



## Minimum Qualifications for Instructors

No: SAAP 7-10

**Authority:** Higher Learning Commission CRRT.B.2

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**Initiator:** Provost

**Responsible Party:** Provost

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### I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to articulate a university-wide standard for instructor qualifications at UWM. This policy is developed to meet accreditation standards of the Higher Learning Commission on minimum qualifications for instructors and in support of UWM's commitment to provide students with the best possible learning experience. As an institution accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, UWM has the obligation to demonstrate that all instructors are appropriately qualified to teach the courses that are assigned to them.

### II. Policy

- a. Applicability: This policy applies to all instructors (including those with appointments as faculty or instructional academic staff) who teach courses for which students will earn UWM credit. This policy does not apply to graduate teaching assistants who work under the direct supervision of a faculty member or an instructional academic staff member.
- b. Qualification by Credentials: The primary method of determining the qualifications of an instructor will be based on their academic credentials including earned degree in the field or subject area relevant to the course taught. The degree must be from an institution accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by the US Department of Education and/or a professional accrediting organization, or the equivalent quality of university or college in countries outside the United States.
  - i. Instructors teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the discipline and have a record of research, scholarship or achievement appropriate to the program and degree offered.
  - ii. Instructors teaching in undergraduate programs must have master's degree or higher in the discipline or program area in which they teach or develop courses.
- c. Alternative Qualification: If an instructor does not meet the credentials requirement, the applicable department (or equivalent) and school/college have the option to appoint him/her to teach the course based on tested experience. Departments, or equivalents, in consultation with the relevant school/college,

must have written guidelines on the minimum threshold of experience and have processes for reviewing and documenting the alternative qualifications of such instructors. In developing the guidelines, departments, or equivalent, may consider the following factors:

- i. Substantial (greater than 18 semester credits or the approximate equivalent thereto) graduate-level academic coursework in the discipline or program area,
- ii. Practical experience in a relevant field (e.g., arts, business, legal, or public service sector),
- iii. Relevant clinical experience,
- iv. Demonstrated competence or fluency in a language other than English and demonstrated ability to teach that language, and
- v. Related research experience in industry or government agencies

It is the expectation of the institution that the decisions to hire instructors under this provision will be relatively rare, and made in light of providing students with the best possible learning experience.

- d. Documentation Requirement: Documentation of department, or equivalent, guidelines and processes should be on file with the relevant Dean or Director's office. Upon request from an external reviewer, the department, or equivalent, must produce documentation of individual instructor's credentials and/or tested experience, and the rationale for the decision to assign specific courses to the instructor.

### **III. Procedures**

- a. Each department, or equivalent, should document the verification of instructor qualifications using the attached form or an equivalent document.
- b. The minimum qualifications statements in faculty and instructional academic staff vacancy postings should have language consistent with this policy.
- c. The hiring unit should ensure that the instructor qualifications are verified before assigning courses to the instructor.

### **IV. Forms**

See [Instructor Qualification Verification Form](#).