

compare the value of each optional form of benefit (including the QJSA) to the value of a QJSA for an unmarried participant (*i.e.*, a single life annuity), but only if that same single life annuity is available to that married participant.

(C) *Substitution of joint and survivor annuity for unmarried individual.* For an unmarried participant, in lieu of comparing the value of each optional form of benefit presently available to the participant to the value of the QJSA for that individual (which is a single life annuity), the plan can compare the value of each optional form of benefit (including the single life annuity) to the value of the joint and survivor annuity that is the QJSA for a married participant, but only if that same joint and survivor annuity is available to that unmarried participant.

(iii) *Simplified presentations permitted—(A) Grouping of certain optional forms.* Two or more optional forms of benefit that have approximately the same value may be grouped for purposes of a required numerical comparison described in this paragraph (c)(2). For this purpose, two or more optional forms of benefit have approximately the same value if none of those optional forms of benefit vary in relative value in comparison to the value of the QJSA by more than 5 percentage points when the relative value comparison is made by expressing the actuarial present value of each of those optional forms of benefit as a percentage of the actuarial present value of the QJSA. For such a group of optional forms of benefit, the requirement relating to disclosing the relative value of each optional form of benefit compared to the value of the QJSA can be satisfied by disclosing the relative value of any one of the optional forms in the group compared to the value of the QJSA, and disclosing that the other optional forms of benefit in the group are of approximately the same value. If a single-sum distribution is included in such a group of optional forms of benefit, the single-sum distribution must be the distribution form that is used for purposes of this comparison.

(B) *Representative relative value for grouped optional forms.* If, in accordance with paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, two or more optional forms of benefits are grouped, the relative values for all of the optional forms of benefit in the group can be stated using a representative relative value as the approximate relative value for the entire group. For this purpose, a representative relative value is any relative value that is not less than the relative value of the member of the

group of optional forms of benefit with the lowest relative value and is not greater than the relative value of the member of that group with the highest relative value when measured on a consistent basis. For example, if three grouped optional forms have relative values of 87.5 percent, 89 percent, and 91 percent of the value of the QJSA, all three optional forms can be treated as having a relative value of approximately 90 percent of the value of the QJSA. As required under paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, if a single-sum distribution is included in the group of optional forms of benefit, the 90 percent relative factor of the value of the QJSA must be disclosed as the approximate relative value of the single sum, and the other forms can be described as having the same approximate value as the single sum.

(C) *Special rules.* If the plan is comparing the value of each optional form to the value of the QJSA for a married participant, this paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(C) provides a grouping rule that is in addition to the grouping rules of paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(A) of this section. Under this special rule, the relative value of all optional forms of benefit that have an actuarial present value that is at least 95 percent of the actuarial present value of the QJSA for a married participant is permitted to be described by stating that those optional forms of benefit are approximately equal in value to the QJSA, or that all of those forms of benefit and the QJSA are approximately equal in value. In addition, if a plan is comparing the value of optional forms of benefit to the value of the single life annuity and all optional forms of benefit have actuarial present values that are at least 95 percent, but not greater than 102.5 percent, of the actuarial present value of the single life annuity, the plan is permitted to describe the relative value of all optional forms of benefit by stating that all the optional forms of benefit are approximately equal in value, or that all of those forms of benefit and the single life annuity are approximately equal in value.

(iv) *Actuarial assumptions used to determine relative values.* For the purpose of providing a numerical comparison of the value of an optional form of benefit to the value of the immediately commencing QJSA under this paragraph (c)(2), the following rules apply—

(A) If an optional form of benefit is subject to the requirements of section 417(e)(3) and § 1.417(e)–1(d), any comparison of the value of the optional form of benefit to the value of the QJSA must be made using the applicable

mortality table and the applicable interest rate as defined in § 1.417(e)–1(d)(2) and (3) (or, at the option of the plan, another reasonable interest rate and reasonable mortality table used under the plan to calculate the amount payable under the optional form of benefit); and

(B) All other optional forms of benefit payable to the participant must be compared with the QJSA using a single set of interest and mortality assumptions that are reasonable and that are applied uniformly with respect to all such optional forms payable to the participant (regardless of whether those assumptions are actually used under the plan for purposes of determining benefit payments).

(v) *Required disclosure of assumptions—(A) Explanation of concept of relative value.* The notice must provide an explanation of the concept of relative value, communicating that the relative value comparison is intended to allow the participant to compare the total value of distributions paid in different forms, that the relative value comparison is made by converting the value of the optional forms of benefit presently available to a common form (such as the QJSA or a single-sum distribution), and that this conversion uses interest and life expectancy assumptions. The explanation of relative value must include a general statement that all comparisons provided are based on average life expectancies, and that the relative value of payments ultimately made under an annuity optional form of benefit will depend on actual longevity.

(B) *Disclosure of assumptions.* A required numerical comparison of the value of the optional form of benefit to the value of the QJSA under this paragraph (c)(2) is required to include a disclosure of the interest rate that is used to develop the comparison. If all optional forms of benefit are permitted to be grouped under paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, then the requirement of this paragraph (c)(2)(v)(B) does not apply for any optional form of benefit not subject to the requirements of section 417(e)(3) and § 1.417(e)–1(d)(3).

(C) *Offer to provide actuarial assumptions.* If the plan does not disclose the actuarial assumptions used to calculate the numerical comparison required under paragraph (c)(2) of this section, then, the notice must be accompanied by a statement that includes an offer to provide, upon the participant's request, the actuarial assumptions used to calculate the relative value of optional forms of benefit under the plan.