

## Policy Interpretation of the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist

This is to be used in conjunction with the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist Standard.

### Basic Requirements:

**A. Education: Successful completion of a full 4-year course of study in an accredited college or university leading to a bachelor's or higher degree in biological sciences, agriculture, natural resource management, or related discipline appropriate to the position being filled. The following majors are creditable:**

1. Disciplines identified in the 400 Professional and Scientific Series Standard for General Biological Science/Natural Sciences which may be used to meet the basic requirement:

Agriculture	Agricultural Extension
Agronomy	Animal Science
Biochemistry	Biological Sciences (General)
Biometrics (includes Applied Forestry*)	Botany
Ecology	Entomology
Fishery Biology (includes marine/aquatic)	Forestry
General Fish & Wildlife Administration	Genetics
Horticulture	Microbiology
Natural Resources Management	Pharmacology
Physiology	Plant Pathology
Plant Physiology	Plant Protection & Quarantine
Rangeland Management	Soil Conservation
Soil Science	Toxicology
Wildlife Biology	Wildlife Refuge Management
Zoology	

2. Natural Resource related disciplines as determined by Fire Management subject matter experts to meet the Natural Science Group GS-400 which may be used to meet the basic requirement:

Chemistry	Earth Sciences
Environmental Sciences <sup>1</sup>	Geology
Hydrology	Meteorology
Outdoor Recreation <sup>2</sup>	Physical Geography <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> An Environmental Sciences degree does not equate to an environmental or natural resources policy degree

<sup>2</sup> Natural Resources emphasis

<sup>3</sup> GIS is creditable when identified as Biometrics, Applied Forestry, Natural Resources, e.g., FOR xxx, Survey of GIS in Natural Resources; GEOG xxx Hydrologic Application of GIS & Remote Sensing; NR xxx Advanced GIS Applications in Fire Ecology & Management. It is not creditable if the course is designated as part of a discipline not listed above, e.g., Computer Science course CS xxx, Inter Arcview.

Physics  
Fire Management/Fire Science

Watershed Management

A graduate degree in any of the disciplines listed above will meet basic qualifications regardless of the undergraduate degree. All disciplines in A.1 above were obtained from series listed in the Biological Sciences, GS-0401 or within an individual occupational series. For example, natural resources management was taken from the GS-0480, Fish and Wildlife Administration Series, and GS-0454-Rangeland Management Series.

Subject matter experts from the five wildland firefighting agencies developed A.2 related disciplines. Physical sciences are mentioned throughout the individual occupational series for the 0400 family. In the draft Job Family Standard for Professional Work in the Natural Sciences Group, GS-0400, the term “natural resources” is defined as “all the things in our physical environment that we use to meet our needs and wants.” It also quotes: “The most commonly thought of natural resources are metals and nonmetals, energy sources, water, land, food, wild plants and animals, and soils. Work in natural resources sciences spans a broad range of disciplines and specialty areas. Some natural resource scientists are engaged in broad research and development activities that, taken singly, would be classifiable to:

- A specific professional biological or agricultural science within the GS-0400 job family’  
or
- A closely related science in another job family, e.g. physics.

A.2. Individual Occupational Series:

- 0401 includes chemistry
- 0470 includes physical and earth sciences
- 0480 includes chemistry

## **B. Combination of Education and Experience**

1. Education Equivalent: The OPM Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions, Group Coverage Qualification Standards for Professional and Scientific Positions, requires that an applicant possess a core of educational credit. This course work plus additional education and/or experience meets the qualifications for a GS-0401 under paragraph B of the individual occupational requirements. Universities regularly credit continuing education coursework even when the student is not enrolled in a degree program. These courses go through the same strenuous curriculum review as general coursework. The following criteria will be used to determine eligibility for all college/university credits:

1. The course is from an accredited university. To verify a particular school’s accreditation status go to <https://www.ed.gov/accreditation>

**AND**

2. The course is offered in a discipline as identified in A. under Basic Requirements. It is the responsibility of the college/university to determine the discipline; the Human Resources Staff will credit all courses on a transcript or equivalent documentation in disciplines defined in A. toward the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist series.

**Examples, as creditable:<sup>4</sup>**

Course #	Course Title (Discipline)
▪ ENV5 xxx	Environmental Hydrology (Environmental Science)
▪ Soil xxx	Soil & Env. Physics (Soil Science)
▪ FOR xxx	Env. Conservation (Forestry)
▪ WFSC xxx	Wildlife and Changing Environment (Wildlife Science)
▪ FW xxx	Survey of GIS in Nat. Resources (Fish & Wildlife)
▪ GEOG xxx	Decision-making NR Mgt. (Geography)
▪ F xxx	Decision Methods for Fire Managers (Forestry)
▪ FOR xxx	Professional Writing for Natural Resources Sciences (Forestry emphasis)

**Examples, not creditable:**

Course #	Course Title (Discipline)
▪ POS xxx	Environmental Policy (Political Science)
▪ SOC xxx	Environment & Society (Sociology)
▪ HIST xxx	American Env. History (History)
▪ STAT xxx	Data Analysis & Regression (Statistics)
▪ ECON xxx	Natural Resources Economics (Economics)
▪ ENG xxx	Professional Writing for Natural Resources Sciences (English emphasis)

**AND**

3. Documentation verifying the coursework was completed and met accreditation and discipline (items B.1.a.1, B.1.a.2 above). The OPM Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions, General Policies and Instructions, Part E.4 describes proof as: an official transcript; statement from the institution's registrar, dean, or other appropriate official; or equivalent documentation.

## **2. Specialized Experience**

Specialized experience is well defined in the Supplemental Qualifications Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist. It is not required that this work be performed under the supervision of a professional employee, only that the work experience meets the definition required of this Standard.

If an employee or applicant has been performing the work described in the Supplemental Qualifications Standard, it is creditable even if that work was performed in a technical or administrative fire position.

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<sup>4</sup> Generally, the course number includes the Department (discipline) for which the course was developed and whether the course is upper or lower division.

For additional information on crediting experience, refer to OPM General Schedule Qualification Policies, General Policies, Purpose and Scope. 3. Experience Requirements (d) - (p).

## **Application of Education and Specialized Experience**

### **Creditable Education**

Education, to be creditable toward the 24-semester hour requirement, must meet the requirements of the Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions Operating Manual, published by the U. S. Office of Personnel Management. The nature and quality of the education must have been such that it would serve as a prerequisite for more advanced study (graduate level or professional education).

The education must meet one of the following:

1. **Conventional** - Obtained from a college or university, applicable school within the college or university, or applicable curriculum at the college or university that has been properly accredited.
2. **Agency courses which are creditable through a college or university** - These courses contain content developed or endorsed by an NWCG member agency. An agency or university provides instructors for these courses or may use contractors to teach them through agreements. Through an agreement with an accredited college or university, students can purchase credits. The acceptable format for validating the course completion is a college transcript or equivalent documentation showing completion of the course and the amount of credit awarded by the school. It should be noted that some courses are comprised of modules, for which each individual module can be awarded credits by the school as evidenced by the college transcript. It is up to the Human Capital Management staff to make the final determination as to whether a course constitutes creditable education from the standpoint of being equivalent to a “major field of study”.

### **Education Equivalent to a Major Field of Study (24 semester hours)**

The **24 semester hours** must be obtained in biological sciences, natural resources, wildland fire management, forestry, or agriculture course work as noted above. You can refer to college course catalogs or consult with college advisors or officials to help you to determine the appropriate content of courses.

### **Additional Education**

In addition to courses in the major and related fields, a typical college degree program would have included courses that involved analysis, written and verbal communication, critical thinking, planning research, etc. Therefore, creditable experience should have demonstrated similar skills and abilities.

The quality of the combination of education and experience, must be sufficient to demonstrate that the applicant possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform work in the occupation and is comparable to that normally acquired through the successful completion of a full 4-year course of study in the fields listed in section A. Degree, - OR - B. Combination of education and experience, of the Basic Qualification Requirements.

An example of appropriately creditable experience comparable to the required college coursework *may be that of a technician, at the GS-7 grade level or above*, who is working under the supervision of a professional employee and is performing duties **equivalent to an entry-level professional employee, in the field of biological sciences, agriculture, chemistry, natural resources management, or fire management.**

**Specialized Experience:** According to the Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions Operating Manual, one-grade interval experience may be qualifying for two-grade interval positions, provided that the experience demonstrated the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities required to perform the work successfully. This is true for either lateral or promotion actions. The basic requirements for the type and level of experience and/or education apply to all applicants, whether their experience has been in the same occupation as the position being filled or in related occupational field. Since two-grade interval positions may differ significantly in the nature of the work, it is important that applicants be evaluated on the “knowledge required to perform the work.

Other education creditable towards 24 semester hours requirement: Prior to the OPM changes to the Operating Manual for Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions, Part E.4 – E.4 (a) of the General Policies and Instructions Creditable education from other than an accredited institution of higher learning that meets the requirements of the qualifications standards. To meet the 24 semester hour or equivalent requirement, the other education must be equivalent to course work in a Bachelor’s of Arts or Bachelor’s of Science degree with a major course of study in biological sciences, natural resources, chemistry, wildland fire management, forestry, or agriculture. Most “technology” type coursework will not meet this requirement.

Technical Fire Management Courses: All TFM courses are creditable toward meeting the 24 semester hours required of the 0401 Qualification Standard if documented on either a transcript or a certificate with the name of the accredited college or university. The TFM certificate may note all 18 semester hours or the partial credit which the student may purchase for academic credit. These TFM credits are considered upper level creditable course work for the purposes of this supplemental standard.

A. TFM courses creditable toward meeting the required 24 semester hours under the 0401 Qualifications Standard (these meet the current documentation requirements noted in the OPM Operating Manual for Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions, Part E.4 – E.4(a) of the General Policies and Instructions, revised effective February 15, 2005):

Module I/IA	Statistics/Computer and Math
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Module II	Economics
Module III	Fuels Management
Module IV	Fire Ecology
Module V	Fire and Land Management
Module VI	Final Projects Reviews

B. The NWCG Courses listed below were initially determined to be creditable toward meeting the required 24 semester hours under the 0401 Qualifications Standard. These met the documentation requirements prior to the revision of the OPM Operating Manual for Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions, Part E.4 – E.4(a) of the General Policies and Instructions, effective February 15, 2005. In order to be creditable after the February 15, 2005 revisions, these NWCG courses must be listed on an official transcript or equivalent documentation from an accredited college or university. The transcript or equivalent documentation must note the credited academic hours for each course. Other NWCG courses, not listed in the table below, **may** be used to meet the basic requirements of the 0401 Qualification Standard. However, they too must be listed on a transcript or equivalent documentation from an accredited college or university in order to be creditable:

FIEM	Fire in Ecosystem Management	1 Semester Hour
FML	Fire Management Leadership	1 Semester Hour
FPM	Fire Program Management	1 Semester Hour
LFML	Local Fire Management Leadership	1 Semester Hour
NFMAS	National Fire Management Analysis System	1 Semester Hour
RX-450	Smoke Management Techniques	1 Semester Hour
RX-540	Applied Fire Effects	1 Semester Hour
RX-590	Prescribed Fire Behavior Interpretation (to be combined with S-590)	2 Semester Hours
S-490	Advanced Wildland Fire Behavior Calculations	1 Semester Hour

S-491	National Fire Danger Rating System	1 Semester Hour
S-492	Long Term Fire Risk Assessment	1 Semester Hour
S-493	Fire Area Growth Simulation	1 Semester Hour
S-520	Advanced Incident Management	2 Semester Hours
S-580	Advanced Fire Use Applications (National Parks & Wilderness Fire Management)	1 Semester Hour
S-590	Fire Behavior Interpretation	2 Semester Hours
S-620	Area Command	1 Semester Hour
P-151	Wildfire Origin and Cause Determination	1 Semester Hour
RX-300	Prescribed Fire for Burn Bosses	1 Semester Hour
RX-340	Introduction to Fire Effects	1 semester Hour
S-190/290	Introduction to fire Behavior combined with Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior	1 Semester Hour
S-390	Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior Calculations	1 Semester Hour