



Guidelines and Procedures for Qualifying Faculty to Teach
(in accordance with Higher Learning Commission's Assumed Practices regarding Faculty Qualification)

Purpose

Guidelines are meant to enable the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) to comply with the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) Assumed Practices regarding Faculty Qualification. UNI is supportive of the following HLC statement in its publication entitled "[Determining Qualified Faculty Through HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices.](#)"

B.2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications

*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. 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. In terminal degree programs, faculty members possess the same level of degree.** 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."*

UNI expects faculty will be hired who "have completed a program of study in the discipline or subfield* (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..." "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 they teach." In the case of interdisciplinary courses, 18 hours in one of the disciplines will suffice.

In the unusual case when a department wishes to hire a faculty member to teach undergraduate courses who has not achieved 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline in which they teach, the decision will be based on the following criteria:

- 1) A bachelor's degree must be held.
- 2) The person has "tested experience." HLC statements explain that this "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."
- 3) For purposes of this document, "tested experience" includes the following:
 - A minimum of 5 years as a successful practitioner in a related field, as defined by the hiring department, are required.
 - Holder of certification or licensure if required or relevant to the field being taught as determined by the hiring department.
 - "Tested experience" cannot refer merely to teaching at UNI or any other institution of higher education.
- 4) The applicant must submit three letters of reference attesting to the person being a "successful practitioner."
- 5) The person may be a graduate teaching assistant supervised by a qualified faculty member who is the instructor of record.

In the unusual case when the department wishes to hire a faculty member to teach graduate courses who has not achieved a Ph.D. or other terminal degree, the decision will be based on the following criteria:

For faculty teaching in a master's program:

- 1) The applicant must hold a master's degree, congruent or related to the field of study.
- 2) The applicant must have "tested experience." HLC statements explain that this "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."
- 3) For purposes of this document, "tested experience" includes the following:
 - A minimum of 5 years as a successful practitioner, as defined by the hiring department, are required.
 - Holder of certification or licensure if required or relevant to the field of study, as determined by the hiring department.
 - "Tested experience" cannot refer merely to teaching at UNI or any other institution of higher education.
- 4) The applicant must submit three letters of reference attesting to the person being a "successful practitioner."

For faculty teaching in a doctoral program:

1. The applicant must hold a master's degree and post-master's course work in the field of study, congruent or related to the field of study.
2. The applicant must have "tested experience." **HLC statements explain that this "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."**
3. For purposes of this document, "tested experience" includes the following:
 - A minimum of 5 years as a successful practitioner, as defined by the hiring department, are required.
 - Holder of certification or licensure if required or relevant to the field of study, as determined by the hiring department.
 - "Tested experience" cannot refer merely to teaching at UNI or any other institution of higher education.
4. The applicant must submit three letters of reference attesting to the person being a "successful practitioner."

Procedure

If a department head and dean wish to hire a faculty member who does not hold the appropriate degree, the department head must gather appropriate documentation (evidence of tested experience, documentation of reference calls, copies of licensure, etc.) to attach to a written letter of justification (which the department head writes). The letter of justification will be submitted for approval along with any draft letter of offer to the faculty member to the dean of the college. For approval. If the dean approves, the justification materials (potential faculty member's CV and letter of application detailing how HLC qualifications are met) should be sent to the office of the Provost and Executive Vice President or designee for final approval before an offer is made. Once the Provost or designee has signed the approval, the approval form must be attached to the Personnel Action Form. A copy of the letter justification will be filed along with any other transcripts as evidence of meeting criteria for qualified faculty.

For instructors teaching courses at the graduate level (5000-, 6000- or 7000-level), Associate Graduate Faculty Status is required for approved instructors that are not members of the regular graduate faculty.

Please see the [Graduate Faculty Constitution, 2.2.2](#), located at:

http://www.grad.uni.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/graduate_faculty_constitution.pdf

The [Associate Graduate Faculty Status to be on Committee](#) form must be completed and submitted to the graduate dean, along with the same letter of justification and CV, for approval. This form can be found at:

<https://grad.uni.edu/faculty-staff-info>