

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RELATED TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALABAMA HOUSSE OPTION FOR IDENTIFYING HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

A. College Coursework in Content Area

- A-1. For a seventh grade teacher of English who holds an X2 (Grades 1-9) certificate, may Speech courses be counted toward the base of 18 semester hours required for eligibility to participate in the HOUSSE option?

Yes. The X2 certificate technically covers the broad English language arts area. (The answer would be “no” if the teacher held a certificate in English only.)

- A-2. How do I know which courses on my transcript may be included as “College Coursework in Content Area”?

Clarification for courses in the content area is provided on Page 6 of the HOUSSE Supplement. You may include only courses in the content area for which you are applying. (You may not include “methods” courses in this area.) If the content area assignment is one for which proper certification may be in a closely related area, you may include only courses in the area specified on the certificate. For example, a physical science teacher may be certified in chemistry and only chemistry courses may be counted in the “College Coursework in Content Area” section of the HOUSSE application.

- A-3. Scenario: I am an elementary teacher and would like to use the HOUSSE option to document HQ status. In the “College Coursework in Content Area” component, I can document from my transcripts nine semester hours in English language arts, six semester hours in social science, six semester hours in science, and only three semester hours in math. However, I have completed the application and the total of points across all sections exceeds 100 points. May I submit my application for consideration of HQ status under the HOUSSE option?

No. As a prerequisite to using the HOUSSE option to establish HQ status, an elementary teacher (Grades K-6) must have completed and received college credit for a minimum of 6 semester hours in each of the four content areas: English language arts (including reading), mathematics, science, and social science. A middle/secondary teacher (Grades 7-12) must have completed a minimum of 18 semester hours in the content area for which the HOUSSE application is made. In the scenario presented, the elementary teacher may take an additional course in mathematics to get the additional three semester hours needed, and then submit an application for consideration under the HOUSSE option.

B. College Coursework in Professional Studies Related to Content Area

- B-1. How do I know which courses on my transcript may be included as “College Coursework in Professional Studies in Content Area”?

Clarification for courses in the professional studies area is provided on Page 7 of the HOUSSE Supplement. Courses that have a direct relationship to teaching in the content area for which a teacher is seeking HQ status can be included. For specific examples, refer to the document “Examples of Professional Studies Courses Acceptable and Not Acceptable for Meeting Alabama’s HOUSSE Option for NCLB,” which was given to each LEA designee who attended the HOUSSE training provided by the SDE in December 2003. This document lists examples of courses at each in-state college or university that has a teacher preparation program. Courses similar to the examples listed in this document may be accepted from other regionally accredited institutions. Since course prefixes and numbers change, look for titles similar to the courses on your transcript.

Except for core subject methods courses for elementary teachers and reading methods courses for all teachers, methods courses must match the content area for which HQ status is sought.

C. Professional Development Related to Content Area

- C-1. Can the state-required *Lee v. Macon* training be included in the section for “Professional Development Related to Content Area” for any teacher that is eligible for the HOUSSE option?

Yes. The list of examples of professional development on Page 5 of the Application and Worksheets package includes “differentiating instruction for subgroups” and “professional development related to special needs students.” It is assumed that any teacher, without regard to teaching assignment, who has contact with special needs students is responsible for facilitating student access to the regular education curriculum and that is a primary goal of the Lee v. Macon training. The series of Lee v. Macon training may be counted as a single activity (3 points).

- C-2. Can the state-required Building-Based Student Support Team (BBSST) training be included in the section for “Professional Development Related to Content Area” for any teacher that is eligible for the HOUSSE option?

Yes. As a result of the state’s most recent consent decree for Lee v. Macon, all K-12 schools must have a Building-Based Student Support Team (BBSST). The consent decree requires all administrators and team members to be trained in a trainer-of-trainers model by State Department of Education (SDE) staff. Administrators are required to provide initial and ongoing training for school staff, and designated SDE staff are available to assist with follow-up and update training. The ultimate purpose

of BBSST training is to ensure that each student has access to effective teaching and learning. The series of BBSST workshops can be counted as a single “Professional Development” activity (3 points).

- C-3. Can the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) training be included in the section for “Professional Development Related to Content Area” for any teacher that is eligible for the HOUSSE option?

Yes. ARI training fully meets federal and state definitions and expectations for high-quality professional development. The usual expectation for ARI training is that all teachers in the school attend the training, not just “reading” teachers. Acquisition of the knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach reading is applicable to any content area and grade level and is essential for assisting all students in attaining reaching proficiency.

The ARI-Initial Training and the required follow-up activities may be counted in the HOUSSE application as a single activity (3 points). The ARI-Retooling and required follow-up activities may be counted as a separate single activity (3 points). The ARI-Recertification Training (five 6-hour sessions) may be counted as a separate single activity (3 points).

- C-4. Scenario: We have a technology team that has attended numerous workshops, some of which were conducted or sponsored by the State Department of Education. Members of the technology team work in their individual schools as technology facilitators. Does this qualify for the “Professional Development Related to Content Area” or “Professional Activities Related to Content Area” component of the HOUSSE application?

The workshops attended by the technology team teachers can be included in the “Professional Development Related to Content Area” component IF the workshops meet the definition of high-quality professional development on Page 8 of the HOUSSE Supplement. The content of the workshops must be designed to improve the teacher’s knowledge and skills for teaching and learning in the core academic subject(s) to which the teacher is assigned and for which the teacher is seeking HQ status.

The teachers’ role as facilitators does not qualify as professional development or as a professional activity as those components are defined on Pages 5-6 of the HOUSSE Application and Worksheets package and Pages 8-9 of the HOUSSE Supplement, respectively. (See #D-3 for related response.)

- C-5. For teachers who attended the DIBELS training and returned to their local schools to train other teachers on how to use the assessment, can they include DIBELS in both the “Professional Development Related to Content Area” and “Professional Activities Related to Content Area” components?

Yes. Gaining the initial knowledge and skills and, subsequently, training other teachers so that they gain the knowledge and skills are two separate activities that require different modes of learning and skills. Both activities must be clearly and appropriately documented for the respective component. (See #D-4 for related response.)

- C-6. If a workshop is multiple days in duration—for example, ARI initial training is ten days and Direct Instruction training is five days—does this count as one professional development activity?

Yes. By definition, professional “development” that results in professional “growth” or increased knowledge and skills goes well beyond a short duration or “one-shot” activity and, frequently, will require multiple days for initial training and more days for follow-up. One verified professional development activity can be assigned 3 points in the HOUSSE application.

- C-7. Will the following count for professional development in the HOUSSE application?

- Writing workshop from Point Clear
- HASP units training
- Accelerated Reader training
- Technology Conference in Birmingham
- Technology in Motion workshop
- Workshops offered through a regional inservice center

These are specific examples of activities for which you will need to apply the definition, criteria, and rationale provided in the following references: (1) Page 5 of the Application and Worksheets package; (2) Page 8 of the HOUSSE Supplement; and (3) the document "Examples of Professional Development Activities Acceptable and Not Acceptable for Meeting Alabama's HOUSSE Option for NCLB," which was provided to LEA representatives who attended the HOUSSE training in December 2003. If the activities adhere to the definition of high-quality professional development provided on Page 8 of the HOUSSE Supplement, they may be included.

Most of the named activities in the list are "designed" to be high-quality professional development. They are not, however, always delivered or participated in as high-quality professional development. For example, many of the sessions at the Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing (held in Point Clear, Alabama) are one-shot awareness activities for which there is no planned follow-up. Sometimes, however, the sessions are arranged in strands with related or linked workshops so that a teacher can follow the strand over a three-day period and gain substantial learning that can be applied in the classroom. The Technology Conference uses a similar strategy. It will be helpful during the review process to have descriptions of the content and format of such activities.

To be counted in the Professional Development component, the following must be evident in documentation: (1) the activity must be related to the content area and

teaching level to which the teacher is currently assigned, certified, and seeking HQ status; (2) the activity must meet the criteria specified in the definition of high-quality professional development on Page 8 of the HOUSSE Supplement; (3) the learning process must be on-going, with planned follow-up to ensure that the learned content and strategies are implemented effectively to result in improved student learning; and (4) the activity must have been accomplished within the last ten years.

D. Professional Activities Related to Content Area

- D-1. Can service as a member of a SACS visiting review team be included as an approved activity in the HOUSSE application?

Service as a member of a SACS visiting review team may be included in the section for “Professional Activities Related to Content Area” on Page 6 of the application, but may not be included in the section for “Professional Development Related to Content Area” on Page 5. The distinction between professional activities and professional development is based in the definition of each that is provided on the respective worksheet pages. Service as a review team member requires that the teacher have exemplary knowledge and skills in a particular content area and that he/she use that knowledge and skills while participating in a peer review of educational programs and practices in that content area in a school other than the one in which he/she teaches. This is not intended to be a professional growth or development activity for the teacher providing the service, although he/she may gain professional insight and/or understandings during the review.

- D-2. Can participation on a steering committee or subcommittee for a SACS initial, five-year, or ten-year self-study in one’s own school be included in any component of the HOUSSE application? What about serving on a Title I schoolwide program committee to develop or review the schoolwide plan?

No. The SACS self-study is a process conducted by school staff for the purpose of securing or maintaining accreditation. While a teacher may gain professional insight and/or understandings related to the total school or to a particular component of the study, the SACS self-study activities are not designed to increase a teacher’s knowledge and skills in the content or teaching area to which the teacher is assigned. The same rationale is applied to serving on a Title I schoolwide committee.

- D-3. Scenario: We have a technology team that has attended numerous workshops, some of which were conducted or sponsored by the State Department of Education. Members of the technology team work in their individual schools as technology facilitators. Does this qualify for the “Professional Development Related to Content Area” or “Professional Activities Related to Content Area” component of the HOUSSE application?

The teachers’ role as facilitators does not qualify as professional development or as a professional activity as those components are defined on Pages 5-6 of the HOUSSE

Application and Worksheets package and Pages 8-9 of the HOUSSE Supplement, respectively.

If the role as facilitator, however, requires that the teacher design, develop, and deliver academic content-related (in his/her own current teaching content assignment) professional development for other content-area teachers, the activity may be included under the “Professional Activities Related to Content” component on Page 6 of the application. (This would exclude presentation of workshops that are designed only to teach other teachers how to use the equipment or software.) As is the case with any other approved activity, documentation must provide clear evidence of the teacher’s academic content knowledge and skills and using that to increase the content knowledge and/or related teaching skills to other teachers. (See #C-4 for related response.)

- D-4. For teachers who attended the DIBELS training and returned to their local schools to train other teachers on how to use the assessment, can they include DIBELS in both the “Professional Development Related to Content Area” and “Professional Activities Related to Content Area” components?

Yes. Gaining the initial knowledge and skills and, subsequently, training other teachers so that they gain the knowledge and skills are two separate activities that require different modes of learning and skills. Both activities must be clearly and appropriately documented for the respective component. (See #C-5 for related response.)

- D-5. How can teacher service on a local school system or state textbook selection committee be included in the HOUSSE application?

For a teacher who has been officially appointed to serve on a state or local textbook selection committee, the period of time spent in reviewing and deliberating over textbooks for the assignment may be included in the “Professional Activities Related to Content Area” component on Page 6 of the application. The teacher was selected to perform the service because he/she possesses the related content knowledge and skills that are needed to conduct an informed review of available textbooks. Granted, the teacher may actually gain some content knowledge and skills as a result of performing the service, but the intent of the activity is to provide a professional service.

- D-6. Can supervising a teaching internship for a student teacher be included on the HOUSSE application?

Yes. This activity is listed as an example on the worksheet for “Professional Activities Related to Content Area” on Page 6 of the application. An internship must be conducted under the supervision of a teacher who is certified and assigned to the area in which the student teacher candidate is seeking certification. The regular teacher’s role in this relationship is to use his/her teaching knowledge and skills to facilitate the intern’s learning of academic content and professional practices. For a teacher who

has supervised a student teacher during one year or during multiple years, it may be included as a single activity for 4 points on the HOUSSE application.

- D-7. Can teacher mentoring be included in the “Professional Activities Related to Content Area” section of the HOUSSE application?

Yes, as long as the mentoring program is formalized so that the activities consist of structured guidance and regular and ongoing support for teachers, especially beginning teachers or teachers experiencing difficulty in one or more academic content areas to which they are assigned to teach. Mentoring activities must be designed to help teachers continue to improve their practice of teaching and to develop their instructional skills. The teacher is an exemplary teacher who has been identified based on his/her knowledge and skills in a particular content area and who has been appropriately trained to serve as a mentor. Teacher mentoring for one year or for multiple years may be included on Page 6 of the Application and Worksheets package as a single activity (4 points.)

If no academic content knowledge and skills are needed for the activity – e.g., any teacher can be a mentor, activities relate only to new teacher orientation and/or induction, new teachers are paired in a “buddy” system at the beginning of the year – the activities do not constitute mentoring and may not be counted as such in the Professional Activities component of the HOUSSE application.

(It should be noted that the period of time spent by a teacher in being trained to be a teacher mentor may not be counted as professional development since it is assumed that the teacher who is selected as a mentor already possesses an exemplary level of content knowledge and skills in the area to which he/she will be assigned to serve as a mentor.)

- D-8. Scenario: A high school history teacher takes a group of U. S. History students to Washington, D. C., and the surrounding area every summer. The purpose of the trip is to allow students to experience first-hand the monuments, museums, events, and places depicted in their studies during the school year. Can this activity be included in the HOUSSE application under “Professional Activities Related to Content Area” and, if so, can it be entered for five years for the maximum total of 20 points?

This activity, as it is described, does not fit the criteria and expectation for Professional Activities. While it is an important and commendable activity, it is an extended learning opportunity for students and an extension of the regular teaching assignment. The intent of Professional Activities is for a teacher to use his/her knowledge and skills in a content area and/or teaching level to advance “professional” knowledge, skills, and/or practice in that same content area and/or teaching level. In response to the second part of the question, this is a single, multi-year activity.

E. Years of Public School Experience in the Content Area

- E-1. Scenario: A teacher holds a Grades 1-9 (X2) certificate and has taught at different grade levels within that range over a period of several years. Currently, the teacher is assigned to teach Grade 4 and is seeking “highly qualified” status as an elementary teacher. May the years spent teaching seventh grade science and eighth grade P.E. be counted toward “Years of Public School Experience in the Content Area” in the HOUSSE application.

No. Since the teacher in this example is seeking “highly qualified” status at the elementary level and the state defines elementary as Grade 6 and below, years of experience teaching above Grade 6 may not be included in the HOUSSE application. Page 7 of the Application and Worksheets package stipulates that teaching experience included here is restricted to the number of years teaching in the content area to which the teacher is assigned and is seeking highly qualified status. For elementary this includes the number of years teaching any one content area or combination of content areas in Grades K-6 in a public school.

F. Recognition in Content Area

- F-1. Can recognition by a local business or television station be included in the HOUSSE application in the “Recognition in Content Area” section?

No. Both of these examples are considered to be local recognitions and do not adhere to the “regional, state, and/or national” criterion specified on Page 10 of the HOUSSE Supplement or the more stringent criteria implied by the examples on Page 8 of the Application and Worksheets package.

G. General Questions

- G-1. Scenario: An alternative class/center/school teacher is responsible for providing core academic instruction in the areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, health, and social studies to students who have long-term assignments in an alternative school. Students earn academic credit based on instruction from the teacher. The teacher holds a Class A certificate in mathematics and has a bachelor’s degree in mathematics. Can this teacher use the HOUSSE option to attain HQ status for his/her teaching assignment?

No. The HOUSSE option cannot be used as a “blanket” to attain HQ status for multiple content areas. In this scenario, the alternative school teacher is fully responsible for the core academic instruction and credit accrual for one or more students and is required to be determined to meet the HQ requirement in each of those core areas by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. The teacher is HQ in middle/secondary mathematics based on holding the Class A certificate in mathematics and having the requisite undergraduate degree in mathematics. The teacher, however, does not have the prerequisites to be eligible for HQ consideration under the other

available options for the English language arts, science, and social studies content areas. Health is not among the core academic subjects.

- G-2. **Scenario:** An alternative class/center/school teacher is responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of students assigned to an alternative setting. Instructional tasks include using teacher-provided lesson plans to focus facilitative activities; assisting students in completing assignments provided by the student's "regular" or "sending" teacher(s); ensuring that resource materials are available; sending student work with anecdotal notes to the sending teacher(s); and/or managing student behavior. The teacher is certified in science. Should he/she submit a HOUSSE application?

No. While he/she may be eligible to apply for HQ status, depending on facts that are not provided in the scenario, this teacher is not required to demonstrate that he/she meets the NCLB "highly qualified teacher" requirements. In this example, the teacher is clearly a facilitator and is not responsible for core academic instruction for which students receive academic credit.

- G-3. What should a teacher do if he/she has more courses or activities to list than space allows on the respective pages in the application?

Additional pages may be added to the application. If, for example, a teacher wants to list more professional studies courses on Page 4 than the spaces allow, the first professional studies page may be labeled as 4(a) and the added page may be labeled as 4(b).

Please keep in mind that each component of the HOUSSE application has a maximum number of points that may be counted toward the total. There is no HOUSSE-related benefit for entries over the maximum number of points allowed for that component.

- G-4. What is the deadline for submitting a HOUSSE application for establishing HQ status?

LEAs have been notified that HOUSSE applications received by the SDE on or before March 31, 2004, will be reviewed so that a determination of HQ status is made for each of the teacher-applicants prior to the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year. LEAs may continue to submit HOUSSE applications after March 31, 2004. These applications will be reviewed and verified by SDE staff, and notification of HQ status will be provided to the LEA superintendent and the teacher as early as possible.