



Faculty Credentials / Qualifications Policy

I. Title:

Faculty Credentials / Qualifications Policy

II. Policy Statement:

Alabama State University (ASU) employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish its missions and goals. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, ASU gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline in accordance with Credential Guidelines published by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The instructor assigned teaching responsibility for each academic credit course offered at ASU must document having the proper credentials for the discipline in which he or she is teaching.

ASU 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.

The purpose of this policy is to define the credentials expected and to describe the credentialing process for full-time and adjunct (part-time) faculty, graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), and other individuals to teach courses at ASU. Additionally, the purpose of this policy is to establish the requirements, processes and procedures set forth and to monitor the faculty credentialing process occurring at ASU. 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) Comprehensive Standard 6.2(a), 6.2(b), 6.2(c).

III. Scope:

This policy applies to all individuals assigned an instructional role in a credit-bearing class that will appear as the Instructor of Record for ASU offered courses. Individuals who are invited to deliver a guest presentation or presentations are exempt from this policy.

Alabama State University will ensure continued compliance with SACSCOC Comprehensive Standards: 6.2(a), 6.2(b), and 6.2(c) of the Commission on Colleges, which reads as follows:

For each of its educational programs, the institution

- a. justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members. (Faculty qualifications)

b. employs a sufficient number of full-time faculty members to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review. (Program faculty)

c. assigns appropriate responsibility for program coordination. (Program coordination)

ASU defines faculty credentials based on guidelines provided by the SACSCOC, with additional support from the ASU Faculty Handbook.

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Justification based on academic credentials:

- a. **Faculty teaching general education courses at the undergraduate level:** doctoral or master’s degree in the teaching discipline or master’s degree in a related discipline with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours/30 graduate quarter hours in the teaching discipline).
- b. **Faculty teaching associate degree courses not designed for transfer to the baccalaureate degree:** bachelor’s or associate’s degree in the teaching discipline and demonstrated competence/experience in the teaching discipline.
- c. **Faculty teaching basic computation and communication skills in non-degree occupational programs:** master’s degree preferred in the teaching discipline or master’s degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours/30 quarter hours in the teaching discipline); however, will accept bachelor’s degree in the teaching discipline and work or other verifiable experience which helps them relate these skills.
- d. **Faculty teaching learning support courses:** doctorate or master’s degree preferred in the teaching discipline or master’s degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours/30 quarter hours in the teaching discipline); however, will accept bachelor’s degree in the teaching or related discipline and either teaching/tutoring experience or graduate training in remedial education specific to the discipline.
- e. **Faculty teaching non-degree, diploma occupational courses:** diploma in the teaching discipline and/or licensure/certification in field (if applicable) with an emphasis on competence gained through work experience.
- f. **Faculty teaching non-degree certificate level courses:** certificate in the teaching discipline and/or licensure/certification in field (if applicable) with an emphasis on competence gained through work experience.

***Alabama State University does not offer associate level programs; section b above does not apply.**

IV. Effective Date:

This policy is effective upon official approval by the ASU Board of Trustees

V. Audience (Designated Responsibilities and Applicability of Faculty Credentialing / Qualifications Policy):

All employees are expected to follow this policy. The Accreditation Liaison, President, Provost, Associate Provost, Assistant Provost, Vice Presidents, Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs, and Faculty:

- a. Faculty members and adjunct (part-time) instructors employed are responsible for submitting documentation of their academic credentials and certifications including transcripts, at the time of hire or upon request if additional documentation is needed.
- b. Department Chairs will complete the ASU Faculty Credentials Verification Checklist (Appendix A). If the credentials are based on experience both the ASU Faculty Credentials Verification Checklist and the ASU Faculty Qualification by Exception Form (Appendix B) must be completed and submitted to the appropriate College Dean. This is done at time of hire or appointment recommendation for faculty or if teaching responsibilities are expanded to include courses which were not previously listed on the faculty member's approved ASU Faculty Credentials Verification Checklist.
- c. Deans receive the ASU Faculty Credentials Verification Checklist form (Appendix A) from the Department Chairs and once approved, submit package to Academic Affairs for credential approval. If the credentials are based on experience, the ASU Faculty Qualification by Exception Form from Appendix B is submitted to the Provost for approval.
- d. The Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs provides oversight for the faculty credentialing process. This includes final approval on any credentials based on experience using the ASU Faculty Credentials Verification Checklist (Appendix A) or any disagreement on fields in which the credential is held.

VI. Policy Management:

- a. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness staff will audit course assignments each semester to verify faculty credentials.
- b. The Office of Academic Affairs will maintain a copy of the faculty credentialing file.
- c. The Office of Human Resources will house official personnel files.

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

VII. Definition of Faculty Credentials/Qualifications:

The following definitions relate to qualifying faculty by credentials. All instructors of record must be qualified under the preceding and following guidelines.

- a. **Instructor of Record:** The term “instructor of record” refers to any individual teaching a course whose name appears on the grade roll for the course, including independent studies and clinical/lab instruction. The instructor of record meets with the class, teaches independently, evaluates the students' performances, and is responsible for assigning the grades to students.
- b. **Teaching Discipline (or Concentration):** Preferred concentration (major) as identified on the transcript; the majority of the faculty member's coursework should be related (by prefix or course title/description) to this concentration and should closely correspond to competencies for those courses within the discipline in which the faculty will be teaching.
- c. **Related Teaching Discipline:** Related disciplines must be closely related to the teaching discipline. In completing the ASU Faculty Credentials Verification Checklist, you may also use this section to document coursework that strengthens the faculty member's overall case; all relevant qualifying coursework should be included, even if it is not a part of the faculty member's major course of study.
- d. **Standard Documentation of Credentials:**

Official Transcripts – The University requires all instructional faculty, whether full-time or part-time, to provide an official transcript of their highest degree attained. If this degree is not directly related to their teaching assignment, an official transcript of the degree that is relevant to the teaching assignment must also be provided. When the degree(s) represented by the official transcript(s) is/are not directly related to the employee's teaching assignment, the hiring unit or department must also submit an Exceptions to Qualifications form to provide written justification demonstrating how the instructor is qualified to teach the courses they have been assigned.

Curriculum Vitae/Resume- The University requires all instructional faculty whether full-time or part-time, to provide a curriculum vitae (CV) or resume. Although a curriculum vitae or resume can never be used alone to justify an individual's qualification, it is essential for the University to have complete information on the background of each instructor of record. An individual's curriculum vitae (CV) or resume is not enough on its own and the SACSCOC expects institutions to substantiate additional qualifications that are based on other work and/or experience outlined in the CV or resume.

VIII. Exceptions to Qualifications:

Academic credentials, including earned degrees, are the primary qualifications for faculty members. However, in exceptional cases, other types of qualifications may also be deemed appropriate. All instructors (tenured, tenure-track, full-time temporary, and adjuncts) must possess the appropriate credentials to teach their assigned courses.

The SACSCOC permits institutions to employ faculty who do not meet the credential guidelines as long as the institution has a process and criteria for justifying and documenting exceptions. In the case of an exception, Alabama State University uses the Exceptions to Qualifications Form, to allow for justification to make a compelling case for how the alternative qualifications serve as an equivalency for the lack of the expected academic credentials. Examples of acceptable documentation include but are not limited to the following: professional experience, academic and professional accomplishment (e.g., awards, peer recognition, distinction in field, etc.), and scholarly contributions. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

IX. Procedures:

Hiring procedures for Adjunct (part-time) and Full-time Faculty are stipulated by the Office of Human Resources in accordance with the Alabama State University Office of Human Resources Procedures Manual.

Once a full-time or adjunct (part-time) instructor is considered for possible hire at ASU, the credentials of the instructor must be verified to be in compliance with the qualifications required by ASU and SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 6.2. The credentials of all full-time and part-time instructors must be verified prior to employment.

Document History

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