

PART 536—GRADE AND PAY RETENTION

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§536.307 also issued under 5 U.S.C. 552, Freedom of Information Act, Pub. L. 92–502.

SOURCE: 45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Definitions; Coverage and Applicability

§536.101 General.

(a) Title VIII of Public Law 95–454 (The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978) provides that an employee who is placed in a lower grade as a result of reduction-in-force procedures, or whose position is reduced in grade as a result

of reclassification of the position, is entitled to retain for a period of 2 years the grade held immediately before that placement or reduction. It also provides the authority for granting an employee indefinite pay retention. In addition to specifying criteria and conditions for the application of the grade and pay retention provisions, the law authorizes the Office of Personnel Management to extend the application of these provisions to other individuals and situations to which they would not otherwise apply.

(b) This part contains the regulations—including extensions, conditions, criteria, and procedures—which the Office of Personnel Management has prescribed for the administration of grade and pay retention. This part supplements and implements the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 5361–5366, and section 801(b) of Public Law 95–454, and must be read together with those sections of law.

§536.102 Definitions.

For the purposes of this part:

Demotion at an employee’s request means a reduction in grade that is initiated by the employee for his or her benefit, convenience, or personal advantage. A demotion that is caused or influenced by a management action is not considered to be at an employee’s request, except that a voluntary demotion in response to a management action directly related to personal cause is considered to be at the employee’s request.

Demotion for personal cause means a reduction in grade based on the conduct, character, or unacceptable performance of an employee.

Employee means an employee as defined in 5 U.S.C. 5361 and also an individual who is moved from a position which is not under a covered pay schedule to a position which is under a covered pay schedule provided that the individual’s employment immediately prior to the move was on other than a temporary or term basis.

Employment on a temporary or term basis means employment under an appointment having a definite time limitation or designated as temporary or term.

Rate of basic pay means, for any pay system, the rate of pay fixed by law or administrative action for the position held by an employee before any deductions and exclusive of additional pay of any kind such as night or environmental differentials in the case of a prevailing rate employee.

Rate schedule means a specific set of rates within a pay schedule.

Reorganization means the planned elimination, addition or redistribution of functions or duties either wholly within an agency or between agencies.

Representative rate means:

(1) The fourth step of the grade in the case of a position under the General Schedule or the individual's rate under the Senior Executive Service or a position subject to the senior-level pay authority under 5 U.S.C. 5376;

(2) The second rate of the grade of a position under a regular prevailing rate schedule established under subchapter IV of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, or in the case of a position with a single rate, the single rate of that position; or

(3) The rate designated as representative of the position by the agency responsible for establishing and adjusting the schedule in the case of a position under a schedule different from those covered in paragraph (1) or (2) of this definition.

Temporary promotion means a promotion with a definite time limitation, and one which the individual is informed in advance is temporary and would normally require that the individual return to his or her permanent position at the expiration of that promotion.

Temporary reassignment means a reassignment with a definite time limitation, and one which the individual is informed in advance is temporary and would normally require that the individual return to his or her permanent position at the expiration of that reassignment.

[45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, as amended at 50 FR 11795, Mar. 25, 1985; 50 FR 35494, Aug. 30, 1985; 56 FR 18662, Apr. 23, 1991; 58 FR 65537, Dec. 15, 1993; 64 FR 69174, Dec. 10, 1999]

§ 536.103 Coverage and applicability of grade retention.

(a) Grade retention shall apply to an employee who moves to a position in a covered pay schedule which is lower graded than the position held immediately prior to the demotion in the following circumstances:

(1) As a result of reduction-in-force procedures; or

(2) As a result of a reclassification process.

(b) Except as otherwise covered in paragraph (a) of this section, the head of the agency may offer grade retention to eligible employees who are or might be reduced in grade as the result of a reorganization or reclassification decision announced by management in writing. When an employee is offered a position with grade retention in anticipation of a reduction in grade, the agency shall inform the employee in writing that acceptance of the position is not required and that declination of the offer has no effect on the employee's entitlement to grade retention under paragraph (a) of this section if he or she is actually moved to a lower graded position.

(c)(1) An employee who, immediately before being placed in a lower graded position as a result of reduction-in-force procedures, is in a position under a covered pay schedule, is eligible for grade retention only if the employee has served for 52 consecutive weeks or more in a position(s) under a covered pay schedule at a grade(s) higher than the position in which the employee is placed, including service performed by an employee of a nonappropriated fund instrumentality of the Department of Defense or the Coast Guard, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2105(c), who is moved to a position in the civil service employment system of the Department of Defense or the Coast Guard, respectively, without a break in service of more than 3 days.

(2) An employee is eligible for grade retention when his or her position has been reclassified at a lower grade only if the position which is being reduced had been classified at a higher grade(s) for a continuous period of at least 1 year immediately before the reduction.

(3) In situations other than those covered in paragraphs (c)(1) and (c)(2)

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of this section, an employee is eligible for grade retention if he or she, immediately prior to being placed in the lower grade, has served in a position in any pay schedule for 52 consecutive weeks or more, provided the service was in an agency as defined in 5 U.S.C. 5102 at a grade(s) higher than the position in which the employee is placed, including service performed by an employee of a nonappropriated fund instrumentality of the Department of Defense or the Coast Guard, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2105(c), who is moved to a position in the civil service employment system of the Department of Defense or the Coast Guard, respectively, without a break in service of more than 3 days.

[45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, as amended at 57 FR 12404, Apr. 10, 1992]

§ 536.104 Coverage and applicability of pay retention.

(a) Pay retention shall apply to any employee whose rate of basic pay would otherwise be reduced:

(1) As the result of the expiration of the 2-year period of grade retention; or

(2) As a result of reduction-in-force or reclassification when the employee does not meet the eligibility requirement for grade retention; or

(3) As a result of a reduction or elimination of scheduled rates, special schedules, or special rates, but not as a result of—

(i) A statutory reduction in scheduled rates of pay under the General Schedule, including a reduction authorized under section 5305(c) of title 5, United States Code; or

(ii) A statutory reduction in a prevailing rate schedule established under subchapter IV of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, and part 532 of this chapter.

(4) As a result of the placement of an employee into a non-special rate position or into a lower special rate position from a special rate position; or

(5) As a result of the placement of an employee in a position in a lower wage area or in a position in a different pay schedule; or

(6) As a result of the placement of the employee in a formal employee development program generally utilized Governmentwide: Upward Mobility,

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Apprenticeship, and Career Intern Programs.

(b) Except as otherwise covered in paragraph (a) of this section, the head of the agency may provide pay retention to eligible employees whose rates of basic pay would otherwise be reduced as the result of a management action.

(c) The head of the agency may grant pay retention to an employee whose pay is reduced as the result of the movement of his or her position from a nonappropriated fund instrumentality under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense or the Coast Guard to the civil service employment system of the Department of Defense or the Coast Guard, respectively.

[45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, as amended at 51 FR 12684, Apr. 15, 1986; 53 FR 49545, Dec. 8, 1988; 54 FR 51009, Dec. 12, 1989; 57 FR 12404, Apr. 10, 1992]

§ 536.105 Exclusions.

(a) Grade and pay retention shall not apply to an employee who—

(1) Moves from a position that is not in an agency as defined in 5 U.S.C. 5102;

(2) Is identified under 5 U.S.C. 2105(c), except prevailing rate employees included under 5 U.S.C. 5361;

(3) Is reduced in grade or pay for personal cause or at the employee's request;

(4) Does not satisfactorily complete the probationary period prescribed by 5 U.S.C. 3321(a)(2), and, as a result, is removed from a supervisory or managerial position; or

(5) Is entitled to receive basic pay under 5 U.S.C. 3594(c) because of removal from the Senior Executive Service and placement in a civil service position (other than a Senior Executive Service position) under 5 U.S.C. 3594(b)(2).

(b) An employee's entitlement to grade or pay retention is not affected by a temporary promotion or temporary reassignment. However, an employee serving under a temporary promotion or temporary reassignment may not retain a grade or rate of basic pay held during the temporary promotion or temporary reassignment.

(c) Grade retention under § 536.103(a)(1) or (b) shall not apply to a

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member of the Senior Executive Service or an individual in a position subject to the senior-level pay authority in 5 U.S.C. 5376 who is placed in a position in a covered pay schedule.

[45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, as amended at 54 FR 18880, May 3, 1989; 56 FR 18663, Apr. 23, 1991]

Subpart B—Determination of Retained Grade and Rate of Basic Pay; Loss of, or Termination of Eligibility

§ 536.201 Comparison of grades in different pay schedules or pay systems.

For the purpose of determining whether the grade of a position is equal to, higher than, or lower than the grade of another position in movements between pay schedules or pay systems, the representative rates of the positions will be compared.

§ 536.202 Period of grade retention.

(a) An employee entitled to grade retention is entitled to retain that grade for 2 years beginning on the date the employee is placed in the lower graded position.

(b) If, during a 2-year period of grade retention, an employee is further reduced in grade under circumstances also entitling the employee to grade retention, the employee shall continue to retain the previous retained grade for the remainder of the previous 2-year retention period. At the end of that period, the employee shall be entitled to retain the grade of the position from which the further reduction in grade was made, until 2 years have passed from the date of the further reduction in grade.

(c) Notwithstanding § 536.207(a)(1) of this part, grade retention shall continue to apply to an employee serving under an interim appointment made under § 772.102 of this chapter for the duration of the original 2-year period if the employee's grade was retained under this part in the appointment immediately preceding the interim appointment.

[45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, as amended at 57 FR 3712, Jan. 31, 1992]

§ 536.203 Determination of retained grade.

(a) An employee who is in a position under a covered pay schedule immediately prior to the action which gives entitlement to grade retention shall retain the grade held immediately prior to the action.

(b) An employee who is in a position not under a covered pay schedule immediately prior to the action which gives entitlement to grade retention shall retain:

(1) The lowest grade of the covered pay schedule in which placed which has a representative rate equal to or higher than the representative rate of the grade held immediately prior to that placement; or

(2) The highest grade of the covered pay schedule in which placed, if there is no grade in the covered pay schedule with a representative rate equal to or higher than the representative rate held immediately prior to that placement.

[44 FR 54693, Sept. 21, 1979, as amended at 64 FR 69174, Dec. 10, 1999]

§ 536.204 Determination of applicable rate schedule.

(a) When an employee entitled to grade retention is placed in a position in a different geographical area, the rate schedule which applies to the employee is the rate schedule in the new geographical area.

(b) When an employee entitled to grade retention is placed in a position in, or his or her position is changed to, a different occupational series, the rate schedule which applies to the individual is the rate schedule for the new occupational series.

§ 536.205 Determination of rate of basic pay.

(a) When an employee becomes entitled to grade retention, or moves to another position during a period of grade retention under conditions which permit continuation of the grade retention entitlement, the employee is entitled to the greatest of:

(1) His or her rate of basic pay before the movement, or

(2) The rate of basic pay from the applicable rate schedule for the grade and step (except as provided by

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§ 531.204(e)(4) of this chapter) held by the employee before the movement, or

(3) The lowest rate of basic pay from the applicable rate schedule for the retained grade which equals or exceeds the employee's rate of basic pay before the movement.

(b) (1) When an employee becomes entitled to pay retention, or moves to another position while receiving pay retention, the employee's rate of basic pay immediately prior to eligibility or movement shall be compared with the range of rates of basic pay for the position to be occupied by the employee upon this eligibility or movement.

(2) The employee is entitled to the lowest rate of basic pay in the position to be occupied upon the eligibility or movement which equals or exceeds his or her rate of basic pay immediately prior to the eligibility or movement. If the rate of basic pay can be accommodated in the rate range of the latter position, pay retention does not apply.

(3) If the employee's rate of basic pay immediately prior to the pay retention exceeds the maximum rate of the position to be occupied when he or she becomes entitled to pay retention, the employee is entitled to the lower of:

(i) The rate of basic pay payable to the employee immediately before the reduction in pay; or

(ii) 150 percent of the maximum rate of basic pay payable for the new grade.

(4) If an employee moves to another position at the same grade while entitled to pay retention, the employee's rate of basic pay after movement may not be less than the maximum rate of basic pay for the newly applicable rate range.

(c) When an increase in the scheduled rates of the grade of the employee's position occurs while the employee is under pay retention, the employee is entitled to 50 percent of the amount of the increase in the maximum rate of basic pay payable for the grade of the employee's current position.

(d) When, as a result of an increase in the scheduled rate(s) of the grade of the employee's position, an employee's retained rate of basic pay becomes equal to or lower than the maximum rate of that grade, the employee is entitled to the maximum rate of that grade and pay retention ceases.

(e) An employee who is serving on a temporary promotion at the time he or she becomes eligible for pay retention is entitled to retain the rate of basic pay which he or she would have been receiving at that time had the temporary promotion not occurred.

(f) Notwithstanding § 536.209(a)(1) of this part, pay retention shall continue to apply to an employee serving under an interim appointment made under § 772.102 of this chapter if the employee's pay was retained under this part in the appointment immediately preceding the interim appointment.

(g) When an employee's entitlement to grade or pay retention terminates, the employee's rate of basic pay shall be set in accordance with the provisions of parts 531 and 532 of this title unless:

(1) Grade retention is being terminated as a result of the expiration of the 2-year retention period; or

(2) The employee is moved to a grade equal to or greater than the retained grade; or

(3) The employee is entitled to a higher rate of basic pay under paragraph (b) or (d) of this section.

[45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, as amended at 57 FR 3712, Jan. 31, 1992; 58 FR 65537, Dec. 15, 1993; 64 FR 69174, Dec. 10, 1999]

§ 536.206 Criteria for a "reasonable offer".

For the purposes of this part, an offer of a position, in order to be considered a reasonable one, must fulfill the following conditions:

(1) The offer must be in writing, and must include an official position description of the offered position; and

(2) The offer must inform the employee that an entitlement to grade or pay retention will be terminated if the offer is declined and that the employee may appeal the reasonableness of the offer as provided in § 536.302; and

(3) The offered position must be of tenure equal to or greater than that of the position creating the grade or pay retention entitlement; and

(4) The offered position must be in an agency, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 5102, although not necessarily in the same agency in which the employee is serving at the time of the offer; and

(5) The offered position must be full-time, unless the employee's position immediately before the change creating entitlement to grade or pay retention was less than full-time, in which case the offered position must have a work schedule of no less time than that of the position held before the change; and

(6) The offered position must be in the same commuting area as the employee's position immediately before the offer, unless the employee is subject to a mobility agreement or a published agency policy which requires employee mobility.

§ 536.207 Loss of eligibility for grade retention.

(a) Eligibility for grade retention as a result of entitlement under § 536.103(a) of this part ceases if any of the following conditions occurs at any time after the employee receives written notice of the reduction in grade action, but before the commencement of the 2-year period of grade retention:

(1) The employee has a break in service of 1 workday or more; or

(2) The employee is demoted for personal cause or at the employee's request; or

(3) The employee is placed in, or declines a reasonable offer of, a position the grade of which is equal to or higher than the retained grade; or

(4) The employee elects in writing to terminate the benefits of grade retention.

(b) Eligibility for grade retention as a result of entitlement under § 536.103(b) of this part ceases if any of the following conditions occurs at any time after the employee is informed by management of an impending reorganization or reclassification which will or could result in reduction in grade, but before the commencement of the 2-year period of grade retention:

(1) Any of the conditions listed in paragraph (a) of this section except that an employee's request for placement in a lower graded position, in lieu of displacing an employee at his or her grade under reduction-in-force procedures, is not a declination of a reasonable offer for grade retention purposes; or

(2) The employee fails to enroll in, or to comply with reasonable written requirements established to assure full consideration under, a program providing priority consideration for placement.

§ 536.208 Termination of grade retention.

(a) Grade retention terminates if any of the conditions listed in § 536.207(a) occurs after commencement of the 2-year period of grade retention.

(b) Grade retention as provided by § 536.103(b) also terminates if any of the conditions listed in § 536.207(b) occur after the commencement of the 2-year period of grade retention.

(c) The effective date of termination of grade retention benefits is:

(1) The day before placement if the termination is the result of the employee's placement in another position; or

(2) At the end of the last day of the pay period which the employee:

(i) Declines a reasonable offer; or

(ii) Elects to waive grade retention benefits; or

(iii) Fails to enroll in, or comply with reasonable written requirements established to assure full consideration under, a program providing priority consideration for placement.

(d) Grade retention terminates on the day before the first day of the first pay period beginning on or after April 23, 1991 in the case of an employee who, on that date, becomes subject to the senior-level pay system established under 5 U.S.C. 5376 and subpart E of part 534 of this chapter.

[45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, as amended at 56 FR 18663, Apr. 23, 1991]

§ 536.209 Loss of eligibility for, or termination of, pay retention.

(a) Eligibility for pay retention, or actual retention of pay, ceases if any of the following conditions occurs at any time after the employee had received written notification that his or her pay is to be reduced:

(1) The employee has a break in service of 1 workday or more; or

(2) The employee is entitled to a rate of basic pay which is equal to or higher than, or declines a reasonable offer of a position the rate of basic pay for which

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is equal to or higher than, the rate to which the employee is entitled under pay retention; or

(3) The employee is demoted for personal cause or at the employee's request.

(b) The effective date of termination of pay retention benefits is:

(1) The day before placement or conversion if the termination is the result of the employee's placement in another position or conversion to the senior-level pay system established under 5 U.S.C. 5376 and subpart E of part 534 of this chapter.

(2) The end of the last day of the pay period in which the employee declines a reasonable offer.

[45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, as amended at 56 FR 18663, Apr. 23, 1991]

Subpart C—Miscellaneous Provisions

§ 536.301 Placement and classification plans.

(a) Agencies which employ individuals subject to this part are required to establish in writing placement and classification plans.

(b) The placement and classification plans must commit the agency to:

(1) Identify and correct classification errors; and

(2) Correct position management problems; and

(3) Carry out specific planned efforts to place employees subject to this part; and

(4) Pursue placement efforts that do not adversely affect affirmative action goals.

§ 536.302 Appeal of termination of benefits because of reasonable offer.

(a) Except as provided for in paragraph (e) of this section, an employee whose grade or pay retention benefits are terminated on the grounds the employee declined a reasonable offer of a position the grade or pay of which is equal to or greater than his or her retained grade or pay may appeal the termination to the Office of Personnel Management.

(b) An employee who appeals under this section shall file the appeal in writing with the Office of Personnel Management not later than 20 calendar

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days after being notified that his or her grade of pay retention benefits have been terminated, and shall state in the appeal the reasons why the employee believes the offer of a position was not a reasonable offer.

(c) The Office of Personnel Management may conduct any investigation or hearing it determines necessary to ascertain the facts of the case.

(d) If a decision by the Office of Personnel Management on an appeal under this section requires corrective action by an agency, including the retroactive or prospective restoration of grade or pay retention benefits, the agency shall take that corrective action.

(e) Termination of benefits based on a declination of a reasonable offer by an employee in an exclusively recognized bargaining unit may be reviewed under the negotiated grievance and arbitration procedures in accordance with chapter 71 of title 5, United States Code, and the terms of any applicable collective bargaining agreement. An employee in an exclusively recognized bargaining unit may not appeal a termination of benefits to the Office of Personnel Management if the grievance procedure of the agreement by which he or she is covered provides for this review.

(f) Decisions issued by the Office of Personnel Management shall be considered final decisions. OPM may, at its discretion, reconsider an original appellate decision when new and material information is presented, in writing, by the employee or the agency, which establishes a reasonable doubt as to the appropriateness of the original decision. The request must show that the information was not readily available when the decision was issued. A request for reconsideration of an original appeal decision must be submitted to OPM within 30 calendar days of the date of the original decision.

[45 FR 85656, Dec. 30, 1980, as amended at 50 FR 428, Jan. 4, 1985; 50 FR 45389, Oct. 31, 1985]

§ 536.303 Documentation.

The application of the provisions of this part shall be documented in writing as a permanent part of the employee's Official Personnel Folder. As a

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minimum this documentation will include a copy of the letter described in § 536.304.

§ 536.304 Issuance of employee letters.

When an employee is entitled to grade and/or pay retention, the employing agency shall give to the employee, with a copy of the Notification of Personnel Action (SF-50) documenting entitlement to grade and/or pay retention, a letter describing the circumstances warranting grade and/or pay retention, and the nature of that entitlement.

§ 536.305–536.306 [Reserved]

§ 536.307 Availability of information.

(a) The Office, upon a request which identifies the individual from whose file the information is sought, shall disclose the following information from an appeal file to a member of the public, except when the disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy:

(1) Confirmation of the name of the individual from whose file the information is sought and the names of the other parties concerned;

(2) The status of the appeal;

(3) The results of the appeal (i.e., proper title, pay plan, series, and grade);

(4) The classification requested (i.e., title, pay plan, series, and grade); and

(5) With the consent of the parties concerned, other reasonably identified information from the file.

(b) The Office will disclose to the parties concerned, the information contained in an appeal file in proceedings under this part, except when the disclosure would violate the proscription against the disclosure of medical information in § 297.204(c) of this chapter. For the purposes of this section, “the parties concerned” means the Government employee or former Government employee involved in the proceedings, his or her representative designated in writing, and the representative of the agency or the Office involved in the proceeding.

[50 FR 3313, Jan. 24, 1985, as amended at 54 FR 18879, May 3, 1989]

§ 536.308 Applicability of retained grade.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, when an employee is entitled to grade retention, the retained grade shall be treated as the employee’s grade for all purposes, including pay and pay administration, retirement, life insurance, and eligibility for training.

(b) The retained grade may not be used—

(1) In any reduction-in-force procedure;

(2) To determine whether an employee has been demoted for the purpose of terminating grade or pay retention;

(3) To determine whether an employee retains status as a GM employee (as defined in § 531.202 of this chapter); or

(4) To determine whether an employee is exempt or nonexempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (as amended).

[58 FR 65537, Dec. 15, 1993, as amended at 59 FR 40794, Aug. 10, 1994]

PART 537—REPAYMENT OF STUDENT LOANS

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537.110 Records and reports.

AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 5379.

SOURCE: 66 FR 2791, Jan. 11, 2001, unless otherwise noted.

§ 537.101 Purpose.

This part provides regulations to implement 5 U.S.C. 5379, as amended, which authorizes agencies to establish a program under which they may agree to repay (by direct payment on behalf of the employee) all or part of any outstanding federally insured student loan