



Policy on Qualifications of Course Instructors

Policy Statement

This policy is designed to ensure that individuals assigned instructional responsibilities for credit-bearing courses are qualified to teach at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The University establishes and documents the qualifications of instructors consistent with the University's standards of quality and the *Principles of Accreditation* established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). *The changes in this policy are expected of all institutions by SACSCOC.*

This policy applies to: (1) all individuals assigned as Instructor of Record or as a Primary or Secondary Instructor in any section of a credit-bearing course, including lecture, laboratory, seminar, clinical, and other sections, regardless of academic rank or appointment type; and (2) all class sections offered for UNC-Chapel Hill credit and entered on student transcripts as UNC-Chapel Hill courses.

Instructional Roles

Instructional role is defined by the academic level of the course section assigned and the individual's responsibility for that course section. The following are the categories of instructional roles that may be assigned to faculty members, or in some circumstances, to graduate teaching assistants.

Instructor of Record (often referred to as "Course Director") -- Responsible for: (1) the overall design, contents, and delivery of the course section; (2) overseeing all other faculty or graduate teaching assistants who participate in delivering some component of the course (such as conducting lectures, labs, field work, or related activities); and (3) approval of the final course grade assigned to each student. There must be a qualified Instructor of Record for each credit-bearing course section offered.

Primary Instructor -- May be assigned to any of the following responsibilities: (1) development of the course section content and materials, (2) delivering lectures, (3) managing class-related activities (such as labs, field work, etc.), (4) evaluating or grading student work that contributes to final course grades, and/or approving the final course grade assigned to each student. Typically responsible for 50% or more of the total effort for



the course. A Primary Instructor might or might not be the Instructor of Record for a given course.

Secondary Instructor -- May participate in any of the following: (1) development of the course section material, (2) delivering lectures, (3) managing class-related activities (such as labs, fieldwork, etc.), and (4) evaluating or grading student work that contributes to the final course grades assigned. Does not have authority to approve final course grades. Typically responsible for less than 50% of the overall effort for the course, and therefore cannot be designated as the Instructor of Record.

Teaching Fellow -- A graduate student who has been appointed as an Instructor for a course section. Depending on qualifications and course level, may be designated as a Secondary Instructor, Primary Instructor, or Instructor of Record. In any case, Teaching Fellows must be directly supervised by a full-time faculty member.

Graduate Teaching/Instructional Assistant -- A graduate student who provides support to the Instructor of Record by coordinating some class-related activities such as setting up labs, grading student work, tutoring students, or supervising field placements.

Qualifications for Teaching

To qualify for a teaching assignment at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, an individual must be appointed to an appropriate instructional role with the University and meet specific academic and experiential requirements for the courses to be taught.

Instructional Appointment

Consistent with the University's Faculty Pay Policy, all individuals assigned as an Instructor with 10% or more responsibility for the overall effort for the course section must hold an active faculty appointment at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (tenured, tenure-track, fixed term, part-time, temporary, etc.) during any term in which they teach. Those responsible for less than 10% of the total effort for the course section may be required to have a faculty appointment or meet other standards at the discretion of the dean. This applies to individuals who are currently employed by the University with a primary appointment in a non-faculty position, including administrators, student support services, post-doctoral, and other professionals. The academic unit that assigns a non-faculty employee to a teaching role must ensure that the employee has an active secondary faculty appointment.

All graduate students assigned to teach or co-teach a course section must be appointed as a non-faculty employee in the role of Teaching Fellow.



Academic Qualifications

An Instructor's qualifications must be appropriate for the level, discipline, and topic of each course taught. Qualifications may consist of academic credentials (earned degrees or completed coursework) or alternative credentials (professional experience or demonstrated competency) or a combination of these credentials.

When determining acceptable qualifications a person must have to serve as Instructor, UNC-Chapel Hill gives primary consideration to the highest degree earned. The qualifying degree should be in the same discipline or one closely related to the subject matter of the course to be taught. The level of the course dictates the minimum level of the degree the instructor must hold, as described below.

Undergraduate General Education and Baccalaureate Courses:

- **Faculty:** Earned doctorate or master's degree in the same or closely related discipline as the course taught, or master's degree with a concentration in that discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours).
- **Graduate Teaching Fellow:** A master's degree or 18 graduate semester hours in the same or related teaching discipline prior to teaching the course, direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic evaluations.

Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate Courses:

- **Faculty:** Earned doctorate or terminal degree in the same or closely related discipline as the course taught.
- **Graduate Teaching Fellows:** Not permitted unless they already have an earned doctorate or terminal degree in the course taught.

Alternative Qualifications

In lieu of an earned terminal degree or graduate coursework in an appropriate field as described above, Instructors may be qualified by professional experience or by a combination of education and experience. The University also considers other qualifications, including, as appropriate, undergraduate or graduate degrees, specialized coursework, record of research in the field, related work experiences, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes of the course.



Credentials in the field alone are not necessarily sufficient to establish suitable expertise. Department chairs or their designees are responsible for ensuring that individuals serving as Instructor of Record have suitable expertise in the specific topic or content area of that course. When an instructor teaches a course in which s/he has no documented topical expertise (through, e.g., scholarly research in the area or graduate coursework), department chairs or their designees must document the existence of other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and learning outcomes.

Approval of Qualifications for Teaching and Justification of Exceptions

Within each college/school, the dean assigns responsibility to the department chair or associate dean for documenting and justifying the qualifications for each course offered by the department/program. The department chair or associate dean shall review the qualifications of the instructor at the time of initial appointment, but in all cases before an instructor begins teaching.

The dean is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the qualifications of those with a pedagogical role are justified and the credentials verified. The dean or designee must review and approve all appointments and teaching assignments that are based on alternative qualifications. Written justification for exceptions from the degree requirements listed above must be kept in the school and filed with the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost's Office of Academic Personnel.

Consistent with the Provost's Guidelines for Graduate Teaching Assistants, assignment of a Graduate Teaching Fellow as a Primary or Secondary Instructor for a graduate course is an exception that must be approved on a case-by-case basis by the dean of The Graduate School in addition to the dean of the instructional unit. If permission is granted, a full-time faculty member must be designated as the graduate student's supervisor and the Instructor of Record for the course.

Questions about the appropriateness of qualifications for teaching should be referred to the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost's Office of Academic Personnel.

Documentation of Qualifications

Documents verifying the qualifications of an individual in a pedagogical role may include official transcripts, letters of recommendation, professional licenses or certifications, honors and awards, and other evidence of professional experience.



When the primary qualification for teaching a course is an earned doctoral or terminal degree or completion of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline of the course, the appropriate documentation is an official transcript from the institution that awarded the degrees and/or course credits.

When the primary qualification is an earned degree from a foreign institution, appropriate documentation also includes an evaluation of the foreign transcript by a certified external agency.

When an individual is qualified for teaching a course by alternative professional credentials or demonstrated competency, required documentation includes: (1) an official transcript for highest earned degree and any other credentials that are used to establish qualifications for teaching courses; (2) objective evidence of qualifying experiences such as prior work experience, professional licenses and certifications, and other qualifications; and (3) the department head's written justification clearly describing the relationship between the experience and course content and level.

Beginning with appointments effective for the fall semester 2016, individuals with instructional duties who will or may serve as Instructors of Record, Primary Instructors, or Secondary Instructors are responsible for providing the documentation necessary to verify their qualifications before the end of their first semester of employment at UNC-Chapel Hill. This requirement will be stated in the appointment letter as a condition of employment. Approval from the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost is required in cases in which the instructor cannot provide a transcript or other documentation due to exceptional circumstances. This waiver, and the documentation supporting it, must be kept on file in the appointing department and in the Academic Personnel Office.

Official transcripts, documentation of alternative qualifications, and letters of justification will be maintained by the Office of Academic Personnel.

Roles and Responsibilities

Ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy belongs to the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost. Responsibility for communicating instructor qualification policies and procedures requirements is the responsibility of the Academic Personnel Office. Department chairs and deans, in consultation with the Academic Personnel Office, have primary responsibility for reviewing evidence of qualifications and verifying that appointees and current instructors meet the requirements for their instructional role and for obtaining approval for any exceptions.



The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate, masters, educational specialist, and doctorate degrees. Degree-granting institutions also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC’s website (www.sacscoc.org).

Related Policies and Procedures

Faculty Credentials Guidelines, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/faculty%20credentials.pdf>

Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1 Faculty Competence. *SACSCOC Resource Manual*, page 72-73, 2012.

Faculty Pay Policy. Academic Personnel Office, Office of the Provost.
<http://academicpersonnel.unc.edu/faculty-policies-procedures-guidelines/compensation-and-pay/>

The Professional Development of Graduate Teaching Assistants at UNC-Chapel Hill (GTA Guidelines). Office of the Provost, Revised July 2015.
<https://provost.unc.edu/files/2015/07/Graduate-TA-Guidelines-20151.pdf>

Eligibility Waiver Request Form for Graduate Teaching Assistants. Office of the Provost, 2007.
<http://provost.unc.edu/policies/faculty/>

For More Information on This Policy

Subject	Contact	Telephone	Email
Requirements for faculty appointments	Lachonya Thompson, Assistant Provost, Faculty Affairs Office	919-962-1570	lachonya@unc.edu
SACSCOC Accreditation Standards related to instructor credentials for teaching	Dr. Lynn Williford, Assistant Provost, UNC-Chapel Hill Accreditation Liaison	919-962-1500	Lynn_williford@unc.edu



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of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Responsible University Officer
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Responsible Office
Office of the Provost

Document History

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