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Science



NASA PATHWAYS PROGRAMS

Transition Guide for NASA's Pathways Programs

Version 1

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

			<u>Page</u>
SECTION	1	INTRODUCTION.....	5
	1.1	Purpose.....	5
	1.2	Background.....	5
	1.3	Applicability.....	5
	1.4	About This Document.....	6
SECTION	2	REFERENCES.....	7
	2.1	Federal Laws, Regulations, and Executive Order References.....	7
	2.2	OPM References.....	7
	2.3	NASA References.....	7
SECTION	3	OVERVIEW.....	9
	3.1	Policies and Guidance.....	9
	3.1.1	OPM Policies and Guidance.....	9
	3.1.2	NASA Policies and Guidance.....	9
	3.2	Transition Eligibility.....	10
	3.3	Roles and Responsibilities.....	10
	3.4	Overview Flowchart for Transitioning SCEP and STEP Participants.....	13
SECTION	4	TRANSITIONING SCEP AND STEP PARTICIPANTS.....	14
	4.1	Transitioning Current Students into the NASA Pathways IEP.....	14
	4.2	Out Processing SCEP/STEP Students Who Leave NASA During Transition.....	15
SECTION	5	TRANSITIONING PMF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS.....	16
SECTION	6	PROCESSING STUDENTS STARTING EMPLOYMENT DURING TRANSITION.....	17
SECTION	7	FINAL CHECKS FOR COMPLIANCE.....	18
SECTION	8	ADDITIONAL CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES.....	19
APPENDICES			
APPENDIX	A	ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	20
APPENDIX	B	REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND SPECIAL PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION (SPID) NUMBERS.....	21
APPENDIX	C	NASA PATHWAYS TRANSITION.....	22

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	3-01	Process Overview: Transition SCEP and STEP Participants into the Pathways Programs.....	13
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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview of the document content, as well as how the information is arranged.

1.1 Purpose

This transition guide provides National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) guidance to transition students currently on a Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), or Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program appointment into the new NASA Pathways Programs. The Pathways Programs consist of the Intern Employment Program (IEP), Recent Graduates Program (RGP), and the revised PMF program.

This guide does not include transition activities for NASA Pathways RGP since current SCEP and STEP participants cannot transition into the NASA Pathways RGP.

Transition actions for current PMF participants will be limited to processing a new SF 50, Notification of Personnel Action, and ensuring each NASA Pathways PMF Program participant is assigned a mentor and has an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in place.

The Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) final Pathways regulations became effective July 10, 2012. Agencies have until January 6, 2013 to complete all transition and conversion activities as described in OPM's Transition and Implementation Guidance. This document is effective only during the transition period. For new students entering employment directly into the Pathways Programs, please refer to the NASA Implementation Guide to the Pathways Programs and the related OPM guidance.

1.2 Background

On December 27, 2010, President Obama signed Executive Order (E.O.) 13562 establishing the Pathways Programs. On May 11, 2012, OPM issued the final rules on the Pathways Programs, (77 Federal Register (FR) 92) (dated May 11, 2012). The Pathways Programs consists of three components which are the Internship Program, the RGP, and the PMF Program. Pathways Programs replace the STEP (5 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 213.3202 (a)), SCEP (5 C.F.R. 213.3202 (b)), and enhances the PMF Program (5 C.F.R. 362).

Effective July 10, 2012, all agencies must use Pathways for any new student recruitment or hiring actions.

The Pathways Programs Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between OPM and NASA identifies the agreement between the organizations and the roles and responsibilities as they pertain to the implementation of the Pathways Programs.

1.3 Applicability

This transition guide applies to NASA Headquarters and NASA Centers, including Component Facilities, the NASA Shared Services Center (NSSC), and the Office of the Inspector General.

Unless otherwise stated, the use of the word Center(s) in the text of this document includes NASA Headquarters, the NSSC, and the Office of the Inspector General, and any reference to Center Director(s) includes the Executive Director, Headquarters Operations, and the Executive Director, NSSC. The guide is primarily for use by NASA Center Human Resources (HR) Offices, but may also be used by the other stakeholders identified in paragraph 3.3, Roles and Responsibilities.

1.4 About This Document

This document contains information on regulations and processes relating to the Pathways Programs. The following appendices are included in this document:

- Appendix A, Acronyms and Abbreviations
- Appendix B, Reporting Requirements and Special Program Identification Numbers (SPIDs)
- Appendix C, NASA Pathways Transition

SECTION 2 – REFERENCES

This document contains references that, in some cases, are for specific subparagraphs; however, this section generally lists the primary document or code. In addition, when a Web link is available, it is provided here for your convenience. Since Web links may become invalid, the document names and numbers are provided as available. The following references were used in the preparation of this guide:

2.1 Federal Laws, Regulations, and Executive Order References

- a. Government Organization and Employees, 5 United States Code (U.S.C.).
- b. Exec. Order No. 13562, 3 C.F.R. 13562 (2010).
- c. Administrative Personnel, 5 C.F.R.

2.2 OPM References

- a. OPM Pathways Transition and Implementation Guidance.
- b. OPM Delegated Examining Operations Handbook: A Guide for Federal Agency Examining Offices, May 2007. <http://www.opm.gov/deu/>.
- c. OPM Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, Update 59, July 10, 2012.
- d. OPM Hiring Reform Web site. <http://www.opm.gov/HiringReform/Pathways>.
- e. OPM Laws, Regulations & Other Guidance Web site. http://www.opm.gov/hr_practitioners/lawsregulations/.
- f. OPM Merit System Principles Web site. <http://www.opm.gov/ovrsight/mspidx.asp>.
- g. OPM Pathways Programs Posting Jobs for Students and Recent Graduates on USAJOBS, March 13, 2012.
- h. OPM Qualification Standards Web site. <http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/>.
- i. OPM Supervisory Qualification Guide. <http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/>. Click the **Standards** tab, click the **Specialty Areas** link on the left side of the page, then click the **Supervisory Positions** link.

2.3 NASA References

- a. Pathways Programs Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, approved by OPM on July 3, 2012.

**Transition Guide for NASA's Pathways Programs – Version 1
July 2012**

- b. NASA Implementation Guide to the Pathways Programs.
- c. NASA Pathways Participant Agreement Templates.
- d. NASA Pathways Programs Web site. www.nasajobs.nasa.gov/studentopps/.
- e. NASA Shared Services Center Service Delivery Guide, Personnel Action Processing, NSSC-HR-SDG-0036.
- f. NASA Manager's Guide to Recruitment Best Practices, Version 1, Draft 4, May 2009.
- g. NASA Strategic Recruitment Guide. Currently under development, and not yet finalized.
- h. NASA Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) Desk Guide for Program Managers and Supervisors, Version 1, April 2009.
- i. NASA Policy Directive (NPD) 3713.1, Reasonable Accommodations Procedures.
- j. NASA Procedural Requirements (NPR) 3300.1, Appointment of Personnel To/From NASA.
- k. NPR 3335.1, Internal Placement of NASA Employees.
- l. NPR 3430.1, NASA Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS).
- m. NPR 3530.1, NASA Pay and Compensation Policy.
- n. NASA Desk Guide on the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004, Version 3, April 2009.

SECTION 3 – OVERVIEW

The Pathways Programs includes the following three programs that provide Federal employment opportunities for current students, recent graduates, and advanced degree candidates:

OPM Program Names	NASA Program Names
1. Pathways Internship Program	1. NASA Pathways Intern Employment Program (IEP)
2. Pathways Recent Graduates Program	2. NASA Pathways Recent Graduates Program (RGP)
3. Pathways Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program	3. NASA Pathways Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program

3.1 Policies and Guidance

Important: All participants currently in a SCEP, STEP, or PMF Program position must be converted to career-conditional, transitioned to a new Pathways Programs position, or terminate/resign as applicable.

Please note that “**conversion**” only refers to conversion to career-conditional and “**transition**” only refers to transitioning from the SCEP, STEP, or PMF Program to the new Pathways IEP, Pathways RGP, or Pathways PMF Program.

3.1.1 OPM Policies and Guidance

Effective Dates

The final regulation became effective July 10, 2012. OPM has provided agencies with a six-month transition period following the effective date to complete all transition and conversion activities.

Important: All transition activities must be completed prior to January 6, 2013.

OPM Instructions and Procedures

OPM has published the OPM Pathways Transition and Implementation Guidance with specific instructions and procedures for all Federal agencies to follow during the transition period. That document also contains numerous Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that will assist you in transitioning current SCEP/STEP students into the new Pathways Programs.

3.1.2 NASA Policies and Guidance

This document provides NASA-specific guidance to transition current students into the Pathways Programs that is not already covered in the OPM guidance. Please refer to Section 2, References, for a listing of applicable NASA policies and guidance.

3.2 Transition Eligibility

Refer to the OPM policies and guidance for specific transition eligibility. Some points to remember:

- SCEP participants may transition into the NASA Pathways IEP.
- STEP participants may transition into the NASA Pathways IEP with the same Not to Exceed (NTE) date as identified under their current STEP agreement.
- Current participants who are eligible for conversion during the 6-month transition period may be converted to career or career conditional appointments, if applicable.
- Current participants may not transition into the NASA Pathways RGP.

3.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Throughout this document, NASA stakeholder roles and responsibilities are identified. This paragraph provides a high-level overview of each role's responsibilities. Note that the responsibilities are not listed in rigid chronological order. The following is a list of the roles and a high-level overview of responsibilities for the transition period:

Pathways Programs Transition Roles and Responsibilities	
Role	Overview of Transition Responsibilities
NASA Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM) Agency Pathways Programs Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide finalized versions of all new Pathways documents, along with a resource for obtaining the latest revisions. Coordinate all stakeholder input, including Headquarters and Center Leadership, Office of Education, and Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity. Obtain necessary approvals by senior management prior to implementation. • Revise current policy guidance as necessary for the successful operation and administration of the Pathways Programs. • Provide recommendations/best practices for implementing this type of program change. • Establish eligibility criteria for conversion into the NASA Pathways IEP from STEP and SCEP. Note that NASA eligibility and qualifications standards must comply with criteria established by OPM. During the transition period, previously accepted eligibility criteria will be accepted for students transitioning from the old programs into the Pathways Programs. • Provide clearly defined NASA policy on qualifications for promotion while in the program as directed by OPM qualification guidelines. • Create and lead the strategic roll out of communication Agency wide. This will include major impacts, such as applicant process and naming conventions, change management, and educational/communication materials and messages.

**Transition Guide for NASA's Pathways Programs – Version 1
July 2012**

Pathways Programs Transition Roles and Responsibilities	
Role	Overview of Transition Responsibilities
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide updates of student status at least 4-6 weeks prior to effective date (i.e., transcripts, graduation date, personal information, return to duty forms, and <i>intentions to continue into Pathways</i>). • Sign statement acknowledging they have read and understand the Pathways regulations. (Note that this may also be addressed via the NASA Pathways Participant Agreement.) • Sign a new NASA Pathways Participant Agreement.
Center HR Office Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the NSSC Personnel Action Processing (PAP) Team to develop the phased transition schedule. • Determine eligibility for the Pathways Programs. • Verify/obtain the Student's signature on the new Pathways Participant Agreement. • Ensure all participants are classified into the appropriate x99 occupation series. • Receive transition guidance from NSSC after the Department of the Interior (DOI) finalizes procedures. No Workforce Transformation Tracking System (WTTS) entries are anticipated for conversions since these are conversions and not gains. Any WTTS entries for a conversion would cause current students to be contacted as though they were entering NASA as new employees. Any terminations/resignations would be handled through WTTS as normal.
Supervisor/Assigned Organization Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit proper documentation (e.g., Position Description (PD), SF 52) to convert current SCEPs who are eligible for conversion to a permanent or term position to the Center HR Office or Center Pathways Programs Manager. • Communicate their intentions for current STEP students based on transition guidance from OPM. • Notify Center OHCM personnel of termination recommendations for STEP students and for SCEP students who do not meet any of the conversion options. Provide supporting documentation such as Performance Evaluations.
Center Pathways Programs Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the strategic roll out of communication across their Center. This will include major impacts, such as applicant process and naming conventions. • Notify current students of program changes due to implementation of Pathways. • Notify students who have received a recent offer to SCEP and STEP, but have not yet reached their Entrance on Duty (EOD) date. • Request and verify/update student data (e.g., graduation dates, transcripts, personal information, etc.) before Pathways

**Transition Guide for NASA's Pathways Programs – Version 1
July 2012**

Pathways Programs Transition Roles and Responsibilities	
Role	Overview of Transition Responsibilities
	<p>implementation date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify which category each current student will transition to in accordance with the Nature of Action Codes (NOACs) and Legal Authority Codes (LACs) provided by OPM. • Obtain signed NASA Pathways Participant Agreement from all students before conversion to Pathways. • Review student PDs and Performance Plans to ensure that they align with Pathways Program guidance (e.g., naming conventions, etc.). • Update Center-specific information to reflect new Pathways regulations and information (e.g., desk manuals, Web sites, recruiting material, etc.). • Notify universities of program changes due to the implementation of the Pathways Programs. • Notify recruiters of program changes due to the implementation of the Pathways Programs. • Issue letters of final determinations for terminations. • Coordinate with Center HR Office personnel to complete any responsibilities not able to be accomplished.
NSSC PAP Team Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Center HR Office personnel to develop the phased transition schedule. • Notify Center Pathways Programs Manager and copy the HR Office personnel regarding any changes in processing of personnel actions as a result of Pathways implementation, including document processing lead times. • Provide transition guidance to Center HR Office personnel after DOI finalizes the procedures.
DOI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate conversion actions after OPM finalizes program and transition requirements.

3.4 Overview Flowchart for Transitioning SCEP and STEP Participants

Since current program participants will not transition into the NASA Pathways RGP, no transition procedures or flowcharts have been developed for that new program. For PMF Program information, please refer to Section 5, Transitioning PMF Program Participants. In addition, during transition, any resignations or terminations are handled as per normal processes noted in paragraph 4.2, Out Processing Students Who Leave NASA During Transition. The transition period is for a period of six months following the effective date of July 10, 2012. The following flowchart **only** shows the process overview for transitioning SCEP and STEP participants into the NASA Pathways IEP:

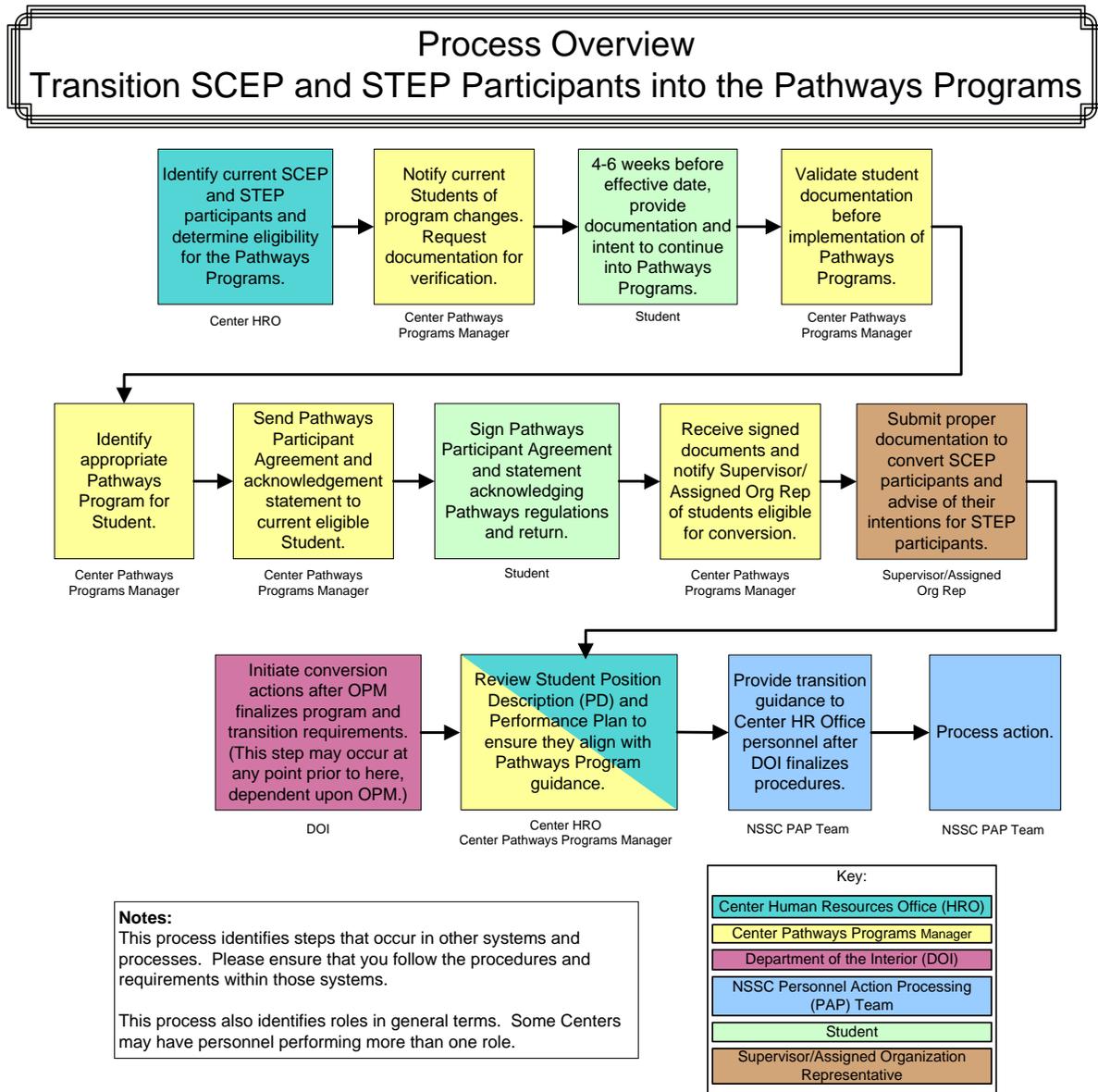


Figure 3-01. Process Overview: Transition SCEP and STEP Participants into the Pathways Programs

SECTION 4 – TRANSITIONING SCEP AND STEP PARTICIPANTS

4.1 Transitioning Current Students into the NASA Pathways IEP

Use the following steps to identify current students and determine eligibility for the Pathways Programs:

1. Center HR Office identifies current SCEP and STEP participants.
2. Center HR Office determines eligibility for Pathways Programs.

Note: During the transition period, previously accepted eligibility criteria will be accepted for students transitioning from the old programs into the Pathways Programs. Students are essentially being moved with the same conditions originally approved. Terms of the student agreements are intact for the duration of the Internship; however, new agreements must be signed.

3. Center Pathways Programs Manager notifies current students of program changes and requests documentation for verification.
4. Student provides requested documentation to the Center Pathways Programs Manager no later than 4-6 weeks before the effective date. Student also advises of the intent to continue into the Pathways Programs.
5. Center Pathways Programs Manager validates student documentation before implementation of the Pathways Programs. Student document validation includes evaluation for promotion eligibility. If a student is eligible for promotion, the student **must** be transitioned to the Pathways Programs before the promotion activity may occur.
6. Center Pathways Programs Manager identifies appropriate Pathways Program for student (e.g., Intern (formerly SCEP), Intern with an NTE date (formerly STEP)).
7. Center Pathways Programs Manager notifies Supervisor/Assigned Organization Representative of students who are eligible for conversion or transition into a Pathways Programs Intern.
8. Center Pathway Programs Manager sends the Pathways Participant Agreement to current eligible student.
9. Student signs the Pathways Participant Agreement, and returns to the Center Pathways Programs Manager.
10. Center Pathways Programs Manager receives signed documents from the student.
11. Supervisor/Assigned Organization Representative submits proper documentation to transition SCEP participants, and Center HR Office executes any subsequent actions for STEP participants, if required.
12. DOI initiates conversion actions after OPM finalizes program and transition requirements. Note that this step may occur at any point prior to the next step.
13. Center HR Office and/or Center Pathways Programs Manager reviews student PD to ensure it aligns with Pathways Programs guidance.
14. NSSC PAP team provides transition guidance to Center HR Office personnel after DOI finalizes procedures.
15. NSSC PAP team processes the action.

4.2 Out Processing SCEP/STEP Students Who Leave NASA During Transition

During transition, a termination is handled as a normal termination. Please refer to the OPM Guide to Processing Personnel Actions for the proper coding of termination actions. Students not transitioned under new appointments may be given the option of resigning in lieu of termination. All resignations are handled as per normal procedures.

In addition, if an employee resigns or terminates from NASA during the transition period, it is recommended that the Center contact the NSSC Benefits Processing team to advise of the resignation date so the team can contact the employee in a timely manner.

SECTION 5 – TRANSITIONING PMF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Please refer to the OPM Pathways Transition and Implementation Guidance. Use the following procedures to transition current PMF Program participants to the NASA Pathways PMF Program:

1. Center Pathways Programs Manager ensures a mentor is assigned to the PMF Program participant and that an IDP is in place.
2. Center logs into the Federal Personnel Payroll System (FPPS) and initiates the SF 52, Request for Personnel Action. Refer to the updated OPM Guide to Processing Personnel Actions.
3. Center HR Office logs into FPPS, codes the personnel action, Legally Approves (LGAPs), and forwards the action to the NSSC. Please note that the OPM Pathways Transition and Implementation Guidance contains the required NOACs needed for the FPPS action.
4. NSSC PAP team processes the action.

SECTION 6 – PROCESSING STUDENTS STARTING EMPLOYMENT DURING TRANSITION

Since NASA was allowed to continue recruiting and hiring between the date of publication of the new regulations (May 11, 2012) and the effective date of the regulations (July 10, 2012), there may be unusual circumstances regarding how to handle processing new students. Please refer to the OPM regulations for clarification. However, the following are some points to remember:

- As of July 10, 2012, there can no longer be any open announcements for SCEP or STEP positions.
- All advertisements must close by July 9, 2012, and everything that is completed by that date falls under the applicable SCEP and STEP rules.
- If a position is offered under SCEP or STEP with an EOD date after July 9, 2012, the participant enters as a NASA Pathways IEP participant.

Important: If a participant has an EOD date after July 9, 2012, do not use these transition procedures. Use the Transition Guide for NASA's Pathways Programs for the applicable instructions.

SECTION 7 – FINAL CHECKS FOR COMPLIANCE

The system of record is FPPS. When DOI initiates these actions, there are codes for students that will be used to pull all persons in these positions. NSSC will provide a report to each Center listing all known SCEP and STEP participants. Centers will ensure this report is accurate and all inclusive, and should monitor the process and outcome of the action (e.g., separation, new appointment, etc). This double-check will help ensure NASA is in full compliance with the OPM requirements. NSSC PAP team is in constant communication with the HR Office Point of Contact (POC) for processing actions and will continue this communication through transition as normal.

SECTION 8 – ADDITIONAL CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Update Center-specific information and documentation to reflect the new Pathways Programs regulations, information, naming conventions, etc. Ensure that all desk manuals, Web pages, recruiting materials, etc. are reviewed and updated.
2. Notify colleges and universities of program changes due to the implementation of the Pathways Programs.
3. Notify recruiters of program changes due the implementation of the Pathways Programs.

APPENDIX A – ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms that are used in this desk guide are identified upon first use in this document. Thereafter, the acronym is used. In cases where the first or only instance of the use of an acronym is in a table or graphic, it may not be spelled out on first reference. Since many acronyms and abbreviations have multiple meanings, the following list includes those used in this guide and the applicable meaning:

ACRONYM/ ABBREVIATION	MEANING
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
DOI	Department of the Interior
E.O.	Executive Order
EOD	Entrance on Duty
EPCS	Employee Performance Communication System
FAQ	Frequently Asked Question
FPPS	Federal Personnel Payroll System
FR	Federal Register
HR	Human Resources
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IEP	Intern Employment Program
LAC	Legal Authority Code
LGAP	Legally Approve
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NEACC	NASA Enterprise Applications Competency Center
NOAC	Nature of Action Code
NPD	NASA Policy Directive
NPR	NASA Procedural Requirements
NSSC	NASA Shared Services Center
NTE	Not to Exceed
OHCM	Office of Human Capital Management
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PAP	Personnel Action Processing
PD	Position Description
PMF	Presidential Management Fellows
POC	Point of Contact
RGP	Recent Graduates Program
SCEP	Student Career Experience Program
SPID	Special Program Identification
STEP	Student Temporary Employment Program
U.S.C.	United States Code
WTTS	Workforce Transformation Tracking System

APPENDIX B – REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND SPECIAL PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION (SPID) NUMBERS

OPM requires specific reporting criteria for agencies to follow when reporting on Pathways Programs. Please refer to the OPM Pathways Transition and Implementation Guidance.

SPID numbers are used when generating reports in FPPS Datamart. The NASA Enterprise Applications Competency Center (NEACC) will provide a new derivation table to the NSSC, including the correct SPID codes to be used with the Pathways Programs.

DOI provided three new SPID codes to be used for the Pathways Programs. They are the following:

- 74 - Internship Program
- 75 - Recent Graduate Program
- 76 - Presidential Management Fellows

APPENDIX C – NASA PATHWAYS TRANSITION

After NSSC receives guidance from DOI, NSSC will communicate the transition procedures accordingly. NSSC will process the actions in accordance with this guidance.

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