



## Civil Service 101 – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Learning about Civil Service

Civil service with the City of New York is all about serving your community and your city in your chosen field. The City of New York provides a wealth of career opportunities, a clear path for growth, and great benefits. Please read below to find frequently asked questions and answers about the City's Civil Service System.

#### What is civil service?

- New York Civil Service is the system the City of New York uses to hire and promote employees based on qualifications. The system ensures hiring is fair, transparent, and competitive, while helping agencies find the most qualified candidates for the job. There are four types of title classes:
  - **Competitive class:** These jobs require that you take an exam to qualify for the position. Over 80% of civil service positions with the city are called **competitive class**.
  - **Non-Competitive Class:** These positions have specific qualifications for eligibility for a job, but testing for the position is not practicable. Examples of **non-competitive class** positions include jobs such as Community Assistant or Agency Attorney.
  - **Labor Class:** Labor Positions reserved for certain laborer titles that do not have minimum education or experience requirements are **labor class**. Examples include City Laborer and City custodial assistant. No exam is required.
  - **Exempt Class:** Positions that have a close and confidential relationship with senior-level agency officials who determine the qualifications and evaluate merit. **Exempt class titles** include deputy commissioner and executive assistant.
  - Non-Competitive, exempt, and labor class positions do not require competitive examinations and do not have permanent civil service status. To view positions within these three categories, please visit [jobs.nyc.gov](http://jobs.nyc.gov).

# How to Get a Job with the City of New York

## How can I find out if there are any specific requirements for a job?

- The minimum education, work experience, licenses, registrations and/or any other specialized qualifications needed for a position are listed in the job description or the Notice of Examination.
- Before applying for an exam, please reference the Minimum Qualification Requirements section in the Notice of Examination. If applying for a specific job on [nyc.gov/jobs](https://nyc.gov/jobs), please ensure that you thoroughly read the job notice in its entirety, including all sections pertaining to requirements and qualifications.

## Where can I find a list of open jobs for the City of New York?

- You can find all currently open jobs, and more information about the Civil Service, at [nyc.gov/jobs](https://nyc.gov/jobs).

## Must I be a resident of New York to be eligible for employment with the City of New York?

- Some city positions require New York City residency while other positions do not. Be sure to check the Notice of Examination or job description for information concerning residency requirements.

## Do I have to be a citizen of the United States to obtain a job with the City of New York?

- Any citizenship requirement will be set forth in the Notice of Examination or job description. When citizenship is not required, non-citizens must be able to establish at the time of appointment and throughout the period of their employment that they are legally permitted to work in the United States under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.
- Each candidate must be able to prove their identity and their right to obtain employment in the United States prior to employment with the City of New York

## I was convicted of a crime. Can I still obtain employment with the City of New York?

- Unfair discrimination against people previously convicted of one or more criminal offenses is prohibited.

- However, candidates can be excluded from a position if there is a direct relationship between the offense(s) and the employment sought, or granting of the employment would involve an unreasonable risk to property or the safety/welfare of specific individuals or the general public.

**What is the difference between applying for a job on [nyc.gov/jobs](https://nyc.gov/jobs) and applying for an exam on [nyc.gov/dcas](https://nyc.gov/dcas)?**

- City agencies post positions that are available for immediate hire on [nyc.gov/jobs](https://nyc.gov/jobs).
- Candidates can apply for these positions using their resume and cover letter and are hired through the typical interview process.
- Some of these positions may fall into the “competitive class,” which means a civil service exam is required for that title, either before or after being hired. These exams are posted on [nyc.gov/dcas](https://nyc.gov/dcas). Candidates apply for and take civil service exam titles that are often used by multiple agencies across a four-year period.
- While positions posted on [nyc.gov/jobs](https://nyc.gov/jobs) are more immediate, obtaining a position through the civil service exam process provides more option to be considered for positions and provides more job security.

## **Exam Information**

### **How do I determine if an exam is right for me?**

- To determine if an exam is right for you, it is important to read the “What the Job Involves” and “How to Qualify” sections of the Notice of Exam carefully prior to applying for an exam.
- Candidates will need to meet the minimum requirements for the position to be hired into the position.

### **How do I apply for a civil service exam?**

- To apply for a civil service exam, you’ll need to visit the City’s Online Application System, OASys 2.0. There, you can view upcoming exams, review the Notice of Examination (NOE) for qualifications and requirements, and submit your application online during the filing period.
- Be sure to carefully review the minimum qualifications and any required documentation before applying. Once your application is submitted, you’ll receive confirmation and further instructions, if applicable.

### **How many kinds of civil service test are there?**

- There are two types of civil service examination—multiple choice exams and education and experience exams.
- Education and Experience Exams are used to fill positions in which specific education, experience and/or licenses, and/or professional certifications are better indicators than a multiple-choice test to determine a candidate's qualification for a particular position.

### **What material is on an exam? How do I prepare for an exam? Are there study materials for exams?**

- Each Notice of Examination provides information related to the areas being tested on the exam. Refer to the “Test” section of the Notice of Examination for more information.
- For education and experience examinations, please review the “How to qualify” section of the NOE to understand the required education and experience levels of a position.
- DCAS does not endorse any study guides or test prep material, including material prepared by and distributed by unions or other third parties.

## **What is a Notice of Examination?**

- The Notice of Examination (NOE) is a legal document that explains the specific details of an examination. This includes test date, qualifications required to take the examination and topics the exam will cover. Read the NOE carefully before registering for an examination. If you are found to be not qualified as part of the civil service exam process, your application fee is non-refundable.

## **If I fail an exam, can I retake the exam?**

- Each exam for a title is assigned an individual exam number.
- If you fail an exam, you can take another exam for the same title, just not the same exam as the one you failed. You may only take each exam number once.
  - For example: You take Police Officer, Exam 1000 but did not pass the exam. You cannot retake Police Officer, Exam 1000, but can take Police Officer, Exam 1001.

## **Is there a limit to the number of exams I can take?**

- No. We encourage you to apply for as many city exams for which you qualify.
- Candidates should review any minimum education, work experience, licenses, registrations, and/or any other specialized qualifications that they must possess in order to be found qualified for the examination.
- Before applying for an exam, please reference the Minimum Qualification Requirements in the Notice of Examination. If you are found not qualified, your application fee is non-refundable.

## **Is there a cost to take exams? How can I learn about fee waivers?**

- Yes, different exams have different fees required to take the exam. The Fee for each exam is listed on the Notice of Examination (NOE).
- DCAS offers many fee waivers for candidates including for veterans and certain recipients of public benefits.
- Visit [nyc.gov/dcass](http://nyc.gov/dcass) and navigate to the Employment tab and click the link to the Online Application System (OASys) to learn more.

## Can I apply for a civil service exam and an open position at the same time?

- Yes. You can apply for a civil service exam (you are highly encouraged to do so) and an open position at the same time. However, please be aware that these are separate processes.
- Taking an exam is part of the civil service journey as most positions are filled by taking and passing an exam and being called off an eligible list. You are encouraged to apply for an open position for which you meet the requirements, however please review the job description carefully and note whether it states “Exam may be required” as you will need to take an exam in order to remain in that position.

## Can I request a refund for an exam?

- As per the NYC DCAS General Examination Regulations, an applicant who was unable to take or complete an examination may apply for refund of the application fee by submitting a written request to the Examining Service Section of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services within 30 days of the date of the first test in the examination at which they were unable to appear.
- An applicant who was unable to take or complete an exam must provide verification within 30 days that such absence was due to:
  - Compulsory attendance before a court or other public body or official having the power to compel attendance
  - Hospitalization
  - A clear error or mistake for which the Department of Citywide Administrative Services is responsible.

## What is the 55-a Program?

- The City of New York encourages employment of people with disabilities. Most positions in City government require taking a written competitive civil service exam. [Section 55-a of the New York Civil Service Law](#) allows qualified people with disabilities to be appointed to such competitive civil service positions without having to take the exam.
- That individual, if appointed, would be appointed as a non-competitive employee. The New York State Office of the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) certifies persons as having a physical or mental disability and makes determinations as to whether the individuals are qualified to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position

sought with or without an accommodation. There is no guarantee of receiving an interview or a position. Appointments through the 55-a Program are discretionary for each city agency. The law limits the number of 55-a positions in the city to 700.

## **Exam Scoring, Eligible Lists**

### **What should I expect after taking an exam?**

- After taking an exam, you will receive a tentative result. This is an initial score and may be subject to change based on further review, including score adjustments following appeals for multiple choice tests, verification of education and experience for the Education and Experience exams. Once the exam score is finalized, candidates are ranked based on their final scores and a list of eligible candidates is established. Agencies then use the list to contact candidates, typically in score order, for available positions. While being on a list makes you eligible for consideration, it does not guarantee an appointment.

### **How will I be notified of my final exam score?**

- You will be notified of your test results in your OASys account and via email. It is critical that you promptly notify DCAS of any change to your email address.
- If we do not have your correct email address, you will not receive information about your exam(s), consideration for appointment and/or important information that may require a response by a specified deadline. Updates to your email address should be made in your OASys account.

### **What is the passing grade for an exam?**

- Most tests require a passing score of 70%.

### **What happens after I receive my final score?**

- DCAS will take all scores by all candidates and rank them by highest to lowest score and establishes a list.
- Once the exam process is finalized, candidates receive a Notice of Result and are ranked based on their final scores and a list of eligible candidates is established.
- Agencies then use the list to contact candidates, typically in score order, for available positions. While being on a list makes you eligible for consideration, it does not guarantee an appointment.

## What is an Eligible List?

- An Eligible List is a listing of all candidates who passed the examination ranked in descending score order (i.e., highest score at the top and lowest score at the bottom of the eligible list) and who are eligible for appointment off the eligible list.

## What are Veterans' Credits?

- In accordance with NYS Civil Service Law, veterans of the U.S. Armed forces are entitled to additional points to be added to a passing score. Candidates may use Veterans' or Disabled Veterans' Credit only once for appointment or promotion. Veterans' or Disabled Veterans' credit will be added only to the final score of those candidates who pass all parts of the examination.

## What are legacy credits?

- Legacy credits allows 10 additional points to be added to the final score of any applicant with a parent who has died while in discharge of his or her duties as a Police Officer or Firefighter, a candidate who is the sibling of a Police Officer or Firefighter who was killed in service of New York City as a result of the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001, or a candidate who is the child of an FDNY EMS member who was killed in the service of New York City as a result of the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001.

## Appointments Off a List

Once you have taken and passed your civil service exam, you will be placed on an eligible list that will be used by agencies to fill positions.

## What is Selective Certification?

- Selective Certification is a method by which exam applicants who possess a particular specialized skill (ex: specific work experience, language proficiency, license or certification) for which a City agency may have an immediate need are given preference for being appointed/promoted from the eligible list over other candidates who do not possess that particular specialized skill. If Selective Certification is being offered for an exam, it will be announced in the Notice of Examination (NOE), including instructions on how to claim Selective Certification.

## **What is a Call Letter?**

- Once an exam's rating is completed, a ranked order list of test passers is created which is used by agencies to fill their vacancies in that specific exam title.
- Upon publication or establishment of a list, the City notifies all candidates of their official score and list number.
- Those agencies with existing vacancies proceed to send candidates in the respective eligible list a Call Letter (or Notice of Hiring Pool) which provides information about the position, including salary and work site.
- Candidates participate in an individual interview or hiring pool. Please note that ignoring a Call Letter can result in the removal of your name from an eligible list.

## **Can a list expire before I am hired?**

- Yes. Being on an eligible list does not guarantee employment. All appointments are based on the hiring needs of a city agency or agencies. Your eligible list number may not be reached and therefore, you may not be appointed from the eligible list.
- Eligible lists expire after four years.