

3 FAH-1 H-2790 PROCEDURES FOR THE FUNCTIONAL SPECIALIZATION PROGRAM (FSP)

*(CT:POH-124; 01-12-2007)
(Office of Origin: HR/CDA)*

3 FAH-1 H-2791 APPLICATION PROCESS

*(CT:POH-124; 01-12-2007)
(State Only)
(Applies to Foreign Service Only)*

- a. Employees may apply for the Functional Specialization Program (FSP) in only one (1) specialty. The FSP application open season is announced annually in January by cable and Department Notice. Applications are accepted generally by the Entry-Level Division in the Office of Career Development and Assignments (HR/CDA/EL) from January through March each year, with the specific yearly due dates noted in the annual cable and Department Notice.
- b. The following application materials must be submitted by all applicants:
 - (1) DS-1950, Application for Employment: The chosen specialty (Financial Management, General Services, Human Resources, or Information Management) should be indicated in question eight (8);
 - (2) Most recent updated copy of U.S. Department of State Employee Profile (formerly referred to as the PAR);
 - (3) Autobiography (not to exceed two (2) pages, double-spaced). In narrative form, applicants should write about their life, emphasizing those events that contributed most to their personal and professional development;
 - (4) Essay (not to exceed one (1) page, double-spaced). Applicants should describe their motivation to become a financial management officer (FMO), general services officer (GSO), human resources officer (HRO), or information management specialist (IMS), as appropriate. Applicants must address the skills and talents that, in their opinion, qualify them for conversion to another skill code, and detail the actions they have taken to prepare for this skill code

change;

- (5) A list of six (6) references, with contact information, to include three (3) current or former supervisors and three (3) current or former peers and/or subordinates; and
- (6) A signed and dated acknowledgement as provided below:

FSP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am applying to participate in the Functional Specialization Program (FSP). I hereby acknowledge that if I am selected and I do not successfully complete the program (both the eleven (11) month training period and the directed tour of duty abroad), I will be returned to my prior skill code.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

- c. Additional requirements for financial management officer (FMO) applicants: Higher education in the financial management field and/or specific experience in financial management or accounting are required. Education and experience must be of a quality and depth that demonstrate the applicant's aptitude and potential to master complex skills required of FMOs.
- d. Additional requirements for information management applicants: Applicants must have successfully completed one of the following courses offered by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI): CompTIA A+ via FasTrac, or YW642 – Desktop Systems – A+. Applicants must submit a certificate of completion with their application.
- e. Application materials may be submitted electronically to HR/CDA/EL – FSP Coordinator, except for the FSP Acknowledgement shown in subparagraph b(6) of this section, which must be submitted with an original signature.

3 FAH-1 H-2792 APPLICATION PROCEDURES

(CT:POH-124; 01-12-2007)

(State Only)

(Applies to Foreign Service Only)

- a. The Functional Specialization Program, the specific functional training, and the number of positions for training will be announced annually.
- b. Applications should be forwarded to the Entry-Level Division in the Office of Career Development and Assignments (HR/CDA/EL) within

the time frame with the information specified in the announcement.

3 FAH-1 H-2793 SELECTION PROCESS

(CT:POH-124; 01-12-2007)

(State Only)

(Applies to Foreign Service Only)

- a. Qualifications evaluation panels (QEPs), composed of Foreign Service specialists and generalists with experience in each specialty under review, and a continuity counselor, evaluate applications as well as applicants' Official Personnel Folders (OPFs). A separate QEP is held for each specialty. Applicants are notified of their QEP score by May 15 of the same year.
- b. Those applicants who earn a QEP score of 75 or above are invited to schedule a Specialist Oral Assessment (OA) with the Foreign Service Board of Examiners (HR/REE/BEX). The OA consists of a one-hour interview and a 45-minute writing exercise. Applicants must take the OA by September 30 of the same year in which they qualify. All applicants are notified of their OA score by October 1 of that same year.
- c. No official funds are available for applicants' travel to Washington, DC for the Oral Assessment.
- d. Applicants who obtain a score of 75 or higher on the OA are placed in rank order on functional specialty specific registers based on a combination of their QEP and OA scores.
- e. The target number of Functional Specialization Program (FSP) participants per year is nine (9) total, by specialty as follows:

FMO – one (1)

GSO – three (3)

HRO – three (3)

IMS – two (2)

This number may be adjusted annually based on current Service needs.

- f. Applicants selected for participation in the FSP are notified by October 1 of each year.
- g. Qualified applicants not selected from the registers may opt to retain their

name and score on the register for consideration the following year.

- h. Applicants may apply for participation in the FSP a maximum of four (4) times.

3 FAH-1 H-2794 FSP TRAINING PROGRAM

3 FAH-1 H-2794.1 General Information

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(State Only)

(Applies to Foreign Service Only)

- a. The Functional Specialization Program (FSP) Training Program begins in late August or early September of the year following selection. It consists of functional training, rotational assignments, and briefings for an eleven (11) month period.
- b. If necessary, HR/CDA/EL adjusts FSP participants' current tours of duty to ensure availability of those selected for FSP participation.
- c. A tandem employee will not be curtailed solely for the purpose of accompanying an FSP participant to Washington, DC for the eleven (11) month training period.
- d. While in FSP training, program participants may opt to be assigned to Washington, DC, or to their onward assignment. The latter option puts participants in a temporary-duty (TDY) status while in training.

3 FAH-1 H-2794.2 Functional Training

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Functional Specialization Program (FSP) participants are enrolled by the FSP Coordinator in training courses in their new functional specialty, as well as leadership and management courses, and language instruction, as appropriate.

3 FAH-1 H-2794.3 Rotational Assignments

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- a. Functional Specialization Program (FSP) participants serve in a number of rotational assignments within the Department in order to gain practical experience in their new functional specialty.
- b. Work requirements are established for all rotational assignments of two (2) weeks or longer. In these instances, memoranda of performance are completed for all FSP participants by their supervisors. This information is incorporated into a final training evaluation report prepared by the FSP Coordinator at the conclusion of the training period.

3 FAH-1 H-2794.4 Annual Leave during Training

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Approximately two (2) weeks in late December are available for annual leave during the training year. Consideration of additional requests for annual leave will be dependent on Functional Specialization Program (FSP) participants' specific training schedules.

3 FAH-1 H-2794.5 Training Evaluation

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(State Only)

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The Functional Specialization Program (FSP) Coordinator prepares a Form DS-1106, Training Evaluation Report, (comprehensive) on each FSP participant at the conclusion of the training period. This report is placed in the FSP participant's Official Personnel Folder (OPF).

3 FAH-1 H-2794.6 Unsatisfactory Performance

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(State Only)

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Functional Specialization Program (FSP) participants may be removed from the program at any time prior to the skill code change if issues of performance, poor judgment, or improper behavior arise, which, in the judgment of the Director General (DG), can reasonably be expected to interfere with or prevent effective performance in the new specialty.

3 FAH-1 H-2795 ONWARD ASSIGNMENTS

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(State Only)

(Applies to Foreign Service Only)

- a. Functional Specialization Program (FSP) participants are directed by the Entry-Level Division in the Office of Career Development and Assignments (HR/CDA/EL) to their first assignment abroad. This assignment is for two (2) years; an extension is not allowed.
- b. FSP participants are notified of their initial assignment abroad prior to reporting to Washington, DC for training.
- c. HR/CDA/EL attempts to coordinate same post assignments for FSP participants who are part of a tandem couple. Joint assignments may, however, not be possible in all cases.

3 FAH-1 H-2796 SKILL CODE CHANGE

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(State Only)

(Applies to Foreign Service Only)

- a. After one (1) year of satisfactory performance abroad in the new skill code assignment certified by the employee's supervisor at post to the Functional Specialization Program (FSP) Coordinator, a permanent primary skill-code change is granted. Tenure in the new skill code is not required.
- b. The FSP Coordinator initiates required administrative action to facilitate a

skill-code change.

- c. Following skill-code change, FSP participants are subject to selection out for relative performance and time-in-class (TIC) provisions of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 in their new specialty (see 3 FAM 6213).
- d. If a skill-code change is not granted after one year in accordance with paragraph a of this section, the Director of the Entry-Level Division in the Office of Career Development and Assignments (HR/CDA/EL) reviews the FSP participant's file, conducts a counseling session with the FSP participant, and determines whether an additional year of participation in the program may be granted. If an additional year in the program is granted, the FSP participant is evaluated at the end of the additional year using the same procedure as noted in paragraph a of this section.
- e. FSP participants who are not granted a skill-code change retain their original skill code and revert back to their functional position (FP) class in that skill code plus any otherwise applicable within-class step increases they would have received if they had not been participating in the FSP. They are reassigned expeditiously to a position in their original skill code.

3 FAH-1 H-2797 EVALUATION AND PROMOTION

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(State Only)

(Applies to Foreign Service Only)

- a. While on their directed assignment abroad, Functional Specialization Program (FSP) participants are evaluated by using the Foreign Service Employee Evaluation Report on the regular Department schedule (see 3 FAH-1 H-2814.1).
- b. FSP participants who enter the program at the class of FP-06 are promoted administratively to FP-05 following the satisfactory completion of twelve (12) months in the program. These program participants are promoted administratively to FP-04 after an additional eighteen (18) months of satisfactory performance (see 3 FAM 2329.3-2, subparagraph (4)).
- c. FSP participants who enter the program at the class of FP-05 are promoted administratively to FP-04 following the satisfactory completion of eighteen (18) months in the program (see 3 FAM 2329.3-2, subparagraph (4)).

- d. FP-04 FSP participants are not promoted administratively (see 3 FAM 2329.3-8).
- e. FSP participants will be given credit in calculating required time-in-class for periods of previous service in present class while assigned to a position with the primary skill code of the new occupational category (see 3 FAM 2329.3-2, subparagraph (5)).
- f. Promotions to FP-03 are competitive. FP-04 FSP participants are eligible to be considered by the first functional specialty selection board that convenes following the FSP participants' skill-code change.
- g. FSP participants continue to be considered for competitive promotion in their original skill code during the period between the time they enter the FSP program and the time their skill code is changed.
- h. Successful FSP participants are no longer eligible for promotion consideration by their former functional specialty selection board once their skill code is changed.
- i. FSP participants whose skill codes are changed retain all administrative promotions received during the FSP program.

3 FAH-1 H-2798 AND H-2799 UNASSIGNED