

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION	ACAF Academic Affairs
POLICY NUMBER	ACAF 1.20
POLICY TITLE	Credential Verification for Instructors of Record
SCOPE OF POLICY	USC Columbia and Regional Palmetto College Campuses
DATE OF REVISION	November 15, 2021
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	Office of the Provost

PURPOSE

The University of South Carolina is committed to recruiting, retaining, and promoting an outstanding faculty who demonstrate excellence in teaching, research, service, and outreach.

To ensure compliance with accreditation requirements regarding teaching faculty, the teaching credentials of all instructors of record must be systematically reviewed by the hiring authority at the time of hire and must meet all credential requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Additionally, credentials must be reviewed when an instructor of record is assigned to a course, they have not previously taught.

The credentials of all instructors of record must be verified in accordance with this policy and its accompanying procedures.

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Campus Chief Academic Officer: The term "campus chief academic officer" is used throughout this policy and defined for each campus as follows:

- For the USC Columbia campus, the campus chief academic officer is the executive vice president for academic affairs and provost.
- For the regional Palmetto Colleges, the campus chief academic officer is the chancellor for Palmetto College unless otherwise specified by the chancellor.

Instructor of Record: The term “instructor of record” is used throughout this policy and, as defined in ACAF 1.19 Instructor of Record, refers to the individual designated by the academic unit as responsible for the course, including developing its content, assignments, and grades. The instructor of record is the primary instructor on the class section record, identified as either “assigned instructor” or “instructor.”

This policy applies to all faculty and other academic personnel involved in instruction as defined by policy ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions. This also includes university staff assigned as instructors of record either as dual employment or

as part of their staff appointment, and academic affiliates appointed in accordance with policy UNIV 2.50 Affiliate Appointments.

Additionally, this policy applies to academic administrators with academic appointments as defined by policy ACAF 1.01 Recruitment and Appointment of Academic Administrators. Examples of related positions include the provost, vice provosts, academic deans and associate deans, academic department chairs and academic program directors.

All instructors of record regardless of rank or type must meet the appropriate standards for credentials.

Course Department: refers to the college, school, department, or program responsible for the oversight of a course and for the assignment of the instructor of record for the course. The “course department” is the college, school, department, or program in which a course originates.

Official Transcript: refers to a transcript that is printed on the institution’s official letterhead or transcript stationary, and includes the name, official seal, and watermark or other identifier of the issuing institution; includes the signature of the appropriate authorizing agent (usually the Registrar) and date of issue; and, lists the type of degree, area of concentration, and date the degree was conferred (if the degree has been awarded).

Electronic transcripts are acceptable as long as these are received from the university granting the degree, or through a third party that is authorized to broker such transactions and that takes the responsibility for verifying the identities of both the issuing institution and the receiving institution.

POLICY STATEMENT

On each campus, the chief academic officer is responsible for ensuring that each course department verifies the academic credentials of all instructors of record. The course department is responsible for documenting the credentials of the instructor of record and keeping the documentation on file.

This policy applies to all faculty and other academic personnel involved in instruction as defined by policy [ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions](#). This also includes university staff assigned as instructors of record either as dual employment or as part of their staff appointment, and academic affiliates appointed in accordance with policy [UNIV 2.50 Affiliate Appointments](#).

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A. Credential Verification

1. Criteria for Credential Verification

Credential review on all campuses must be in accordance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges' Comprehensive Standard 6.2.a of *The Principles of Accreditation*.

The criteria specify that when determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution should give primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The minimum academic requirements for instructors of record are:

- a. Faculty teaching 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 graduate and post-baccalaureate course work, including all mixed-level courses: earned doctorate/terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline.
- c. Graduate teaching assistants: To be eligible to teach undergraduate courses, each graduate teaching assistant must provide an official transcript showing that a master's degree in the teaching discipline has been conferred. Otherwise, graduate teaching assistants must meet all of the following qualifications before they are eligible to teach: 1) 18 or more graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline as evidenced by coursework on a transcript, 2) direct supervision by a faculty member who is qualified to teach in the discipline, 3) regular in-service training, which may be in the form of a course taken simultaneously or prior to teaching, and 4) planned and periodic evaluations by a faculty member in the discipline.

Some graduate teaching assistants have graduate semester hours in a related discipline rather than the teaching discipline. For disciplines with common cross-training, documentation much reflect approval from both the teaching discipline and the related discipline.

In rare circumstances, a graduate teaching assistant can be approved to teach a graduate or other post-baccalaureate course; such approval requires satisfying the academic credentials described above or providing alternate credentials as described below; in addition, the academic unit must affirm that the graduate teaching assistant cannot take the course for their own program of study and will not have any students in their doctoral program cohort in the course. The Office of the Provost must approve any graduate teaching assistant as instructor of record for any graduate or other post-baccalaureate course, including all mixed-level courses.

2. Alternative Credentialing

When the credentials of the instructor of record do not meet the minimum requirements as outlined above, but the prospective instructor possesses outstanding professional experience or demonstrated contributions to the teaching discipline, the individual may be alternatively credentialed. A minimum of two faculty (e.g., program director, department chair, associate dean, dean) must review and approve any request for alternative credentials for an instructor of record.

- a. In cases of alternative credentialing, the course department must explain and provide documentation of the instructor's alternate qualification(s) to teach a course or courses. These may include, but are not limited to, work or research experience, professional licensure or certification, non-credit professional development courses, or other specialized training. Sufficient objective documentation to support outstanding experience and demonstrated contributions is required to warrant consideration and must be kept up to date and maintained by the course department as long as the individual is in an active teaching role within the department.
 - b. For undergraduate courses, the instructor of record must have at minimum a baccalaureate degree in addition to alternative credentials. Exceptions require approval of the Office of the Provost.
 - c. For graduate and post-baccalaureate courses, including all mixed-level courses, the instructor of record must have, at minimum, 18 hours of relevant graduate course work in addition to alternative credentials. Exceptions require approval of the Office of the Provost.
3. Select courses are excluded from the criteria identified above. Programs can identify non-standard criteria for specific courses, e.g. minimum professional experience in lieu of graduate coursework for certain experiential courses. Non-standard criteria must be proposed by the program faculty and approved by the academic dean and Office of the Provost. The appendix includes courses approved for use of non-standard criteria.
4. Required Review at Time of Hire or Appointment

Verification of required credentials as described in policy section A.1. must occur at time of hire for all new instructors of record. In the case of academic affiliates, credentials must be reviewed at the time of appointment.

5. Required Review for New Class Assignment

Verification of required credentials as described in section A.1. must occur when an established instructor of record is assigned to teach a class not previously taught by the individual. This includes classes both within and outside the instructor's normal teaching discipline.

6. Per-Course Review Requirement

Credential verification for eligibility to teach a course must be considered on a per-course basis regardless of the instructor's full- or part-time standing. It is possible that the highest earned degree in a discipline may be sufficient to credential an instructor for the majority of their classes, while alternative credentialing may be necessary for a particular class taught outside the degree discipline.

7. ROTC Instructors

ROTC instructors are provided to the university through the military. The university provides them with courtesy appointments and credentials their instruction provided they have a master's degree or higher, have completed appropriate military programs, or have accumulated substantial and relevant experience. As with other instructors of record, credentials for ROTC instructors must be submitted upon appointment.

8. Credential Documents

All instructors of record must have an official transcript and curriculum vitae on file with the academic unit (program, department/school, or campus/college, based on campus/college-level procedures) for which they are teaching. Instructors of record who are alternatively credentialed and, therefore, do not have a transcript on file, still must submit a curriculum vitae along with their other supporting materials.

- a. Credential documentation for each instructor of record must be maintained by the course department for as long as the individual is in an active teaching role. In the case of an instructor of record teaching a course outside their primary academic unit, the secondary course academic unit does not need to keep an official transcript and curriculum vitae on file if it has ensured these documents are already on file and can be easily accessed, if needed. However, the secondary unit is responsible for verifying that the academic credentials satisfy the requirements for courses in the secondary unit and to maintain any documentation related to alternative credentials.
- b. Official Transcripts: An individual's credentials should include an official transcript showing the highest degree conferred in the teaching discipline, or the highest degree conferred with 18+ graduate hours in the teaching discipline. Undergraduate and other graduate transcripts are not required unless they are being used for alternative credentialing.

Official transcripts must be sent from the issuing institution directly to the instructor's department chair, college or school dean, program director, or other appointed individual within the department, college, school, or program. Electronic transcripts may be sent from a third party authorized to broker such transactions. A transcript sent directly to an instructor from an issuing institution is acceptable if the transcript is delivered to the instructor's department, college, school, or program in an envelope addressed and sealed by the issuing institution. The program, department, school or

college must keep a record of the receipt of the transcript in the instructor's file to show that the transcript was received directly from the issuing institution, delivered by the instructor in an envelope addressed and sealed by the issuing institution, or through an authorized third party. If an official transcript is obtained prior to a degree being awarded, a second official transcript must be requested and submitted after the degree is conferred.

Graduate teaching assistants who do not hold a master's degree in the teaching discipline, and who are currently enrolled at the University of South Carolina, may submit an unofficial transcript (i.e., advising transcript) showing the completion of 18+ hours in the teaching discipline. If a teaching assistant graduates and is re-hired as an instructor, an official University of South Carolina transcript showing the conferred degree must be requested.

- c. Physician Credentials: For clinical faculty in either School of Medicine whose terminal degree is a doctor of medicine or equivalent degree, a copy of the faculty member's licensure or board certification is acceptable in lieu of an official transcript.
- d. Curriculum Vitae: A curriculum vitae must be on file in the course department, or readily available online, for each instructor of record. This requirement includes graduate teaching assistants, professional staff who teach credit-bearing courses, adjuncts, and individuals not employed by the University of South Carolina but who are listed as instructors of record. Each course department is responsible for ensuring curricula vitae are periodically updated.
- e. Alternative Credentialing Documents: When the assignment of an instructor of record is justified by means other than those outlined in policy section C.1., supporting documentation is needed to explain the instructor's qualifications to teach the course. Documentation should be periodically reviewed and kept up to date for as long as the instructor is teaching the course for which he they are being alternatively credentialed.
- f. Foreign Credentials: Non-U.S. academic credentials must be evaluated for equivalency to U.S. accredited coursework by a university-approved foreign credential evaluator, and the evaluation submitted with the instructor's transcript or proof of degree. The transcript and other applicable academic records should be accompanied by a notarized translation, if not in English.

PROCEDURES

A. Responsibility for Implementation

1. At USC Columbia, the Provost delegates responsibility for implementation of this policy, including credential verification, to the USC Columbia college and school deans. In cases where a course is offered by a department outside the purview of the college and school deans, responsibility for implementation and credential verification is delegated to the unit administrator of the department offering the course.

On the regional Palmetto College campuses, the chancellor delegates responsibility for implementation regional of this policy, including credential verification, to the campus deans. In addition to the campus review, the academic credentials for faculty hired for the regional Palmetto College campuses must be reviewed by the respective academic unit at USC Columbia. For tenure-track/tenured faculty, this most often occurs through membership on the faculty search committee. For full-time instructors and adjunct instructors, the regional Palmetto College campus dean must submit the academic credentials to the respective academic unit at USC Columbia for approval; this review includes instructors for all Palmetto campuses , including dual enrollment sites.

B. Verifying Credentials of Instructors of Record

Each person responsible for implementing this policy, as defined in procedures section A, should establish procedures for verifying credentials of instructors of record within the respective college, school, department, or program. Credentials should be verified upon hire for new instructors of record, and before new courses are assigned to continuing instructors of record. Credential documentation must be maintained by course departments as long as the individual is in an active teaching role within the department. Academic units, colleges, or schools may elect to limit credential approval for new instructors to a specified period (e.g., three years), after which they would need to be reaffirmed based on updated credentials and instructional effectiveness. Any process requiring reaffirmation must be applied equitably, e.g. to all instructors of record or all instructors approved through alternative credentials.

C. Documenting Alternate Credentials, Related Coursework, and Graduate Teaching Assistant Qualifications

When documenting an instructor of record's alternate teaching credentials, 18+ hours in the teaching discipline (for instructors of record without a degree in the teaching discipline), or qualifications to teach as a graduate teaching assistant, the course academic unit must explain and provide documentation showing the instructor's credentials. Course academic units should use the Alternate Credentials, Graduate Coursework, Graduate Teaching Assistant, and Graduate Coursework (Outside of Discipline) for Graduate Teaching Assistants forms available on the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics' (OIRAA) [Faculty Credentials for SACSCOC](#) website.

D. Submitting Faculty Credential Documentation for the SACSCOC Faculty Roster

SACSCOC requires each of its accredited institutions to report the qualifications of its teaching faculty using the SACSCOC Faculty Roster form. The Faculty Roster includes the names of all instructors of record during a given semester or semesters, a list of courses they are teaching, and their qualifications for teaching those courses.

Each person responsible for implementing this policy, as defined in procedures section A, must ensure that proper credential documentation for each instructor of record is submitted to the office responsible for creating the SACSCOC Faculty Roster for his or her campus.

1. At USC Columbia, credential documentation (i.e., official transcripts, and documentation forms and supporting materials, if applicable) should be submitted to the Human Resources representative within the instructor's home college or school. Credential documentation for an instructor of record teaching a course outside the purview of their home college or school, or for an instructor of record teaching a course administratively housed outside a college or school (e.g., University 101), should be submitted to the Human Resources representative within the college, school, or program offering the course. The Human Resources representative will then forward the documentation to the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics (OIRAA). All credential documents relevant to courses being taught should be on file in the course department and with OIRAA by the midpoint of term or part of term. For an instructor teaching in more than one academic unit, only the primary unit must have an official transcript. Refer to the [Faculty Credentials for SACSCOC](#) page on the OIRAA website for more information, and to access the forms that must be used when documenting alternate credentials, 18+ hours of coursework in the teaching discipline (for instructors of record without a degree in the teaching discipline), and graduate teaching assistant qualifications.
2. On the regional Palmetto College campuses, credential documentation (i.e., official transcripts, and documentation forms and supporting materials, if applicable) should be submitted to the campus dean's office. The dean's office will forward the documentation to the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics (OIRAA) at USC Columbia. All credential documents relevant to courses being taught should be on file in the campus dean's office and with OIRAA by the midpoint of term or part of term. Refer to the [Faculty Credentials for SACSCOC](#) page on the OIRAA website for more information, and to access the forms that must be used when documenting alternate credentials, 18+ hours of coursework in the teaching discipline (for instructors of record without a degree in the teaching discipline), and graduate teaching assistant qualifications.

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, *Principles of Accreditation*, Comprehensive Standard 6.2.a.

[ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track and Professional-Track Faculty](#)

[ACAF 1.01 Recruitment and Appointment of Academic Administrators](#)

[ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions](#)

[ACAF 1.16 Professional-Track Faculty](#)

[ACAF 1.19 Instructor of Record](#)

[ACAF 4.00 Graduate Assistantships](#)

[UNIV 2.50 Affiliate Appointments](#)

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
November 15, 2021	Updating academic credentials and approval procedures for clarification and better compliance with SACSCOC 6.2.a.
October 10, 2018	Reformatting to new template and to add physician board licensure or board certification as valid confirmation of academic credentials.
September 2, 2016	The policy was updated to clarify definitions of terms; requirements regarding curricula vitae and non-U.S. credentials; procedures for documenting alternate credentials, related coursework, and graduate teaching assistant qualifications; and procedures for submitting credential documentation for the SACSCOC Faculty Roster. Additionally, new references to related policies were added, the list of campuses to which this policy applies were updated, and changes were made to reflect the renaming of the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics (OIRAA).
May 11, 2015	New policy approval

APPENDIX

Courses approved for non-standard credentials