

Directive

9230.2

September 15, 2008

AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY TECHNICIAN PROFICIENCY REQUIRED FOR PROMOTION TO GS-6

Contents

1. PURPOSE	2
2. GENERAL	2
3. PROFICIENCY IN FULL RANGE OF TECHNICAL AREAS	2
4. WHEN TO REQUEST PROFICIENCY EVALUTIONS	3
5. MAINTAINING PROFICIENCY.....	3
6. DOCUMENTATION	3
7. QUESTIONS	3

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternate means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write to the USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

1. PURPOSE

This directive states the proficiency requirements for promoting Agriculture Commodity Technician (ACT 5) trainees to the GS-6 journeyman grade level.

2. GENERAL

- a. The ACT position involves the performance of a full range of sampling, weighing, chemical and physical analyses for grains and commodities (such as, but not limited to mycotoxins; protein/oil; and Falling Number), stowage examinations, and assisting inspection personnel in grain and commodity inspection services for field office and/or sub-office locations.
- b. In view of the above requirement, it is Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) policy that training of employees at the GS-5 grade level be planned in such a way to ensure that a GS-6 grade level technician can meet the requirements based on service requests in their respective market area.

3. PROFICIENCY IN FULL RANGE OF TECHNICAL AREAS

- a. Before a trainee can be promoted to the GS-6 journeyman grade level, he/she must be proficient in performing the full range of technical duties associated with weighing, inspection, physical and chemical tests (such as, but not limited to mycotoxins; protein/oil; and Falling Number), sampling, stowage examinations, and commodity inspections assigned. Proficiency also includes the knowledge of procedural background information, critical points within the procedures, and troubleshooting. The GS-6 grade level technicians will also serve as coaches for other technicians in the office.
- b. The field office training officer and/or supervisors are responsible for determining when the trainee has reached full proficiency in performing the entire range of technician duties/job requirements as stated above, and properly documenting the ACT's training progress.

After training is completed, practical examinations in the areas of concern will be administered and scored by the training officer/supervisor. The training officer/supervisor will rate the trainees proficiency by entering a rating of "V" for very good, "S" for satisfactory, or "N" for needs improvement, on the Proficiency Training/Practical examination checklist.

The field office training officer, and/or supervisors will verify the trainee's proficiency by utilizing both written and practical examinations that are prepared and administered at the local field office level.

4. WHEN TO REQUEST PROFICIENCY EVALUATIONS

A trainee may start proficiency training at any time after achieving the GS-5 grade level. The goal of FGIS management, supervisors, training personnel, and trainees is to provide training so that a trainee is sufficiently prepared and will successfully pass the proficiency evaluation. The minimum passing score is 80 percent correct for the proficiency evaluation. Promotion to the GS-6 grade level occurs only after an individual has successfully passed a complete proficiency examination, and served as a GS-5 grade level technician for 1 year.

Should a trainee fail a proficiency examination, only one more attempt at the same proficiency examination during the following 12-month period is allowed. If the second attempt is unsuccessful, the technician will remain at the GS-5 level. Thereafter, the employee may be allowed to retake the examination annually.

Note: The field office manager may waive the limitation on the number of GS-6 proficiency examinations allowed for an individual trainee during the initial 12 month testing period.

5. MAINTAINING PROFICIENCY

A technician is expected to maintain their proficiency after successfully passing a proficiency examination at the GS-6 grade level. Ongoing proficiency training is required to maintain an individual's proficiency level. If a GS-6 grade level technician's performance is ever questioned, the field office manager may require additional training and/or a proficiency examination in the testing area of concern. If performance concerns still exist, appropriate employee relations and collective bargaining procedures will be implemented.

6. DOCUMENTATION

- a. All proficiency examination material, including the evaluation notification letter, score sheets, and the trainee's proficiency training/practical examination checklist will become part of the employee's permanent training record.
- b. When an individual successfully completes the proficiency evaluation process, the training officer/supervisor will forward the proficiency evaluation score sheets to the field office manager.
- c. The proficiency evaluation score sheets must accompany the original Proficiency Examination Checklist when it is submitted to initiate the trainee's promotion to GS-6.

7. QUESTIONS

Direct any questions concerning the ACT proficiency program to the Policies and Procedures Branch at (202) 720-0224.