

SUBTITLE A. INCOME TAXES
CHAPTER 1. NORMAL TAXES AND SURTAXES
SUBCHAPTER D. DEFERRED COMPENSATION, ETC.
PART I. PENSION, PROFIT-SHARING, STOCK BONUS PLANS, ETC.
SUBPART A. GENERAL RULES.

IRC Sec. 401

Sec. 401. Qualified pension, profit-sharing, and stock bonus plans [Caution: See prospective amendment note below.].

(a) Requirements for qualification. A trust created or organized in the United States and forming part of a stock bonus, pension, or profit-sharing plan of an employer for the exclusive benefit of his employees or their beneficiaries shall constitute a qualified trust under this section--

(1) if contributions are made to the trust by such employer, or employees, or both, or by another employer who is entitled to deduct his contributions under section 404(a)(3)(B) [[26 USCS § 404\(a\)\(3\)\(B\)](#)] (relating to deduction for contributions to profit-sharing and stock bonus plans), or by a charitable remainder trust pursuant to a qualified gratuitous transfer (as defined in section 664(g)(1) [[26 USCS § 664\(g\)\(1\)](#)]), for the purpose of distributing to such employees or their beneficiaries the corpus and income of the fund accumulated by the trust in accordance with such plan;

(2) if under the trust instrument it is impossible, at any time prior to the satisfaction of all liabilities with respect to employees and their beneficiaries under the trust, for any part of the corpus or income to be (within the taxable year or thereafter) used for, or diverted to, purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of his employees or their beneficiaries (but this paragraph shall not be construed, in the case of a multiemployer plan, to prohibit the return of a contribution within 6 months after the plan administrator determines that the contribution was made by a mistake of fact or law (other than a mistake relating to whether the plan is described in section 401(a) [[26 USCS § 401\(a\)](#)] or the trust which is part of such plan is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) [[26 USCS § 501\(a\)](#)]), or the return of any withdrawal liability payment determined to be an overpayment within 6 months of such determination);

(3) if the plan of which such trust is a part satisfies the requirements of section 410 [[26 USCS § 410](#)] (relating to minimum participation standards); and

(4) if the contributions or benefits provided under the plan do not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees (within the meaning of section 414(q) [[26 USCS § 414\(q\)](#)]). For purposes of this paragraph, there shall be excluded from consideration employees described in section 410(b)(3)(A) and (C) [[26 USCS § 410\(b\)\(3\)\(A\)](#) and (C)].

(5) Special rules relating to nondiscrimination requirements.

(A) Salaried or clerical employees. A classification shall not be considered discriminatory within the meaning of paragraph (4) or section 410(b)(2)(A)(i) [[26 USCS § 410\(b\)\(2\)\(A\)\(i\)](#)] merely because it is limited to salaried or clerical employees.

(B) Contributions and benefits may bear uniform relationship to compensation. A plan shall not be considered discriminatory within the meaning of paragraph (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) [[26 USCS § 414\(s\)](#)]) of such employees.

(C) Certain disparity permitted. A plan shall not be considered discriminatory

within the meaning of paragraph (4) merely because the contributions or benefits of, or on behalf of, the employees under the plan favor highly compensated employees (as defined in section 414(q) [\[26 USCS § 414\(q\)\]](#)) in the manner permitted under subsection (l).

(D) Integrated defined benefit plan.

(i) In general. A defined benefit plan shall not be considered discriminatory within the meaning of paragraph (4) merely because the plan provides that the employer-derived accrued retirement benefit for any participant under the plan may not exceed the excess (if any) of--

(I) the participant's final pay with the employer, over

(II) the employer-derived retirement benefit created under Federal law attributable to service by the participant with the employer.

For purposes of this clause, the employer-derived retirement benefit created under Federal law shall be treated as accruing ratably over 35 years.

(ii) Final pay. For purposes of this subparagraph, the participant's final pay is the compensation (as defined in section 414(q)(4) [\[26 USCS § 414\(q\)\(4\)\]](#)) paid to the participant by the employer for any year--

(I) which ends during the 5-year period ending with the year in which the participant separated from service for the employer, and

(II) for which the participant's total compensation from the employer was highest.

(E) 2 or more plans treated as single plan. For purposes of determining whether 2 or more plans of an employer satisfy the requirements of paragraph (4) when considered as a single plan--

(i) Contributions. If the amount of contributions on behalf of the employees allowed as a deduction under section 404 [\[26 USCS § 404\]](#) for the taxable year with respect to such plans, taken together, bears a uniform relationship to the compensation (within the meaning of section 414(s) [\[26 USCS § 414\(a\)\]](#)) of such employees, the plans shall not be considered discriminatory merely because the rights of employees to, or derived from, the employer contributions under the separate plans do not become nonforfeitable at the same rate.

(ii) Benefits. If the employees' rights to benefits under the separate plans do not become nonforfeitable at the same rate, but the levels of benefits provided by the separate plans satisfy the requirements of regulations prescribed by the Secretary to take account of the differences in such rates, the plans shall not be considered discriminatory merely because of the difference in such rates.

(F) Social security retirement age. For purposes of testing for discrimination under paragraph (4)--

(i) the social security retirement age (as defined in section 415(b)(8) [\[26 USCS § 415\(b\)\(8\)\]](#)) shall be treated as a uniform retirement age, and

(ii) subsidized early retirement benefits and joint and survivor annuities shall not be treated as being unavailable to employees on the same terms merely because such benefits or annuities are based in whole or in part on an employee's social security retirement age (as so defined).

(G) State and local governmental plans. Paragraphs (3) and (4) shall not apply to a governmental plan (within the meaning of section 414(d) [\[26 USCS § 414\(d\)\]](#)) maintained by a State or local government or political subdivision thereof (or agency or instrumentality thereof).

(6) A plan shall be considered as meeting the requirements of paragraph (3) during the whole of any taxable year of the plan if on one day in each quarter it satisfied such requirements.

(7) A trust shall not constitute a qualified trust under this section unless the plan of which such trust is a part satisfies the requirements of section 411 [\[26 USCS §](#)

[411](#)] (relating to minimum vesting standards).

(8) A trust forming part of a defined benefit plan shall not constitute a qualified trust under this section unless the plan provides that forfeitures must not be applied to increase the benefits any employee would otherwise receive under the plan.

(9) Required distributions.

(A) In general. A trust shall not constitute a qualified trust under this subsection unless the plan provides that the entire interest of each employee--

(i) will be distributed to such employee not later than the required beginning date, or

(ii) will be distributed, beginning not later than the required beginning date, in accordance with regulations, over the life of such employee or over the lives of such employee and a designated beneficiary (or over a period not extending beyond the life expectancy of such employee or the life expectancy of such employee and a designated beneficiary).

(B) Required distribution where employee dies before entire interest is distributed.

(i) Where distributions have begun under subparagraph (A)(ii). A trust shall not constitute a qualified trust under this section unless the plan provides that if--

(I) the distribution of the employee's interest has begun in accordance with subparagraph (A)(ii), and

(II) the employee dies before his entire interest has been distributed to him, the remaining portion of such interest will be distributed at least as rapidly as under the method of distributions being used under subparagraph (A)(ii) as of the date of his death.

(ii) 5-year rule for other cases. A trust shall not constitute a qualified trust under this section unless the plan provides that, if an employee dies before the distribution of the employee's interest has begun in accordance with subparagraph (A)(ii), the entire interest of the employee will be distributed within 5 years after the death of such employee.

(iii) Exception to 5-year rule for certain amounts payable over life of beneficiary. If--

(I) any portion of the employee's interest is payable to (or for the benefit of) a designated beneficiary,

(II) such portion will be distributed (in accordance with regulations) over the life of such designated beneficiary (or over a period not extending beyond the life expectancy of such beneficiary), and

(III) such distributions begin not later than 1 year after the date of the employee's death or such later date as the Secretary may by regulations prescribe, for purposes of clause (ii), the portion referred to in subclause (I) shall be treated as distributed on the date on which such distributions begin.

(iv) Special rule for surviving spouse of employee. If the designated beneficiary referred to in clause (iii)(I) is the surviving spouse of the employee--

(I) the date on which the distributions are required to begin under clause (iii)(III) shall not be earlier than the date on which the employee would have attained age 70 1/2, and

(II) if the surviving spouse dies before the distributions to such spouse begin, this subparagraph shall be applied as if the surviving spouse were the employee.

(C) Required beginning date. For purposes of this paragraph--

(i) In general. The term "required beginning date" means April 1 of the calendar year following the later of--

(I) the calendar year in which the employee attains age 70 1/2, or

(II) the calendar year in which the employee retires.

(ii) Exception. Subclause (II) of clause (i) shall not apply--

(I) except as provided in section 409(d) [26 USCS § 409(d)], in the case of an employee who is a 5-percent owner (as defined in section 416 [26 USCS § 416]) with respect to the plan year ending in the calendar year in which the employee attains age 70 1/2 , or

(II) for purposes of section 408 (a)(6) or (b)(3) [26 USCS § 408(a)(6) or (b)(3)].

(iii) Actuarial adjustment. In the case of an employee to whom clause (i)(II) applies who retires in a calendar year after the calendar year in which the employee attains age 70 1/2 , the employee's accrued benefit shall be actuarially increased to take into account the period after age 70 1/2 in which the employee was not receiving any benefits under the plan.

(iv) Exception for governmental and church plans. Clauses (ii) and (iii) shall not apply in the case of a governmental plan or church plan. For purposes of this clause, the term "church plan" means a plan maintained by a church for church employees, and the term "church" means any church (as defined in section 3121(w)(3)(A) [26 USCS § 3121(w)(3)(A)]) or qualified church-controlled organization (as defined in section 3121(w)(3)(B) [26 USCS § 3121(w)(3)(B)]).

(D) Life expectancy. For purposes of this paragraph, the life expectancy of an employee and the employee's spouse (other than in the case of a life annuity) may be redetermined but not more frequently than annually.

(E) Designated beneficiary. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "designated beneficiary" means any individual designated as a beneficiary by the employee.

(F) Treatment of payments to children. Under regulations prescribed by the Secretary, for purposes of this paragraph, any amount paid to a child shall be treated as if it had been paid to the surviving spouse if such amount will become payable to the surviving spouse upon such child reaching majority (or other designated event permitted under regulations).

(G) Treatment of incidental death benefit distributions. For purposes of this title, any distribution required under the incidental death benefit requirements of this subsection shall be treated as a distribution required under this paragraph.