

# Northern Michigan University Faculty Credentials Policy

## Purpose and Summary

In support of its goal to ensure high-quality teaching and learning in its curricula, Northern Michigan University ensures that members of its instructional faculty are well-qualified to teach students enrolled in credit-bearing courses. This policy establishes the minimum standard for ensuring all members of the instructional faculty are qualified to teach courses to which they are assigned.

This policy complies with the [Assumed Practices of the Higher Learning Commission](#).

## Scope

This policy applies to all individuals assigned an instructional role in a credit-bearing class that will appear on a student transcript as an NMU-offered course, wherever and however delivered (including all modes of delivery and all locations, modalities and venues, including but not limited to the main campus, additional locations, distance delivery, dual credit and contractual or consortial arrangements). The policy does not apply to members of the instructional staff who assist the teacher of record for any given course, such as the laboratory instructor of a course that is taught by a member of the instructional faculty. The policy does not apply to guest lecturers or others invited to participate in classes on limited bases by members of the instructional faculty.

Departments' bylaws include departmental statements of minimum and preferred qualifications for instructional faculty. The Academic Senate has set expectations for Graduate Faculty membership. *In addition to meeting at least the minimums set in the following University policies*, instructional faculty must also meet the qualifications set forth in the bylaws of the department in which they are hired to teach and Graduate Faculty appointments require adherence to the current Graduate Faculty Status requirements as approved by the Academic Senate. Policies and practices of hiring for specific positions may exceed the minimums stated in this University policy.

## Definitions

**Members of Instructional Faculty:** Any individual assigned as faculty of record to teach a course that will appear as an NMU-delivered, credit-bearing course, except study abroad courses offered by a third-party. In the case of such study abroad course work, it is assumed that the provider ensures the qualifications of the instructional faculty within the context of the course and within the relevant national context.

**Teaching Field:** A teaching field is defined by the particular content of the course.

**Terminal Degree:** The highest order degree that an individual may normally achieve in a teaching field offered at regionally-accredited institutions in the United States (e.g., PhD, EdD, MFA, DNP).

## Policy

### General

Qualification to teach a given academic course is normally based on the highest earned degree in the teaching field in which the course is situated. For courses in applied programs, experience in the field is also normally an essential qualification. Specific exceptions are made below. Hardship cases may be considered by Academic Affairs in rare circumstances through an appeal process.

Degrees earned are acceptable only if documented by an official transcript, or the international equivalent, with the degree posted (or via letter from an appropriate university official attesting that all requirements for the degree have been completed and that the degree will be awarded on a particular date according to the awarding university's schedule for doing so). Additionally, the degree must be awarded by a regionally-accredited U.S. institution or by a recognized foreign institution, as determined by Academic Affairs.

It is the responsibility of any prospective member of the instructional faculty to supply any and all documentation attesting to the awarding of an appropriate degree or other documents required to ensure that she or he meets at least minimum standards. Such documentation must be on file with NMU, verified, and approved by the Office of the Provost prior to the first day that the individual is scheduled to teach.

### **Applied and Technical Courses, in Certificate, Associate's, and Baccalaureate Programs**

A member of the instructional faculty may be deemed academically qualified if they have earned:

- A bachelor's degree or higher in the teaching field; *or*
- The appropriate credential in the field,

And they have:

- 2000 hours of work (not teaching) experience in the field being taught.

### **Exceptions to the policy on faculty of technical courses may be granted in accordance with the following:**

- In exceptional cases for technical courses, qualification for instruction may alternatively be determined based on demonstrated and documented proficiency and evidence of professional renewal work in the subject of the course the instructor is hired to teach, as assessed and approved by the department and Academic Affairs.

### **Academic Baccalaureate Courses**

A member of the instructional faculty may be deemed academically qualified if they have earned:

- A master's degree or higher in the teaching field; *or*
- A master's degree or higher in a closely related field, as defined by the academic department/unit; *or*
- A master's degree or higher in any discipline with at least eighteen graduate credit hours in the teaching field or a closely related field, as defined by the academic department/unit

### **Exceptions to the policy on faculty of academic baccalaureate courses may be granted in the following cases:**

- Members of the instructional faculty assigned to teach courses applicable to the Reserve Officer Training Corps program who have been certified by United States Army Cadet Command to do so are exempt from NMU credentialing requirements.
- Members of the instructional faculty assigned to teach physical education activity classes need only possess a bachelor's degree in a closely related field; alternatively, they may possess appropriate certifications, licenses or a documented high-level of achievement in the activity coupled with a high-level of understanding of the pedagogy pertaining to the activity.
- Graduate teaching assistants without a master's degree may teach at the undergraduate level within the teaching field or a closely related field, as defined by the academic department/unit in which they are pursuing a degree, provided that an appropriately qualified member of the instructional faculty directs course content and pedagogy. If graduate teaching assistants are not directed by faculty, they must be otherwise qualified to teach at the academic bachelor's level.

- Members of the instructional faculty may teach baccalaureate students without regard to educational attainment if they have a demonstrable tribal, regional, national, or international reputation for excellence in the field in which they are being hired to teach.
- Members of the instructional faculty with only a bachelor's degree may teach bachelor's level courses in academic programs if they have appropriate licensure or certification that their students cannot yet possess because they lack the degree required, provided that the content of the course is directly relevant to achieving licensure or certification or if they hold a bachelor's degree in the field or a closely related field, as defined by the academic department/unit, and have 5 years of full-time professional experience directly related to the field in which they are being hired to teach. Typically, bachelor's-degree qualified members of the instructional faculty who are approved to teach at the baccalaureate level in academic programs teach "applied" courses such as clinical, practicum, or other similar courses.
- For Anishinaabe language faculty, qualification for instruction is determined by demonstrated and documented language proficiency and evidence of language renewal work.

### **Graduate Courses**

A member of the instructional faculty may be deemed academically qualified if they have earned:

- A terminal degree in the teaching field; or
- A terminal degree in a closely related field, as defined by the academic department/unit; or
- A terminal degree in any discipline with at least eighteen graduate credit hours in the teaching field or a closely related field, as defined by the academic department/unit.

### **Exceptions to policy on faculty of graduate courses may be granted in the following cases:**

- Members of the instructional faculty may teach doctoral students without regard to educational attainment if they have a demonstrable tribal, regional, national, or international reputation for excellence in the field in which they are being hired to teach.
- Members of the instructional faculty with only a master's degree may teach master's level students if they have appropriate licensure or certification that their students cannot yet possess because they lack the degree required, provided that the content of the course is directly relevant to achieving licensure or certification or if they hold a master's degree in the field or a closely related field, as defined by the academic department/unit and have 5 years of full-time professional experience directly related to the teaching field. Typically, master's-degree qualified members of the instructional faculty who are approved to teach at the graduate level teach "applied" courses such as clinical, practicum, or other similar courses.
- For Anishinaabe language faculty, qualification for instruction is determined by demonstrated and documented language proficiency and evidence of language renewal work.

Academic Affairs will review this policy on a regular basis.

# Northern Michigan University Faculty Credentials Policy Waiver Procedure

## Purpose and Summary

In rare cases, it may be in NMU students' best interest for a department to temporarily hire an instructional faculty member who would not meet the standard qualifications laid out in the Northern Michigan University Faculty Credentials Policy (the Policy). This procedure allows a department to seek a limited waiver on a case-specific basis to hire an instructor who is proficient in the subject matter.

Limited exceptions to the Policy may be made for appointments not exceeding 12 months in response to critical situations (e.g., in hiring a short-term substitution instructor to temporarily replace a regular instructional faculty member who departs for a limited sabbatical or medical leave). In such rare cases, qualifications based on a combination of education and experience will be used to determine proficiency with the relevant material, assessed by the department and Academic Affairs.

## Scope

Qualification to teach a given academic course is normally based on the highest earned degree in the teaching field in which the course is situated. For courses in applied programs, experience in the field is also normally an essential qualification. The Policy allows for determination of faculty qualification based primarily on tested experience, rather than earned degrees. In such cases or in the cases of any instructional faculty hired based on qualification set in Policy, including those described under the applicable Exceptions headings, this waiver process is not necessary because such instructional faculty are Policy-compliant.

This process is only for short-term circumstances where need emerges to hire outside the parameters set in the Policy.

## Definitions

**Members of Instructional Faculty:** Any individual assigned as faculty of record to teach a course that will appear as an NMU-delivered, credit-bearing course, except study abroad courses offered by a third-party.

**Teaching Field:** A teaching field is defined by the particular content of the course.

## Procedure

Departments, through the office of their college dean, may submit a request to Academic Affairs to make short-term hire of an instructional faculty member who does not meet the criteria in Policy but whose hiring can be justified to students, regulators, accreditors, and other stakeholders when it is impossible to avoid hiring an instructor who is non-compliant with the Policy. In its waiver request, the department should demonstrate that each of the following is the case, or explain why the criterion is not applicable.

- The hire has the competencies in the teaching field to teach the full range of subject matter covered in the course(s).
- Students will benefit from instruction by the person hired.

- The hire's term of appointment will not exceed 12 months.
- All internal options (e.g., giving an overload schedule to a long-term NMU instructor, reassigning current NMU instructors) have been exhausted.
- All Policy-compliant external options (e.g., hiring a Policy-compliant temporary instructor) have been exhausted.

It is the responsibility of any prospective member of the instructional faculty to supply any and all documentation attesting to their completion of degrees, credentials, professional experiences, and/or other documents required to ensure that she or he has the competencies to instruct NMU students. Such documentation must be on file with NMU, verified, and approved by Academic Affairs prior to the first day that the individual is scheduled to teach.

Reviewed by Academic Cabinet  
Approved by VPAA 12-14-18