

## Faculty Teaching Qualifications Policy

This policy establishes specific teaching qualification standards that align with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) guidelines and comply with SACSCOC Standard 6.2.a, which states, “For each of its educational programs, the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members (Faculty qualifications).” These teaching qualification standards apply to all teaching faculty regardless of contract type (i.e. full-time tenure-track, full-time non-tenure track, part-time, volunteer, graduate teaching assistant).

UTRGV must justify and document the qualifications of its faculty to demonstrate compliance with SACSCOC Standard 6.2.a. To achieve this, each department chair (or equivalent unit head) is responsible for making a clear, compelling case to support each faculty hire and teaching assignment and providing evidence supporting the faculty member’s qualifications with respect to the subject/content of each course taught. There are two ways to demonstrate a faculty member’s qualifications:

1. Academic credentials alone (i.e. degrees and coursework)
2. Qualification other than academic credentials (or combined with academic credentials) that are appropriate for teaching particular courses

Primary consideration should be given to the highest earned degree in the teaching discipline (or closely related discipline) when making hiring decisions and teaching assignments.

### Qualification by Academic Credentials

When qualifying an instructor **by academic credentials alone**, the following guidelines apply: Faculty teaching **general education and lower division baccalaureate** courses may be qualified by

- Earned doctoral or terminal degree in the discipline or a closely related discipline, OR
- Master’s degree or higher in the teaching discipline or a closely related discipline, OR
- Master’s degree or higher (in any discipline) with a concentration including a minimum of eighteen graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline, OR
- In the absence of a completed master’s degree, a concentration may be documented by providing evidence that, as part of the instructor’s doctoral or terminal degree program, master’s degree equivalency was achieved and at least eighteen graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline or a closely related discipline were successfully completed.

Faculty teaching **upper division baccalaureate courses\***, **graduate courses and first professional degree courses** may be qualified by

- Earned doctoral or terminal degree in the discipline or a closely related discipline

\*Note: exceptions to allow teaching with a master’s degree may be made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the Office of Institutional Accreditation, especially in cases where an external accrediting body allows teaching of upper level and/or graduate/professional courses by master’s

qualified faculty or where professional experience and/or research demonstrates the faculty member is qualified in the content of the course.

**Graduate Teaching Assistants** may be assigned to assist a faculty member with the delivery of course content but may not be the instructor of record. Graduate teaching assistants are restricted to assisting a faculty member with teaching undergraduate-level courses only and may be qualified to assist an instructor of record with specific undergraduate courses by

- Holding a bachelor's degree or higher appropriate to the area of service.

In addition to academic credentials, Graduate Teaching Assistants must also receive direct supervision from a faculty member who is qualified in the teaching discipline, must participate in regular in-service training, and must have planned and periodic evaluations beyond student course evaluations. The Graduate Teaching Assistant must also meet all university and department/program requirements for eligibility to hold an assistantship.

A Graduate Teaching Assistant may provide non-teaching support to an instructor teaching a graduate course but cannot be the instructor of record and cannot provide support for a class in which they might enroll in the future as a part of their degree plan.

Duties include, but are not limited to, providing feedback and/or grading student work; monitoring/proctoring course activities; leading laboratory sessions, discussion sessions, or recitation labs; providing office hour assistance to students; and performing clerical tasks associated with course instruction.

**Graduate Assistant Instructors** are graduate students who hold a bachelor's degree or higher appropriate to the area of service and have successfully completed eighteen (18) hours of graduate course work in the assigned teaching discipline. Graduate Assistant Instructors may be appointed as instructors of record for lower-level (1000-2000 level) undergraduate courses. **Appointments can only be made after the successful completion of the faculty qualification process.** All required documentation must accompany the teaching validation form.

In addition to meeting the academic credentials for the teaching assignment, Graduate Assistant Instructors must also receive direct supervision from a faculty member who is qualified in the teaching discipline, must participate in regular in-service training, and must have planned and period evaluations beyond student course evaluations. Evaluations must include at least one peer observation completed by a full-time faculty member, as well as an end of term evaluation completed by the supervising faculty member. The Graduate Assistant Instructor must also meet all university and department/program requirements for eligibility to hold an assistantship.

**Graduate Associate Instructors** are doctoral students who are in the last phase of their doctoral program (i.e. have completed more than seventy-five percent (75%) of the coursework required for the doctoral degree, or who are at the dissertation stage), who are unconditionally enrolled as a doctoral student, hold a bachelor's degree or higher appropriate to the area of service, and have successfully completed eighteen (18) hours of graduate course work in the assigned teaching discipline. Graduate Associate Instructors may be appointed as instructors of record for lower-level (1000-2000 level) undergraduate courses. In disciplines where entry level major coursework is at the junior level, Graduate Associate Instructors may be appointed as instructors of record for junior level courses (3000 level). **Appointments can only be made after the successful completion of the faculty qualification process.**

All required documentation must accompany the teaching validation form.

In addition to meeting the academic credentials for the teaching assignment, Graduate Associate Instructors must also receive direct supervision from a faculty member who is qualified in the teaching discipline, must participate in regular in-service training, and must have planned and period evaluations beyond student course evaluations. Evaluations must include at least one peer observation completed by a full-time faculty member, as well as an end of term evaluation completed by the supervising faculty member. The Graduate Teaching Assistant must also meet all university and department/program requirements for eligibility to hold an assistantship.

Graduate students who hold a master's degree in a discipline but have not yet completed at least seventy-five percent (75%) of their doctoral program as required for appointment as a Graduate Associate Instructor, may be appointed as Graduate Assistant Instructors to teach specific lower-level undergraduate courses for which they may be qualified by virtue of the coursework completed for the master's degree. The Graduate Assistant Instructor must also meet all university and department/program requirements for eligibility to hold an assistantship.

### **Qualification by Other Demonstrated Competencies and Achievements**

Academic credentials are the primary means of qualification for all instructors of record at UTRGV, regardless of contract type, level of courses taught, academic program, or teaching site. However, UTRGV recognizes that, for certain courses, qualifications other than academic credentials (or combined with academic credentials) may be appropriate. Teaching qualifications including consideration of other demonstrated competencies, either in conjunction with or in lieu of academic credentials, must be reviewed on a case-by-case and course-by-course basis. Qualification by other demonstrated competencies should be rare and should include compelling evidence of competencies and achievements. Qualification based on professional experience should show substantial and significant evidence of professional progress in a field related to the teaching assignment.

Other qualifications may include:

- Professional licensure or certifications
- Relevant undergraduate and graduate degrees
- A scholarly record in the teaching discipline or a closely related discipline
- Contract or grant work
- Work experience in the field
- Honors and awards
- Continuous documented excellence in teaching at the collegiate level and at an accredited institution other than UTRGV
- Other relevant demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes

### **Qualification for Team Teaching**

Some courses, for example interdisciplinary courses, may be team-taught by two or more faculty members based on their expertise in specific content areas of the course. In these cases, each faculty member is considered an instructor of record and must be qualified to the specific course content or component for which s/he is responsible within the course. The faculty member may be qualified by virtue of academic credentials alone, or by a combination of academic credentials and other demonstrated competencies and achievements as described above. Teaching validation for each instructor should include information on the specific course content for which the instructor will be responsible and document the instructor's qualifications for teaching that content.

### **Required Documentation for Academic Credentials**

All instructors, regardless of contract type, who are qualified to teach based in whole or in part on academic credentials must have received the qualifying degree(s) or qualifying coursework from an accredited institution (or international equivalent). The institution awarding the degree or providing the coursework must be accredited by an accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). It is not sufficient for a program within an institution to be accredited if the institution granting the credential is not itself accredited. Official transcripts reflecting the successful completion of the qualifying credential(s) must be provided for inclusion in the official faculty file. If the qualifying credential(s) is (are) awarded by an institution outside of the United States, the U.S. equivalency of the credential(s) must be evaluated by an approved credential evaluation service even if the transcript is provided in English.

### **Required Documentation for Other Demonstrated Competencies and Achievements**

All instructors whose qualifications are based on competencies other than (or in combination with) their academic credentials (degrees and coursework), must provide appropriate and compelling evidence of the other demonstrated competencies and achievements related to the learning outcomes of the course(s) taught. All evidence should include dates corresponding to the qualifying activities. When qualifying an instructor based on his or her work experience in the field, specific job titles and relevant duties should also be provided. For all instructor qualifications that include other competencies or achievements, a current curriculum vita (CV) or resume must be provided. Additional evidence should be provided as appropriate and may include copies of licensures or certifications, awards, diplomas, transcripts, or other relevant documentation.

### **Additional College, Department, or Program Requirements**

This policy provides the minimum university requirements that all instructors must meet to qualify to teach courses at UTRGV. Colleges, departments, and programs may have additional requirements as long as those requirements meet or exceed university-level requirements.

Any additional requirements should be supported by external standards such as accrediting requirements, professional guidelines, or national best practices for the discipline. The department/program faculty and the College Dean's Office must approve all additional requirements before routing to the Office of Institutional Accreditation for review and approval.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Department/Program**

Each program/department will develop a list of terminal/professional degrees/majors, certifications, licensures, and coursework that qualify a faculty member to teach each course or series of courses using the Academic Qualifications for Teaching Validation template. In developing the academic qualifications list, the department/program must ensure that academic qualifications are at or above the minimum university requirements identified in this standard. The completed qualifications template will be submitted to the Office of the Dean who will review and approve the qualifications prior to submitting the list to the Office of Institutional Accreditation for review and approval. The program/department faculty must periodically review the list to determine if revisions are needed. Lists may be updated at any time but must be reviewed at least once every two years. Any revisions will be submitted to the Office of the Dean who will review and approve prior to submitting the list to the Office of Institutional Accreditation for review and approval.

### **Department Chairs and/or Program Coordinators Responsibilities**

Department Chairs/Program Coordinators will work with faculty to develop the degree qualifications list. Department Chairs/Program Coordinators are also responsible for submitting teaching validation forms and supporting documentation for all new faculty and for faculty members with new teaching assignments that have not previously been validated. All instructors of record must have teaching assignments validated prior to the first day of classes. In cases where more than one instructor is teaching a course (i.e. team teaching), all instructors must be credentialed, not just the primary instructor.

### **College Dean's Office**

The College Dean's Office will work closely with the department chairs and/or program coordinators to review the degree qualifications template for each program. The dean's office approves the list and submits it to the Office of Institutional Accreditation for review and approval. The dean's office ensures that the list undergoes periodic review and approves any revisions to the list prior to submitting the revisions to the Office of Institutional Accreditation for review and approval. Lists may be updated as needed but must be reviewed at least once every two years.

### **The Office of Institutional Accreditation**

The Office of Institutional Accreditation is responsible for reviewing all teaching assignment validations to determine if the instructor meets university and program requirements. The Office may approve the teaching assignment validation, contact the college for additional information, or reject the request for validation. The Office of Institutional Accreditation will apply the approved terminal/professional degrees/majors list and additional program/department standards to all verifications of teaching validations.

- Required documentation includes:
  - A current Curriculum Vita (in the case of new hires or instructors with a break in service over a full semester)
  - Official transcript (or recognized equivalent) of highest degree awarded. *(Note: for Graduate Teaching Associates/Assistant Instructors, the UTRGV transcript should include all coursework up to the most recently completed semester of study.)*
    - Costs associated with obtaining transcripts and with validation of foreign transcripts are the responsibility of the faculty member
  - If the instructor is assigned to teach courses in a related discipline, the department may be asked to provide additional documentation regarding qualifications. Additional documentation may include, but is not limited to:
    - Transcripts for additional degrees completed
    - Certifications
    - Listing of courses completed that meet requirements for teaching course content
    - Documentation of number of relevant graduate hours completed
    - Relevant professional (not teaching) experience in the field