

Note: The Higher Learning Commission has established September 1, 2017 as the effective date of the new faculty credentials expectation. New language in the Assumed Practices states, “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.”

University of Minnesota Crookston Expectations Regarding Faculty Credentials

Introduction

The Higher Learning Commission requires that faculty credentials be appropriate to the degree level being taught. As clarified in *Determining Qualified Faculty: Guidelines for Institutions and Peer Reviewers* (HLC, May 2014, accessed 6/27/15 from <http://www.hlcommission.org/Document-Library/publications-list.html>),

Faculty teaching in undergraduate programs should hold a degree at least one level above that of the program in which they are teaching. Those teaching general education courses, or other courses that transfer, typically hold a master’s degree or higher in the discipline or subfield. If a faculty member holds a master’s degree or higher in a discipline or subfield other than that in which he or she is teaching, that faculty member should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credits in the discipline or subfield in which they teach (p. 2).

Consistent with this statement and University of Minnesota policy, the University of Minnesota Crookston’s expectation for full-time term, tenure-track, tenured faculty, lecturers, teaching specialists, and all adjuncts (hereafter referred to as faculty, unless otherwise modified) is that they have earned at least a master’s degree in the field in which they teach.

Implications for Current Faculty

Current tenured, tenure-track, and term faculty members are presumed to have met the credentials expectations. Current lecturers, teaching specialists, and adjuncts whose master’s degree is not in their teaching field, and who have a track record of successful teaching experience at UMC, may transfer to teaching in the field in which they are qualified, if an opening exists.

Current lecturers, teaching specialists, and adjuncts whose master’s degree is not in the discipline in which they teach, and for whom no opening exists in their master’s degree field, must have at least 18 graduate credits in the field in which they teach or be alternatively credentialed through one of the three options below.

Alternative credential options include:

1. A formal written agreement to earn at least 18 graduate credits in their teaching field by a specific completion date. Demonstration of progress by a specific deadline is required.

2. An active (or actively in-process) relevant industry-recognized credential (e.g., CPA licensure, TESOL, FAA certifications).
3. Demonstration of equivalent relevant experience, examples of which include:
 - a. Peer-reviewed research and/or publications
 - b. Service as an Extension Educator
 - c. Advanced professional experience
 - d. Other advanced level “faculty-like” work (e.g., curriculum development, textbook authoring)
 - e. Industry training and certification (e.g., Microsoft certification)
 - f. Substantial disciplinary service outside the classroom (e.g., national judging)

Determination of “track record of successful teaching experience at UMC” is made by the department head, in consultation with other program or department faculty and Academic Affairs. Generally, faculty must have taught the same course at least three times and have a minimum of 15 credits of teaching experience to be considered eligible for alternative credential options. Determination of “relevant industry-recognized credential” and “equivalent relevant experience” is also at the discretion of the department head, in consultation with other program or department faculty and Academic Affairs.

Current instructional staff and adjunct instructors with no master’s degree may not teach after the 2016-2017 academic year, unless they meet the alternative credential expectations outlined in 1-3 above.

Current instructional staff and adjunct instructors whose master’s degree is not in the discipline in which they teach may not teach UMC courses after the 2016-2017 academic year unless they have:

- At least 18 graduate credits in their teaching field by the end of the 2016-2017 academic year, or
- Met credential expectations through the alternative credential options outlined 1-3 above.

Implications for Hiring New Faculty

1. With rare exceptions, all individuals hired for future faculty positions must have at least a master’s degree in the field in which they teach.
2. Faculty members may be hired without a master’s degree only after substantial effort (e.g., previous searches that failed to attract master’s prepared candidates) has been expended to recruit and hire a faculty member with a master’s degree. In such instances, the appointment letter may specify, as a condition of employment, a requirement to attain the master’s degree within 3-4 years of the beginning date of the appointment.

Implications for College in the High School Instructors

The Higher Learning Commission has approved UMC’s request for extension of the date by which our dual enrollment program instructors must be in compliance with the revised credentials. The extended deadline is September 2022. The extension applies only to dual credit programs. HLC will review compliance at the time of UMC’s next comprehensive review in 2024-2025.

With approval of the extension request, credential standards currently in place for College in the High School will gradually phase into the new standard.

The current standards are:

- Required: Bachelor's degree, plus 18 graduate credits in the field in which they teach
- Preferred: Master's degree in field, or master's degree, plus 18 graduate credits in field

During the extension period, UMC will work with the College in the High School Advisory Board and CIHS school leadership and faculty to develop a plan to transition the CIHS program faculty to meeting the HLC expectations through academic credentials, tested experience, and/or alternative methods. By the end of the extension period, CIHS instructors must meet the enhanced credentials expectations.