



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
CIVILIAN PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SERVICE
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JUL 26 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Crediting Education for Positions with Positive Education Requirements

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recently clarified the Operating Manual: "Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions," Chapter II, Policies and Instructions, Part E.4, Educational and Training Provisions or Requirements (attached), to more clearly delineate the differences between education and training from accredited, non-accredited, foreign, and non-qualifying (i.e., "diploma mills") educational institutions and clarify whether such education or training may be used in the qualifications determination process.

The revised section reaffirms that in order for education or training to be used in the qualifications determination process, it must be from an institution that is accredited by an accrediting body approved by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education or deemed creditable by such an institution. Education that is from non-accredited institutions, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Graduate School, may not be used to meet minimum qualification standards unless an accredited institution has awarded academic credit for that education.

Due to misinterpretations of the previous edition of Part E.4, there are some cases where individuals improperly received credit for USDA coursework for the purpose of determining minimum qualification requirements for positions with positive education requirements. In order for these employees to move to another position (e.g., promotion, reassignment, transfer, change to lower grade, etc.) with positive education requirements, they must meet the qualification requirements for the new position.

For example, if the current position is a GS-510-7 and the new position is a GS-510-9, the employee would need to meet the positive education and additional qualifying requirements prior to being promoted to the GS-510-9 position. This guidance applies to all forms of promotion (i.e., career ladder promotions, competitive promotions, repromotions). Similarly, if the current position is a GS-1102-11 or a GS-511-11 and the new position is a GS-1102-11 or a GS-511-11, respectively, the employee would need to properly meet all qualification requirements prior to being reassigned or transferred into the new position.

Please ensure that this information is distributed to all human resources offices in your Component or Agency. If you have questions on this matter, my point of contact is Ms. Sarah Evans who may be reached at (703) 696-6301 or DSN 426-6301, extension 613.


b- Brad Bunn
Director

Attachment:
As stated



Office of Personnel Management

The Federal Government's Human Resources Agency



Strategic Management of Human Capital

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Operating Manual

Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions

GENERAL POLICIES AND INSTRUCTIONS

Part E.4 - E.4.(a)

4. Educational and Training Provisions or Requirements

The educational provisions referenced in a qualification standard normally pertain to either high school graduation or the equivalent, or to education above the high school level (post high school education). Whether at the high school or post high school level, 5 U.S.C. §3308 prohibits requiring education for positions in the competitive service, unless OPM has determined that the duties of a scientific, technical, or professional position cannot be performed by an individual who does not have the prescribed minimum education. In inservice placement actions, agencies cannot impose minimum educational requirements above those set by OPM.

The index to this Manual (Section III-A) identifies the occupational series for which minimum educational requirements have been established. Under 5 U.S.C. §3313, the names of disabled veterans with a compensable service-connected disability of 10 percent or more are entered on civil service examination registers ahead of other eligibles, except on registers established for scientific and professional positions at grades GS-9 and above. The identified occupations in Section III-A should be used as the basis for determining whether such compensably disabled veterans should “float to the top” of competitive examination registers.

OPM also recognizes generally accepted professional credentials, such as engineering registration, successful completion of certain actuarial examinations, or a Certified Public Accountant certificate as being equivalent to meeting minimum educational requirements. Examples of such alternate provisions are generally included in the qualification standard for the occupational series.

Agencies should use the following criteria to determine the acceptability of post high school education or training at an accredited business or technical school, junior college, college or university. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide documentation or proof that he or she has met the applicable educational provisions described in this subsection. An official transcript; statement from the institution's registrar, dean, or other appropriate official; or equivalent documentation is acceptable. Agencies must ensure that the applicants' education or credentials meet the criteria below.

Acceptability of Higher Education for Meeting Minimum Qualification Requirements

(a) Accredited and Pre-Accredited/Candidate for Accreditation—This category includes only those institutions that grant academic degrees. Such institutions must meet one of the following criteria for Federal employment:

- **Conventional/Accredited Institutions**—At the time the education was obtained, the entire institution, applicable school within the institution, or the applicable curriculum was appropriately accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. Military schools or military educational programs that meet this criterion are also acceptable. For additional information, refer to the U.S. Department of Education web site at <http://www.ed.gov>. A complete listing of all institutions accredited by recognized agencies, including those located outside of U.S. territories may be found in *Accredited Institutions of Post-Secondary*

Education, a handbook published annually by the American Council on Education (ACE). Institutions located within the United States that have attained accreditation as well as recognized accrediting agencies are listed on the U.S. Department of Education web site at <http://www.ed.gov>.

- Correspondence or distance learning course work is also acceptable if the applicable school within the institution or applicable curriculum is accredited by an accrediting body that is recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. The distance learning courses should indicate the credit hours for each course and be indicated on the degree transcript together with traditional course work and credits.
- Pre-Accredited/Candidate for Accreditation Status—At the time that the education was obtained, the entire institution, applicable school within the institution, or applicable curriculum had acquired “preaccreditation” or “candidate for accreditation status” that is recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

Exceptions: Preaccredited or Candidate for Accreditation status is not acceptable for the following Federal programs:

- Student Loan Repayments; or
- Academic Degree Training.

For the above programs, the institutions must be fully accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education at the time the education was obtained.

(b) Non-Accredited/Other—This category includes institutions that do not meet the criteria above but offer a curriculum which is equivalent to “conventional/accredited institutions.” Such institutions are either outside the jurisdiction, or have decided not to seek accreditation from accrediting bodies recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. Examples of “Non-Accredited/Other” education or institutions include, but are not limited to:

- USDA Graduate School;
- Foreign education [see paragraph (c) below];
- Non-accredited military education or schools;
- Continuing education units; or
- Academic credit for work or life experience.

Non-Accredited/Other Education may be considered during the rating/ranking process when evaluating qualified job applicants who already meet minimum qualification standards. Such education may not, however, be used to meet minimum qualification standards, unless it meets one of the following criteria with respect to a college, university, or institution accredited as described in (a) above:

- The specific courses have been accepted for college-level credit by an accredited U.S. college or university, or institution because they would be creditable if the student were to further his or her education at that institution.
- The academic credit earned through a special credit program such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) has been awarded by an accredited college, university, or institution.
- An accredited college, university, or institution has identified the course work area(s) or courses for which credit was given for life experience. There must be a direct link between credits given and the course objectives or syllabus, i.e., the course and the life experience must be comparable in nature, content, and level. Life experience credit for courses that are not identified in its course catalog as part of a college or university’s curriculum is not acceptable, unless the college or university is giving credit for course work that is a prerequisite for more advanced courses included in its curriculum.
- An accredited U.S. university or college reports the other institution as one whose transcript is given full value, or full value is given in subject areas applicable to the curricula at that university or college.

(c) Foreign Education—Education completed outside of the United States must be deemed equivalent to that gained in conventional/accredited U.S. education programs to be acceptable for Federal employment. Most foreign education is not accredited by an accrediting body that is recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. A few medical schools are accredited under country standards that have been determined to be “comparable” to U.S. standards by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation. For foreign education that is not so accredited, agencies should follow the provisions below before considering such education for Federal employment.

Unless the foreign education meets the criteria in paragraph (a) above, applicants must submit all necessary documents to a private U.S. organization that specializes in interpretation of foreign educational credentials, commonly called a credential evaluation service. To be acceptable, the foreign credential evaluation must include/describe:

- The type of education received by the applicant;
- The level of education in relation to the U.S. education system, and state that its comparability recommendations follow the general guidelines of the U.S. National Council for the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials;
- The content of the applicant’s educational program earned abroad and the standard obtained;
- The status of the awarding foreign school’s recognition and legitimacy in its home country’s education system; and

- Any other information of interest such as what the evaluation service did to obtain this information, the qualifications of the evaluator, and any indications as to other problems such as forgery.

Foreign credential evaluations that do not contain the above information or that state there is insufficient information provided by the applicant on which to base an evaluation should not be accepted. If the requested evaluation shows the foreign education to be legitimate and comparable to that expected of a candidate with U.S. credentials, it may be accepted at the discretion of the agency. For further information on the evaluation of foreign education, refer to the U.S. Department of Education's web site at <http://www.ed.gov>.

Professional Licensure: Possession of a valid and current U.S. professional license by a graduate of a foreign professional school or program is sufficient proof that the foreign education has been determined to be equivalent to the requisite U.S. professional education in that occupational field.

(d) Non-Qualifying Education—Non-qualifying education is education that is not accredited or determined to be equivalent to conventional, accredited educational programs as described in paragraphs (a), (b), or (c) above. This category includes educational institutions or sources commonly known as “diploma mills” which are defined as “unregulated institutions of higher education, granting degrees with few or no academic requirements [*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (tenth edition)]”. For more information on the subject of diploma mills, refer to the following web sites: <http://www.ed.gov/students/prep/college/consumerinfo/considerations.html> or <http://www.chea.org>. Agencies must not consider or accept such education, degrees, or credentials for any aspect of Federal employment, including basic eligibility and the rating/ranking process.

[← Qualifications Standards Main →](#)

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