

Guidelines for Validating Instructor Credentials to Teach

SACSCOC Requirements and University Expectations

These guidelines are provided for consideration of application to all instructional faculty, including graduate teaching assistants, who are instructors of record at Texas A&M University-Commerce and its approved off-campus instructional sites.

In its Faculty Credentials Guidelines, the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) provides the following guidance regarding qualifications of individuals serving as instructors of record:

“When an institution defines faculty qualifications using faculty credentials, institutions should use the following as credential guidelines:

- a) Faculty teaching general education courses at the undergraduate level: doctorate or master’s degree in the teaching discipline or master’s degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
- b) Faculty teaching associate degree courses designed for transfer to a baccalaureate degree: doctorate or master’s degree in the teaching discipline or master’s degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
- c) Faculty teaching associate degree courses not designed for transfer to the baccalaureate degree: bachelor’s degree in the teaching discipline, or associate’s degree and demonstrated competencies in the teaching discipline.
- d) Faculty teaching baccalaureate courses: doctorate or master’s degree in the teaching discipline or master’s degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
- e) Faculty teaching graduate and post-baccalaureate course work: earned doctorate/terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline.
- f) Graduate teaching assistants: master’s in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline, direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic evaluations.”

SACSCOC standards on faculty qualifications can also state:

“The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, ... graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes.”

At Texas A&M University-Commerce, the primary indicator used to determine instructors’ qualifications to teach is possession of the highest earned doctorate/terminal degree in the designee’s discipline or a closely related field. However, Texas A&M University-Commerce recognizes, as does SACSCOC, that there may be other qualifications or related considerations that credential and individual to teach. In some cases, faculty members are considered qualified for instruction based on factors other than an in- discipline terminal degree, such as:

- Terminal degree in a closely related field
- A master's degree or at least 18 semester credit hours of graduate-level coursework in the same or a closely related field
- Professional licensure or certification in a related field or profession
- Significant professional, research, or teaching experience in the same or closely related field
- "Other qualifications"
 - a. Must possess the equivalent-level degree in the discipline being taught or closely-related field (aka formal training), and use of the qualifications below must be directly related to the course content
 - i. At least 5 years' work experience, and/or
 - ii. Refereed, discipline specific or related research/scholarly activity, and/or
 - iii. Related, discipline specific licensure or certification, and/or
 - iv. As approved by a national, discipline-specific accreditor.
 1. For instance, the National Association of Schools of Music states, in the NASM Handbook, Faculty and Staff Qualifications, "NASM recognizes the availability of doctorates for specialists in performance, composition, and some other applied disciplines. At the same time, the Association recognizes that some highly qualified practitioners may hold other academic degrees; others may not hold any academic degrees. In such cases, the institution should base appointments on experience, education, and expertise at least equivalent to those required for the master's degree in music or another appropriate field."

If any of the bulleted items above apply, the department head or their proxy is responsible for describing such qualifications for each instructor of record in the Faculty Credential Inventory (FCI) form. Note that length of time alone is not enough justification, and a detailed description of qualifications is needed. **The following general justifications are not acceptable: "Individual has a degree in the field." or "Individual taught this course previously."**