

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE
FACULTY CREDENTIALS POLICY

Number 02.01.57

Division Academic Affairs

Date June 2016; Reviewed/Revised August 28, 2023

Purpose The purpose of this policy is to define the credentials expected and to describe the credentialing process for full-time and part-time faculty, graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), and other individuals to teach courses at The University of Alabama in Huntsville ("UAH"). Adherence to this policy will ensure that all who teach are qualified for their teaching assignments. The policy will help maintain compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Standard 6.2.a Faculty Qualifications.

Policy The instructor assigned teaching responsibility for each academic credit course offered at UAH must document having the proper credentials for the discipline in which he or she is teaching. UAH bases its definition of faculty credentials on guidelines supplied by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). In Standard 6.2.a, SACSCOC requires, "For each of its educational programs, the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty." Standard 6.2.a also states that "Qualified, effective faculty members are essential to carry out the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs." Standard 6.2.c. further states, "The emphasis is on overall qualifications of a faculty member, rather than simply academic credentials. While academic credentials in most cases may well be the standard qualification for faculty members, other types of qualifications may prove to be appropriate." In addition, the Standard states "It is the institution's obligation to justify and document the qualifications of its faculty. Determining the acceptability of faculty qualifications requires judicious use of professional judgement, especially when persons do not hold degrees in the teaching discipline or are qualified based on criteria other than their academic credentials." The SACSCOC guidelines are given in Appendix A.

This policy describes the types of faculty assigned to a course, appropriate documentation, the credentials required to teach at the graduate and undergraduate levels, the types of credentials, and the process to document compliance.

Procedures

I. Faculty Credentials

A. Instructor Types. A completed Faculty Hiring and Credentials form, shown in Appendix B, with official transcripts for each degree earned and any other documentation required or associated with the discipline that demonstrates experience or expertise (e.g. licensure, certification), must be in the faculty member's personnel file in order for the individual to teach as the instructor of record or to teach under the supervision of a regular faculty for any academic credit course (i.e. secondary instructor or GTA). This form and the documentation are typically completed during the hiring process but may be updated if teaching responsibilities change.

1. Instructor of Record. The instructor of record has full responsibility for all aspects of the development and delivery of the course, and determination of final grades for the students. The official instructor of record must be assigned for each academic credit course by the first day of classes of each term. Any exceptions must be approved by the Dean who must ensure that the instructor of record is assigned by the third day of class in each term.
2. Secondary Instructor(s). In the case of multiple instructors being assigned to teach a course, one instructor may be designated the instructor of record and the others as secondary instructors. Secondary instructors provide support to the instructor of record and may teach lectures and/or laboratories, grade papers or provide other support functions.

When there is an instructor of record and one or more secondary instructors assigned to a course, it is the responsibility of the Department Chair each semester to ensure that all instructors have a complete understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

B. Documentation of Credentials. All documentation related to faculty credentials, including official transcripts for all degrees and coursework, are housed in the faculty member's personnel file. Digital personnel files with appropriate security and backup measures are encouraged, but personnel files may be in paper format if desired. Faculty personnel files are housed in the Office of the Provost for full-time faculty and in the appropriate Dean's Office for part-time faculty. A summary of this information, documented on the signed Faculty Hiring and Credentials form from Appendix B and usually completed during the hiring process, must be sent to the Office of Institutional, Research, Effectiveness, & Assessment (OIRA) for the Faculty Credentials database.

1. Non-U.S. Institutions. Transcripts from non-U.S. institutions may need to be submitted to a professional transcript evaluation service before being used in the credentialing process. Both the original transcript from the institution and the transcript evaluation are included in the faculty member's personnel file.
 2. Graduate Status: Verification of graduate faculty status, as recommended by the Graduate Council and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies, is required to be instructor of record for graduate and post-baccalaureate coursework, including 400/500, 500, 600, and 700 level courses.
 3. Field in which the Credential is Held. The faculty representing the program that offers courses with a given prefix are responsible for determining the fields in which a terminal degree is held, or in which graduate hours have been completed, that are appropriate for teaching a course with that prefix. The Chair and Dean must reach consensus with the faculty. If there is disagreement, the Provost will decide the appropriateness of the terminal degree or graduate hours completed for the course being taught.
 4. Database. Justification and documentation of qualifications for full-time and part-time faculty and GTAs must be recorded in the Faculty Credentials Database. For new faculty, this is required as part of the hiring process on the Faculty Hiring and Credentials form given in Appendix B. This form must be completed and submitted by the faculty member for full-time faculty, by the Department Chair for part-time faculty, or by the supervising faculty for GTAs. For faculty employed after July 2015, this form must also be completed to document their credentials. For faculty members employed during the 2014-2015 academic year and before, the information from the 2016 Reaffirmation of Accreditation 3.7.1. documentation will be used in lieu of Form B. If additional information is needed, a request will be made to the faculty member for the information.
- C. Credential Levels. Credentials based on SACSCOC in the *SACSCOC Guidelines Faculty Credentials* given in Appendix A are determined as follows:
1. Undergraduate courses. The instructor of record must possess "a doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or a master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline)." This applies to courses at the 100, 200, 300 and 400 level.

2. Graduate and post-baccalaureate courses. The instructor of record must possess an “earned doctorate/terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline” and graduate faculty status, as recommended by the Graduate Council and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The status must be valid for the entire semester/term in which the course is taught. The requirement of graduate faculty status applies to 400/500 level cross-listed courses and 500, 600, and 700 level courses.
 3. Graduate Teaching Assistants as Instructors of Record. GTAs may serve as instructors of record for undergraduate courses if they have a “master’s in the teaching discipline or at least “18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline” with “direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic evaluations.” For GTAs with 18 hours, documentation regarding their supervision, training and evaluation must be maintained for each semester with the appropriate College Dean or with the Dean of Graduate Studies. GTAs cannot serve as instructors of record for graduate level courses, regardless of qualifications.
 4. Alternative Certification through Commensurate Experience. An individual may be certified to teach courses at the undergraduate or graduate level based on commensurate experience in the same or related discipline. Professional certification, licensure, or documented record of professional practice may be utilized to evaluate commensurate experience. An individual credentialed to teach graduate courses based on experience in the field is also required to have a graduate degree, although that degree may be in a different field.
- D. Types of Credential. One of the following three types of credentials is required for a faculty member (full or part-time) or GTA to be listed as an instructor of record for a course.
1. Degrees. If a completed terminal or non-terminal graduate degree is utilized to justify the hire or course assignment(s), the courses to be assigned and the related degrees must be documented on the Faculty Hiring and Credentials form (Appendix B). Official transcript(s) must be kept in the faculty member’s personnel file as described in section B above.

Copies of transcripts are required as supporting documentation for the Faculty Hiring and Credentials form (Appendix B) when it is submitted the first time or if there are changes to the transcript that affect teaching responsibilities. In addition, the faculty

member must maintain graduate faculty status, as recommended by the Graduate Council and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies, in order to be considered credentialed to teach graduate coursework.

2. Coursework in the Discipline. If 18 hours of graduate coursework in the discipline or a related discipline is utilized to justify the assignment, the specific 18 graduate hours must be documented on the Faculty Hiring and Credential form in the space provided. Official transcripts for all coursework must be kept in the faculty member's personnel file as described in section B above. Copies of transcripts are required as supporting documentation for the Faculty Hiring and Credentials form (Appendix B) when it is submitted the first time or if there are changes to the transcript that affect teaching responsibilities. In addition, the faculty member must maintain graduate faculty status, as recommended by the Graduate Council and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies, in order to be considered credentialed to teach graduate coursework.
3. Experience. If experience, along with the degrees and coursework, is utilized to justify the assignment, this must be documented on a letter from the Department Chair on appropriate letterhead providing a narrative justification. Particular care should be taken to explain how the experience relates to the course content and has prepared the faculty member to teach the course. In addition, for graduate courses, a letter from the Dean of Graduate Studies is also required, clarifying how the experience is significant in depth and breadth and appropriate preparation for the graduate level. The letter or letters along with any other relevant documentation must be submitted with the Faculty Hiring and Credentials form given in Appendix B to the College Dean. The Dean, upon approval, submits the documentation and form to the Provost for approval. The individual is not considered fully credentialed until the approval from the Provost is complete. The letters and other documentation are kept in the faculty member's personnel file as described in section B above.

II. Credentials Verification

- A. Faculty Credentials Database. OIRA maintains the Faculty Credentials Database that contains credential and course information for each full-time and part-time faculty member in the faculty credentials data module in Compliance Assist. This information is a summary of the personnel file and is used to

complete the Faculty Roster for SACSCOC.

- B. Semester Audit. Each semester, OIRA will conduct an audit of all teaching assignments for the semester and verify that all faculty are credentialed to teach the courses to which they are assigned. If any faculty appear to lack documented credentials, this information will be forwarded to the Department Chair and College Dean, with instructions to provide additional information or revise the course assignment.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

- A. Faculty. Faculty employed and GTAs are responsible for submitting documentation of their credentials, including transcripts, at the time of hire or upon request if additional documentation is needed.
- B. Department Chairs. Department Chairs complete the Faculty Hiring and Credentials Form from Appendix B and submit it electronically to the appropriate College Dean. This is done at time of hire or appointment for faculty or GTAs hired after July 2015 or if teaching responsibilities are expanded to include courses not on the form on file or on the 2015 SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation Faculty Credential form for a faculty member or GTA. For any faculty being credentialed to teach graduate courses, Department Chairs verify their graduate status with the Dean of Graduate Studies. If that credential is based on experience, Department Chairs also request the appropriate recommendation from the Dean of Graduate Studies.
- C. Deans. Deans receive the Faculty Hiring and Credentials Form from Appendix B and, once approved, submit it electronically. If the credentials are based on experience, the form is submitted to the Provost for approval. If the credentials are not based on experience, the form is submitted directly to the OIRA.
- D. Dean of Graduate Studies. This Dean maintains the record of graduate status for faculty and is responsible to notify OIRA of any status changes. For any faculty credentialed to teach graduate courses based on experience, this Dean also provides a letter with narrative justification as part of the supporting documentation.
- E. Provost. The Provost provides oversight for the faculty credentialing process. This includes final approval on any credentials based on experience using the Faculty Hiring and Credentials Form from Appendix B or any disagreement on fields in which the credential is held.
- F. OIRA. OIRA staff maintain documentation on faculty credentials,

audit course assignments each semester to verify faculty credentials, and generate the faculty roster based on those credentials as needed.

Review

Academic Affairs will review this policy every five years or sooner as needed.



FACULTY CREDENTIALS

- Guidelines -

Standard 6.2.a (*Faculty qualifications*) of the *Principles of Accreditation* reads as follows:

For each of its educational programs, the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members.

When an institution defines faculty qualifications using faculty credentials, institutions should use the following as credential guidelines:

- a. Faculty teaching general education courses at the undergraduate level: doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
- b. Faculty teaching associate degree courses designed for transfer to a baccalaureate degree: doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
- c. Faculty teaching associate degree courses not designed for transfer to the baccalaureate degree: bachelor's degree in the teaching discipline, or associate's degree and demonstrated competencies in the teaching discipline.
- d. Faculty teaching baccalaureate courses: doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
- e. Faculty teaching graduate and post-baccalaureate course work: earned doctorate/terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline.
- f. Graduate teaching assistants: master's in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline, direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic evaluations.

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