



1. **PURPOSE:** This directive establishes the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) policy and procedures for the Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP) for non-screener positions.
2. **SCOPE:** This management directive applies to student employment in non-screener positions through SEEP. The SEEP includes the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP).

This management directive does not address other student programs, such as the Student Volunteer Service Program, the Workforce Recruitment Program, the Scholarship for Service Program, or the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education.<sup>1</sup>

3. **AUTHORITIES:** The Aviation and Transportation Security Act (P.L. 107-71) provides that:
  - A. TSA is an excepted service agency, with the authority to establish a personnel management system that is independent of most of the personnel management rules and procedures established under Title 5 of the U.S. Code<sup>2</sup>;
  - B. The personnel management system used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) shall apply to TSA employees unless the Assistant Secretary makes such modifications as he/she deems appropriate; and
  - C. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Assistant Secretary may employ, appoint, discipline, terminate, and fix the compensation, terms, and conditions of employment of Federal service for Screeners, Lead Screeners, and Supervisory Screeners<sup>3</sup>.
4. **DEFINITION:** For the purposes of this policy, a “student” is an individual who has been enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a degree (diploma, certificate, etc.) seeking student in an accredited high school, technical or vocational school, 2-year or 4-year college or university, or graduate or professional school.

For the purposes of this policy, “students” also include home-schooled students who are participating either in accredited home schools or in home-school curriculums approved by their state.

5. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- A. TSA headquarters and field offices shall:

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<sup>1</sup> These programs are described in an HR memorandum on student employment programs dated April 2, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> ATSA, Public Law 107-71, sec. 101(a), codified at 49 U.S.C. 114(n).

<sup>3</sup> ATSA, sec. 111(d), codified at 49 U.S.C. 44935 note.

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- (1) Explore the option of filling non-screener vacancies with SEEP appointees, as appropriate;
- (2) Fund and provide the necessary full-time equivalent (FTE) for the office's SEEP appointment;
- (3) Place SEEP appointees under performance agreements in accordance with TSA's Performance Management System;
- (4) Develop and execute any other required written agreements between TSA, the SEEP appointees, and the academic institutions involved, as explained below;
- (5) Adhere to such agreements; and
- (6) Make timely decisions concerning whether to convert to permanent those SEEP appointees eligible for noncompetitive conversion to permanent (see 6A(11)).

**B. TSA's Office of Human Resources, Office of Diversity and Outreach, shall:**

- (1) Provide headquarters and field offices with guidance on the SEEP, including information on the implementation of this policy; and
- (2) As requested, help develop required written agreements between TSA, SEEP appointees, and academic institutions.

**C. TSA's SEEP appointees shall:**

- (1) Participate in the development of a practical schedule of work hours and class attendance with TSA and their academic institutions; and
- (2) Adhere to written agreements signed by them, their academic institutions, and TSA.

**6. POLICIES & PROCEDURES:** It is TSA's policy to provide education related work assignments for students. Such assignments are a means of acquainting students with the mission of TSA and assisting them in planning their careers.

The TSA SEEP has two components; i.e., the career track and the temporary employment track.

**A. TSA STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM (SCEP):**

**(1) General**

The TSA SEEP permits the noncompetitive temporary appointment of a student to a non-screener position providing experience directly related to the student's educational program and career goals.

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SCEP appointments are intended to prepare the student for permanent employment at TSA, although permanent employment is not guaranteed. Conversion to permanent is based on such considerations as the student's completion of program requirements, the student's performance, the continuing need of the organization for the student's skills, and the continuing availability of a funded position.

Students receiving SCEP appointments have a schedule of periods of attendance at an accredited school combined with periods of career-related work in a TSA organization. The work experience with the agency **MUST** be related to his/her academic studies and career goals.

**(2) Eligibility Requirements:**

In order to be eligible for the TSA SCEP, the student must be:

- Pursuing a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED), a vocational/technical certificate, an associate degree, a baccalaureate degree, a graduate degree, or a professional degree, in an accredited institution or accredited home school<sup>4</sup>;
- At least the minimum age required by Federal, state or local laws and standards governing the employment of minors;
- Maintaining a 2.0 Grade Point Average on a scholastic average scale of 4.0, and
- Taking at least a half-time course load as defined by his/her institution. (A student who needs to complete less than the equivalent of half an academic/vocational/ technical courseload in the enrollment period immediately prior to graduating is still considered a student for purposes of this program.)

**(3) Classification:**

TSA SCEP positions are classified in the student job category, and in the appropriate –99 job series (e.g., 299 – Human Resources Management Trainee; 2199 – Transportation Student Trainee). The 399 job series (Administrative/ Office Support Student Trainee) should not be used, as it is reserved for STEP positions (see below).

**(4) Selection Procedures:**

The TSA SCEP authority is considered a special, “on-the-spot” appointment authority. As such, SCEP appointments and conversions to permanent are exempt from competitive procedures. There are no public notice requirements for filling SCEP positions.

However, TSA organizations do have the discretion to advertise SCEP opportunities and receive either all eligible candidates for consideration, or a list of eligible candidates ranked

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<sup>4</sup> A state-approved home-school curriculum is also acceptable.

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according to job-related factors. If a determination is made to advertise a SCEP position, veterans' preference must be applied as far as administratively feasible when considering applications.

**(5) Qualifications:**

In addition to the eligibility requirements outlined above, SCEP appointees must meet standard qualification, suitability, and clearance requirements. In evaluating TSA SCEP candidates, the Student Trainee qualification standard covered in the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) *Qualification Standards Operating Manual* should be used.<sup>5</sup> Although no written tests are required for entry into the SCEP, selecting officials may request writing samples, conduct structured interviews, etc., based on projected work assignments and responsibilities.

A SCEP appointee must be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national or the following conditions must be met:

- The student is lawfully admitted to the United States as a permanent resident or otherwise authorized to be employed; and
- TSA is permitted to pay aliens under the annual appropriations act and any other specific enabling or appropriations statutes.

The student must be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national in order to be eligible for noncompetitive conversion to permanent appointment.

**(6) Employment of Relatives:**

A SCEP appointee may work in TSA with a relative when there is no direct or indirect reporting relationship and the relative is not in a position to control or influence the student's appointment, employment, promotion or advancement within TSA. For additional information, see TSA MD 1100.30-2, TSA Employment of Relatives, dated August 19, 2004.

**(7) Appointment:**

TSA SCEP appointments are temporary appointments not-to-exceed five years. A SCEP appointment may be extended beyond five years provided the student continues to meet eligibility requirements and provided the temporary appointment will not extend beyond six months after the student's graduation date. The authority to approve such extensions rests with the Assistant Administrator or Office Director over the student's position.

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<sup>5</sup> This standard does not address initial appointment when the student trainee has not earned a high school diploma or equivalent. For the purposes of the SCEP, TSA considers an individual pursuing a high school diploma or GED to have met requirements for entry to the "B" pay band (GS-1/2 equivalent).

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Management has the discretion to terminate a SCEP appointment prior to the not-to-exceed date.

SCEP appointees are placed in tenure group 3, which covers excepted service employees serving under appointments with time limitations of more than one year.

SCEP appointees count against the employing organization's full-time equivalent (FTE) ceiling.

**(8) Agreements:**

TSA SCEP is a formally structured program and requires a written agreement by all parties (agency, school, student). See Attachment 1 for the "TSA Student Career Experience Program Agreement."

The TSA SCEP also requires a written agreement by all parties (agency, school, student) regarding specific expectations. See Attachment 2 for the "TSA Student Trainee Expectations Form." This agreement covers:

- Nature of work assignments/expectations;
- Schedule of work hours/assignments and class attendance;
- Evaluation procedures; and
- Requirements for continuation and successful completion of the program.

The TSA employing organization, participating educational institution, and student should agree on a formally arranged schedule of work to ensure that: (1) work responsibilities do not interfere with academic performance; (2) completion of the educational program (awarding of diploma/certificate/degree) and completion of the TSA SCEP are accomplished in a reasonable and appropriate timeframe; (3) TSA is informed and prepared for the student's periods of employment; and (4) requirements for conversion to permanent are known to all parties.

**(9) Schedules:**

SCEP participants may be appointed at any time during the year. Students may work full-time or part-time schedules. A part-time schedule generally is 16 – 32 hours per week (32 – 64 hours per pay period). However, a SCEP participant on a part-time schedule may work less than 16 hours or more than 32 per week if acceptable to his/her supervisor.

It is expected that students will be either working at TSA, enrolled in classes, or both at all times. The student's work schedule should not interfere with the student's academic schedule. Employing organizations may use their discretion in either approving or denying a break in program defined as a period of time when a program participant is neither attending classes nor working at the agency. The best interests of the student and the agency must be balanced in making these decisions.

**(10) Promotions:**

SCEP students are eligible for advancement to higher pay bands provided qualification requirements are met. The nature of action for such advancement is a conversion to a new appointment at the higher band with the same not-to-exceed date.

In evaluating SCEP participants for promotion, the student trainee qualification standard should be used.

**(11) Conversion to Permanent Excepted Appointment:**

SCEP participants who are U.S. citizens or U.S. nationals<sup>6</sup> may be noncompetitively converted to a permanent excepted appointment at any time within six months after satisfactory completion of the requirements for their diploma/certificate/degree if the following program requirements are met:

- SCEP employee has completed course requirements for a diploma, certificate, or degree within the preceding six months, at an accredited school;
- SCEP employee has completed a minimum of 320 hours on-the-job experience, directly related to his/her educational program and career goals, before or concurrent with the completion of course requirements;
- SCEP employee has been recommended for permanent appointment by the TSA organization in which the career-related work was performed;
- SCEP employee meets the qualification standards for the position to which he/she is being permanently appointed, and has demonstrated possession of the competencies needed for successful performance in the position; and
- An FTE exists in the gaining TSA organization to support the conversion to permanent.

Conversions must be to an occupation related to the student's academic training and career related work experience. The conversion does not have to be in the same organization as the student's SCEP experience.

At the end of six months, if the graduate has not been converted to a permanent appointment, his/her temporary appointment must be terminated, regardless of whether the not-to-exceed date has been reached.

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<sup>6</sup> SCEP appointees must be U.S. citizens or U.S. nationals at the time they are noncompetitively converted to permanent.

**B. TSA STUDENT TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (STEP):**

**(1) General:**

The TSA STEP permits the noncompetitive temporary appointment of a student to a non-screener position. The STEP is intended for students not employed under the SCEP and does not require that the student's TSA duties be related to his/her academic program and career goals.

**(2) Eligibility Requirements:**

In order to be eligible for the TSA STEP, the student must be:

- Pursuing a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED), a vocational/technical certificate, an associate degree, a baccalaureate degree, a graduate degree, or a professional degree, in an accredited institution or accredited home school<sup>7</sup>;
- At least the minimum age required by Federal, state or local laws and standards governing the employment of minors;
- Maintaining a 2.0 Grade Point Average on a scholastic average scale of 4.0; and
- Taking at least a half-time course load as defined by his/her institution. (A student who needs to complete less than the equivalent of half an academic/vocational/ technical courseload in the enrollment period immediately prior to graduating is still considered a student for purposes of this program.)

**(3) Classification:**

STEP positions will be classified in the student job category, in the 399 job series (Admin/Office Support Student Trainee).

**(4) Selection Procedures:**

TSA STEP appointments are exempt from competitive hiring procedures under TSA's general authority to effect noncompetitive temporary appointments up to two years. The STEP appointment is unique in that it may be extended in one-year increments beyond the 2-year mark as long as the individual meets the definition of student, supplies evidence of continued enrollment, and the appointment will not extend beyond six months after the student's graduation date.

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<sup>7</sup> A state-approved home-school curriculum is also acceptable.

**(5) Qualifications:**

In addition to the eligibility requirements outlined above, STEP appointees must meet standard qualification, suitability, and clearance requirements. In evaluating STEP candidates, the qualification standard for Clerical and Administrative Support Positions should be used (see OPM's *Qualification Standards Operating Manual*). Although no written tests are required for entry into the STEP, selecting officials may request writing samples, conduct structured interviews, etc., based on projected work assignments and responsibilities.

A STEP appointee must be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national or the following conditions must be met:

- The student is lawfully admitted to the United States as a permanent resident or otherwise authorized to be employed; and
- TSA is permitted to pay aliens under the annual appropriations act and any other specific enabling or appropriations statutes.

**(6) Employment of Relatives:**

A SCEP appointee may work in TSA with a relative when there is no direct or indirect reporting relationship and the relative is not in a position to control or influence the student's appointment, employment, promotion or advancement within TSA. For additional information, see TSA MD 1100.30-2, TSA Employment of Relatives, dated August 19, 2004.

**(7) Appointment:**

STEP appointments are temporary appointments up to two years in length. STEP appointments may be extended beyond two years, in one-year increments, as long as the individual meets the definition of student, supplies evidence of continued enrollment, and the appointment will not extend beyond six months after the student's graduation date.

Management has the discretion to terminate a STEP appointment prior to the not-to-exceed date.

STEP appointees whose temporary appointments have a time limitation of more than one year are placed in tenure group 3. STEP appointees whose temporary appointments have a time limitation of one year or less are placed in tenure group 0, but are moved to tenure group 3 after completing one year of current, continuous service.

STEP appointees count against the employing organization's FTE ceiling.

**(8) Agreements:**

While formal agreements are not required under the STEP program, managers are encouraged to develop agreements with STEP students. Such agreements would address:

- Nature of work assignments and expectations;
- Schedule of work hours and class attendance;
- Evaluation procedures; and
- Requirements for continuation of the program.

Such agreements will ensure that: (1) work responsibilities do not interfere with academic performance and (2) the student understands that completion of the educational program (awarding of diploma/certificate/degree) concludes program eligibility.

**(9) Schedules:**

Students may be appointed at any time during the year. Students may work full-time or part-time schedules. A part-time schedule generally is 16 – 32 hours per week (32 – 64 hours per pay period). However, a STEP participant on a part-time schedule may work less than 16 hours or more than 32 per week if acceptable to his/her supervisor.

It is expected that students will be either working at TSA, enrolled in classes, or both at all times. The student's work schedule should not interfere with the student's academic schedule. Employing organizations may use their discretion in either approving or denying a break in program defined as a period of time when a program participant is neither attending classes nor working at the agency. The best interests of the student and the agency must be balanced in making these decisions.

**(10) Promotions:**

STEP students are eligible for advancement to higher pay bands provided qualification requirements are met. The nature of action for such advancement is a conversion to a new appointment at the higher band with the same not-to-exceed date.

In evaluating STEP participants for promotion, the qualification standard for Clerical and Administrative Support Positions should be used. (See OPM's *Qualification Standards Operating Manual*).

**(11) Completion of the STEP Program:**

After completing their academic requirements, TSA STEP participants may remain on TSA employment rolls for six months, or until the expiration of their current temporary appointment, whichever occurs first.

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TSA STEP participants are not eligible for noncompetitive conversion to a permanent excepted service appointment. However, students may be non-competitively converted to the TSA SCEP whenever they meet the conditions of that program and TSA has an appropriate position available. Time served as a TSA STEP participant may count toward the 320-hour requirement upon conversion to TSA SCEP provided the work performed as a STEP employee is related to the student's academic studies and career goals.

**7. EFFECTIVE DATE & IMPLEMENTATION:**

This directive will be effective immediately upon signature.

**APPROVAL**



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Richard A. Whitford  
Assistant Administrator for Human Resources  
Attachments

10/24/04  
Date

Filing Instructions: File with HR Management Directives  
Effective Date: October 24, 2004  
Review Date: October 24, 2005  
Distribution: Assistant Administrators, Office Directors, and TSA Affiliated HR Offices  
Point Of Contact: Beth Campbell or Jacqueline Yeatman, TSA/HR, 571-227-2469

## **TSA STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AGREEMENT**

This agreement establishes a basis of mutual understanding between the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the student to participate in the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). The TSA SCEP is designed to prepare students for professional careers in administrative, managerial, and technical occupations by integrating alternating or parallel periods of academic study and work experience. By combining the advantages of a well-rounded education with the experience gained from actual work assignments, this program should enhance the quality and quantity of trainees entering TSA career fields.

In accordance with the provisions and responsibilities outlined in this agreement, the student and the TSA will work together to insure that the academic and work experience of the TSA SCEP are carried out to the mutual satisfaction and benefit of the student participants and the TSA.

### **TSA agrees to:**

1. Appoint the student to a temporary, not-to-exceed five-year appointment. TSA may extend such SCEP appointment beyond five years provided the student continues to meet SCEP eligibility requirements and provided the temporary appointment will not extend beyond six months after the student's graduation date.
2. Provide the student with meaningful and increasingly responsible work assignments related to his/her academic work in the major functional areas of his/her career field and guide the student in carrying out the assignment;
3. Maintain work period evaluation as part of the student's records;
4. Provide counseling assistance to the student as well as a point of contact to facilitate information exchange and program liaison with the academic institution's Cooperative Education Coordinator; and,
5. Provide the university with such additional information as deemed necessary for effective mutual cooperation and successful program operation.

### **The Student Trainee agrees to:**

1. Satisfy both the academic standards of the academic institution and the work performance standards of TSA;
2. Demonstrate a personal interest in his/her professional career, both at work and while in attendance at the academic institution;
3. Remain a candidate in good standing at the educational institution for the degree, diploma, certificate, etc., pursued;

4. Provide and comply with a schedule of periods for work and study specified in the Student Trainee Expectations form;
5. Maintain eligibility based on requirements of TSA and the academic institution;
6. Satisfy any security requirements of the facility to which he/she will be assigned;
7. Meet or exceed the standard for satisfactory performance in TSA's performance management system;
8. Understand that TSA has the discretion to terminate the student's temporary SCEP appointment at any time; and
9. Understand that upon completion of the program, conversion to a permanent excepted service appointment is not guaranteed but at the discretion of TSA. Students disqualified from continuing in the program, or not selected for a permanent position, will be terminated.

NOTE: During their participation in the SCEP, student trainees are eligible to receive promotions provided qualifications are met.

This agreement becomes effective upon signature by all parties and shall continue indefinitely unless voided by non-compliance of the afforded agreements.

I HAVE READ, UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO FOLLOW THE TERMS IN THIS AGREEMENT.

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Student Signature and Date

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Institution Representative (e.g., Co-op Coordinator) and Date

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TSA Representative and Date

## TSA STUDENT TRAINEE EXPECTATIONS AGREEMENT

1. Nature of Work Assignments/Expectations.
2. Schedule of Work Assignments/Hours and Class Attendance.
3. Evaluation Procedures.
4. Other Requirements.

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Student Signature and Date

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Institution Representative (e.g., Co-op Coordinator) and Date

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TSA Representative and Date