

## **Guidelines for Degree Requirements**

### **(Revisions Proposed by Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Staff Requirements)**

#### **Academic Staff and Limited Appointees**

The University has a long and established need for a workforce that is able to apply critical thinking, utilize multiple perspectives, and communicate with others when addressing complex issues in changing environments. A bachelor's degree has typically been required for Limited and Academic Staff positions. Some positions may require more advanced degrees. On July 1, 2015, the University implemented structural changes to the employee classification system to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Those positions, which are exempt from the FLSA, were moved to the Academic Staff or Limited employee category. This change calls into question the minimum educational requirements for Limited and Academic Staff. The University needs to fill positions with individuals possessing the appropriate skills for that position. For example, use existing guidelines when hiring positions listed in Unclassified Title Guideline (UTG) - <http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/polproced/UTG/AlphaTitle.html>, or policies (see Minimum Qualifications for Instructional Staff <https://kb.wisc.edu/vesta/page.php?id=47764>).

UW-Madison has a minimum degree qualifications policy for any positions where the individual employed will be listed as the instructor of record for a course. The default standard is that all instructional staff will have earned a terminal degree, or a degree at least one level higher than the degree for which the course to be taught can be counted. For more information on this requirement as well as exceptions to this standard, see the Policy on Minimum Qualifications for Instructional Staff.

#### **Academic Staff positions which used to be Classified Staff**

With the movement of all vacant positions exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) into the Academic Staff or Limited employee category, there are some positions that do not require a bachelor's degree to attract and retain the most qualified applicants. There are two instances when this might occur:

1. Newly created Academic Staff or Limited titles from the former classified exempt title (e.g., Accountant, IS Specialist) and/or positions ;
2. Former classified exempt titles mapped to existing Academic Staff or Limited titles (e.g., University Grants and Contract Specialist maps to Administrative Program Specialist).

Prior to posting a PVL (Position Vacancy Listing), divisions will review positions to identify those that do and do not require candidates to have a bachelor's degree before being hired. The decision to require a degree for numbers 1 and 2 above will require consultation with and approval from the Office of Human Resources (OHR) between 7/1/15 and the completion of the title/compensation study. There is a precedent for attracting qualified applicants for these positions in the past, so divisions should work to attract a diverse pool of candidates and avoid

unnecessary exclusion for these vacancies by requiring a degree.

### **Recruitment for New or Existing Limited and Academic Staff positions**

Divisions are encouraged to review positions prior to posting to identify those that do and do not require candidates to have a bachelor's degree before being hired. New or existing academic staff positions may not require a bachelor's degree for the following reasons: history of past recruitment issues with a position (Including the lack of a diverse applicant pool or failed searches); alternate credentialing available in a specific field; and work involves working with special populations or community organizations. Additional information regarding degree requirements for visas and advanced degree requirements can be found later in this document. If a hiring unit determines that a bachelor's degree will not be required for recruiting a new or existing Academic Staff or Limited position, the unit needs to include language for degree exception in the PVL when submitted for review.

### **Position Vacancy Listing**

#### **1) Positions Requiring Bachelor's Degrees**

The degree requirement listed on the PVL will be used in determining if an applicant meets the minimum qualifications for the position. If a bachelor's degree is listed as a requirement, then an applicant must have a bachelor's degree to be qualified.

#### **2) Positions Not Requiring Bachelor's Degrees**

If a hiring unit determines that a bachelor's degree is not required the "degree specialization" section on the PVL must be written to identify the minimum years of relevant work experience and any other credentials required to be eligible for the position in lieu of a bachelor's degree. If a hiring unit wants to modify the PVL to change the bachelor's degree requirement after the position is posted, the unit must work with OHR to re-post the position for a period of time that is consistent with OHR guidelines.

Sample PVL language for degree exception in exchange for experience includes:

(Note: This is entered in the QUALS Tab):

#### **Degree Specialization:**

- Bachelor's degree is preferred.
- A Bachelor's degree is not required for this position. Please refer to the minimum years relevant work experience and/or credentials" section below for more information on position requirements.
- In lieu of Bachelor's degree, an Associate's degree and the following minimum credentials are required: (To be defined by the hiring unit prior to the search)

#### **Minimum Years Relevant Work Experience and/or Credentials:**

- Position requires X years of experience for appointment at the associate level.
- X years of applicable\* experience is equal to 1 year of university-level study. A minimum of X years of applicable experience is required for this position.

\*Applicable or relevant experience can be defined by the hiring unit, and should be determined before the search begins.

### 3) Positions Requiring Advanced Degrees

For Academic Staff positions that are identified in the UTG as requiring an advanced degree (e.g., Scientist), we will continue to expect that candidates meet the minimum degree requirement. If extraordinary circumstances exist, the division may consider recruiting for one of these positions without requiring an advanced degree. In this case, the division must include, in the comment section of the PVL submitted to OHR, a statement justifying the degree waiver. In addition, the “degree specialization” section on the PVL must be written to identify the minimum years of relevant work experience and any other credentials required to be eligible for the position as this modifies the degree requirement listed on the PVL will be used in determining if an applicant meets the minimum qualifications for a position. If a master’s degree or PhD is listed as a requirement, then an applicant must have that degree to be qualified for the position. If a hiring unit wants to modify the advanced degree requirement after the position is posted, the unit must obtain approval from OHR and then repost the position for a period of time that is consistent with OHR guidelines.

#### Special Considerations

##### 1) Note from International Faculty and Staff Services (IFSS) pertaining to degree requirements for petitions:

- In order to file an H-1B petition for a candidate, the position must require at least a bachelor’s degree to a **specific** area of study or specialization, that area of study **must be related to the job**, and **the applicant must have at least that degree**. This is a two-step assessment. The following are examples of situations in which the degree requirement listed on the PVL will impact the ability to file a petition. All questions on degree requirements for petitions must go to IFSS. If the position does not require a degree and the applicant has a master’s degree in business administration, IFSS cannot file an H-1B.
- The job posting is for a research specialist in neuroscience. The job requires a bachelor’s degree in biology, neurology, or a related field. The applicant has a bachelor’s degree in microbiology. IFSS can file an H-1B.
- The job posting is for a research specialist in neuroscience. The job requires a bachelor’s degree in biology, neurology, or a related field. Applicant has a PhD in geography. IFSS cannot file an H-1B.

##### 2) Exempt Staff moving to Academic Staff as part of Employee Choice

Employees in classified permanent exempt positions are able to choose to move to the designated Academic Status and title even if they do not have a bachelor’s degree. If, at a later date, an employee wants to apply for other Academic Staff positions, the employee will be required to meet the minimum qualifications for that position.