

Civil Service Entry Level Police Exam

Frequently Asked Questions

Basic Requirements of the Exam:

Who can take the Municipal or Transit Entry-level Police Exam?

Education/Experience Requirement: As of the date of appointment, candidates must have either a high school diploma or equivalency certificate approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or three years of experience in the armed forces of the United States with last release or discharge under honorable conditions.

Age Requirement: Pursuant to [Massachusetts General Law \(M.G.L.\) Chapter 31, § 58](#), candidates must be 19 years of age on or before the first date the examination is being administered for municipal firefighter, police officer and transit police officer. Candidates are also required to be at least 21 years of age by the date of appointment as a municipal police officer or transit police officer. Please review the list of Civil Service departments to identify those that may have an upper age limit: [Civil Service Police Departments](#).

Who can take the State Trooper Entry-level Exam?

Education Requirement: Candidates must have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Age Requirement: In order to take the examination for State Trooper and pursuant to [M.G.L. Chapter 22C, § 10](#), candidates must be at least 21 years of age and less than 35 years old as of the last date to file an application for an examination.

How much does it cost to take an exam and are there hardship exceptions?

The **combined** examination fee for Municipal Police Officer and State Trooper is \$150. For candidates who only wish to be considered for either State Trooper **OR** Municipal Police Officer the examination fee is \$100.

Late Fee: Candidates who miss the first deadline, may still submit an application with an additional Fifty (\$50) dollar late fee.

Note: No applications will be accepted after the second deadline.

Fee Waiver: The examination processing fee may be waived for candidates receiving certain state or federal public assistance, or unemployment insurance. Fee Waiver Forms are available on our website ([Fee Waiver Form](#)). This form should be completed and supporting documentation must be scanned and attached to the application. All fee waiver forms must be submitted on or before the first deadline for applications.

How many times can someone take the exam?

Candidates are eligible to participate each time the exam is offered, whether every two years or annually. If candidates participate in the annual cycle, the most recent test score will be used for ranking on the eligible list. A candidate could take the most recent exam, fail, and no longer appear on any eligible list.

Do you have to be a United States citizen to take the exam?

No, you do not have to be a United States citizen to participate in the police officer exam.

Do you need to be a Massachusetts resident to take the exam?

No, you do not have to be a Massachusetts resident to participate in the police officer exam.

Is proficiency in spoken and written English required to take the exam?

The exam is authored and conducted in English.

If you wish to take the written examination in the Spanish language, you must submit a separate email requesting this along with your application and examination processing fee by the first filing deadline for exam applications. Candidates must take and pass the English Comprehension written examination that tests your ability to read and understand English. The English Comprehension written examination will be administered prior to the municipal police officer, transit police officer, municipal firefighter and State Trooper written examination. A separate confirmation will be sent to candidates approved to take the English Comprehension written examination. If you pass the English Comprehension written examination, you will be scheduled to take the municipal police officer, transit police officer and/or State Trooper written examination in the Spanish language. If you fail the English Comprehension written examination, you will not be eligible to take the examination in Spanish.

Can a candidate with a criminal record take the exam?

Yes. Through the hiring process, each municipal police and fire department has an extensive background evaluation including a CORI check. A candidate may be bypassed for appointment based on their background.

Does having certification as an emergency medical technician (EMT) give a candidate any advantages in the hiring process?

Having an EMT license will not rank you higher on the eligible list but may be used as a criteria in the selection process for municipal departments.

Are there any advantages in the hiring process to candidates who are multi-lingual?

Yes. Based on operational necessity, municipal Police departments may request a language-based hiring list for the title of police officer. This request would be limited to candidates who are fluent in a specific language identified by the department.

Frequency of Exams:

How often are entry level exams administered?

In the past, the entry-level municipal police and transit police exam was offered every two years. However, beginning in calendar year 2022, it is anticipated the exam will be offered annually.

The frequency of the State Trooper entry-exam administration is determined by their recruiting needs. More information can be found at [MA State Police](#).

The Exam:

What comprises the written exam?

The written examination consists of three subtests: the Written Ability Test (WAT), the Life Experience Survey (LES), and the Work Styles Questionnaire (WSQ).

The *Written Ability Test* (WAT) is administered to measure cognitive abilities that have been identified as essential to performing the duties of a municipal police officer, transit police officer and State Trooper. The WAT includes areas of verbal expression, verbal comprehension, problem sensitivity, deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, and information ordering.

Note: Candidates must pass the WAT in order to have the remaining sections of the exam scored.

The *Life Experience Survey* (LES) consists of a series of multiple-choice questions related to candidates' history and experience of potential relevance to successful performance of entry-level a municipal police officer, transit police officer and State Trooper.

The *Work Style Questionnaire* (WSQ) is designed to assess certain motivational, value-related, and attitudinal characteristics that are of potential relevance to successful performance of entry-level a municipal police officer, municipal firefighter, transit police officer and State Trooper.

How long is the written exam?

The written exam is 2 hours and 15 minutes.

The Preparation Guide for the municipal police officer, transit police officer and State Trooper examination recommends spending one hour and fifteen minutes on the WAT, before continuing to the rest of the examination.

How should a candidate study for the exam?

For more information regarding the written examination and access to the Preparation Guide, please visit [Preparation Guides & Reading Lists](#).

How is the exam administered?

The exam will be administered on a computer by a proctor. The proctor will provide instructions prior to the exam starting, and the first page of the exam provides additional directions. Please read the instructions carefully and follow all directions for the exam. Cheating in any form will not be tolerated under any set of circumstances and is grounds for disqualification.

Are ADA accommodations available for test takers?

If you need special testing accommodations due to a documented impairment, you must submit a letter of support from a qualified professional detailing what type of accommodation you require at the examination site, and such letter must be scanned and attached to the application or emailed to civilservice@mass.gov. Without such a letter, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to grant your accommodation. This information is requested only to provide reasonable accommodation for examinations and will not be used for any other purpose.

What are the next steps for candidates after they take the exam?

Within 60 days of the administration of the exam, all candidates will receive a score notice. The score notice contains information along with a numeric exam result.

Test Scores:

How is the exam scored?

Candidates must receive a passing score on the WAT (Written Ability Test) section of the examination to have the WSQ (Work Styles Questionnaire) and LES (Life Experience Survey) sections scored.

What is a passing score for the written exam?

70 is a passing score for the police officer exam.

When will a candidate receive their exam score?

Typically, scores are released within 60 days of the last exam administration.

Eligible Lists:

How long does it take between the exam being administered, the scores being issued, and the eligible list being established?

Typically, within 90 days of the last administration of the exam the resulting eligible list will be established.

For how long is the eligible list valid?

Candidates have a maximum of two years eligibility on a list.

Once scores are calculated, how are lists established?

Eligible lists are created based on candidates' scores with statutory preference in [MGL c.31, section26](#).

Where is the eligible list posted?

Once the entry-level examination is given and the resulting eligible list is established, it will be posted on www.mass.gov/civilservice. [Entry-Level Police Officer Eligible List](#) are displayed by civil service municipal departments.

How is the eligible list sorted?

Candidates are ranked on eligible list by score within statutory preferences listed below.

ORDER OF APPLICANTS ON ELIGIBLE LISTS: (See below for applicable codes)

- Chapter 534 Applicant
- Resident 402A Applicant
- Non-Resident 402A Applicant
- Resident Disabled Veteran Applicant
- Resident 402B Applicant
- Non-Resident 402B Applicant
- Resident Veteran Applicant
- Resident Civilian Applicant
- Non-Resident Disabled Veteran Applicant
- Non-Resident Veteran Applicant
- Non-Resident Civilian Applicant

What do the various preference codes on the eligible list mean?

What's a 534?

534/310: A decision rendered by the Civil Service Commission under MGL c. 534 of the Acts of 1976 as amended by c. 310 of the Acts and Resolves of 1993. This action generally allows an applicant to be placed at the top of a specific department's eligible list for consideration to the next vacancy. A candidate may receive the opportunity to be considered for employment, thereby going to the top of a department eligible list based on the Civil Service Commission decision stemming from a hearing.

What's a 402A/B?

Chapter 402A of the Acts of 1985, amending Law Chapter 31, Section 26 - enables a child of a police officer or firefighter who passes the required written, medical and physical examinations to receive a statutory preference in placement on all entry-level police officer or firefighter eligible lists if the police officer or firefighter was killed in the line of duty and benefits are paid to the beneficiary due to the parent's death.

402B: Chapter 402B of the Acts of 1985, amending Law Chapter 31, Section 26 - enables a child of a police officer or firefighter who passes the required written, medical and physical examinations to receive a statutory preference in placement on all entry-level police officer or firefighter eligible lists if the police officer or firefighter was

permanently and totally disabled in the line of duty and if through a special act of the legislature received a retirement pension equal to his/her regular rate of compensation had s/he continued in service.

From a candidate’s perspective, what happens after an eligible list is established?

Once the eligible list has been established, candidates can view their rankings on the eligible list. [Entry-Level Police Officer Eligible List](#)

From a hiring department’s perspective, what happens after an eligible list is established?

The hiring department must now utilize the eligible list for any vacancies they have in the specific title.

If a candidate is on the top of a municipality’s list, does that mean they will automatically be hired if there is a vacancy? If not, why not?

No. Being at the top of a municipality’s list allows the candidate to appear in the selection ratio from which the selection must be made. Candidates can be bypassed for appointment.

What should a candidate on the list do if they are no longer interested in becoming an officer?

If a candidates no longer wishes to be considered for employment, they may email Civil Service at civilservice@mass.gov requesting their name be removed from the list.

Is there anything a candidate can do if they gain a new skill that was not reflected on their application?

At any time during the two years of eligibility a candidate may add or drop information by using the [Update your Account](#) function. One example is a candidate earning their EMT license 6 months after the eligible list was established. They may update this information at any time using [Update your Account](#).

Candidate Residency:

What is a residency preference?

Candidates who have resided in that municipality for 12 months immediately preceding the date of the first written examination administration are entitled to be placed on the eligible list as a resident for that community ahead of any non-residents. Verification of residency will be made by the hiring Municipal Police Department where the candidate claimed their residency.

Note: A candidate can be removed from the eligibility for misrepresenting eligibility for residency preference.

For additional information regarding residency preference, including for military candidates, please visit the following link: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/residency-preference-for-civil-service-police-and-fire-jobs>

How can a candidate specify which cities or towns they prefer to work in?

Once the eligible list has been established, candidates may select as many employment departments they wish to be considered in outside of where they claimed residency preference. Candidates who claim a department as an employment location will be listed below candidates who claimed residency preference in that department. The score notice provides information on how to add other departments by [Updating your Account](#) on NeoGov.

Does a candidate need to live in the city or town in which they want to work?

This requirement is specific to a municipality and any relevant collective bargaining agreement. If no agreement has been reached with the relevant union as to how far a candidate can live from the municipality, then statute prevails, which is 10 miles from the candidate’s home to the border of the hiring municipality. A candidate would need to meet post-employment requirements within 9 months of being hired by the department under [Chapter 31, Section 58](#).

Can a department opt out of using residency preference?

Yes. Departments can choose to opt out of [Chapter 31, Section 58](#) by submitting a request to their HRD Civil Service Liaison.

Hiring Information for Municipalities:

If a municipality has a vacancy on its force, what does it need to do first?

In order to start the hiring process, a department must enter a requisition in HRD’s online system NEOGOV. The requisition will require basic information such as title, number of vacancies, who and where to report if candidates are interested in being considered for employment.

How does a municipality receive a ranked list of eligible candidates for consideration to hire?

A municipality’s HRD Civil Service Liaison will process the requisition and will first review which eligible list to send in priority order:

Certification Order of Eligible Lists

1. RE-EMPLOYMENT LIST
2. ROSTER LIST OF RESERVES OR INTERMITTENTS
3. OPEN COMPETITIVE LISTS

Next, the liaison will create a certification and send the department the list as a PDF by email. Once the department confirms receipt of the list, Civil Service would notify the candidates.

What’s my pool of candidates to hire? How many candidates may I request?

A department can consider twice the number of vacancies plus 1 (2N+1). For example, for 10 vacancies, the department can consider the top 21 names willing to accept. Any candidates tied with the 21st candidate can be considered. The number of names referred out on a certification is dependent on the number of vacancies being requested.

Is there anything a municipality can do if it believes it would better serve its community by increasing diversity through its hiring practices?

Personnel Administration Rules .08 and .10 provides the municipality the ability to request a pool of candidates outside the regular list.

Can a municipality ask for candidates who are fluent in a language other than English?

Yes. PAR.08 allows for departments to request special certifications. As part of a department's request, they must show the need for the specific skill or ability they are requesting. For example, if a municipal police department has no Spanish speaking Officers and is having difficulty communicating with a large segment of the City population. By documenting the number and type of incidents, HRD will review the need on a case-by-case review. The request for a [Bilingual Selective Certification Questionnaire](#) is the first step in the process.

Can a municipality get an eligible list of just females?

Yes. PAR.08 allows for departments to request special certifications. As part of a department's request, they must show the need for the specific skill or ability they are requesting. For example, if a municipal police department has no female Officers and is responding to calls of rape, domestic abuse, and care and custody of female detainees. By documenting the number and type of incidents, HRD will review the need on a case-by-case review. The request for a [Gender-Based Selective Certification Questionnaire](#) will need to be filled out by the hiring department. After HRD's review and acceptance, HRD will forward to MCAD for their recommendation.

Can a municipality get an eligible list of just minorities?

A special certification request based on race, color, or national origin can be made in accordance with PAR .10 when:

- (a) A municipality needs to make an appointment to one or more positions included in their affirmative action plan on file with HRD, and;
- (b) HRD has made a written determination substantiating that previous practices of municipality, with respect to the filling of such position or positions, has discriminated against members of a group, hereinafter referred to as a protected group, on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin in contravention of any provision of the Constitution of the United States or the Constitution of the Commonwealth, Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e) or any other federal or state statute.

Does a municipality need to interview all candidates on its ranked list of eligible candidates?

It is advised that the hiring department conduct a thorough investigation on the pool of candidates that express a willingness to accept the position. Throughout the process, some candidates may choose to withdraw from consideration.

What does a municipality do if it contacts a selected candidate from its list and the candidate says they are no longer interested?

If a candidate expresses they are no longer interested in the position, it is advised the hiring department obtain a confirmation in writing to document the withdrawal.

What happens after a municipality receives its eligible list, screens and interviews the candidates, and selects its preferred candidates?

At the conclusion of the hiring process, the department fills out a [Notification of Employment Form](#) for those selected candidates and attaches it to the requisition in NeoGov. The department should also update the status of the candidates in NEOGOV for who is hired, bypassed, withdrew, etc.

Note: All forms can be found at the following link. <https://www.mass.gov/lists/hiring-authority-forms>

How does a department remove a candidate from its list?

Hiring departments can pursue PAR .03 or PAR .09 removals of candidates.

PAR .03: Most severe action which results in the removal from the entire eligible list.

Department must provide proof of one of the conditions specified in the rule. These include but are not limited to:

- conduct that shows a lack of qualifications,
- failure to meet the minimum entrance requirements, or
- making any false statements with regard to the application for the position.

Note: The candidate has a right to a hearing.

PAR .09: Less severe action which results in the removal from the department's eligible list only. Department must provide proof to Civil Service that the candidate's appointment would be detrimental to the public's interest.

Note: The candidate has a right to a hearing.

When processing a certification, does a department need to provide a bypassed candidate's negative reasons AND selection reasons for candidates selected lower on the list?

[Chapter 31, section 27](#) requires Appointing Authorities to provide written reasons for the selection of any candidates other than those highest on the list. Selection reasons must address positive job-related reasons for selecting the individual who is being selected.

PAR 8: requires that Municipalities should also supply any negative reasons for a candidate's non-selection. In addition candidates should be notified of their right to appeal to the [Civil](#)

[Service Commission](#) within 60 days of receipt of the letter. If the candidate appeals to the Civil Service Commission, the department would only be allowed to elaborate on the bypass reasons given in writing to the candidate.

If a candidate is bypassed, will they be removed from the eligible list?

If a candidate is bypassed, they will not be removed from a department's eligible list unless it is due to not meeting residency requirements. If a candidate is bypassed for not meeting residency requirements, please notify your Civil Service Liaison.

The Hiring Process:

When does a selected candidate take the Medical Examination and the Physical Ability Test [PAT]?

Once given a conditional offer of employment by the hiring department, a candidate will be scheduled to take their initial hire Medical Examination and the PAT.

What is included in the Medical Exam and where does it take place?

Each municipal police department implements a pre-placement medical evaluation process for candidates. During the medical evaluation, a physician will evaluate each candidate in accordance with HRD's medical standards. A complete listing of the medical exam can be found on the Civil Service website under [Medical Standards](#).

What is the Physical Ability Test?

The Physical Ability Test (PAT) is a test of the candidate's aerobic capacity and physical capability to perform various tasks required on the job. A separate fee may be required for the administration of the PAT. The [PAT Preparation Guide](#) is available on our website.

What happens if a selected candidate fails the Medical Exam or the Physical Ability Test (PAT)?

In the event a candidate fails the medical or PAT, they have a second opportunity to take and pass the exam. For medical exams, candidates have the right to seek a second opinion by a medical professional under the standard they failed. For the PAT, upon request, a candidate will be provided the opportunity to take the entire PAT within a 16 week period from the first failure. If the candidate fails the second medical exam or second PAT, the hiring department must rescind the conditional offer of employment.

Hiring Military Candidates:

How should a department process a military candidate in NEOGOV (offered status)?

An active duty military candidate is protected by USERRA and cannot be bypassed on a certification because of active duty military status. If a candidate indicates their interest during a signing period and someone below them on the certification is being hired, a department should provide the active duty candidate something in writing to notify them that a position will be held for their consideration and that they should reach out to them once released from active duty

military. The candidate can be processed at that time. If the candidate meets all conditions of hire, they have a right to a retroactive seniority date the same as others hired from the certification. The department can leave an active duty candidate in “offered” status in NEOGOV with a note that the candidate is active duty military.

How does a department update a candidate who has returned from active duty military and has been hired?

The department should reach out to their Civil Service Liaison to have the certification unlocked in NEOGOV in order to update. The candidate can be moved to “hired” status with a retroactive seniority date. The notification of employment form should also be attached in NEOGOV.

Police Academy

Any questions about Police Academies should be directed to the [Municipal Police Training Committee \(MPTC\)](#)

**Civil Service Personnel
Frequently Asked Questions**

Personnel Transactions:

Does Permanent Reserve time count towards seniority in the department?

No. Candidates are given a new seniority date when they are hired Permanent Full-Time.

Does Reserve time count toward retirement?

This question would be best directed to the [Massachusetts State Retirement Board](#).

Transfers from Other Departments:

What is required for an employee to be able to transfer?

A candidate who wants to transfer from one department to another would need the Appointing Authorities from both departments to complete and sign the transfer form and submit to HRD.

Does an employee need to be tenured to transfer?

No. A candidate only needs to be Permanent in a Civil Service position in order to transfer to another department.

Seniority:

How does a transfer impact Civil Service Seniority?

The transfer effective date would be the candidate’s seniority date in the department. After three (3) consecutive years in the new department, the candidate would have the right to their retroactive date immediately prior to the transfer.

How does a reinstatement impact Civil Service Seniority?

[M.G.L Chapter 31, Section 33 states](#): For the purposes of this chapter, seniority of a civil service employee shall mean his ranking based on length of service, computed as provided in this section. Length of service shall be computed from the first date of full-time employment as a permanent employee, including the required probationary period, in the department unit, regardless of title, unless such service has been interrupted by an absence from the payroll of more than six months, in which case length of service shall be computed from the date of restoration to the payroll; but upon continuous service following such an absence for a period of twice the length of the absence, length of service shall be computed from the date obtained by adding the period of such absence from the payroll to the date of original employment; provided, however, that the continuity of service of such employee shall be deemed not to have been interrupted if such absence was the result of (1) military service, illness, educational leave, abolition of position or lay-off because of lack of work or money

Does an employee need to be tenured to have reinstatement rights under Section 46 after a resignation?

No. The candidate just needs to have been Permanent in a Civil Service position prior to resigning.

Civil Service Promotional Police Exam Frequently Asked Questions

When are promotional exams offered?

Police Promotional exams are offered annually in the Fall.

How early can a department put in to participate for a yearly promotional written exam?

Reading Lists and Examination Posters are announced 6 months prior to the examination date. Departments can enter a requisition in NEOGOV to participate at any time.

How do I sign up for a department promotional exam?

A candidate can sign up for a promotional examination by visiting our website and applying. [Civil Service Examination Schedule](#)

Why is the exam requisition marked in “Draft” or “On Hold”?

If a requisition has the designation of “Draft” in NEOGOV, the user who entered the requisition selected “Save and Close” rather than “Save and Submit.” Users can submit by clicking edit on the requisition and selecting “Save and Submit.” “On Hold” has no negative connotations in the NEOGOV requisition process. It is simply in a holding pattern while it is being processed and before the promotional eligible list is established and referred out in the system.

How many candidates must apply for a promotional exam for it to take place?

Four candidates must apply in order for the promotional examination to take place until it is opened to the lowest rank. After the initial application period, if less than 4 candidates signed up, a department would have the option of opening up to the next lowest rank for the exam that year. They could also choose to postpone to the next year or cancel their participation.

Is my employee eligible for an exam when they have less than the time needed in the title?

No, if the exam is only open to the next lowest rank and there are at least 4 candidates eligible and willing to participate. A candidate may become eligible if the exam gets opened up to the next lowest rank.

Can our department request more than one rank be eligible to sign up for an exam title?

Yes, but only if there are less than 4 candidates eligible from the next lowest rank. For example, if there are only 2 candidates eligible in the next lowest, you may request in writing the need for the exam to be open to multiple ranks to allow 4 candidates to participate.

Can a candidate that was provisionally promoted stay in that position once an eligible list is established? What if only one employee is on the new list?

Candidates who have been provisionally promoted must vacate the position when a new suitable eligible list with 3 or more names is established.

I have an employee out on injury, how do I fill that position? Provisional Promotion versus Temporary Full-time.

If you have a suitable eligible list, you can choose to promote someone from it on a temporary full-time basis. That candidate could fill the position for a specific amount of time, for the entire duration the original employee is out on leave, or until the eligible list they are on expires. You would follow the standard promotional process, creating the promotional certification locally, notifying the candidates and conducting your process. A Provisional Promotion would only be used if the department has no active eligible list, or they have a list with less than 3 names and declare it a short list.