

## Section 5 — Qualifying Officials

### Qualifying Official Selection and Training Process Overview

Line management's implementation of the QO requirements supports technical qualification programmatic integrity. QOs play a vital role in ensuring that all technical participants are qualified to perform their assigned tasks. A QO is an individual who has the technical experience and/or education in a particular technical area and who, with the necessary training, is authorized to sign qualification cards for designated competencies. The QO signs the qualification card when he/she has verified that a TQP participant has demonstrated proficiency in a given competency or series of competencies. Typically, the participant's supervisor is the QO for all competencies unless the supervisor has designated a subject matter expert (SME) as the QO for specific competencies. A SME is an individual with the professional education, certification, or experience to have an expert level of knowledge in the particular subject area.

The NNSA administrator appoints the NNSA Headquarters agent who will serve as the lead agent. Each NNSA site office manager and the NNSA Service Center director appoint an agent to serve as the TQP sponsor and champion at their elements. Agents approve SMEs to serve as QOs and forward their names to the TQP administrator, so the required QO training can be arranged.

An individual may become a QO if he/she meets the following prerequisites:

- Has the desired qualities to be a QO
- Has completed the QO orientation
- Has been listed on the organization's QO list

The participant qualification process requires that only designated QOs be authorized to sign a participant's qualification card.

Refer to the Participant Qualification Process subsection for a description of this process.

#### *Qualifying Official Nominating Criteria*

A supervisor nominates an SME who has sound judgment, good communication skills, and technical competence to be a QO. The supervisor evaluates the individual for the desired qualities based on examinations of technical knowledge, on-the-job observations, job performance evaluations, and other personal interviews with the individual. The supervisor must take into consideration the QO responsibilities and the individual's technical and personal skills, knowledge, experience, and past performance.

A supervisor may nominate SMEs at NNSA or other individuals who have operations and program knowledge in certain competencies to serve as QOs. An immediate supervisor who has completed the QO orientation may serve as a QO for his/her direct reports who are in the TQP.

The supervisor is responsible for the following:

- Ensuring the nominee completes the QO orientation
- Interviewing the nominee on the QO duties and responsibilities to ensure that the nominee understands them

- Signing and dating the QO Attestation Form (see form 5–1 at the end of this section)
- Submitting the attestation form to the cognizant agent for approval

The agent is responsible for the following:

- Signing and dating the QO attestation form
- Submitting the QO attestation form to the TQP administrator

### *Qualifying Official Formal Recognition*

A supervisor or SME must complete the following to be formally recognized as a QO:

- Complete the QO orientation
- Enter the competency areas for which he/she will be a QO on the QO attestation form
- Understand the QO duties and responsibilities and be interviewed by the supervisor on them
- Sign and date the QO attestation form

The L&CDD will update the element's list of QOs with the information provided and file the attestation form.

### *Designation of Qualifying Officials*

Supervisors may designate a SME as the QO and the competencies that he/she may evaluate. The QO's name and other information are noted. Supervisors will provide a completed copy of Form 5–1 to the agent for approval. The agent will forward the form to the TQP administrator who will use the information to update the QO list. If the supervisor designates an individual who is not on the list of QOs, the designee must complete the steps listed in the Qualifying Official Formal Recognition section to be formally recognized as a QO.

## **Qualifying Official Orientation**

### *Responsibilities*

QOs are responsible for performing the following:

- Determining whether the participant has competence in his or her assigned area of responsibility and documenting any determination of insufficient competence
- Meeting with participants to evaluate qualifications
- Preparing for qualification evaluations by reviewing applicable references and obtaining necessary materials
- Conducting evaluations according to the guidance provided in this orientation
- Ensuring that participants can demonstrate proficiency in the applicable competencies
- Documenting and signing the qualification card when the participant meets or performs the applicable competencies
- Participating as a qualification oral board member according to the Conduct of Oral Evaluation Guidance subsection
- Assisting in the development of the exam bank for their area of expertise

- Maintaining a working knowledge of the TQP in their technical area

The agent serves as the QO for senior technical safety manager (STSM) TQP participants.

### *Qualifying Official and Participant Evaluation Process*

#### Evaluation Scheduling and Pre-evaluation Activities

Participants are responsible for consulting with their QO to determine the most appropriate method of evaluation and for scheduling the evaluation with the designated QO.

Participants who have completed a competency or a series of competencies on the qualification card should present the qualification standard, qualification card, and objective evidence that supports completion to the designated QO before the evaluation. Objective evidence may include

- previous qualification documents
- written examination results
- documented oral evaluations
- documented observation of performance within the past five years
- certificate of completion for training that had some form of an examination process
- professional certification that relates directly to the position
- academic transcripts

QOs should review the material submitted by the participant.

QOs are responsible for ensuring that they have the ability to determine whether the participant has demonstrated proficiency in the competencies. If QOs are not certain about the correct response to an evaluation element, they should perform a sufficient amount of research to ensure that they can recognize a correct response.

#### Conducting the Evaluation

QOs shall use the evaluation elements from the qualification standard to evaluate the participant's knowledge, skill, and ability for each competency that the participant has initiated as completed on the qualification card. This evaluation can be done by written examination, oral evaluation, performance demonstration, or documented evaluation of equivalency.

QOs should review the participant's qualification standard, qualification card, and objective evidence for the competencies that the participant has signed and marked equivalent experience, training, or education (**EQ**) as the evaluation method. The supporting knowledge and/or skill statements for the individual competencies should be considered before granting equivalency for a competency. If there is a disagreement between the QO and a TQP participant regarding an equivalency, the second-level supervisor should resolve it.

The local or Headquarters agent must approve STSM equivalencies. STSM equivalencies must be demonstrated through some form of documented evaluation, such as an interview by the agent or by an examination.

If the QO decides that a participant's objective evidence does not provide sufficient information to determine that the participant has obtained and/or maintained proficiency on competency statements, the QO should interview the participant on those competency statements. QOs should interview participants on

a random sample of competencies that were accomplished through the equivalency process to ensure that participants have maintained proficiency on those competencies.

If the QO decides that the participant's previous qualification documentation does not provide sufficient information to determine whether the participant has obtained or maintained proficiency on competency statements, the QO should interview the participant on those competency statements. Acceptance of transferred qualifications is at the discretion of the QO.

QOs should interview participants on a random sample of competencies that were accomplished through previous qualification to ensure that participants have maintained proficiency on those competencies.

**Note:** Some evaluation elements require a performance-based demonstration of a skill. These elements usually include the term "perform" or "demonstrate." Other evaluation elements require an oral response from the participant. These elements usually include the term "discuss," "describe," or "state." The QO should ensure that the participant's response matches the one called for in the evaluation element.

Observation of performance is the preferred method of evaluation. In advance of the performance evaluation, the QO should determine what the TQP participant should do to demonstrate that he or she has mastered the competency, the method used to accomplish the performance demonstration, and what standards will be used to measure performance. The QO should document observations on the performance demonstration and maintain the documentation in a secure location.

The QO may arrange for a written examination from the TQP administrator's exam bank. The QO should review the exam in advance and inform the participant whether the exam is open book or closed book, and what materials are acceptable to use during the exam. The QO should provide a quiet setting for the exam and try to put the participant at ease. The QO is responsible for proctoring the exam or designating another individual to do so. The proctor should start the test on time, provide instructions, answer any questions, and be available during the entire exam process. The QO should grade the exam using the answer sheet provided. If the QO believes an answer key is in error, he or she should call the TQP administrator and discuss the issue. A score of 80% is considered a passing grade for all written examinations. The QO should document exam administration by signing and dating the answer sheet. The QO should destroy the examination and answer key and retain only the graded answer sheet; the answer sheet should be maintained in a secure location to protect the participant's privacy.

Oral evaluations should be conducted using an approach similar to the one for written exams. The QO administering an oral evaluation should develop sufficient questions in advance of the evaluation to ensure a participant has the breadth and depth of knowledge required to demonstrate knowledge of each competency statement. The QO should also decide on a scoring procedure in advance so it would be clear to a reviewer whether the participant has successfully demonstrated competence. The QO must take notes on the participant's responses during the exam and maintain these records in a secure place. When the QO is performing an oral evaluation of his or her supervisor, the agent should participate as a quality assurance review.

## Documenting the Evaluation

When QOs are satisfied that a participant has met all evaluation element requirements for a competency, they should indicate the evaluation method, then sign and date the competency in the spaces provided. The QO should record “**EQ**” for evaluation of equivalency, “**OE**” for oral evaluation, “**OP**” for observation of performance, and “**WE**” for written examination.

### *Qualifying Official Action at Completion of an Evaluation*

At the completion of an evaluation, the QO should make an objective determination, referring to the supporting knowledge and skill statements of the competency statements, as to whether the participant has a satisfactory level of competence. The QO should provide clear, immediate feedback to the participant regarding the outcome. The signature of the QO indicates that the participant has successfully completed the evaluation, and that the participant possesses the minimum required competence. There are two possible outcomes from a QO evaluation:

- **Satisfactory:** The participant displayed a satisfactory competence showing no weak points of any significance, and receives a signature.
- **Unsatisfactory:** The participant has a significant lack of understanding of the competency. In this case, the participant should not receive a signature and should be counseled as to (1) what material to restudy and (2) the best method of studying it (including scheduled retraining, if necessary) before scheduling another evaluation.

Any remedial training plan established by a QO for a participant must be approved by the participant’s supervisor if the QO is not the supervisor before its issuance to the participant. QOs should establish a return date with the participant for the follow-up evaluation. Establishing a date for the follow-up interview gives the participant direction and a goal for the completion of any remedial training plans. Remedial training should be given priority over other training activities.

# Form 5-1. Qualifying Official Attestation Form

## Attestation

Upon completion, send the completed form to the TQP administrator, NNSA Service Center, L&CDD

## Designated Qualifying Official

As a designated qualifying official, I attest that I have read the QO orientation and that I understand my duties and responsibilities associated with the position, as well as the significance of performing these responsibilities and duties to the best of my ability.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Site Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Designating Supervisor

As a supervisor of a designated QO, I attest that I have discussed the duties and responsibilities of the QO with the designated QO whose signature appears above. I certify that this person understands the duties and responsibilities associated with serving as a QO for the competency areas listed below, as well as the significance of performing those duties and responsibilities to the best of his or her ability.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Site Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Federal Technical Capability Agent

As the organization's agent, I approve the individual whose signature appears above as the QO for the competency areas listed below.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Site Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

List the competency area(s) (for example: project management, nuclear programs, and waste management) for which the designated QO has the expertise to evaluate.

Number	Competency Area
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
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8	
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11	
12	
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14	
15	