covered by a trust forming part of a pension plan, 300 of whom have satisfied all the requirements for a monthly pension, while the remaining 700 employees have not yet completed the required period of service, contingent obligations to such 700 employees have nevertheless arisen which constitute ''liabilities'' within the meaning of that term. It must be impossible for the employer (or other non employee) to recover any amounts other than such amounts as remain in the trust because of ''erroneous actuarial computations'' after the satisfaction of all fixed and contingent obligations. Furthermore, the trust instrument must contain a definite affirmative provision to this effect, irrespective of whether the obligations to employees have their source in the trust instrument itself, in the plan of which the trust forms a part, or in some collateral instrument or arrangement forming a part of such plan, and regardless of whether such obligations are, technically speaking, liabilities of the employer, of the trust, or of some other person forming a part of the plan or connected with it.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11672, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6722, 29 FR 5072, Apr. 14, 1964; T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1695, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.401–3 Requirements as to coverage.

(a)(1) In order to insure that stock bonus, pension, and profit-sharing plans are utilized for the welfare of employees in general, and to prevent the trust device from being used for the principal benefit of shareholders, officers, persons whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly paid employees, or as a means of tax avoidance, a trust will not be qualified unless it is part of a plan which satisfies the coverage requirements of section 401(a)(3). However, if the plan covers any individual who is an owner-employee, as defined in section 401(c)(3), the requirements of section 401(a)(3) and this section are not applicable to such plan, but the plan must satisfy the requirements of section 401(d).

(2) The percentage requirements in section 401(a)(3)(A) refer to a percentage of all the active employees, including employees temporarily on leave, such as those in the Armed Forces of the United States, if such employees are eligible under the plan.

(3) The application of section 401(a)(3)(A) may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. A corporation adopts a plan at a time when it has 1,000 employees. The plan provides that all full-time employees who have been employed for a period of two years and have reached the age of 30 shall be eligible to participate. The plan also requires participating employees to contribute 3 percent of their monthly pay. At the time the plan is made effective 100 of the 1,000 employees had not been employed for a period of two years. Fifty of the employees were seasonal employees whose customary employment did not exceed five months in any calendar year. Twenty-five of the employees were part-time employees whose customary employment did not exceed 20 hours in any one week. One hundred and fifty of the full-time employees who had been employed for two years or more had not yet reached age 30. The requirements of section 401(a)(3)(A) will be met if 540 employees are covered by the plan, as shown by the following computation:

(i) Total employees with respect to whom the percentage requirements are applicable (1,000 minus 175 (100 plus 50 plus 25))	825
(ii) Employees not eligible to participate because of age requirements	150
(iii) Total employees eligible to participate	675
(iv) Percentage of employees in item (i) eligible to participate	81 + %
(v) Minimum number of participating employees to qualify the plan (80 percent of 675)	540

If only 70 percent, or 578, of the 825 employees satisfied the age and service requirements, then 462 (80 percent of 578) participating employees would satisfy the percentage requirements.

(b) If a plan fails to qualify under the percentage requirements of section 401(a)(3)(A), it may still qualify under section 401(a)(3)(B) provided always that (as required by section 401(a) (3) and (4)) the plan's eligibility conditions, benefits, and contributions do not discriminate in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, persons whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or the highly compensated employees.

(c) Since, for the purpose of section 401, a profit-sharing plan is a plan which provides for distributing the funds accumulated under the plan after a fixed number of years, the attainment of a stated age, or upon the prior

occurrence of some event such as illness, disability, retirement, death, layoff, or severance of employment, employees who receive the amounts allocated to their accounts before the expiration of such a period of time or the occurrence of such a contingency shall not be considered covered by a profit-sharing plan in determining whether the plan meets the coverage requirements of section 401(a)(3) (A) and (B). Thus, in case a plan permits employees to receive immediately the amounts allocated to their accounts, or to have such amounts paid to a profit- sharing plan for them, the employees who receive the shares immediately shall not, for the purpose of section 401, be considered covered by a profit-sharing plan.

(d) Section 401(a)(5) sets out certain classifications that will not in themselves be considered discriminatory. However, those so designated are not intended to be exclusive. Thus, plans may qualify under section 401(a)(3)(B) even though coverage thereunder is limited to employees who have either reached a designated age or have been employed for a designated number of years, or who are employed in certain designated departments or are in other classifications, provided the effect of covering only such employees does not discriminate in favor of officers, shareholders, employees whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly compensated employees. For example, if there are 1,000 employees, and the plan is written for only salaried employees, and consequently only 500 employees are covered, that fact alone will not justify the conclusion that the plan does not meet the coverage requirements of section 401(a)(3)(B). Conversely, if a contributory plan is offered to all of the employees but the contributions required of the employee participants are so burdensome as to make the plan acceptable only to the highly paid employees, the classification will be considered discriminatory in favor of such highly paid employees.

(e)(1) Section 401(a)(5) contains a provision to the effect that a classification shall not be considered discriminatory within the meaning of section 401(a)(3)(B) merely because all employees whose entire annual remuneration constitutes ''wages'' under section 3121(a)(1) (for purposes of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act, chapter 21 of the Code) are excluded from the plan. A reference to section 3121(a)(1) for years after 1954 shall be deemed a reference to section 1426(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1939 for years before 1955. This provision, in conjunction with section 401(a)(3)(B), is intended to permit the qualification of plans which supplement the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits under the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. ch. 7). Thus, a classification which excludes all employees whose entire remuneration constitutes ''wages'' under section 3121(a)(1), will not be considered discriminatory merely because of such exclusion. Similarly, a plan which includes all employees will not be considered discriminatory solely because the contributions or benefits based on that part of their remuneration which is excluded from wages under section 3121(a)(1) differ from the contributions or benefits based on that part of their remuneration which is not so excluded. However, in making his determination with respect to discrimination in classification under section 401(a)(3)(B), the Commissioner will consider whether the total benefits resulting to each employee under the plan and under the Social Security Act, or under the Social Security Act only, establish an integrated and correlated retirement system satisfying the tests of section 401(a). If, therefore, a classification of employees under a plan results in relatively or proportionately greater benefits for employees earning above any specified salary amount or rate than for those below any such salary amount or rate, it may be found to be discriminatory within the meaning of section 401(a)(3)(B). If, however, the relative or proportionate differences in benefits which result from such classification are approximately offset by the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits which are provided by the Social Security Act and which are not attributable to employee contributions under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act, the plan will be considered to be properly integrated with the Social Security Act

and will, therefore, not be considered discriminatory.

(2)(i) For purposes of determining whether a plan is properly integrated with the Social Security Act, the amount of old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits which may be considered as attributable to employer contributions under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act is computed on the basis of the following:

(A) The rate at which the maximum monthly old-age insurance benefit is provided under the Social Security Act is considered to be the average of (*1*) the rate at which the maximum benefit currently payable under the Act (i.e., in 1971) is provided to an employee retiring at age 65, and (*2*) the rate at which the maximum benefit ultimately payable under the Act (i.e., in 2010) is provided to an employee retiring at age 65. The resulting figure is 43 percent of the average monthly wage on which such benefit is computed.

(B) The total old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits with respect to an employee is considered to be 162 percent of the employee's old-age insurance benefits. The resulting figure is 70 percent of the average monthly wage on which it is computed.

(C) In view of the fact that social security benefits are funded through equal contributions by the employer and employee, 50 percent of such benefits is considered attributable to employer contributions. The resulting figure is 35 percent of the average monthly wage on which the benefit is computed.

Under these assumptions, the maximum old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits which may be attributed to employer contributions under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act is an amount equal to 35 percent of the earnings on which they are computed. These computations take into account all amendments to the Society Security Act through the Social Security Amendments of 1971 (85 Stat. 6). It is recognized, however, that subsequent amendments to this Act may increase the percentages described in (A) or (B) of this subdivision (i), or both. If this occurs, the method used in this subparagraph for determining the integration formula may result in a figure under (C) of this subdivision (i) which is greater than 35 percent and a plan could be amended to adopt such greater figure in its benefit formula. In order to minimize future plan amendments of this nature, an employer may anticipate future changes in the Social Security Act by immediately utilizing such a higher figure, but not in excess of 37½ percent, in developing its benefit formula.

(ii) Under the rules provided in this subparagraph, a classification of employees under a noncontributory pension or annuity plan which limits coverage to employees whose compensation exceeds the applicable integration level under the plan will not be considered discriminatory within the meaning of section 401(a)(3)(B), where:

(A) The integration level applicable to an employee is his covered compensation, or is (*1*) in the case of an active employee, a stated dollar amount uniformly applicable to all active employees which is not greater than the covered compensation of any active employee, and (*2*) in the case of a retired employee an amount which is not greater than his covered compensation. (For rules relating to determination of an employee's covered compensation, see subdivision (iv) of this subparagraph.)

(B) The rate at which normal annual retirement benefits are provided for any employee with respect to his average annual compensation in excess of the plan's integration level applicable to him does not exceed 37½ percent.

(C) Average annual compensation is defined to mean the average annual compensation over the highest 5 consecutive years.

(D) There are no benefits payable in case of death before retirement.

(E) The normal form of retirement benefits is a straight life annuity, and if there are optional forms, the benefit payments under each optional form are actuarially equivalent to benefit payments under the normal form.

(F) In the case of any employee who reaches normal retirement age before completion of 15 years of service with the employer, the rate at which normal annual retirement benefits are provided for him with respect to his average annual compensation in excess of

the plan's integration level applicable to him does not exceed 2½ percent for each year of service.

(G) Normal retirement age is not lower than age 65.

(H) Benefits payable in case of retirement or any other severance of employment before normal retirement age cannot exceed the actuarial equivalent of the maximum normal retirement benefits, which might be provided in accordance with (A) through (G) of this subdivision (ii), multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the actual number of years of service of the employee at retirement or severance, and the denominator of which is the total number of years of service he would have had if he had remained in service until normal retirement age. A special disabled life mortality table shall not be used in determining the actuarial equivalent in the case of severance due to disability.

(iii) (A) If a plan was properly integrated with old-age and survivors insurance benefits on July 5, 1968 (hereinafter referred to as an ''existing plan''), then, notwithstanding the fact that such plan does not satisfy the requirements of subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, it will continue to be considered properly integrated with such benefits until January 1, 1972. Such plan will be considered properly integrated after December 31, 1971, so long as the benefits provided under the plan for each employee equal the sum of—

(*1*) The benefits to which he would be entitled under a plan which, on July 5, 1968, would have been considered properly integrated with old-age and survivors insurance benefits, and under which benefits are provided at the same (or a lesser) rate with respect to the same portion of compensation with respect to which benefits are provided under the existing plan, multiplied by the percentage of his total service with the employer performed before a specified date not later than January 1, 1972; and

(*2*) The benefits to which he would be entitled under a plan satisfying the requirements of subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, multiplied by the percentage of his total service with the employer performed on and after such specified date.

(B) A plan which, on July 5, 1968, was properly integrated with old-age and survivors insurance benefits will not be considered not to be properly integrated with such benefits thereafter merely because such plan provides a minimum benefit for each employee (other than an employee who owns, directly or indirectly, stock possessing more than 10 percent of the total combined voting power or value of all classes of stock of the employer corporation) equal to the benefit to which he would be entitled under the plan as in effect on July 5, 1968, if he continued to earn annually until retirement the same amount of compensation as he earned in 1967.

(C) If a plan was properly integrated with old-age and survivors insurance benefits on May 17, 1971, notwithstanding the fact that such plan does not satisfy the requirements of subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, it will continue to be considered properly integrated with such benefits until January 1, 1972.

(iv) For purposes of this subparagraph, an employee's covered compensation is the amount of compensation with respect to which old-age insurance benefits would be provided for him under the Social Security Act (as in effect at any uniformly applicable date occurring before the employee's separation from the service) if for each year until he attains age 65 his annual compensation is at least equal to the maximum amount of earnings subject to tax in each such year under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act. A plan may provide that an employee's covered compensation is the amount determined under the preceding sentence rounded to the nearest whole multiple of a stated dollar amount which does not exceed $600.

(v) In the case of an integrated plan providing benefits different from those described in subdivision (ii) or (iii) (whichever is applicable) of this subparagraph, or providing benefits related to years of service, or providing benefits purchasable by stated employer contributions, or under the terms of which the employees contribute, or providing a combination of any of the foregoing variations, the plan will be considered to be properly

integrated only if, as determined by the Commissioner, the benefits provided thereunder by employer contributions cannot exceed in value the benefits described in subdivision (ii) or (iii) (whichever is applicable) of this subparagraph. Similar principles will govern in determining whether a plan is properly integrated if participation therein is limited to employees earning in excess of amounts other than those specified in subdivision (iv) of this subparagraph, or if it bases benefits or contributions on compensation in excess of such amounts, or if it provides for an offset of benefits otherwise payable under the plan on account of old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits. Similar principles will govern in determining whether a profit-sharing or stock bonus plan is properly integrated with the Social Security Act.

(3) A plan supplementing the Social Security Act and excluding all employees whose entire annual remuneration constitutes ''wages'' under section 3121(a)(1) will not, however, be deemed discriminatory merely because, for administrative convenience, it provides a reasonable minimum benefit not to exceed $20 a month.

(4) Similar considerations, to the extent applicable in any case, will govern classifications under a plan supplementing the benefits provided by other Federal or State laws. See section 401(a)(5).

(5) If a plan provides contributions or benefits for a self-employed individual, the rules relating to the integration of such a plan with the contributions or benefits under the Social Security Act are set forth in paragraph (c) of §1.401–11 and paragraph (h) of §1.401–12 of the Treasury Regulations in effect on April 1, 2017.

(6) This paragraph (e) does not apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1989.

(f) An employer may designate several trusts or a trust or trusts and an annuity plan or plans as constituting one plan which is intended to qualify under section 401(a)(3), in which case all of such trusts and plans taken as a whole may meet the requirements of such section. The fact that such combination of trusts and plans fails to qualify as one plan does not prevent such of the trusts and plans as qualify from meeting the requirements of section 401(a).

(g) It is provided in section 401(a)(6) that a plan will satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(3), if on at least one day in each quarter of the taxable year of the plan it satisfies such requirements. This makes it possible for a new plan requiring contributions from employees to qualify if by the end of the quarter-year in which the plan is adopted it secures sufficient contributing participants to meet the requirements of section 401(a)(3). It also affords a period of time in which new participants may be secured to replace former participants, so as to meet the requirements of either subparagraph (A) or (B) of section 401(a)(3).

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11672, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10119, Sept. 17, 1963; T.D. 6982, 33 FR 16499, Nov. 13, 1968; T.D. 7134, 36 FR 13592, July 22, 1971; 36 FR 13990, July 29, 1971; T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47614, Sept. 19, 1991; T.D. 9849, 84 FR 9234, Mar. 14, 2019]

§§ 1.401–4–1.401–5 [Reserved]

§ 1.401–6 Termination of a qualified plan.

(a) *General rules.* (1) In order for a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus trust to satisfy the requirements of section 401, the plan of which such trust forms a part must expressly provide that, upon the termination of the plan or upon the complete discontinuance of contributions under the plan, the rights of each employee to benefits accrued to the date of such termination or discontinuance, to the extent then funded, or the rights of each employee to the amounts credited to his account at such time, are nonforfeitable. As to what constitutes nonforfeitable rights of an employee, see paragraph (a)(2) of §1.402(b)–1.

(2)(i) A qualified plan must also provide for the allocation of any previously unallocated funds to the employees covered by the plan upon the termination of the plan or the complete discontinuance of contributions under the plan. Such provision may be incorporated in the plan at its inception or by an amendment made prior to the termination of the plan or the discontinuance of contributions thereunder.