

# HR Desk Reference

## BPA Career Pathways Program

### HR Desk Reference: 410-03-01

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## 1. Introduction and Background

This HR Desk Reference implements BPA HR Directive 410-3: Hiring, Selecting, and Assigning Employees.

On December 27, 2010, President Obama signed Executive Order (E.O.) 13562 establishing the Internship Program, the Recent Graduates Program, and the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued the final rule for the Pathways Programs on May 11, 2012 (77 FR 28194). The Pathways Program requirements are found in part 362 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The appointing authorities for the Pathways Programs are found in 5 CFR 213.3402(a), (b), and (c). To support that objective and build bench strength, BPA uses the BPA Pathways Internship Program to employ students to help meet business challenges, achieve diversity goals, and create a source of talented high-quality candidates for career service with BPA.

The Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) Pathways Program provides an opportunity to introduce students to BPA's environment and foster student interest in Federal careers. It is also a means to assess and develop student competencies for potential BPA careers, to address short and long term staffing needs, and to fill permanent staffing needs by allowing students to be converted to permanent positions in BPA consistent with merit system principles. The program is open to all students (high school, vocational/technical, business, college, or graduate) without regard to race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, or any other non-merit based factor. Permanent positions available for student conversion from the BPA Pathways Internship Program are based on needs identified through BPA's workforce planning.

- A. **Internship Program:** This program is for current students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions from high school to graduate level with paid opportunities to work in agencies and explore Federal careers while still in school. For more information visit: <http://www.opm.gov/HiringReform/Pathways/program/interns/>.
- B. **Recent Graduates Program:** This program is for individuals who have recently graduated from qualifying educational institutions or programs and seek a dynamic, career development program with training and mentorship. To be eligible, applicants must apply within two years of degree or certificate completion (except for veterans precluded from doing so due to their military service obligation, who will have up to six years to apply). For more information please visit: <http://www.opm.gov/HiringReform/Pathways/program/graduates/>
- C. **Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program:** For more than three decades, the PMF Program has been the Federal government's premier leadership development program for advanced degree candidates. This program is now for individuals who have received a qualifying advanced degree within the preceding two years. For complete

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program information, visit: For more information please visit: <http://www.opm.gov/HiringReform/Pathways/program/fellows/>.

## 2. Purpose/Objectives

This HR Desk Reference guide establishes BPA’s policy and procedures for employing students under the BPA Pathways Program for Managers, Supervisors, and Human Resources Specialists.

## 3. Applicability

Applies to all students and recent graduates employed by BPA under the Pathways Program.

## 4. Terms & Definitions

- A. **Academic year:** Defined by the student’s academic institution, but 45 quarter hours or 30 semester hours typically constitutes an academic year.
- B. **Accredited institution:** An accredited institution or program is a secondary or post-secondary institution or program that is legally authorized to offer academic programs that lead to a diploma, certificate, or degree and is formally recognized by an accrediting agency listed as nationally recognized by the Secretary of Education. Accreditation can be verified at: <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Index.aspx>. Students who take online courses are eligible to participate in the Internship Program if all other basic and additional eligibility requirements are met. Home-schooled students may participate in the Internship Program if they are either enrolled in an accredited home-school or in a State-approved home-school curriculum program. Written documentation attesting to the validity of the accreditation will be needed prior to processing the appointment and Enter-on-Duty.
- C. **Advanced degree:** A professional or graduate degree, e.g. Master’s, PhD., or J.D.
- D. **Break in program:** A break in program is defined as a period of time when a program participant is on a leave without pay status during the course of attempting to complete a Recent Graduate or Internship Program appointment. The participant may be working but unable to go to school, may be attending classes but unable to work, or may not be working or attending class. All breaks in the program must be pre-approved by the participant’s supervisor. The supervisor must provide a written valid business reason for any denials.
- E. **Certificate program:** Post-secondary education, in a qualifying educational institution, equivalent to at least one academic year of full-time study that is part of an accredited college-level, technical, trade, vocational, or business school curriculum.

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- F. **Excepted service:** Appointments in the Federal Government that have been excepted from certain competitive service rules and regulations.
- G. **Good academic standing:** Defined by the student’s academic institution, but an overall or cumulative and current grade point average of 2.0 or better is typically the standard for good academic standing.
- H. **Half-time course load:** The definition of half-time enrollment as defined by OPM is enrollment in at least 6 credit hours per semester or the equivalent as defined by the school’s Registrar’s Office. An individual who needs to complete less than the equivalent of half-time enrollment as defined in this section for the semester in which graduation occurs is still considered a student for purposes of this program.
- I. **International Education:** Students who gained part of their education internationally must: (1) Meet all citizenship requirements, and (2) Have their foreign education interpreted by a credential evaluation service. For specific guidelines regarding this service, please refer to <http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>.
- J. **Internship Program:** The Pathways Internship Program is for current students accepted for enrollment in qualifying educational programs and provides students enrolled in a variety of educational institutions with paid opportunities to work in agencies and explore Federal careers while still in school.
- K. **Pathways Participant Agreement:** An agency standard and consistent outline for all students that clearly identifies expectations, including but not limited to: (a) a general description of duties; (b) work schedules; (c) the length of the appointment and termination date; (d) mentorship opportunities; (e) training requirements as applicable; (f) evaluation procedures that will be used for the participant; (g) requirements for continuation and successful completion of the program; and (h) minimum eligibility requirements for noncompetitive conversion to term or permanent competitive service employment according to the requirements of the applicable Pathways Program. If at any point in time any major changes occur, an updated Pathways Program Participant Agreement must be signed.
- L. **Presidential Management Fellows Program:** The PMF Program has been the Federal Government's premier leadership development program for advanced degree candidates. E.O. 13562 expands the eligibility window for applicants by aligning it with academic calendars and allowing those who have received a qualifying advanced degree within the preceding 2 years to participate. This is a competitive process that is administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM); therefore, PMF’s will not be covered in this HR Desk Reference. For more information regarding PMF’s please see: <http://www.opm.gov/HiringReform/Pathways/program/fellows/>.
- M. **Qualifying Educational Institution:**

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1. A public high school whose curriculum has been approved by a State or local governing body, a private school that provides secondary education as determined under State law, or a homeschool that is allowed to operate in a State; and
  2. Any of the following educational institutions or curricula that have been accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education:
    - a) A technical or vocational school;
    - b) A 2-year or 4-year college or university;
    - c) A graduate or professional school, e.g., law school, medical school; or
    - d) A post-secondary homeschool curriculum.
- N. **Recent Graduates Program:** The Recent Graduate Program is for individuals who have recently graduated from a qualifying educational institution or program. To be eligible for this program, applicants must apply within 2 years of degree or certificate completion, except for Veterans (as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2108) who, due to their military service obligation were precluded from participating in the Recent Graduates Program during the 2-year period after obtaining a qualifying degree or completing a qualifying program; therefore, veterans are eligible to participate in the program within 6 years of obtaining a qualifying degree or completing a qualifying program.
- O. **Student:** An individual who has been accepted for enrollment or who is currently enrolled at least half-time and seeking an accredited degree at a qualifying educational institution. This includes awardees of the Harry S. Truman Foundation Scholarship Program under Public Law 93-842. Students need not be in actual physical attendance, so long as all other requirements are met.

## 5. Acronyms

- A. **ACWA:** Administrative Careers with America
- B. **ADTP:** Academic Degree Training Program
- C. **AOC:** Area of Consideration
- D. **BPA:** Bonneville Power Administration
- E. **CFR:** Code of Federal Regulations
- F. **CHRIS:** Corporate Human Resources Information System
- G. **EO:** Executive Order
- H. **FPL:** Full Performance Level
- I. **GPA:** Grade Point Average
- J. **GS:** General Schedule

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- K. **HCM:** Human Capital Management
- L. **HRD:** Human Resources Director
- M. **ICTAP:** Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program
- N. **IDP:** Individual Development Plan
- O. **JOA:** Job Opportunity Announcement
- P. **KSA:** Knowledge, Skills, and Ability
- Q. **LWOP:** Leave Without Pay
- R. **NTE:** Not-to-Exceed Date
- S. **OLC:** Online Learning Center
- T. **OPM:** Office of Personnel Management
- U. **PD:** Position Description
- V. **PMF:** Presidential Management Fellows
- W. **PPO:** Pathways Program Officer
- X. **RPL:** Recruitment Priority Listing
- Y. **RIF:** Reduction in Force
- Z. **SOP:** Standard Operating Procedures

## 6. Responsibilities

- A. **Pathways Program Officer (PPO)/HR Specialist/HR office (HCM):** The PPO establishes Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that outline functions, responsibilities, and expectations as it pertains to the use of the Pathways hiring authorities. The PPO is responsible for program administration plans, including coordinating recruitment, job analysis, assessing candidates, on-boarding processes, administering and tracking the program, counseling interns, identifying positions anticipated to convert to permanent positions, providing final review of Pathways Agreements, assisting managers and students in the Pathways processes, and ensuring BPA remains compliant with Pathways Program Federal rules and regulations.
- B. **Hiring Managers/Supervisors (Program/Field/Staff/Support Office):**
  1. Provide on-boarding logistics, such as desk, phone, computer, office space, assistive technology, travel/purchasing cards (if necessary), etc.;
  2. Identify managers to serve as mentors and/or coaches for students;
  3. Identifies staffing needs that can be met by hiring interns and advises the HCM Student Program Manager;

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4. Define BPA’s performance management requirements and establish Pathways Agreements with student;
5. Provide necessary organizational orientation and arrange for any site-specific security, safety, and other related briefings for participants; and
6. Ensure development, submission, and approval of training and learning requirements and outlines career progression where specified by employment program guidance within 30 days. Determine if interns will be retained, converted, or terminated based on valid business needs.

**C. Pathways Program Participants:**

1. Sign a Pathways Program Participant Agreement with their manager/supervisor and PPO; and
2. For Interns, each semester, trimester, or quarter (depending on the academic institution’s class schedule) after the initial appointment, submit current academic transcripts as proof of enrollment to verify they continue to meet eligibility requirements. Participants must maintain good academic standing and ability to perform essential duties of the position.

**7. Program Administration Requirements, Guidance, and Processes**

**7.1 Pathways Programs Facts**

- A. **Agency Workforce Planning:** Before filling any positions under the Pathways Program, managers should include measures in their workforce planning to ensure that an adequate number of permanent positions will be available to convert Pathways Participants who successfully complete their programs.
- B. **Position Description:** Internship positions must be classified to a student trainee series (GS-XX99). A classified PD(s) must be established before beginning the recruitment process.
- C. **Announcing Pathways Programs Opportunities:** Agencies must meet OPM public notification requirements by providing Pathways Program opportunities and procedures for application to the general public, as provided by 5 CFR 362.105(b), 362.203(a), and 362.303(a). A vacancy announcement must be posted on [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov) for all Internship appointments. Limiting recruitment to only specific academic institutions is prohibited.
- D. **Citizenship:** BPA may appoint a non-citizen to a Pathways Program position only if the student is lawfully admitted to the United States as a permanent resident or is otherwise authorized to be employed. A Pathways Intern or Recent Graduate must possess full U.S. citizenship by the end of the Program to be eligible to be converted to permanent Federal employment in the competitive service.

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- E. **Employment of relatives:** Pathways Participant may work in the same agency with a relative when there is no direct reporting relationship and the relative is not in a position to influence or control the Participant's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement within the agency. DOE Policy Guidance Memorandum #35A Procedures for Compliance with Nepotism and Misuse of Position was issued May 2014.
- F. **Separations or Terminations:** The PPO and HCM must be informed of any proposed action to separate a Pathways Participant. An appointment may be terminated for any of the following reasons:
1. Resignation;
  2. Suspension, expulsion, or withdrawal from his or her educational institution;
  3. Unsatisfactory work performance or conduct (must be properly documented);
  4. Failure to maintain academic standards; or
  5. Inability of the program office to retain the student in the position, e.g., budget constraints, reduction-in-force, etc.
- G. **Security Clearance:** All positions require a background investigation prior to hire date.
- H. **Veterans' Preference:** Veterans' preference applies to selection for positions in the Pathways Programs. Selections must be made in accordance with the requirements of 5 CFR part 302, Veterans' preference laws, and OPM guidance issued as a Memorandum for Chief Human Capital Officers, dated February 9, 2009 on Procedures for Passover of Compensable-Disabled Preference Eligibles in the Excepted Service. This includes, but is not limited to, ranked and unranked referral lists.
- I. **Veteran Pass-Over:** Subject to the appointment procedures in 5 CFR Part 302, and in light of the decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in *Gingery v. Department of Defense*, if the selecting official wishes to pass-over any preference eligible with a compensable, service-connected disability of 30 percent or more (CPS) who has applied for a position in the excepted service, the selecting official must follow the principle of Veterans' preference as much as administratively feasible, i.e., consider Veteran status as a positive factor when reviewing and considering applications, thus the selecting official must obtain sufficient documentation justifying the reasons why the CPS Veteran will not be selected for the position. It is important to note that for 30% or more compensable Veterans, BPA must obtain permission for pass-over from OPM while simultaneously notifying the Office of Human Capital Policy (HC-11). While requesting OPM's approval, BPA must notify the preference eligible of the proposed pass-over of the reasons thereof, and his/her right to respond. If the Veteran is a TP vet, a pass-over request may be submitted to HCM and a determination may be made at the local level. A pass-over notification must be sent in a timely manner to the preference eligible's last known address. Veteran Pass-over's are highly discouraged.

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## 7.2 Internship Program

As authorized by Executive Order 13562, the Internship Program is for current students and individuals accepted for enrollment in a qualifying educational program.

This hiring authority requires hiring managers to be proactive by integrating basic workforce planning principles to identify competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed to achieve short-term and/or long-term projects.

The servicing human resources office will conduct a strategic recruitment discussion with the hiring manager who will need to identify upfront if the need for an intern is temporary (with a NTE date) or more long-term (without a NTE date).

The Internship Program is comprised of two paths:

- Interns with an NTE are not eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.
- Interns without an NTE date are eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.

### A. Basic Internship Program Eligibility Criteria:

Applicants appointed to the Internship Program must meet the following basic eligibility requirements:

1. Be at least 16 years old (as per 5 CFR 551.601(a)).
2. Be a U.S. Citizen.
3. The Intern must be accepted for enrollment or enrolled in and seeking a degree (diploma, certificate, etc.) in a qualifying institution, on a full or half-time basis (as defined by the institution in which the student is enrolled), including awardees of the Harry S. Truman Foundation Scholarship Program under Public Law 93-842. A student can be enrolled in an accredited high school; college (including 4-year colleges/universities, community colleges, and junior colleges); professional, technical, vocational, and trade school; advanced degree programs; or other qualifying educational institution pursuing a qualifying degree or certificate.
4. The Intern must be in good academic standing as determined by their academic institution (a GPA of 2.0 or higher). Student must submit transcripts with application and official transcripts before being appointed to a student trainee position.
  - a) For STEM-related positions, BPA and the hiring manager may establish a minimum GPA higher than 2.0. The PPO/HCM is responsible for establishing the criteria within its standard operating procedure. It must outline the GPA levels, illustrate the need for establishing a higher GPA, and identify the occupational groups within the geographic location that fall under this GPA range.

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- b) The PPO/HCM is responsible for ensuring transparency, equity, and standardization when applying this revised GPA criteria for all related positions. This means that the higher GPA must be applied consistently and with merit across the board within the STEM occupations when recruiting for Interns.
  - c) GPA cannot be used as a quality ranking factors (KSA) to determine qualifications.
5. The Intern must meet personnel suitability and physical requirements for the position to which they are applying.
  6. The Intern must meet the OPM Qualification Standard for the series and grade of the position.
  7. Male applicants for Internship program born after 12/31/59 who are required to register with the Selective Service under Section 3 of the Military Selective Service Act must be registered (or must have registered at the time that they were required to do so) in order to be eligible for appointment under this program 5 U.S.C. § 3328(a) and 5 CFR Part 300, Subpart G.

**B. Recruitment Process for an Intern Position:**

1. **Recruitment Request:** Managers/Supervisors must submit a recruitment request to HR HELP. A complete recruitment package must be submitted. This request must include:
  - a) SF-52 Request for recruitment with notes regarding announcement specifics, such as intern type (with or without NTE date), PD #'s, Manager/selecting officials name and contact information, and number of positions to be filled;
  - b) Classified PD(s) for Student Trainee for all grade levels at which the position will be announced/filled. PD(s) submitted should also include all targeted grade levels;
  - c) Advertising; if wanting to advertise to schools or a geographic location, managers must put in request with recruitment package; and
  - d) Length of time desired for announcement, minimum announcement open period is 3 business days (only in rare circumstances), otherwise announcement will default to 10 business days.
2. **Strategic Recruitment Discussion:** The PPO/HCM will review recruitment request and conduct strategic recruitment discussion with manager/selecting official. A job analysis will be created using OPM qualification standard for the specific series being announced. Rating criteria will be developed appropriate to the grade level of the position being announced in order to rate and rank candidates. Although applicants appointed under the Internship hiring authority are exempt from the rating and ranking requirements under Schedule D, HCM must apply a rating system that

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explains and defends hiring decisions to assure the process is open and fair. Internship positions are entry-level, therefore, HCM and hiring managers cannot establish criteria that overwhelmingly exceeds OPM’s basic qualification standards or establishes selective placement factors that impose unfair consideration and is not directly related to the position. Use of GPA to distinguish best qualified candidates as part of the rating and ranking or category process is not authorized. The PPO/HCM will submit draft job analysis to the manager/supervisor for review. Once the final job analysis is complete both the manager and PPO will sign the document or approve in an email notification.

3. **Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA):** PPO/HCM will then draft the Student Trainee announcement. Announcement information includes the position title, series and grade, pay range, qualifications, geographic location and how to apply or express interest. Management may select at any of the grade levels announced. Manager/Selecting official will approve final announcement before opening.

NOTE: Appointments are not subject to Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP), Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) or Reemployment Priority List (RPL) or Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) requirements.

4. **JOA period:** BPA/HCM can only accept resumes through the duration (open through close dates) of the JOA. During JOA period the manager/selecting official should be preparing for interviews, scheduling interview dates as well as gathering panel members, if applicable.
5. **Referral Certificate (Certificate of Eligibles):** When the announcement closes, PPO/HCM will review applications and adjudicate Veterans’ preference and determine those who are “preference eligible candidates” (PEC). All PECs will be reviewed first. If there are 3 or more eligible and qualified PECs on a Certificate for 1 position, only those PECs will be referred on a Certificate of Eligibles. If there are less than 3 eligible and qualified PECs for 1 position, then all applicants will be reviewed and all eligible and qualified applicants will be referred. If there are more vacant positions than eligible and qualified PECs, then all applicants will be reviewed and all eligible and qualified applicants will be referred. Applicants will be reviewed and must be determined as meeting or not meeting the minimum qualifications for the position.
6. **Interviews:** When management receives the Certificate of Eligibles, all resumes should be reviewed. Management can, and are highly encouraged to, conduct interviews and will keep all notes for records. An applicant being referred on a Certificate of Eligibles does not guarantee them an interview. Management must consider all PEC referred before considering other candidates.
7. **Declinations/Withdrawals:** If any candidate declines an interview, declines further consideration, declines an offer, or in any other way withdrawals his/her application

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during any step of the process, then it must be documented in writing. If the declination/withdrawal is given verbally, then attempts to should be made to confirm with the candidate via email. Failing that, a memo-for-record will be produced documenting the conversation. The documentation will be included in the case file.

8. **Selections:** When a selection has been made, the selecting official must return the Certificate of Eligibles to HCM with annotations on all referred applicants indicating their selection(s), non-selections, any alternate selections (if applicable) and notes on all interviewed candidates. Non-PECs may not be chosen over an eligible and qualified PEC on the certificate list, unless the PEC has declined the position or withdrawn from consideration, sufficiently documented. All documentation must be sent to the PPO/HCM for review and record. DOE’s Nepotism and Misuse of Position and Selection Checklist must be sent to the PPO/HCM for review and approval of selection.
9. **On-Boarding:** The PPO/HCM will contact the candidate to make the tentative job offer and collect all the documents necessary for on-boarding. The PPO/HCM office will determine and set pay for the selectee in accordance with established OPM pay setting standards. If selectee accepts the position the on-boarding process will be initiated. If the selectee declines the position, the job offer will be made to the alternate selection or the Certificate will be sent back to the manager/selecting official for an alternate selection. Once a selectee has been cleared by security, the PPO will make a firm job offer with an official start date.

**C. Maintaining your Pathways Intern:**

1. **Transcripts:** Each semester, trimester, or quarter (depending on the academic institution’s class schedule) after the initial appointment, the Intern must submit current academic transcripts for proof of enrollment to verify that they continue to meet eligibility requirements.
2. **Establishing assignments:** Before the Intern begins employment, the manager/supervisor should plan and establish work assignments that are tailored around the intern’s studies. The purpose of the program is to provide the student with on-the-job experience that will develop competencies and technical skills needed to excel professionally in the targeted position at the time of conversion.
3. **Probationary period:** The time spent by participants in the Internship program without a NTE date can be credited toward the mandatory 1-year probationary period, regardless of work schedule, so long as the participant is in a pay status and employment is continuous (5 CFR 315.802).
4. **Work schedules:** Students can be placed on either a part-time or full-time schedule. There are no limitations on the number of hours a student can work; however, because the Internship Program is developmental in nature and to ensure

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consistency and compliance, intermittent work schedule and/or regular remote telework, which require a change in duty station, are not authorized. The work schedule cannot interfere with the student’s academic schedule. With supervisory approval, work schedules for full-time students may be flexible or compressed, and students may be eligible for regular or situational telework.

5. **Annual and Sick Leave:** Students in the Internship Program are eligible to accrue annual and sick leave. Standard leave and accrual policies apply when determining eligibility (5 CFR 630, Subparts C & D).
6. **Training:** Interns are eligible to attend training courses and have any training-related travel reimbursed. There is not a dedicated training program required for the Internship Program. However, this should not preclude a manager from identifying and supporting investments in any job-specific training. Within 30 days of the initial appointment, the manager must determine necessary and general job-specific training for the Intern. This applies specifically toward Interns who are not serving on a NTE date. Training requirements, documented on the Participant Agreement, are contingent on funding availability and should be budgeted in advance.
7. **Pay:** Students in the Internship Program must be paid according to the criteria set forth in the appropriate General Schedule, pay band, or wage grade classification standard for the job. Typically, an Intern will be employed at Step 1 of the General Schedule grade level for which they qualify based on a combination of education attainment and relevant work experience.
8. **Performance Plans:** Managers must develop performance standards for Interns expected to be employed for six months or longer. Managers must apply the same standards under the current BPA Performance Management System for Non-Supervisory Employees, since Interns are BPA/federal employees. Performance standards will vary depending on the work required as well as any rotational assignment. All performance standards must be completed and submitted to HCM within the first 30 days following the appointment.

Performance plans and appraisals shall not deviate from the Department’s established performance management standards. Both supervisors and interns must use the forms currently established under the BPA Performance Management System. The plan must contain critical elements pertaining to the position and directly align to the organization's strategic goals and mission.

At any time during the rating period, if an Intern is falling short of “Meets Expectations” in any performance element, the manager must address the issue with the employee. If an Intern receives a performance rating for the lowest level in any critical element, the Intern must receive a rating of “Fails to Meet Expectations.” As a result, the Intern will not be eligible to receive a promotion or within-grade-

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increase or performance award. If the Intern is in a probationary period, supervisors in consultation with the PPO/HCM must consider terminating the employee. If the employee is not in a probationary period, consideration must be given to removing the employee from the internship program.

9. **Within-Grade-Increases:** Depending on the length of the appointment, interns are eligible to receive within-grade-increases.
10. **Promotions:** Promotion eligibility is based on: one-year specialized experience at the lower grade-level of federal service (or equivalent) and/or educational experience as required under initial appointment as outlined in OPM’s qualification standards for Pathways Internship Positions. Because the intent of the Intern Program is to be developmental in nature, BPA intern positions cannot exceed the Full Performance Level (FPL) of a GS-12 (or equivalent). The FPL can be less than a GS-12. This FPL must be documented on the Job Opportunity Announcement, and there must be a supporting PD for the FPL. This provision does not confer entitlement to promotion. Accelerated promotions are prohibited under the Intern Program.

An intern may only be promoted to their FPL once they have completed their requirements for conversion. Keep in mind that these dates are when interns are eligible for promotion; an intern who is eligible is not entitled to a promotion and promotions are not mandatory. Some examples are as follows:

- a) If an intern’s FPL is at the GS-12, they can only be promoted up to a GS-11 (or equivalent) before completing their requirements for conversion. Once the Intern has completed their requirements for conversion, he/she can then be promoted to the GS-12 (or equivalent) before being converted to the competitive service.
- b) If an intern’s FPL is at the GS-9, they can only be promoted to the GS-7 (or equivalent) before completing their requirements for conversion. Once the intern has completed their requirements for conversion, he can then be promoted to the GS-9 (or equivalent) before being converted to the competitive service.

Hiring managers seeking to promote an Intern must submit an SF-52 and a PD for the next grade level to the PPO and HR HELP at least 2 pay periods prior to the effective date. The PD must be classified before the promotion can be effective. If the position must be classified, then a SF-52 request must be submitted at least 2 pay periods in advance of the effective date. If the documentation is provided after the employee’s career ladder promotion eligibility date, the promotion action must be effective the next pay period. HCM is not authorized to back-date promotion actions.

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11. **Awards:** Interns are eligible to receive monetary or non-monetary awards based on a suggestion, invention, superior accomplishment, productivity gain, or other personal effort that contributes to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations or achieves a significant reduction in paperwork. Interns are also eligible to receive performance-based awards or bonuses assuming they meet the criteria set forth by BPA.

12. **Breaks in the Program:** If there is a period where the Intern is unable to work due to circumstances beyond their control, i.e. unforeseen health issues, family emergency, etc., a break in the program may be approved in advance by the PPO/HCM. The supervisor of the Intern must submit a written justification to HCM requesting a break in program. At this point, the individual will be placed on Leave without Pay (LWOP) for the period of the break in the program. HCM must notify the Office of Human Capital Policy (HC-11) of the break in program if it exceeds 90 days. Breaks in service cannot exceed 120 days within one calendar year.

The rationale for extensions beyond four months may include:

- a) Extreme health issue/treatment;
- b) Extended military deployment or commitment;
- c) Temporary inability to maintain student status;
- d) Unique educational opportunity not to exceed six months in duration; or
- e) Compelling departmental interest due to unique skills required in an identified mission-critical occupational series.

**If an extension beyond the three months is not granted, the intern must immediately be removed from service.**

13. **Tenure Group and Reduction in Force (RIF):** An Intern serving under an appointment for an initial period expected to last more than 1 year of service is in the excepted service Tenure Group II. A temporary Intern, serving under an appointment not to exceed 1 year of service is in excepted service Tenure Group 0. A temporary Intern who is serving under an appointment not to exceed 1 year but has exceeded 1 year of current continuous service, is in excepted service Tenure Group III. (See 362.205)

14. **Federal benefits:** Interns are eligible to receive basic life insurance, retirement benefits, and participate in the Federal Government’s Thrift Savings Plan if the appointment is 1 year or longer. All Interns with and without NTE dates are eligible for FEHB coverage. (See 5 CFR 870.202 and 5 CFR 890.102).

15. **Student Loan Repayment/Recruitment Incentives:** Interns without an NTE date may be eligible to receive recruitment incentives, i.e. advance in hire, recruitment bonus, student loan repayment, tuition reimbursement. BPA recommends that

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recruitment incentives be utilized judiciously. If a recruitment incentive is utilized, a written justification must be submitted to HCM for consideration. Some examples of acceptable justification rationales can be found in 5 CFR 531.212(c) and include, but are not limited to:

- a) Pay retention based on current or historical salary of the applicant;
- b) Proven difficulty in hiring within a particular occupational series without the use of incentives;
- c) Excessive recent turnover; or
- d) Exceptional educational or vocational achievement.

All justifications for student loan repayment and recruitment bonus should follow the guidance set forth in 5 CFR 531.212 and DOE Order 322.1C Admin Chg 1B. A continuing service agreement between the recipient and the agency must be signed and executed prior to the receipt of either a recruitment bonus or student loan repayment. Additionally, the justification must be provided to HCM prior to the job offer being made. It is critical that this document be provided in order to ensure the final job offer letter states the accurate compensation package. Because Internship positions are developmental and entry-level in nature and scope, hiring managers need to exercise sound business decision-making when offering any of these incentives. Interns with a not-to-exceed date are ineligible, since they are employed on a short-term basis. Under Pathways, most candidates will likely qualify for a position based on education alone. Any incentive should only be considered for highly qualified candidates and hard-to-fill positions. The rules and regulations governing incentives apply to Pathways appointments.

**16. Academic Degree Training Program (ADTP):** Pathways Program Interns may be eligible for ADTP. ADTP is a part of the overall planned, systemic, and coordinated program to provide employees (student employees and regular workforce employees) effective education and training to improve performance and accomplish strategic goals. ADTP is used to attract high quality individuals to BPA's student employee program (Pathways program - Internships) and raise the skill level for occupations directly related to BPA's mission; increase BPA diversity through the student employment program; hire for hard to fill jobs; meet new qualifications standards; develop skills for mission/strategic business changes including employee redeployment; prepare for technological changes and advancements; and address any other strategic business need, training need or staffing problem. ADTP program information can be found at:

<http://internal.bpa.gov/EmployeeCenter/Training/Pages/ADTP.aspx>

**17. Movement from agency to agency:** BPA Interns can move between agencies as long as they remain on an intern appointment. Interns can transfer to other agencies. BPA may accept resumes from interns outside the agency as long as the JOA is

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posted on USAJOBS for a minimum of 3 calendar days because the intern is not on the agency rolls. The gaining PPO or HR office will be accountable for the ensuring the intern meets the program requirements and is eligible for conversion. The gaining agency would absorb any financial requirements/liability associated with the initial appointment, i.e. training.

**18. Movement within BPA:** If the intern is on BPA rolls, then HCM may process a reassignment. To provide fair and equitable consideration, the process may include posting the opportunity as a JOA on USAJOBS for 3 calendar days to serve as notice to employees. However, internal advertisements for reassignment are not required unless there is a change in the type of internship. Reassignments from one intern position to another could affect any incentives the intern is receiving.

**D. Pathways Intern Program Completion:**

**1. Non-Competitive Conversion:** Interns are eligible for non-competitive conversion to a term or permanent appointment in the competitive service. If the intern is placed on a term appointment, the employee can be later converted to a permanent competitive service position as long as the conversion occurs prior to the end of the NTE date of the term position.

- a) Complete the academic study within the 120 days preceding the appointment at a qualifying institution. This means that the student does not have to be awarded the degree at time of conversion but rather have completed all of the academic requirements conferring a degree, diploma or certificate.
- b) Complete 640 hours of work experience while enrolled as a full-time or part-time degree or certificate seeking student\*\*.
- c) Be rated at the minimum a “meets expectations” under the DOE/BPA performance management system.
- d) Meet OPM qualification standards for the position. A Student trainee may be converted to the highest grade they are qualified for.
- e) Meet Pathways agreement requirements and any other agency-specific requirements.

**\*\*Note:** Not all 640 hours must be gained while the student is employed under the Internship Program appointment authority. Managers may credit up to 320 hours out of the 640 hours in three ways:

- i) Outstanding academic achievement and exceptional job performance:
- ii) Non-federally based (third party) internship provider officially established to provide internship experiences to students that are comparable to the Internship Program. This experience may be gained through a non-federally

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based internship, volunteer experience, stipend-based program, or contractor internship; or

- iii) Served as an active duty member of the Armed Forces.

A detailed work schedule under the program must be submitted to justify the number of hours credited toward the 320 hour credit.

Superior academic achievement can be achieved through one of three ways:

- a. The student is expected to graduate with at 3.5 Grade Point Average (GPA). Organizations may round out a 3.45 GPA to 3.5 to meet the criteria;
- b. The student may have graduated in the top 10% of the graduating class; or
- c. The student is a member of a nationally-recognized honor society.

In addition to superior academic achievement, the Intern must also achieve exceptional job performance during this time as well. Exceptional job performance is defined as the highest performance rating (Significantly Exceeds Expectations or SEE) for all performance elements under the established BPA performance plan system. Therefore, both superior academic achievement and exceptional performance are needed by the Intern in order to receive the 320 hour credit. Only a total of up to 320 hours total can be credited toward the mandatory 640 hours required for non-competitive conversion. Managers cannot combine these flexibilities to achieve the 640 hours requirement for non-competitive conversion.

- 2. **Conversion from an Intern NTE to Intern:** An Intern with a not-to-exceed date may be converted to an Intern appointment. The conversion requires public notice because the new appointment would lead to a non-competitive conversion to the competitive service. HCM must post a JOA on USAJOBS for a minimum of 3 calendar days. The minimum area of consideration (AOC) must be open to Interns within BPA.
- 3. **Conversion from Intern NTE to Intern NTE:** In those instances in which opportunities may arise for an Intern NTE that require a change in grade level or change in occupational series, BPA must post a JOA open for a minimum of 3 calendar days. The minimum area of consideration must be BPA.
- 4. **Non-Competitive Conversion Documentation:** The following documentation is required to be submitted to HCM prior to conversion.

In order to be converted, the student must:

- a) Participant’s final/official transcripts must be sent to the PPO/HCM documenting the date and degree awarded;
- b) SF-52 Conversion Action;

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- c) All PDs for any career ladder position (if applicable);
  - d) Most recent Performance Appraisal (if appointed greater than 90 days); and
  - e) Work schedule demonstrating 640 hours have been accomplished. In the event that the student receives crediting hours under an appointment other than Intern, a description of duties along with the type of appointment is necessary.
5. **Separations or Terminations:** If management is not planning to convert or continue employment of a student, the PPO/HCM must be informed of any proposed action to separate a student on account of performance or conduct. An appointment may be terminated for any of the following reasons:
- a) Resignation;
  - b) Suspension, expulsion, or withdrawal from his or her educational institution;
  - c) Unsatisfactory work performance or conduct (must be properly documented);
  - d) Failure to maintain academic standards; or
  - e) Inability of the program office to retain the student in the position, e.g., budget constraints, reduction-in-force, etc.

### 7.3 Recent Graduates Program

The Recent Graduates Program is an entry-level program designed to offer employment opportunities to recent graduates and individuals, who obtained certificates from qualified educational institutions or technical programs. The Program provides eligible participants entry-level developmental experience to prepare for a federal career at BPA.

The Recent Graduates Program serves as a supplement to BPA’s workforce pipeline development efforts. It does not replace nor substitute competitive procedures. This means that this authority should be used in conjunction with other hiring authorities based on the Office’s overall hiring.

Recent Graduates positions require career progression; therefore, appointment actions at the full-performance grade level are prohibited. Recent Graduates appointments can be made up to the GS-09 (or equivalent) grade-level. Appointments with degrees in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering or math) can be made up to the GS-11 (or equivalent) grade-level if the individual possess a Ph.D. or equivalent degree from a qualifying institution directly related to the position being filled. The full-performance-level (FPL) of a Recent Graduate appointment should not exceed the GS-13 or equivalent levels.

#### A. Basic Recent Graduate Program Eligibility Criteria:

Applicants appointed to the Recent Graduate Program must meet the following basic eligibility requirements:

1. Be a U.S. Citizen.

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2. Completed a qualifying associates, bachelors, masters, professional, doctorate, vocational, or technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution within the previous 2 years. Preference eligible Veterans who were precluded from applying due to their military service obligation begin their 2-year eligibility period upon release or discharge from active duty (see examples in Frequently Asked Questions). Eligibility for these Veterans cannot exceed 6 years from the date on which they completed their degrees (or certification).
3. The PPO/HCM may make tentative job offers to students no more than 9 months in advance. Appointments cannot be processed until the individual has completed their educational program and provides official transcripts indicating the degree has been awarded prior to the effective date of the personnel action. If the student does not graduate within the specified timeframe or produce the required documentation regarding degree completion, the tentative job offer is rescinded. The servicing human resources office must receive all of the documentation prior to processing the appointment action.
4. The participant must meet personnel suitability and any physical requirements for the position to which they are applying.
5. The participant must meet the OPM Qualification Standards for the series and grade of the position.
6. Male applicants for Recent Graduate program born after 12/31/59 who are required to register with the Selective Service under Section 3 of the Military Selective Service Act must be registered or must have registered at the time that they were required to do so in order to be eligible for appointment under this program (5 U.S.C. § 3328(a) and 5 CFR Part 300, Subpart G).
7. The Department acknowledges that hiring managers seek the most highly qualified candidates; therefore, if the GPA level is used as eligibility criteria, the PPO/HCM establish outline the process within its SOP and ensure transparency, equity and fairness to all perspective applicants in order to assure a diversified talent pool. At this point, GPA cannot be used as a quality ranking factor for qualification determination.

**B. Recruitment Process for a Recent Graduate Position:**

1. **Recruitment request:** Managers/Supervisors must put in a recruitment request to HR HELP. A complete recruitment package must be submitted. This request must include:
  - a) SF-52 Request for recruitment with notes regarding announcement specifics, such as the PD #, Manager/selecting officials name and contact information, and number of positions to be filled.

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- b) Classified PD(s) for Student Trainee for the announced grade level and PD(s) for all targeted grade levels.
  - c) Advertising: if wanting to advertise to schools or a geographic location, managers must put in request with recruitment package.
  - d) Length of time desired for announcement, minimum announcement open period is 3 business days, otherwise announcement will default to 10 business days.
2. **Strategic Recruitment Discussion:** The PPO/HCM will review recruitment request and conduct strategic recruitment discussion with manager/selecting official. A job analysis will be created using OPM qualification standard for the specific series being announced. Rating criteria will be developed appropriate to the grade level of the position being announced in order to rate and rank candidates. Under Schedule D, BPA/HCM must apply a rating system that explains and defends hiring decisions to assure the process is open and fair. It is important to note that Recent Graduates positions are entry-level; and hiring managers cannot establish criteria that will overwhelmingly exceed OPM's basic qualification standards or establish selective placement factors that imposes unfair consideration and is not directly related to the position. The use of GPA to distinguish best qualified candidates as part of the rating and ranking or category process is not authorized. The use of selective placement factors must be supported and outlined in the job description. PPO/HCM will submit draft job analysis to the manager/supervisor for review. Once the final job analysis is complete both the manager and PPO will sign the document or approve in an email notification.
3. **Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA):** The PPO/HCM will then draft the Student Trainee announcement. Announcement information includes the position title, series and grade, pay range, qualifications, geographic location, and how to apply or express interest. The PPO/HCM must document both the recruitment strategy and the rating and ranking strategy (making sure to adjudicate Veterans' preference).
- a) Appointments are not subject to Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP), Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) or Reemployment Priority List (RPL) requirements.
  - b) Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) requirements apply to Recent Graduate appointments at the GS-5/7 levels depending on the occupational series. If the position is an ACWA-covered job, the PPO/HCM must contract OPM to administer ACWA examinations.
4. **JOA period:** BPA/HCM can only accept resumes through the duration (open through close dates) of the JOA. During JOA period the manager/selecting official should be preparing for interviews, scheduling interview dates as well as gathering panel members, if applicable.

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5. **Referral:** When announcement closes, the PPO/HCM will review applications and adjudicate Veterans' preference. All Veterans will be reviewed first. If there are 3 or more eligible and qualified Veterans on a Certificate for 1 position, only Veterans will be referred. If there are less than 3 eligible and qualified Veterans for 1 position then all applicants will be reviewed and all eligible and qualified applicants will be referred. If there are more vacant positions than eligible and qualified Veterans then all applicants will be reviewed and all eligible and qualified applicants will be referred. Applicants will be reviewed and must be determined as meeting or not meeting the minimum qualifications for the position. Minimum Qualification sheets must be completed for each applicant reviewed and will be kept for record purposes for up to 3 years.
6. **Interviews:** When management receives the Certificate of Eligibles, all resumes should be reviewed. An applicant being referred on a Certificate does not guarantee them an interview. Management must consider all Veterans referred before any non-Veterans. If there are any declinations, it should be documented in writing. Management can conduct interviews and will keep all notes for records.
7. **Selections:** When a selection has been made the manager/selecting official must return the Certificate to HCM with annotations on all referred applicants indicating their selection(s), non-selections, any alternate selections (if applicable) and notes on all interviewed candidates. Non-Veterans may not be chosen over an eligible and qualified Veteran on the certificate list, unless the Veteran has declined the position in writing. The PPO/HCM may make tentative job offers to students no more than 9 months in advance. Appointments cannot be processed until the individual has completed their educational program and provides official transcripts indicating the degree has been awarded prior to the effective date of the personnel action. If the student does not graduate within the specified timeframe or produce the required documentation regarding degree completion, the tentative job offer is rescinded. The servicing human resources office must receive all of the documentation prior to processing the appointment action. All documentation must be sent to the PPO for review and record. DOE's Nepotism and Misuse of Position and Selection Checklist must be sent the PPO/HCM for review and approval of selection.
8. **On-Boarding:** The PPO/HCM will contact the candidate to make the official job offer and collect all the documents necessary for on-boarding. The PPO/HCM will determine and set pay for the selectee in accordance with established OPM pay setting standards. If selectee accepts position the on-boarding process will be initiated. If the selectee declines the position, the job offer will be made to the alternate selection or the Certificate will be sent back to the manager/selecting official for an alternate selection. Once a selectee has been cleared by security and has provided copy of official transcripts for proof of graduation, the PPO/HCM will make a firm job offer with an official start date.

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**C. Maintaining your Recent Graduate:**

1. **Trial Period:** Although the Recent Graduate appointment is indefinite, the employee serves a 1-year trial period regardless of work schedule. The participant must remain in a pay status. (See 5 CFR 315.802.)
2. **Work Schedules:** Program participants may work full-time or part-time. Participants may work up to 80 hours a pay period. Because Pathways Program is developmental in nature, intermittent work schedule and/or regular remote telework, which require a change in duty station, are not authorized. With supervisory approval, work schedules for employees may be flexible or compressed, and program participants may be eligible for regular or situational telework
3. **Pay:** Participants in the Recent Graduate Program must be paid according to the General Schedule, pay band, wage grade, or other pay plan for the job. Typically, a Recent Graduate participant will be appointed at the step 1 of the General Schedule grade-level (or equivalent) for which they qualify based on a combination of education and relevant work experience.
4. **Annual and Sick Leave Accrual:** Recent Graduate participants are eligible to accrue annual and sick leave in accordance with 5 CFR Part 630.
5. **Training:** The Recent Graduate Program will provide eligible participants entry-level developmental experience to prepare for a career with BPA.

In terms of training venue, the employee should consult with the HCM Training office and hiring manager in identifying specific courses and sources for training. Some of these venues can be web-based, such as the Online Learning Center (OLC) or even webinars from outside vendors and formal classroom courses.

6. **Recent Graduate Training Requirements:**
  - a) Assign a Mentor outside of Recent Graduate’s chain of command within 90 days (5 CFR 362.301(b));
  - b) Complete 40-hours of formal interactive training (online or classroom) each year they are in the program (5 CFR 362.301(d); and
  - c) Rotational assignments 30 to 180 days (optional)
7. **Coaching and Mentoring:** Recent Graduate participants must be assigned a mentor within 90 days. Mentors serve as an unbiased confidant and advisor with whom participants may discuss work-related situations and opportunities for career growth. Mentors are expected to devote the necessary time to facilitate participant career development by:
  - a) Assisting the participant and supervisor in preparing the IDP;
  - b) Recommending quality training classes;

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- c) Identifying potential rotational and shadowing assignments;
- d) Providing the participant with regular and frequent follow-up;
- e) Identifying other technical and professional employee resources that may be consulted to provide exposure to other parts of the organization; and
- f) Exposing the participant to decision-making styles, problem solving techniques, and attributes of what it takes to succeed.

Mentors should also provide objective suggestions and recommendations for improvement of the program. Hiring managers in collaboration with the PPO are responsible for assigning a formal or informal Mentor within 90 days. The Mentor must be outside of Recent Graduates chain of command. Mentors must also sign an agreement of responsibilities.

8. **Developmental Assignments:** Because of BPA’s complex and challenging missions, participants can be given the opportunity to further develop professional skills and knowledge by participating in rotational and developmental assignments. Participants must meet with their immediate supervisors and should consult with their mentors to review and discuss appropriate rotational opportunities and the proposed length (30 to 180 days). The immediate supervisor should consult with the PPO/HCM before a final decision is made. Any rotational assignment must be approved by HCM and documented by both the gaining and losing supervisors as well as the PPO/HCM.

Rotations should be designed to maximize the participants’ exposure to the entire office function and scope of work and enable the employee to gain a broad and better understanding of Energy’s mission and work. Assignments should provide practical, hands-on experience and the opportunity to experience interactions between the assigned organization(s) and other work elements. Before the start of each rotational assignment, participants should meet with their supervisor and the prospective rotational supervisor to establish a clear mutual understanding of the expectations of both the rotational supervisor and the participant. At the end of the rotational assignment (detail), the rotational supervisor is responsible for providing performance input to the employee’s permanent record. This feedback must be factored into the employee’s annual performance rating and noted as an advisory plan in e-Performance.

9. **Performance Plans:** Managers must develop performance standards for each Recent Graduate participant. Managers must apply the same standards under the current BPA Performance Management System for Non-Supervisory Employees. Performance standards will often vary depending on the work required of the participant for both their assigned position as well as any rotational assignment. All performance standards must be completed and submitted to the PPO/HCM within the first 30 days following the appointment.

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Performance plans and appraisals shall not deviate from the Department’s established performance management standards and forms currently set forward in the BPA Performance Management Policy. Organizations should not design a performance sub-system specifically for a Recent Graduate participant. Plans must contain critical elements pertaining to the position and be directly align to the organization's strategic goals and mission. Performance objectives for Recent Graduate participants should remain consistent with the IDP and any other on-the-job training experiences planned for the fiscal year.

At any time during the rating period, if an intern is falling short of “Meets Expectations” in any performance element, the manager should address the performance issue with the employee. If an employee receives a performance rating for the lowest level in any performance element, the employee must receive a rating of “Fails to Meet Expectations”. As a result, the Recent Graduate participant will not be eligible to receive a promotion or performance award. Since the employee is on a trial period, managers must consider if termination is appropriate. Managers can not extend the trial period or appointment period beyond one year to receive additional time for consideration. It is expected that managers conduct progress reviews and remain engaged with the employee in order to assure performance is measured accurately and timely. Managers must contact the PPO/HCM to determine the most suitable course of action.

10. **Within-Grade Increases:** Participants are eligible to receive within-grade increases in accordance with federal regulations.
11. **Promotions:** Any Recent Graduate participant who meets the qualifications requirements for the position is eligible for career ladder promotion(s). This provision does not confer entitlement to promotion. Accelerated promotions are prohibited under the Recent Graduate Program because eligibility is based on the one-year specialized experience at the lower-grade level of federal service as outlined in OPM’s qualification standards.
12. **Awards:** Recent Graduate participants are federal employees and are therefore eligible to receive monetary or non-monetary awards based on a suggestion, invention, superior accomplishment, productivity gain, or other personal effort that contributes to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations. Recent Graduate employees are also eligible to receive performance-based awards or bonuses assuming they meet the criteria set forth by BPA.
13. **Federal Benefits:** Participants in the Recent Graduate program are eligible to receive health care benefits, basic life insurance benefits, retirement benefits, and participate in the Federal Government’s Thrift Savings Plan (see 5 CFR 870.202 and 5 CFR 890.102). Newly appointed employees, newly rehired employees, and transfers hired on or after January 1, 2013, will automatically be enrolled in Federal Employees Retirement System-Revised Annuity Employees (FERS-RAE) based on

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revisions to P.L. 112-96 unless they fall under the FERS-RAE exception rule. The servicing Human Resources Office will be responsible for determining the correct retirement coverage determinations for all employees hired on or after January 1, 2013.

Section 8401 of Title 5, United States Codes, made amendments to FERS retirement System. Adding new definition called FERS-FRAE. Beginning January 1, 2014, new employees with no prior service hired on or after that date will have to pay higher employee contributions (4.4%) for regular employees and 4.9% for special category employees.

- 14. Breaks in the Program:** If there is a period where the Recent Graduate participant is unable to work due to circumstances beyond his/her control, i.e., unforeseen health issues, family emergency, etc., a break in the program may be approved in advance by the PPO/HCM. The period of the break in program may not exceed two months (60 days) in duration. The supervisor of the Recent Graduate participant must submit a written justification to the PPO/HCM when requesting a break in program for the Recent Graduate participant. At this point, the individual will be placed on Leave without Pay (LWOP) for the period of the break in the program.

As with any LWOP personnel action, HCM must follow the guidance outlined in the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions when determining if and when a SF-50 is required. The PPO/HCM must notify the Office of Human Capital (HC-11) of the break in program and ensure the participant will meet the requirements prior to the conversion eligibility. Again, the 120-day extension restriction applies.

Any break over two months (cumulative) cannot be approved by HCM. The PPO/HCM must submit a written justification from the participant’s supervisor for extension(s) to HC-11 no later than 30 calendar days prior to the NTE date/proposed return date.

The rationale for extensions beyond four months may include:

- a) Extreme health issue/treatment;
- b) Extended military deployment or commitment;
- c) Unique educational opportunity not to exceed six months in length;
- d) Compelling departmental interest due to unique skills required in an identified mission-critical occupational series; or
- e) Impact on meeting program requirements.

If an approval is not granted and the Recent Graduate is unable to complete the program requirements within 1-year along with the 120-days extension, then employment is immediately terminated. BPA, DOE nor OPM have statutory approval to exceed the 120-days limitation.

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15. **Reduction in Force (RIF):** Participants are placed in the excepted service in Tenure Group 2. The employee does not have vested rights to be non-competitively converted to a competitive service position.
16. **Student Loan Repayment/Recruitment/Relocation Incentives:** Recent Graduate participants may be eligible to receive student loan repayments, relocation, and/or recruitment incentives, i.e., advanced pay rate, recruitment bonus, student loan repayment, tuition remission, as authorized by Federal statute or regulation. Such incentives are to be used when, in the absence of them, it would be difficult to recruit for the position. The DOE Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer recommends the incentives be utilized judiciously in keeping with budgetary constraints, critical skill needs, and fairness. It is important to note that Pathways positions are entry-level and thus applicants' skill-set would probably be limited. If an incentive is offered, it must be documented and justified accordingly. If management wishes to offer an incentive, the PPO/HCM must document the process and receive written justification from the manager as with any other incentive. Both management and HR staff must comply with BPA pay policies and procedures. Some examples of acceptable justification rationales can be found in 5 CFR 531.212(c) and include, but are not limited to:
- a) Pay retention based on current or historical salary of the applicant;
  - b) Proven difficulty in hiring within a particular occupational series without the use of incentives;
  - c) Excessive recent turnover; or
  - d) Exceptional educational or vocational achievement.
- Depending on the nature of the incentive, the recipient must sign a continuing service agreement prior to the receipt of a relocation incentive, recruitment incentive, or student loan repayment. The justification must be sent to the PPO/HCM prior to the job offer to ensure that the final job offer letter has the best compensation offer included.
17. **Tuition Assistance:** In the event that a Recent Graduate decides to continue their education, a program office may offer tuition assistance, such support is permissible under 5 CFR 213.3202(b) (17).
18. **Movement between positions:** According to 5 CFR 362.304, participants in the Recent Graduates Program are permitted to apply and transfer between agencies in the federal government, as long as the individual does not have a break in service. This means that a Recent Graduate may apply for and HCM may accept applications from other Recent Graduates who are already on the rolls at other agencies. To move between agencies and BPA to accept these applications, HCM must post a JOA on USAJOBS with the minimum area of consideration as "Current Recent Graduates from other federal agencies." If a general JOA is posted on USAJOBS and it is open

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to the general public, current Recent Graduates from other agencies are eligible to apply. However, if the Recent Graduate participant is separated, the individual does not have reinstatement rights and the former employee must reapply and the appointment would be as a new Recent Graduate.

19. **Movement from agency to agency:** If the employee is on agency rolls, the Recent Graduate must separate from the current appointment (termination appt-in) in the agency and be appointed to a new appointment (gaining) without a break in service. Time spent under the initial (previous) appointment will be credited towards meeting the Recent Graduates Program requirements. If the employee is coming from another agency outside of BPA, PPO/HCM will be responsible for ensuring the employee meets all appointment and conversion requirements. This means that BPA will absorb all of the responsibilities and accountability associated with the Recent Graduate appointment and conversion (training and development, mentors, conversion requirements, etc.). It is important to note that the Recent Graduate would not begin a new program period because of the transfer.

BPA must enter into a new Participant Agreement that reflects the requirements for Program completion and eligibility for noncompetitive conversion to the competitive service in the new appointment. Another one year waiting period for conversion or completion of new requirements do not apply. It is recommended that the PPO/HCM acquires all of the mandatory paperwork and agreement(s) from the losing organization/agency in order to ensure the conversion date is accurate and requirements will be met. For example, if the Recent Graduate was employed at Agency XYZ for 6 months and then later transferred to BPA, the employee’s remaining program eligibility would be 6 months for a total duration of 1 year; 6 months at Agency XYZ and 6 months at BPA. The employee will finish the remaining time period and receive training under BPA.

20. **Movement within BPA:** Based on the MOU agreement defines agencies under 5 U.S.C. 105, movement between sub-agencies, offices, and components of BPA are considered reassignments as long as the Recent Graduate remains on BPA rolls. Because this appointment utilizes a FTE and to ensure compliance with Merit System Principles and adherence to Prohibited Personnel Practices, BPA will announce the position opening for at least 3 days on USAJOBS. The area of consideration can be BPA Recent Graduates within the local commuting area.

**D. Pathways Recent Graduate Program Completion:**

1. **Non-competitive conversion:** Recent Graduates must be U.S. citizens to be eligible for conversion to the competitive service. An agency may convert a Recent Graduate noncompetitively to a term or permanent position in the competitive service if the Recent Graduate has:
  - a) Completed all of the Program requirements successfully;

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- b) Demonstrated successful job performance consistent with the applicable DOE performance appraisal program; and
- c) Met the OPM qualification standard for the position to which the Recent Graduate will be converted.

Once the Recent Graduate is noncompetitively appointed to a career, career-conditional or a term (NTE 1-4 years) appointment, time spent on the Recent Graduates appointment may be credited toward completion of the probationary period in accordance with 5 CFR Part 315, subpart H. If the Recent Graduate participant is converted to a term position, he/she may later be noncompetitively converted to a permanent position as long as the conversion occurs prior to the end of the Term’s NTE date.

The non-competitive conversion must occur upon successful completion of the 1-year Program period or at the end of the 120-days approved extension. Recent Graduate Program Participants should complete program requirements within the one-year period. It is the responsibility of both the hiring manager and the PPO to track and monitor progress, to address performance concerns, and to maintain engagement with the employee. If the requirements cannot be completed within one year, then the PPO must submit a request for an extension. If participants are not converted on the date of their service requirement, or at the end of the 120-day extension, their appointment must be terminated.

**2. Non-Competitive Conversion Documentation:** The following documentation must be submitted to HCM prior to conversion:

- a) SF-52 Conversion Action;
- b) Pathways Agreement;
- c) Most recent Performance Appraisal ;
- d) Rotational Assignment forms; and
- e) Letter from the rotational assignment supervisor detailing the participant’s performance

**3. Extension request of a recent graduate appointment:** The initial appointment for Recent Graduate participants is set for 1 year. BPA acknowledges that sometimes circumstances arise that may impact this requirement. As a result, a request to extend the appointment of a participant must be submitted to the Office of Human Capital Policy (HC-11).

HC-11 can authorize an extension of a Recent Graduate appointment up to an additional 120 days. Justifications must be submitted to the Office of Human Capital Policy (HC-11) and contain at a minimum:

- a) Reason for extension;

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- b) Proposed timeline to complete of training requirements justified with training dates; and
- c) If it is a personal reason, the intent of the intern and proposed return to duty date.

**NOTE:** Extensions can only be granted for up to a total of 120 days. The Executive Order prohibits OPM and agencies from extending conversion eligibility beyond a total of 120 days. This means that if HCM requests a 120-day extension and then later requests another extension even for 1 day, the total will exceed 120 days. Failure to meet the programs requirements within that 120-days window will result in the employee’s immediate termination.

**7.4 Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program**

The PMF Program has been the Federal Government's premier leadership development program for advanced degree candidates. E.O. 13562 expands the eligibility window for applicants by aligning it with academic calendars and allowing those who have received a qualifying advanced degree within the preceding 2 years to participate. This is a competitive process that is administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM); therefore PMF’s will not be covered in this HR Desk Reference. For more information regarding PMF’s please see <http://www.opm.gov/HiringReform/Pathways/program/fellows/>.

**8. Contacts**

- A. For information on the BPA Career Pathway Programs, please contact the Pathways Program Officer at 503.230.5320 or contact HR HELP.
- B. For information on Academic Degree Training Program, contact Learning and Development Supervisor at 503.230.3190 or contact HR HELP.

**9. Authorities & References**

1. BPA HR Directive 410-3: Hiring, Selecting, and Assigning Employees
2. U.S. Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration Career Pathways Program, Aug. 2014.
3. Pathways Program MOU between OPM and DOE, Aug 2014
4. Pathways Program – OPM, May 11, 2012 (77 FR 28194)
5. Executive Order 13562, Dec. 2010
6. 5 CFR Part 213 – Excepted Service
7. 5 CFR Section 213.3402(a)(b)(c)

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8. 5 CFR Part 362 – Pathways Programs
9. 5 CFR Part 842 – Federal Employees Retirement System – Basic Annuity
10. 5 CFR Part 870 – Federal Employees’ Group Life Insurance Program
11. 5 CFR Part 890 – Federal Employees’ Health Benefits Program
12. 5 U.S.C. Section 2301 – Merit System Principles
13. DOE Policy Guidance Memorandum #35A Procedures for Compliance with Nepotism and Misuse of Position was issued May 2014.
14. Harry S. Truman Foundation Scholarship Program under Public Law 93-842
15. HR Desk Reference 410-04-01: Academic Degree Training Program

## 10. Revision History

Version Number	Issue Date	Description of Change or Review
1.0	1/19/2016	Initial publication.
2.0	4/18/2016	Formatting and grammar changes. Updated/corrected referenced document titles. Fixed broken web links.

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# Appendix A: Participant Agreements/Documents

## BPA Pathways Internship Program Participant Agreement

<b>Appointee's Full Name:</b>	
<b>Appointing Agency/Sub-Agency: Bonneville Power Administration</b>	
<b>Appointment Date (s):</b>	<b>Work Schedule:</b>
Entrance on Duty (EOD) Date in Student Program : _____  Appointment Not to Exceed (NTE) Date: _____  Program NTE Date: _____	Work Schedules will vary but typical schedule may include working full time during winter and summer break and part time of up to 32 hours per week during school. Personnel actions will be requested whenever changes are needed.  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>OR</b></p> Work Schedules will vary but typically will be working in a full time status while on school break and will go on LWOP while attending school. Personnel actions will be requested whenever changes are needed
<b>Position Title, Series and Grade</b>	<b>Pay</b>
<b>Intern's Responsibilities:</b>	<b>Hiring Official's/Supervisor's Responsibilities:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide proof of enrollment as necessary</li> <li>• Notify the agency of any change in your enrollment status and/or work schedule</li> <li>• Maintain at least a half-time course load as defined by the educational institution</li> <li>• Remain in good academic standing Maintain a GPA of 2.0</li> <li>• Adhere to an established work schedule</li> <li>• Adhere to the Intern Program requirements</li> <li>• Participate in agency training classes or programs</li> <li>• Perform, successfully, the assigned duties listed in your</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a Participant Agreement with each Intern</li> <li>• Verify enrollment and eligibility for continued participation in the Program</li> <li>• Provide information on the Intern Program requirements</li> <li>• Identify job duties and responsibilities; provide a copy of the position description.</li> <li>• Provide information on any special training requirements</li> <li>• Identify performance goals and evaluation criteria</li> <li>• Establish a mutually agreeable work schedule that does not interfere with the Intern's academic schedule</li> <li>• Supervise daily work activities of the Intern</li> </ul>

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position description <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe all workplace rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If position offers conversion to the competitive service, identify the eligibility requirements for conversion and ensure your Intern is converted within the applicable timeframe (120 days from completion of all academic requirements).</li> <li>Provide regular, ongoing feedback and coaching</li> </ul>
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**Work Assignments** (Enter brief description of major duties from position description or attach a position description)

**Program Requirements** (Enter requirements for continuation and successful completion of Program, including any work group specific requirements, as applicable)

**Training Requirements and if applicable rotation assignments**

**Mentoring** (Suggested for Interns on appointments lasting more than 1 year)

**Evaluation Procedures** (Interns serving on appointments expected to last more than 120-day are covered by DOE Order 330.1 with BPA Supplement)

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**Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Noncompetitive Conversion** (Include any specific requirements for your organization)

To be eligible for conversion to the competitive service, an Intern must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Successfully complete academic course of study.
- Complete a minimum of 640 hours of work experience under the Internship Program.
- Meet the OPM Qualification Standard for the position the Intern may be converted to.
- Maintain acceptable performance under the BPA's approved performance management system.
- Receive favorable recommendation for conversion from supervisor.

**It is important to remember that eligibility for conversion does not guarantee that BPA will decide to opt for conversion.**

**SIGNATURES:**

**Intern:**

*Print Name*

*Signature  
Date*

**Hiring Official/Supervisor:**

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*Print Name*

*Signature*  
*Date*

**Pathways Program Officer:**

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*Print Name*

*Signature*  
*Date*

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## BPA Pathways Recent Graduate Program Participant Agreement

<b>Appointee's Full Name:</b>	
<b>Appointing Agency/Sub-Agency: Bonneville Power Administration</b>	
<b>Appointment Date (s):</b>	<b>Work Schedule:</b>
Entrance on Duty (EOD) Date in Student Program : _____	Monday _____
Program NTE Date: _____	Tuesday _____
	Wednesday _____
	Thursday _____
	Friday _____
<b>Position Title, Series and Grade</b>	<b>Pay</b>
<b>Recent Graduate's Responsibilities:</b>	<b>Hiring Official's/Supervisor's Responsibilities:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhere to the Recent Graduate Program requirements</li> <li>Adhere to an established work schedule</li> <li>Perform, successfully, the assigned duties listed in your position description</li> <li>Participate in agency training classes or programs</li> <li>Select a mentor within 90 days of your date of hire. Your manager will assist you</li> <li>Attend regularly scheduled meetings with mentor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Participant Agreement with each Recent Graduate</li> <li>Provide information on the Recent Graduate Program requirements</li> <li>Establish a mutually agreeable work schedule</li> <li>Identify performance goals and evaluation criteria</li> <li>Assist Recent Graduate with the selection of a mentor within 90 days of date of hire               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentor must be at an appropriate level outside of the Recent Graduate's chain of command</li> </ul> </li> <li>Provide information on any special training requirements               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure Recent Graduate participates in at least 40 hours of formal interactive training per year</li> </ul> </li> <li>Supervise daily work activities</li> <li>Identify performance goals and evaluation criteria</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the position offers noncompetitive conversion to the competitive service, identify the eligibility requirements for conversion and ensure the Recent Graduate is converted at the end of the Program.</li> </ul>
<b>Work Assignments</b> (Enter brief description of duties or attach a position description)	

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<b>Recent Graduates Program Requirements</b> (Enter requirements for continuation and successful completion of Program)				
<b>Recent Graduates Training Requirements</b> (Identify any special training requirements)				
<b>40 hours of formal interactive training each year.</b>				
<b>Mentoring</b> (Enter instructions on process to select Mentor)				
<b>Evaluation Procedures</b> (Summarize elements on which the Recent Graduate's performance appraisal will be based)				
<b>Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Noncompetitive Conversion.</b> (If this position offers noncompetitive conversion, enter any agency specific requirements)				

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To be eligible for conversion to the competitive service, the Recent Graduate must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Successfully complete all Recent Graduate Program requirements.
- Meet the OPM Qualification Standard for the position to which the Recent Graduate may be converted to.
- Maintain acceptable performance under the agency's approved performance management system.

**It is important to remember that eligibility for conversion does not guarantee that BPA will decide to opt for conversion.**

**SIGNATURES:**

**Intern:**

*Print Name*

*Signature  
Date*

**Hiring Official/Supervisor:**

*Print Name*

*Signature  
Date*

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**Pathways Program Officer:**

---

*Print Name*

*Signature*  
*Date*

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## MENTOR AGREEMENT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I hereby agree to participate for a period of 12/24months as a mentor  
to \_\_\_\_\_

while he/she participates in the (Recent Graduate Program or PMF Program). I am willing  
to:

**(Insert info in this section)**

I understand that I may be released from this agreement if the participant or I decide this is  
not a productive arrangement. In this event, a confidential "Lessons Learned" evaluation  
will be prepared by the terminating party for submission to the Pathways Intern  
Coordinator.

SIGNATURE OF MENTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

CC: Pathways Program Officer (PPO)

Field/Program Office

Supervisor

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