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ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services

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

1. The present administrative instruction, which governs the second round of competitive examinations scheduled to be held in March/April 1981, supersedes document ST/AI/268 of 29 August 1979. It is issued pursuant to the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/173 of 29 August 1979 and takes into consideration the report of the Central Examination Board (CEB) on the first examination, recommendations made by a joint working group of the Staff Management Co-ordination Committee as a result of its interim review of the procedures governing the first competitive examination and comments received from Joint Advisory Committees at various duty stations.

2. The purpose of this instruction is to set out policies and procedures governing the selection of posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels subject to geographical distribution to be filled by promotion, the eligibility requirements for staff members wishing to sit the examination, the organization of this examination, the establishment of a new Central Examination Board and of specialized boards of examiners, and the selection and promotion of successful candidates as a result of this examination. The selection of staff to fill Professional posts with special language requirements, such as posts of translators and editors, will also continue to be made through competitive examinations. These examinations shall be the only means of promotion to the Professional category.

Selection of posts

3. The Office of Personnel Services, on the basis of the list of projected vacancies for 1981, provided by departments and offices at all duty stations, has established a list of all the P-1 and P-2 posts subject to geographical distribution which are available or which are expected to become available during 1981. Within this context, it has made an initial identification of those posts

*/ This Administrative Instruction replaces Instruction ST/AI/268 in Section I, paragraph G, of the Administrative Handbook. /...

which may be filled by promotion through the competitive examination. Consultations are taking place with departments and offices on the availability of these posts. Furthermore, in order to ensure that the examination is held in March/April 1981, the Office of Personnel Services has also identified the occupational groups to be included in this examination, taking into account the number of posts expected to be available in each occupational group. The selected occupational groups for this examination are as follows: (a) administration; (b) archives and library science; (c) information; and (d) social and political sciences.

4. A review of all the junior Professional posts referred to in paragraph 3 above will be made by CEB to ensure that the posts are distributed as equitably as possible among these occupational groups throughout the Secretariat. CEB will decide on the posts to be selected within each of the occupational groups, taking into account the number of posts available in each occupational group and at each duty station. 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 projected number of posts subject to geographical distribution expected to be filled at the P-1 and P-2 levels during 1981. The remaining P-1/P-2 posts will be filled through the recruitment of external candidates or the reassignment of staff members already in the Professional category.

5. A complete list of the selected posts and their administrative and geographical locations will be issued as an information circular which will include a full description of each post and will indicate, where appropriate, any special qualifications required for the post, such as knowledge of more than one working language of the Secretariat.

Applications

6. Since the examination is organized by occupational groups, staff members are invited to apply for one or more of the occupations listed in the application form annexed to the present administrative instruction.

7. Candidates will have the opportunity to apply for any of the posts earmarked for the examination in the occupational group or groups concerned, if invited to an interview in one or more occupational groups (see para. 14 below). If they wish to apply for more than one post in an occupational group, they must list the posts by order of preference on the form which will be provided to them with the letter of invitation. This information will be communicated to CEB before the interviews are held. It should be noted that an expression of preference by a candidate for a particular post at a given duty station indicates the staff member's readiness to serve in that post at the duty station where it is located, if successful in the examination.

Eligibility requirements

8. The competitive examination will be open to all staff members in the General Service and other categories, including the Field Service category up to and including FS-5 level who will have served a minimum of five years of continuous

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service in the United Nations Secretariat by 31 December 1981, who have a satisfactory record of performance and conduct, and who submit with their application acceptable evidence of post-secondary educational qualifications. Staff members who had previously served five years with the United Nations Secretariat, had resigned and then been reappointed and would have served at least three years by 31 December 1981 will also be considered eligible, provided they satisfy the other requirements mentioned below. Where a staff member resigns a post at one duty station and is reappointed to a post at another duty station without a break in service, the additional three-year requirement shall be waived. A successfully completed course or courses of significant duration at a university or an institution which requires secondary education as a prerequisite shall be considered as satisfying the post-secondary educational requirement. Staff members who are in doubt as to whether they meet the above educational requirement should nevertheless submit an application.

9. Staff members who have been found ineligible by CEB to sit 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 Board for review. Such appeals must be received by CEB at Headquarters within 10 working days of the receipt of notification of rejection. In order to meet this deadline, candidates serving at offices away from Headquarters must appeal to the Chairman of CEB by cable.

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 core paper, a specialized paper and an interview. Each part of this composite examination is designed to test specific knowledge or abilities:

(a) The common core paper will consist of three sections which test the candidate's analytical capacity (35 per cent), drafting ability (35 per cent) and his or her knowledge of the Organization, world geography and current international relations (30 per cent).

(b) The specialized paper for each occupation will test the candidate's knowledge of, and ability to perform in, the occupational group.

(c) The interview is designed to assess a candidate's ability to communicate with others and to present and illustrate his or her views in a clear, understandable and concise way. Since the purpose of the interview is not to retest a candidate's substantive knowledge, topics and questions used in the interview will be of a general nature.

Staff members will have the choice of taking the examinations in either English or French, the working languages of the Secretariat. Additional information on the format of the written examination, as well as sample questions, documents and publications which can be helpful in preparing for the examination, will be included in a circular to be issued shortly.

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

- (a) Common core paper: 30 per cent
- (b) Specialized paper: 50 per cent
- (c) Interview: 20 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, objectivity and freedom from cultural bias of the common core paper. It will also arrange for the preparation of the specialized papers in consultation with selected staff members with appropriate professional experience in each occupational group 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 will follow a similar format. Likewise, a standardized format will be followed in the interview of candidates. The interviews will be graded separately by each member of the specialized board of examiners interviewing the candidates, without relation to the grading of the written test.

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 occupational group to write the required papers. The core and specialized papers are scheduled to be given in March/April 1981. Eligible candidates will be informed in writing of the exact date, time and location of the core and specialized examinations for their duty station.

14. CEB will arrange for the marking of the common core paper. The specialized papers will be marked by the relevant specialized boards of examiners for each occupational group. All papers will be kept anonymous until after they have been marked. Each specialized board will then draw up the list of candidates to be interviewed on the basis of their performance in both parts of the written examination, the number of candidates so invited in each occupational group normally being at least three times the number of posts available in that group. Special arrangements will be made for the interview of candidates who are not serving at Headquarters. Invitation to the interview, however, will not imply success in the examination as a whole.

15. The candidates for each occupational group will be ranked by the specialized boards on the basis of their anonymous scores in both the written and oral parts of the examination. Bearing in mind the provision of the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/173 that the competitive examination procedure is to "provide eligible staff members with an opportunity to compete for selected posts for which they qualify", and taking into account the level of difficulty of the examination as a whole, the specialized boards may make recommendations as to the level above which the candidates will be considered to be qualified to perform at the junior Professional level. The final ranking of the candidates by occupational groups will be established by CEB on the basis of these recommendations.

Allocation of posts and promotion

16. Successful candidates will be promoted against the posts earmarked for examination. Subject to the provisions of paragraph 15 above, the candidate with the highest number of points in a given occupational group will be assigned to the post for which he or she expressed preference in the application form; the next highest-ranked candidate will be assigned to the next available post for which he or she expressed preference and so forth. A candidate who does not wish to be assigned to the post or posts available to him or her relinquishes ipso facto his or her claim to promotion under the second competitive examination. If a given post reserved for the examination requires a specific knowledge, such as the knowledge of more than one working language of the Secretariat, this will be indicated on the description of the post in the circular. Assignment to such posts will be subject to the candidates' providing evidence of such knowledge.

17. 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. Those below these levels will be recommended for promotion to P-1. The salary step at the P-1 or P-2 level will be determined on the basis of staff 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 purposes 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 personal transitional allowance in an amount sufficient to meet the requirements of that rule.

18. All candidates who have been interviewed will be informed by the Office of Personnel Services of their ranking in the examination for each of the occupational groups concerned. A list of successful candidates and the grade to which they will be promoted will then be issued. The Office of Personnel Services will also issue a general report on the conduct and results of the examination to the staff, without identifying the names of candidates.

19. The effective date of promotion of the successful candidates shall be the first of the month in which they assume the functions of the post for which they have been selected.

Central Examination Board

20. The Central Examination Board (CEB) will be appointed for this examination by the Secretary-General and will be composed of five (5) members: a President appointed by the Secretary-General from among staff serving at Headquarters, with the concurrence of the representatives of the staff; two (2) members nominated by the representatives of the staff, one of whom will be from a duty station away from Headquarters; and two (2) members nominated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, one of whom will be from a third duty station.

21. CEB will review the occupational groups to be tested and decide on the posts to be filled through competitive examinations; it will also determine the eligibility of candidates to sit the examination, oversee the procedures and

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arrangements for the competitive examinations, review complaints thereon and make recommendations to the Secretary-General for the promotion of successful candidates.

Specialized boards of examiners

22. A specialized board of examiners will be set up in each occupational group in which a post or posts have been selected for the examination.

23. Each specialized board of examiners will be appointed for this examination by the Secretary-General and will consist of six (6) members, including a non-voting ex-officio member representing the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services. Each specialized board shall have a President appointed by the Secretary-General, with the concurrence of the representatives of the staff; two (2) members nominated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services and two (2) members nominated by the representatives of the staff. The voting members should be drawn from the occupational group concerned.

24. Under the over-all authority of CEB, the functions of the specialized boards will be to mark the specialized papers, to conduct the interviews and to report the results of the examination to CEB.

25. The composition of each specialized board and of CEB will reflect as far as possible the cultural and linguistic diversity of the staff of the Secretariat, in order to ensure that the examination process is free from all avoidable cultural biases. The ability of the Boards to examine in English and French will be an important consideration in the appointment of the membership. Although it is desirable to maintain some continuity in the membership of the boards, no voting member shall remain for more than two terms on any examination board.

General

26. Staff members who have complaints with respect to the procedures and arrangements for this examination, should address themselves to CEB within 10 working days of the event which gave rise to the complaints.

27. The Office of Personnel Services will provide a Secretariat to service the boards.

28. In the light of experience with the examinations, the procedures will be reviewed and modified, as necessary.

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Certificate, degree or diploma	Exact title in original language (do not translate) or number of credits)	Institution: Name, place, country	PERIOD OF STUDY		Description of courses or main field of study (hours of instruction per course)
			From: Month/Yr.	To: Month/Yr.	
(a) Secondary education					
(b) Post-secondary education					

SECTION III - OCCUPATION(S) FOR WHICH YOU ARE APPLYING

Candidates are asked to select only the occupations listed below. The complete list of posts earmarked for the second competitive examination will be issued as an annex to a circular before the written examination, in order to enable candidates to indicate their order of preference. Based on the information to be provided in that circular, candidates will have the opportunity to revise their application for occupations.

Administration (A) ☐

Archives and library sciences (L) ☐

Information (I) ☐

Social and political sciences (L) ☐

Indicate the language in which you will take the examination:

(a) Core paper: English ☐ French ☐

(b) Specialized paper: English ☐ French ☐

(c) Interview: English ☐ French ☐

SECTION IV

I certify that the above information is correct to the best of my knowledge and I understand that any misrepresentation would lead to my elimination from the examination and possible disciplinary action.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Fully completed applications, together with proof of post-secondary education must be received at Headquarters NO LATER THAN 20 February 1981. They should be sent in a sealed envelope and marked CONFIDENTIAL to:

COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION FOR PROFESSIONAL POSTS
Career Development and Placement Unit
Room 3294
Office of Personnel Services
United Nations Secretariat
New York, USA 10017

For duty stations other than New York, please use the United Nations pouch.
