
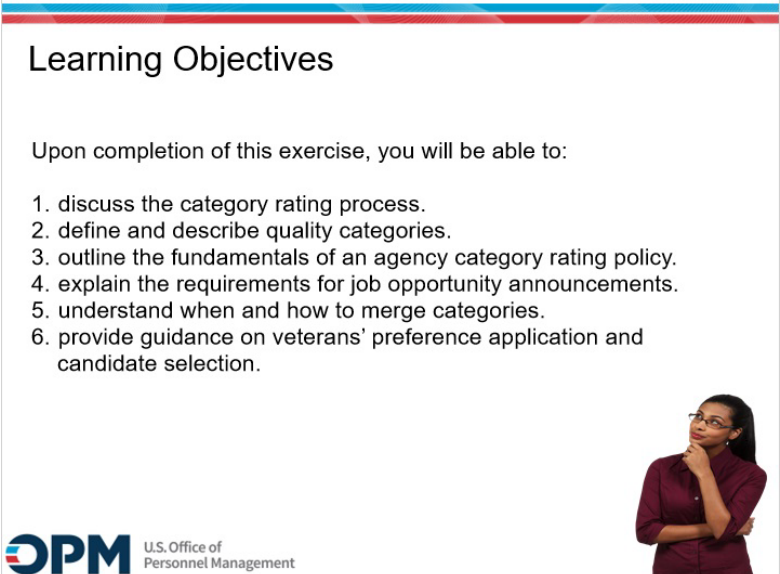


Technical Assistance Module: Spotlight on: Category Rating

#	Slide	
1.1 Category Rating	 <p>Spotlight on: Category Rating</p> <p>OPM U.S. Office of Personnel Management</p>	
1.3 Objectives	 <p>Learning Objectives</p> <p>Upon completion of this exercise, you will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. discuss the category rating process.2. define and describe quality categories.3. outline the fundamentals of an agency category rating policy.4. explain the requirements for job opportunity announcements.5. understand when and how to merge categories.6. provide guidance on veterans' preference application and candidate selection. <p>OPM U.S. Office of Personnel Management</p>	

1.4 What is Category Rating?

What is Category Rating?

The Presidential Memorandum - Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process issued on May 11, 2010, requires agencies to use the category rating procedure (as authorized by [section 3319 of title 5, United States Code](#)) to assess and select job applicants for positions filled through competitive examining.

Category rating is a ranking & selection procedure. It is used to place qualified applicants into two or more pre-defined categories.

Category rating includes a process by which veterans' preference is applied for qualified preference eligible applicants.



1.5 Category Rating

Category Rating



Who is impacted by Category Rating and how is it done?

Applicants who meet the minimum qualification requirements established for the position are subject to the category rating process. These applicants have been determined to have met the job-related competencies, knowledge, skills and abilities.

This learning module will detail how qualified applicants are ranked into two or more pre-defined quality categories. Proceed to the next slide to begin by learning exactly what categories are.



Category Rating



Who is impacted by Category Rating?

Hiring managers have a great responsibility and options to choose qualified applicants.



Category Rating



How is Category Rating Done?

This learning module will detail how qualified applicants are ranked into two or more pre-defined quality categories. Proceed to the next slide and to begin by learning exactly what categories are.



1.6 Category Rating: Categories

Category Rating: Categories



Let's talk about "categories"

Category rating must involve at least 2 pre-defined quality categories.

There are no other limitations to the number of categories, except if established by local agency category rating policy.

Naming Categories



Category Rating: Categories



Naming Categories

Category names can be almost anything. ❌

Here are some examples:

- *Best Qualified, Well Qualified, Qualified*
- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- **Red, White, Blue**

"Not Qualified" is not a proper category name. Only candidates who have met minimum qualifications are placed into one of the qualify categories.



1.7 Agency Category Rating Policy

Agency Category Rating Policy

Agencies must have a category rating policy established by the agency headquarters. That policy:



- Must establish a minimum of two quality categories (no maximum)
- May not establish a "not qualified" category
- Must define the quality categories before announcing the job (cannot be changed once it has been announced)
- Must identify the quality categories in the job opportunity announcement
 - Identify each category simply by name on the job announcement (e.g., Highly Qualified, Qualified, etc.)
 - Use the "How You Will Be Evaluated" section of the job announcement to explain to applicants that category rating will be used



1.8 Agency Category Rating Policy (cont.)

Agency Category Rating Policy (cont.)

Policy should contain implementation requirements such as,

- Coverage – all competitive positions
- Identification and definition of each quality category
- Identification of the type of assessment tool(s) to be used
- Job opportunity announcements
- Identification of ranking and selection procedures
- Description on how the highest quality category with preference eligibles *only* may be referred when there are a sufficient number of preference eligibles to fill the number of vacancies
- Description on how categories may be merged

For any circumstances under which alternative category rating policies may be used, this information should be noted in the agency policy. For example, if an agency contracts out for delegated examining services, it may opt to use the service provider's policy instead.



1.9 Developing Quality Categories

Developing Quality Categories

An agency will decide how to define and describe the categories.

1. Conduct job analysis and identify competencies/KSAs
2. Consult with hiring manager to:
 - Validate existing competencies/KSAs
 - Identify most important competencies/KSAs
 - Determine assessment strategies
3. Use the job analysis and competencies/KSAs to define and describe the categories
 - Category definitions should be written to reflect the requirements to successfully perform the job.
 - Category definitions should distinguish differences in quality of candidates' job-related competencies/KSAs.



1.10
Describing
and Defining
Quality
Categories

Describing & Defining Quality Categories

Defining and Describing Quality Categories

Once you determine the number and names of your quality categories, decide how to define and describe the categories:

- Numerical Scores
- Narrative

Review the simple and complex narrative examples. Think about how the differences between these definitions may impact the type of candidates that may qualify.

[View Simple Narrative](#)

- Possession of Competencies/KSAs
- Levels of Proficiency



1.11 Complex
Narrative

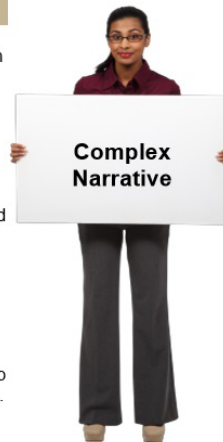
Describing & Defining Quality Categories

Complex Narrative Example

Human Resources Specialist (Staffing), GS-201-14, position in agency headquarters policy office

Highly Qualified- Senior Human Resources Specialist in an agency headquarters office or equivalent with experience writing regulations or other policy or guidance on staffing, downsizing, realignments, classification or compensation. Experience must demonstrate written products involved analyzing evaluating and development the major aspects of agency-wide HR programs and reflected new or substantially modified concepts or methodologies. Written documents were accepted at the agency level for implementation.

Qualified- Senior Human Resources Specialist with operations experience in interpreting and implementing written policy guidance in working with management. Must demonstrate ability to advise on complex problems that require assessment of how to apply guidance appropriately to promote management objectives.



1.12 Simple Narrative Example

Describing & Defining Quality Categories

Simple Narrative Example:

Human Resources Specialist (Staffing), GS-201-14, position in agency headquarters policy office

Highly Qualified- Senior Human Resource Specialist in an agency headquarters office or equivalent with experience writing regulations or agency policy, or providing guidance on staffing and recruitment, downsizing, realignments, classification or compensation

Qualified- Senior Human Resources Specialist with operations experience in staffing and recruitment, downsizing, realignments, classification, or compensation



[View Complex Narrative](#)

1.13 Defining Quality Categories Example A, Step 1

Defining Quality Categories, Example A

Example A for Accountant, GS-0510-12

Step 1: Three competencies were identified through job analysis to be job-related:

1. Oral Communication
2. Technical Knowledge
3. Project Management



1.14 Defining Quality Categories Example A, Step 2

Defining Quality Categories, Example A

Example A for Accountant, GS-0510-12

Step 2: Identify indicators of proficiency for each of the competencies/KSAs:

- 1. Oral Communication**
 - Makes presentation
 - Communicate technical information orally
- 2. Technical Knowledge**
 - Conducts financial analysis
 - Utilizes accounting techniques
- 3. Project Management**
 - Reviews budget cycle
 - Uses project management software

An indicator of proficiency is a source of evidence that an applicant possesses job-related competencies/KSAs. In this example, each competency is defined by experiences which relate to the competency being measured.



1.15 Defining Quality Categories Example A, Step 3

Defining Quality Categories, Example A

Example A for Accountant, GS-0510-12

Step 3: Identify levels of proficiency required by the level of the position:

- Based on demonstrating possession only of the competencies/KSAs (*applicant's specific level of proficiency does not matter*); or
- Based on specific level of proficiency for each competency/KSA (*applicant's specific level of proficiency does matter*)



1.16 Defining Quality Categories Example B

Defining Quality Categories, Example B

Example B: Example of Possession Only of Competencies/KSAs

Categories	Required Competencies/KSAs
Highest-Qualified	Oral Communication Technical Knowledge Project Management
Well-Qualified	Oral Communication Technical Knowledge
Qualified	Technical Knowledge



1.17 Defining Quality Categories Example C, Part 1

Defining Quality Categories, Example C, Part 1

Example C, Part 1: Example of Level of Proficiency Oral Communication

Proficiency Level	Proficiency Level Definition
5	Communicates or explains complex ideas or information clearly
3	Communicates or explains moderately complex ideas or information clearly
1	Communicates or explains basic ideas or information clearly



1.18 Defining Quality Categories
Example C Part 2

Defining Quality Categories, Example C Part 2

Example C, Part 2: Example of Level of Proficiency Category Definition

Proficiency Level	Proficiency Level Definition
Best Qualified	Eligibles who have demonstrated a proficiency level of "5" in Technical Knowledge; "5" in Project Management; and a minimum of "3" in Oral Communication.
Well-Qualified	Eligibles who have demonstrated a proficiency level of at least "3" in all three competencies/KSAs.
Qualified	Eligibles who have demonstrated a proficiency level of "1" in any competency.



1.19 Inappropriate Definition of a Category

Inappropriate Definition of a Category

Inappropriate Definition of a Quality Category

In some instances the job analysis may show that once a basic proficiency level has been met, a higher level of proficiency is not necessarily better. In such cases it should not be used to define categories.

Example of an inappropriate qualify category:

- An agency is seeking to fill a job that requires an employee to lift 40 pounds.
 - Candidate A can lift 70 pounds
 - Candidate B can lift 45 pounds
- Both candidates have the necessary strength to meet the lifting requirements of the job. They are indistinguishable with respect to this factor.
- Candidate A should not be placed into a higher category than Candidate B.



1.20 Applying Veterans' Preference

Veterans' Preference

Adjudicating and Identify Veterans' Preference Eligibles

After the assessment phase, we next identify preference eligibles. This includes adjudicating their veterans' preference and then applying the veterans' preference in category rating.

Veterans' preference points (*5 or 10 points*) are NOT added to applicants' scores with category rating:

- The Delegated Examining Operations Handbook (DEOH) and the Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations refer to certain veteran's preference eligibles as "5-point" and "10-point" preference eligibles. However, with category rating these preference eligible points are NOT added to applicants' scores.



1.21 Veterans' Preference: Floating

Veterans' Preference: Floating

When a veteran has a compensable service-connected disability of 10% or more (i.e., CPS and CP), veterans' preference allows a move from the category in which they otherwise would be placed into the preference eligible section of the highest quality category.

[View Exceptions to Floating](#)



Veterans' Preference: Floating

Scientific and Professional Job Series Positions at GS-9 and above do NOT have CPS and CP applicants float categories.

Instead, they remain within the category into which they were initially placed by the assessment phase of the application process.

A list of professional and scientific job series is available in Appendix K of the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook (DEOH).



1.22 Floating

Applying Veterans' Preference: Floating

Quick Reference for Floating Rules

Placement of Preference Eligibles with a Compensable Service-Connected Disability of 10% or More (CPS and CP)	
For scientific and professional positions at the GS-9 or higher...	Place qualified CPS and CP preference eligibles above non-preference eligibles within the same quality category for which they are assessed (CPS and CP eligibles do not "float" to the highest quality category)
For all other positions (series) and grade levels...	Place qualified CPS and CP preference eligibles in the highest quality category (CPS and CP eligibles "float" to the highest quality category)



1.23
Example:
Applying
Veterans'
Preference (1)

Example: Applying Veterans' Preference (1)

Example

Place qualified preference eligibles with their appropriate veterans' preference designation code shown on the certificate (i.e., CPS, CP, XP, TP, and SSP), above non-preference eligibles within their respective quality category (preserving veterans' preference rights)

- Within a category, always place all preference eligibles above all of the non-preference eligibles.

Being placed above the non-preference eligibles indicates that all the preference eligibles must be selected before any non-preference eligibles in the category may be selected.

Highest Quality Category

Preference eligibles

Non-preference eligibles

Lower Category(ies)



1.24
Example:
Applying
Veterans'
Preference (2)

Example: Applying Veterans' Preference (2)

Example

List preference eligibles in any order, for example, alphabetically or by veterans' preference designation. Regardless of how they are ordered, the veterans' preference designation code for the preference eligible must be displayed on the certificate.

List in any order, such as alphabetical or veterans' preference designation, etc. Include the designation code.

List in any order, such as alphabetical or score, etc.

Highest Quality Category

Preference eligibles

Abba (CP)
Cappa (TP)
Yabba (CPS)
Zeta (XP)

Non-preference eligibles

Dabba (NV)
Gappa (NV)
Mappa (NV)

Lower Category(ies)



1.25
Example:
Applying
Veterans'
Preference (3)

Example: Applying Veterans' Preference (3)

Example

Application of "Floating Rule"

CPS and CP veterans' preference eligibles who are initially placed in the lower category(ies) "float" from that lower category and are placed into the highest category among the preference eligibles in that highest category.

EXCEPTION: Will not float for scientific or professional positions at GS-9 or higher.

Highest Quality Category

Preference eligibles

Abba (CP)
***Bela (CPS)**
Cappa (TP)
Yabba (CPS)
***Vega (CP)**
Zeta (XP)

Non-preference eligibles

Dabba (NV)
Gappa (NV)
Mappa (NV)

Lower Category(ies)

~~*Bela (CPS)~~
~~*Vega (CP)~~



1.26
Example:
Applying
Veterans'
Preference (4)

Example: Applying Veterans' Preference (4)

Example

- A hiring manager may not pass over a preference eligible select a non-preference eligible unless there is an approved pass-over request.

Must select all preference eligibles before moving on to select non-preference eligibles in the category; within the highest quality category, any preference eligible may be selected in any order.

Highest Quality Category

Preference eligibles

Abba (CP)
Bela (CPS)
Cappa (TP)
Yabba (CPS)
Vega (CP)
Zeta (XP)

Non-preference eligibles

Dabba (NV)
Gappa (NV)
Mappa (NV)

Lower Category(ies)



1.27 Floating
Example (1)

Floating Example (1), GS-0201-11

Example: HR Specialist, GS-0201-11

Three quality categories were established for the position: **Best Qualified**, **Well-Qualified**, and **Qualified**.

- A preference eligible with 5-point preference (TP) is assessed and assigned to the Well-Qualified category and is placed at the top of the Well-Qualified category.
- A preference eligible with a service-connected disability of 30% (CPS) is assessed and would be assigned to the Qualified category; however, because this is not a professional or scientific position, the preference eligible is placed in (i.e., "floats" to) the Best Qualified category.

The next 4 slides demonstrate this point, step by step.



1.28 Floating Example (2)

Floating Example (2), GS-0201-11

Eligibles Ranked by Quality Category Based on Review of Qualifications & Assessment Tool(s)

Best Qualified
Ben Jones
Maya Cruz

Well-Qualified
Joyce Harrison
George Glass

Qualified
Preston Winslow
Cameron Miller

First, after applicants complete the qualification and assessment phases of the application process, the assessment results in a score for qualified applicants.



Next, that score is used to initially place each applicant into a category based upon the pre-defined scores that make up the category.

1.29 Floating Example (3)

Floating Example (3), GS-0201-11



Next, HR adjudicates applicants' claims of veterans' preference eligibility. We begin by identifying who has veterans' preference:

"A preference eligible with 5-point preference (TP) is assessed and assigned to the Well-Qualified category." In this example, that is George Glass.

"A preference eligible with a service-connected disability of 30% (CPS) is assessed and assigned to the Qualified category." In this example, that is Cameron Miller.

Identify Preference Eligibles

Best Qualified
Ben Jones
Maya Cruz

Well-Qualified
Joyce Harrison
George Glass (TP)

Qualified
Preston Winslow
Cameron Miller (CPS)

1.30 Floating Example (4)

Floating Example (4), GS-0201-11

With category rating, veterans' preference points (5 or 10 points) are NOT added to applicant scores.

Instead, we apply veterans' preference by always placing veterans' preference eligibles "float" to the highest quality category (with an exception to floating for scientific and professional job series grades GS-9 and above).

Identify Preference Eligibles
Best Qualified Ben Jones Maya Cruz
Well-Qualified Joyce Harrison George Glass (TP)
Qualified Preston Winslow Cameron Miller (CPS)



1.31 Floating Example (5)

Floating Example (5), GS-0201-11

A preference eligible with a service-connected disability of 30% (CPS) is assessed and would be assigned to the Qualified category; however, because this HR Specialist is not a professional or scientific position, the CPS preference eligible is placed in (i.e., "floats" to) the Best Qualified category, above non-preference eligibles.



A preference eligible with 5-point preference (TP) is assessed and assigned to the Well-Qualified category and is placed at the top of the Well-Qualified category.



Apply Veterans' Preference for Certificate Eligibles
Best Qualified Cameron Miller (CPS) Ben Jones Maya Cruz
Well-Qualified George Glass (TP) Joyce Harrison
Qualified Preston Winslow

1.32
Knowledge
Check:
Category
Placement

Knowledge Check: Category Placement

Category Placement Exercise: Instructions

The **GS-0962-6 Contact Representative** is advertised and results in 14 qualified applicants. The applicants, their veterans' preference, and their initial assessment score are listed. Place the applicants into the correct categories, using the categories as defined. *(Hint: for this exercise, Agency policy dictates listing applicants alphabetically, so place the veterans' preference eligibles and the non-preference eligibles in alphabetical order by name)*

Categories: Best Qualified (100-92), Highly Qualified (91-83), Qualified (82-70)

Applicants:

Behar (CPS) 86
Degeneres (CP) 78
Donahue (NV) 91
Goldberg (XP) 99
Hostin (CP) 90
Lake (NV) 95
M... (CP) 84

Check Your Answer

Complete the knowledge check in the Category Rating Workbook. Answers can be found in the Answer Guide.

1.33 Number
of Names
Certified

Number of Names Certified

- With category rating we certify all applicants in the highest quality category
 - Agency policy may allow for certification of only preference eligibles from the highest quality category
- If fewer than three eligibles are in the highest quality category, may opt to merge with the next quality category.



1.34 Merging Categories (1)

Merging Categories (1)

In many situations the hiring managers will need more candidates than are provided in the highest quality category.

Examples include:

- Not enough candidates place in the highest quality category
- Many candidates decline or withdraw

When and how candidates in the next lower categories may be reached is determined by following the processes established for merging categories.



Merging Categories (2)

How does Merging Categories work?

- When there are *fewer than three* eligible applicants in the highest quality category, then the category is eligible to be combined (merged) with the next lower category.
- Regardless of how many vacancies the agency hopes to fill with the Delegated Examining recruitment, a merge can only occur when there are *fewer than three* eligible applicants in the highest quality category.
- Combining (*merging*) the highest quality category with the next lower quality category allows selections to be made from the newly merged category

Reminder: Merging must be done in accordance with an agency's category rating policy.

Merging is **not** mandatory.

Once a merge is complete, it **cannot** be undone.



Merging Categories (3)

When does Merging Categories occur in the hiring process?

- Before certifying/issuing the Certificate of Eligibles or
- After working the Certificate of Eligibles

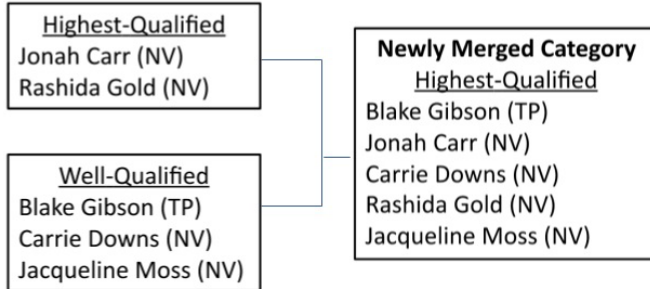
Merging is **not** mandatory.

Once a merge is complete, it **cannot** be undone.



1.37 Merging Before Issuing a Certificate

Merging Before Issuing a Certificate

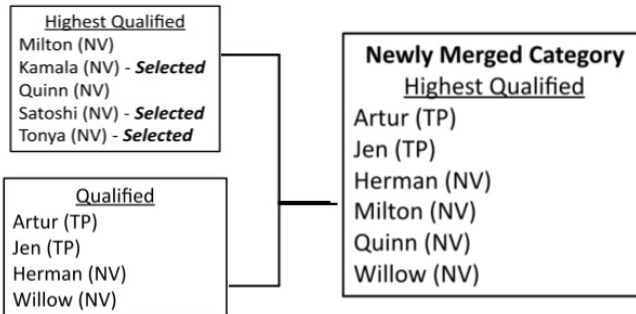


Note:
Merging the highest quality category (Highest-Qualified) with the next lower category (Well-Qualified) requires placing the qualified preference eligible at the top of the newly merged quality category.



1.38 Merging After Working a Certificate

Merging After Working a Certificate



[More Information!](#)



Merging After Working a Certificate

Note:
Merging the highest quality category (Highest-Qualified) with the next lower category (Well-Qualified) requires placing the qualified preference eligibles (*Artur and Jen*) at the top of the newly merged quality category. In this example, the preference eligibles and non-preference eligibles are listed alphabetically in accordance with agency policy.



1.39
Knowledge
Check:
Merging

Knowledge Check

After initial selections and declinations, the hiring managers ask for a merged certificate. **Create a Merged Certificate.**

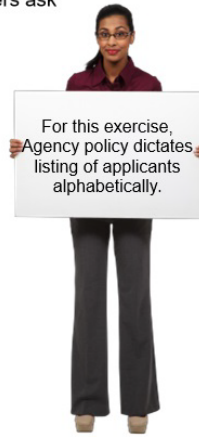
Best Qualified

Lee (CPS) - **Selected**
Wick (CP) - **Declined Position**
Anderson (NV)
Boyd (NV) - **Selected**
Lewis (NV) - **Declined Position**
Martinez (NV) - **Selected**
Patel (NV)

Well Qualified

Bridges (TP)
Appleton (NV)
Calgon (NV)
James (NV)

Answer Key



Complete the knowledge check in the Category Rating Workbook. Answers can be found in the Answer Guide.

1.40
Selection
Procedures

Selection Procedures

- A hiring manager may select from among the qualified applicants in:
 - The highest quality category *or*
 - *(If a merge took place)* the newly merged category comprised of the highest and the second-highest quality categories
- A hiring manager may select any applicant in the highest quality category (or the newly merged category) *in accordance with veterans' preference.*
 - *All* preference eligibles in a category must be selected before any non-preference eligibles in the category can be selected.
 - Preference eligibles may be selected in any order, regardless of their veterans' preference designation.



Let's Practice!

*Don't forget to use the Resources available to help you through these exercises.

OPM U.S. Office of
Personnel Management

Complete the practice exercises in the Category Rating Workbook. Answers can be found in the Answer Guide.