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Pass Line: ALL FOREIGN SERVICE EMPLOYEES FROM THE DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE
Subject: Let's Talk: Time in Class (TIC) and Time in Service (TIS) for Foreign
Service Generalists and Specialists - Plus FAQs

Key Points:

- The Bureau of Global Talent Management’s Let’s Talk series sheds light on common performance evaluation questions by providing clear, comprehensive guidance to the Foreign Service. This cable clarifies the formula for calculating Foreign Service time in class and time in service.
- Time in class (TIC) is the maximum time in which a Foreign Service member may spend in the current class. Time in service (TIS) is the maximum time allowable to cross the threshold into the Senior Foreign Service. Whichever time is earlier is considered the “controlling TIC.”
- The mandatory retirement age of 65 supersedes any later controlling TIC.

Controlling TIC and Expiration of Controlling TIC

Controlling TIC determines when an employee must separate from the Service. Controlling TIC is determined by the earlier of the employee’s TIC, TIS, or Threshold Window close date. Expiration of controlling TIC refers to the amount of time a Foreign Service member has to be promoted from one grade to the next and/or to be promoted across the threshold into the Senior Foreign Service before facing mandatory retirement, frequently referred to as “mandatory retirement for expiration of TIC” or “TIC-ing out.”

Time in Class

The Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended, prescribes limitations for the maximum time during which Foreign Service members may serve in a particular class prior to retirement for expiration of time in class. The time in class, also known as TIC, is the maximum time by which the employee must be promoted to the next higher class or be separated from the Foreign Service.

Single-class TIC limits for generalists

Foreign Service Single class	Total Time in Class - Generalists
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FS-04 (Foreign Service)	10 years
FS-03 (Foreign Service)	13 years
FS-02 (Foreign Service)	13 years
FS-01 (Foreign Service)	15 years*
FE-OC (Counselor)	7 years
FE-OC/MC (Minister Counselor)	14 years combined
FE-CM (Career Minister)	7 years

The single-class TIC limit for specialists is 15 years at grades FS-04 through FS-01. Foreign Service specialists who are promoted to class FS-03, FS-02, and FS-01 in less than fifteen years can carry over up to a maximum of five years of their unused TIC, thereby creating a new TIC of up to twenty years. (see [3 FAM 6213.3-5\(b\)](#)).

* Once a Foreign Service member is promoted to FS-01, that employee may “open their window” to be considered for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service (SFS). Once the window is open, that member has up to six competitive selection years in which to be promoted to FE-OC. Therefore, a member who has been an FS-01 for three years, opens their window, and is not promoted to FE-OC after six annual Board reviews, would be separated from the Foreign Service after nine years, even though the time in class allowable for FS-01 is 15 years.

Time in Service

Time in service, also known as TIS, is the maximum total time allowable from entry into the Foreign Service to crossing the threshold into the SFS, *i.e.*, to FE-OC. The amount of TIS an employee receives depends on the class at which the employee enters the Foreign Service. The TIS for generalists and specialists is based on class at the time of entry into the Foreign Service as listed below:

Pro-Rated Time in Service (TIS) for Generalists

Foreign Service Class	Total Time in Service - Generalists
FS-04 & below:	27 years
FS-03:	22 years
FS-02:	20 years
FS-01:	15 years

Pro-Rated Time in Service (TIS) for Specialists

Foreign Service Class	Total Time in Service - Specialists
FS-04 & FS-03	30 years
FS-02	25 years
FS-01	20 years

TIC/TIS Recalculations

An employee’s controlling TIC may be recalculated to account for periods that are not included

in calculating the maximum time permitted in a class ([3 FAM 6213.5](#)). Recalculations may be warranted for periods of separation from the Service, periods of leave without pay (LWOP), periods of long-term training, 44 weeks or longer of a hard/super hard language, or periods of service in specifically designated posts. For a complete list of periods of performance that may be excluded when calculating TIC/TIS, see [3 FAM 6213.5](#) Calculation of TIC and TIS.

Recalculations Examples

- Officer X joined the Foreign Service as a generalist in 2009 and became an FS-03 in 2013. The TIC for an FS-03 is 13 years, so Officer X has until 2026 to be promoted to FS-02. If Officer X is not promoted by then, Officer X will be separated from the Foreign Service. This is called “TIC-ing out.” If Officer X gets promoted to FS-02 in 2021, Officer X’s TIC is 13 years at the FS-02 level. Officer X will then have until 2034 to be promoted from FS-02 to FS-01.
- Example continued: Having joined at the FO-04 level or below in 2009, Officer X has 27 years from the date of entry into service (the day Officer X started A-100) to be promoted to the SFS. That period is Officer X’s TIS. If Officer X is promoted to FS-02 in 2021, 12 years of TIS would have elapsed, leaving Officer X with 15 years remaining (until 2036) to be promoted into the SFS. If Officer X is not promoted into the SFS by 2036, Officer X will be separated from the Foreign Service, which is called “TIS-ing out.” If Officer X turned 65 in 2023, Officer X would have to retire by the end of the month Officer X turns 65 because the mandatory retirement age supersedes any later Controlling TIC/TIS date.
- Specialist Z joined the Foreign Service in 2009 and became an FS-03 in 2013. The TIC for an FS-03 Specialist is 15 years, but Z carried over five years of unused TIC so Specialist Z has 20 years of TIC until 2033 to be promoted to FS-02. If Z is not promoted by then, Z will be separated from the Foreign Service. This is called “TIC-ing out.” If Specialist Z gets promoted to FS-02 in 2021, Z is allowed to carry over five years of unused TIC. Z’s TIC is 20 years (15 years plus five years carried over) at the FS-02 level. Z will then have until 2041 to be promoted from FS-02 to FS-01.
- Specialist example continued: Having joined at the FS-04 level or below in 2009, Z has 30 years from the date of entry into service (the day Specialist Z started A-100) to be promoted to the SFS. That period is Z’s TIS. If Z is promoted to FS-02 in 2021, 12 years of TIS would have elapsed, leaving Z with 18 years remaining (until 2039) to be promoted into the SFS. If Specialist Z is not promoted into the SFS by 2039, Z will be separated from the Foreign Service, which is called “TIS-ing out.” If Z turned 65 in 2023, Z would have to retire by the end of the month Z turns 65 because the mandatory retirement age supersedes any later Controlling TIC/TIS date.

FAQS

1. Where Foreign Service Members Can Find Their TIC/TIS

- The Employee Profile/PAR accessed through HR Applications contains TIC/TIS information for Foreign Service members. At the top, there is a “View TIC/TIS History Data” bar. If the information is inaccurate, click “Report Profile Problem” on the same

page and follow the instructions there. TIC/TIS information can change, for example, following a promotion or following long-term language study.

- The calculation of TIC can be complicated, and employees should regularly review their TIC/TIS information to ensure accuracy, as dates could impact eligibility for promotion consideration. The mandatory retirement age is 65 and supersedes any TIC or TIS.
2. If a Foreign Service Member Reaches TIC or TIS, When Does Employment End?
- The Director General has the discretion to extend an appointment of members whose controlling TIC has expired or will expire based upon the needs of service, to ensure an orderly transition. Such an extension is commonly referred to as a “grace period”. Under current practice, if the controlling TIC is between October 1 and July 1 of a fiscal year, then the appointment is extended to the end of that fiscal year – September 30. Accordingly, if the final TIC is April 15, 2021, the separation date would be set as September 30, 2021.
 - If the controlling TIC is between July 1 and September 30, then the grace period extends to exactly one year beyond that final TIC Date. So, if the controlling TIC Date is July 8, 2021, the appointment would extend to July 7, 2022.
3. What Happens to the TIC/TIS Date if A Selection Board Decides to “Non-Rate” an Employee?
- If a Selection Board, with the concurrence of the Director of GTM’s Office of Performance Evaluation (GTM/PE), chooses to non-rate an employee due to insufficient performance documentation, then the member’s TIC/TIS is recalculated to exclude the year of the non-rate. See [3 FAM 6213.5](#) (FAM provision on non-rates).

For more information regarding the calculation of TIC and TIS, please refer to [3 FAM 6200](#) or contact GTM’s Office of Performance Evaluation via email at GTM-PEQuestions@state.gov

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