

## Determining Qualified Faculty Through HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices Guidelines for Institutions and Peer Reviewers

### Using Tested Experience as a Basis for Determining Minimally Qualified Faculty (pp. 4-5)

Tested experience may substitute for an earned credential or portions thereof. Assumed Practice B.2. allows an institution to determine that a faculty member is qualified based on experience that the institution determines is equivalent to the degree it would otherwise require for a faculty position. This experience should be tested experience in that it 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. (Note: Tested experience, as is explained in the following section on dual credit, is typically not based exclusively on years of teaching experience, although other experiential factors as noted below may be considered on a case-by case basis.)

The value of using tested experience to determine minimal faculty qualifications depends upon the relevance of the individual faculty member's experience both to the degree level and to the specific content of the courses the faculty member is teaching. An institution that intends to use tested experience as a basis for hiring faculty must have well-defined policies, procedures and documentation that demonstrate when such experience is sufficient to determine that the faculty member has the expertise necessary to teach students in that discipline. In their policies on tested experience as a basis for hiring faculty members, institutions are encouraged to develop faculty hiring qualifications that outline a minimum threshold of experience and a system of evaluation. Tested experience qualifications should be established for specific disciplines and programs and could include skill sets, types of certifications or additional credentials, and experiences.

Documented qualifications would ensure consistency and transparency in hiring and human resources policies. The faculty hiring qualifications related to tested experience should be reviewed and approved through the faculty governance process at the institution—a step that should be highlighted for peer review teams, as appropriate.

### Determining Minimally Qualified Faculty in the Context of Dual Credit

The subject of dual credit\*\* was the focus of HLC's national study completed in 2012. This research entailed the analysis of dual credit activities across 48 states and revealed the dramatic expansion of dual credit offerings. Citing research conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, HLC's study reported that by 2010–2011 dual credit enrollments had reached 2.04 million students, up from 1.16 million in 2002–2003, an increase of 75 percent.

Even though the study was a descriptive analysis of dual credit and by design did not advocate a position, it did report on both the benefits and the drawbacks of dual credit arrangements and prompted HLC to address some critical concerns, including inadequate instructor qualifications. (See Dual Credit for Institutions and Peer Reviewers for additional information.) To address these concerns, HLC determined that accredited institutions awarding college credit by means of

dual credit arrangements must assure the quality and integrity of such offerings and their comparability to the same college credit offered on the institution's main campus or at the institution's other locations. As such, the faculty members teaching dual credit courses should hold the same minimal qualifications as required by the institution of its own faculty. These expectations extend to minimally qualified dual credit faculty, as stated in Criterion Three (3.A., 3.C.2.), Criterion Four (4.A.4.), and Assumed Practice B.2.

This requirement is not intended to discount or in any way diminish the experience that the high school teacher brings into a dual credit classroom. Such classroom experience alone, however lengthy or respected, is not a substitute for the content knowledge needed for college credit. HLC recognizes that many high school teachers possess tested experience beyond their years in the classroom that may account for content knowledge for the dual credit courses they may teach.

These teachers may have gained relevant experience while working in other sectors or through professional development or other relevant experience that now informs their teaching. They may be active in professional organizations and learned societies through presentations and publications on topics relevant to the dual credit courses they may teach. In combination with other credentials and/or tested experience, they may be able to provide direct evidence of their students' achievement on college-level tests that reflects a level of teaching and learning akin to a college classroom. However, evidence of students' achievement, on its own, is not sufficient to demonstrate minimal qualifications.

HLC also recognizes that dual credit faculty members who have obtained a Master of Education degree but not a master's degree in a discipline such as English, Communications, History, Mathematics, etc., may have academic preparation to satisfy HLC's expectations. In this context, the curricula of graduate degrees in the field of Education, when inclusive of graduate-level content in the discipline and methods courses that are specifically for the teaching of that discipline, satisfy HLC's dual credit faculty expectations. In other words, the attainment of a Master of Education degree does not demonstrate a qualification to teach dual credit courses in a particular discipline unless it is demonstrated that the content of that faculty member's Master of Education degree is sufficiently related to the discipline of the dual credit course. Accredited institutions should monitor closely the earned credentials along with the tested experience of dual credit faculty with the understanding that allowances for tested experience may occur.

\*\* Dual credit refers to courses taught to high school students at the high school for which the students receive both high school credit and college credit. These courses or programs are offered under a variety of names; HLC's Criteria on dual credit apply to all of them, as they involve the accredited institution's responsibility for the quality of its offerings.