

United States Office of Personnel  
Management



Operating Manual

**Qualification Standards for  
General Schedule Positions**

Individual Occupational Requirements for

**GS-2152: Air Traffic Control Series**

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*The text below is extracted verbatim from Section IV-B of the Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions (p.IV-B-272), but contains minor edits to conform to web-page requirements.*

*This is an individual qualification standard.*

**EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants may meet minimum qualification requirements on the basis of experience, education, or, for GS-7 positions, one of the alternate provisions described below.

**EXPERIENCE**

*General Experience (for GS-4 and GS-5):* Progressively responsible experience that demonstrated the potential for learning and performing air traffic control work. Two years of such experience is required for GS-4 positions, and 3 years is required for GS-5 positions.

*Specialized Experience (for GS-7 and above):* Experience in a military or civilian air traffic facility that demonstrated possession of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the level of work of the specialization for which application is made. This experience must have provided a comprehensive knowledge of appropriate air traffic control laws, rules, and regulations.

Examples of specialized experience include:

**For Station Positions:** Providing information to pilots on such matters as weather, air routes, navigational aids, and airport conditions before and during flight. This specialization also requires:

- Judgment to select only essential and pertinent information from a great mass of data;
- Skill to present essential information to pilots clearly, concisely, and quickly before or during flight; and
- Ability to act decisively in emergency situations.

**For Terminal Positions:** Issuing control instructions and advice to pilots in the vicinity of airports to assure proper separation of aircraft and to expedite their safe and efficient movement. This specialization also requires:

- Ability to act decisively under stressful situations and to maintain alertness over sustained periods of pressure;
- Skill to coordinate plans and actions with pilots and other controllers; and
- Judgment to select and take the safest and most effective course of action from among several available choices.

**For Center Positions:** Controlling aircraft operating enroute along the airways to assure proper separation and safe and expeditious movement of such aircraft. This specialization also requires:

- Skill to control aircraft operating at very high speeds over great distances;
- Skill to arrange air traffic in patterns that assure maximum safety and minimum delay at points where such aircraft are "handed off" or transferred to other facilities or other sectors within the center; and
- Judgment to estimate when and where traffic congestion will build to a point that necessitates changing patterns, and to plan accordingly.

**For Research and Development Positions:** Experience in a terminal, station, or center that demonstrated the ability or potential to:

- Create, design, and/or develop new air traffic control systems or concepts; and
- Analyze, test, and evaluate current or new air traffic control procedures, methods, systems, or concepts.

**For Combination Positions:** Positions involving a combination of the duties of two or more specializations require that applicants meet the qualification requirements for the appropriate specializations.

Up through GS-7, specialized experience in one specialization is fully qualifying for reassignment or promotion into another specialization. At GS-9 and above, experience and training in one specialization is qualifying for another specialization if the applicant's total background indicates that he or she can gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities required in the new assignment after a reasonable period of orientation and training. All positions at the full performance level of each specialization require skill and training in the work of the specialization.

For all specializations, qualifying specialized experience must have provided the ability to:

- Arrive quickly at well-reasoned solutions to complex problems;
- Adjust quickly to different assignments, changing conditions, and workload fluctuations;
- Remain calm and controlled during and after long periods of tension and fatigue; and
- Speak rapidly, clearly, and distinctly.

*Level of Experience:* For each grade level, creditable experience must have equipped applicants with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the full range of duties of the position for which application is being made. Such experience is typically demonstrated by accomplishment of assignments of the difficulty and responsibility described in the position classification standard used to evaluate positions at the next lower grade level in the normal line of promotion to the position being filled.

OR

## **EDUCATION**

*For GS-5 Positions:* A full 4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree meets the requirements for GS-5.

*For GS-7 Positions:* Superior academic achievement at the baccalaureate level *or* 1 full year of graduate study meets the requirements for GS-7.

OR

## **ALTERNATE REQUIREMENTS FOR GS-7 POSITIONS**

Applicants who pass the written test qualify for GS-7 if they:

- Hold or have held an appropriate facility rating and have actively

controlled air traffic in civilian or military air traffic control terminals or centers;

- Hold or have held an FAA certificate as a dispatcher for an air carrier;
- Hold or have held an instrument flight rating;
- Hold or have held an FAA certificate as a navigator or have been fully qualified as a Navigator/Bombardier in the Armed Forces;
- Have 350 hours of flight time as a copilot or higher and hold or have held a private certificate or equivalent Armed Forces rating;
- Have served as a rated Aerospace Defense Command Intercept Director; or
- Meet the requirements for GS-5 and pass the written test with an appropriately higher score.

### **MAXIMUM ENTRY AGE**

Under the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 3307, a maximum entry age has been established for Terminal and Center positions.

### **TEST REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants for competitive appointment and inservice placement to all positions in this series at GS-7 and below must pass a written test. A written test may also be required for positions above GS-7.

### **PERSONAL QUALITIES**

In addition to meeting all other requirements, applicants must demonstrate possession of the traits and characteristics important in air traffic control work. Applicants who qualify in the written test and/or meet the experience and training requirements will be required to appear for a pre-employment interview to determine whether they possess the personal characteristics necessary for performance of air traffic control work.

### **ADDITIONAL SCREENING REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants who have passed the written test (and the interview, if required) may be required to pass additional air traffic control aptitude screening for positions in the Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration. Persons who do not pass the aptitude evaluation testing requirements will not be appointed to these positions.

### **TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

At all trainee and developmental levels, employees must learn the skills needed for operation at higher levels of responsibility. Failure of employees to meet training requirements for or accept promotion to higher grade air traffic control specialist positions may constitute grounds for reassignment, demotion, or separation from employment.

## CERTIFICATE AND RATING REQUIREMENTS

Air traffic control specialists in all specializations must possess or obtain, within uniformly applicable time limits, the facility ratings required for full performance at the facility where the position is located.

Applicants must possess or obtain a valid Air Traffic Control Specialist Certificate and/or Control Tower Operator Certificate, if appropriate. These certificates require demonstrating knowledge of basic meteorology, basic air navigation, standard air traffic control and communications procedures, the types and uses of air navigation aids, and regulations governing air traffic.

Facility ratings require demonstration of a knowledge of the kind and location of radio aids to air navigation, the terrain, the landmarks, the communications systems and circuits, and the procedures peculiar to the area covered by the facility.

## MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

In general, air traffic control specialist applicants and employees must have the capacity to perform the essential functions of these positions without risk to themselves or others. The provision of sufficient information about physical capacity for employment requires that before appointment applicants undergo appropriate pre-employment physical/medical evaluations.

The physical impairments/medical conditions that follow, unless otherwise noted, are disqualifying because there are medical and/or management reasons to conclude that an individual with such impairment/condition cannot perform the duties of the position without unacceptable risk to his or her own health, or to the health or safety of others (employees or the public).

***Initial Employment:*** Applicants for initial employment to air traffic control specialist positions must meet the following requirements. (Unless otherwise indicated, these requirements are identical for all specializations.)

### A. *Eye*

#### 1. *Visual Acuity*

- a. *Terminal and Center Positions*--Applicants must demonstrate distant and near vision of 20/20 or better (Snellen or equivalent) in each eye separately. If glasses or contact lenses are required, refractive error that exceeds plus or minus 5.50 diopters of spherical equivalent or plus or minus 3.00 diopters of cylinder is disqualifying. The use of orthokeratology or radial keratotomy methods is not

acceptable for purposes of meeting this requirement. The use of contact lenses for the correction of near vision only or the use of bifocal contact lenses for the correction of near vision is unacceptable.

- b. *Flight Service Station Positions*--Applicants must demonstrate distant and near vision of 20/20 or better (Snellen or equivalent) in at least one eye. If glasses or contact lenses are required, a refractive error in at least one eye that exceeds plus or minus 8.00 diopters of spherical equivalent will necessitate an ophthalmological consultation to establish absence of ocular pathology that could interfere with visual function. The use of contact lenses for the correction of near vision only or the use of bifocal contact lenses for the correction of near vision is unacceptable.
- Equivalents in Near Visual Acuity Notations Standard Test Chart: 14/14*  
*Snellen Metric: 0.50M*  
*Jaeger: J-1*  
*Metric: 6/6*

2. *Color Vision*--For all specializations, applicants must demonstrate normal color vision.

3. *Visual Fields*

- a. *Terminal and Center Positions*--Applicants must demonstrate a normal central visual field, i.e., the field within 30 degrees of the fixation point, in each eye. They must also demonstrate a normal peripheral visual field, i.e., the field of vision beyond the central field that extends 140 degrees in the horizontal meridian and 100 degrees in the vertical meridian, in each eye.
- b. *Flight Service Station Positions*--Applicants must demonstrate a normal central field of vision, i.e., the field within 30 degrees of the fixation point, in at least one eye.

4. *Intraocular Pressure*--For all specializations, if tonometry reveals either intraocular pressure greater than 20 mm of mercury, or a difference of 5 or more mm of mercury intraocular pressure between the two eyes, ophthalmological consultation is required to rule out the presence of glaucoma. If a diagnosis of glaucoma is made, or if any medication is routinely required for control of intraocular tension, the applicant is disqualified.

5. *Phorias*

- a. *Terminal and Center Positions*--If an applicant demonstrates greater than 1-1/2 prism diopters of hyperphoria or greater than 10 prism diopters of esophoria or exophoria, evaluation

by a qualified eye specialist is required. If this evaluation determines that bifoveal fixation and vergence-phoria relationships sufficient to prevent disruption of fusion under normal working conditions are not present, the applicant is disqualified.

b. *Flight Service Station Positions*--Applicants must demonstrate the absence of diplopia in the cardinal fields of gaze.

6. *Eye Pathology*--For all specializations, if examination of either eye or adnexa reveals any form of glaucoma or cataract formation, uveitis, or any other acute or chronic pathological condition that would be likely to interfere with proper function or likely to progress to that degree, the applicant is disqualified.
7. *Chronic Eye Disease*--For all specializations, an applicant with any chronic disease of either eye that may interfere with visual function is disqualified.
8. *Ocular Motility*--For terminal and center specialist positions, applicants must demonstrate full extraocular motility.
9. *History of Eye Surgery*--For all specializations, a history of ocular surgery requires ophthalmological consultation. If consultation indicates that the condition that necessitated surgery could interfere with the visual function necessary for performance as an air traffic control specialist, the applicant is disqualified. A history of radial keratotomy is disqualifying.

B. *Ear, Nose, Throat, Mouth*

1. Examination must show no outer, middle, or inner ear disease, either acute or chronic, unilateral or bilateral.
2. Examination must show no active disease of either mastoid.
3. Examination must show no unhealed perforation of either eardrum.
4. Examination must show no deformity of either outer ear that might interfere with the use of headphones of the applied or semi-inserted type.
5. Examination must show no disease or deformity of the hard palate, soft palate, or tongue that interferes with enunciation. The applicant must demonstrate clearly understandable speech, and an absence of stuttering or stammering.
6. Applicants must demonstrate, by audiometry, no hearing loss in either ear of more than 25 decibels in the 500, 1000, or 2000 Hz ranges and must demonstrate no hearing loss in these ranges of more than 20 decibels in the better ear, using ISO (1964) or ANSI (1969) standards. Hearing loss in either ear of more than 40 decibels in the 4000 Hz range may necessitate an otological consultation. Incipient disease processes that may lead to early hearing loss will

be cause for disqualification.

### C. *Cardiovascular*

1. No medical history of any form of heart disease. Must demonstrate absence of heart disease to clinical examination, including resting and post-exercise electrocardiogram.
2. Blood pressure levels no greater than the appropriate values as shown below:

<i>Age</i>	<i>Maximum Reclining Blood Pressure</i>	
	<i>Systolic</i>	<i>Diastolic</i>
20 to 29	140	90
30 to 39	150	90
40 to 49	150	100
50 & over	160	100

3. Must demonstrate to X-ray no evidence of increase in heart size beyond normal limits.
4. An applicant under any form of treatment for any disease of the cardiovascular system is disqualified.

### D. *Neurological*

1. No medical history or clinical diagnosis of a convulsive disorder.
2. No medical history or clinical diagnosis of a disturbance of consciousness without satisfactory medical explanation of the cause.
3. No other disease of the nervous system that would constitute a hazard to safety in the air traffic control system.
4. An applicant under any form of treatment, including preventive treatment, of any disease of the nervous system, is disqualified.

### E. *Musculoskeletal*

1. No deformity of spine or limbs of sufficient degree to interfere with satisfactory and safe performance of duty. Certain limitations of range of motion may be acceptable for certain specific options or positions, in which case acceptance of limitations will be noted specifically for that position or option only.
2. No absence of any extremity or digit or any portion thereof sufficient to interfere with the requirements for locomotion and manual dexterity of the position being sought. Acceptance of

limitations for employment for a specific option or position will be noted for that option or position only.

3. No condition that predisposes to fatigue or discomfort induced by long periods of standing or sitting.

F. *General Medical*

1. No medical history or clinical diagnosis of diabetes mellitus.
2. Must possess such a body build as not to interfere with sitting in an ordinary office armchair.
3. Must have no other organic, functional, or structural disease, defect, or limitation found to indicate clinically a potential hazard to safety in the air traffic control system. A pertinent history and clinical evaluation, including laboratory evaluations, will be obtained, and when clinically indicated, special consultations or examinations will be accomplished.

G. *Psychiatric*

No established medical history or clinical diagnosis of any of the following:

1. A psychosis;
2. A neurosis; or
3. Any personality or mental disorder that clearly demonstrates a potential hazard to safety in the air traffic control system. Determinations will be based on medical case history (including past, social, and occupational adjustment) supported by clinical psychologists and board-certified psychiatrists, including such psychological tests as may be required as part of medical evaluation.

H. *Substance Dependency*

A history, review of all available records, and clinical and laboratory examination will be utilized to determine the presence or absence of substance dependency, including alcohol, narcotic, and non-narcotic drugs. Wherever clinically indicated, the applicant must demonstrate an absence of these on any clinical or psychological tests required as part of the medical evaluation.

***Retention Requirements:*** The physical requirements in this section apply to: (1) air traffic control specialists in the center and terminal specializations who are actively engaged in the separation and control of air traffic, (2) immediate supervisors of air traffic control specialists actively engaged in the separation and control of air traffic, and (3) air traffic control specialists in the station specialization who regularly perform flight assistance services.

Employees occupying the types of positions described above must requalify in an annual medical examination, usually given during the employee's month of birth.

Controllers incurring illness, injury, or incapacitation at any time between the annual examinations must be medically cleared before returning to air traffic control duty. Examinations, including laboratory tests and consultations, will be accomplished to the extent required to determine medical clearance for continued duty. New employees are required to meet the retention requirements by examination during the first 10 months of service.

Employees who are found to be not physically or emotionally qualified for air traffic control duties at any time will be subject to reassignment to a position for which they are fully qualified, retirement for disability if eligible, or separation from the service.

To be medically qualified for retention, an air traffic control specialist must meet the following requirements. (Unless otherwise indicated these requirements are identical for all specializations.)

A. *Eye*

Retention requirements for vision and eye conditions are identical to the requirements for initial hire.

B. *Ear, Nose, and Throat*

1. *Ear Disease; Equilibrium*

a. *Terminal and Center Positions*--Must demonstrate no chronic disease of the outer or middle ear, unilateral or bilateral, that might interfere with the comfortable, efficient use of standard headphone apparatus or that might interfere with accurate perception of voice transmissions or spoken communications. Must have no ear disease that might cause a disturbance of equilibrium.

b. *Flight Service Station Positions*--Must demonstrate no chronic disease of the outer or middle ear, unilateral or bilateral, that might interfere with accurate perception of voice transmissions or spoken communications. Must have no ear disease that might cause a disturbance of equilibrium.

2. *Mastoid*--No active disease of either mastoid.

3. *Eardrum Perforation*--Must demonstrate no unhealed perforation of either eardrum.

4. *Speech*--Must have no interference with enunciation, and must have clear speech free of stuttering or stammering.

5. *Hearing Loss*--No hearing loss in either ear of more than 30 decibels in either the 500, 1000, or 2000 Hz ranges. No loss in these ranges greater than 25 decibels in the better ear. Non-static hearing loss in either ear of greater than 50 decibels in the 4000 Hz range will require an otological consultation.

### C. *Cardiovascular*

#### 1. *Heart Disease*

- a. *Terminal and Center Positions*--No history or symptomatic form of heart disease or any form requiring therapy.
  - b. *Flight Service Station Positions*--No symptomatic form of heart disease.
2. *Disturbance of Rhythm; Other Abnormality; EKG*--Must demonstrate no disturbance of rhythm or other cardiac abnormality on clinical examination, including resting, and when clinically indicated, post-exercise electrocardiography.
  3. *Blood Pressure*--Retention requirements are identical to the requirements for initial hire.
  4. *Heart Size*--Must have no increase in heart size beyond normal limits.

### D. *Neurological*

Retention requirements are identical to the requirements for initial hire.

### E. *Musculoskeletal*

Retention requirements are identical to the requirements for initial hire.

### F. *General Medical*

#### 1. *Diabetes Mellitus*

- a. *Terminal and Center Positions*--An employee who has an established clinical diagnosis of diabetes mellitus will be evaluated for continued duty based upon the degree of control of the disease. Whether by diet alone, or diet and hypoglycemic drugs, control that results in the absence of symptoms and the absence of complications of the disease or the therapy may be considered as satisfactory control. A controller with diabetes mellitus who cannot demonstrate satisfactory control over specified and observed periods of 48 hours is not cleared for duty involving active air traffic control.
  - b. *Flight Service Station Positions*--An employee who has an established clinical diagnosis of diabetes mellitus will be evaluated for continued duty based upon the degree of control of the disease. Whether by diet alone, or diet and hypoglycemic drugs, control that results in the absence of symptoms and the absence of complications of the disease or the therapy may be considered as satisfactory control.
2. *Body Configuration*--Must possess such a body build as not to interfere with sitting in an ordinary office armchair.
  3. *Other Medical Conditions*--Must have no other organic, functional, or structural disease, defect, or limitation found to indicate clinically a potential hazard to safety in the air traffic control system. A

pertinent history and clinical evaluation, including laboratory screening, will be obtained, and when clinically indicated, special consultations and examinations will be accomplished.

#### G. *G. Psychiatric*

1. *Psychotic Disorder*--No established medical history or clinical diagnosis of a psychosis.
2. *Mental, Neurotic, or Personality Disorder*--No neurosis, personality disorder, or mental disorder, that clearly indicates a potential hazard to safety in the air traffic control system. Determinations will be based on medical case history (including past, social, and occupational adjustment) supported by clinical psychologists and board-certified psychiatrists, including such psychological tests as may be required as part of medical evaluation.
3. *Alcoholism and/or Alcohol Abuse*--No clinical diagnosis of alcoholism or alcohol abuse, since these constitute a hazard to safety in the air traffic control system. A history and clinical evaluation, including laboratory evaluation (when indicated) will be accomplished to determine the presence or absence of alcohol addiction, dependency, habituation, abuse, or use.
4. *Addiction, Dependency, Habituation, or Abuse of Dangerous Drugs*--No clinical diagnosis of addiction, habituation, dependency, or abuse of any narcotic or non-narcotic drug, since these constitute a threat to safety in the air traffic control system. A history and clinical evaluation, including laboratory evaluation (when indicated), will be accomplished to determine the presence or absence of drug addiction, dependency, habituation, abuse, or use.

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*Page created 22 March 1999*