

UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARIAT

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29 August 1979

ADMINISTRATION INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the staff

From: Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services

Subject: COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION FOR PROMOTION TO THE PROFESSIONAL
CATEGORY OF STAFF MEMBERS FROM OTHER CATEGORIES

1. The present policy governing the promotion to the Professional category of staff members in the General Service and other categories, including the Field Service, has been replaced by a system of competitive examinations which will be organized for posts at the P-1/P-2 levels selected for this purpose and grouped by occupations, as announced by the Secretary-General in his bulletin ST/SGB/173 of 29 August 1979.

2. The purpose of this instruction is to set out the policies and procedures governing the selection of new and vacant posts to be filled by promotion, the eligibility requirements for staff members wishing to apply to sit for the examinations, the organization of these examinations, the establishment of a Central Examination Board and of Boards of Examiners and the selection and promotion of successful candidates between 1 April 1979 and 31 March 1980.

Selection of posts

3. The Office of Personnel Services in consultation with heads of departments and offices at all duty stations will establish a list of all the P-1/P-2 posts subject to geographical distribution that are available to be filled by promotion on 1 April each year and that are expected to become available before 1 April of the following year and will make an initial identification of posts proposed to be filled by promotion through the competitive method of selection. It will also determine the distribution of these posts among the various occupations represented in a given department (for instance in the Department for International Economic and Social Affairs: economic work, social work, general administration, finance, etc.).

4. A review of these Professional posts will then be made by the Central Examination Board to ensure an equitable distribution among occupations throughout

the Secretariat of these selected posts. The total number of posts to be selected for the promotion of qualified staff members by way of the competitive examination will be approximately 30 per cent of the number of posts subject to geographical distribution to be filled at the P-1 and P-2 levels during that year. The remaining P-1/P-2 posts will normally be filled through the recruitment of external candidates.

5. The complete list of posts to be made available and their administrative and geographical locations will be circulated as an annex to the information circular announcing the competitive examination to the staff. Job descriptions for these posts will be posted on appropriate bulletin boards.

6. Although the examination will be organized by occupational group, staff members will be invited to apply for particular posts in each occupational group. An application to sit for the examination for a particular post in an occupational group at any duty station will imply readiness of the staff member to serve in that post if successful and subsequently to be subject to reassignment under the provisions of staff regulation 1.2. Staff members may apply for more than one post in an occupational group or for posts in more than one occupation. In cases where a candidate has applied for more than one post, he/she will list the posts on the application by order of preference. This information will be communicated to the Board of Examiners after the final ranking of candidates is completed.

Eligibility requirements

7. The competitive examination will be open to all staff members in the General Service and other categories, including the Field Service, who have served a minimum of five years of continuous service in the Secretariat and who submit acceptable evidence of post-secondary educational qualifications.

8. Staff members in the Field Service category up to and including FS-5 levels who wish to be promoted to the Professional category will be required to sit for the examination. Field Service Officers at levels FS-6 and FS-7 selected for Professional posts will be converted to the Professional category in accordance with the current procedure.

9. Staff members who have been found ineligible to sit for the examination but who have cause to believe that they have been unfairly excluded from participating in the examination will be able to present their case to the Central Examination Board for review.

Examinations

10. The examinations will be organized by the Training and Examinations Service of the Office of Personnel Services. The examinations will consist of a written test and an interview. The written test will comprise:

- (a) a common core paper to test the candidate's analytical capacity, drafting ability and his or her knowledge of the Organization; and

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- (b) a specialized paper for each occupation designed to test the candidate's knowledge of, and ability to perform in, the occupation.

Staff members will have the choice of taking the examination in either English or French, the working languages of the Secretariat. Candidates for posts in the Secretariat of a body with other working languages may take the specialized paper in one of those languages.

11. The weighing of each part of the examination will be as follows:

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|-----------------------|-------------|
| (a) common core paper | 30 per cent |
| (b) specialized paper | 45 per cent |
| (c) interview | 25 per cent |

12. The Training and Examinations Service of the Office of Personnel Services will be responsible for preparing the common core paper drawing as appropriate on such professional resources as necessary to ensure the validity and objectivity of the common core paper. It will also arrange the preparation of the specialized papers in consultation with selected staff members with appropriate professional experience in each occupation from within the Secretariat as a whole including, but not limited to, those departments or offices in which the selected posts are to be filled. As a matter of principle, all the specialized papers should follow the same format. Likewise, a standardized format should be followed in the interview of candidates. The interviews will be graded separately by each member of the Board of Examiners interviewing the candidates without relation to the grading of the written test. The purpose of the interview will be inter alia to assess a candidate's ability to communicate with others and to present his/her views in a clear, understandable and concise way.

13. The common core paper will be administered on the same day at all duty stations. The specialized paper will be scheduled so as to permit all candidates who have applied for more than one post to write the required papers.

14. The Central Examination Board will arrange for the grading of the common core paper. The specialized paper will be graded by the relevant Board of Examiners for each occupation. All papers will be kept anonymous until after they have been graded. Since the written test represents 75 per cent and the interview 25 per cent of the examination, each candidate's score in the written test will be converted to a scale of 0 to 75. Candidates whose converted score is not more than 25 points below the score of the highest ranking candidate for each post, will normally be interviewed by the relevant Board of Examiners. Those whose score is more than 25 points below the score of the highest ranking candidate will not be interviewed since, even if they scored the maximum of 25 points in the interview, this would not be sufficient to make up the difference with the highest score in the written test.

15. The ranking of the candidates for each post will be determined by the Boards of Examiners on the basis of the written tests and of the interviews. The final

ranking of the candidates will be reviewed by the Central Examination Board. The candidate with the highest number of points in the examination for each post will be recommended by the Central Examination Board to the Secretary-General for promotion to the post, either at the P-1 or P-2 level. (See para. 16 below.) In the event that the highest-ranked candidate cannot for any reason accept promotion to a post, the next highest-ranked candidate will be selected for promotion to that post.

16. Successful candidates who are at the top level of the local General Service salary scales or at the FS-5 level will be recommended for promotion to P-2 and those below these levels will be recommended for promotion to P-1. The salary step at the P-2 or P-1 level will be determined on the basis of rule 103.9 on salary policy in promotions. At duty stations where a General Service staff member's emoluments in local currency, when computed for promotion purpose under that rule, exceed the ceiling step of P-1 or P-2, as the case may be, the staff member will be paid a transitional personal allowance in an amount sufficient to meet the requirements of that rule.

17. All candidates who have been interviewed will be informed by the Office of Personnel Services of their ranking in the examination for the posts concerned. The Office of Personnel Services will also issue a general report on the examination to the staff, without identifying the names of the candidates.

Central Examination Board

18. The Central Examination Board will be appointed by the Secretary-General and will be composed of three (3) members, one member nominated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, one member nominated by the staff representatives and a President appointed by the Secretary-General with the concurrence of the representatives of the staff.

19. The Central Examination Board will review and recommend the posts to be filled through the competitive examination, determine the eligibility of candidates, oversee the procedures and arrangements for the competitive examination, and make recommendations to the Secretary-General for the promotion of successful candidates. It will also review complaints or appeals from candidates related to the examination.

Board of Examiners

20. A Board will be set up in each occupation in which a post or posts have been selected for the promotion to the Professional category of staff members in other categories. The Boards will normally be set up at Headquarters except in the occupations where the main office is at a duty station away from Headquarters.

21. Each Board of Examiners will be appointed by the Secretary-General and will consist of at least six (6) members with a representative of the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services serving ex officio as a non-voting

member of the Board. Each Board shall have a President appointed by the Secretary-General with the concurrence of the staff representatives, two members (2) nominated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services and two members (2) nominated by the representatives of the staff, at least one of whom on each side will be from the occupational group concerned. Arrangements will be made to interview those candidates selected on the basis of their written examination who are not serving at the duty station where the relevant Board of Examiners has been set up.

22. Under the over-all authority of the Central Examination Board, the functions of the Boards will be to make a preliminary determination of the subject-matters to be tested in the specialized papers, to grade the specialized papers, to interview the candidates selected on the basis of the written tests, to rank all interviewed candidates for each post in the occupational group concerned, and to report the results of the examination to the Central Examination Board.

23. The composition of each Board, including the Central Examination Board, will reflect as much as possible the cultural and linguistic diversity of the staff in the Secretariat in order to ensure that the examination process is free from all avoidable cultural biases.

24. The Office of Personnel Services will provide a secretariat to service the Boards.

Transitional measures

25. The provisions set out in paragraphs 26-29 below shall apply as transitional measures with respect to the competitive examination to be held this year.

26. Staff members in the General Service or related category who have been assigned to and fulfilling the duties of a P-1/P-2 post in the staffing table prior to 1 April 1979, whether with or without a special post allowance, will be recognized as having satisfied the requirement for post-secondary education.

27. Staff members referred to in paragraph 26 above who sit for the examination will be granted a 10 per cent increase in the score of the written part of the examination for any post in the related occupational group, provided that they received at least an "adequate" performance rating on the last periodic report.

28. Staff members in the General Service category who were on the 1978 promotion registers to P-1 or P-2 will be promoted as soon as a post in their occupation becomes available and will not be required to take the examination.

29. The selection of the specific posts to be filled by promotion through the competitive examination during the period 1 April to 31 March 1980 will be based on the initial selection made by departments and offices of those posts that they had set aside for the promotion of staff members they recommended or intended to recommend in the 1979 promotion review.

30. The present instructions are effective immediately and supersede earlier instructions governing the review at each duty station of staff members in the General Service or related category who qualify for promotion to the Professional category. Staff members recommended for Professional posts on the basis of the competitive examination will be included in the P-1 or P-2 registers as appropriate. The P-2 register will therefore consist of two (2) lists: a list of staff members at the P-1 level recommended for promotion through the annual review and a list of staff members successful in the competitive examination.

31. In the light of experience with the examination, the procedures will be reviewed and modified, as necessary, in 1980 and thereafter as required.
