

§ 1.401(a)(5)-1

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and minimum benefit adjustment, respectively).

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§ 1.401(a)(5)-1 Special rules relating to nondiscrimination requirements.

(a) *In general.* Section 401(a)(5) sets out certain provisions that will not of themselves be discriminatory within the meaning of section 410(b)(2)(A)(i) or section 401(a)(4). The exceptions specified in section 401(a)(5) are not an exclusive enumeration, but are merely a recital of provisions frequently encountered that will not of themselves constitute prohibited discrimination in contributions or benefits. See section 401(a)(4) and the regulations thereunder for the basic nondiscrimination rules. See § 1.410(b)-4 for the rule of section 410(b)(2)(A)(i) (relating to the nondiscriminatory classification test that is part of the minimum coverage requirements) referred to in section 401(a)(5)(A). See paragraphs (b) through (f) of this section for special rules used in applying the section 401(a)(4) nondiscrimination requirements under the remaining provisions of section 401(a)(5).

(b) *Salaried or clerical employees.* A plan does not fail to satisfy the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) merely because contributions or benefits provided under the plan are limited to salaried or clerical employees.

(c) *Uniform relationship to compensation.* A plan does not fail to satisfy the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) merely because the contributions or benefits of, or on behalf of, the employees under the plan bear a uniform relationship to the compensation (within the meaning of section 414(s)) of those employees.

(d) *Certain disparity permitted.* Under section 401(a)(5)(C), a plan does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees (as defined in section 414(q)), within the meaning of section 401(a)(4), in the amount of employer-provided contributions or benefits solely because—

(1) In the case of a defined contribution plan, employer contributions allo-

cated to the accounts of employees favor highly compensated employees in a manner permitted by section 401(l) (relating to permitted disparity in plan contributions and benefits), and

(2) In the case of a defined benefit plan, employer-provided benefits favor highly compensated employees in a manner permitted by section 401(l) (relating to permitted disparity in plan contributions and benefits).

See §§ 1.401(l)-1 through 1.401(l)-6 for rules under which a plan may satisfy section 401(l) for purposes of the safe harbors of §§ 1.401(a)(4)-2(b)(3) and 1.401(a)(4)-3(b).

(e) *Defined benefit plans integrated with social security—(1) In general.* Under section 401(a)(5)(D), a defined benefit plan does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees (as defined in section 414(q)) with respect to the amount of employer-provided contributions or benefits solely because the plan provides that, with respect to each employee, the employer-provided accrued retirement benefit under the plan is limited to the excess (if any) of—

(i) The employee's final pay from the employer, over

(ii) The employer-provided retirement benefit created under the Social Security Act and attributable to service by the employee for the employer.

(2) *Final pay.* For purposes of paragraph (e)(1)(i) of this section, an employee's final pay from the employer as of a plan year is the employee's compensation (as defined in section 414(q)(7)) for the year (ending with or within the 5-plan-year period ending with the plan year in which the employee terminates from employment with the employer) in which the employee receives the highest compensation from the employer. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, final pay for each employee under the plan may be determined with reference to the 5-plan-year period ending with the plan year before the plan year in which the employee terminates from employment with the employer. In determining an employee's final pay, the plan may specify any 12-month period (ending with or within the applicable 5-plan-year period) as a year provided

the specified 12-month period is uniformly and consistently applied with respect to all employees. In determining an employee's final pay, compensation for any year in excess of the applicable limit under section 401(a)(17) for the year may not be taken into account.

(3) *Rules for determining amount of employer-provided social security retirement benefit.* For purposes of paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section, the following rules apply.

(i) The employer-provided retirement benefit on which any reduction or offset in the employee's accrued retirement benefit is based is limited solely to the employer-provided primary insurance amount payable under section 215 of the Social Security Act attributable to service by the employee for the employer.

(ii) The employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to service by the employee for the employer is determined by multiplying the employer-provided portion of the employee's projected primary insurance amount by a fraction (not exceeding 1), the numerator of which is the employee's number of complete years of covered service for the employer under the Social Security Act, and the denominator of which is 35.

(4) *Projected primary insurance amount.* (i) As of a plan year, an employee's projected primary insurance amount is the primary insurance amount, determined as of the close of the plan year (the "determination date"), payable to the employee upon attainment of the employee's social security retirement age (as determined under section 415(b)(8)), assuming the employee's annual compensation from the employer that is treated as wages for purposes of the Social Security Act remains the same from the plan year until the employee's attainment of social security retirement age. With respect to service by the employee for the employer before the determination date, the actual compensation paid to the employee by the employer during all periods of service of the employee for the employer covered by the Social Security Act must be used in determining an employee's projected primary insurance amount. With respect

to years before the employee's commencement of service for the employer, in determining the employee's projected primary insurance amount, it may be assumed that the employee received compensation in an amount computed by using a six-percent salary scale projected backwards from the termination date to the employee's 21st birthday. However, if the employee provides the employer with satisfactory evidence of the employee's actual past compensation for the prior years treated as wages under the Social Security Act at the time the compensation was earned and the actual past compensation results in a smaller projected primary insurance amount, the plan must use the actual past compensation. The plan administrator must give clear written notice to each employee of the employee's right to supply actual compensation history and of the financial consequences of failing to supply the history. The notice must be given each time the summary plan description is provided to the employee and must also be given upon the employee's separation from service. The notice must also state that the employee can obtain the actual compensation history from the Social Security Administration. In determining the employee's projected primary insurance amount, the employer may not take into account any compensation from any other employer while the employee is employed by the employer.

(ii) As of a plan year, the employer-provided portion of the employee's projected primary insurance amount under the Social Security Act is 50 percent of the employee's projected primary insurance amount (as determined under paragraph (e)(4)(i) of this section).

(5) *Employer-provided accrued retirement benefit.* For purposes of this section, the employee's employer-provided accrued retirement benefit as of a plan year is the employee's accrued retirement benefit under the plan (determined on an actual basis and not on a projected basis) attributable to employer contributions under the plan. With respect to plans that provide for employee contributions, see section

411(c) for rules relating to the allocation of accrued benefits between employer contributions and employee contributions.

(6) *Additional rules.* (i) As of a plan year, paragraph (e)(1) of this section does not apply to the extent that its application would result in a decrease in an employee's accrued benefit. See sections 411(b)(1)(G) and 411(d)(6).

(ii) Section 401(a)(5)(D) and this paragraph (e) do not apply to a plan maintained by an employer, determined for purposes of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act or the Railroad Retirement Tax Act, as applicable, that does not pay any wages within the meaning of section 3121(a) or compensation within the meaning of section 3231(e). For this purpose, a plan maintained for a self-employed individual within the meaning of section 401(c)(1), who is also subject to the tax under section 1401, is deemed to be a plan maintained by an employer that pays wages within the meaning of section 3121(a).

(iii) If a plan provides for the payment of an employee's accrued retirement benefit (whether or not subsidized) commencing before an employee's social security retirement age, the projected employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to service by the employee for the employer (as determined under paragraphs (e)(3) and (e)(4) of this section) that may be applied as an offset to limit the employee's accrued retirement benefit must be reduced in accordance with § 1.401(l)-3(e)(1). The reduction is made by multiplying the employee's projected employer-provided primary insurance amount by a fraction, the numerator of which is the appropriate factor under § 1.401(l)-3(e)(1), and the denominator of which is 0.75 percent.

(iv) The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices or other documents of general applicability, prescribe additional rules that may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this section, including rules relating to the determination of an employee's projected primary insurance amount attributable to the employee's service for former employers and rules applying section 401(a)(5)(D) with respect to an employer that pays wages within the meaning of section

3121(a) or compensation within the meaning of section 3231(e) for some years and not for other years.

(7) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this paragraph (e).

Example 1. Employer Z maintains a non-contributory defined benefit plan that uses the calendar year as its plan year. The plan provides a normal retirement benefit, commencing at age 65, equal to \$500 a year, multiplied by the employee's years of service for Z, limited to the excess of the amount of the employee's final pay from Z (as determined in accordance with paragraph (e)(2) of this section) over the employee's employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to the employee's service for Z. If an employee's social security retirement age is greater than 65, the plan provides for reduction of the employee's employer-provided primary insurance amount in accordance with paragraph (e)(6)(iii) of this section. The plan provides no limitation on the number of years of service taken into account in determining benefits under the plan. Employee A retires on July 6, 1995, at A's social security retirement age of 65 with 35 years of service for Z. The plan uses the plan year as the 12-month period for determining an employee's year of final highest pay from the employer. A's compensation for A's final 5 plan years is as follows:

1995 plan year	\$10,500
1994 plan year	\$20,000
1993 plan year	\$18,000
1992 plan year	\$17,000
1991 plan year	\$16,500

A's annual primary insurance amount under social security, determined as of A's social security retirement age, is \$9,000, of which \$4,500 is the employer-provided portion attributable to A's service for Z ($\$9,000 \times 50$ percent $\times 35/35$). Under the plan's benefit formula (disregarding the final pay limitation), A would be entitled to receive a normal retirement benefit of \$17,500 ($\500×35 years). However, under the plan, A's otherwise determined normal retirement benefit of \$17,500 is limited to the excess of the amount of A's final pay from Z over A's employer-provided primary insurance amount under social security attributable to A's service for Z. Accordingly, A's normal retirement benefit is determined to be \$15,500 ($\$20,000$ (A's final pay from Z) less \$4,500 (A's employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to A's service for Z)) rather than \$17,500. The final pay limitation in Z's plan satisfies section 401(a)(5)(D) and this paragraph (e). Accordingly, the plan maintained by Z does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees within the meaning of section 401(a)(4) merely because of the final pay limitation contained in the plan.

Example 2. Assume the same facts as in *Example 1*, except that A has 32 years of service for Z when A retires at A's social security retirement age. Under the plan's benefit formula (disregarding the final pay limitation), A would be entitled to receive an annual normal retirement benefit of \$16,000 ($\500×32 years). However, the plan provides that A's normal retirement benefit of \$16,000 will be limited to \$15,500 (\$20,000 (the amount of A's final pay from Z) less \$4,500 ($\frac{1}{2}$ of A's primary insurance amount under the Social Security Act)). The final pay limitation does not satisfy this paragraph (e). The portion of A's employer-provided primary insurance amount under the Social Security Act attributable to A's service for Z is $32/35 \times \$4,500$, or \$4,114. Therefore, to satisfy this paragraph (e), the final pay provision in Z's plan may not limit A's otherwise determined normal retirement benefit of \$16,000 to less than \$15,886 (\$20,000 (the amount of X's final pay) minus \$4,114 (the portion of A's employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to A's service for Z)).

Example 3. (a) Employer X maintains a noncontributory defined benefit plan that uses the calendar year as its plan year. The formula for determining benefits under the plan provides a normal retirement benefit at age 65 equal to 90 percent of an employee's final average compensation, with the benefit reduced by $\frac{1}{60}$ th for each year of the employee's service less than 30 and limited to the employee's final pay (as determined in accordance with paragraph (e)(2) of this section) less the employee's employer-provided primary insurance amount under social security attributable to the employee's service for X. The plan determines an employee's employer-provided projected primary insurance amount under social security attributable to the employee's service for X in accordance with paragraph (e)(3) of this section and applies the reductions applicable under paragraph (e)(6)(iii) of this section if benefits commence before social security retirement age. The plan determines an employee's accrued benefit under the fractional accrual method of section 411(b)(1)(C).

(b) Employee A commences participation in the plan on January 1, 1990, when A is 35 years of age. A's social security retirement age is 67. As of the close of the 2014 plan year, A's final average compensation from X is \$15,000; A's final pay from X is \$15,400, and A's projected employer-provided annual primary insurance amount under social security attributable to A's service for X is \$4,000 (after the reduction applicable under paragraph (e)(6)(iii) of this section). Under the plan formula, A's accrued benefit as of the close of the 2014 plan year is \$11,250 (90 percent \times \$15,000 \times 25/30). As of the close of the 2014 plan year, the plan's final pay limitation does not affect A's benefit because A's benefit under the plan as of the close of the plan year and before application of the final pay limitation (\$11,250) does not exceed A's final pay of \$15,400 from X, determined as of the close of the plan year, less A's employer-provided projected primary insurance amount under social security attributable to A's service for X (\$4,000).

(c) Assume that, as of the close of the 2015 plan year, A's final average compensation from X is \$14,500 and A's final pay from X is \$15,400. Assume also that as of the close of the 2015 plan year, A's employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to A's service for X is \$4,200 (after the reduction applicable under paragraph (e)(6)(iii) of this section). Accordingly, A's benefit as of the close of the 2015 plan year and before application of the final pay limitation is \$11,310 (90 percent \times \$14,500 \times 26/30). Under the plan's final pay limitation, A's benefit of \$11,310 would be limited to \$11,200, the amount of A's final pay from X (\$15,400), less A's employer-provided projected primary insurance amount under social security attributable to A's service for X (\$4,200). However, the plan's final pay limitation may not be applied to limit A's accrued benefit for the 2015 plan year to an amount below \$11,250, which was A's accrued benefit under the plan at the close of the prior plan year. The foregoing is further illustrated in the following table for the plan years presented above and for additional years of service performed by A for X.

TABLE
[In dollar amounts]

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Years of service	Final average compensation	Benefit under plan formula (Column 2 \times 0.9 \times years of service/30)	Final pay	Employer-provided projected primary insurance amount under social security attributable to service for employer	Benefit if final pay reduction is applied in full (Column 4 - Column 5)	Benefit to which A is entitled (smaller of Column 6 or Column 3, but not less than Column 7 for prior year)
25	\$15,000	\$11,250	\$15,400	\$4,000	\$11,400	\$11,250
26	14,500	11,310	15,400	4,200	11,200	11,250

TABLE—Continued
[In dollar amounts]

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Years of service	Final average compensation	Benefit under plan formula (Column 2 × 0.9 × years of service/30)	Final pay	Employer-provided projected primary insurance amount under social security attributable to service for employer	Benefit if final pay reduction is applied in full (Column 4 – Column 5)	Benefit to which A is entitled (smaller of Column 6 or Column 3, but not less than Column 7 for prior year)
27	15,500	12,555	15,800	4,400	11,400	11,400
28	15,500	13,020	16,000	4,500	11,500	11,500
29	15,000	13,050	16,000	4,800	11,200	11,500
30	14,500	13,050	16,000	5,000	11,000	11,500

(f) *Certain benefits not taken into account.* In determining whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) and this section, other benefits created under state or federal law (e.g., worker’s compensation benefits or black lung benefits) may not be taken into account.

(g) *More than one plan treated as single plan.* [Reserved]

(h) *Effective date—(1) In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (h)(2) of this section, this section is effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994.

(2) *Plans of tax-exempt organizations.* In the case of plans maintained by organizations exempt from income taxation under section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans), this section is effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996.

(3) *Compliance during transition period.* For plan years beginning before the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in paragraphs (h)(1) and (h)(2) of this section, and on or after the first day of the first plan year to which the amendments made to section 401(a)(5) by section 1111(b) of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA '86) apply, a plan must be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(5), taking into account pre-existing guidance and the amendments made by TRA '86 to related provisions of the Code. Whether a plan is operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(5) will generally be determined based on all of the relevant facts

and circumstances, including the extent to which an employer has resolved unclear issues in its favor. A plan will be deemed to be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(5) if it is operated in accordance with the terms of this section.

[T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47614, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10817, 10818, 10951, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8486, 58 FR 46830, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(17)-1 Limitation on annual compensation.

(a) *Compensation limit requirement—(1) In general.* In order to be a qualified plan, a plan must satisfy section 401(a)(17). Section 401(a)(17) provides an annual compensation limit for each employee under a qualified plan. This limit applies to a qualified plan in two ways. First, a plan may not base allocations, in the case of a defined contribution plan, or benefit accruals, in the case of a defined benefit plan, on compensation in excess of the annual compensation limit. Second, the amount of an employee’s annual compensation that may be taken into account in applying certain specified nondiscrimination rules under the Internal Revenue Code is subject to the annual compensation limit. These two limitations are set forth in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section, respectively. Paragraph (d) of this section provides the effective dates of section 401(a)(17), the amendments made by section 13212 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (OBRA '93), and this section. Paragraph (e) of this section provides