

What are “preferred” qualifications?

Preferred qualifications are experience and/or education standards that most people hired into the job are expected to possess. Preferred qualifications appear on the Job Specification in the place of Minimum Qualification Requirements.

Most of the time, you will be hiring people who possess at least the preferred qualifications. However, you may select someone who does not meet the preferred qualifications provided you have a sound business reason to do so. In these cases, you should document the reason for your decision.

For example, a candidate who types 75 word per minute and has a year of experience in a law office may be a better choice for a Legal Secretary 1 position than a candidate who types 40 words per minute and has five years of general clerical experience, even though the preferred qualifications for the job ask for three years of experience.

Always check with your Human Resource Office before offering a job to someone who does not meet the preferred qualifications.

What do the test scores tell me?

There are three parts to the clerical test: an Office Skills test, an Office Behavior Assessment and a Typing Skills test. Each measures something different. The **Office Skills** test measures a candidate’s reading, spelling and customer service skills. The **Office Behavior Assessment** measures a candidate’s work habits, attitudes and preferences. The **Typing Skills** test measures a candidate’s speed and accuracy in typing text.

The Office Skills test and the Office Behavior Assessment are mandatory for all clerical jobs. Candidates must have scores on both of these tests to be considered.

The Typing Skills test is optional at your discretion. If you need someone with good typing skills, you’ll want to require candidates to have a Typing Skills score. Ask your HR office to include this information in your Job Posting. You may choose to require Typing Skills scores for any position, regardless of Job Title.

Typing Skills test scores are reported as words-per-minute. The Office Skills and Behavior Assessment scores are shown as percentiles. A percentile score tells you how high the candidate ranks compared to whole candidate pool. For example, a candidate with a percentile score of 80 did better on the test than 80% of all other clerical candidates. You should check with your Human Resource Office before offering a job to someone with a test score below the 50th percentile.

QUEST

Quality Express Staffing

THE FAST, FLEXIBLE WAY TO FILL CLERICAL JOBS

SUPERVISOR’S GUIDE

Effective March 1, 2004

This Guide offers a brief description of the basic QUEST process as it applies to all state clerical jobs. Individual state agencies will establish their own internal procedures and standards for using QUEST. Please check with your Human Resource office to be sure you follow your agency’s standards when filling a job with the QUEST process.

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WHAT IS QUEST?

QUEST is the new direct-hire process introduced by Civil Service to make it easier for you to fill your clerical support jobs. QUEST has four basic steps:

1. Post your vacancy on the JOB SEARCH website for a week
2. Pre-tested candidates apply directly to you (or your HR office)
3. You decide which of the candidates you wish to interview
4. Make your selection based on your evaluation of candidates' interviews, test scores and experience

Some special features of the QUEST process for Clerical positions are:

- Qualification standards are flexible – experience and education standards are now “preferred” qualifications rather than mandatory requirements.
- Test scores are reported separately for each test component – you can compare how candidates scored on the Office Skills test compared to their Office Behavior assessment.
- Test scores are shown as percentiles – this shows you how a candidate's scores compare to all other applicants.
- Typing Skills testing is optional based on individual position needs. Typing scores are shown as words per minute.

HOW DOES QUEST WORK?

STEP 1 – YOUR OPENING IS POSTED ON JOB SEARCH

When you have a clerical vacancy, your HR office will post it on JOB SEARCH: <http://www.dscs.state.la.us/jobs.nsf>. The posting will tell candidates about your vacancy and how to apply. JOB SEARCH postings last at least one week.

STEP 2 – THE PRE-TESTED CANDIDATES APPLY TO YOU

The JOB SEARCH posting will tell candidates to apply directly to your agency with a copy of their Civil Service test scores. This means candidates must already have taken the test before they apply. Because candidates apply directly to you, there is no need to mail “inquiries of availability” to people on a Civil Service certificate. You only consider the candidates who respond to your specific vacancy posting.

STEP 3 – WHO TO INTERVIEW

With QUEST, you are no longer limited to interviewing only the top five. Instead, you may consider any candidate with any score.

If a small number of candidates apply, you may wish to interview them all. When that is not practical, you'll decide what job related standards to use when choosing candidates to interview. For example, if typing is an important part of the job, you may want to interview only candidates with higher typing scores.

Candidates with more experience and higher test scores are more likely to be successful employees. You'll improve your chances of seeing the most promising candidates if you limit your choices to those who meet the preferred qualifications standards and who have test scores above the 50th percentile. (The top half of the applicant pool.)

Your agency may also set standards for qualifications and/or test scores. Check with your Human Resource office to be sure you follow your agency's standards.

STEP 4 – MAKING YOUR SELECTION DECISION

Use all the information available to you to make your selection decision. If you decide to select a candidate who does not possess the preferred qualifications or whose test scores are below the 50th percentile, you'll need to document your reasons for choosing that candidate over candidates with more experience and/or education and higher test scores. Ask your Human Resource office for guidance.

Always check with your HR Office to be sure you follow your agency's procedures.