



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

SACSCOC Faculty Qualifications Certification Policy

Policy Name: SACSCOC Faculty Qualifications Certification

Policy Purpose

This policy specifies the process to certify qualifications for faculty and instructional personnel inclusive of all locations and delivery modes to ensure that qualified, effective faculty and instructional personnel carry out the mission of the institution and ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs.

Applicability

This policy is applicable to all Instructors of Record.

Responsible Official, Office, and Interpretation

The Provost is responsible for the review and revision of this policy. For questions about this policy, please contact the Office of the Provost. The Provost, in consultation with the Office of University Counsel, has the final authority to interpret this policy.

Defined Terms

A defined term has a specific meaning within the context of this policy.

Approved Agency

The following accrediting agencies are recognized by the US Department of Education: (1) Higher Learning Commission (HLC); (2) Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE); (3) New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE); (4) Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU); (5) Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC); and (6) Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

Curriculum Vitae/Resume

An exhaustive list of a person's education, qualifications, and significant achievements in an individual's career.

Dual-listed Courses

Courses listed at both the graduate and undergraduate level. At ETSU, these courses are typically numbered 4XX7/5XX7.

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First-Year Experience Course

Courses offered at the 1000 level that prepare students to transition from high school to college and serve to connect students with resources offered at the university. The goal of First-Year Experience courses is to support academic performance, social development, persistence, and degree completion.

Foreign/International Transcript

An official document from an institution outside of the United States showing an individual's academic record. To be accepted, this transcript must be a certified Official Transcript. If the transcript is not in English, it must be translated.

Instructor of Record

The individual who provides direct instruction for the course and is primarily responsible for assigning the grade. This may include full-time faculty (e.g., tenure-track, tenured, lecturer, instructor, clinical instructor), part-time faculty (e.g., adjunct, tuition associate, graduate associate), and professional or administrative staff.

Introductory Skills-Based Course

A course that teaches practical skills, rules of engagement, benefits of participation, and provides hands-on practice and real-world scenarios. These courses are designed to teach students how to do something basic or skills oriented (e.g., physical activity and wellness courses).

Official Transcript

A transcript that bears the embossed or raised seal, date, and Registrar's signature. Electronic transcripts are considered official if delivered securely from the issuing institution to ETSU.

Reserve Officers' Training Corps Military Science Courses

Military science courses designed to prepare individuals who will be commissioned as officers for the United States Army as part of the Reserve Officers' Training Corp.

Unofficial Transcript

A transcript does not contain an original college seal or Registrar's signature.

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Policy

As required by Standard 6.2a (Faculty qualifications) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), for each of its educational programs, East Tennessee State University justifies and documents the qualifications of all faculty and instructional staff teaching for-credit courses.

The Office of the Provost, in collaboration with the department chair and dean, is responsible for ensuring that all units certify the academic credentials and/or professional qualifications of all faculty or instructional staff teaching for-credit courses as the Instructor of Record. The academic credentials and/or professional qualifications of the Instructor of Record are determined on a course-by-course basis. For interdisciplinary courses, units must certify faculty credentials and/or professional qualifications relevant to the disciplines that are components of the course. Documentation of the academic credentials and/or professional qualifications of all Instructors of Record are maintained electronically in Watermark Faculty Success.

It is the department chair's responsibility to evaluate, justify, and document the academic credentials and/or professional qualifications of an Instructor of Record at the time of hire and again if the courses assigned to the Instructor of Record change. The dean verifies the accuracy of the department chair's assessment of the academic and/or professional qualifications of the Instructor of Record. The Provost, or designee, verifies the accuracy of the dean's and department chair's assessment of the academic and/or professional qualifications of the Instructor of Record.

1. Academic Credential Requirements.

The academic credentials necessary to teach ETSU courses vary by course level as follows:

1.1. Baccalaureate Courses.

The Instructor of Record teaching courses at the undergraduate level must have a doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline.

Graduate Teaching Assistants may not be the Instructor of Record for courses at the Baccalaureate level or above.

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Graduate Teaching Associates may serve as an Instructor of Record for a Baccalaureate course in a Traditional Academic Discipline if they have a master's degree in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline. They must also be directly supervised by a faculty member and receive in-service training and planned, periodic evaluations by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline.

1.1.1. First-Year Experience Courses.

1.1.1.1. The Instructor of Record for First-Year Experience courses must have a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by an Approved Agency AND

1.1.1.2. substantial experience in the discipline if the course is associated with a specific academic program, OR

five years of experience in higher education if the course is not associated with a specific academic program.

1.1.2. Reserve Officers' Training Corps Military Science Courses.

Instructors of Record are fully qualified, active-duty military officers/senior enlisted personnel who are appointed to their ROTC detachments by the United States Army. Appointments are connected to military qualifications, which relate directly to the courses taught.

1.1.3. Introductory Skills-Based Courses.

Instructors of Record are qualified by applied knowledge of and experience in the area being taught, including appropriate certification and institution-supplied training where needed. Extended academic training is not deemed to be necessary by the Provost.

The Instructor of Record operates under the guidance of the department chair or other appropriate designee. They must receive in-service training and planned, periodic evaluations by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline.

1.2. Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate Courses.

The Instructor of Record for graduate and post-baccalaureate courses must have an earned doctorate or a terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a closely related discipline.

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Graduate Teaching Associates may not be the Instructor of Record for any graduate or post-baccalaureate course.

1.3. Dual-Listed Courses.

The Instructor of Record for Dual-listed Courses must be qualified to teach the course at the highest level the course is offered or listed in the catalog, regardless of enrollment in either section.

2. Professional Qualifications.

Primary consideration is given to individuals meeting the academic credential requirements outlined in Section 1 of this policy. However, in exceptional situations, professional qualifications may be suitable for an Instructor of Record teaching a specific course. Units may employ Instructors of Record who do not meet the academic credential requirements only if the professional qualifications of Instructors of Record are justified, documented, and approved. The department chair, in collaboration with the program coordinator, the dean or dean designee, and the Provost or Provost designee will review, approve or deny an Instructor of Record based on their Professional Qualifications. The Provost's or their designee's decision is final.

3. Requirements for Documenting Faculty Qualifications.

Faculty qualifications for an Instructor of Record are determined at the time of hire. Faculty qualifications must align with the current courses assigned to an Instructor of Record. Therefore, justifications and associated documentation must be reviewed, updated, and kept on file as teaching assignments are made each term.

3.1. Documentation of Academic Credentials.

3.1.1. Transcripts.

The university adheres to the [Transcripts for Employment Purposes Policy](#) to document the educational attainment of Instructors of Record as a condition of employment. Unofficial Transcripts may be reviewed for consideration for employment. However, the Instructor of Record must ensure that Official Transcripts are provided within 60 days of employment.

3.1.1.1. Transcripts from Foreign Universities or Schools

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If an Instructor of Record attended a university in a foreign country, certified credentials from a credential verification service (e.g., [Federation Credentials Verification Service](#), [World Education Services](#) or [Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.](#)) may be accepted.

3.1.1.2. Transcripts from institutions not accredited by an Approved Agency.

The hiring of an Instructor of Record with academic credentials from an institution not accredited by an Approved Agency will be considered by the search committee and the dean on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the Provost or designee. Specific programs, departments, or colleges may have guidelines that prevent hiring an Instructor of Record with academic credentials from an institution not accredited by an Approved Agency.

3.1.2. Curriculum Vitae/Resume.

The University requires all Instructors of Record to provide a curriculum vitae (CV) or resume. The department chair, in consultation with the program coordinator, must substantiate professional qualifications as described on the CV or resume when used to qualify an Instructor of Record for a teaching assignment.

3.1.3. Oral and Written English Proficiency.

The University will assess the oral and written English proficiency of all Instructors of Record prior to employment to ensure adequate proficiency for direct instruction of students. The primary responsibility for assessing oral and written English proficiency of Instructors of Record will reside at the departmental level, with the department chair undertaking individual assessment and certification. Primary responsibility for assessing the oral and written English proficiency of department chairs will reside at the school or college level, with the dean undertaking the assessment and certification of chairs.

3.2. Documentation of Professional Qualifications.

Qualifications of an Instructor of Record are determined on a course-by-course basis. In some cases, faculty may not hold the required academic credentials, but specialized experience(s) may qualify them to teach a course. The relationship between each professional qualification used and the course(s) assigned is documented using the

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SACSCOC Instructor Justification Form. The following professional qualifications, when directly related to the learning outcomes of the course, may be used to qualify an Instructor of Record when the individual's academic credentials are insufficient to do so (note that this list may not be exhaustive):

- 3.2.1. Evidence of research conducted - published, and/or presented.
- 3.2.2. Documentation of significant professional work experience.
- 3.2.3. Documentation verifying professional licensure, certificates, or special training.
- 3.2.4. Documented excellence in the teaching discipline (for example, through peer or supervisor evaluations of teaching or documented excellence in student performance).
- 3.2.5. Honors, Awards, or Special Recognition: Documentation of honors, awards, or special recognition.

4. Credentialing Responsibilities.

4.1. Review of New Faculty.

During the search, the department chair, and the search committee chair are responsible for documenting and evaluating the candidate's academic credentials and/or professional qualifications to determine the course(s) the candidate is qualified to teach.

Candidates whose degrees are from an institution outside of the United States and not in English are responsible for demonstrating appropriate academic preparation and providing necessary credentials. The candidate is responsible for acquiring a certified Official Transcript that is reviewed by a credential evaluation agency (e.g., [Federation Credentials Verification Service](#), [World Education Services](#), or [Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.](#)). If the transcript is not in English, it must be translated. The candidate is responsible for any fees incurred and must ensure the translation comes directly from the agency to the university.

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4.2. Continued Certification of Current Instructors of Record.

All current Instructors of Record should ensure documentation of academic credentials and/or professional qualifications by providing Official Transcript(s) and a current CV/resume to both the college(s) in which they work and the ETSU Office of Human Resources. Because the Official Transcript(s) should show the full academic record, updated Official Transcript(s) may be required when Instructors of Record complete additional coursework.

4.3. Department Chair and Program Coordinator Responsibilities.

Department chairs and program coordinators ensure that all Instructors of Record have submitted an Official Transcript, a current CV/resume, and copies of any other necessary documents (e.g., copies of licensure, certification, etc.) and submit a SACSCOC Instructor Justification Form, if necessary, to ensure the qualifications of Instructors of Record are documented for each course assigned.

4.4. Dean Responsibilities.

The dean, or designee, ensures the department chair and/or program coordinator follow the requirements to document faculty qualifications at the time of hire and each semester thereafter. The dean or designee, maintains copies of all related documents in faculty files in the Office of the Dean and uploads those to Watermark Faculty Success each semester.

4.5. Provost or Designee.

The Provost, or designee, is responsible for faculty credentialing and qualification activities. The Provost, or designee, reviews Watermark Faculty Success each semester to ensure the appropriate documentation is filed for faculty and Instructors of Record.

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The department chair, in coordination with the program coordinator from each unit/department reviews the documents submitted by the potential Instructor of Record verifies the qualifications of full-time and part-time faculty before hiring and/or assigning courses to Instructors of Record.

The Provost or designee reviews faculty qualifications for an Instructor of Record occur before faculty are hired. Faculty qualifications align with the current courses assigned to an Instructor of Record. Therefore, justifications and associated documentation are reviewed, updated, and kept on file as teaching assignments are made each term.

All documentation related to credentials is placed in the faculty file maintained in the Office of the Dean for the hiring unit. A designated staff member in the unit scans the information on credentials into the Watermark system. The data from the Watermark system will allow for the creation of the required SACSCOC reports and allow units to generate reports on faculty credentials for their own use.

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Applicable Forms and Websites

N/A

Authority and Revisions

Authority: TCA § 49-8-203, et seq.

Previous Policy: N/A

The ETSU Board of Trustees is charged with policy making pursuant to TCA § 49-8-203, et seq. On March 24, 2017, the Board delegated its authority to ETSU's President to establish certain policies and procedures for educational program and other operations of the University, including this policy. The delegation of authority and required process for revision to this policy can be found on the [Policy Development and Rule Making Policy webpage](#).

To suggest a revision to this policy, please contact the responsible official indicated in this policy. Before a substantive change to the policy section may take effect, the requested changes must be: (1) approved by the responsible office; (2) reviewed by the Office of University Counsel for legal sufficiency; (3) posted for public comment; (4) approved by either Academic Council or University Council; and (5) approved by ETSU's President.