



**WISCONSIN**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

14 October 2016

TO: Deans  
Department Chairs  
School and College HR offices

FROM: Michael Bernard-Donals, Vice Provost for Faculty and Staff  
Jocelyn Milner, Vice Provost and Director, Academic Planning and  
Institutional Research

RE: Implementation of new policy on minimum qualifications of instructors

As announced by Provost Mangelsdorf in her 11 July 2016 memo, the University Academic Planning Council has approved a policy on the minimum qualifications for those in instructional roles. (The policy and July memo can be found here: <https://kb.wisc.edu/vesta/page.php?id=47764>). This new policy, which became effective for the fall 2016 semester, aligns with a similar policy adopted by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which is UW-Madison's accreditor.

In general, the policy formalizes what we already do in the vast majority of instances: it ensures that anyone listed as a course instructor for undergraduate, graduate, or professional classes is qualified to teach those classes as determined by the hiring unit. The general standard is that a qualified instructor holds an academic degree from an accredited institution that is at least one level higher than the degree level of students served by the course, or holds the appropriate terminal degree for students in programs leading to a terminal degree (MFA, PhD, JD, etc.), or is otherwise qualified through distinguished accomplishments.

The most significant change in practice required by the new policy is the entry of highest-degree information into HRS for all individuals who serve as course instructors. This is already done for faculty on a routine basis and will now be done for other course instructors. The highest degree information will be included in a published "A to Z" list of all faculty and other course instructors that will be made public through university web sites starting in summer 2017, in compliance with HLC policy.

Attached to this memo are several documents that outline the steps for implementing the minimum qualifications policy. As you'll see, this will involve some additional work to add highest degree to HRS for course instructors who do not hold faculty appointments.

We hope to see the highest-degree information entered into HRS beginning in September 2016, with full compliance with the policy beginning by 1 January 2017. This timeline will also assure compliance with HLC policy.

We are very grateful for your assistance with this policy implementation. If you have any questions about implementation of the minimum qualifications of instructors policy, please contact:

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## **STEPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS OF INSTRUCTORS POLICY**

STEP 1: Validate the academic credentials of all individuals who will be listed as a course instructor in the Schedule of Classes.

*This step is taken at the departmental level.*

Each course instructor – either faculty or instructional academic staff – will need to have highest degree information entered into HRS. This is a one-time only data entry for each individual (unless an individual earns an additional degree).

This first step is taken to make sure that the highest degree information is available for all individuals who are to be entered as course instructors in the Schedule of Classes. For individuals who do not meet the academic degree standard for minimum qualifications, then information on how they are qualified by experience (other qualifications) must be provided.

Typically the degree information for all instructional hires is affirmed during the hiring process. This means that for continuing faculty and instructional academic staff, this step has already been taken.

When hiring faculty, instructional academic staff (including clinical faculty), or research or outreach staff who may have an instructional role – either at the time of screening of applicants, during the interview stage, or during a credentials check after interviews – the department chair and/or the departmental Executive Committee must assure that those who are being hired as faculty or instructional academic staff meet minimum qualifications in order to be listed as a course instructor. (See Step 3 for information on individuals who are qualified by other experience and not by academic degree.)

*Note that Teaching Assistants and Lecturers-SA hold positions that are by definition supervised by a qualified instructor. For this reason, data entry of highest degree information for individuals teaching with these titles is not required.*

STEP 2: Confirm that each individual listed as a course instructor in the Schedule of Classes has a faculty or instructional academic staff title; if they do not, then provide them an appointment in an allowable instructional title.

*This step is initiated by the department.*

Any member of the academic staff who will be listed as a course instructor but does not already hold an instructional title (e.g. research, student services, librarian, administrative, or outreach appointment) *must* hold an instructional title in order to be eligible to be a course instructor. This is the only way the individual will be included on the list of eligible course instructors in the Schedule of Classes.

The expectation is that individuals delivering instruction will be appropriately compensated. In rare instances when an individual who is already employed full time by the University in a non-instructional title seeks to teach without additional compensation, they may be appointed at a zero-dollar level in an instructional title. This is a convenience for these rare cases. Please contact your divisional HR office about necessary steps to incorporate the teaching duties into their current appointment.

For Academic Staff supported on sponsored funds, the department should consult with research administration staff in regards to how effort or payroll certification is affected by the addition of teaching duties (paid or unpaid).

Departments must ensure that any member of the academic staff who requires an instructional title appointment in order to be listed as a course instructor has secured such an appointment – and has that appointment entered into HRS – *before* that person is listed as a course instructor.

In some cases a dual-role waiver has to be secured from the University Committee, so departments should take any action necessary for an instructional title appointments for individuals who are already employed in research or outreach titles. This dual-role waiver must be sought during the time period when they are building the schedule of classes, well before the start of the semester in which the academic staff member is scheduled to teach.

Guidelines for securing dual-role waivers can be found here:

<http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/polproced/Appendix%203-1%20UC%20Rule%20Waiver-Dual%20Roles.pdf>

STEP 3: Enter highest-degree information or documentation about other qualifications for instructional staff into HRS.

*Typically this step will be taken by the school or college, though in some cases, highest-degree information is entered by the department.*

All units are required to enter into HRS the highest-degree information, or a brief statement documenting the rationale for being otherwise qualified for individuals serving as course instructors. In cases where departments are entering otherwise-qualified instructors, approval of the school or college is required.

Examples of ways that individuals without academic degrees can meet requirements for other experience:

- include substantial graduate-level academic coursework in the discipline they'll be teaching
- related experience in industry and/or the private sector
- practical experience in the art, business, legal, or political sector
- clinical experience
- in the case of language teaching, demonstrated competence or fluency in that language and demonstrated ability to teach it

The highest degree information is entered one time for each course instructor, unless the information changes. It does **not** need to be entered every semester. Detailed information on entering highest-degree information can be found here:

<https://kb.wisc.edu/vesta/page.php?id=47764>

STEP 4: Departments will check the on-line “A to Z list” of course instructors to make sure information entered there is accurate.

An “A to Z” list of course instructors will be published once annually to the University’s web site based on course instructors listed for the prior year. An example of the possible format follows:

ADAMS, DAVID  
Professor  
Jurassic Studies  
PHD 1980 University of Wisconsin-Madison

If the information listed in the catalogue is accurate, departments don’t need to do anything.

If the information needs to be updated or corrected, department representatives should contact their division HR representative to learn how to make the change that will correct the error or oversight.

## **FAQ ON THE MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS POLICY**

### **Who is covered by the policy?**

Anyone who will be assigned as a course instructor in a for-credit UW-Madison course that appears in the Schedule of Courses in any university program must have the minimum qualifications. Exceptions are individuals in Teaching Assistant and Lecturer-SA titles, because these titles are by their nature supervised by a qualified instructor.

### **Do we need to do this for Teaching Assistants and other Graduate Student instructional appointments?**

No. The policy does not include graduate students who receive appointments as TAs or as Lecturers-SA (Student Assistant) because they work under the direct supervision of a member of the faculty or instructional academic staff who does meet the minimum qualifications.

### **What degrees must instructors or faculty have in order to be in compliance with the HLC policy?**

The policy requires that the course instructor of a for-credit course should have one degree higher than the degree level of the students in the course in which they're teaching, or hold the terminal degree appropriate to the students they are teaching. For example:

- If you're teaching students in a BA program, you should have completed the MA.
- If you're teaching students in an MA program, you should have completed the PhD or terminal degree.
- If you're teaching students in a doctoral program, you should have completed the PhD or terminal degree.

Though not stated in policy, if an instructor does not hold a degree in the field specific to the program in which they are assigned to teach (as may be the case in interdisciplinary or emerging fields), the presumption is that the hiring faculty has vetted the instructor's record and determined that she or he has demonstrated expertise or completed a substantial amount of relevant graduate level coursework in the discipline taught.

### **What counts as a “terminal degree”?**

Typically a terminal degree is the PhD. In some fields – such as law and some of the fine arts – other degrees are considered terminal (the JD and the MFA, respectively).

Departments, in consultation with their schools or colleges, will define the terminal degree in a way that’s consistent with the academic and institutional norms of the field.

### **What’s meant by “course instructor”?**

The course instructor is the individual identified as such in the “course instructor” field in the Schedule of Classes.

### **One of the instructors scheduled to teach does not hold a degree that qualifies him/her to teach, but has other experience. What experience other than a degree qualifies someone to teach?**

The new policy, consistent with HLC criteria, lists several other factors that satisfy the minimum requirements:

- substantial graduate-level academic coursework in the discipline they’ll be teaching
- related research experience in industry and/or the private sector
- practical experience in the art, business, legal, or political sector
- clinical experience
- in the case of language teaching, demonstrated competence or fluency in that language and demonstrated ability to teach it

This is not an exhaustive list, and all hires are subject to school/college approval. Consideration of factors beyond the degree attained are carefully scrutinized. If you have questions, please contact your school or college academic associate dean.

### **A department finds it necessary to assign an academic staff member to teach a course at the undergraduate level, but the staff member has a researcher title. What does the department have to do to be in compliance with the policy?**

The department must do several things:

- Ensure that the academic staff member has an instructional title. This will involve working with your school/college office of human resources to identify what instructional title is appropriate, or whether redefining the staff member’s appointment is the better route to follow.



- Expectations are that the individual will receive appropriate pay for instruction and the appointment will be structured accordingly. In rare instances, it may be allowable for an individual already paid in another role at UW-Madison to teach in the context of a zero-dollar instructional title appointment.
- In some cases, it may mean getting a dual-role waiver from the University Committee. Please see this link -- [https://www.secfac.wisc.edu/documents/Guidelines for Submitting Requests for Rule Waivers May 2015docx.pdf](https://www.secfac.wisc.edu/documents/Guidelines%20for%20Submitting%20Requests%20for%20Rule%20Waivers%20May%202015docx.pdf) (section D) -- for the process to follow.
- Once the staff member has secured an instructional title, the staff member's degree information should be entered into HRS. For researchers supported on sponsored funds, departments should check with research administration staff to see how effort or payroll certification will be affected by the addition of teaching duties (paid or unpaid).