

## UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – SUPERIOR

Policy Subject: **Minimum Teaching Qualifications Policy (number AP1701)**  
Cabinet Division: **Provost & Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs**  
Date Created: **3/15/2016**  
Approval: **Passed by Faculty Senate 10/25/16 (Action Memo #17.10 issued on 3/17/17) & Academic Staff Senate 12/14/16; Approved by Chancellor Wachter 3/21/17)**

### I. Background and Purpose

**The purpose of the policy** is to guarantee that students have access to faculty and instructional academic staff members who are experts in the subject matter they teach and who can communicate knowledge in that subject to their students. Qualified faculty and instructional academic staff members help position students for success, not only in a particular class, but in their academic programs and careers after they have graduated. The policy also outlines the process for determining equivalent experience when academic credentials do not meet the stated minima.

This policy revision replaces the 2012 *UW-Superior's minimum qualifications policy statement* and will be added to section 7.4.4.1 and 7.2 (for instructional academic staff) of the Unclassified Staff Handbook titled *minimum qualifications*. It clarifies the University's expectations regarding the minimum qualifications of faculty and academic instructional staff, ensuring appropriate expertise in the subjects they teach. This policy brings UW-Superior into alignment with the [Higher Learning Commissions \(HLC\) Core Component 3.C \(subcomponents 3.C.1., 3.C.2., and 3.C.4.\) and Assumed Practice B.2.a. and B.2.b.](#)

### II. No Constraints

### III. Definitions

**Determination by Credentials:** As of August 2016, the following policy applies to all persons whose primary responsibilities include teaching. This includes faculty, renewable and non-renewable academic instructional staff, part time instructional academic staff, adjunct instructors, and instructors in dual credit programming who teach within academic programs including distance learning, online, continuing education, dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.

### IV. Policy Statement

The HLC explicitly states that all persons who teach students (excluding teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty) 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 terminal degrees or when equivalent experience is established. In terminal degree programs, faculty members possess the same level of degree. When faculty members are employed based on equivalent experience, the institution defines a minimum threshold of experience and an evaluation process that is used in the appointment process.

### V. Policy Procedures

#### Minimum Teaching Qualifications

Thus, it is the policy of UW-Superior, that to teach any courses for UW-Superior, the following criteria must be met:

#### For Faculty:

1. Have a terminal<sup>1</sup> degree relevant to the content they are teaching, OR
2. Have a master's degree relevant to the content in the discipline, subfield or related field they are teaching and a learning plan for achieving a terminal degree, OR
3. Have a degree equivalent to one level above the level at which they are teaching plus a minimum of 5 years of professional experience relevant to the content they are teaching (evidence could include documented professional experience, professional licensing or certification, and/or recognition of one's expertise within the field), OR
4. Have a master's degree or higher in a discipline, subfield or related field other than that in which they are teaching and have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline, subfield or related field in which they teach.

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<sup>1</sup> "Terminal degree is defined as the highest academic degree in a field of study, usually a doctorate." In fields where this is not the case, the terminal degree will be defined by the academic department. Source: *Dictionary.com's 21st Century Lexicon*. Dictionary.com, LLC. 11 Feb. 2016. <Dictionary.com [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/terminal\\_degree](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/terminal_degree)>.

5. The approval process to hire a faculty member under these criteria happens at the point of hire. Documentation of this review is maintained within the personnel files in the Human Resources Office.

Note: 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.

#### **For Instructional Academic Staff (IAS):**

1. Have a terminal degree relevant to the content they are teaching, particularly when they are teaching at the graduate level, OR
2. Have a degree, relevant to the content they are teaching, that is at least one level higher than the coursework in which they are providing instruction. For example, individuals teaching baccalaureate-level coursework should have a minimum of a master's degree, OR
3. Have a degree in a discipline, subfield or related field other than that in which they are teaching that is at least one level higher than the coursework in which they are providing instruction and have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline, subfield or related field in which they teach, OR
4. Have completed all course requirements for a doctorate except a dissertation (ABD) in discipline, subfield or related field in which they teach.

**Determination by Factors other than Credentials:** Qualified IAS are identified primarily by academic credentials, but other factors may be considered in addition to degrees earned. In instances where the determination by credentials listed above are not met, the following process and credentials are required to hire a person as an instructional academic staff member:

At UW-Superior, IAS members have a degree equivalent to the level at which they are teaching plus a minimum of 5 years of 'tested experience' relevant to the content they are teaching. An IAS being considered for such a hire **must** still have a minimum of a baccalaureate degree. "Tested experience" implies that some objective measure ensures that the individual's knowledge and expertise are sufficient for determining what students should learn and have learned. Evidence could include documented professional experience, professional licensing or certification, and/or recognition of one's expertise within the field.

For example:

- An IAS member teaching creative writing, painting, or music may have had his or her expertise, ability, and talent validated through publications or through wide critical and public acclaim.
- An IAS member teaching clinical courses in a master's program in education may not have a doctorate in education, but, instead, may have documented excellence in teaching.
- An IAS member teaching conversational courses in Native American or world language may demonstrate his or her qualification through recognition of competence by tribal elders or through a national recognized rating of proficiency in world language.

When IAS are employed based on a determination of factors other than credentials, the evaluation process to be utilized in making such an appointment is:

1. Submission of a written request, recommendation, and written review of candidate credentials by the department chair to the Dean of Faculties (DOF) and Graduate Studies, along with the candidate's vita.
2. If the DOF agrees with the recommendation to hire, submission of the department chair's request and rationale along with a recommendation and written review of the candidate's credentials is sent by the DOF to the Provost.
3. A decision is made by the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.
4. If the Provost agrees with the recommendation to hire, a final approval must be communicated from the Provost to Human Resources before a contract will be issued.

The approval process to hire a faculty member under these criteria happens at the point of hire. Documentation of the review is maintained within the personnel files in the HR Office.

#### **VI. Compliance**

- 6.1 Approved by
- 6.2 Department Chairs and the Provost's Leadership Team are aware of this policy change.

#### **VII. Attachments**

- 7.1 No attachments