

Understanding the SME-QA Process

In the current competitive hire process, agencies use HR resume review and occupational questionnaires to determine whether a candidate is “minimally qualified.” Applicants who pass this step are automatically “eligible” for quality category placement and veterans’ preference application. The SME-QA process instead deploys a subject matter expert (SME) resume review step as a *pre-qualification* for an overall passing score assessment. HR adjudicates and applies veterans’ preference only to those applicants who achieve the overall passing score after the second interview. HR works with SMEs during a job analysis workshop to develop the competencies, proficiency levels, and structured interview questions that will define the assessments. If the agency has IO Psychologists available, they are encouraged to participate.

Step	Current Process	Pilot Process
Job Announcement Listing of Minimum Qualifications	Agencies use OPM's Qualification Standards to define the minimum qualifications for the job. Specialized Experience describes requirements needed for day one on the job. Often, agencies describe these experience requirements as overly specific job tasks.	In the job announcement under “Qualifications,” HR lists the technical competencies that they helped SMEs to identify and define during job analysis. These technical competencies describe the specialized experience as the minimum qualifications for the position to assess applicants throughout the hiring action.
Resume Review/ Minimum Qualifications	HR reviews resumes to determine whether applicants demonstrate the required qualifications for the posted position. Applicants who pass this review are “minimally qualified.”	Before sending resumes to SMEs, HR reviews all applications to remove applicants who are missing resumes and who do not meet eligibility requirements (such as citizenship and confirming the submission of a resume). SMEs review the resumes of the remaining applicants to determine whether their technical competencies meet the proficiency requirements established during job analysis. Instead of performing a separate minimum qualification check, HR ensures that the SMEs provide sufficient justification to retrace their decisions.

<p>Passing Score/ Assessment</p>	<p>Most commonly, HR assesses applicants using a self-rated occupational questionnaire. HR uses the results to confirm qualification and to determine category placement.</p>	<p>Applicants whom SMEs move forward past resume review are assessed for technical qualifications using structured interviews. No applicant receives 70 points to be considered qualified until after the structured assessment interviews.</p> <p>Applicants who do not achieve a high enough rating on the first breadth interview do not need to complete the second depth interview.</p> <p>The interview assessment ratings are combined to create an <i>overall passing score</i> where passing requires the applicant to demonstrate that they meet the required proficiency levels. The passing score then transmutes to a minimum passing score of 70 or higher.</p>
<p>Certification (Category Rating and Veterans' Preference)</p>	<p>HR uses applicants' self-reported occupational questionnaire scores to assign them to a quality category and applies veterans' preference. HR issues the certificate to the hiring manager for further interviews.</p>	<p>For applicants who achieved an overall passing score from the structured interviews, HR adjudicates veterans' preference and assigns applicants to a quality category based on their overall score and veterans' preference. HR ensures that the applicants on the certificate meet GS level requirements for the position. HR then issues the certificate to the hiring manager for further interviews or to make immediate selections off the resumes and transcripts of interviews.</p>