

§ 1.401(a)(31)-1

26 CFR Ch. I (4-1-17 Edition)

(TRA '86), if certain conditions are satisfied, a waiver of the excise tax under section 4980 applies with respect to any employer reversion that occurs by reason of the termination or merger of a plan before the first year to which section 401(a)(26) applies to the plan. In general, the applicable conditions are that the plan must have been in existence on August 16, 1986; that if section 401(a)(26) was in effect for the plan year including August 16, 1986, the plan would have failed to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(26) and would have continued to fail the requirements at all times thereafter; that the plan satisfies the applicable conditions in paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(A) or (B) of this section; and that certain requirements regarding asset or liability transfers and mergers and spinoffs involving the plan after August 16, 1986, are satisfied.

(2) *Termination date.* An employer reversion with respect to a plan is eligible for the section 4980 excise tax waiver only if the employer reversion occurs by reason of the termination of the plan with a termination date prior to the first plan year for which section 401(a)(26) applies to the plan. Solely for purposes of this waiver, the employer reversion is treated as satisfying this paragraph (c)(2) even though the plan's termination date is during the first plan year for which section 401(a)(26) applies to the plan if the plan's termination date is on or before May 31, 1989. If the termination date occurs in the first plan year for which section 401(a)(26) applied to the plan and the employer receives a reversion that is eligible for the waiver of the section 4980 tax, the plan is subject to the interest rate restriction set forth in section 11 12(e)(3)(B) of TRA '86 as amended.

(3) *Failure to satisfy section 401(a)(26).* An employer reversion with respect to a plan is eligible for the excise tax waiver only if the plan was in existence on August 16, 1986, and, if section 401(a)(26) had applied to the plan for the plan year including such date, the plan would have failed to satisfy section 401(a)(26) for the plan year and continuously thereafter until the plan's termination or merger. For purposes of this paragraph (c)(3), a plan is

treated as though it would have failed to satisfy section 401(a)(26) before such section actually applied to the plan only if the plan (as defined under section 414(1)) failed to benefit at least the lesser of 50 employees or 40 percent of the employer's employees. In general, this determination is to be made on the basis of only the applicable statutory provisions, without regard to the regulations under section 401(a)(26). Thus, for example, the prior benefit structure rules in § 1.401(a)(26)-3 do not apply in determining whether a plan would have failed to satisfy section 401(a)(26) for plan years beginning prior to the effective date of section 401(a)(26) with respect to the plan.

(d) *Special rule for collective bargaining agreements.* In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements (as defined in § 1.401(a)(26)-8(a)) that were ratified before March 1, 1986, section 401(a)(26) and the regulations thereunder shall not apply to plan years beginning before the earlier of—

(1) January 1, 1991, or

(2) The later of—

(i) January 1, 1989, or

(ii) The date on which the last of such collective bargaining agreements terminates. For purposes of this paragraph (d), any extension or renegotiation of any collective bargaining agreement that is ratified after February 28, 1986, is disregarded in determining the date on which such collective bargaining agreement terminates.

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63419, Dec. 4, 1991, as amended by T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46838, Sept. 3, 1993]

**§ 1.401(a)(31)-1 Requirement to offer direct rollover of eligible rollover distributions; questions and answers.**

The following questions and answers relate to the qualification requirement imposed by section 401(a)(31) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, pertaining to the direct rollover option for eligible rollover distributions from pension, profit-sharing, and stock bonus plans. Section 401(a)(31) was added by section 522(a) of the Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1992, Public Law 102-318, 106 Stat. 290 (UCA). For additional UCA guidance under sections 402(c), 402(f), 403(b)(8) and (10), and

3405(c), see §§ 1.402(c)-2, 1.402(f)-1, and 1.403(b)-7(b), and § 31.3405(c)-1 of this chapter, respectively.

## LIST OF QUESTIONS

Q-1: What are the direct rollover requirements under section 401(a)(31)?

Q-2: Does section 401(a)(31) require that a qualified plan permit a direct rollover to be made to a qualified trust that is not part of a defined contribution plan?

Q-3: What is a *direct rollover* that satisfies section 401(a)(31), and how is it accomplished?

Q-4: Is providing a distributee with a check for delivery to an eligible retirement plan a reasonable means of accomplishing a direct rollover?

Q-5: Is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover currently includible in gross income or subject to 20-percent withholding?

Q-6: What procedures may a plan administrator prescribe for electing a direct rollover, and what information may the plan administrator require a distributee to provide when electing a direct rollover?

Q-7: May the plan administrator treat a distributee as having made an election under a default procedure where the distributee does not affirmatively elect to make or not make a direct rollover within a certain time period?

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Q-10: Must the plan administrator allow a distributee to divide an eligible rollover distribution into two or more separate distributions to be paid in direct rollovers to two or more eligible retirement plans?

Q-11: Will a plan satisfy section 401(a)(31) if the plan administrator does not permit a distributee to elect a direct rollover if his or her eligible rollover distributions during a year are reasonably expected to total less than \$200?

Q-12: Is a plan administrator permitted to treat a distributee's election to make or not make a direct rollover with respect to one payment in a series of periodic payments as applying to all subsequent payments in the series?

Q-13: Is the eligible retirement plan designated by a distributee to receive a direct rollover distribution required to accept the distribution?

Q-14: If a plan accepts an invalid rollover contribution, whether or not as a direct rollover, how will the contribution be treated for purposes of applying the qualification requirements of section 401(a) or 403(a) to the plan?

Q-15: For purposes of applying the plan qualification requirements of section 401(a), is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover a distribution and rollover or is it a transfer of assets and liabilities?

Q-16: Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution that is in the form of a plan loan offset amount?

Q-17: Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution from a qualified plan distributed annuity contract?

Q-18: What assumptions may a plan administrator make regarding whether a benefit is an eligible rollover distribution?

Q-19: When must a qualified plan be amended to comply with section 401(a)(31)?

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q-1: What are the direct rollover requirements under section 401(a)(31)?

A-1: (a) *General rule.* To satisfy section 401(a)(31), added by UCA, a plan must provide that if the distributee of any eligible rollover distribution elects to have the distribution paid directly to an eligible retirement plan, and specifies the eligible retirement plan to which the distribution is to be paid, then the distribution will be paid to that eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover described in Q&A-3 of this section. Thus, the plan must give the distributee the option of having his or her distribution paid in a direct rollover to an eligible retirement plan specified by the distributee. For purposes of section 401(a)(31) and this section, eligible rollover distribution has the meaning set forth in section 402(c)(4) and § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-3 through Q&A-10 and Q&A-14, except as otherwise provided in Q&A-2 of this section, eligible retirement plan has the meaning set forth in section 402(c)(8)(B) and § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-2.

(b) *Related Internal Revenue Code provisions*—(1) *Mandatory withholding.* If a distributee of an eligible rollover distribution does not elect to have the eligible rollover distribution paid directly from the plan to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover under section

401(a)(31), the eligible rollover distribution is subject to 20-percent income tax withholding under section 3405(c). See § 31.3405(c)-1 of this chapter for guidance concerning the withholding requirements applicable to eligible rollover distributions.

(2) *Notice requirement.* Section 402(f) requires the plan administrator of a qualified plan to provide, within a reasonable period of time before making an eligible rollover distribution, a written explanation to the distributee of the distributee's right to elect a direct rollover and the withholding consequences of not making that election. The explanation also is required to provide certain other relevant information relating to the taxation of distributions. See § 1.402(f)-1 for guidance concerning the written explanation required under section 402(f).

(3) *Section 403(b) annuities.* Section 403(b)(10) provides that requirements similar to those imposed by section 401(a)(31) apply to annuities described in section 403(b). See § 1.403(b)-7(b) for guidance concerning the direct rollover requirements for distributions from annuities described in section 403(b).

(c) *Effective date—(1) Statutory effective date.* Section 401(a)(31) applies to eligible rollover distributions made on or after January 1, 1993.

(2) *Regulatory effective date.* This section applies to eligible rollover distributions made on or after October 19, 1995. For eligible rollover distributions made on or after January 1, 1993 and before October 19, 1995, § 1.401(a)(31)-1T (as it appeared in the April 1, 1995 edition of 26 CFR part 1), applies. However, for any distribution made on or after January 1, 1993 but before October 19, 1995, a plan may satisfy section 401(a)(31) by substituting any or all provisions of this section for the corresponding provisions of § 1.401(a)(31)-1T, if any.

Q-2: Does section 401(a)(31) require that a qualified plan permit a direct rollover to be made to a qualified trust that is not part of a defined contribution plan?

A-2: No. Section 401(a)(31)(D) limits the types of qualified trusts that are treated as eligible retirement plans to defined contribution plans that accept eligible rollover distributions. There-

fore, although a plan is permitted, at a participant's election, to make a direct rollover to any type of eligible retirement plan, as defined in section 402(c)(8)(B) (including a defined benefit plan), a plan will not fail to satisfy section 401(a)(31) solely because the plan will not permit a direct rollover to a qualified trust that is part of a defined benefit plan. In contrast, if a distributee elects a direct rollover of an eligible rollover distribution to an annuity plan described in section 403(a), that distribution must be paid to the annuity plan, even if the recipient annuity plan is a defined benefit plan.

Q-3: What is a direct rollover that satisfies section 401(a)(31), and how is it accomplished?

A-3: A direct rollover that satisfies section 401(a)(31) is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid directly to an eligible retirement plan for the benefit of the distributee. A direct rollover may be accomplished by any reasonable means of direct payment to an eligible retirement plan. Reasonable means of direct payment include, for example, a wire transfer or the mailing of a check to the eligible retirement plan. If payment is made by check, the check must be negotiable only by the trustee of the eligible retirement plan. If the payment is made by wire transfer, the wire transfer must be directed only to the trustee of the eligible retirement plan. In the case of an eligible retirement plan that does not have a trustee (such as a custodial individual retirement account or an individual retirement annuity), the custodian of the plan or issuer of the contract under the plan, as appropriate, should be substituted for the trustee for purposes of this Q&A-3, and Q&A-4 of this section.

Q-4: Is providing a distributee with a check for delivery to an eligible retirement plan a reasonable means of accomplishing a direct rollover?

A-4: Providing the distributee with a check and instructing the distributee to deliver the check to the eligible retirement plan is a reasonable means of direct payment, provided that the check is made payable as follows: [Name of the trustee] as trustee of [name of the eligible retirement plan]. For example, if the name of the eligible

retirement plan is "Individual Retirement Account of John Q. Smith," and the name of the trustee is "ABC Bank," the payee line of a check would read "ABC Bank as trustee of Individual Retirement Account of John Q. Smith." Unless the name of the distributee is included in the name of the eligible retirement plan, the check also must indicate that it is for the benefit of the distributee. If the eligible retirement plan is not an individual retirement account or an individual retirement annuity, the payee line of the check need not identify the trustee by name. For example, the payee line of a check for the benefit of distributee Jane Doe might read, "Trustee of XYZ Corporation Savings Plan FBO Jane Doe."

Q-5: Is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover currently includible in gross income or subject to 20-percent withholding?

A-5: No. An eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover is not currently includible in the distributee's gross income under section 402(c) and is exempt from the 20-percent withholding imposed under section 3405(c)(2). However, when any portion of the eligible rollover distribution is subsequently distributed from the eligible retirement plan, that portion will be includible in gross income to the extent required under section 402, 403, or 408.

Q-6: What procedures may a plan administrator prescribe for electing a direct rollover, and what information may the plan administrator require a distributee to provide when electing a direct rollover?

A-6: (a) *Permissible procedures.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b) of this Q&A-6, the plan administrator may prescribe any procedure for a distributee to elect a direct rollover under section 401(a)(31), provided that the procedure is reasonable. The procedure may include any reasonable requirement for information or documentation from the distributee in addition to the items of adequate information specified in §31.3405(c)-1(b), Q&A-7 of this chapter. For example, it would be reasonable for the plan administrator

to require that the distributee provide a statement from the designated recipient plan that the plan will accept the direct rollover for the benefit of the distributee and that the recipient plan is, or is intended to be, an individual retirement account, an individual retirement annuity, a qualified annuity plan described in section 403(a), or a qualified trust described in section 401(a), as applicable. In the case of a designated recipient plan that is a qualified trust, it also would be reasonable for the plan administrator to require a statement that the qualified trust is not excepted from the definition of an eligible retirement plan by section 401(a)(31)(D) (i.e., is not a defined benefit plan).

(b) *Impermissible procedures.* A plan will fail to satisfy section 401(a)(31) if the plan administrator prescribes any unreasonable procedure, or requires information or documentation, that effectively eliminates or substantially impairs the distributee's ability to elect a direct rollover. For example, it would effectively eliminate or substantially impair the distributee's ability to elect a direct rollover if the recipient plan required the distributee to obtain an opinion of counsel stating that the eligible retirement plan receiving the rollover is a qualified plan or individual retirement account. Similarly, it would effectively eliminate or substantially impair the distributee's ability to elect a direct rollover if the distributing plan required a letter from the recipient eligible retirement plan stating that, upon request by the distributing plan, the recipient plan will automatically return any direct rollover amount that the distributing plan advises the recipient plan was paid incorrectly. It would also effectively eliminate or substantially impair the distributee's ability to elect a direct rollover if the distributing plan required, as a condition for making a direct rollover, a letter from the recipient eligible retirement plan indemnifying the distributing plan for any liability arising from the distribution.

Q-7: May the plan administrator treat a distributee as having made an election under a default procedure

where the distributee does not affirmatively elect to make or not make a direct rollover within a certain time period?

A-7: Yes, the plan administrator may establish a default procedure whereby any distributee who fails to make an affirmative election is treated as having either made or not made a direct rollover election. However, the plan administrator may not make a distribution under any default procedure unless the distributee has received an explanation of the default procedure and an explanation of the direct rollover option as required under section 402(f) and § 1.402(f)-1, Q&A-1 and unless the timing requirements described in § 1.402(f)-1, Q&A-2 and Q&A-3 have been satisfied with respect to the explanations of both the default procedure and the direct rollover option.

Q-8: May the plan administrator establish a deadline after which the distributee may not revoke an election to make or not make a direct rollover?

A-8: Yes, but the plan administrator is not permitted to prescribe any deadline or time period with respect to revocation of a direct rollover election that is more restrictive for the distributee than that which otherwise applies under the plan to revocation of the form of distribution elected by the distributee.

Q-9: Must the plan administrator permit a distributee to elect to have a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover and to have the remainder of that distribution paid to the distributee?

A-9: Yes, the plan administrator must permit a distributee to elect to have a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover and to have the remainder paid to the distributee. However, the plan administrator is permitted to require that, if the distributee elects to have only a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover, that portion be equal to at least a specified minimum amount, provided the specified minimum amount is less than or equal to \$500 or any greater amount as prescribed by the Commissioner in rev-

enue rulings, notices, and other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin. See § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(b) of this chapter. If the entire amount of the eligible rollover distribution is less than or equal to the specified minimum amount, the plan administrator need not allow the distributee to divide the distribution.

Q-10: Must the plan administrator allow a distributee to divide an eligible rollover distribution into two or more separate distributions to be paid in direct rollovers to two or more eligible retirement plans?

A-10: No. The plan administrator is not required (but is permitted) to allow the distributee to divide an eligible rollover distribution into separate distributions to be paid to two or more eligible retirement plans in direct rollovers. Thus, the plan administrator may require that the distributee select a single eligible retirement plan to which the eligible rollover distribution (or portion thereof) will be distributed in a direct rollover.

Q-11: Will a plan satisfy section 401(a)(31) if the plan administrator does not permit a distributee to elect a direct rollover if his or her eligible rollover distributions during a year are reasonably expected to total less than \$200?

A-11: Yes. A plan will satisfy section 401(a)(31) even though the plan administrator does not permit any distributee to elect a direct rollover with respect to eligible rollover distributions during a year that are reasonably expected to total less than \$200 or any lower minimum amount specified by the plan administrator. The rules described in § 31.3405(c)-1, Q&A-14 of this chapter (relating to whether withholding under section 3405(c) is required for an eligible rollover distribution that is less than \$200) also apply for purposes of determining whether a direct rollover election under section 401(a)(31) must be provided for an eligible rollover distribution that is less than \$200 or the lower specified amount.

Q-12: Is a plan administrator permitted to treat a distributee's election to make or not make a direct rollover with respect to one payment in a series

of periodic payments as applying to all subsequent payments in the series?

A-12: (a) Yes. A plan administrator is permitted to treat a distributee's election to make or not make a direct rollover with respect to one payment in a series of periodic payments as applying to all subsequent payments in the series, provided that:

(1) The employee is permitted at any time to change, with respect to subsequent payments, a previous election to make or not make a direct rollover; and

(2) The written explanation provided under section 402(f) explains that the election to make or not make a direct rollover will apply to all future payments unless the employee subsequently changes the election.

(b) See § 1.402(f)-1, Q&A-3 for further guidance concerning the rules for providing section 402(f) notices when eligible rollover distributions are made in a series of periodic payments.

Q-13: Is the eligible retirement plan designated by a distributee to receive a direct rollover distribution required to accept the distribution?

A-13: No. Although section 401(a)(31) requires qualified plans to provide distributees the option to make a direct rollover of their eligible rollover distributions to an eligible retirement plan, it imposes no requirement that any eligible retirement plan accept rollovers. Thus, a plan can refuse to accept rollovers. Alternatively, a plan can limit the circumstances under which it will accept rollovers. For example, a plan can limit the types of plans from which it will accept a rollover or limit the types of assets it will accept in a rollover (such as accepting only cash or its equivalent).

Q-14: If a plan accepts an invalid rollover contribution, whether or not as a direct rollover, how will the contribution be treated for purposes of applying the qualification requirements of section 401(a) or 403(a) to the plan?

A-14: (a) *Acceptance of invalid rollover contribution.* If a plan accepts an invalid rollover contribution, the contribution will be treated, for purposes of applying the qualification requirements of section 401(a) or 403(a) to the receiving plan, as if it were a valid rollover contribution, if the following two

conditions are satisfied. First, when accepting the amount from the employee as a rollover contribution, the plan administrator of the receiving plan reasonably concludes that the contribution is a valid rollover contribution. While evidence that the distributing plan is the subject of a determination letter from the Commissioner indicating that the distributing plan is qualified would be useful to the receiving plan administrator in reasonably concluding that the contribution is a valid rollover contribution, it is not necessary for the distributing plan to have such a determination letter in order for the receiving plan administrator to reach that conclusion. Second, if the plan administrator of the receiving plan later determines that the contribution was an invalid rollover contribution, the amount of the invalid rollover contribution, plus any earnings attributable thereto, is distributed to the employee within a reasonable time after such determination.

(b) *Definitions.* For purposes of this Q&A-14:

(1) An *invalid rollover contribution* is an amount that is accepted by a plan as a rollover within the meaning of § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-1 (or as a rollover contribution within the meaning of section 408(d)(3)(A)(ii)) but that is not an eligible rollover distribution from a qualified plan (or an amount described in section 408(d)(3)(A)(ii)) or that does not satisfy the other requirements of section 401(a)(31), 402(c), or 408(d)(3) for treatment as a rollover or a rollover contribution.

(2) A *valid rollover contribution* is a contribution that is accepted by a plan as a rollover within the meaning of § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-1 or as a rollover contribution within the meaning of section 408(d)(3) and that satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(31), 402(c), or 408(d)(3) for treatment as a rollover or a rollover contribution.

(c) *Examples.* The provisions of paragraph (a) of this Q&A-14 are illustrated by the following examples:

*Example 1.* (i) Employer X maintains for its employees Plan M, a profit sharing plan qualified under section 401(a). Plan M provides that any employee of Employer X may make a rollover contribution to Plan M. Employee A is an employee of Employer X, will

not have attained age 70½ by the end of the year, and has a vested account balance in Plan O (a plan maintained by Employee A's prior employer). Employee A elects a single sum distribution from Plan O and elects that it be paid to Plan M in a direct rollover.

(ii) Employee A provides the plan administrator of Plan M with a letter from the plan administrator of Plan O stating that Plan O has received a determination letter from the Commissioner indicating that Plan O is qualified.

(iii) Based upon such a letter, absent facts to the contrary, a plan administrator may reasonably conclude that Plan O is qualified and that the amount paid as a direct rollover is an eligible rollover distribution.

*Example 2.* (i) The facts are the same as *Example 1*, except that, instead of the letter provided in paragraph (ii) of *Example 1*, Employee A provides the plan administrator of Plan M with a letter from the plan administrator of Plan O representing that Plan O satisfies the requirements of section 401(a) (or representing that Plan O is intended to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) and that the administrator of Plan O is not aware of any Plan O provision or operation that would result in the disqualification of Plan O).

(ii) Based upon such a letter, absent facts to the contrary, a plan administrator may reasonably conclude that Plan O is qualified and that the amount paid as a direct rollover is an eligible rollover distribution.

*Example 3.* (i) Same facts as *Example 1*, except that Employee A elects to receive the distribution from Plan O and wishes to make a rollover contribution described in section 402 rather than a direct rollover.

(ii) When making the rollover contribution, Employee A certifies that, to the best of Employee A's knowledge, Employee A is entitled to the distribution as an employee and not as a beneficiary, the distribution from Plan O to be contributed to Plan M is not one of a series of periodic payments, the distribution from Plan O was received by Employee A not more than 60 days before the date of the rollover contribution, and the entire amount of the rollover contribution would be includible in gross income if it were not being rolled over.

(iii) As support for these certifications, Employee A provides the plan administrator of Plan M with two statements from Plan O. The first is a letter from the plan administrator of Plan O, as described in *Example 1*, stating that Plan O has received a determination letter from the Commissioner indicating that Plan O is qualified. The second is the distribution statement that accompanied the distribution check. The distribution statement indicates that the distribution is being made by Plan O to Employee A, indicates the gross amount of the distribution, and indicates the amount withheld as Fed-

eral income tax. The amount withheld as Federal income tax is 20 percent of the gross amount of the distribution. Employee A contributes to Plan M an amount not greater than the gross amount of the distribution stated in the letter from Plan O and the contribution is made within 60 days of the date of the distribution statement from Plan O.

(iv) Based on the certifications and documentation provided by Employee A, absent facts to the contrary, a plan administrator may reasonably conclude that Plan O is qualified and that the distribution otherwise satisfies the requirements of section 402(c) for treatment as a rollover contribution.

*Example 4.* (i) The facts are the same as in *Example 3*, except that, rather than contributing the distribution from Plan O to Plan M, Employee A contributes the distribution from Plan O to IRA P, an individual retirement account described in section 408(a). After the contribution of the distribution from Plan O to IRA P, but before the year in which Employee A attains age 70½, Employee A requests a distribution from IRA P and decides to contribute it to Plan M as a rollover contribution. To make the rollover contribution, Employee A endorses the check received from IRA P as payable to Plan M.

(ii) In addition to providing the certifications described in *Example 3* with respect to the distribution from Plan O, Employee A certifies that, to the best of Employee A's knowledge, the contribution to IRA P was not made more than 60 days after the date Employee A received the distribution from Plan O, no amount other than the distribution from Plan O has been contributed to IRA P, and the distribution from IRA P was received not more than 60 days earlier than the rollover contribution to Plan M.

(iii) As support for these certifications, in addition to the two statements from Plan O described in *Example 3*, Employee A provides copies of statements from IRA P. The statements indicate that the account is identified as an IRA, the account was established within 60 days of the date of the letter from Plan O informing Employee A that an amount had been distributed, and the opening balance in the IRA does not exceed the amount of the distribution described in the letter from Plan O. There is no indication in the statements that any additional contributions have been made to IRA P since the account was opened. The date on the check from IRA P is less than 60 days before the date that Employee A makes the contribution to Plan M.

(iv) Based on the certifications and documentation provided by Employee A, absent facts to the contrary, a plan administrator may reasonably conclude that Plan O is qualified and that the contribution by Employee A is a rollover contribution described in section 408(d)(3)(A)(ii) that satisfies the

other requirements of section 408(d)(3) for treatment as a rollover contribution.

**Q-15:** For purposes of applying the plan qualification requirements of section 401(a), is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover a distribution and rollover or is it a transfer of assets and liabilities?

**A-15:** For purposes of applying the plan qualification requirements of section 401(a), a direct rollover is a distribution and rollover of the eligible rollover distribution and not a transfer of assets and liabilities. For example, if the consent requirements under section 411(a)(11) or sections 401(a)(11) and 417(a)(2) apply to the distribution, they must be satisfied before the eligible rollover distribution may be distributed in a direct rollover. Similarly, the direct rollover is not a transfer of assets and liabilities that must satisfy the requirements of section 414(1). Finally, a direct rollover is not a transfer of benefits for purposes of applying the requirements under section 411(d)(6), as described in § 1.411(d)-4, Q&A-3. Therefore, for example, the eligible retirement plan is not required to provide, with respect to amounts paid to it in a direct rollover, the same optional forms of benefits that were provided under the plan that made the direct rollover. The direct rollover requirements of section 401(a)(31) do not affect the ability of a qualified plan to make an elective or nonelective transfer of assets and liabilities to another qualified plan in accordance with applicable law (such as section 414(1)).

**Q-16:** Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution that is in the form of a plan loan offset amount?

**A-16:** A plan will not fail to satisfy section 401(a)(31) merely because the plan does not permit a distributee to elect a direct rollover of an eligible rollover distribution in the form of a plan loan offset amount. Section 1.402(c)-2(b), Q&A-9 defines a plan loan offset amount, in general, as a distribution that occurs when, under the terms governing a plan loan, the participant's accrued benefit is reduced (offset) in order to repay the loan. A plan administrator is permitted to allow a direct rollover of a participant note for a plan

loan to a qualified trust described in section 401(a) or a qualified annuity plan described in section 403(a). See § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-9 for examples illustrating the rules for plan loan offset amounts that are set forth in this Q&A-16. See § 31.3405(c)-1, Q&A-11 of this chapter for guidance concerning special withholding rules that apply to a distribution in the form of a plan loan offset amount.

**Q-17:** Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution from a qualified plan distributed annuity contract?

**A-17:** Yes. If any amount to be distributed under a qualified plan distributed annuity contract is an eligible rollover distribution (in accordance with § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-10 the annuity contract must satisfy section 401(a)(31) in the same manner as a qualified plan under section 401(a). Section 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-10 defines a qualified plan distributed annuity contract as an annuity contract purchased for a participant, and distributed to the participant, by a qualified plan. In the case of a qualified plan distributed annuity contract, the payor under the contract is treated as the plan administrator. See § 31.3405(c)-1, Q&A-13 of this chapter concerning the application of mandatory 20-percent withholding requirements to distributions from a qualified plan distributed annuity contract.

**Q-18:** What assumptions may a plan administrator make regarding whether a benefit is an eligible rollover distribution?

**A-18:** (a) *General rule.* For purposes of section 401(a)(31), a plan administrator may make the assumptions described in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this Q&A-18 in determining the amount of a distribution that is an eligible rollover distribution for which a direct rollover option must be provided. Section 31.3405(c)-1, Q&A-10 of this chapter provides assumptions for purposes of complying with section 3405(c). See § 1.402(c)-2, Q&A-15 concerning the effect of these assumptions for purposes of section 402(c).

(b) *\$5,000 death benefit.* A plan administrator is permitted to assume that a distribution from the plan that qualifies for the \$5,000 death benefit exclusion under section 101(b) is the only

death benefit being paid with respect to a deceased employee that qualifies for that exclusion. Thus, to the extent that such a distribution would be excludible from gross income based on this assumption, the plan administrator is permitted to assume that it is not an eligible rollover distribution.

(c) *Determination of designated beneficiary.* For the purpose of determining the amount of the minimum distribution required to satisfy section 401(a)(9)(A) for any calendar year, the plan administrator is permitted to assume that there is no designated beneficiary.

Q-19: When must a qualified plan be amended to comply with section 401(a)(31)?

A-19: Even though section 401(a)(31) applies to distributions from qualified plans made on or after January 1, 1993, a qualified plan is not required to be amended before the last day by which amendments must be made to comply with the Tax Reform Act of 1986 and related provisions, as permitted in other administrative guidance of general applicability, provided that:

(a) In the interim period between January 1, 1993, and the date on which the plan is amended, the plan is operated in accordance with the requirements of section 401(a)(31); and

(b) The amendment applies retroactively to January 1, 1993.

[T.D. 8619, 60 FR 49204, Sept. 22, 1995, as amended by T.D. 8880, 65 FR 21314, Apr. 21, 2000; 65 FR 34534, May 30, 2000; T.D. 9340, 72 FR 41159, July 26, 2007]

**§ 1.401(a)(35)-1 Diversification requirements for certain defined contribution plans.**

(a) *General rule*—(1) *Diversification requirements.* Section 401(a)(35) imposes diversification requirements on applicable defined contribution plans. A trust that is part of an applicable defined contribution plan is not a qualified trust under section 401(a) unless the plan—

(i) Satisfies the diversification election requirements for elective deferrals and employee contributions set forth in paragraph (b) of this section;

(ii) Satisfies the diversification election requirements for employer non-

elective contributions set forth in paragraph (c) of this section;

(iii) Satisfies the investment option requirement set forth in paragraph (d) of this section; and

(iv) Does not apply any restrictions or conditions on investments in employer securities that violate the requirements of paragraph (e) of this section.

(2) *Definitions, effective dates, and transition rules.* The definitions of applicable defined contribution plan, employer security, parent corporation, and publicly traded are set forth in paragraph (f) of this section. Applicability dates and transition rules are set forth in paragraph (g) of this section.

(b) *Diversification requirements for elective deferrals and employee contributions invested in employer securities*—(1) *General rule.* With respect to any individual described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if any portion of the individual's account under an applicable defined contribution plan attributable to elective deferrals (as described in section 402(g)(3)(A)), employee contributions, or rollover contributions is invested in employer securities, then the plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph (b) if the individual may elect to divest those employer securities and reinvest an equivalent amount in other investment options. The plan may limit the time for divestment and reinvestment to periodic, reasonable opportunities occurring no less frequently than quarterly.

(2) *Applicable individual with respect to elective deferrals and employee contributions.* An individual is described in this paragraph (b)(2) if the individual is—

- (i) A participant;
- (ii) An alternate payee who has an account under the plan; or
- (iii) A beneficiary of a deceased participant.

(c) *Diversification requirements for employer nonelective contributions invested in employer securities*—(1) *General rule.* With respect to any individual described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, if a portion of the individual's account under an applicable defined contribution plan attributable to employer nonelective contributions is invested in employer securities, then the plan