



Memo from Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs to  
Academic Deans Regarding Graduate Students as Instructors of Record

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3/28/2018

**MEMORANDUM**

Date: March 28, 2018

To: Academic Deans

From: Lizette Chevalier  
Acting Co-Provost



David DiLalla  
Acting Co-Provost



Re: Appointment of Graduate Assistants / Graduate Students as Instructors of Record

The purpose of this document is to establish procedures in Academic Affairs for the appointment of graduate students in instructional roles.

Background. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has explicit criteria and assumed practices for determining qualified faculty. An excerpt from the guidelines document associated with these requirements is provided at the end of this document (B.2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications).

According to the HLC assumed practices, Faculty must possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and must hold a degree that is at least one level above the level at which they teach. Exception is given in programs where the terminal degree is at the master's level or when an institution defines a minimum threshold for tested experience with an evaluation process that is used in the appointment process. The HLC excludes from this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program who are formally supervised by faculty.

Please note that if a graduate assistant meets the HLC criteria established for determining the qualifications of faculty to teach an undergraduate course, s/he will be eligible for appointment to teach such course as Instructor of Record. Otherwise, according to our HLC Liaison, a teaching assistant must teach under the formal supervision of a Faculty Member of Record. In this arrangement, the teaching assistant falls under the teaching assistant exclusion noted above and is not bound by the academic degree or tested experience requirements applying to qualification of faculty.

SIUC will undergo an HLC review during the 2020 Spring semester. We must demonstrate that our process of continuous improvement and assessment has addressed the issues above. With the approval of the Chancellor, the following procedures will be employed effective with the Fall 2018 semester:

1. Doctoral students who hold a master's degree (the assumed practice requirement that would apply to faculty for qualification for teaching an undergraduate course) shall be eligible for appointment as instructor of record for lower-division<sup>1</sup> undergraduate courses in the disciplinary area of her/his degree.

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<sup>1</sup> 400-level courses may, with approval of the Dean, be taught by qualified graduate students except in cases where the 400-level course has both undergraduate and graduate students enrolled.

- a. NOTE: Some of our doctoral students have direct or accelerated entry into the program without a master's degree. In such cases, a student who has achieved doctoral candidacy shall be considered to have met a tested experience criterion to teach as instructor of record for lower-division undergraduate courses in the disciplinary area of her/his degree.
  - b. Similarly, for students enrolled in a terminal master degree programs (e.g., MFA), completion of the thesis proposal shall serve as a tested experience criterion to teach as instructor of record for lower-division undergraduate courses in the disciplinary area of her/his degree.
2. Academic units may define additional criteria for selecting eligible graduate students as defined above to serve as instructors of record (for example, prior teaching experience, number of years in the graduate program, etc.).
3. Academic units shall document the criteria for selecting a doctoral student to be an instructor of record as part of the Policy and Procedure Manual (or similar document) of the program, department, or school.
4. For graduate students who are teaching independently for the first time, it is strongly recommended that the doctoral student have a Faculty mentor for the course.
5. Graduate students who do not hold a Master's degree shall not serve as instructor of record (except as noted in 1.a or 1.b above).
  - a. Graduate students who do not hold a Master's degree may serve as instructors (e.g., for multi-section introductory-level courses) under the supervision of a faculty member.
  - b. The faculty supervising such graduate student instructors shall be identified as "Faculty of Record". This is aligned with HLC assumed practices for graduate students teaching under supervision.
6. We have begun working with some departments that assign graduate students as instructors in large service courses to develop processes for mentoring and supervision of such instructors. We will continue to work with departments and colleges to implement the procedures described above. For such departments, we also recommend:
  - a. Documenting the oversight, mentoring and training of graduate teaching assistants as part of the Policy and Procedure Manual (or similar document) of the program, department, or school.
  - b. Developing a common syllabus for the service courses that have a Faculty Member of Record. This will provide further validation and documentation of our practice of oversight, mentoring and training.

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

### **B.2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications**

- a. 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. Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty) possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach, except in programs for terminal degrees or when equivalent experience is established. In terminal degree programs, faculty members possess the same level of degree. When faculty members are employed based on equivalent experience, the institution defines a minimum threshold of experience and an evaluation process that is used in the appointment process. Faculty teaching general education courses, or other non-occupational courses, 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 credit hours in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.
- b. Instructors teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the discipline and have a record of research, scholarship or achievement appropriate for the graduate program.

([http://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines\\_2016\\_OPB.pdf](http://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB.pdf))