Minimum Academic and Relevant Work Experience Requirements for Recruiting Staff in UNDP (Including Step Determination)
Effective 1 July 2009

Section 1.0 Description

Introduction

1. In accordance with Staff Regulation 4.4 that allows for the setting of recruitment standards, this policy details the minimum educational requirements and relevant years of work experience for recruitment of external candidates (including staff joining UNDP on secondment, inter-agency transfer or exchange) and selection of internal staff for vacant positions in UNDP. It also provides guidance on the determination of step-in-grade upon initial recruitment into UNDP.

2. This policy is applicable for all new recruitments in UNDP including General Service (GS) staff moving into the Professional category, and supersedes the recruitment standards of 4 April 2005 (http://bulletin.undp.org/articles/en/20050404).

3. The Personal History form (P.11) signed by the applicant (including electronic signature) is the official document by which OHR/HR practitioners will establish the academic qualifications and determine the number of years of relevant working experience for the purposes of selection and recruitment and for the determination of the step and grade of the selected candidate (see paragraph 25 below).

Academic Qualifications and Relevant Work Experience

4. The minimum academic standard for all recruitments and selections to Professional and higher level category posts (P, and National Officer (NO) is a completed, advanced university degree (Masters or equivalent, and also inclusive of professional certifications (CPA etc.) and military/police rank equivalents).

5. The minimum standard for all support GS is completion of high school (secondary school) combined with a number of years relevant work experience. Selection to GS Fixed Term Appointment (FTA) positions at Headquarter locations requires passing a UN administered clerical test, unless conditions are met allowing the waiver of such a requirement.

6. For GS positions in New York, the UN clerical test will be waived for UNDP staff members previously holding 100-series appointments and/or holding an FTA appointment after 1 July 2009 who have a Bachelors degree (or equivalent) from a recognized educational institution, for at least three years education after high school; or who do not have a Bachelors degree or equivalent from a recognized educational institution, but have demonstrated satisfactory performance in GS posts in Country Offices, Regional Centres or Headquarters locations for at least five years previously under a 100-series appointment and/or an FTA after 1 July 2009. The same applies to staff members who are holding, or held, a 100-series appointment and/or an FTA after 1 July 2009 with the UN common system in their work history.
7. All external candidates (whether they are ALDs, SSAs, Service Contract holders, UNVs or staff appointed on Temporary Appointments (TAs)) will need to go through the clerical exam to qualify for Headquarters GS FTA positions.

8. Temporary Appointments (TA) do not require the passing of a UN administered clerical test.

9. Combined with academic qualifications are the number of years of relevant work experience required for the grade level of the post. Relevant work experience and minimum academic qualifications form the basis for UNDP’s standard of a professional workforce.

**Determining Relevant Experience**

10. In determining the number of years of relevant work experience, OHR/HR practitioners will generally take into account any relevant experience gained after completion of the first university degree (Bachelors or equivalent) unless the candidate has undertaken ‘mid-career’ studies, in which case some flexibility may be exercised. Compulsory Military Service completed prior to a first university degree may also be taken into account provided that it is directly relevant to the position being recruited for and may be counted as 50% Full Time Equivalent (FTE). Determination of relevance of Military Service will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

11. In determining the ‘relevancy’ of experience, OHR/HR practitioners will make a determination based on the nature of the functions and the competencies required for the position as articulated in the vacancy announcement, or more generally on experience in the UN Common System.

12. Full-time consulting experience in the UN Common System, or like-institutions, may be counted at ‘one-for-one’ or 100% Full Time Equivalent (FTE). Formal volunteer work (for example UNV) may also be counted one-for-one. Non-UN Common System independent consulting, non-formal volunteer work, and remunerated teaching while pursuing academic study, in most cases, may not be counted at greater than 50% FTE unless it can be clearly substantiated that the work in question was, indeed, full time. Internships are not counted when determining months of relevant experience.

**Recognition of UN Common System Professional Service**

13. In recognition of a candidate not in possession of an advanced university degree, but currently in, or having previously had a Professional post for more than one year in the UN Common System (either previously under the 100 or 200-series of the Staff Rules, but not the 300-series, or as an international FTA approved by an Advisory Body), UNDP will recognize that service and the candidate will be eligible for consideration for Professional and higher level posts.

**Waivers**
14. Whereas the recruitment standards for Professional and higher posts remains that of a completed advanced university degree (or equivalent), there are certain specialized jobs/job categories, or specific local labour market contexts (in particular NO posts in crisis and post-crisis countries) for which this academic requirement may be relaxed.

15. In the case of certain ‘specialized jobs/job categories’, a determination will be made at the point of classification by the Classification specialist whether or not a post warrants the advanced university degree requirement.

16. In the case of specific local labour market contexts, upon submission of the operational needs of the office, the Director, Office of Human Resources (OHR) (or his/her designated official) will consider a blanket waiver covering all NO posts for a given period of time. In such cases, vacancies will instead be advertised with a combination of a first level university degree and an additional two years of relevant experience on top of the number of years normally required for the level of the post.

17. There may be cases where a post requires a special set of competencies, skills and work experience that are possessed by a candidate without an advanced university degree. In the event that a position was advertised with the requirement of an advanced degree, and the Hiring Unit wishes to interview an applicant that possesses the critical requirements but does not possess an advanced degree, in rare circumstances, OHR may consider an individual waiver prior to the interview taking place, provided the candidate has at least an additional two years of relevant experience on top of the number of years normally required for the level of the post. Such waivers, to be requested by the hiring unit prior to the selection interviews, will be extremely limited as the individual selected may have difficulty in being selected for further assignments within the organization.

18. In support of National Staff career progression, a GS staff in Country Offices with a first level university degree in combination with at least 10 years of continuous service with a 100-series and/or FTA appointment may be considered for NO posts, provided they meet all other selection criteria.

19. In support of career progression of GS staff in Headquarter locations, staff possessing a first level university degree in combination with at least 10 years of continuous service with a 100-series and/or FTA appointment, may be considered for Professional posts provided they meet all other selection criteria.

20. All waivers to advertise a Professional post without the requirement of an advanced degree must be secured with the Director, OHR (or her or her designated official), prior to advertising the post and post facto waivers will not be entered into.

**Grade and Step Determination**

21. All new appointments in the Professional categories (FTA and TA), normally begin at step I (one) of the appropriate grade. One additional step may be granted for each additional year
of relevant work experience beyond the minimum required for appointment at step I (one) of the grade up to:
- A maximum of step VI (six) for P-4/NO-D and below, and
- A maximum of step V (five) for P-5/and D-1/P-6 appointments.
- All D-2/P-7 appointments, regardless of the experience of candidates, start at step I (one).
An additional two steps may be granted for a completed Ph.D (or equivalent), or one additional step for a completed M.Phil. (or equivalent).

22. For new FTA and TA appointments in GS category, candidates are appointed at step I (one) of the salary scale. One additional step may be granted for each additional year of relevant work experience beyond the minimum required for appointment at step I (one) of the grade up to a maximum of step V (five).

23. For staff selected to a higher level post, the determination of the step at the grade and category to which the staff member is selected is made pursuant to UNDP Policy and Guidelines on Rank-in-Post.

24. Staff Members holding an FTA appointment making a lateral move from one UN Common System Organization to UNDP, should be appointed at one step above their current step. Former UN Common System Staff Members being appointed to new FTA or TA appointments, should not be appointed at a grade/step lower than their previous 100 or 200-series or FTA finishing grade/step, provided they meet minimum selection criteria.

25. Given the significant differences in the contractual modalities, UNDP ALD holders (up until December 2010\(^1\)) will be treated as new hires subject to the provisions set in the present policy, in the event that they are offered a UNDP FTA or TA. It should be noted that the total net salary of comparable functions within the 300-series appointment may differ, with an FTA or TA net pay often being lower. However, the former pay as an ALD does not determine pay under an FTA or TA appointment. The guidelines set forth in the present policy are the only measures to be used in determining grade and step.

**Academic Reference Checks**

26. All selected candidates will be required to submit evidence of their academic qualifications and may be subject to academic reference checks. A signed Personal History form (P.11) is the official document by which OHR/HR establishes the professional and academic referees for this purpose. Candidates found to have falsified their academic credentials, or to have submitted qualifications from non-accredited academic institutions (sometimes referred to as ‘diploma mills’) may constitute a basis for withdrawing the offer of employment, or, if the employment has started, to terminate it without notice or indemnity.

27. The authority to determine whether degrees presented to UNDP by staff members and applicants constitute recognized academic qualifications lies with the Director, OHR. In making such determinations, the Director, OHR, is normally guided by the United Nations

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\(^1\) ALD with an expiry date beyond 1 July 2009 will be honored until their expiry date. In accordance with Staff Rule 13.6 (b), there will no ALDs running beyond 31 December 2010.
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) listing (referred to as “the UNESCO list” [link]) of higher education institutions recognized or otherwise approved by competent authorities in participating countries.

27. UNDP will normally recognize only degrees obtained from institutions on the UNESCO list, except where the Director, OHR, has explicitly, in writing, confirmed the degree as acceptable. Degrees requiring little or no actual course work, degrees awarded for payment of fees only, and degrees granting substantial credits for “lifetime achievements” or “life/work experience” will normally not be recognized.

28. Incomplete degrees are unacceptable to UNDP as proof of academic qualification, regardless of whether they are associated with a recognized higher education institution.

29. It is the responsibility of candidates (and Staff Members for selection) to ensure that any presented degrees in the Personal History Form, P.11, or in other application documents, are recognized by UNDP. If an academic degree was obtained from an educational institution that is recognized or otherwise sanctioned by competent national authorities at the time of issuance, and this institution is included in the UNESCO list, hiring managers and staff members may assume that such a degree is recognized.

30. If an academic degree was obtained from an institution that is not in the UNESCO list, the candidates, including internal candidates are obliged to provide supporting evidence that the degree is legitimate. Hiring managers or staff members may request a review by the Director, OHR, who will confirm, explicitly and in writing, whether the degree is recognized. Without proper documentation and until this confirmation is received, no offer of appointment cannot be made to the candidate.

32. Staff members who, in their P.11 and other application documents, misrepresent their qualifications or present a degree that is determined to be illegitimate, may be subject to disciplinary proceedings or any other appropriate administrative action.
FTA and TA Professional Recruitment Standards
Academic Qualifications and Minimum Years of Relevant Work Experience

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* Please refer to the section on waivers
FTA and TA GS Recruitment Standards
Academic Qualifications and Minimum Years of Relevant Work Experience

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