

UIS SOE Policy Tested Experience

Purpose:

The policy outlined below pertains to decisions regarding the hiring of instructional faculty under the tested experience provision in the College of Public Affairs and Education (CPAE) at UIS. In the College's "Assessing Tested Experience for Instructional Faculty Policy" of October 17, 2024, units were instructed to create guidelines for hiring adjunct faculty. Below the SOE faculty provide the tested experience policy for SOE.

Background

Higher Learning Commission Minimum Qualifications by Credentials:

Under its Assumed Practices B.2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications, HLC requires that "The institution establishes and maintains reasonable policies and procedures to determine that faculty are qualified. The factors that an institution considers as part of these policies and procedures could include, but are not limited to: the achievement of academic credentials, progress toward academic credentials, equivalent experience, or some combination thereof" (Higher Learning Commission, 2024). The most commonly used qualification is the academic credential, "that an instructor possesses 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. In terminal degree programs, an instructor possesses the same level of degree" (Higher Learning Commission, 2023, p. 2). Progress toward academic credentials means "demonstrable, current, and consistent progress toward the academic credential(s) deemed relevant by the institution for an instructor to be qualified" (p.3). Equivalent experience means "experience that is commensurate with achievement of academic credentials such that it qualifies an instructor for the instruction. This could include through a minimum threshold of experience; research and/or scholarship; recognized achievement; and/or other activities and factors" (p. 3).

Guidelines were provided by HLC in 2023 entitled "Institutional Policies and Procedures for Determining Faculty Qualifications: HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices" to clarify the HLC expectations. Herein, the HLC Board stated, "In 2023, the HLC Board of Trustees revised the Assumed Practices to further clarify that an institution must establish and maintain policies and procedures for determining that faculty are qualified; and that an institution could consider a variety of factors as part of these policies and procedures." Hence, each institution of higher education is expected to define and consistently apply their standard to determine faculty qualifications.

Illinois Board of Higher Education Minimum Faculty Qualifications

Similarly Illinois Board of Higher Education rules for public institutions of higher education [23 Illinois Administrative Code 1050.30(a)(3)(B)] state "At a minimum, faculty shall have a degree from an institution accredited by a U.S. Department of Education and/or Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognized accrediting body or a degree from another country evaluated for U.S. equivalency in the discipline they will teach or for which they will develop curricula at least one level above that of the courses being taught or developed." However, under a caveat (v) exceptions are allowed "for professional experience, equivalent training and other qualifications; however, except in extraordinary circumstances, these should prove the exception and not the rule in meeting faculty qualification requirements."

UIS SOE Policy Tested Experience Provision:

The tested experience provision allows for the evaluation of instructional faculty candidates who possess specialized training/coursework and/or breadth and depth of real-world experiences relevant to the discipline in which they would be teaching. These experiences may include skill sets, certifications, professional development, licensure, additional credentials, practical (e.g., art, law), clinical, or research experience. Instructional faculty using tested experience must hold a Bachelor's degree.

SOE proposed standards for tested experience

Under the CPAE tested experience policy each “unit will submit a copy of the written standards for tested experience to the dean” for consideration. As a reminder, under the policy, these “Decisions made under the tested experience provision will be relatively rare and exceptional, and will be guided by CPAE’s commitment to delivering exceptional education to its students. Such decisions will only be made when candidates' tested experience significantly enhances the quality and relevance of instruction beyond what is typically achieved through standard credentials.”

Per the CPAE guidelines:

Step 1: Submission and Documentation

- a) Candidates applying for instructional faculty positions under the tested experience exception will submit their applications, which must include evidence of tested experience, such as certifications, licensure, additional credentials, practical experiences, clinical experiences, or research experience in industry or the public and nonprofit sectors.

Step 2: Evaluation of Tested Experience

- a) The Unit Executive Officer (UEO) will review each application to ensure that candidates meet the minimum qualification requirements under the unit's approved tested experience policy. The UEO will carefully examine the skills, knowledge, and expertise gained from the candidate's tested experiences, and the duration and significance of those experiences, to determine alignment with the instructional goals of CPAE and the associated program and coursework. The UEO will ensure that, in addition to holding at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, the breadth and depth of each candidate's specialized training/coursework and/or real-world experiences align with the instructional requirements of the position; enhance the candidate's potential to provide valuable insights and practical knowledge to students; and enrich the overall student learning experience.
- b) The UEO may interview candidates to allow them to elaborate on their specialized training/coursework and/or real-world experiences and how these experiences relate to the teaching role. The UEO may assess the candidate's communication skills and ability to connect their experiences to academic concepts effectively.

Step 3: Memo for Final Evaluation and Justification

- a) The UEO will prepare a memo documenting the evaluation of each candidate's tested experience and qualifications and their alignment with this policy and the unit's tested experience policy.
- b) The memo will provide a comprehensive assessment of the candidate's qualifications as discussed in Step 2(a) above.
- c) The memo will be submitted in the Academic Affairs Position Request for final approval of the hiring decision and will serve as an official record of the evaluation process.

Qualification criteria

For each proposed adjunct, the School will identify how the candidate meets the qualifications based on the three HLC categories: “the achievement of academic credentials, progress toward academic credentials, equivalent experience, or some combination thereof” (Higher Learning Commission, 2024). The HLC minimum degree requirement is the norm - “that an instructor possesses 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. In terminal degree programs, an instructor possesses the same level of degree” (Higher Learning Commission, 2023, p. 2).

For each graduate program that is accredited, the qualifications must be consistent and adhere to the requirements and policies set forth by that accrediting body.

If a candidate is seeking a teaching position and does not meet this requirement, the candidates will be asked to provide evidence of their tested experience. The criteria for the tested experience may vary by candidate but, as indicated in CPAE policy must provide evidence that “the breadth and depth of each candidate’s specialized training/coursework and/or real-world experiences align with the instructional requirements of the position; enhance the candidate’s potential to provide valuable insights and practical knowledge to students; and enrich the overall student learning experience.” The criteria will vary depending on whether the course to be taught is undergraduate or graduate.

Evidence will be considered across these categories

Undergraduate

Degree(s) in the relevant field: Bachelors, Masters, or Doctorate, or JD as appropriate for law-content courses

Progress toward academic credentials: Progress toward a master’s or doctorate in an appropriate field

Certifications/licensure: As germane to the course, professional certifications/licensure will be considered

Years of Professional Experience: Five years of management level or technical experience as germane to the course

Type of Experience: Relevant and significant professional experience. Demonstrable experience dealing with both understanding issues in the appropriate field and application in the field. Appropriate experience may include areas such as management, policy, statistics, data analytics, or professional communication, in a field relevant to the course.

Demonstration of Teaching Excellence: Prior course evaluations and/or review of course syllabus.

Graduate

Types of Courses: Graduate Courses

Degree(s) in the relevant field: Masters, or Doctorate, or JD as appropriate for law-content courses

Progress toward academic credentials: Progress toward a doctorate in an appropriate field

Certifications/licensure: As germane to the course, professional certifications/licensure will be considered

Years of Professional Experience: Five years of management level or technical experience as germane to the course

Type of Experience: Relevant and significant professional experience. Demonstrable experience dealing with both understanding issues in the appropriate field and application in the field.

References:

Higher Learning Commission. (2024). Assumed Practices.

<https://www.hlcommission.org/accreditation/policies/assumed-practices/>

Higher Learning Commission. (2023). Institutional policies and procedures for determining faculty qualifications: HLC's criteria for accreditation and assumed practices.

https://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines_OPB.pdf

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2017). 23 Illinois Administrative Code 1050.

<https://www.ibhe.org/assets/files/PublicAdminRules2017.pdf>

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