



Faculty Credentialing Manual

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Office of the Provost

This manual describes the procedures of the University of North Texas for ensuring that all courses are taught by well-qualified instructors. It includes the procedures used to review the credentials of every instructor teaching a course at UNT. All instructional faculty (including part-time, adjunct, and teaching fellows) are required to meet the guidelines established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

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SACSCOC PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

The University of North Texas subscribes to the values and practices developed through the regional body for academic self-regulation, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). SACSCOC states the basic standards that an institution should meet in order ensure that its faculty holds the appropriate level and kind of credentials as detailed in the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* Comprehensive Standard 6.2.a.

C.S. 6.2.a: For each of its educational programs, the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members.

The rationale provided by the SACSCOC [Resource Manual](#) provides additional information:

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. 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. Examples could include appropriately 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. These types of qualifications are especially important in professional, technical, and technology-dependent fields.

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 judgment, especially when persons do not hold degrees in the teaching discipline or are qualified based on criteria other than their academic credentials. Similarly, persons holding a degree at the same or lower level than the level at which the course is taught require additional qualifications and the application of professional judgment. Additional justification is needed for these cases as compared to cases where the academic credentials are a "perfect match" for the teaching assignments.

Consideration of faculty credentials begins with the instructional assignment. The content/level of the course or other instructional assignment determines the qualifications required to teach it.

UNT's credentialing guidelines are patterned after the [guidelines](#) provided by SACSCOC, which specify the degrees and coursework qualifications that are appropriate to different kinds of instructional assignments; specifically:

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).

Faculty teaching lower division (1000 – 2000) courses designed for 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).

Faculty teaching upper division 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).

Faculty teaching graduate and post-baccalaureate course work: earned doctorate/terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline.

Graduate students teaching undergraduate courses (Teaching Fellows): 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.

SACSCOC recognizes that a faculty member's qualifications for a particular teaching assignment may include or may rest on professional or artistic accomplishments, licensures and certifications, and a range of other evidence of "competence, effectiveness and capacity" in successfully meeting the objectives of a given course. UNT also acknowledges that these additional qualifications may be considered, and has created a set of guidelines for their documentation that ensures that all faculty members meet the highest standards of preparation for a given instructional assignment.

UNT's guidelines are described in more detail below, including UNT's requirement that faculty holding the master's degree must document 18 graduate credit hours relevant to the discipline and/or a record of substantial and current accomplishments in the field of the teaching assignment.

Transcripts and degrees

The hiring authority (generally the Department Chair, Associate/Assistant Dean, or Faculty Director) is responsible for ensuring that UNT has an official copy of the transcript for the highest academic credential earned by the instructor on file in the Office of the Provost.

UNT requires that degrees earned in the United States be from institutions that are regionally accredited.

Foreign degrees must be evaluated by an agency certified by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to establish their equivalency to American degrees. A course-by-course evaluation is necessary for all degrees except terminal degrees in the teaching field. If an abstract (or equivalent) of the dissertation or other terminal project can be provided, a course-by-course analysis is not required for a terminal degree in the teaching field. Documentation in a foreign language must be translated by an appropriate external agency.

Until appropriate documentation of the highest earned degree is on file, the university will accept no claims about the prospective faculty member's qualifications for the instructional assignment.

Graduate Instruction

All faculty teaching graduate courses or otherwise responsible for graduate credit must hold an earned terminal degree in the teaching discipline. Faculty who hold the appropriate terminal degree that is not in the teaching discipline (i.e., "related discipline") can be credentialed to teach at the graduate level if they demonstrate their qualifications on the basis of graduate coursework and/or current

accomplishments in research or relevant professional and artistic fields. A current C.V. must be on file with The Office of the Provost.

Terminal degree in teaching discipline

A person who has earned a terminal degree in the teaching discipline is qualified to teach graduate courses in that discipline.

Some academic units have a single terminal degree in the teaching field; other units may have multiple teaching fields and several appropriate terminal degrees. Academic units with multiple terminal degrees typically associate those degrees with a subset of the courses offered. In all cases, chairs of departments are responsible for ensuring that faculty members are assigned to courses, theses, dissertations and other forms of instruction within their areas of expertise.

Terminal degree outside of the teaching discipline (“related discipline”)

Prospective instructors without a terminal degree in the teaching discipline (but who do hold a terminal degree) may qualify to teach graduate courses, serve on dissertation committees, or offer other forms of graduate credit through **one or both** of the following:

- Documentation of 18 graduate semester credits of coursework that can serve as the basis for the instructional assignment.

[Note: Documentation must be appropriate to the course being taught. An official transcript (or, in the case of a foreign degree, an approved agency’s evaluation of the equivalency of the foreign degree and its courses) must be used in this documentation. If the level/content of the coursework is not clear, the hiring authority should seek additional information from the degree-granting institution. Credits must be documented by course prefix/number, course name, year in which the credits were earned, and the institution/degree program in which they were earned. These graduate semester credit hours must be made up of formal coursework. Thesis, dissertation, internship, and similar credits do not count towards this documentation, unless the research conducted on the thesis or dissertation topic is directly related to the course being taught].

- Documentation of a record of substantial and current accomplishments in the field of the teaching assignment.

[Note: Documentation must be appropriate to the course being taught. Accomplishments must be documented by the hiring authority. Documentation would include such items as: abstracts of published work, taken directly from the journals or proceedings; evidence of book publication, including the rigor of the reviewing process and the press; copies of published reviews of an exhibition or performance; copies of book reviews published in scholarly journals or similarly significant venues; dissertation abstracts, listing the committee and the institution. In all cases, the accomplishments must be verified by the hiring authority. For all accomplishments cited, the hiring authority should be prepared to provide the level of documentation required for the promotion and tenure portfolio, as this provides the best guide to comprehensive documentation of accomplishments. All documentation must be on file in the academic unit, available for review upon request by dean or provost.]

The hiring authority completes the documentation of qualifications for the instructional assignment. The Dean of the college or school will review the documentation to ensure it is appropriate prior to forwarding the information to the Office of the Provost. The Office of the Provost will determine whether the narrative of accomplishments provides sufficient clear and compelling evidence that the person is qualified for the instructional assignment.

Upon review, if it is determined that the narrative is not sufficiently strong, either the dean or the Provost will require the hiring authority to provide a more detailed justification of how the individual's qualifications prepare him or her for the particular instructional assignment. This justification requires a narrative justification that addresses how the individuals' accomplishments constitute a level of preparation for the instructional assignment comparable to that of a terminal degree in the teaching field and how the individual's graduate degree contributed to his/her accomplishment and preparation to teach this course. Also, the hiring authority should provide key course objectives and explain the evidence for concluding that the individual is prepared to meet those objectives.

Undergraduate Instruction

Terminal degree within the teaching discipline

Those holding the terminal degree in the teaching field are qualified for any instructional assignment within that field, provided that the hiring authority has concluded that they have either the graduate training or have acquired the knowledge base for the particular course. In all cases, chairs of departments are responsible for ensuring that faculty members are assigned to courses, directed independent studies, and honors theses solely within their areas of expertise. UNT assumes that professional development is an on-going responsibility of full-time faculty. Professional development appropriately includes the development of new fields of competency as well as staying current in the fields of one's graduate study.

Master's degree or terminal degree outside the teaching discipline

Faculty who hold a master's degree and faculty who hold a terminal degree outside the teaching field (i.e., related discipline) must document their qualifications to teach a particular course through graduate coursework and/or a record of substantial and current accomplishments in the field of the teaching assignment. The hiring authority would need to provide one or both of the following:

- Documentation of 18 graduate semester credits of coursework that can serve as the basis for the instructional assignment.

[Note: Documentation must be appropriate to the course being taught. Credits must be documented by course prefix/number, course name, year in which the credits were earned, and the institution/degree program in which they were earned. An official transcript (or, in the case of a foreign degree, an approved agency's evaluation of the equivalency of the foreign degree and its courses) must be used in this documentation. If the level/content of the coursework is not clear, the hiring authority should seek additional information from the degree-granting institution. These graduate semester credit hours must

be made up of formal coursework. Thesis, dissertation, internship, and similar credits do not count towards this documentation, unless the research conducted on the thesis or dissertation topic is directly related to the course being taught.]

- Documentation of a record of substantial and current accomplishments in the field of the teaching assignment.

[Note: Documentation must be appropriate to the course being taught. Accomplishments must be documented by the hiring authority. Documentation would include such items as: abstracts of published work, taken directly from the journals or proceedings; copies of published reviews of an exhibition or performance; copies of book reviews published in scholarly journals or similarly significant venues; dissertation abstracts, listing the committee and the institution. In all cases, the accomplishments must be verified by the hiring authority. For all accomplishments cited, the hiring authority should be prepared to provide the level of documentation required for the promotion and tenure portfolio, as this provides the best guide to comprehensive documentation of accomplishments. All documentation must be on file in the academic unit, available for review upon request by dean or provost.]

The dean and the Office of the Provost will determine whether the narrative of accomplishments provides sufficient clear and compelling evidence that the person is qualified for the instructional assignment.

Upon review, if it is determined that the narrative is not sufficiently strong, either the dean or the Provost will require the hiring authority to provide a more detailed justification of how the individual's qualifications prepare him or her for the particular instructional assignment. This justification requires a narrative justification that addresses how the individuals' accomplishments constitute a level of preparation for the instructional assignment comparable to that of a terminal degree in the teaching field and how the individual's graduate degree contributed to his/her accomplishment and preparation to teach this course. Also, the hiring authority should provide key course objectives and explain the evidence for concluding that the individual is prepared to meet those objectives.

No graduate degree/graduate degree in progress

Graduate teaching fellows (TF's) at UNT may teach if they have completed 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching field AND are under the direct supervision of a faculty member, receive regular in-service training, and receive planned and periodic evaluations of their teaching.

These graduate semester hours must be made up of formal coursework. Thesis, dissertation, internship, and similar credits do not count towards this documentation. Directed independent study courses can be counted only if there is documentation of the content and outcome of the course: for example, a syllabus that details the work to be done and how it will be evaluated or a copy of the final research paper or a faculty critique of the completed artistic project. This documentation must be on file in the department in which the student will be teaching.

Exceptional cases

UNT recognizes that the best interests of the students may, at times, be served by instruction delivered by someone who has not taken the typical academic route to developing her or his ability to effectively

teach a particular subject. As SACSCOC 3.7.1 states: “When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline.... The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes.”

A request for an exception to the University’s standards for teaching at the graduate or undergraduate level requires extraordinarily strong evidence of the qualifications of the prospective faculty member to effectively deliver the instructional assignment.

This request for exception is made for a particular course. The dean or the Provost will require the hiring authority to provide a more detailed justification of how the individual’s qualifications prepare him or her for the particular instructional assignment. This justification requires a narrative justification that addresses how the individuals’ accomplishments constitute a level of preparation for the instructional assignment comparable to that of a terminal degree in the teaching field and how the individual’s graduate degree contributed to his/her accomplishment and preparation to teach this course. Also, the hiring authority should provide key course objectives and explain the evidence for concluding that the individual is prepared to meet those objectives.

Additionally, the hiring authority must assemble a portfolio of documentation of the proposed instructor’s record of substantial and current accomplishments in the field of the teaching assignment.

[Note: Documentation must be appropriate to the course being taught. Accomplishments must be documented by the hiring authority. Documentation would include such items as: abstracts of published work, taken directly from the journals or proceedings; evidence of book publication, including the rigor of the reviewing process and the press; copies of published reviews of an exhibition or performance; the venues of significant performances or exhibitions; copies of book reviews published in significant venues; letters of evaluation solicited by the hiring authority from persons able to dispassionately evaluate the accomplishments of the prospective faculty member. In all cases, the accomplishments must be independently verified by the hiring authority. For all accomplishments cited, the hiring authority should be prepared to provide the level of documentation required for the promotion and tenure portfolio, as this provides the best guide to comprehensive documentation of accomplishments. All documentation must be on file in the academic unit, available for review upon request by dean or provost.]

The Office of the Provost will review the submitted justification for consideration. The Office of the Provost will determine whether the narrative of accomplishments provides sufficient clear and compelling evidence that the person is qualified for the instructional assignment. Decisions from the Office of the Provost are final. Approval of a request for exception is specific to the particular course(s) approved.

Justification Checklist

If instructional personnel cannot be credentialed by any of the means provided, additional justification must be submitted. You may use this checklist to review appropriate content for justifications. Use this list to assist in providing the maximum amount of information to justify instructional personnel.

- All required documents on file in the Provost's office: transcripts, updated CV; and Faculty Profile System: current syllabus
- Justification: A narrative justification that addresses how the individuals' accomplishments constitute a level of preparation for the instructional assignment comparable to that of a terminal degree in the teaching field and how the individual's graduate degree contributed to his/her accomplishment and preparation to teach this course. Also, the hiring authority should provide key course objectives and explain the evidence for concluding that the individual is prepared to meet those objectives.
- Coursework taken that is relevant to instruction of course
- Professional licensure and certifications
- Honors and awards
- Continuous documented excellence in teaching
- Demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes
- Professional/work experience (give number of years)
- Sustained artistic or creative accomplishments that directly relate to instruction of course
- Sustained record of research that directly relates to instruction of course (provide detail on publications, grants, and/or patents)
- Unique qualifications, including an explanation of why no other individual is better qualified to teach course
- Other relevant skills
- Other relevant experiences
- Other relevant information