



NOMINATION FOR QUALITY STEP INCREASE (QSI) OR QUALITY PERFORMANCE AWARD (QPA)

To be Completed by GTM:

- QSI
- Quality Performance Award

PART A - Nominee

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Employee Name <i>(Last, First, MI)</i> | | Employee ID | Date <i>(mm-dd-yyyy)</i> |
| Title of Position | Office Symbol | Pay Plan, Series, Grade and Step | |
| Within Grade Increase Due Date <i>(mm-dd-yyyy)</i> | Date of Last QSI <i>(mm-dd-yyyy)</i> | Date of Last QPA <i>(mm-dd-yyyy)</i> | Current Rating of Record |

PART B - Rating Official/Supervisor and Reviewing Official

CERTIFICATION: We certify that the employee being recommended for a Quality Step Increase/Quality Performance Award has been performing his or her major work assignments and responsibilities in a manner that substantially exceeds the requirements of the position; that the employee's high level of effectiveness has been sustained to the extent that it may be considered characteristic of his/her performance; that this high quality performance is likely to continue; and the specific performance being rewarded by this nomination has not already been recognized with a Superior Honor Award or a Meritorious Honor Award that included a cash award.

*If electronic signature is unavailable, a typed signature must include /s/ designation. Example: /John T. Smith/. When /s/ is used, bureaus must upload with the QSI package a signature confirmation from the official, in the form of a PDF of an email or memo that confirms support of nomination. Pen signatures are acceptable provided rescanned PDF remains legible.

| | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| _____ Rating Official's Typed Name | | _____ Rating Official's Title | |
| Rating Official's Signature* | Rating Official's Office Symbol | Date <i>(mm-dd-yyyy)</i> | |
| _____ Reviewing Official's Typed Name | | _____ Reviewing Official's Title | |
| Reviewing Official Signature* | Reviewing Official's Office Symbol | Date <i>(mm-dd-yyyy)</i> | |

PART C - Bureau Awards Committee Action

- Forward to Department-level Panel Do Not Forward

| | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| Bureau Award Committee Chair's Typed Name | Bureau Award Committee Chair Signature | Date <i>(mm-dd-yyyy)</i> |
|---|--|--------------------------|

PART D - Bureau Executive Office Action

Date Forwarded to HR for Department-level Review _____

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| Name of Employee | Employee ID |
|------------------|-------------|

PART E - Department-level Panel Action

Recommended Recommended But Not Reached Not Recommended

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Panel Chairman's Typed Name | Panel Chairman Signature* | Date (mm-dd-yyyy) |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|

PART F - Department Action

Approved Recommended But Not Reached

| | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| QSI/QPA Team Lead Typed Name | QSI/QPA Team Lead Signature* | Date (mm-dd-yyyy) |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|

PART G - Justification

This section should complement the rating of record and must succinctly highlight the employee's specific contributions as they relate to the QSI/QPA Criteria (see instructions below). Address any aspect of the criteria not sufficiently addressed in the appraisal. Do not copy and paste language from the appraisal or exceed this space.

**QUALITY STEP INCREASE AND QUALITY PERFORMANCE
AWARD GUIDELINES
(CFR 531.501, 3 FAM 3124.4, and 3 FAM 4891)**

A **Quality Step Increase** (QSI) is an additional within-grade increase (WGI) used to recognize and reward General Schedule (GS) employees at GS-15 and below who display outstanding performance. A QSI has the effect of moving an employee through the GS pay range faster than by periodic step increases alone.

A **Quality Performance Award** is a cash award for employees at GS-15 and below who display outstanding performance but are ineligible for a QSI because of step or pay cap limitations.

Nominations may be submitted by the **designated rating official**. Per 3 FAM 2821.3-6, the designated rating official is the individual responsible for establishing the employee's performance plan and drafting the official rating of record. Only the rating official at the time of nomination can nominate an employee for a QSI/QPA.

Required Documentation

Quality Step Increases and Quality Performance Awards will be considered annually, immediately following the annual performance appraisal cycle. The nomination package should include a completed DS-1968, Nomination for Quality Step Increase or Quality Performance Award, plus the most recent rating of record, i.e., performance appraisals. The most recent performance rating must be "outstanding". The package must clearly demonstrate that the employee's performance meets or exceeds the Department-wide criteria (see below).

Criteria

1. The employee's most recent summary level rating of record must be "outstanding" and demonstrate how the employee has contributed to the achievement of the U.S. Government or Department/Bureau/Office management, policies and/or goals.
2. The employee's performance has been at a sustained high level of quality with every expectation of continued exceptional achievement.
3. The employee's quality and scope of work, particularly in difficult circumstances and conditions, demonstrates exceptional judgment, initiative, adaptability, resilience and resourcefulness.
4. The employee has demonstrated character and conduct that modeled the Leadership and Management Principles (3 FAM 1214), placing the Department/Bureau/Office's success above personal achievement and are aligned with the Department's six core values.
5. The employee has excelled at interpersonal relations that enhanced a productive and collaborative work environment with colleagues.
6. The employee has significantly and substantially contributed to and advanced U.S. Government or Department/Bureau/Office policy, management, and/or leadership.

CHECKLIST FOR QUALITY STEP INCREASES (QSIs) AND QUALITY PERFORMANCE AWARDS

To receive a QSI, employees must:

- Be below step 10 of their grade level or below step that is subject to pay cap limitations;
- Have received an "Outstanding" in the most recent appraisal cycle;
- Have demonstrated sustained outstanding performance for sufficient time, but for no less than 52 weeks at the time of nomination, to conclude that such a level of achievement is characteristic of the employee's performance and therefore likely to continue;
- Not have received a cash award for superior or sustained performance under 3 FAM 4827 (superior honor award) or 3 FAM 4828 (meritorious honor award) in the rating cycle for the same performance being recognized by the QSI/QPA nomination. When considering whether to nominate an employee for a QSI/QPA, rating officials should take care to avoid recognizing the same performance twice;
- Not have received a QSI or QPA in the preceding annual QSI/QPA cycle; and,
- Occupy a "permanent position", e.g. filled by an employee whose appointment is not designated as temporary and does not have a definite time limitation of one year or less, 5 CFR 531.403. For example, employees on career, career-conditional, or term appointments in the competitive service are eligible for QSIs. Employees in the excepted services who are on an appointment that meets the definition herein are also eligible for QSIs [e.g., Presidential Management Fellows; attorneys appointed under Schedule A; training instructors appointed under Section 704(4)(A)(B) of the Foreign Service Act; and severely physically handicapped persons who are appointed under 5 CFR 213.3102 (u)].

To receive a Quality Performance Award, employees must:

- Meet all the eligibility requirements listed above EXCEPT they must be at step 10 of their grade level or subject to a pay cap.

Important Considerations:

- Review the OPM guidance below and consult with your Bureau HR Specialist and HR Service Provider, if applicable, to determine if a QSI is beneficial based on the employee's current step.
- QSIs are given in addition to regular within-grade increases and won't affect the timing of an employee's next regular within-grade increase **UNLESS** the QSI places the employee on step 4 or step 7 of their grade. In these cases, waiting periods are extended an additional 52 weeks (waiting periods are 52 weeks for steps 1-3, 104 weeks for steps 4-6, and 156 weeks for steps 7-9). The time an employee has already waited counts toward the next increase, but they must wait the full period that the new step requires.

[Performance Management - Quality Step Increase: Timing Matters](#)

[Fact Sheet: Quality Step Increase](#)