

UW-MADISON POLICY ON MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

Revised draft 9/30/2015

Objective: This policy aims to create a university-wide standard for the appointment of instructional staff in courses taught for academic credit at the UW-Madison. Such a standard will set common expectations for instructor qualifications at UW-Madison. In addition, it is being promulgated to meet the new accreditation standards adopted by the Higher Learning Commission in June 2015.

Applicability: This standard will apply to all UW-Madison staff who teach with appointments as faculty or instructional academic staff, including limited-term appointments, defined here collectively as "instructional staff". It will not apply to graduate students who receive appointments as teaching assistants or as lecturers-SA (Student Assistant) and work under the direct supervision of a member of the faculty or instructional academic staff. In cases of instructors (including graduate student teaching assistants) who are supervised by faculty or qualified academic staff, the institution will note both supervisor and instructor of record. Individuals who teach courses offered for UW-Madison credit must have instructional appointments consistent with that role during the term of instruction.

General Standard: Qualifications for instructional staff will be judged primarily on the basis of earned degrees in a field or subject area relevant to the courses taught, obtained from academic institutions that are accredited by regional higher education associations and/or professional accrediting organizations, or the equivalent quality of university or college in countries outside the USA. As a default standard, all instructional staff will have earned a degree at least one level higher than the degree for which the course to be taught can be counted. (For example, a Master's degree is required to teach a course that counts toward the bachelor's degree, and a Ph.D. is required for a course that counts towards a Master's degree.) Instructors teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the faculty to be appropriate to the discipline, and have a record of research, scholarship or achievement appropriate for the graduate program.

In some cases, instructional staff who do not possess the academic credentials described above can be appointed to teach courses, if they possess at least a bachelor's degree and are determined by the hiring authority to be otherwise qualified by possessing substantial tested

experience. In these cases, permission to employ instructors in this category will be the purview of the department in which the courses are taught, in consultation with the relevant school or college. Departments, in consultation with the relevant school/college, will define the minimum threshold of experience for alternative qualification, and will establish alternative processes for documenting alternative qualifications, evaluation instruction by, and otherwise supervising, these instructors.

Other factors that may be considered relevant to being “otherwise qualified” may include, but are not limited to:

- Substantial graduate-level academic coursework in the discipline
- Related research experience in industry and/or the private sector
- practical experience in the art, business, legal, or political sector
- clinical experience
- demonstrated competence or fluency in a language other than English and demonstrated ability to teach that language

It is the expectation of the institution that the decisions to hire instructors under this provision will be relatively rare, and made in light of providing students with the best possible learning experience.

These guidelines are informed by new accreditation standards adopted by the Higher Learning Commission in June 2015; they are promulgated to meet these standards.