



## **POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT**

NUMBER: 1.1114

DIVISION: Academic Affairs

TITLE: Evaluation of Faculty Credentials

DATE: March 25, 2013

REVISED: January 5, 2015, September 19, 2016, July 1, 2023, January, 2026

AUTHORIZED: Robert Fischer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

### **I. Purpose and Scope**

This policy establishes minimum university requirements for teaching qualifications for all Western Kentucky University (WKU) instructors of record that align with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools: Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) faculty credentialing guidelines and SACSCOC Standard 6.2.a. which states, "It is the institution's obligation to justify and document the qualifications of its faculty." To comply with the standard, the overall qualifications of a faculty member will be taken into consideration. These qualifications include academic credentials as guided by CIP code, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications related to the teaching assignment, honors, and awards, continuing professional development, relevant peer-reviewed publications, and/or continuous documented excellence in teaching.

This policy applies to all full-time and part-time faculty who are listed as instructor(s) of record teaching credit bearing courses at WKU.

### **II. Policy**

#### **A. Faculty Qualifications for Undergraduate Courses**

Instructors teaching Colonnade, certificate, associate, and baccalaureate courses may be qualified by academic credentials, by professional and other experiences, or a combination of both.

1. For academic credentials, using the following qualifications:

- a. Earned doctoral or terminal degree in the discipline or a closely related discipline, OR
- b. Master's degree or higher in the teaching discipline or a closely related discipline, OR

- c. Master's degree or higher (in any discipline) including a minimum of eighteen (18) graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline, OR
- d. In the absence of a completed master's degree, a concentration may be documented by providing evidence that, as part of the instructor's doctoral or terminal degree program, master's degree equivalency was achieved and at least eighteen (18) graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline or a closely related discipline were successfully completed.

## 2. Equivalent Professional Qualifications

WKU recognizes that qualifications other than academic credentials, or combined with academic credentials or graduate coursework, may be sufficient to justify an instructor's qualification. These considerations will be reviewed on a course-by-course basis and include compelling evidence of competencies and achievements. Other qualifications may include:

- a. Professional licensure or certifications,
- b. Scholarly record in the teaching discipline or a closely related discipline,
- c. Contract or grant work,
- d. Work experience in the field,
- e. Honors and awards,
- f. Transcripts,
- g. Continuous documented excellence in teaching at the collegiate level, and/or
- h. Other relevant demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes.

## 3. Special cases for faculty qualifications for some undergraduate courses

- a. ROTC Instructors – This is a partnership between the University and the branch of the U.S. Armed Forces who authorized the ROTC program. The Armed Forces send qualified instructors who are employed by the U.S. Armed Forces to WKU to teach ROTC skills-based courses. WKU recognizes the U.S. Department of the Army Certificate of Training for the Common Faculty Development-Instructor Course (CFD-IC) as the primary qualification for teaching ROTC courses. Instructor qualifications including ROTC instructor certification will be sufficient to teach skills-based ROTC courses and are included in the faculty personnel file.
- b. Clinical Nursing Faculty - WKU adheres to the Kentucky Administrative Regulation 201 KAR 20:310 when hiring part-time faculty to teach nursing clinicals for registered nurse programs. Nursing clinicals are skills-based practical learning courses typically taught on site at a medical facility where the clinical instructor is employed. All clinical nursing faculty must hold a BSN and RN license; faculty with a minimum of a master's degree in the nursing discipline have oversight of BSN-prepared part-time clinical faculty.
- c. Entrepreneurship and Sales– There are typically no specific disciplines that prepare graduates to teach in these areas. Such faculty are credentialed by their home department based on the learning outcomes of the course and how they align with the faculty member's academic and/or professional background.
- d. Interdisciplinary Courses (i.e., Honors)-- There are typically no specific disciplines that prepare graduates to teach interdisciplinary courses. The Academic Program Coordinator and/or the relevant Department Chair credentials faculty teaching such courses based on

the learning outcomes of the course and how they align with the faculty member's academic and/or professional background.

4. Qualifications for Graduate Assistant Instructors (GAI) to teach undergraduate courses

Graduate Assistants who will serve as the instructor of record must have completed eighteen (18) credit hours of graduate coursework in the discipline in which they will be assigned to teach and have completed the Graduate Assistant Teaching Institute (GATI) or similar college/department faculty training program as approved by the Provost or their designee. GATI or similar training program coursework must be catalogued by the WKU Office of the Registrar and appear on the graduate student's official WKU transcript. Credential requirements for Graduate Assistant Instructors are documented in Policy 1.112V.

B. Faculty Qualifications for Graduate Courses

Faculty teaching graduate courses may be qualified by academic credentials or a combination of academic credentials and other qualifications using these guidelines:

1. Earned doctoral or terminal degree in the discipline or a closely related discipline, or graduate and professional experience commensurate to that degree, AND
2. Adjunct graduate faculty status or graduate faculty status, as recommended by the department chair/director or academic program coordinator and approved by the dean is required for teaching graduate and post-baccalaureate coursework, including 400G or higher-level courses. The status must be valid for the entire semester/session in which the course is taught.
3. WKU also recognizes equivalent professional qualifications other than academic credentials, or combined with academic credentials or graduate coursework, may be sufficient to justify a faculty member's qualification. These considerations will be reviewed on a course-by-course basis and include compelling evidence of competencies and achievements. Other qualifications may include:
  - a. Professional licensure or certifications,
  - b. Scholarly record in the teaching discipline or a closely related discipline,
  - c. Contract or grant work,
  - d. Work experience in the field,
  - e. Honors and awards,
  - f. Transcripts,
  - g. Continuous documented excellence in teaching at the collegiate level, and/or
  - h. Other relevant demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes.
4. Special cases for faculty teaching some graduate courses:
  - a. Graduate accounting courses involving commercial audits – Because this skill is highly specialized, an expert with a current C.P.A. license and documented professional experience in auditing is considered qualified to teach graduate courses in the Master of Accountancy and Data Analytics specifically related to auditing.
  - b. Leadership disciplines in Education and Professional Studies – Graduate courses in educational administration, educational leadership, school administration, teacher education, and organizational leadership may be taught by faculty who earn post-master's credentials such as Rank I, Rank II, Specialist, or graduate certificates in the disciplines along with professional experience and and/or certifications.

### C. Required Documentation for Academic Credentials

All instructors, regardless of appointment type, who are qualified to teach based on academic credentials solely or in combination with professional experience must have received a qualifying degree(s) or coursework from an accredited institution or international equivalent. The institution awarding the degree or providing the coursework must be accredited by an accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE).

### D. Credentials Issued Outside of the United States

As part of the initial appointment of faculty with credentials that do not conform to the US standard (particularly those that do not have a transcript in support of them), a statement by a faculty member representing the pertinent academic program (usually the academic program coordinator – see Policy 1.505V) must be provided that certifies that the degree in question has standards similar to those of an accredited institution in the US. (See sample wording in Appendix A.) This certification must be approved by the department chair/director, dean, and the provost (or designee) prior to an offer being extended to a candidate.

## III. Procedure

### A. Types of Credentials

1. One of the following three types of credentials is required for a faculty member (full or part-time) to be instructor of record for a course. Justification and documentation of qualifications for faculty is required for each class to be taught. The credential documentation listed below will be collected by the department/school as part of the hiring process and is housed in the Office of the Provost.
  - a. Official Transcript for the terminal degree and additional degree(s) and/or coursework justifying the hire and course assignment(s) are required for all faculty. The transcript(s) are a part of the faculty member's personnel file maintained in the Office of the Provost as stated in Policy 1.106V.
  - b. If the doctorate or master's degree in any discipline, plus 18 credit hours of graduate coursework in the discipline and a related discipline is utilized to justify the assignment, the specific courses taken in the discipline or related discipline must be documented in the faculty credentialing platform.
  - c. If neither of the above justifies the assignment, the equivalent professional qualifications (as outlined in Section II.A.2. and II.B.3. above) used to justify the assignment must be documented in the faculty credentialing platform. Furthermore, if the CIP code associated with the faculty member's degree does not align with the CIP code assigned to the course being taught, then additional credentials may be required.
  - d. A current (three years or newer) curriculum vita (CV) or resume.
2. In addition to the above credentialing requirements, the following is essential to be the instructor of record for certain types of classes, such as graduate, doctoral, and/or interdisciplinary courses. This information is also housed in the Office of the Provost.
  - a. Graduate faculty status (see section II.B.2. above). The status must be valid for the entire semester/session in which the course is taught.

- b. Doctoral Faculty approval (all 700 and above level courses and/or committee, dissertation assignment) is required by the individual doctoral program coordinator.

#### **B. Roles and Responsibilities**

1. Department Chairs/Directors/Program Coordinators are responsible for submitting faculty qualifications for new teaching assignments that have not previously been validated. All instructors of record must have teaching assignments validated prior to the first day of classes.
2. Deans (or designees) work closely with the department chairs/directors and/or academic program coordinators to review the academic qualifications. The Dean/designee will review and approve qualifications.
3. Provost (or designee) reviews all teaching assignment validations to audit whether an instructor meets university requirements. The Provost is the final arbiter on whether a faculty member should be credentialed to teach a specific course.

#### **IV. Related Policies:**

1.106V Access to Academic Affairs Electronic Personnel Files

1.505V Academic Program Coordinator

#### **V. Reason for Revision**

##### October 2014

Miscellaneous redundancies and conflicting statements removed.

##### September 2016

Change faculty status recommendation/approval process to include the department chairs/directors or program director/coordinator and college deans while removing the Graduate Council. All references to graduate and post-baccalaureate course numbers changed to “400G or higher”.

##### July 2023

Non-substantive changes as part of the fifth-year policy review in accordance with Policy 0.000V, updates reflecting changes in faculty credentialing reporting and tracking.

##### April 2025

Changes made to include special circumstances for faculty qualifications that are not standard and to make other qualifications appropriate for teaching graduate courses clear in the policy.

## APPENDIX A – SAMPLE FOREIGN CREDENTIAL MEMO

Foreign Credentials (see III.B.1)

**TO:** \_\_\_\_\_ Department Chair/Director

**FROM:** Program Faculty Member/Coordinator in Discipline

**DATE:**

**SUBJECT:** Foreign Credential for \_\_\_\_\_ (WKU ID# \_\_\_\_\_)

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On behalf of the program faculty in discipline, I have reviewed the documentation of the degree level in discipline from foreign institution name submitted by faculty candidate's name. I have determined that this credential is reliable and that it is equivalent to a degree level in discipline from an accredited US institution.

Signed,

Program Faculty Member

(List credentials in discipline and other credentials (e.g. foreign language skills) pertinent to this credential review)

Attachments as appropriate (e.g., notarized translation of foreign transcript/diploma, certification from recognized credentialing agency)

Approvals:

_____	Chair/Dir.	_____	Date
_____	Dean	_____	Date
_____	Provost	_____	Date