USA Staffing
Multiple Hurdles
Guide

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Introduction

This guide explains options for implementing multiple or progressive hurdles within USA Staffing, including considerations around when to use hurdles and how to configure them. It also provides examples to help illustrate how multiple hurdles might be used in practice. Please note that functionality related to multiple hurdles is flexible; agencies can use it in numerous different ways depending on the job analysis, consultation with key stakeholders (e.g., hiring managers, HR professionals, and assessment professionals), and agency guidance. If you are using functionality related to multiple hurdles for the first time, we recommend trying it out in the USA Staffing Training environment first, so you can gain hands-on experience with each piece of the process before using it in a live vacancy.

What Are Multiple or Progressive Hurdles?

In a broad sense, multiple hurdles allow applicants to complete multiple assessments in a progressive fashion. In other words, applicants progress from one hurdle to the next based on whether they meet established scoring criteria. Only applicants meeting the established scoring criteria proceed in the assessment and hiring process. Applicants not meeting the scoring criteria do not proceed (i.e., they do not complete additional assessments or receive additional consideration). A multiple or progressive hurdles approach can help narrow down the applicant pool and maximize the efficiency of resources by utilizing the most time and cost intensive resources on the best qualified individuals.

There are two approaches for implementing multiple hurdles in USA Staffing:

1. Minimum Required Proficiency using **Passing Score** functionality; and

2. Business Necessity using **Hurdles** functionality.

The difference between the two approaches from a system perspective lies in how the system is configured to determine which applicants move forward. However, as explained below, there are important fundamental differences between the two methods based on why and how the scoring criteria are established. Either approach or both in combination can be used as part of an effective assessment strategy for a given position.

When to Use Passing Score Functionality?

Agencies interested in ensuring that applicants possess a minimum level of proficiency on one or more competencies can use the Passing Score functionality. Applying a Passing Score on an assessment can help to ensure that applicants who are referred to hiring managers have the minimum required level of proficiency in competencies required for success on the job. The Passing Score corresponds to the minimum level of acceptable proficiency on the competency or competencies needed for successful performance in the target position. Applicants who do not meet the Passing Score (regardless of veterans' preference) are rated ineligible for consideration.

Passing Scores for the assessment are determined prior to the opening of the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA). Currently, Passing Scores can be applied for Assessment Questionnaires (AQs) or Manual Assessments in USA Staffing. Passing Scores are already applied for certain USA Hire Standard assessments (referred to as Cut Score batteries).

ℹ️ **Note:** Although the terms 'cutpoint,' 'passing score,' and 'cut score' are used interchangeably in the assessment industry, for purposes of clarity, this guide uses 'cutpoint' when referring to scoring criteria established using a business necessity approach. This guide uses 'passing score' when referring to scoring criteria established based on a minimum required proficiency approach. (USA Hire uses the term 'cut score' to refer to the minimum required proficiency needed to pass a USA Hire Standard assessment for a given series/grade).

Agencies will want to consider whether an assessment Passing Score may be useful for a particular position or series/grade based on a strategic discussion between stakeholders such as hiring organizations/managers, HR professionals, and assessment professionals. Use of an assessment Passing Score is most helpful in situations where you are:

(a) filling positions that require a minimum level of proficiency on critical competencies;

(b) looking to pare down a large (anticipated) applicant pool based on a minimum level of proficiency on key, critical competencies;

(c) expecting a wide variation of proficiency in the applicant pool;

(d) filling positions that have a history of attracting candidates who do not meet job requirements; and/or

(e) announcing the same position repeatedly due to the volume of those vacancies/positions within the agency.

See the Assessment Passing Score FAQs for additional information and considerations when using the Passing Score functionality.

When to Use Hurdles Functionality?

Agencies interested in paring down the applicant pool on factors other than the minimum level of proficiency needed on one or more competencies can consider using the Hurdles functionality in USA Staffing. The Hurdles functionality is built around a *business necessity* approach to establishing cutpoints. A Hurdle cutpoint is the minimum score applicants must achieve on the assessment tool(s) within a given Hurdle to move to the next Hurdle or stage in the assessment process. When using a business necessity approach, cutpoints are determined based on organizational factors such as budget for processing applicants, timeframes for hiring, or overall administrative burden associated with processing a certain number of applicants in a given stage of the assessment process. This guide is primarily focused on use of Hurdles functionality in USA Staffing, again based on a business necessity approach to setting cutpoints.

ℹ️ **Note:** The term 'Hurdle' is capitalized in this guide when referring to USA Staffing system functionality. Users set up Hurdles in USA Staffing so that applicants meeting certain criteria

progress to the next Hurdle or stage in the assessment process. The Hurdles functionality is built around a *business necessity* approach to establishing cutpoints.

When Hurdles are added to an Assessment Plan in USA Staffing, applicants progress from one Hurdle to the next only if they meet the required Hurdle score criteria (cutpoint). Applicants who do not meet the Hurdle cutpoint do not move on to the next assessment or Hurdle and are unavailable for certification. As discussed more fully in a later section of this guide, veterans' preference is applied at each Hurdle as appropriate. Hurdle cutpoints can be set at different values for different rating combinations (e.g., GS-9 v. GS-11). The Hurdle cutpoint value may be adjusted by HR users who have the permission to do so, including after applicants have applied (e.g., to correspond to a target number of applicants that can be accommodated in the next hurdle). When setting up Hurdles, users determine how assessment scores should be combined within and across Hurdles to arrive at the applicant's final score.

Agencies will want to consider whether using Hurdles, based on a business necessity approach to setting cutpoints, may be useful for a particular position or series/grade based on a strategic discussion between stakeholders such as hiring organizations/managers, HR professionals, and assessment professionals. Use of Hurdles in USA Staffing is most helpful in situations where you are:

(a) looking to pare down a large applicant pool based on organizational factors (e.g., budget for processing applicants, timeframe for hiring, or overall administrative burden associated with processing a certain number of applicants);

(b) wanting to move forward the most capable applicants but there is not a pre-determined minimum required level of proficiency (passing score) established on your assessment(s);

(c) wanting more control over the number of candidates who complete assessments, to better manage time and cost intensive resources; and/or

(d) wanting to minimize exposure to and/or maximize security around certain assessment items.

Agencies opting to use the Passing Score and Hurdles functionality within USA Staffing assume responsibility for the assessments and the specific passing scores/cutpoints that are used. Setting valid and legally defensible passing scores/cutpoints should be done in consultation with assessment experts (e.g., Industrial and Organizational (I/O) psychologists). Agencies may wish to consult their policy experts and legal counsel to determine if using this functionality is appropriate, and if so, for which types of recruitments. We also recommend agencies establish guidelines and procedures for establishing and documenting passing scores/cutpoints to ensure consistency and legal defensibility.

Developing your Assessment Strategy

Decisions around use of Passing Score and Hurdles functionality in USA Staffing are made during the assessment strategy development phase of the hiring process. An assessment strategy can be defined as a plan for designing and implementing one or more assessment tools for an organization, occupation, or a specific vacancy. When mapping out an assessment strategy, there are a wide variety

of variables to consider including those related to context, stakeholders, content, and process as outlined in the Assessment Strategy Presentation Series highlighted below. The assessment strategy is developed well in advance of the vacancy announcement. Once you've conducted your job analysis and decided on your assessment strategy, you can set up your Assessment Plan in USA Staffing.

Note: For additional information, see the **Assessment Strategy Presentation Series** on the USA Staffing Resource Center for a comprehensive overview of assessment strategy considerations. Also, Executive Order 13932, 'Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates', outlines requirements aimed at improving assessment practices and strategies across agencies.

Below are assessment strategy-related questions and considerations specific to use of Passing Score and Hurdles functionality in USA Staffing. It is important to consider each of these questions, in combination with system functionality, as you develop your assessment strategy.

When to Use Multiple Assessments?

Implementing multiple assessments can be useful in situations when there are large numbers of applicants expected and a hurdled approach can help narrow down the applicant pool. Multiple assessments also can be useful when there are a variety of competencies or skills required for the job and knowledge about applicants' capability in these competencies or skills could help identify those applicants who are most likely to be successful in the job. The use of multiple assessments may also provide opportunities for applicants to demonstrate their skills in different ways.

There are other reasons or factors, some related to those above, that may come into play in determining whether to use multiple assessments. For example, consider the type of announcement and hiring authorities being used, pre-existing agreements (e.g., involving bargaining units), and/or compliance issues for a given position. Other important considerations related to use of multiple assessments and the order in which they are administered include cost, test security/exposure, and applicant burden.

When to Use Hurdles, Passing Scores, or Both?

Hurdles based on business necessity should be identified when there are known limitations on the capabilities in the next assessment phase. For example, an agency may choose to limit the number of applicants moving to a structured interview due to the number of resources available to conduct interviews.

Passing Scores should be used when a minimum proficiency has been identified as required before moving to the next phase. For example, due to the level of technical expertise needed to be successful in the position at the time of hire, an agency may require applicants to meet a Passing Score on a job knowledge test prior to moving to the interview phase.

Using both Passing Scores and Hurdles may be helpful when applicants must not only demonstrate the minimum required proficiency level for the position (by passing the assessment) but also be in the best qualified group (by meeting a Hurdle cutpoint) to move forward to the next step in the assessment process.

The number of Hurdles and/or Passing Scores included in your assessment strategy will depend on the number of assessments determined to be appropriate and available for use, as well as the expected number of applicants. In USA Staffing you may use up to 5 Hurdles in your Assessment Plan, and Passing Scores can be applied for Assessment Questionnaires and/or Manual Assessments.

How to Order Assessments?

The use of multiple or progressive hurdles maximizes the efficiency of resources by utilizing the most time and cost intensive resources on the best qualified individuals. Therefore, it is important to consider the order in which the assessments will be administered (i.e., within and across hurdles).

Generally, the assessments that require the fewest resources (i.e., cost and time) will be administered earliest in the assessment process. Assessments that require the most resources are generally incorporated at later stages in the assessment process.

- Assessments commonly administered as part of the first hurdle include: assessment questionnaires (also called occupational questionnaires) and biodata assessments. In addition, all USA Hire assessments are currently included in the first hurdle.

- Assessments commonly administered at later hurdles can include custom cognitive ability tests, personality tests, situational judgment tests, job knowledge tests, writing assessments, work samples/simulations, accomplishment records, or structured interviews. In USA Staffing, these assessments would be built as Manual Assessments. In addition, structured resume review assessments can be built in a later hurdle using the SME Evaluation assessment type in USA Staffing.

As mentioned earlier, other important considerations related to the order in which assessments are administered include cost, test security/exposure, and applicant burden.

How to Score Assessments for Each Rating Combination?

For each assessment and rating combination, you will need to determine if the assessment will be used pass/fail and/or if applicants will receive a score. If scored, you also will want to determine if/how scores will be combined both within a Hurdle and across Hurdles to arrive at the final applicant scores. In some cases, you may decide it makes sense to use the score on the last assessment administered vs. combining Hurdle scores to compute a final score. If combining scores, you will need to determine if the assessment scores should be standardized prior to combining them, as well as the weight each assessment should receive in computing the Hurdle/Final score.

Note: Scores are generally standardized prior to combining them. Circumstances under which one may opt NOT to standardize assessment or Hurdle scores prior to combining them include:

- Only a very small number of applicants completed one or more assessments (e.g., less than 10).

- Most applicants received (or typically receive) the same or similar scores on one or more assessments.

In developing your scoring strategy, consider also whether you will use Hurdle cutpoints. For each Hurdle that contains rated (scored) assessments (except the final Hurdle), agencies are able to establish a Hurdle cutpoint, if desired. If using Hurdle cutpoints, you will need to determine how they will be established and what criteria will be used to establish them, and include supporting documentation in the recruitment case file. For example, a cutpoint could be set ahead of time or determined later in the process (i.e., based on the number of applicants that can be accommodated in the next phase of the assessment process). In addition, when announcing multiple graded positions, you will need to determine if the Hurdle cutpoint will be the same or different across grade levels.

> **Note:** Agencies need documentation that is consistent with professional and legal guidelines for setting Hurdle cutpoints. Further information about documentation requirements can be found in:

- [Uniform Employee Selection Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (uniformguidelines.com)](uniformguidelines.com)
- [The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (apa.org)](apa.org)
- [Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures | Fifth Edition (apa.org)](apa.org)

Implementing a Multiple Hurdle Assessment Strategy in USA Staffing

With an assessment strategy in place, you can implement it in USA Staffing. If you have determined that using multiple hurdles, based on a business necessity approach to setting cutpoints, will be useful for the target position or series/grade, see the remainder of this guide. Remaining sections focus on how to: create your Assessment Plan, implement scoring decisions, select Veterans Preference settings, inform applicants as to how they will be evaluated, filter applicant lists, and send applicant notifications throughout the multiple hurdle process.

> **Note:** Please be sure to use the Case File documents to record the job analysis results and the subject matter experts, human resources professions, and assessment experts who participated in the development and application of the assessment plan.

Creating Your Assessment Plan in USA Staffing

An Assessment Plan with multiple hurdles (i.e., using the Hurdles functionality) can be built either within a Vacancy's Assessment Package or as part of an Assessment Package Template. To do so:

1. Click the **New Hurdle** button to create each of the additional Hurdles needed, up to a maximum total of five Hurdles.
2. Name each hurdle and click **Save Hurdles** when ready.

3. Create the assessments within each Hurdle by clicking the New Assessment button. Please note:

- Hurdle 1 can contain any kind of assessments (AQ, USA Hire, Manual and/or SME Evaluation). For more information on creating and scoring AQs, please see the **Assessment Scoring and Weighting Decision Guide** on the USA Staffing Resource Center. **Note:** If using both USA Hire and SME Evaluation assessments, they must be in separate hurdles.
- Hurdles 2-5 can only contain Manual or SME Evaluation assessments at this time. For more information on Manual Assessments, please see the **Manual Assessment User Guide** on the USA Staffing Resource Center. For more information on SME Evaluation assessments, please see the **SME Evaluation HR User Guide, SME Evaluation Assessment Methods Guide,** and other resources for the Structured Resume Review process available on the USA Staffing Resource Center.
- USA Hire assessments can be added to a Vacancy's Assessment Package by using the **Select Template** option from the Gear menu. For more information on USA Hire, please see the **USA Hire User Guide** on the USA Hire Resource Center.

Implementing Scoring Decisions

As outlined above, there are scoring decisions that need to be made as part of the assessment strategy development. These decisions will determine how you configure USA Staffing with regard to combining scores, standardizing scores, and setting Hurdle cutpoints.

Combining Scores

Depending on the assessment strategy for your recruitment, you may have one or more rated (scored) assessments within a Hurdle. If you have multiple rated assessments within the same Hurdle, the system will default to equally weighting the assessments to determine the Hurdle score. On the Assessment Plan page, you can adjust the proportional weights for each one according to your job analysis and Subject Matter Expert (SME) input.

Similarly, if you have multiple Hurdles where the assessments are used for rating, you may choose to combine scores across Hurdles when calculating the applicants' final scores. Scoring decisions across Hurdles are documented on the Hurdle Criteria page. If you do combine scores from multiple Hurdles to determine the final score, the system will default to equally weighting the Hurdle scores, and you can adjust the proportional weights for each Hurdle according to your job analysis and SME input.

Standardizing Scores

One important factor to consider when combining assessment scores, either within a Hurdle or across Hurdles, is standardization. Standardization is the process of converting an assessment score to a common metric while considering how applicants performed relative to each other. Calculating a standardized score includes finding the average score and determining how spread out the applicant scores are from the average.

In USA Staffing, scores are standardized:

1. **When using a USA Hire battery.** USA Hire scores are always standardized, and when the Assessment Plan contains an AQ and one or more USA Hire battery, the AQ scores will be standardized as well.
2. **When using a Manual Assessment.** Manual Assessment scores are standardized if the HR user turns on the Standardize scores setting for the Manual Assessment. When the Assessment Plan contains an AQ and a Manual Assessment that has the Standardize scores setting turned on, the AQ scores will be standardized as well. For more information on Manual Assessments, please see the **Manual Assessment User Guide** on the USA Staffing Resource Center.
3. **When multiple AQs are used to rate applicants.** AQ scores will be standardized if the Rating checkbox is selected for more than one AQ within an Assessment Plan.

Keep in mind that standardizing scores does not affect the order of applicant scores (i.e., applicants who performed better will still score higher than those who performed less well). However, depending on the assessments and applicant pool, fewer applicants may score at the top of the 70 – 100 range when scores are standardized. When standardizing and combining scores, agencies may wish to consider adjusting category rating cutpoint values to account for standardization (e.g., to ensure a sufficient number of candidates place in the highest quality category).

Hurdle Score Cutpoint Values

The Hurdle Criteria page is also where you can set the cutpoint values that will be used to determine which applicants move forward based on the results they received on the assessments contained within the previous Hurdle. The Hurdle Score Cutpoint values can be set for each rating combination on the 70-100 scale with up to 2 decimal points. Applicants who meet the Hurdle Score Cutpoint will be able to proceed to the next Hurdle, while those who are qualified but did not score high enough to meet the Hurdle Score Cutpoint will be automatically assigned the NF notification message code:

NF - You are tentatively eligible for this series/grade combination. However, based on the results of the assessment(s) completed so far and the needs of the hiring agency, you are not being moved to the next phase of the hiring process at this time.

The Hurdle Score Cutpoint values can be adjusted or removed altogether at a later point in time, if necessary. All changes will be tracked in the Hurdle Criteria page History. For example, if your agency determined that only the top 100 applicants will move from Hurdle 1 to Hurdle 2 based on business necessity, you may not know ahead of time which cutpoint value will result in that number of applicants. If you do make a change to the Hurdle Criteria after the announcement has been released and opened to USAJOBS, please be sure to add notes or attach supporting documents to the case file to support/justify it.

Selecting Veterans' Preference Settings

If your vacancy announcement is open to the public through Delegated Examining procedures, you will need to apply veterans' preference to the hurdling process. The veterans' preference settings can

be found in the **Hurdle Settings** section on the Settings page of the Assessment Package or the Assessment Package Template.

By default, the Hurdle Settings will have the "Apply veterans' preference to hurdles" option selected, as well as the two settings enabled for:

1. *Add veterans' preference points to determine if the hurdle cutpoint is met* – this setting is automatically enabled and cannot be disabled if you are applying veterans' preference to Hurdles. This default setting is consistent with OPM multiple hurdles guidance in the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#) (DEOH).

2. *"Float" eligible CP/CPS veterans to the next hurdle regardless of their score* – this setting can be set by rating combination because CP/CPS veterans do not "float" for professional and scientific positions at the GS-9 or higher (similar to category rating procedures).

If your announcement will not be announced through Delegated Examining (e.g., Merit Promotion, Direct Hire, etc.), select the option for "Do not apply veterans' preference to hurdles". Doing so will also automatically turn off the two other settings for adding veterans' preference points or floating CP/CPS veterans.

Informing Applicants How They Will Be Evaluated

Agencies must inform applicants of the process that will be used to assess their qualifications. As outlined in the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook (DEOH)](#), you will want to include the following:

- An overview of the type of assessments used and the order in which they will be administered
- Language explaining at a high level when Passing Score will be used, for example:
  - "Only applicants meeting or exceeding the minimum required level of proficiency will move forward." or
  - "The assessment includes a passing score based on the minimum level of required proficiency across critical competencies. You must meet or exceed the passing score to be considered. You will not be considered for the position if you score below the passing score."
- Language explaining at a high level when Hurdle Cutpoints will be used, for example:
  - "The highest performing candidates based on the results of the [X] assessment will be invited to complete the [Y] assessment." or
  - "Based on agency resources, a subset of those submitting complete application packages and completing the online assessment will move on to the next phase of the process."
- The competencies that will be assessed throughout the process
- The ranking method to be used (i.e., category rating), identifying the category levels such as Best Qualified and Highly Qualified

- A link to any assessment-related information on the agency's website (e.g., career information, test preparation guide) as appropriate
- Next steps in the hiring and notification process

Important to note, the actual Passing Score criteria for an assessment and the specific Hurdle cutpoints used to determine which applicants move forward from one Hurdle to the next are considered secure test information and are generally not disclosed to applicants. Similarly, applicant Hurdle scores, which are interim in nature, are generally not disclosed.

Rating Applicants for Multiple Hurdles

Once the assessments in the first Hurdle are completed, USA Staffing will determine which applicants are eligible to move forward to the next assessment Hurdle based on the Hurdle criteria and veterans' preference settings established in the Assessment Package:

- Eligible applicants who met the Hurdle criteria will be in a **PA – Pending Assessment** status.

- Eligible applicants who did not meet the Hurdle criteria will be in an **NF – Not Moving Forward** status.

If the position has multiple rating combinations, it is possible an applicant might receive an NF NOR code for one grade level and a PA NOR code for another. In this scenario, their overall Record Status Code (RSC) would be PA, since they are eligible to proceed to the next Hurdle for at least one of the grade levels.

Understanding Applicant Rating Details

When using Hurdles, an applicant's **Rating Details** will display additional information for each of their Hurdles at each rating combination. The Rating Details may be viewed either from an applicant's record or from an applicant list.

- **Hurdle Minimum Qualifications (MQ)** – This is the NOR code that the applicant received at the Hurdle level as a result of the assessments contained within the Hurdle. For example, an applicant might have a Hurdle 1 MQ of ELTE indicating they completed the assessments in that Hurdle and are eligible based on those results and a Hurdle 2 MQ of PA indicating they need to complete the assessments in Hurdle 2.

- **Hurdle Score** – This is the score the applicant received on the assessment(s) contained within the Hurdle and is the score used to determine if the applicant met the Hurdle criteria to move forward. If the Hurdle only contains a single rated assessment, the assessment Transmuted Rating will be the same as the Hurdle Score. If the Hurdle contains multiple rated assessments, the Hurdle Score will be calculated based on the proportional weights assigned to each assessment in the Assessment Plan.

  Note: If the applicant is a veterans' preference eligible, a **Hurdle Augmented Score** is also saved and reflects the 5 or 10 additional points based on their veterans' preference type. If the Hurdle Settings indicate that veterans' preference should be applied, then the Hurdle Augmented Score is used in determining if the applicant met

the Hurdle criteria to move forward to the next assessment Hurdle (in addition, CP/CPS veterans may float even if they do not meet the Hurdle criteria with their Hurdle Augmented Score if the setting for doing so is applied). The Hurdle Augmented Score is not visible in the applicant Rating Details, but it is available as an applicant list filter.

- **Hurdle Status** – This is the status of the Hurdle for an applicant at a specific rating combination:

    o **Active** – Indicates one or more of the assessments within that Hurdle are in progress. This status will be automatically applied for the first Hurdle or when the previous Hurdle's criteria is met for the applicant to proceed to the current Hurdle.

    o **Pending** – Indicates the Hurdle is not active because the applicant is still completing the assessments in a previous Hurdle.

    o **Inactive** – Indicates the Hurdle is not active because the applicant didn't meet the Hurdle criteria to move forward in a previous Hurdle.

    o **Complete** – Indicates all the assessments contained within that Hurdle have been completed, i.e., the applicant has received a minimum qualifications code and an assessment-level score (if applicable) for each assessment.

Filtering Applicant Lists

Adjudicating Veterans' Preference

If the Hurdle Settings were configured to apply veterans' preference, the system will use the applicants' veterans' preference claims in determining whether they met the Hurdle criteria. You may wish to adjudicate applicant veterans' preference claims before proceeding to the assessment(s) in the second/subsequent Hurdles to avoid applicants continuing to the next step when they might ultimately not be eligible to move forward.

To identify a list of applicants to be adjudicated after Hurdle 1 is complete:

1. From the Applicant Overview tab, click the **Create List** button.

2. Filter the applicant list by:

    a. Status (RSC): PA

    b. Veterans' Preference: SSP, TP, CP, CPS, XP, XP

If, as a result of the veterans' preference adjudication, an applicant no longer meets the Hurdle criteria, the system will automatically update their status from PA to NF as soon as the adjudication decision is saved. This will happen regardless of when the adjudication occurs (i.e., before or after the assessments in the later Hurdles are completed).

Identifying Applicants Who Do/Don't Move Forward

Applicants who meet the Hurdle cutpoint to move forward from one Hurdle to another will be placed in a PA – Pending Assessment status. Applicants who do not meet the Hurdle cutpoint will automatically be placed in an NF – Not Moving Forward status. To identify applicants who should move to the next step in the assessment process, you can simply filter an applicant list by the PA NOR code or RSC.

> **Note:** If the vacancy has multiple rating combinations (i.e., multiple grades or interdisciplinary) it is better to use the PA NOR code filter, rather than the filter for the PA RSC, when using the **Manual Assessment Export** option. By using the PA NOR code filter, the export file will only include the rows for the applicant rating combinations that have a PA NOR code. In contrast, using the PA RSC filter will include in the export file all rating combinations for applicants who have an overall PA RSC, even if some of their rating combinations have a different NOR code (e.g., PA at the GS-9 level and IQID at the GS-11 level).

Applying Hurdle Filters

When using Hurdles, an additional **Hurdle Filter** option will display on an applicant list, in the Advanced Filters section. This filter allows the list to be narrowed down by: Hurdle Status, Hurdle Score, or Hurdle Augmented Score. This filter works in a similar way to the other Advanced Filters and allows an HR user to apply more than one filter criteria (each one has to be added and saved separately). If more than one Hurdle Filter is added, the system will only display applicants who meet *all* the filter criteria in the list.

Hurdle Filters could be used in a variety of situations, for example:

- If an HR user wanted to determine how many applicants completed Hurdle 1, they could apply a *Hurdle Status* filter for Complete. Similarly, if they wanted to determine how many applicants are actively completing Hurdle 2, they could apply a *Hurdle Status* filter for Active. Adding both a Hurdle 1: Complete filter and a Hurdle 2: Active filter to the same applicant list would identify the applicants who meet both criteria.

- If an agency decided to advance the top 20 applicants from Hurdle 1 to Hurdle 2, a *Hurdle Score* filter could be used to determine which Hurdle cutpoint would achieve that result. If the position applied veterans' preference, the *Hurdle Augmented Score* filter type could be used. Once the cutpoint is identified, the Hurdle Criteria could then be updated in the Assessment Package (doing so would require the Assessment Package to be un-completed). Re-completing the Assessment Package after the update would automatically trigger a vacancy-wide re-rate so that applicant ratings are appropriately updated.

> **Note:** Both the *Hurdle Filter* and the *Hurdle Criteria* allow a hurdle score cutpoint to have up to two decimal points if additional precision is needed to obtain the desired number of candidates.

Sending Applicant Notifications

It is up to each agency to establish business processes for notifying applicants of their status as they are proceeding through the different assessment Hurdles. While notifications are not required to be sent after each Hurdle (unlike the touchpoint notifications) it is a best practice to do so in the interest of transparency and to keep applicants engaged throughout the process.

Example Multiple Hurdle Assessment Approaches

This section provides several examples to help illustrate how a multiple hurdles approach might be used in practice. These are only examples and are not intended to recommend a particular assessment strategy. Please follow your agency's guidance on setting up the multiple hurdles assessment process for specific recruitments.

Example 1: AQ and Accomplishment Record Panel Review

Scenario: An agency needs to fill a Budget Director, GS-0560-15 position, and has decided to open the announcement to all US citizens using Category Rating procedures. Based on job analysis data and in consultation with the hiring manager/SMEs, the agency has developed an accomplishment record which will be used as a second assessment hurdle. Specifically, a panel of trained SMEs will rate competency-based narratives (accomplishments) submitted by applicants who rated themselves above a threshold of 90 on an AQ based on business necessity. The agency is expecting a small number of applicants for this location.

Assessment Package Set Up:

- Assessment Plan:
  - **Hurdle 1**: AQ used for Screen-out and Rating
    Assessment Method: Training & Experience (Self Evaluation)
    Rating Method: Weight-Based
    Scoring: Competency-level
  - **Hurdle 2**: Manual Assessment used only for Rating with:
    - *Assessment Method:* Panel Review
    - *Assessment Method Details:* Accomplishment Record
    - *Standardize scores* setting is kept off because the agency anticipates a small volume of applicants for this location
    - *Minimum Raw Score:* 0 (this is the minimum number of points possible on the accomplishment record)
    - *Maximum Raw Score:* 100 (this is the maximum number of points possible on the accomplishment record)
- Hurdle Criteria:
  - Hurdle 1 implements a *Hurdle Score Cutpoint of 90* (highest performing applicants on the self-evaluation AQ).
  - Both Hurdle 1 and Hurdle 2 are checked as *Used for Final Rating*, with *equal proportional weights* based on job analysis/SME input.
- Settings:
  - Since this is a DE announcement, the *Apply veterans' preference to hurdles* is enabled.
  - *"Float" eligible CP/CPS veterans to the next hurdle regardless of their score* is enabled since 0560-15 is not a professional/scientific position.

Applicant Assessment Process:

1. Once the announcement has closed, an HR user creates an applicant list using a NOR Code filter for PA and reviews applicant documents in order to:
   - Adjudicate CTAP/ICTAP eligibility claims.
   - Adjudicate veterans' preference claims.
   - Verify applicants meet minimum qualification requirements.
2. Once all PA applicants have been reviewed, the HR user contacts these applicants to obtain their accomplishment records, which can be uploaded to each applicant's *Documents* area.
3. Once the accomplishment records are received, the HR user will:
   - *Export Manual Assessment File* to obtain a spreadsheet with the PA applicants.
   - *Generate Stored List* of the PA applicants.
   - Send the Stored List through a Panel Review to the SMEs who will be conducting the accomplishment record review, attaching the exported file as well as the accomplishment record instructions on rating each application.
   - Send applicants Notifications to let them know whether or not they're moving to the next step in the assessment process.
4. Once the panel members have completed their accomplishment record reviews, the panel coordinator or HR user completes the Assessment Rating column on the Export file with the applicant scores.
5. The HR user uses a Saved List to *Import Manual Assessment Results*, which generates applicant final scores based on the 50/50 weights assigned to the two hurdles.
6. The HR user can then issue and send the Category Rating certificate to the hiring manager and send applicants their Notice of Referral notifications.

Example 2: AQ and Structured Resume Review

Scenario: An agency needs to fill multiple Research Microbiologist, GS-0403-13 positions, and has decided to open the announcement to all US citizens using Category Rating procedures. As this is a highly technical position, the applicant pool is expected to be a manageable size, there are SMEs available, and the hiring organization needs to make three selections, the agency has determined that using a Structured Resume Review process would be a good choice as a second assessment hurdle. The HR specialist and SMEs have worked together to develop the specialized experience statements that SMEs will use to evaluate applicant resumes. Based on SME availability, only the top 50 candidates will proceed to the Structured Resume Review process.

Assessment Package Set Up:

1. Assessment Plan:
   - **Hurdle 1**: AQ used for *Screen-out* and *Rating*
     - *Assessment Method:* Training & Experience (Self Evaluation)
     - *Rating Method:* Weight-Based
     - *Scoring:* Competency-level
   - **Hurdle 2**: SME Evaluation used only for *Screen-out* with:

- - *Assessment Method:* Structured Resume Review (EO Compliant)
  - *Number of SME Evaluations Required:* 2
  - *Evaluation Justification Notes Required:* For All Responses
2. Hurdle Criteria:
   - Hurdle 1 implements a *Hurdle Score Cutpoint of 85,* which can later be adjusted as needed, once the announcement has closed and the appropriate cutpoint is identified that will lead to 50 candidates being included in the SME Review.
   - Only Hurdle 1 is checked as *Used for Final Rating*, as the SME Evaluation assessment is only used for screen-out and will not generate an applicant score.
3. Settings:
   - Since this is a DE announcement, the *Apply veterans' preference to hurdles* is enabled.
   - *"Float" eligible CP/CPS veterans to the next hurdle regardless of their score* is <u>disabled</u> since 0403-13 is a professional/scientific position at the GS-9 or higher.
   - *Do not "float" eligible CP/CPS veterans when assigning Categories* is <u>enabled</u> since 0403-13 is a professional/scientific position at the GS-9 or higher.

Applicant Assessment Process:

1. Once the announcement has closed, an HR user creates an applicant list using a NOR Code filter for PA and reviews applicant documents in order to:
   - Adjudicate CTAP/ICTAP eligibility claims.
   - Adjudicate veterans' preference claims.
   - Review applicant transcripts to verify they meet the individual occupational requirements (education).
2. If there are more/fewer than 50 applicants who are in a PA status (the desired number to proceed to the structured resume review assessment), the HR user can:
   - Use a **Hurdle Filter** with a *Hurdle Augmented Score* filter type to identify the cutpoint that will lead to 50 applicants being eligible to move forward. **Note:** The hurdle score cutpoint can have up to two decimal points if additional precision is needed to obtain the desired number of candidates.
   - Update the Hurdle Criteria on the Assessment Package with that new cutpoint value for Hurdle 1. Once the Assessment Package is completed again, this will initiate a vacancy-wide re-rate that will update the applicants to PA/NF status, as appropriate.
- Next, the HR user creates and sends an SME Review:
   - Identify the *Due Date* for the review.
   - *Add Reviewers*, indicate if one or more of them will act as a *Tiebreaker Only*, and *Send Review.*
   - Send applicants Notifications to let them know whether or not they're moving to the next step in the assessment process.
3. As SMEs are completing the evaluations, the HR user can monitor their progress by reviewing and either accepting or returning the evaluation to the SME so they can amend one or more justification notes.
4. Once all SME Evaluations are accepted, the SME Review can be marked complete and the system will update the applicants from PA to ELTE or IQSM status, as appropriate.

5. The HR user can then issue and send the Category Rating certificate to the hiring manager and send applicants their Notice of Referral notifications.

Example 3: AQ with Passing Score, USA Hire, and Structured Resume Review

Scenario: An agency needs to hire a Content Strategist, GS-0301-13 position, and the announcement will be open to all US citizens using Category Rating procedures. Based on job analysis data, in consultation with the hiring manager/SMEs, and with the help of I/O psychologists, the agency has developed an AQ with a minimum required level of proficiency (passing score criteria). They also intend to use the USA Hire Standard assessment battery and a Structured Resume Review to further evaluate candidates prior to referral. The agency has the SME resources needed to rate up to 100 applicants for the Structured Resume Review.

Assessment Package Set Up:

1. Assessment Plan:
   o **Hurdle 1**:
      ▪ AQ used for *Screen-out*, *Rating*, and *Passing Score*
      ▪ Standard USA Hire 0301-13 used for *Rating*
      ▪ Equal weights assigned to the AQ and USA Hire within Hurdle 1 based on job analysis/SME input
   o **Hurdle 2**: SME Evaluation used only for *Screen-out* with:
      ▪ *Assessment Method:* Structured Resume Review (EO Compliant)
      ▪ *Number of SME Evaluations Required:* 2
      ▪ *Evaluation Justification Notes Required:* For All Responses
2. Hurdle Criteria:
   o Based on prior vacancies, the agency estimates that using a *Hurdle Score Cutpoint* of 85 will correspond with approximately 100 applicants moving forward (to be updated as needed).
   o Only Hurdle 1 is checked as *Used for Final Rating*, since the SME Evaluation assessment is only used for screen-out and will not generate an applicant score.
3. Settings:
   o Since this is a DE announcement, the *Apply veterans' preference to hurdles* is enabled.
   o *"Float" eligible CP/CPS veterans to the next hurdle regardless of their score* is enabled since 0301-13 is not a professional/scientific position.

Applicant Assessment Process:

1. Once the announcement has closed and the USA Hire assessment window has ended, an HR user creates an applicant list using a NOR Code filter for PA and reviews applicant documents in order to:
   o Adjudicate CTAP/ICTAP eligibility claims.
   o Adjudicate veterans' preference claims.

2. Once all PA applicants have been reviewed, the HR user verifies that the number of applicants eligible to move forward is 100. If needed, a *Hurdle Filter* on an applicant list can be used to determine the *Hurdle Augmented Score* that will coincide with the target number of applicants based on business necessity, and the *Hurdle Score Cutpoint* on the *Hurdle Criteria* page can be adjusted to match it. **Note**: Both the *Hurdle Filter* and the *Hurdle Criteria* allow a hurdle score cutpoint to have up to two decimal points if additional precision is needed to obtain the desired number of candidates.

3. The HR user creates and sends an SME Review:
   o Identify the *Due Date* for the review.
   o *Add Reviewers*, indicate if one or more of them will act as a *Tiebreaker Only*, and *Send Review.*
   o Send applicants Notifications to let them know whether or not they're moving to the next step in the assessment process.

3. As SMEs are completing the evaluations, the HR user can monitor their progress by reviewing and either accepting or returning the evaluation to the SME so they can amend one or more justification notes.

4. Once all SME Evaluations are accepted, the SME Review can be marked complete and the system will update the applicants from PA to ELTE or IQSM status, as appropriate.

5. The HR user can then issue and send the Category Rating certificate to the hiring manager and send applicants their Notice of Referral notifications.

Example 4: AQ, USA Hire, Structured Resume Review, and Structured Interview

Scenario: An agency needs to hire several Data Analyst, GS-0343-13 positions, and plans to share certificates from this announcement with other agencies following the steps in the **USA Staffing Shared Certificates Guide** on the [USA Staffing Resource Center](#). The announcement will be open to all US citizens using Category Rating procedures. Based on job analysis data and in consultation with the hiring manager/SMEs, the agency has decided to use a multiple hurdle process that involves a minimum qualifications AQ, followed by the USA Hire Standard assessment, then a Structured Resume Review, and finally a Structured Interview.

Assessment Package Set Up:

1. Assessment Plan:
   o **Hurdle 1**:
      ▪ Minimum Qualifications AQ used for *Screen-out* only
      ▪ Standard USA Hire 0343-13 used for *Rating* with *Cut Score* enabled (as defaulted/required for this battery with DE announcements)
   o **Hurdle 2**: SME Evaluation used only for *Screen-out* with:
      ▪ *Assessment Method:* Structured Resume Review (EO Compliant)
      ▪ *Number of SME Evaluations Required:* 2
      ▪ *Evaluation Justification Notes Required:* For All Responses
   o **Hurdle 3**: Manual Assessment used for *Screen-out* and *Rating* with:

- - *Assessment Method:* Interview
  - *Assessment Method Details:* Structured Interview
  - *Standardize scores* setting is turned on because scores from the Interview will be combined with the USA Hire results (which are also standardized).
  - *Minimum Raw Score:* 7 (minimum points possible on the interview, which has 7 questions with a scale of 1-5 each)
  - *Maximum Raw Score:* 35 (maximum points possible on the interview)

2. Hurdle Criteria:
   - Hurdle 1 has a *Hurdle Score Cutpoint* of 85 (highest performing applicants on the USA Hire assessments)
   - Hurdle 2 does not have a *Hurdle Score Cutpoint* since the SME Evaluation assessment is used for Screen-out only.
   - Both Hurdle 1 and Hurdle 3 are both checked as *Used for Final Rating*, with *equal proportional weights* based on job analysis/SME input.

3. Settings:
   - Since this is a DE announcement, the *Apply veterans' preference to hurdles* is enabled.
   - *"Float" eligible CP/CPS veterans to the next hurdle regardless of their score* is enabled since 0343-13 is not a professional/scientific position.

Applicant Assessment Process:

1. Once the announcement has closed and the USA Hire assessment window has ended, an HR user creates an applicant list using a NOR Code filter for PA and reviews applicant documents in order to:
   - Adjudicate CTAP/ICTAP eligibility claims.
   - Adjudicate veterans' preference claims.

2. Once all PA applicants have been reviewed, the HR user creates and sends an SME Review:
   - Identify the *Due Date* for the review.
   - *Add Reviewers*, indicate if one or more of them will act as a *Tiebreaker Only*, and *Send Review.*
   - Send applicants Notifications to let them know whether or not they're moving to the next step in the assessment process.

3. As SMEs are completing the evaluations, the HR user can monitor their progress by reviewing and either accepting or returning the evaluation to the SME so they can amend one or more justification notes.

4. Once all SME Evaluations are accepted, the SME Review can be marked complete, and the system will update the applicants who did not meet the specialized experience requirements based on the SME evaluations to IQSM status. Applicants who did meet the specialized experience will remain in a PA status since they are pending completion of the structured interview.

5. Once the SME Review is complete, the HR user will:
   - Create a Saved List and filter it by NOR Code: PA.
   - *Export Manual Assessment File* and if desired, include the applicant email and phone number(s) in the export file to aid in scheduling interviews.

- o Send applicants Notifications to let them know whether or not they're moving to the interview step in the assessment process.
6. Once the applicant interviews have been completed, the interview coordinator or HR user completes the Assessment Rating column on the Export file with the applicant scores. For any applicants who failed to appear or declined the interview request, they can have the NOR code IOIN entered in the Minimum Qualifications Rating column. (IOIN - You did not respond to inquiries about scheduling an interview or did not attend your scheduled interview. As a result, you will no longer be considered for this position.)
7. The HR user uses a Saved List to *Import Manual Assessment Results*, and triggers the *Calculate Manual Assessment Scores* function, which standardizes the interview results and generates applicant final scores based on the 50/50 weights assigned to Hurdles 1 and 3.
8. The HR user can then issue and send the Category Rating certificate to the hiring manager and send applicants their Notice of Referral notifications.

Conclusion

We hope this guide is a helpful resource in using Hurdles in USA Staffing. As mentioned in the introduction, if you are considering a new assessment process using this functionality, we recommend you try out the desired approach from beginning to end in the USA Staffing Training environment first before using it in a live vacancy. This will give you an opportunity to test each step outlined in this guide, document your business process, and make any adjustments that may be needed. If you have questions that were not answered in this guide or if you would like additional assistance in mapping your desired multiple hurdle assessment process, please feel free to contact your USA Staffing Account Manager.

Appendix: Key Terms and Definitions

Assessment – An assessment is a systematic approach to gathering information about individuals in order to make selection, promotion, or other career-related decisions. Assessments can be used to screen and/or rank applicants.

Assessment Questionnaire – Also called occupational questionnaire, an AQ typically consists of multiple choice, yes/no, or similar types of questions that cover a variety of competencies related to the position. It's used to screen for minimum qualifications, as well as assess applicants' training and experience to identify the best qualified.

Assessment Strategy – An assessment strategy is a plan for designing and implementing one or more assessment tools for an organization, occupation, or a specific situation.

Assessment Tool – An assessment tool is any procedure used to measure an individual's employment or career-related qualifications and interests. Common assessment tools include questionnaires, resume reviews, job knowledge or technical skills tests, cognitive ability tests, situational judgment tests, non-cognitive and biographical assessments, writing assessments, and structured interview assessments.

Business Necessity – An approach for setting a cutpoint (i.e., on an assessment, competency(ies), a combination of assessments) on factors other than the minimum level of proficiency needed. When using a business necessity approach, cutpoints are determined based on organizational factors such as budget for processing applicants, timeframes for hiring, or overall administrative burden associated with processing a certain number of applicants in a given stage of the assessment process. The Hurdles functionality in USA Staffing is built around a business necessity approach to establishing cutpoints.

Cutpoint – This guide uses 'cutpoint' when referring to scoring criteria established using a business necessity approach.

Hurdle – In USA Staffing, the term 'Hurdle' (capitalized in this guide when referring to system functionality) is used to refer to system functionality that is built around a business necessity approach to establishing cutpoints. Applicants progress from one hurdle to the next based on Hurdles that HR users set up in USA Staffing.

Hurdle Score Cutpoint – The minimum score applicants must achieve on the assessment tool(s) within a given Hurdle (i.e., as set up in USA Staffing) to move to the next Hurdle or stage in the assessment process. Hurdle Score Cutpoints are established using a business necessity approach. Cutpoint values can be set for each rating combination on a 70-100 scale with up to 2 decimal points.

Manual Assessment – In USA Staffing, a Manual Assessment is a placeholder that allows HR users to document applicant scores for an assessment that occurs after initial application and prior to

certification. The Manual Assessment functionality allows users to import or manually key enter scores for assessments that are delivered outside of the USA Hire system. Manual Assessments can take a variety of forms such as Subject Matter Expert (SME) panel ratings, structured interviews, accomplishment records, agency tests, or composite scores for multiple assessments.

Minimum Required Proficiency – An approach for setting a passing score (i.e., on an assessment, competency(ies), or a combination of assessments). The passing score corresponds to the minimum level of acceptable proficiency on the competency or competencies needed for successful performance in the target position.

Multiple Hurdles – In a broad sense, hurdles or multiple hurdles allow applicants to complete multiple assessments in a progressive fashion. In other words, applicants progress from one hurdle to the next based on whether they meet established scoring criteria.

Panel Review – A review of applicants' documents (e.g., resume, transcripts, work product sample) conducted by trained Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) working either independently or as a panel to evaluate applicants' qualifications. In USA Staffing, the Panel Review functionality allows an HR user to send a *Stored List* of applicants to one or more SMEs. They are typically sent prior to certification and allow the SMEs, who are provided Hiring Manager user access, to view applicant documents and application information within the secure USA Staffing interface.

Passing Score – This guide uses 'Passing Score' (capitalized in this guide when referring to system functionality) when referring to scoring criteria established based on a minimum required proficiency approach.

Questionnaire: Questionnaire is one of four *Assessment Types* available in USA Staffing, the other three being Manual, External (aka USA Hire), and SME Evaluation. Questionnaires are typically used to assess an applicant's training and experience (self-evaluation assessment) but may also be used for biographical data (biodata) tests, to obtain short answers for verification purposes, or to collect narrative responses that will later be scored.

SME Evaluation – SME Evaluation is one of four *Assessment Types* available in USA Staffing, the other three being Questionnaire, Manual, and External (aka USA Hire). An SME Evaluation allows HR Users to interact directly with SMEs who will evaluate applicants using the Structured Resume Review process.

SME Review – In USA Staffing, the Subject Matter Expert (SME) *Review Type* allows an HR user to send applicants who are in a PA status to Hiring Manager users who will act as SMEs to determine if the applicant resume demonstrates the specialized experience required for the position, using the evaluation criteria established in the SME Evaluation assessment that is linked to the review.

Standardization – Process of converting an assessment score to a common metric while considering how applicants performed relative to each other.

Structured Resume Review – OPM defines a Structured Resume Review as a screening (pass/fail) assessment whereby a trained panel of two or more subject matter experts (SMEs) follows a systematic process to review an applicant's resume and come to agreement on whether the applicant has the required specialized experience necessary to successfully perform the job. The Structured Resume Review is intended to screen out individuals who do not have the specialized experience required. This method does not identify best qualified applicants, provide a numerical score, or determine a category rating placement. In USA Staffing, the Structured Resume Review functionality collects the SMEs' evaluations and justifications, determines if there are discrepancies between SMEs, brings in a tiebreaker SME as needed, and presents the information in an organized way to the HR User. When used following OPM guidance, it meets EO 13932 requirements.

USA Hire – An online assessment program that provides Federal agencies with powerful assessment tools that enable your organization to find top talent and make better hiring decisions. For more information, please see the **What Is USA Hire?** video on the USA Hire Resource Center.

USA Hire Cut Score Battery – USA Hire uses the term 'cut score' to refer to the minimum required proficiency needed to pass a USA Hire Standard assessment battery for a given series/grade.