

Questions And Answers About Within-grade Increases

What are Within-Grade Increases?

There are ten steps within each pay grade in the general schedule, and five steps within each pay grade in the wage grade schedule. Within-grade increases (WGI's) are increases in an employee's rate of basic pay by advancement from one step of his/her grade to the next higher step after meeting requirements for length of service and performance.

Who is eligible for Within-Grade Increases?

All permanent employees--career or career-conditional, and also employees in certain excepted service positions, such as Co-operative Education and Veteran's Readjustment appointments, and post-doctoral appointments. All wage grade employees, permanent and temporary, are eligible for Within-Grade Increases. An eligible employee's work schedule may be full-time, part-time, or intermittent. This is not a complete list; if you have a question concerning eligibility please call the Personnel Office.

Who is not eligible?

Employees in temporary positions such as student temporaries, faculty appointments, and employees serving on temporary appointments in the competitive service do not receive Within-Grade Increases. If an employee transfers or is reassigned to a temporary appointment from a position in which they were eligible for WGI's, they may retain all of their benefits except they will not receive Within-Grade Increases. Persons in the GM pay plan receive merit pay increases in lieu of WGI's.

When does the waiting period for a Within-Grade Increase begin?

The waiting period begins when an employee initially enters on duty in an eligible position, or receives an equivalent increase. An equivalent increase is an increase in pay that amounts to at least as much as the next higher step in the employee's former grade and step. Promotions and Within-Grade Increases are the most common equivalent increases. If a person is converted from a temporary position to a permanent position at the same grade and step, their temporary time will count toward their WGI waiting period. An employee who resigns from an eligible position, and then is rehired at the same grade and step with a break in service of less than one year, is given credit for their previous time toward their current WGI waiting period.

What is NOT an equivalent increase?

Some examples of actions that are not considered equivalent increases are:

- Annual Pay Adjustments
- Temporary Promotions (that are not made permanent)
- Change to Lower Grade (usually)
- Quality Step Increases

If an employee receives a Quality Step Increase or takes a Change to Lower Grade, their time before the action still counts toward their next Within-Grade Increase, but the step they are going *to* determines which waiting period (one, two, or three years) they will be in.

A Temporary Promotion counts as an equivalent increase only if it is later made permanent. If the Temporary Promotion is not made permanent, and the employee is returned to their lower grade and step, their WGI waiting period is counted from the date of last equivalent increase for the lower grade and step. Any WGI's due at the lower grade and step while an employee is on a Temporary Promotion will be given when the employee is returned to the lower grade and step. An employee serving on a Temporary Promotion is eligible to receive Within-Grade Increases for the temporary grade and step if they meet the waiting period and performance requirements.

How are WGI's processed in the Personnel Office?

About 12 weeks before an employee's WGI is due, a computer-generated certification notice is printed out. These "certs" are sent to the administrative offices, who then distributes them to the appropriate employee supervisors. The supervisors sign and date the "cert", and check the employee's work performance as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Supervisors should sign and return the cert even if they think (or know) that the employee is resigning or going to be promoted or otherwise will not be receiving the WGI. If the employee has already been promoted or resigned, the supervisor or admin office can just attach a brief note to explain what happened and return the cert to the Personnel Office.

Each pay period the SF-50-B's (Notification of Personnel Action) for Within-Grade Increases effective that pay period are automatically generated. They are matched up with the SF-50-B's, signed certs, and the employee's personnel folder, then carefully check the SF-50-B's for accuracy. If everything is correct, the action to effect the WGI is "Y" released to make the WGI effective in the employee's master file.

If a cert is returned to the Personnel Office signed "not approved", it will be referred to a specialist for resolution.

Where can I get more information about WGI's?

Refer to the Survey Manual, sections 370.531.2 and 370.532.1.5. There is also more information about WGI's in FPM Supplement 296-33, Ch. 17 and FPM Supplement 990-2 Book 531. If your office does not have these FPM Supplements, call your specialist and refer them to these sections.

Waiting Period for WGI's

GENERAL SCHEDULE:

To steps 2, 3, or 4 takes 52 weeks or 260 Intermittent days at the next lower step. Leave Without Pay in excess of one pay period extends the waiting period for full- and part-time employees.

To steps 5, 6, or 7 takes 104 weeks or 520 Intermittent days at the next lower step. Leave Without Pay in excess of two pay periods extends the waiting period for full- and part-time employees.

To steps 8, 9, or 10 takes 156 weeks or 780 Intermittent days at the next lower step. Leave Without Pay in excess of three pay periods extends the waiting period for full- and part-time employees.

NOTE: A pay period of leave without pay for part-time employees is based on their part-time work schedule, not 80 hours as it is for full-time employees.

WAGE GRADE:

To step 2 takes 6 months (26 weeks) or 130 Intermittent days at step 1. Leave Without Pay in excess of one workweek extends the waiting period for full- and part-time employees.

To step 3 takes 1½ years (78 weeks) or 390 Intermittent days at step 2. Leave Without Pay in excess of three workweeks extends the waiting period for full- and part-time employees.

To steps 4 and 5 takes 2 years (104 weeks) or 520 Intermittent days at the next lower step. Leave Without Pay in excess of four workweeks extends the waiting period for full- and part-time employees.