GUIDE FOR FINAL "457" QUALIFICATIONS REVIEW

EXAMPLES OF NON-QUALIFYING AGRICULTURE OR RELATED DEGREES

(Employees with non-qualifying degrees must be evaluated under Method B of the Qualification Standard and must have 30 semester hours of course work in natural resources including course work in upper level 300 or 400 or Junior or Senior level courses; and must include a minimum of 12 semester hours in crop/plant science and soils, with at least 3 semester hours in crop/plant science and 3 semester hours in soils. Employees may also qualify under this method with a combination of specialized experience and education that when combined is equivalent to a four year degree, but the quality of education as noted above must be met and the specialized experience must be documented.)

NOTE: Upper level course work noted above should follow the university requirements for the number of semester hours required for a major field of study.

Ag Business
Ag Economics
Ag Journalism
Ag Mechanization
Animal Nutrition
Animal Science
Biology
Dairy Science
Floriculture
Food Science and Technology
Landscape Architecture
Poultry Science
Park and Recreation

EXAMPLES OF COURSES CREDITABLE AS NATURAL RESOURCES

Agriculture*
Ag Education*
Ag Engineering*
Animal Science – courses in livestock production, management, feeds and feeding, animal nutrition
Biology*
Bio Physics*
Botany*
Chemistry – courses above general or introductory
Earth Science*
Ecology*
Entomology
Farm and Ranch Appraisal
Farm and Ranch Management
Farm Organization and Management
Forestry*
Geology*
Geo Physics*
Geography – maybe*
Geographic Information Systems
Hydrology*
Land Appraisal
Land Economics
Land Evaluation
Livestock Feeds and Feeding
Livestock Nutrition
Livestock Production
Livestock Management
Parks and Recreation – check these courses out*
Range*
Surveying*
Wildlife*
Zoology*

*Creditable if the course deals with natural resources and/or physical science. If in doubt, check it out (in the course description). Recommend you contact the HR Manager in the State where initial determination was performed and have them contact the employee and request them to provide this documentation, or the HR Mgr. could provide it if they choose to do so. Of course you can check it out yourself if you want to spend the time.

EXAMPLES OF COURSES THAT ARE NON-QUALIFYING FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

Ag Business – Must verify but most likely not creditable
Ag Economics – Must verify but most likely not creditable
Ag Law
Ag Policy

Farm Machinery
Rural Electrification
Welding
Wood Shop

REFERENCE NOTES

Certification requirements of course descriptions for Seminars, Problems Courses, Independent Study Courses, Thesis Research, and Research Projects:

- Employees currently in the 457 series can self certify this type of course work by providing supporting documentation if HR is unable to obtain the course description through a course catalog
- New hires or current employees entering the 457 series must obtain supporting documentation from the professor/instructor or other appropriate university official, preferably on university letterhead stationary

Certification of Coops and Internships:
- Supervisor or other appropriate official at the intern location can certify content

Certification of a standard course description:
- Must be certified from a course catalog or from the Registrar’s Office on university letterhead
QUARTER HOURS TO SEMESTER HOURS CONVERSION

OPM guidance for conversion is: quarter hours multiplied by two-thirds, equals semester hours.

- Example: 50 quarter hours × 2/3 = 100 = 33.3 semester hours

This method will be used in converting quarter hours to semester hours for all employees except those hired from a NRCS-SEU certificate before 7/1/1997.

When converting quarter hours to semester hours for employees hired from a SEU certificate of eligibles prior to 7/1/1997, use the following NRCS-SEU conversion chart.

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MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY

OPM guidance for determining what constitutes a major field of study is not defined in terms of how many semester hours of upper level course work is required. During the USDA Graduate School Training Session that I attended, it was stated that some upper level course work was required. This means one upper level course would satisfy the requirement for education leading toward a major field of study, and this is the guidance we will use in our FINAL “457” REVIEW.

457 QUALIFICATION STANDARDS FOR EMPLOYEES WHO ENTERED THE 457 SERIES PRIOR TO 02/02/1987

Candidates for positions at all levels must show successful completion of paragraph A or B:

A. A full 4-year course of study in an accredited college or university leading to a bachelor’s or higher degree with major study in soil conservation, or one of the closely related natural resource or agricultural fields, such as agronomy, forestry, wildlife biology, regional planning, agricultural education or agricultural engineering. The Study must have included 30 semester hours in natural resources or agricultural fields including the equivalent of a 3 semester hour course in soils.
B. A total of at least 30 semester hours of course work in one or more of the fields listed above in paragraph A, including the equivalent of a 3 semester hour course in soils, plus additional education or experience which, when combined with the 30 semester hours of course work, will total 4 years of education or 4 years of combined education and experience. The quality of such additional education or experience must have been sufficient to give the candidate professional knowledge equivalent to that normally acquired through the successful completion of a full 4-year course of study described in paragraph A.

FINALIZING YOUR QUALIFICATION REVIEW

ACTION REQUIRED BY __________________________

Once you complete your review of the employees you have been assigned to evaluate, documentation packets for each employee will need to be placed in one of the four following groups and returned to me:

I. Employees with upper level course work but lack 9 semester hours or less to meet the educational requirements for the “457” series

II. Employees with 30 semester hours including 12 semester hours in crop/plant science and soils with at least 3 semester hours in crop/plant science and 3 semester hours in soils, but lack upper level course work

III. All other employees who do not meet the “457” qualifications

IV. Employees who are determined to meet the “457” qualifications

You will need to place each employee packet into one of the four categories noted above, and you need to separate each group using folders, rubber bands, clips, or whatever method you desire before returning them to me.

You may call me on any close calls you encounter, but it would assist me if you would complete your evaluation on all employees from a particular State before you contact me. This should save time for both of us. If anyone comes across documentation that is not legible, or find you need additional information, please call the HR Manager in the respective State to obtain additional or legible information.

Your assistance in this national project is greatly appreciated.