



POLICY ON DETERMINING QUALIFIED FACULTY

University of Detroit Mercy is known for our Catholic identity and the tradition of our religious sponsors: the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Our educational philosophy is grounded in the characteristics of a Jesuit education and the characteristics of a Mercy education. The University hires qualified faculty who are committed to carrying out the mission "to integrate the intellectual, spiritual, ethical and social development of students." To ensure consistency and transparency in the hiring of qualified faculty, Detroit Mercy uses the Higher Learning Commission's guidelines for determining qualified faculty.

Higher Learning Commission

I. HLC Guidelines for Determining Qualified Faculty

- a. Qualified faculty members are identified primarily by credentials, but other factors, including but not limited to equivalent experience, may be considered by the institution in determining whether a faculty member is qualified.
- b. Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty) possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach, except in programs for terminal degrees or when equivalent experience is established.
- c. In terminal degree programs, faculty members possess the same level of degree.
- d. When faculty members are employed based on equivalent experience, the institution defines a minimum threshold of experience and an evaluation process that is used in the appointment process.
- e. Faculty teaching general education courses, or other non-occupational courses, hold a master's degree or higher in the discipline or subfield¹. If a faculty member holds a master's degree or higher in a discipline or subfield¹ 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 subfield¹ in which they teach.
- f. Instructors teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the discipline and have a record of research, scholarship or achievement appropriate for the graduate program.

¹ An academic subfield refers to a component of the discipline in which the instruction is delivered. The focus, in the context of HLC accreditation, is on the courses being taught and the general appropriateness of faculty qualifications with reference to such courses. The key consideration is whether a degree in the field or a focus in the specialization held by a faculty member appropriately matches the courses the faculty member would teach in accordance with the conventions of the academic field.

II. Using Credentials as a Basis for Determining Minimally Qualified Faculty

- a.** Faculty credentials refer to the degrees that faculty have earned that establish their credibility as content experts and thus their competence to teach that content in the classroom.
- b.** Common expectations for faculty credentials in higher education include the following:
 - i. Faculty teaching in higher education institutions should have completed a program of study in the discipline or subfield² (as applicable) in which they teach, and/or for which they develop curricula, with coursework at least one level above that of the courses being taught or developed. Completion of a degree in a specific field enhances an instructor's depth of subject matter knowledge and is easily identifiable.
 - ii. With the exception noted, faculty teaching in undergraduate programs should hold a degree at least one level above that of the program in which they are teaching.
 - iii. If a faculty member holds a master's degree or higher in a discipline 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 in which he or she is teaching.
 - iv. If an individual faculty member has not achieved 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline in which he or she teaches, the institution should be able to explain and justify its decision to assign the individual to the courses taught.
 - v. These decisions should be supported by policy and procedure that are acceptable to the professional judgment of HLC peer reviewers.
 - vi. Faculty teaching in career and technical education college-level certificate and occupational associate's degree programs should hold a bachelor's degree in the field and/or a combination of education, training and tested experience.
 - vii. Faculty teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the discipline and have a record of research, scholarship or achievement appropriate for the graduate program.
 - viii. Faculty guiding doctoral education should have a record of scholarship and preparation to teach at the doctoral level. Research and scholarship should be appropriate to the program and degree offered.

III. Using Tested Experience as a Basis for Determining Minimally Qualified Faculty

- a.** Tested experience may substitute for an earned credential or portions thereof. Institutions may determine that a faculty member is qualified based on experience that the institution determines is equivalent to the degree it would otherwise require for a faculty position.

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- b. This experience should be tested experience in that it includes a breadth and depth of experience outside of the classroom in real-world situations relevant to the discipline in which the faculty member would be teaching.
- c. The value of using tested experience to determine minimal faculty qualifications depends upon the relevance of the individual faculty member's experience both to the degree level and to the specific content of the courses the faculty member is teaching.
- d. An institution that intends to use tested experience as a basis for hiring faculty must have well-defined policies, procedures and documentation that demonstrate when such experience is sufficient to determine that the faculty member has the expertise necessary to teach students in that discipline.
- e. In their policies on tested experience as a basis for hiring faculty members, institutions are encouraged to develop faculty-hiring qualifications that outline a minimum threshold of experience and a system of evaluation.
- f. Tested experience qualifications should be established for specific disciplines and programs and could include skill sets, types of certifications or additional credentials, and experiences.
- g. Documented qualifications would ensure consistency and transparency in hiring and human resources policies.
- h. The faculty hiring qualifications related to tested experience should be reviewed and approved through the faculty governance process at the institution—a step that should be highlighted for peer review teams, as appropriate.

IV. Determining Minimally Qualified Faculty in the Context of Dual Credit³

- a. HLC determined that accredited institutions awarding college credit by means of dual credit arrangements must assure the quality and integrity of such offerings and their comparability to the same college credit offered on the institution's main campus or at the institution's other locations. As such, the faculty members teaching dual credit courses should hold the same minimal qualifications as required by the institution of its own faculty.
- b. HLC also recognizes that dual credit faculty members, who have obtained a Master of Education degree but not a master's degree in a discipline such as English, Communications, History, Mathematics, etc., may have academic preparation to satisfy HLC's expectations. The attainment of a Master of Education degree does not demonstrate a qualification to teach dual credit courses in a particular discipline unless it is demonstrated that the content of that faculty member's Master of Education degree is sufficiently related to the discipline of the dual credit course.
- c. Accredited institutions should monitor closely the earned credentials along with the tested experience of dual credit faculty with the understanding that allowances for tested experience may occur.

³ Dual credit refers to courses taught to high school students at the high school for which the students receive both high school credit and college credit. These courses or programs are offered under a variety of names; HLC's Criteria on dual credit apply to all of them, as they involve the accredited institution's responsibility for the quality of its offerings.

V. Detroit Mercy's Minimum Threshold of Faculty Experience

The University's minimum standard for acceptance of tested experience in lieu of a terminal degree is extensive practical experience in the field related to the content of the course(s) to be taught and/or the scholarly activity that will be supervised. (Tested experience can only be counted post-degree completion).

- a. Details of tested experience qualifications specific to disciplines and programs are left to each college or school (e.g., skill sets, certifications, additional credentials, and experiences) and are available upon request.
 - i. School of Architecture
 - ii. College of Business Administration
 - iii. School of Dentistry
 - iv. College of Engineering & Science
 - v. College of Health Professions and McAuley School of Nursing
 - vi. School of Law
 - vii. College of Liberal Arts and Education

VI. Detroit Mercy's System of Evaluation for Qualified Faculty at Time of Hire

- a. To ensure consistency and transparency in hiring, faculty qualifications are documented at the time of hire using the [Detroit Mercy Qualified Faculty Assurance Form](#).
- b. The electronic form is completed by the Dean or a representative of the Dean's Office. An electronic copy of each Detroit Mercy Qualified Faculty Assurance Form is sent to the affiliated Dean and the Provost. The Office of Academic Affairs will provide a copy of the submitted form to the Office of Human Resources for inclusion in personnel files. All database records will be maintained by the Office of Academic Affairs.