

Facts for Feds:

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FEDERAL PRESERVATION OFFICER QUALIFICATIONS

Who is a Federal Preservation Officer (FPO)?

Each federal agency is required by Section 110(c) of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to “designate a qualified official to be known as the agency’s ‘preservation officer’ who shall be responsible for coordinating the agency’s activities under this Act.” In addition, the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs* encourage agencies to appoint qualified preservation officials at regional and field offices.

What is a qualified Federal Preservation Officer?

In order to be considered qualified under Section 110, a Federal Preservation Officer can satisfactorily complete an “appropriate training program,” the characteristics of which are described in the *Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards*. Most recently promulgated in 1983, the *Professional Qualification Standards* describe the *minimum* educational and professional experience requirements in history, archeology (historic and/or prehistoric), architectural history, architecture and historic architecture required to perform identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment activities (48 FR 22716, September 1983).

What are the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards?

As documented at www.nps.gov/history/local-law/Prof_Qual_83.htm, the *Professional Qualification Standards* are:

History: The minimum professional qualifications in history are a graduate degree in history or closely related field; or a bachelor's degree in history or closely related field plus one of the following:

- At least two years of full-time experience in research, writing, teaching, interpretation, or other demonstrable professional activity with an academic institution, historical organization or agency, museum, or other professional institution; or
- Substantial contribution through research and publication to the body of scholarly knowledge in the field of history.

Archeology: The minimum professional qualifications in archeology are a graduate degree in archeology, anthropology, or closely related field plus:

- At least one year of full-time professional experience or equivalent specialized training in archeological research, administration or management;
- At least four months of supervised field and analytic experience in general North American archeology; and
- Demonstrated ability to carry research to completion.

In addition to these minimum qualifications, a professional in prehistoric archeology shall have at least one year of full-time professional experience at a supervisory level in the study of archeological resources of the prehistoric period. A professional in historic archeology shall have at least one year of full-time professional experience at a supervisory level in the study of archeological resources of the historic period.

Architectural History: The minimum professional qualifications in architectural history are a graduate degree in architectural history, art history, historic preservation, or closely related field, with coursework in American architectural history; or a bachelor's degree in architectural history, art history, historic preservation or closely related field plus one of the following:

- At least two years of full-time experience in research, writing, or teaching in American architectural history or restoration architecture with an academic institution, historical organization or agency, museum, or other professional institution; or
- Substantial contribution through research and publication to the body of scholarly knowledge in the field of American architectural history.

Architecture: The minimum professional qualifications in architecture are a professional degree in architecture plus at least two years of full-time experience in architecture; or a State license to practice architecture.

Historic Architecture: The minimum professional qualifications in historic architecture are a professional degree in architecture or a State license to practice architecture, plus one of the following:

- At least one year of graduate study in architectural preservation, American architectural history, preservation planning, or closely related field; or
- At least one year of full-time professional experience on historic preservation projects. Such graduate study or experience shall include detailed investigations of historic structures, preparation of historic structures research reports, and preparation of plans and specifications for preservation projects.

Can Federal Agencies Comply with Section 110 without a Qualified FPO?

The *Standards and Guidelines for Federal Historic Preservation Programs* require that FPOs that do not have “substantial experience administering Federal historic preservation activities” must have “specifically assigned staff under their supervision who have such experience.” For example, programs that do not have a qualified FPO can not rely on regionally based qualified historic preservation professionals unless these individuals are directly supervised by the FPO. Federal Historic Preservation Programs that do not meet these supervisory requirements do not comply with the *Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs*.

Has the National Park Service Proposed New Professional Qualification Standards?

In 1997, NPS proposed revisions to the existing Standards and new Standards for a number of other disciplines that the National Historic Preservation Act mentions (62 FR 33708, June 20, 1997). While the new Standards remain in draft, they represent NPS' most recent statement on professional qualifications. To review these draft standards, go to <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>.

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