



Tips and Tidbits
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Question: What is a positive education requirement and what series are subject to this requirement? What education is deemed to be acceptable for meeting minimum qualification requirements? Is an applicant/employee required to prove that they have met this requirement upon entry/movement to a position with this requirement?

Positive education requirement refers to the determination by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) that the duties of a position cannot be performed by an individual who does not have the prescribed minimum education. The OPM has established minimum education requirements for positions that are in a scientific, technical, or professional occupational field. These positions have a “positive education requirement” and generally require completion of degree requirements to meet minimum qualifications for the position. Work in these occupational series requires education and training in the principles, concepts, and theories of the occupation. Typically, these can be gained only through completion of a specified curriculum at a recognized, college or university.

Occupational series that have a positive/minimum education requirement will be marked in the OPM Qualification Standard found at: <http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/standards/index-Standards.asp> by a checkmark in the Min. Ed. Column. Typical examples of series that possess a positive education requirement include some, but not all, in the following series: Natural Resources Management & Biological Series (0400 – 0499), Accounting & Budget Series (0510-0512), Medical, Hospital, Dental & Public Health Series (0600 – 0699), Engineering & Architecture Series (0800 – 0899), Physical Sciences Series (1300 – 1399), Mathematic Sciences Series (1500 – 1599), and the Education Series (1700 – 1799).

In order for an applicant’s higher education to be acceptable for meeting the minimum qualification requirements, agencies must ensure that the education or credentials meet the criteria below.

(a) *Accredited and Pre-Accredited/Candidate for Accreditation* – this category includes those institutions that grant academic degrees. Such degrees must meet one of the following criteria for federal employment:

- Conventional/Accredited Institutions – the institution was accredited by an accrediting body by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. Military schools or military educational programs that meet this criterion are also acceptable.
- Correspondence or distance learning course work is also acceptable if the applicable school within the institution is accredited by an accrediting body that is recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

- Education that was obtained at the time the entire institution had acquired “pre-accreditation” or “candidate for accreditation status” that is recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.
- (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.” This education may be considered during the rating/ranking process when evaluating qualified job applicants who already meet minimum qualification standards.
- (c) *Foreign Education* – this category includes education completed outside of the United States and is 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. Unless the foreign education meets the criteria in paragraph (a) above, applicants must submit all necessary documentation to a private U.S. organization that specializes in interpretation of foreign educational credentials.
- *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 U.S. professional education in that occupational field.

The following is considered non-qualifying for acceptability of higher education for meeting of minimum qualification requirements.

- (d) *Non-Qualifying Education* - this category includes education that is not accredited or determined to be equivalent to conventional, accredited educational programs as described in the paragraphs above. This category includes educational institutions or sources commonly known as “diploma mills.” 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.

It is the applicant’s responsibility to provide documentation or proof that he or she has met the applicable educational provisions. An official transcript; statement from the institution’s registrar, dean or other appropriate official; or equivalent documentation is acceptable.

For additional information, please contact your servicing HR Specialist.

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