
Credentials and Qualifications for Faculty/Instructional Personnel

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Scope

This policy pertains to the minimum credentials and qualifications for all faculty and instructional personnel at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). All UNO employees authorized to extend offers of employment to, and/or specify teaching assignments for, faculty and instructional personnel, including part-time, dual enrollment, and graduate teaching assistants, need to be aware of and abide by this policy. Those individuals who are serving on search committees for faculty and instructional personnel also need to acknowledge and work within the parameters of this policy.

Policy Statement

The following guidelines apply to all faculty members whose primary responsibility is teaching, including part-time, adjunct, dual-credit, temporary and/or non-tenure track. See the 'Related Information' section of this policy for additional clarification with respect to HLC expectations related to current faculty members.

With respect to all faculty/instructional personnel:

- Qualified faculty are identified primarily by credentials, but other factors, including but not limited to equivalent experience, may be considered by the institution in determining whether a faculty member is qualified.
- Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty – see next bullet per graduate teaching assistants) possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching, and at least one level above the level at which they teach, except in programs for the terminal degree or when equivalent experience is established. In terminal degree programs, faculty members possess the same level of degree.
- Master's level Graduate Teaching Assistants, as part of their assigned GTA agreement, may serve as instructor of record for bachelor's level courses. However, they must be under the direct supervision of a qualified, full-time faculty member. Evidence as to sufficient oversight may be requested at any point. Doctoral level graduate assistants may teach without direct supervision if they meet the criteria for teaching the specific course/program.
- Faculty teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the discipline and have a record of research, scholarship, or achievement appropriate for the graduate program. All faculty/instructors of graduate courses need either the UNO 'Graduate Faculty' designation on file in UNO Graduate Studies, or to complete the Graduate Lecturer Form and have been granted approval from UNO Graduate Studies.
- If a faculty member holds a master's degree or higher in a discipline other than that in which he or she is teaching, that faculty member should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline in which he or she is teaching. If an individual faculty member has not achieved 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline in which he or she teaches, the institution should be able to explain and justify its decision to assign the individual to the courses taught.
- In those cases when faculty members are employed based on tested or equivalent experience, departments are to follow the institution's tested experience evaluation process used in the appointment process. Tested experience may substitute for an earned credential or portions thereof. HLC Assumed Practice B.2 allows an institution to determine that a faculty member is qualified based on experience that the institution determines is equivalent to the degree it would otherwise require for a faculty position. This experience should be tested experience in that it includes a breadth and depth of experience outside of the classroom in real-world situations relevant to the discipline in which the faculty member would be teaching. (Note: Tested experience is typically not based exclusively on years of teaching experience, although other experiential factors may be considered on a case-by-case basis.)

With respect to those teaching in the General Education Program:

- Faculty teaching general education courses, or other non-occupational courses hold a master's degree or higher in the discipline or sub-field. If a faculty member holds a master's degree or higher in a discipline or subfield other than that in which he or she is teaching, that individual should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.

With respect to those teaching in the Dual Enrollment Program:

- Faculty/instructional personnel teaching dual credit courses should hold the same minimal qualifications as required by the institution of its own faculty (as outlined in the preceding bullets). See footnote to this document for additional clarification with respect to dual enrollment instructors.
- The attainment of a Master of Education degree does not demonstrate a qualification to teach dual credit courses in a particular discipline unless it is demonstrated that the content of that

faculty member's Master of Education degree is sufficiently related to the discipline of the dual credit course.

Regarding access to information on credentials of faculty/instructors:

- Per federal requirements regarding student and public right-to-know, information on faculty/instructor credentials is posted and updated regularly on the UNO webpage.

Reason for Policy

This policy ensures that UNO students receive instruction from faculty/instructors prepared to deliver an education which meets the prevailing standards for higher education in the United States. This policy also reflects UNO's compliance with those requirements and expectations of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the post-secondary accrediting body with authority to grant institutional accreditation (as required by the US Department of Education to qualify for participation in the federal financial aid program).

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) can be contacted at 230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500, Chicago, IL 60604; **Phone:** 800.621.7440/312.263.0456; **Fax** 312.263.7462; **Email:** info@hlcommission.org

Definitions

Academic Subfields: Refers to a component of the discipline in which the instruction is delivered. The focus is on the courses being taught and the general appropriateness of faculty qualifications with reference to such courses. The key consideration is whether a degree in the field or a focus in the specialization held by a faculty member appropriately matches the courses the faculty member would teach in accordance with the conventions of the academic field.

Adjunct Faculty: Equivalent to Part-time Faculty/Instructors.

Credentials: Refers to the degrees that faculty have earned that establish their credibility as content experts and thus their competence to teach that content in the classroom. An attestation of qualifications or competence issued to an individual by a 3rd party with authority to do so; for example, an academic degree or diploma issued by an accredited college or university is a credential.

Dual Credit: Refers to courses taught to high school students at the high school for which the students receive both high school and college credit. These courses or programs are offered under a variety of names: HLC's Criteria on Dual Credit apply to all of them, as they involve the accredited institution's responsibility for the quality of its offerings. According to the National Association of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP): "Dual Enrollment (sometimes referred to as concurrent enrollment, dual credit, or college in high school) provides high school students the opportunity to take college credit-bearing courses taught by college-approved high school teachers."

Dual Enrollment: See 'Dual Credit'

Faculty: All faculty members and instructional personnel who are assigned as instructor of record, including part-time, adjunct, dual credit, temporary, tenure-track, and non-tenure track. This includes any staff members who may teach a course as well. See the 'Policy Statement' for graduate assistant exclusion information.

Tested Experience: This is a model outlining those criteria by which experience equivalent to credentials, may be considered as a substitute. It is customized for each academic department/school.

- May substitute for an earned credential or portions thereof;
- Is intended to include breadth and depth of experience outside of the classroom in real-world situations relevant to the discipline in which the faculty member would be teaching (typically not based exclusively on years of teaching experience, although other experiential factors may be considered on a case-by-case basis);
- Entails a specified institutional process with well-defined policies, procedures, and documentation that demonstrate when such experience is sufficient to determine that the faculty member personnel has the expertise necessary to teach students in that discipline;
- Tested experience qualifications should be established for specific disciplines and programs, and could include skill sets, types of certifications or additional credentials, and experiences; and
- The faculty hiring qualifications related to tested experience should be reviewed and approved through the faculty governance process at the institution.

Additional Contacts

Subject	Contact	Phone	Email
Credentials, Qualifications, & Hiring Procedures	Candice Batton, Faculty Affairs	402.554.2263	cbatton@unomaha.edu
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Related Information

[Additional Clarifying Information](#)

This policy is designed to align with the following:

- HLC’s “Assumed Practices B.2.” (Policy Changes Adopted June 26, 2015) and
- “Determining Qualified Faculty Through HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices: Guidelines for Institutions and Peer Reviewers,” dated September 2020.

History

Policy approved January 5, 2017. Policy revised to reflect clarification of assumed practices in alignment with HLC guidelines and approved by the Senior Executive Leadership Team on January 12, 2022.

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