

Frequently Asked Questions for the Student Education Employment Program

The Program

1. Q. What is the Student Education Employment Program (SEEP)?

A. The Student Educational Employment Program provides Federal employment opportunities to students who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment as degree seeking students taking at least a half-time academic, technical, or vocational course load in an accredited high school, technical, vocational, 2 or 4 year college or university, graduate or professional school.

The SEEP is made up of two individual programs, the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP).

2. Q. What are the differences between the STEP and SCEP?

A. Students hired under the STEP authority are not eligible for noncompetitive conversion into permanent, full-time (PFT) positions. Students hired under the SCEP authority may be noncompetitively converted to term, career, or career-conditional appointments following completion of their academic and work experience requirements.

3. Q. How does the SEEP help me get a job with the Cadastral Survey Program?

A. The SEEP allows you to work during the summer months to gain employment experience while completing a two or four year surveying or survey-related degree. You may be noncompetitively converted to a permanent, full time position upon successful completion of the program.

Additional Information Regarding SCEP – Student Career Experience Program

A. Generally students will have worked at least one field season for the BLM as a STEP prior to being considered for the SCEP program.

B. Students who have achieved the expectations outlined at the beginning of the field season may be rehired the following season or may be offered a permanent, full-time position, without competing against other candidates.

C. A student must eventually make the transition from STEP to SCEP in order to be hired through the non-competitive hiring process established by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Without obtaining SCEP status while still attending college, the individual not be allowed to convert to permanent full time status non-competitively. Additionally, successful completion of the SCEP program does not guarantee conversion to a permanent full time position.

What kind of working conditions can I expect?

Working for BLM Cadastral Surveys, depending on geographical area, can involve working in remote areas with steep terrain and thick vegetation. Employment with BLM Cadastral Surveys can be quite arduous. Working conditions vary by area and should be discussed with the hiring office early in the hiring process. Pictures located on the BLM Cadastral Survey Careers website (<http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/cadastralsurvey/Careers.html>) depict terrain and working conditions.

Qualifications**4. Q. How do I qualify for either the STEP or SCEP?****A. To qualify for the STEP:**

- 1) At least half time in school
- 2) Maintain at least 2.0 GPA
- 3) In good standing
- 4) No requirement to have related degree in context of job applied for

B. To qualify for the SCEP:

- 1) Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a degree seeking student taking at least half-time academic, two or four year college or university, graduate or professional school; be enrolled in a degree related to the position being applied for. Those enrolled in a four year degree typically are more competitive than those who are not
2. Have a minimum grade point average of 2.5 or greater on a 4.0 scale, and
3. Be in good academic standing at the school in which you are enrolled.

Application Process**5. Q. How do I apply?**

A. Refer to the list of State Office Contacts at the end of this document. Contact someone from the State Office in which you are interested in working. The point-of-contact will tell you how to apply for a position in that office.

6. Q. What documents are required for application?

- A.** At the very minimum, each student will need at least these three documents:
1. Copies of your transcripts (unofficial copies are acceptable);
 2. Current resume, and

3. Letter of recommendation from your academic advisor stating you are in good standing with your academic institution. Some State Offices require three letters of recommendation.

Benefits

7. Q. Are students eligible for annual and sick leave?

A. Yes. Students in both programs earn annual and sick leave.

8. Q. Are students eligible for health and life insurance benefits?

A. Health and life insurance coverage for Federal employees depends on the type of appointment an employee has and the expectation of substantial employment during the year. Students in the STEP are considered temporary employees and are generally not entitled to these benefits. However, once students have been continuously employed for a year without a break in service exceeding five days, they may enroll in the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, but they would have to pay 100 percent of the premium (i.e., both the employee and government share). There is no provision for temporary employees to be eligible for life insurance coverage.

Students in the SCEP are eligible for both health and life insurance coverage as long as they are expected to be employed under this appointment authority for at least one year and are expected to be in a pay status for at least one-third of the total period of time from the date of their initial appointment to the date of the completion of the program. Cost of premiums is split between the employee and the agency, as for all permanent employees. (See [5 CFR 870.202](#) for life insurance and [5 CFR 890.102](#) for health benefits.)

9. Q. Are students eligible for retirement benefits?

A. Students in the STEP are generally ineligible for retirement coverage (see [5 CFR 831.201](#) and [5 CFR 842.105](#)). Students in the SCEP with less than five years of prior civilian service are generally covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) (see [5 CFR part 842](#)).

10. Q. Does a student's work experience, while on the student temporary appointment, count towards the required 640 hours necessary for noncompetitive conversion to career-conditional employment?

A. Yes, if the work performed is related to the student's academic studies and career goals. There should be clear documentation showing the relatedness between the work (actual duties/tasks/assignments) performed while on the STEP appointment and the SCEP appointment.

11. Q. Does the time spent on the Student Temporary Employment Program count towards career tenure? time-in-grade?

A. The time does not count towards career tenure because the three-year period must begin and end with non-temporary employment in the competitive service. However, the time spent on the student temporary appointment would be creditable towards any time in grade calculation.

Conversion to Permanent Full Time Upon Graduation

12. Q. How does a student transition from being in the STEP or SCEP to being a permanent employee? (Note: Noncompetitive conversion to a PFT position requires that the student attain SCEP status before graduation.)

A. A student is required to work 640 hours prior to being converted to a permanent position. The most common manner in which this is done is for a student to be hired into the STEP and sometime before graduation, be converted to the SCEP. Provided the relationship between the student and BLM is acceptable, and depending on whether the student is a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior, the student may terminate his employment with the BLM at the end of the summer and return to school. Also, at least 640 hours must have been in the same field as the position non-competitively converted into upon graduation. The student must be a U.S. citizen upon graduation to be eligible for conversion.

In the case of a person who was hired as a STEP and it is mutually agreed that the student will work for BLM upon graduation, said student is often converted to a SCEP during the last field season prior to graduation. Upon completion of the 640 hours and having completed the requirements for the student's degree (usually marked by the day of graduation), the BLM has 120 days to convert the student from a SCEP status to a permanent full time position. **Also, at least 320 hours (of the minimum 640) must be earned while in SCEP status. If graduation is expected prior to meeting these time-in-service requirements, the student should be aware that he or she may not be successful in meeting the minimum requirements to successfully convert non-competitively. Analysis of projected hours should be performed prior to entering the SEEP program.**

13. Q. Has the 120-Day conversion period been changed?

A. No. The requirement that noncompetitive conversions must take place within 120 days after completing their educational requirements is in Executive Order 12015 and has not been changed. The graduation date is typically the date for computing the 120 days. However, in certain circumstances this requirement may be waived to be interpreted as "Upon satisfactory completion of course requirements."

14. Q. Can a student work any of the *required* 640 hours necessary for conversion, after he/she completes his/her educational requirements?

A. The *required* work experience must be gained *prior* to, or *concurrent with* the completion of the student's education. This requirement is stated in the Executive order.

15. Q. Is a student only eligible for noncompetitive conversion in the agency where the student worked prior to the completion of his/her education?

A. No. A student is eligible to be noncompetitively converted in any Federal agency. Agency student employment coordinators are urged to try and place the graduates with other agencies, if placement in their own agency is not possible. Checking the job listings on the USAJOBS is one way to locate appropriate positions for graduated students. See #12 above for more discussion regarding the types of experience incurred during the 640 hours.

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