

Florida State University Policy 3A-2

Title of Policy: Credentialing Instructors of Record
Responsible Executive: Vice President for Faculty Development and
Approving Official: Provost
Effective Date: TBD-Notice and Final Approval
Revision History: New April 30, 2013, Amended March 31, 2023, Substantial
Revision _____

I. INTRODUCTION

Florida State University ensures that all instructors of record possess the academic preparation, training, and experience to teach in an academic setting, meet or exceed the minimum requirements of accrediting bodies, and accomplish the mission of the institution. This applies to all instructors of record, including but not limited to, full and part-time faculty, ~~tenured, tenure-track postdoctoral scholars,~~ clinical, visiting instructors, instructors teaching with courtesy appointments, adjuncts, and ~~adjunct positions as well as~~ graduate teaching assistants.

When determining acceptable qualifications of its ~~faculty-instructors,~~ Florida State University gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline as documented on the approved terminal degree list. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, scholarship and creative activity in the field, honors and awards, ~~continuous documented excellence in teaching,~~ or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. Teaching experience alone at any level does not establish qualifications to teach in the discipline.

~~For~~In all cases, the institution is responsible for documenting and justifying the qualifications of its ~~faculty-instructors~~ prior to appointment and upon any change to an instructor's teaching assignment that reflects a course in a different discipline or requires a different set of qualifications

[Remainder Substantially revised]

II. POLICY

A. Qualifications

The university applies the following requirements in establishing instructor credentials:

1. **Instructors teaching undergraduate coursework** must have one of the following types of earned degrees unless credentialed as a graduate teaching assistant or with alternative qualifications:
 - a. doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline specified on the terminal degree list; or
 - b. master's degree with a concentration (i.e., 18 graduate semester hours) in the teaching discipline or a related discipline specified on the terminal degree list.
2. **Instructors teaching graduate or post-baccalaureate coursework** must have an earned doctorate/terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline specified on the terminal degree list unless credentialed with alternative qualifications.
3. **Graduate teaching assistants** are degree-seeking students fully admitted to Florida State University and one of its graduate programs. Graduate teaching assistants assigned as instructor of record for undergraduate coursework must meet the following educational, training, and supervision requirements.
 - a. For 1000- or 2000-level courses: Must have either a master's degree in the teaching discipline or related discipline specified on the terminal degree list or have satisfactorily completed at least 18 graduate semester-based credit hours in the teaching discipline or related discipline on the terminal degree list.
 - b. For 3000- or 4000-level courses: Must have either a master's degree in the teaching discipline or related discipline specified on the terminal degree list or have satisfactorily completed at least 30 graduate semester-based credit hours in the teaching discipline or related discipline on the terminal degree list.
 - c. Credits for which an "incomplete" has been assigned may not be included in determining the number of graduate hours completed. Directed Individual Study (DIS) or Seminar courses may be included in determining the number of graduate hours completed if clearly a part of the teaching discipline (or related) or if the transcript includes a topic notation that clarifies its relevance to the teaching discipline (or related).

- d. Graduate teaching assistants assigned as instructors of record must receive appropriate departmental teaching orientation and in-service training (i.e., teaching in the discipline course or equivalent) and university training which may be provided through the Center for the Advancement of Teaching or in-unit training approved by the Graduate School.
 - e. Graduate teaching assistants assigned as instructors of record must have direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic evaluations.
4. **Alternative Qualifications:** In the event an instructor has not completed 18 hours of graduate coursework in the teaching discipline or related discipline specified on the terminal degree list, exceptional alternative qualifications must be documented to justify the appointment. Alternative qualifications may include professional licensure and certifications, diplomas or certificates earned, publications and presentations in the field, honors and awards in the field, and other demonstrated competencies and achievements. Documentation that is relevant beyond the degree and curriculum vitae will require the verification and approval of the college dean or designee before appointment.

B. Approval of Instructor Credentials for Branch Campuses, Off-Campus Sites, and Special Programs

The standards for instructor credentials are the same across all campuses and off-campus instructional sites. The authority for approval of faculty credentials at branch campuses, off-campus sites, and special programs are as follows.

1. **Approval of Instructors Teaching in Degree Programs on Branch Campuses:** Each branch campus has responsibility for oversight of all instructors, full-time and part-time, who teach courses and programs under the authority of that campus or in conjunction with the Tallahassee campus. This includes entry of instructor qualifications into the instructor's credentialing record. Each academic department in Tallahassee that approves instruction on a branch campus must collaborate to ensure adequate oversight of the hiring and teaching qualifications for all instructors, full-time and part-time, who teach in the courses and programs of that department at the branch campus. Exceptions for instructor qualifications not represented on the terminal degree list must be approved by the department chair or faculty designee in the academic unit on the Tallahassee campus.
2. **Approval of Instructors Teaching in Study Abroad Programs:** Instructors teaching in study abroad programs must be credentialed by their home academic department or by International Programs.

Additionally, they must meet all university standards applicable to instructor appointments and credentials prior to teaching regardless of employer or funding source.

3. **Approval of College of Medicine (COM) Clinical Faculty in Part-Time Courtesy Appointments:** Florida State University requires that COM instructors in part-time courtesy appointments teaching off-campus clinical courses are verified at the time of appointment as having current health professional licensure in the state in which the instruction will take place. The COM shall use the official state license verification database to verify credentials in lieu of obtaining the official transcript for the health professional degree.
4. **Approval of Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Instructors:** The university offers undergraduate ROTC programs for both the Air Force and Army. Consistent with this policy, the military assigns instructors for undergraduate ROTC courses provided they have a master's degree or higher or alternative qualifications evidenced by completion of appropriate military training programs, leadership roles, or other substantial and relevant experience. The university provides ROTC instructors with courtesy appointments and credentials them based on education or exceptional alternative qualifications.
5. **Approval of Lifetime Activity Program (LAP) Instructors:** The university offers one-credit undergraduate LAP courses on a Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory grading basis. Teaching Assistants who serve as instructors of record must be actively enrolled in the graduate sport management (or related) program and show evidence of alternative qualifications, including specialized training or certification; sport or exercise programming, coaching, instruction, or facilitation (at any level); or other significant sport or conditioning experience as documented and specifically approved by the Chair of Sport Management and the college dean or designee. Other instructors of record without an earned master's degree must have a significant level of training or coaching experience in the sport or certification in the specific topic of the LAP course. Additionally, all instructors of record for Lifetime Activity Program courses will complete certification in First Aid and CPR.
6. **Approval of Instructors for Interdisciplinary and Student Success Courses:** For instructors teaching interdisciplinary (e.g., ISS or IDH) or student success courses across a range of course prefixes, documentation must be provided that the instructor's qualifications are relevant to the disciplines and topics that are components of the course section. Additionally, the instructor's qualifications in connection to the course section must be explicitly stated in the justification entered into the instructor's credentialing record.

C. Evidence of Qualifications

In order to ensure that all instructors of record possess the academic preparation, training, and/or related experience to teach in an academic setting, instructors of record must present credentials that comply with institutional accreditation requirements and those of applicable disciplinary accrediting agencies regardless of instructor appointment type or location of instruction.

1. The highest degree earned is the usual credential, provided it is in the discipline or a related discipline specified on the terminal degree list, and a transcript is the typical evidence for that degree. If an instructor with a higher degree is qualified on the basis of a master's degree, both the higher degree and the master's degree transcripts are required as evidence.
2. For purposes of this policy, an "official transcript" is defined as a transcript or other academic record with the appropriate notation that certifies it as an official document for that institution. Each individual transcript must meet the authentication criteria based on the institution's standard. Whether submitted in hard copy or electronically, the official transcript must contain all of the following:
 - a. An official seal if used by the issuing institution;
 - b. Signature of the appropriate authorizing agent;
 - c. The institution's official letterhead, watermark, or other identifier; and
 - d. The date of issue.
3. For instructors with degrees earned outside the U.S., the transcript must be evaluated on a course-by-course basis to show equivalency to a U.S. degree, even if a U.S. college or university has accepted the international coursework. It is the responsibility of the instructor to bear the costs to obtain official transcripts and copies of licenses and certifications. Evaluation of transcripts for degrees earned outside the U.S. must be done through a certified external agency that provides credential evaluations. The transcript and other applicable academic records must be accompanied by a notarized translation if it is not in English. If a transcript is not available, an approved external evaluation agency may be used to evaluate international credentials for equivalence to a U.S. degree.
4. For instructors who are not graduate teaching assistants, a complete instructor credential file includes the official transcript of the qualifying degree(s), an updated curriculum vitae and, if required, any additional justification and supporting documentation relevant to the teaching assignment as described in section II-(A)(4) above. If the official

transcript is from an institution outside the U.S., the translation and evaluation of that transcript is also required.

5. For graduate teaching assistants assigned as instructor of record, a complete instructor credential file as maintained in the Graduate School includes verification of a master's degree from FSU or the official master's transcript if earned elsewhere, verification of the 18-30 hours of qualifying semester credit in the discipline (exact amount based on the level of courses in the teaching assignment), and, if alternative qualifications are required, the curriculum vitae and any additional justification and supporting documentation relevant to the teaching assignment as described in section II-(A)(4) above.
6. As part of the Human Resources onboarding process, official transcripts are required to be sent to the prospective instructor's department chair (or college dean or designee in the case of non-departmentalized colleges). The college is responsible for an initial check that the required elements of an official transcript are met per section II-(C)(2) and its applicability to the required qualifications for the teaching assignment. Once approved, the official transcript must be forwarded to the Office of Human Resources, or other relevant hiring authority, via the onboarding process for authentication and addition to the personnel file. A copy of the official transcript is then linked to the instructor credentials record within the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement.
7. Prior to initial appointment as instructor at the Republic of Panama campus, official transcripts are required to be sent to the Rector or designee, who is responsible for an initial check that the required elements of an official transcript are met per section II-(C)(2) and its applicability to the required qualifications for the teaching assignment. Once approved, the official transcript must be kept on file at the Republic of Panama campus and submitted to the instructor credentials record within the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement.
8. Prior to initial appointment as instructor for a study abroad program exclusively, official transcripts are required to be sent to the Director of International Programs or designee, who is responsible for an initial check that the required elements of an official transcript are met per section II-(C)(2) and its applicability to the required qualifications for the teaching assignment. Once approved, the official transcript must be kept on file with the Office of International Programs and submitted to the instructor credentials record within the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement. Other instructors who have been credentialed through their home academic departments at the university do not require separate credentials for study abroad instruction unless assigned courses represent a different discipline or a different set of qualifications.

9. Prior to initial appointment as College of Medicine clinical instructors in part-time courtesy appointments, the Dean of the College of Medicine or designee is responsible for verifying current health professional licensure in the state in which the instructor will teach. This information will be stored in the college's instructor credential database along with other required degree information and documentation of alternative credentials as appropriate.

D. Accountability / Responsibilities:

Verification for all instructor credential requirements is the responsibility of the academic instructional units offering the courses in which the instructor will teach or other designated units outlined in section II-(B) above. For new hires, verification of instructor qualifications to teach in the discipline must be completed prior to the appointment with the university. For instructors on continuing contracts, verification of credentials to teach all assigned courses must be completed before the start of the semester and must be conducted for each separate course taught. Allowable extensions to this policy are found below in section II-(D)(6).

1. **Documentation:** It is the responsibility of all instructors of record to provide the university with the documentation needed to verify their credentials. It is the responsibility of the instructor to bear the costs to obtain official transcripts, copies of licenses and certifications when requested, and translation and evaluation of international transcripts if required. Graduate teaching assistants may use FSU internal transcripts to verify that they have successfully completed the 18 or 30 semester hours of graduate coursework in the appropriate discipline.
2. **Verification:** It is the responsibility of academic instructional units (or other designees as defined in section II-(B) above) to gather, review, and verify the teaching qualifications for instructors of record, including adjuncts and graduate assistants who serve as instructors of record. This process will occur prior to any instructor's appointment with the university and any time the teaching assignment requires evidence of additional qualifications, regardless of the mode of delivery or course location. The department chair will assist the college dean or designee in the acquisition of the documents required for the credentialing process. The determination of adequacy of credentials is the responsibility of the college dean or designee. If the college dean or designee cannot render a determination, it is the responsibility of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement.
3. **Qualifying Degrees for the Discipline:** It is the responsibility of academic instructional units to update the approved terminal degree list as reported to the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement.
4. **Graduate Faculty Status:** Following creation of the faculty

credentialing record, it is the responsibility of academic instructional units to ensure that graduate faculty or graduate teaching status is granted for instructors teaching graduate courses or serving on graduate committees. This information is stored in the Graduate School records system, and the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement must approve exceptions to this requirement.

5. **Documentation Storage:** After approval of instructor credentials by the relevant college dean or designee, the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement is responsible for maintaining all relevant documentation in their records system, except for the following exceptions.
 - a. Instructor credentials for graduate teaching assistants assigned as instructor of record are maintained in a records system managed by the Graduate School.
 - b. Instructor credentials for College of Medicine clinical instructors in part-time courtesy appointments are maintained in a records system managed by the College of Medicine.

6. **Deadlines:** Implementation is an ongoing process in keeping with the academic year calendar and deadlines provided by the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement and the Graduate School. A temporary extension on the basis of an unofficial transcript may be necessary in extenuating instances so an instructor may begin teaching prior to receipt of an official transcript. In such situations, the appropriate college dean or designee must compile all the other required documentation regarding the qualifications of the prospective instructor along with an unofficial transcript and a copy of the request for an official transcript. The college dean or designee shall notify in writing the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement immediately about any temporary “incomplete” credentialing files. For new regular faculty hires with a delayed official transcript, the Vice President will notify Human Resources about the acceptability of the qualifications of the prospective faculty member. If the Vice President approves the appointment based on the information provided by the college dean or designee, the file will be sent to Human Resources, which will complete the appointment. Once the official transcript has been received, it must be sent by the college dean or designee to the Office of Human Resources, and it will be placed with the instructor credentialing file in the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement.

LEGAL SUPPORT, JUSTIFICATION, AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Per Board of Governors’ Regulation 1.001(2)(f) and FSU-1.004 (Article VI), the President has delegated authority from the Board of Trustees as to all personnel qualifications which

has been delegated to the Provost as to faculty. The Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement, working with the Provost, has authority to establish all policy regarding faculty employment issues.

The Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement shall be responsible for periodic review and of this policy and for suggesting any necessary revisions to the Provost and President for their approval.

James Clark, Provost and
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date