

Guidelines for Determining Faculty Qualifications
Missouri University of Science and Technology

These guidelines document the process used to determine qualifications of faculty at Missouri S&T. Departments shall verify that all faculty members are qualified, regardless of title and rank, to teach the assigned courses. Teaching assistants or similar people assisting in a course, but not the instructor of record of that course, are not included in this requirement.

Rationale: This Higher Learning Commission (HLC) expects that faculty have the appropriate qualifications and expertise for the courses they teach. According to HLC's *Determining Qualified Faculty through HLCs Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices* (http://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB.pdf), faculty can be determined to be qualified if

- 1) their credentials indicate that the faculty member completed their studies in the discipline or subfield¹ in which they teach,
- 2) they have completed a minimum of 18 hours of graduate education in the discipline in which they teach, or
- 3) they have the appropriate “tested experience” that is equivalent to acquiring the degree, which is determined by policies and procedures reviewed and approved through the faculty governance process.

Further, teachers are expected to teach students at or below their terminal degree level.

Process: There are three possible methods to verify faculty are qualified. The most common method of determining (minimally) qualified faculty is by reviewing their credentials.

- 1) **Credentials indicate that the faculty member completed his or her studies in the discipline or subfield¹ in which he or she teaches.**
 - a. During the faculty search process, the search committee and/or department faculty review the applicants' credentials.
 - i. The search committee and/or department chair consider/review the application if individuals have the appropriate credentials for their discipline or subfield (e.g. an earned PhD in the field, or for only teaching undergrad classes, a Master's degree in the field).
 - ii. The search committee and/or department chair do not consider further individuals who do not have the appropriate credentials for the discipline or subfield in which they would teach, unless they meet the requirements of 2) or 3) below.

¹ "Assumed Practice B.2. refers to academic subfields. An academic subfield refers to a component of the discipline in which the instruction is delivered. The focus, in the context of HLC accreditation, 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" (HLC's *Determining Qualified Faculty through HLCs Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices* p. 4)

- b. When searching to hire a part-time faculty member to teach one or two courses a year, the department chair and/or department committee only considers those individuals with the appropriate credentials or who meet the conditions in 2) or 3) below.
- c. When faculty are assigned to teach various courses, the department chair only assigns individuals with the appropriate credentials or who meet the conditions in 2) or 3) below.

2) **Faculty with a graduate degree in another discipline, but who have completed a minimum of 18 hours of graduate education in the discipline in which they teach.**

- a. During the faculty search process, the search committee and/or department faculty review the applicants' credentials.
 - i. Depending on the specifications in the job ad, when individuals have credentials in a different discipline or subfield, the search committee and/or department committee may consider/review the application if the individual's credentials reflect 18 hours of graduate education in the discipline.
 - ii. Depending on the specifications in the job ad, the search committee and/or department committee do not consider further individuals who do not have 18 hours of graduate education in the discipline or subfield in which they would teach, unless they meet the requirements of 3) below.
- b. When searching to hire a part-time faculty member to teach one or two courses a year, the department chair and/or department committee only considers those individuals with 18 hours of graduate education in the discipline or subfield or who meet the requirements in 3) below.
- c. When faculty are assigned to teach various courses, the department chair does not assign individuals who do not have 18 hours of graduate education in the discipline or subfield in which they would teach, unless they meet the requirements of 3) below.

In some cases, an individual's experiences are equivalent to the credentials earned in a degree program. For these experiences to be "tested experiences" they must include "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," which typically does not include teaching experience (http://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB.pdf, p. 4).

3) **Faculty have the appropriate "tested experience" that is equivalent to the degree in the discipline or subfield, which is determined by policies and procedures reviewed and approved through the faculty governance process.**

- a. Tested experience should be "substantial" work
- b. Minimum threshold of tested experience includes
 - i. Work experience
 - 1. Five or more years of minimally supervised or independent work in the discipline or subfield for teaching at the master's level.

2. Ten or more years of independent and/or supervisory-level work in the discipline or subfield for teaching at the doctoral level.
- ii. Research, scholarship, or achievement; in addition to work experience
 1. Instructors teaching in a graduate program should have a record of research, scholarship, or achievement appropriate for the course or courses taught in the graduate program (see http://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB.pdf, B.2.b., p. 3).
- c. System of evaluation of tested experience.
 - i. During the search process for candidates not meeting degree requirements in 1) and 2), the department chair, department faculty committee, and/or search committee review the applicants' tested experience.
 1. Depending on the specifications required to teach the course(s), when individuals do not have the appropriate credentials in the discipline or subfield in which the faculty member would teach, the department chair, department committee, and/or search committee may consider/review the application if the applicant has the appropriate "tested experience" for the discipline or subfield which will be taught.
 2. Depending on the specifications required to teach the course(s), the department chair, department committee, and/or search committee do not consider further individuals who do not have the appropriate credentials or "tested experience" in the discipline or subfield in which the faculty member would teach.
 - ii. When searching to hire a part-time faculty member to teach one or two courses a year, the department chair and/or department committee only considers those individuals with the appropriate "tested experience" for the discipline or subfield which will be taught.
 - iii. When faculty are assigned to teach various courses, the department chair assigns individuals who do not have the appropriate credentials to teach in the discipline or subfield only if they have appropriate "tested experience."
 - iv. When hiring faculty to teach interdisciplinary or cross-listed courses and the faculty member does not have 18 credit hours in the discipline in which he or she teaches, these decisions should be supported by policy and procedure that are acceptable to the professional judgment of HLC peer reviewers" (HLC's *Determining Qualified Faculty through HLCs Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices*, p. 4)
 - v. When hiring graduate students to teach various courses, but has not achieved 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline in which he or she teaches, the chair of the hiring department "should be able to explain and justify its decision to assign the individual to the courses taught. These decisions should be supported by policy and procedure that are acceptable

to the professional judgment of HLC peer reviewers" (HLC's *Determining Qualified Faculty through HLCs Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices*, p. 4).

- d. Departments that hire faculty under the tested experiences method (i.e., not methods 1 and 2, above) develop written policies on their methods for determining minimum thresholds and means of evaluation for tested experience.