



CITY OF ITHACA  
108 East Green Street Ithaca, New York 14850-5690

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES / CIVIL SERVICE  
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## **OFFICE ASSISTANT OPEN-COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION NO. 026-01**

APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED  
CONTINUOUSLY

EXAMINATIONS WILL BE HELD  
PERIODICALLY

**LOCATION/VACANCIES:** The eligible list established as a result of this examination will be used to fill vacancies in the City of Ithaca as they occur.

**NOTE:** A promotional examination is being held in conjunction with this open-competitive examination. In the event that a vacancy occurs in a department for which a promotional list exists, the promotional list shall be used first.

**RESIDENCY:** Candidates must be legal residents of either Tompkins County or one of its six (6) contiguous counties (Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Schuyler, Seneca or Tioga) at least one month prior to the date of the examination. Preference in certification may be given to candidates who are residents of the municipality in which appointment is to be made, provided that the candidate is a resident of such municipality at the time of examination and remains a resident of such municipality continuously thereafter, up to and including the dates of certification and appointment.

**SALARY RANGE:** Per labor contract.

**DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE CLASS:** The work involves responsibility for independently performing complex clerical operations and administrative support tasks for a unit or division of a large department. Incumbents spend a substantial amount of time operating a personal computer and the rest of the time on routine administrative tasks to ensure the efficient workflow of the office. The work also involves responsibility for the entry and retrieval of information using software on a computer and using a computer to produce printed material such as letters, memoranda and forms. Incumbents work under general supervision receiving detailed instructions only where policies have not been determined. This class differs from that of an Executive Assistant by the increased time spent on operating software and the more limited scope of duties and decision-making responsibilities in the unit or program area. This class is distinguished from a Keyboard Specialist by the incumbent's increased independence of operation, and the broader scope and greater complexity of the work. Supervision is not a responsibility of this class. Does related work as required.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:** Either:

- (a) Graduation from a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the New York State Board of Regents to grant degrees with an Associate's degree in secretarial science, office management, office technology, business administration or a closely related field with similar course curriculum; or

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS CONTINUED:** Either:

- (b) Graduation from high school or possession of a high school equivalency diploma and two (2) years of full-time paid clerical experience, or its part-time and/or volunteer equivalent; or
- (c) An equivalent combination of training and experience as defined by the limits of (a) and (b).

**BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION:** Applicants may be required to undergo a State and national criminal history background investigation, which will include a fingerprint check, to determine suitability for appointment. Failure to meet the standards for the background investigation may result in disqualification.

**SCOPE OF THE EXAMINATION:** The examination will consist of a weighted written test and a qualifying typing performance test. Candidates must pass both the written and the performance test in order to be considered for appointment. A candidate's rank on the eligible list will be determined by the candidate's score on the written test only.

The written examination will cover knowledges, skills and/or abilities in such areas as:

1. **SPELLING:** These questions test for the ability to spell words that are used in written business communications.
2. **GRAMMAR, USAGE, PUNCTUATION:** The grammar and usage questions test for the ability to apply the basic rules of grammar and usage. The punctuation questions test for a knowledge of the correct placement of punctuation marks in sentences.
3. **KEYBOARDING PRACTICES:** These questions test for a knowledge of preferred practices in such areas as letter format, capitalization, hyphenation, plurals, possessives, word division, word and figure style for numbers, and common proofreading marks. In addition, you will be given a passage to proofread and asked questions about how to correct the errors in the passage.
4. **OFFICE RECORD KEEPING:** These questions evaluate your ability to perform common office record keeping tasks. The test consists of two or more "sets" of questions, each set concerning a different problem. Typical record keeping problems might involve the organization or collation of data from several sources; scheduling; maintaining a record system using running balances; or completion of a table summarizing data using totals, subtotals, averages and percents.
5. **OFFICE PRACTICES:** These questions test for a knowledge of generally agreed-upon practices governing the handling of situations which stenographers, typists, and secretaries encounter in their work, as well as a knowledge of efficient and effective methods used to accomplish office tasks. The questions will cover such topics as planning work flow; setting priorities; dealing effectively with staff, visitors, and callers; filing and retrieving information; safeguarding confidentiality; using office equipment; and making procedural decisions and recommendations which contribute to a well-managed office.

**A Guide to Taking the Written Test for the Senior-Level Secretarial Series (Office Assistant)** is available upon request. Write to the City of Ithaca Human Resource Department at 108 East Green Street - Ithaca, NY 14850 or by e-mail to [hrdept@cityofithaca.org](mailto:hrdept@cityofithaca.org) or call us at (607) 274-6539 to obtain a copy.

**NOTE:** Most civil service examinations do not require the use of a calculator or slide rule; however, candidates have the option of bringing a battery-operated or solar-powered calculator to the test room unless specifically notified that their use is prohibited. Devices with typewriter keyboards, spell checkers, Personal Digital Assistants, Address Books, Language Translators, Dictionaries, or any similar devices are prohibited. **Use of calculators is recommended.**

In addition to the written examination, a qualifying TYPING PERFORMANCE TEST will also be required of all candidates. The typing performance test will be administered separately, at a later date.

**TYPING PERFORMANCE TEST:** Candidates who receive a passing score on the written test must also qualify on the typing performance test. You must pass both the written test and typing performance test to be considered for appointment. Since the performance test is qualifying (pass/fail), if you pass the performance test your final score for the exam will be the score that you achieve on the written test. Candidates may be invited to the performance test in the order of the scores they achieve on the written test. The City of Ithaca reserves the right to give the performance test to only as many candidates as are needed to fill available vacancies.

The performance test is a test of keying speed and accuracy. It utilizes a standard keyboard and is given on computers. The computer program requires no prior knowledge of software. The test is five minutes long and is preceded by a three-minute practice session.

In order to pass the test, candidates must enter the text at a rate of at least 35 words per minute, with at least 96% accuracy. For example, if a candidate enters the text at 35 words per minute, the maximum allowable number of errors is 7. (Note: A word is defined as five characters. The rating formula divides the total number of characters entered by five to determine the number of words entered).

**PERFORMANCE TEST WAIVER POLICY:** The required performance test may be waived for candidates who have already successfully qualified on such performance test administered by a local or state civil service agency within the State of New York, within one year preceding the date of the written examination.

Candidates requesting a waiver must provide verification of their qualification from the civil service agency, which administered the performance test, including the title and location of the performance test(s), the test date(s) and the passing speed(s).

**RE-TEST POLICY (Written Exam):** Candidates who fail the written examination, or who wish to retake the written examination to achieve a better score, may do so upon the submission of a new application. However, a six-month waiting period for retest on the written part will apply. In no event may any candidate take any combination of the Office Assistant, School Secretary, and/or Senior Typist written examinations (promotional and/or open-competitive) more than twice in one year.

**RE-TEST POLICY (Performance Test):** Candidates who fail to qualify on a required performance test are entitled to request an opportunity for a re-test, provided that they request the re-test in writing, within thirty (30) days of notification of their failure to qualify; provided, however, that no candidate will be allowed to take the typing performance test more than four (4) times in any one year period.

**DURATION OF ELIGIBLE LIST:** Candidates who successfully pass the required examination will be certified onto the civil service eligible list for a period of one (1) year. Rank on the eligible list will be based on the candidate's written test score, with candidates' names being interfiled by written test score as examinations are given.

**APPLICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED:** at the City of Ithaca Human Resources/Civil Service Department - 108 East Green Street - Ithaca NY 14850. You may also apply online or download an application at <https://ithaca-portal.mycivilservice.com>.

**TIME AND PLACE OF THE EXAMINATION:** Approved candidates will be notified by mail regarding the time and place of the examination. Examinations will be scheduled and conducted on an as-needed basis.

**RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION - CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES - MILITARY MEMBERS:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicants whose religious beliefs or military service prevent their taking examinations on the scheduled date and candidates with disabilities who require special accommodations to take the test should indicate the need for special arrangements on their application. Candidates who are called to military service after filing an application should send requests for an alternate test date to the City of Ithaca Human Resources/Civil Service Department before the test date.

\_\_\_\_\_ Military Service Members: If you apply for an examination during the filing period but are on active military duty on the date the examination is scheduled, you may request a military makeup examination. Contact the City of Ithaca Human Resources/Civil Service Department for more information. If you are on active duty or discharged after the filing period has begun, you may apply for the examination up to ten days before the test date.

**SECTION 23.2 STATEMENT:** This examination will be prepared and rated in accordance with Section 23(2) of the Civil Service Law. The provisions of New York State Civil Service Law, Rules and Regulations dealing with the preparation and rating of examinations will apply to this examination.

**VETERAN'S CREDIT:** Veterans or disabled veterans who are eligible for additional credit must submit an application for veteran's credit with their application for examination or at any time between the dates of their application for examination and the date of the establishment of the resulting eligible list. Applications for veteran's credit are available from this office. Veteran's credits can only be added to a passing score on the examination.

Effective January 1, 1998, the State Constitution was amended to permit a candidate currently in the armed forces to apply for and be conditionally granted veteran's credit in examinations. Any candidate who applies for such credit must provide proof of military status to receive the conditional credit. No credit may be granted after the establishment of the list. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide appropriate documentary proof indicating that the service was in time of war, as defined in Section 85 of Civil Service Law, and that the candidate received an honorable discharge or was released under honorable conditions in order to be certified at a score including veteran's credits.

**ADDITIONAL CREDIT FOR CHILDREN OF FIREFIGHTERS AND POLICE OFFICERS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY:**

In conformance with section 85-a of the Civil Service Law, children of firefighters and police officers killed in the line of duty shall be entitled to receive an additional ten points in a competitive examination for original appointment in the same municipality in which his or her parent has served. If you are qualified to participate in this examination and are a child of a firefighter or police officer killed in the line of duty in this municipality, please inform this office of this matter when you submit your application for examination. A candidate claiming such credit has a minimum of two months from the application deadline to provide the necessary documentation to verify additional credit eligibility. However, no credit may be added after the eligible list has been established.

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION**

1. Falsification of any part of the "Application for Employment" will result in disqualification.
2. Applicants must answer every question on the application form and make sure that the application is complete in all respects. Incomplete applications will be disapproved.
3. Candidates who wish to take more than one examination must complete the "Application for Employment" for each examination. If you are cross-filing for another examination to be held on the same date, please indicate this on the application and specify the examination title and number, and the jurisdiction offering the other examination.
4. Appointments from an eligible list must be made from the top three candidates willing to accept appointment.
5. It is the responsibility of the candidate to notify the Human Resources Department /Civil Service of any change in address. No attempt will be made to locate candidates who have moved.

Issued by: City of Ithaca Civil Service Commission  
February 28, 2018

The Office Assistant examination is conducted as a continuous recruitment examination program.

**THE CITY OF ITHACA  
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER WITH A COMMITMENT TO WORKFORCE DIVERSIFICATION**