



DECA MANUAL 50-31.01

PATHWAYS PROGRAMS

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Approved by:	Cynthia A. Craft Director, Human Resources

Purpose: This issuance manual:

- Establishes DeCA Pathway Program in compliance with Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5105.55. This Manual provides detailed step-by-step procedures for carrying out the policy, assigns responsibilities, and provides guidance and procedures for the Pathways for Students and Recent Graduates (RG) to Federal Career Program.

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SECTION 1: GENERAL ISSUANCE INFORMATION

1.1. Applicability. This manual applies to all Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) activities.

1.2. Policy. This Manual implements policies as defined in DeCA Directive (DeCAD) 50-18 and is in compliance with references listed in this document.

1.3. Management Control System. This manual contains internal management control provisions that are subject to evaluation and testing as required by DeCA Directive 70-2, "Internal Control Program."

SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. Director, Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA): The Director, DeCA shall:

- a. Be responsible for the overall administration of the DeCA Pathways Program;
- b. Support the use of the Pathways Program for Students and RGs to promote the recruitment and retention needs of the Agency.

2.2. Director, Human Resources (HR): The Director, HR shall:

- a. Develop policy governing the implementation, administration, and use of the program at DeCA.
- b. Provide program oversight and ensure that all managers and supervisors are aware of program requirements and their responsibilities related to each program and participant within their organization according to Part 362, Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).
- c. Adhere to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DoD and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as outlined in Part 362, Section 362.104, of Title 5, CFR.
- d. Meet OPM public notification requirements by providing Pathways Program opportunities and procedures for application to the general public, as provided by Part 362, Sections 362.105(b), 362.203(a), and 362.303(a); (3) of Title 5, CFR.

2.3. DeCA Pathways Program Coordinator (PPC): PPC shall:

- a. Serve as the primary POC for all issues related to the operation and implementation of the programs, coordinate recruitment and on-boarding process for Pathways Program participants;
- b. Coordinate Pathways Program plans with stakeholders and other hiring plans;
- c. Serve as liaison with OPM. For example, provide updates to OPM on Pathways Program implementation, obtain clarification on program issues, and share best practices;
- d. Define criteria for requesting breaks in program, approving extension of up to 120 days, where applicable;
- e. Advise functional process owners (FPOs), office chiefs, zone managers, store directors, or their designee, on all aspects of the Pathways Program.

2.4. Human Resources Service Provider (HRSP). HRSP shall:

- a. Process personnel actions for the Pathways Program, in accordance with (IAW) the guidance set forth in this document, the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions (GPPA), and the provisions of the Pathways Program;
- b. Develop job opportunity announcements (JOA) and post positions using a public source (e.g., USAJOBS.gov);
- c. Appoint candidates for the Pathways Program under the appointing authority, Schedule D in the excepted service, codified by OPM at Part 213, Section 213.3402(a), (b), and (c) of Title 5, CFR as established by Executive Order 13562;
- d. Confirm participants fully meet qualification requirements for the noncompetitive conversion to term, career, or career-conditional appointment;
- e. Process conversion to a new appointment under Schedule D, as provided in Part 362, Section 362.204 of Title 5, CFR within 120 days from the effective date of program completion.

2.5. Hiring Managers and Supervisors. Hiring managers and supervisors shall:

- a. Execute a written participant agreement that clearly identifies expectations according to Part 362, Section 362.106 of Title 5, CFR;
- b. Due to the day-to-day communication between the supervisor and Pathways participant, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that the employee meets the continued eligibility requirements of the Pathways Program as outlined in the participant agreement. The participant agreement clearly identifies expectations, including a general description of duties, evaluation procedures, work schedules, and minimum eligibility requirements for conversion to term or permanent positions in the competitive service;
- c. Prepare an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for each Pathways participant that contains an overall plan of development, training activities, and competencies the Pathways participant must attain by the end of the program. Plan assignments according to the requirements of the IDP to enhance development of the participant, including scheduling training and rescheduling or substituting developmental activities when necessary;
- d. Ensure all participants receive training and are provided the resources necessary to fulfill the requirements of their IDP, discuss each training activity with the participant once completed to assess the participant's level of comprehension and determine the effectiveness of the training material;
- e. Evaluate performance/conduct and ensure that the participant has a clear understanding of the evaluation. Provide counseling and guidance when performance is determined to be less than satisfactory;

f. Ensure all education requirements are maintained by the participant throughout the length of the program. Notify PPC of changes in the intern's academic status (e.g. withdrawing from a class during the academic session/ Grade Point Average (GPA) deficiency/change in projected graduation date). Notify PPC of an intern's request to break in program as applicable. Supervisors will set up a quarterly meeting with the intern to ensure the requirements of the program are adhered to.

g. Request current transcripts from intern at the end of each academic period (quarter or semester/end of academic term) to validate continued student eligibility.

h. Notify PPC of recommendation to convert or not convert a program participant into the permanent service upon completion of the program. Notification should take place approximately two months prior to projected conversion.

2.6. Pathways Program Participants. Pathways participants shall:

a. Adhere to all provisions of the participant agreement between the participant and Agency. It is the intern's responsibility to notify the supervisor and HR PPC of any change to their enrollment status (e.g. withdrawing from a class during the academic session/GPA deficiency/change in projected graduation date). It is the RG's responsibility to keep their supervisor and HR PPC up-to-date on their progress concerning the requirements of the established training plan and mentor program.

b. Participate with the supervisor in the development of the IDP and comply with all requirements established in the IDP;

c. Learn as much as possible about the career field in which employed and the nature of the work to prepare for future career decisions;

d. Intern participant only - keep supervisor and PPC informed of work experience progress and changes concerning education status;

e. Intern participant only - provide current transcripts to supervisor and PPC at the end of each academic period (quarter/end of academic term). Inform supervisor of any change in academic status to include GPA and/or enrollment status;

f. Intern participant only - continue to be enrolled as at least a half-time student, maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0, or higher, on a 4.0 grading scale and remain in good academic standing (according to the school's definition);

g. Intern participant only - if a break in program is needed for any reason, the intern must notify the supervisor and PPC of the requested break in writing prior to the break taking place. The approval for the initial break in program is with the student's second line supervisor;

h. Intern participant only - inform their supervisor about instances when the agreed upon work schedule does not allow ample time to meet educational requirements.

SECTION 3: BACKGROUND

3.1. Purpose. This Manual provides guidance and establishes basic requirements and responsibilities of the Pathways Programs (Interns and RGs). Section 5 covers information specific to each program individually.

3.2. Background.

a. President Obama signed Executive Order 13562 on December 27, 2010. The Pathways Program was created to undo the complexity of the rules governing admission to the career Civil Service which creates a barrier to recruiting and hiring students and recent graduates. The Pathways Program is part of the overall hiring reform through which the Federal Government seeks to streamline the Federal hiring process, and specifically enable the Federal Government to compete effectively for students and recent graduates. The OPM Pathways regulations became effective July 10, 2012.

b. The Internship Program is for current students and replaces the former Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). The RGs Program is a program designed to provide developmental opportunities in Federal employment for individuals who have recently graduated from qualifying educational institutions or programs.

SECTION 4: GENERAL OVERVIEW OF PATHWAYS PROGRAMS

4.1. Pathways Program. Certain aspects of the Pathways Program are common to the Internship Program and RG Program. This section addresses the overarching requirements of the two programs and the DeCA policy and procedures to use them. Refer to sections entitled Intern Program and RG Program for requirements that are unique to each program.

4.2. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). For administration and use of the Pathways Program a MOU must be in effect between DoD and the OPM. The MOU will be renewed every two years.

4.3. Adherence to Merit Principles. DeCA will provide Equal Employment Opportunity on all actions taken under the Pathways Program. All actions to evaluate, appoint, develop, and promote individuals under the Pathways Program will be based on merit and made without regard to race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, or any other non-merit-based-factor.

4.4 Workforce Planning. DeCA will make every effort to ensure that its workforce plans and identifies sufficient numbers of positions in order to allow for the conversion of Pathways Program participants who successfully complete the program.

4.5. Qualifying Educational Institution.

a. Regulations governing the Pathways Program identify qualifying education which participants must be pursuing or have completed for eligibility in the Pathways Program - see Part 362.102 (1) of Title 5, CFR.

b. To be qualifying; high school curriculum must have been approved by a State or local governing body. Home school curriculum that has been approved by a local or State governing body and private school that provides secondary education as determined under state law are also qualifying.

c. Educational institutions and curriculum below must be accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of the Department of Education (DoE) to be qualifying.

(1) Technical or vocational school (For additional information concerning recognized programs, refer to the DoE web site at <http://www.ed.gov>).

- (2) Two-year or four-year college or university
- (3) Graduate or professional school (e.g., law school or medical school)
- (4) A home school curriculum

4.6. Filling Positions. This section identifies requirements applicable to the Internship and RG Pathways Programs. Refer to Section 5 for additional or specific requirements the candidate must meet for consideration under each program.

- a. **Announcing Employment Opportunities.** All job announcements for employment in the Internship or RG Pathways Program at DeCA will be posted on USAJOBS by the HRSP.
- b. The minimum announcement period for positions is seven calendar days.
- c. **Priority Placement Program (PPP).** Pathways Intern positions are exempt from PPP clearance at the time the student enters into these positions and upon noncompetitive conversion to term, career, or career-conditional appointments when all required training and education is completed. Pathways Interns are ineligible to register in PPP. RG positions are subject to the provisions of PPP. Requisitions for positions covered by formal training programs will be submitted at the entry grade using the trainee (TRA) option code. *Reference: PPP Handbook.*
- d. **Accepting Applications.** To receive consideration for a specific job opportunity, all applications must be submitted using the automated system (USAJOBS) to that vacancy number. Applicants must submit a resume and all other required documentation to substantiate their eligibility for the program under which they are applying.
- e. **Assessing Candidates.** OPM qualification standards will be used to evaluate candidate's minimum qualifications for the position and grade level being filled. To be eligible for appointment under any Pathways Program, candidates must meet all qualifications requirements specified in the OPM qualifications standard, including positive education requirements and/or selective placement factors, and any other Agency-specific designated qualifications requirements and conditions of employment as appropriate to the specific position.
- f. **Application of Veterans Preference.** The procedure outlined in Part 362, Section 362.105 (c) (2) of Title 5, CFR, must be followed when filling positions under any Pathways Program. Selections will be made IAW the requirements of Part 302, Section 302.401 of Title 5, CFR and Veterans Preference Law.
- g. **Citizenship.** A non-citizen may be appointed to a Pathways Program position provided the individual is lawfully admitted to the U.S. (as a permanent resident or is otherwise authorized to be employed. However, a participant must be a U.S. citizen to be eligible for non-competitive conversion to a position in the competitive service.

h. Documenting the Appointment. All appointments made under the Pathways Program are appointed under Schedule D as provided for in Part 362, Section 362.203 (d) of Title 5, CFR.

4.7. Individual Pathways Participant Agreement. DeCA must enter into an agreement with each Pathways participant it employs, defining the roles and responsibilities of each party in the agreement.

Agreements must include the following:

A general description of the duties to be performed

Work schedule

Length of appointment, termination date if temporary

Procedures and requirements for evaluating participants

Requirements for continuing and successful completion of the program

Minimum eligibility requirements for non-competitive conversion to term or permanent appointment in the competitive service under the specific Pathways Program in which employed

Any other requirements DeCA deems appropriate.

4.8. Performance Evaluation of Participant. All Pathways Program participants are Federal employees and subject to performance management provisions of Part 430 of Title 5, CFR. Performance plans are required for all participants on appointments over 90 days and will include elements and standards that are directly related to acquiring and demonstrating leadership, technical, and/or general competencies expected of the participants and standards established for the duties assigned.

4.9. Discipline and Corrective Actions.

a. Supervisors are expected to use their best efforts to motivate employees to be effective and efficient. Supervisors will place primary emphasis on preventing situations requiring disciplinary actions by creating an atmosphere conducive to productive employee management relation and interchange of information.

b. The purpose of discipline is to correct the offending employee's behavior and maintain order and morale among other employees. Supervisors will impose the minimum penalty that can reasonably be expected to achieve these objectives.

4.10. Termination of Appointment.

a. The appointment of a Pathways participant may be terminated at any time for reasons of misconduct, poor performance, or suitability.

b. **Misconduct:** When a participant's conduct interferes with mission accomplishment, the supervisor must contact their assigned Labor and Management Employee Relations (LMER) Specialist to assist with taking corrective action. Examples of misconduct are leave issues, disruption in the workplace, conversion, conduct unbecoming a Federal employee, etc. Corrective action may be a letter of counseling, a letter of reprimand, suspension up to removal for the efficiency of the service. (Refer to DeCAM 50-4.01)

c. **Performance:** Participants who are on an appointment for 90 days or more will be provided a performance plan that sets expectations and goals for the participant that channels their efforts toward achieving organizational goals. The performance plan will be communicated to the participant within 30 days of the beginning of the appraisal period (July 1 to June 30 annually), upon entrance on duty (EOD), or assignment to a new position. Unacceptable performance is performance that fails to meet established performance standards in one or more critical element. Although termination of the appointment is an option for unsatisfactory performance it should only be employed when the supervisor has made reasonable attempts to improve the performance through additional training and mentoring.

4.11. Noncompetitive Conversion. Service in the Pathways Program confers no right to further employment in either the competitive or excepted service. The appointment of a pathways participant who is not converted to a term, career-conditional or career appointment in the competitive service automatically expires at the end of the program period or Agency approved extension.

SECTION 5: PATHWAYS INTERN PROGRAM AND RECENT GRADUATES

5-1. Recent Graduates. This section addresses specific differences in the Pathways Internship and RG Programs in regards to policy and procedure and will be used as an outline for effective use of both programs within DeCA.

5-2. Responsibilities. Due to the day-to-day communication between the supervisor and the Pathways Program participant, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that the employee meets the continued eligibility requirements of the Pathways Program. It is the responsibility of the pathways participant to notify the supervisor and HR PPC if they have questions concerning their appointment/conversion, Mentor Program (RG), training requirements (RG), or other concerns related to their Pathways Program appointment.

Pathways Intern Program

5-3. Program Outline. In addition to the requirements outlined in Section 4, the following conditions pertain to the Internship Program. The internship provides students in high schools, colleges, technical or vocational schools, certificate programs, and other qualifying educational institutions with the opportunity to explore federal careers as paid employees while completing their education.

5-4. Types of Pathways Intern Appointments.

DeCA Career Pathways Interns (CPI)	DeCA Temporary Pathways Interns (TPI)
Positions that are expected to last more than 1-year, appointments are not required to have an end date. However, Agencies are required to specify an end date of the appointment in the Participant Agreement. Typically the appointment will last the duration of the degree plan as long as the degree, certificate, or diploma are accomplished in a reasonable and appropriate timeframe.	Positions have a NTE date and are typically used for summer hire and/or temporary projects. <i>Ref: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) section IV, G (7) (8)</i>

5-5. Pathways Intern Qualifications and Eligibility.

a. Individuals must meet the qualifications and eligibility requirements throughout the duration of the internship appointment. A student as defined in Part 362, Section 362.202 of Title 5, CFR: An individual accepted for enrollment or enrolled and seeking a degree (diploma, certificate, etc.) in a qualifying educational institution, on a full or half-time basis (as defined by the institution).

b. Qualification. Prior to appointment, interns must provide documentation of student status. Such documentation may be in the form of an official copy of school transcript, official documentation of registration, tuition bill, or, if a new student, a copy of the acceptance letter from the college or university.

c. Program Eligibility.

(1) It is the responsibility of the intern to provide proof of eligibility (grade report, unofficial transcripts) to the supervisor and the HR PPC at the end of each academic term (as defined by the educational institution). Supervisors and the HR PPC retain the right to request proof of eligibility at any time in order to verify enrollment and academic standing in the Intern Program. Interns will submit unofficial transcripts to Studentprogrampoc@deca.mil for HR PPC review.

(2) Pathways Interns must carry at least a 2.0 GPA on a 4.0 grading scale, and be in good academic standing according to the school's definition (not on academic warning or probation).

(3) The intern's performance/conduct must be kept within acceptable parameters. When an intern's performance/conduct is less than satisfactory, it is recommended that the supervisor/manager notify the PPC and contact their assigned LMER Specialist in order to pursue corrective action.

(4) Completion of the educational program (awarding of a diploma/degree) and the Internship Program will be accomplished in a reasonable and appropriate timeframe. Part 362, Section 362.203(g)(2) of Title 5, CFR.

(5) Trial Period. An intern (CPI/TPI) is not required to serve a trial period.

(6) Duties. The duties of the CPI positions should be related to the student's academic field of study or the student's career interests.

5.6. Work Schedules.

a. There are no limitations on the number of hours an intern can work per week (so long as any applicable laws and regulations governing overtime and hours of work are adhered to). Supervisors and students should agree on a formally-arranged schedule of school and work so that the student's work schedule does not interfere with his or her academic schedule and completion of the educational program;

b. The schedules of the CPI must be designed to meet the minimum career-related work hours required prior to graduation (640 hours or 320 hours, as applicable, IAW Part 362, Section 362.204 (b) (1) of Title 5, CFR;

c. Changes in work schedule will be made to accommodate the intern's academic classes. Pathways Interns wishing to participate in extracurricular school activities that conflict with their work schedule, such as sporting events, dances, club meetings, or proms, must obtain approval prior to the activity by submitting a request for leave, or request a schedule adjustment with their supervisor;

d. Managers are encouraged to adjust schedules or approve requested leave to allow students to participate in meaningful events such as school proms, sporting events, and graduation exercises. In addition, managers should be flexible with work schedules to allow students to participate in routine extracurricular school activities.

5.7. Performance Plan/Appraisal. Performance plans are required for Pathways Interns (TPI/CPI) on appointments that are 90 days or more. Performance plans will include elements and standards that are directly related to acquiring and demonstrating leadership, technical, and/or general competencies. Individuals will be placed on a performance plan within 30 days of appointment.

5.8. Training Plan/Individual Develop Plan (IDP). Career Pathways Interns will be placed on a training plan that advances the goals and competencies of the IDP. The CPI will be placed on the IDP, DeCAF 50-53 within 45 days of appointment. Contact Workforce Development for more information concerning the training plan. WFDTrainingrequest@deca.mil

5.9. Quarterly Evaluation. In order to evaluate the participants progression, the supervisor, HR PPC, and CPI will convene on a quarterly basis (unless performance/conduct indicates more frequent evaluation) to assess the achievement of training/developmental goals and the acquisition of competencies. This meeting will also serve as a checkpoint to verify academic eligibility and ask/answer Pathways Intern Program related questions.

5.9. Promotion. A Career Pathways Intern (without a NTE date) may be promoted as long as eligibility and qualification requirements for the position to which promoted are met. However, this provision does not confer entitlement to promotion. Supervisor and managers may submit actions for promotion for a GS position based on the intern achieving a level of education and meeting a period of work experience.

5.10. Tuition Assistance. It is DeCA's practice to provide tuition assistance for employees taking courses directly related to the job tasks being performed. Eligibility for tuition assistance is met after the CPI has worked for the Agency for six continuous months. This assistance is subject to budget limitations. The appropriation of tuition assistance dollars is not always available. The lack of tuition assistance monies is not a valid reason to request a break in the program and will not be considered in the approval of the break. Additional information concerning tuition assistance can be found in DeCAM 50-20.1.

5.11. Break in Program. A break in program is defined as a period of time when the CPI is working but unable to go to school, or is neither attending classes (online or on-site) nor working at the Agency. Due to the day-to-day communication between the supervisor and the intern, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that the intern meets the continued eligibility requirements of the Pathways Program. It is the intern's responsibility to notify the supervisor and HR PPC of any change to their enrollment status. This requirement is outlined in the Internship Program Participant Agreement and signed by the Pathways Intern, supervisor and the HR PPC.

a. Request for Break in Program - the intern will submit, in writing to their supervisor and HR PPC, a break in program request. The request will include any supporting documentation to aid in the review, consideration, and decision. If it is decided to move forward with the break in program based on the intern's submission, the supervisor should contact the HR PPC to draft the appropriate memorandum for approval. The final approval for the break in program is with the intern's second line supervisor. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Examples of circumstances that may warrant approvals of a break in program are (1) approved leave for medical reasons; (2) bereavement; or (3) military obligation. Break in program requests should be rare. An approved break would typically last for one semester/academic term as defined by the educational institution. The Agency will use its discretion to approve or deny the participants request.

(1) A maximum of two breaks in program may be considered by the chain of command during the student's qualifying academic program. Examples of qualifying academic programs: Working towards a high school diploma, associates, bachelor's, master's, or certificate degree program. The second request for the break in program is subject to the approval of the appropriate FPO or area director.

(2) All additional requests for a break in program (beyond the two allowed above) must be approved by the appropriate Senior Executive Service (SES). It is the intern's responsibility to provide, in writing, to their supervisor and HR PPC a request for subsequent breaks in program with any supporting documentation to aid in the review, consideration, and decision.

b. Request for Extension to a Break in Program - Extension to Break in Program: Only in the most extreme cases will the extension to a break in program be approved for an additional 30 days. It is the intern's responsibility to submit an additional request through the first and second line supervisors and HR PPC with supporting documentation. The request for an extension is subject to the approval of the appropriate FPO or area director.

5.12. Academic Probation. The following will result in the intern's academic probation.

a. Failure to maintain the required minimum cumulative GPA (2.0) and be in good academic standing according to the school's definition (not on academic warning or probation) for one academic term.

b. Failure to meet course load requirements - enrolled and seeking a degree in a qualifying educational institution, on a full or half-time basis (as defined by the institution in which the student is enrolled) for one academic term. Part 362, Section 362.202 of Title 5, CFR.

5.13. Termination. Instances where the intern may be subject to termination include, but are not limited to:

a. When an intern's GPA falls below the Agency requirement 2.0 for two consecutive semesters or within a six month grading period;

b. When an intern's job performance is less than fully successful;

c. When an intern has documented conduct issues;

d. When an intern no longer meets the definition of "Student" as outlined in Part 362, Section 362.202 of Title 5, CFR;

e. When an intern does not meet the terms of the break in program" memo with regards to continuing their academic studies within the suspense outlined in the approved break in program memo;

f. The accumulation of a series of academic probation and break in program issues over time may result in the participant's termination from the Pathways Program;

g. The intern's appointment expires upon degree completion unless the participant is selected for noncompetitive conversion. The Agency has up to 120 days after completion of the designated academic course of study to convert the appointment to a term or permanent appointment for which the employee qualifies in the competitive service under Part 362, Section 362.204 of Title 5, CFR.

5.14. Graduation and Placement Career Pathways Intern.

a. An agency may noncompetitively convert an intern who is a U.S. citizen, to a term or permanent appointment in the competitive service as long as the intern meets all qualification requirements outlined under Part 362, Section 362.204 of Title 5, CFR. Service in the Pathways Program confers no right to further employment in either the competitive or excepted service.

b. If no placement opportunity exists within the 120-day conversion period the intern's appointment will be terminated. Managers may recommend the intern for conversion in other Federal agencies, as appropriate. Contact the HR PPC for further guidance as needed at Studentprogrampoc@deca.mil.

5.15. Temporary Summer Hire Pathways Intern Appointments. This section only applies to Pathways Intern participants' summer hire. All other non-student temporary summer hire opportunities will be filled using the appropriate appointing authority and work schedule.

a. During the second quarter of the fiscal year (FY); HR will survey staff offices (e.g., Store Operations, Logistics, and Resource Management (RM)) to determine the number and types of temporary positions to be filled;

b. During the second quarter of the FY, announcements will be posted to USAJOBS to solicit applications for employment during the upcoming summer months to fill projected vacancies; (*Example of summer employment timeframe is May - September*)

c. Positions will be filled with a firm NTE date and the intern will go off DeCA rolls at the end of the appointment.

Recent Graduate Program

5.16. Program Outline.

a. In addition to the requirements outlined in Section 4, the following conditions pertain to the DeCA RG Program. The RG Program provides an entry-level developmental experience designed to lead to a Civil Service career in the Federal Government after successful completion of the year-long program. An agency may make the initial appointment of the RG to any position filled under this authority for which the RG qualifies up to the GS-9 level. Initial appointments to positions for science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) occupations may be made at the GS-11 level if the candidate possesses a Ph.D. or equivalent degree directly related to the STEM position. Individuals are given a one-year appointment to an entry-level position in the excepted service designed to provide a developmental experience that will lead to a career and permanent position in the Federal Government.

b. Due to the day-to-day communications between the supervisor and the RG, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that the RG meets the eligibility requirements for conversion out of the Pathways Program into the career service. It is the RG's responsibility to notify the supervisor and HR PPC if they have questions concerning the program related to their appointment/conversion, Mentor Program, or training requirements.

5.17. Qualifications and Eligibility.

a. Individuals who obtained a qualifying associates, bachelors, masters, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree, or certificate from a qualifying educational institution, within the previous two years or other applicable period provided below.

b. Application must be received not later than two years after the date the individual completed all requirements of the academic course of study leading to the qualifying degree/certificate. Veteran (defined in Part III, Subpart A, Chapter 21, Section 2108 of Title 5,

United States Code (U.S.C.)), who, due to military obligation, were precluded from applying to the RG Program during any portion of the two-year eligibility will have a full two-year period upon release or discharge from active duty. The eligibility period will not extend beyond six years from the date the individual completed the requirements of the academic course of study.

c. Candidates are evaluated using OPM Qualification Standards for the occupation and grade level of the position being filled.

5.18. Trial Period. The duration of the appointment in the excepted service is the trial period.

5.19. Performance Plans/Appraisals. Performance plans are required for all participants. Performance plans will include elements and standards that are directly related to acquiring and demonstrating leadership, technical, and/or general competencies expected of participants. Individuals will be placed on a performance plan within 30 days of appointment.

5.20 Training Plan/Individual Development Plan (IDP). RGs will be placed on a training plan that advances the goals and competencies of the IDP within 45 days of appointment. The supervisor, in coordination with the RG, will create an IDP that outlines the specific developmental activities designed to help the RG acquire the competencies of the target position in which the RG will be placed upon completion of the program. The IDP will be in place within 45 days of the appointment and will be reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure training activities originally identified are meeting developmental goals.

5.21. Formal Training. At least 40 hours of formal interactive training which may include conference, on-line training, and/or classroom training must be provided during the year-long program. Mandatory training such as annual IT security or Ethics training does not count towards the 40-hour requirement.

a. Due to the eligibility requirements of the program, the RG/supervisor will provide the completed Training Plan to the HR PPC by email: StudentProgram.POC@deca.mil

b. The supervisor will provide daily instruction and guidance in the form of on-the-job-training that is designed to prepare the employee to assume progressively more difficult, responsible, and productive work, and that must constitute at least 50 percent of the developmental activities.

5.22. Mentor Program. Within 90 days of appointment, each RG must be assigned a mentor from an organization outside his/her immediate chain of command. The RG will choose a mentor from the mentor database and set up an introductory meeting. The mentor will provide the Pathways participant with the guidance and support needed to develop effectively in the workplace. The mentor is a trusted advisor that will share with the employee a different focus or

perspective from the technical emphasis on the job or the oversight that the supervisor provides; a role model who shares his/her expertise in order to help the participant understand the workplace culture and effectively build workplace relationships. Due to the eligibility requirements of the program, the RG's supervisor will provide the completed Mentor documentation to the HR PPC at email: StudentProgram.POC@deca.mil upon completion.

5.23. Panel Review. In order to evaluate the participants progression a panel comprised of the participants supervisor, PPC, and mentor will convene on a quarterly basis(unless performance indicates more frequent evaluation) to assess the achievement of training, developmental goals, and acquisition of competencies.

5.24. 120 Day Extension. Extension of a RG appointment, up to 120 days, is decided on a case-by-case basis. Extensions will only be approved for a reason that was beyond the control of the organization and/or the participant (Examples: death in participant's immediate family, extended illness of the participant, organization directed furloughs). Extension requests will be submitted to the PPC for coordination and the final decision. PCC email: StudentProgramPOC@deca.mil

5.25. Termination. The RG appointment expires at the end of the Agency prescribed program period, plus any Agency-approved extension, unless the participant is selected for noncompetitive conversion under Part 362, Section 362.306 (b) of Title 5, CFR.

5.26. Noncompetitive Conversion Placement. An agency may noncompetitively convert a RG who is a U.S. citizen, to a term or permanent appointment in the competitive service as long as the participant meets all qualifications under Part 362, Section 362.305 of Title 5, CFR. The noncompetitive conversion is effective on the date the service requirement is met or at the end of an agency-approved extension, if applicable.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

PROCESS FOR HIRING PATHWAYS STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES

The following information provides guidance for hiring under the Pathways Program:

- a. Management conducts workforce planning initiative in coordination with HR and RM.
- b. If a position description (PD) has not been established, draft duties must be forwarded electronically to HR Staffing and Classification through the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) by submitting a Request Personnel Action (RPA, position establishment) through RM. The HR specialist assigned to classify the position will determine the appropriate title, series, and grade of the newly established position.
- c. Once the PD has been established and management is ready to fill the position, a recruit/fill RPA will be submitted through DCPDS by the hiring manager's activity. There must be an authorization for the position on the activity's unit manning document.
- d. The HRSP will work with management and the HR PPC to complete the job analysis for approval by the hiring manager. The HRSP will announce the position to USAJOBS in order to fill.
- e. Once qualifications are determined by the HRSP and the hiring manager has made a selection, the candidate will be contacted by the servicing HRSP with a tentative job offer. If the applicant accepts the offer, HRSP will provide the applicant with point of contact (POC) information for duty location to arrange an appointment for completing all preliminary paperwork. The HRSP will complete DeCAF 30-110, Section I of the DeCA Pre-Appointment Security/Suitability Check, and submit it to DeCA HQ.
- f. DeCA HQ will then complete Section II of the DeCAF 30-110 and submit it to the Store Point of Contact (SPOC)/store director, or HQ POC, and cc HRSP. If DeCAF 30-110, Section II states fingerprints are required, the SPOC or HQ POC will coordinate an appointment for the applicant to have fingerprints taken in order for OPM to conduct the preliminary background check, Special Agreement Check (SAC).
- g. When the SAC is successfully completed and the servicing HRSP is given the okay to hire, the applicant will be contacted with a firm job offer, EOD and POC information. Refer to the SPOC Guide for additional information concerning Staffing/Personnel Suitability/New Employee In-Processing.

APPENDIX B

CONVERTING A PATHWAYS PARTICIPANT (CPI INTERN/RECENT GRADUATE) TO THE COMPETITIVE SERVICE

a. The following information provides guidance for converting Career Pathways Intern and RG participants into the competitive service:

b. Approximately two months prior to conversion, the supervisor is required to contact the PPC with written notification regarding the intent to convert the Pathways participant to the permanent service. At this point the HR PPC will ensure that the participant meets the program requirements for non-competitive conversion. POC: StudentProgramPoc@deca.mi

c. If a PD has not been established for the conversion position, draft duties must be forwarded by the participants activity. This is done by submitting an RPA through DCPDS. The HR specialist assigned to classify the position will determine the appropriate title, series, and grade of the newly established position.

d. Once the PD is established, the participant's activity will initiate an RPA to convert the appointment to the permanent service.

e. After receiving the RPA and associated documents, the HRSP will determine if the participant meets the OPM qualifications for the position and has met the Pathways Program qualification requirements. Assuming the requirements are met, the participant will be contacted by the HRSP with a tentative job offer.

APPENDIX C

PATHWAYS INTERNS PAY AND BENEFITS

PAY: Pathways Interns are paid on a biweekly basis in accordance with established pay schedules.

BENEFITS:

Pathways Intern Benefit Comparison Chart

Benefit	Temporary Pathways Interns	Career Pathways Interns
Leave	Annual/sick leave for appointments of 90 days or more	Eligible
Retirement	Not eligible	Eligible
Health and Life Insurance	Not eligible	Provisionally Eligible
Non-competitive conversion to the permanent service	Not eligible	Eligible
Degree alignment with federal position	Not required	Should be related to the student’s academic field of study or the student’s career interests.

For additional information concerning Benefits contact: DHRC-DDECAHRbenefits@dla.mil

TUITION ASSISTANCE: Assistance is for courses directly related to the job tasks being performed. Eligibility for tuition assistance is met after the student has worked for the Agency for 6 continuous months. The appropriation of tuition assistance dollars is not always available. The lack of tuition assistance monies is not a valid reason to request a break in program and will not be considered in the approval of the break.

APPENDIX D

**GROUP COVERAGE QUALIFICATION STANDARD FOR SCHEDULE D,
PATHWAYS INTERNSHIP POSITIONS**

This standard describes the qualification requirements for Schedule D, Internship appointments under the Pathways Programs authorized by Executive Order 13562 and applies to the white collar occupations listed below under the section, “Occupational Coverage.”

Requirements for Internship Appointments

Appointments may be at the highest grade level for which the Intern is qualified. Interns with no previous related education or experience may qualify as described below.

GRADE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION
GS-1	Enrollment in a high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED) program.
GS-2	Completion of high school or GED diploma.
GS-3	Completion of 1 full academic year of post-high school study.
GS-4	Completion of 2 full academic years of post-high school study or an Associate’s degree.
GS-5	Completion of 4 academic years of post-high school leading to a Bachelor’s or equivalent degree.
GS-7	Completion of 1 full academic year of graduate level education; or Eligibility under the Superior Academic Achievement Provision and completion of a Bachelor’s degree.
GS-9	Completion of 2 academic years of graduate level education, or a Master’s or equivalent graduate degree.
GS-11	For research positions, completion of all requirements for a master’s or equivalent graduate degree. For non-research positions, completion of all requirements for a PhD or equivalent degree.

One full academic year of undergraduate, graduate, vocational, trade, technical or high school education is the number of credit hours determined by the college, university or school to represent one year of full-time study. The high school curriculum must be approved by a State or local governing body. All education beyond high school must be accredited by an accrediting body or organization recognized by the DoE.

Promotion Requirements: The advancement of interns to higher-graded positions, prior to conversion, is strictly at the Agency’s discretion. To qualify for promotions, the intern must have the same level and type of experience and/or education usually required for an initial appointment. The required action submitted through DCPDS resulting in a higher grade for this exempted service appointment is a conversion to a new appointment.

Conversion Interns may be non-competitively converted to a term, career-conditional, or career appointment within 120 days following successful completion of all of their educational and work experience requirements IAW Part 362, Section 362.204 of Title 5, CFR.

GLOSSARY

G.1. ACRONYMS

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CPI	Career Pathways Intern
DCPDS	Defense Civilian Personnel Data System
DeCA	Defense Commissary Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DoE	Department of Education
EOD	Entrance on Duty
FPO	Functional Process Owner
FY	Fiscal Year
GPA	grade point average
GPPA	Guide to Processing Personnel Actions
GS	general schedule
HR	Human Resources
HRSP	Human Resource Service Provider
IAW	in accordance with
IDP	Individual Development Plan
JOA	job opportunity announcement
LMER	Labor and Management Employee Relations
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NTE	not to exceed
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PD	position description
POC	point of contact
PP	Pathways Program
PPP	Priority Placement Program
RG	Recent Graduate
RPA	request for personnel action

SAC	Special Agreement Check
SCEP	Student Career Experience Program
SES	Senior Executive Service
STEP	Student Temporary Experience Program
TPI	Temporary Pathways Intern

G.2. DEFINITIONS

Student - An individual who is enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a degree seeking student (diploma, certificate, etc.) and is taking at least a half-time course load (half-time is defined by the school in which the student is enrolled) in an accredited high school, technical/vocational school, or college. An individual who needs to complete less than the equivalent of half a course load in the class enrollment period immediately prior to graduating is still considered a student for purposes of this program.

Appointments:

Career Pathways Intern appointments hold positions which are subject to all the requirements and conditions governing term, career, or career-conditional employment. Once the Career Pathways Intern has met all requirements of the program, he or she may be noncompetitively converted to term, career, or career-conditional appointments anytime within 120 days after satisfactorily completing all of the requirements for his or her diploma, certificate, or degree.

Pathways Intern positions announced with not-to-exceed (NTE) dates are for temporary short-term use only, such as summer employment programs. The NTE positions will not be used for subsequent noncompetitive conversions to other Pathways Program appointments.

Breaks in Program - A break in the program is defined as a period of time when a program participant is working, but is unable to attend school, or is neither attending classes nor working at the Agency.

Employment of Minors - Participation in this program must be IAW Federal, State, local laws, and standards governing the employment of minors. In most circumstances, the minimum age requirement for employment is 16 years of age. As such, the U.S. Department of Labor has established limitations on the type of duties that minors can be assigned, as well as the equipment that they can operate. For example, there are restrictions on the operation of power-driven hoisting apparatus, as well as the operation of equipment in the meat department. Parts 570.58 and 570.61 of title 29, CFR provide additional information on those restrictions.

Noncompetitive Conversion:

A Career Pathways Intern who is a U.S. citizen may be noncompetitively converted from the Pathway Intern Program to a term, career, or career-conditional appointment within 120 days following graduation when he or she has: (a) completed course requirements conferring a diploma, certificate, or degree; (b) completed at least 640 hours of career-related work before

completion of, or concurrent with, meeting course requirements. A student may also be converted after completing 320 hours of career-related work if he or she has a GPA of 3.5 or higher at the time they meet the requirements for graduation, and also have a performance rating of at least “fully successful” from his or her supervisor; (c) been recommended by the supervisor for who the career-related work was performed; and (d) met the qualification standards for the targeted position to which the student will be appointed.

A participant in the Pathways RG Program may be noncompetitively converted to a term, career, or career-conditional appointment within 120 days following successful completion of the year-long program (or any approved extension).

Qualifications - Career Pathways Interns and Pathways RG who successfully complete the program requirements may be noncompetitively placed into positions for which they meet the OPM qualification standards based on education, experience, or a combination of education and experience.

Pathways Participant Agreement - A comprehensive agreement between DeCA, the Pathways participant, and the student’s supervisor, that identifies basic information about the program in which the individual is participating. It includes, but is not limited to the requirements to successfully complete the program; the title, series, and grade of the position to which the participant is assigned; conversion requirements (if applicable), and eligibility program requirements.

Pathways Intern Participants - Pathways is a planned, progressive, educational program that provides vocational/technical school and college students with career-related work and study opportunities in a variety of professional career fields with the potential for noncompetitive conversion to Federal career service.

Career Pathways Intern - A student who is a participant in the Pathways Program. The title, series, and grade of the position held should be related to the student’s educational career field or career goals. The student is eligible to be noncompetitively converted to a term, career, or career-conditional appointment after meeting the requirements described in 5 CFR 362.204.

Temporary Pathways Intern - A student who is a participant in the Pathways Program. This appointment includes a not-to exceed (NTE) date and is typically used for summer hire or temporary projects. The appointment provides student employment that enables the intern to gain valuable work experience in a structured work environment that is not necessarily related to their field of study. This program does not provide the potential for noncompetitive conversion to Federal career service.

Recent Graduate - An individual who obtained a qualifying Associate’s, Bachelor’s, Master’s, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution, within the previous two years. Veterans who were precluded from applying to the program during any portion of the two-year eligibility period will have a full two-year period of eligibility upon his or her release or discharge from active duty (up to six years from graduation date).

Mentor - A counselor or coach who serves as a role model and resource for the RG during the time they participate in the year-long program. The mentor facilitates the RG's orientation to the professional working world by providing technical support, administrative guidance, encouragement, and feedback. Additional information: DeCA Pathways Recent Graduate Mentoring Program.

Training Plan - A document that identifies the training activities necessary to help the Intern/RG progress from one job to another. It also describes the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the duties of a specific job and may also include other jobs in that occupational family. The occupational family includes a specific job and other related jobs above and below it in the career path.

Work Schedules - Pathways Interns may work full-time or part-time schedules at any time during the year, without limitations, as long as the work schedule does not interfere with their academic schedule. There are no restrictions to the work schedules of RG participant's as long as any applicable laws and regulations governing overtime and hours of work are adhered to.

REFERENCES

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 5, Part 362
Code of Federal Regulations, Title 5, Part 430
Code of Federal Regulations, Title 5, Part 2130
DeCA Directive 50-18, "Commissary Career Program," January 10, 2014
DeCA Directive 50-31, "Pathway Program," May 28, 2017
DeCA Directive 70-2, "Internal Control Program," December 17, 2007
DeCA Manual 50-4, Civilian Employee Discipline and Adverse Actions, August 4, 1994
DeCA Manual 50-20.1, "Workforce Development Policies and Procedures Manual,"
January 8, 2016
DoD Directive 5105.55, Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), October 17, 2014
DoD Instruction 5025.01, "DoD Issuances Program," August 1, 2016
Executive Order 13562, "Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates,"
December 27, 2010
Pathways Program Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Office of Personnel
Management and the Department of Defense, August 04, 2016
United States Code, Title 5, Section 2108