

Higher Learning Commission Faculty Qualifications Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the new guidelines?

Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has enacted a new guideline for faculty roles and qualifications that went into effect September 1, 2017.

- Generally, faculty members must possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach.
- Qualified faculty members are identified primarily by credentials, but other factors, including but not limited to equivalent experience (also called “tested experience”), may be considered by the university in determining whether a faculty member is qualified.
 - When faculty members are employed based on tested experience, the university must define a minimum threshold of experience and an evaluation process that is used in the appointment process. Relevant information is detailed in the Faculty Qualifications Policy.
- Faculty teaching general education courses, or other non-occupational courses, must hold a master’s degree or higher in the discipline or subfield.
- If a faculty member holds a master’s degree or higher in a discipline or subfield other than that in which he or she is teaching, that faculty member should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.

2. What do the new guidelines mean to me?

All faculty (full-time and part-time) must now have the requisite qualifications to teach the courses they are teaching. If you are a Department Chair/Program Director, you will be required before the start of each semester to review assignments against the credentials of the faculty member and determine if they are qualified to teach, that is, to validate they hold the appropriate qualifications to teach the courses assigned. A Faculty Qualifications Assurance Form must be submitted to the Dean’s Office prior to an offer of employment.

3. How do I determine that faculty in my area are qualified?

A review of the current resume or curriculum vitae, academic transcripts and any other documents verifying credentials, will likely determine qualifications and must be submitted or completed with the referenced Form. It may help to refer to the [Faculty Qualifications Policy](#) when filling out the form.

4. Where do I find the Faculty Qualifications Assurance Form and Faculty Qualifications Policy?

The Faculty Qualifications Assurance request form is located on the Academic Human Resources website under “Academic Employment” – “Faculty Qualifications” tab. The link will take you to the online forms site where you will select “Faculty Qualifications Assurance Request.” Here you will also find a link to the [Faculty Qualifications Policy](#).

5. What is tested experience?

The HLC recognizes that experience may also be considered in addition to credentials when determining faculty qualifications. Tested experience is not based on years of teaching experience

but rather on skill sets, types of certifications, and/or additional credentials that show the breadth and depth of experience outside of the classroom in real world situations relevant to the discipline in which the faculty member teaches. Please see the [Faculty Qualifications Policy](#) for more details.

6. What happens if current faculty members do not have the requisite qualifications as described in the Faculty Qualifications Policy?

Faculty members currently not holding the proper credentialing to teach their assigned course(s) will be offered the opportunity to develop an Academic Development Plan (ADP). These plans will be developed by the faculty member and Department Chair and approved by the respective Dean as well as Academic Human Resources. An ADP will include a mutually agreed upon timeline for meeting the established faculty credential requirements for the academic courses they teach. ADPs are expected to be completed within three years. Specific assistance rendered to faculty members subject to an ADP will be determined on an individual basis.

7. Where do I send the form once I have completed it?

All Department Chairs will send the completed Faculty Qualifications Assurance Form along with a copy of the current resume or curriculum vitae, academic transcripts and any other necessary documents verifying credentials to your Dean. It is the responsibility of the Dean to ensure that the form is completed and the faculty member has the requisite qualifications.

8. Whom do I go to if I have questions?

If you have questions, you can contact your Dean's Office or Academic Human Resources.