
Faculty Qualifications and Credentials Manual

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Introduction

James Madison University (JMU) is responsible for justifying and keeping a record of the qualifications of its faculty. This accountability documents that the faculty are capable of creating relevant learning outcomes and assessment measures and that the curriculum is relevant to the times.

The purpose of the *Faculty Qualifications and Credentials Manual* is to provide information about the credentialing and verification process for faculty members at JMU. Both full-time and adjunct/part-time instructors of record (teaching faculty) must possess the appropriate credentials in the respective teaching discipline. They must also possess credentials in the specific area/topic being taught and meet or exceed the minimum requirements of JMU policy and that of the [Southern Association of Colleges and School Commission on Colleges](#) (SACSCOC), JMU's regional accrediting body, regardless of the location of the course offering or mode of delivery.

Accreditation determines eligibility for Title IV funds (student financial aid) and qualifies institutions and enrolled students for access to federal funds to support teaching, research and student financial aid.

SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation: Guidelines Related to Faculty

Section 6: Faculty ([SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation](#))

Qualified, effective faculty members are essential to carry out the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic program. The tradition of shared governance within American higher education recognizes the importance of both faculty and administrative involvement in the approval of educational programs. Because student learning is central to the institution's mission and educational degrees, the faculty has responsibility for directing the learning enterprise including overseeing and coordinating educational programs to ensure that each contains essential curricular components, has appropriate content and pedagogy, and maintains discipline currency.

Achievement of the institution's mission with respect to teaching, research, and service requires a critical mass of full-time qualified faculty to provide direction and oversight of the academic programs. Due to this significant role, it is imperative that an effective system of evaluation be in place for all faculty members that takes into account the institution's obligations to foster intellectual freedom of faculty to teach, serve, research, and publish.

- 6.1. The institution employs a sufficient number of full-time faculty members to support the mission and goals of the institution. (Full-time faculty) [CR]
- 6.2. For each of its educational programs, the institution
 - 6.2.a. justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members. (*Faculty qualifications*)
 - 6.2.b. employs a sufficient number of full-time faculty members to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review. (*Program faculty*)
 - 6.2.c. assigns appropriate responsibility for program coordination. (*Program coordination*)

- 6.3. The institution publishes and implements policies regarding the appointment, employment, and regular evaluation of faculty members, regardless of contract or tenure status. (*Faculty appointment and evaluation*)
- 6.4. The institution publishes and implements appropriate policies and procedures for preserving and protecting academic freedom. (*Academic freedom*)
- 6.5. The institution provides ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty members as teachers, scholars, and practitioners, consistent with the institutional mission. (*Faculty development*)

Guidelines for Faculty Credentialing

In determining the appropriateness of and documenting the qualifications of faculty members, JMU uses as its basis the [SACSCOC Faculty Credentials Guidelines](#). Limited exceptions are noted in the Responsibilities section.

JMU Policies Related to Faculty Credentialing

Policy 2101 Faculty Selection and Hiring Procedures ([Policy 2101](#))

Applies to Instructional and Administrative & Professional (A&P) faculty and includes full-time and part-time appointments; adjunct and visiting appointments; tenured, tenure-track, renewable term and untenured appointments; academic year, calendar year, fixed term appointments; and interim appointments.

Policy 2104 Part-time/Adjunct Faculty ([Policy 2104](#))

Policy 2103 Graduate Assistantships ([Policy 2103](#))

The Graduate Policy School Policies and Procedures ([Assistantship Website](#))

Responsibilities for Faculty Credentialing

Faculty credentialing begins with the hiring process.

Search Committee Chair Responsibilities

The Search Committee Chair will:

- Understand and follow JMU Policy 2101 throughout the search, selection and hiring process.
- Ensure that accurate documentation accompanies the hiring of every faculty member.

Prospective Faculty Member Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the prospective faculty member to represent their qualifications and credentials accurately and to provide the university with all of the documentation needed to verify their credentials. “Failure by the candidate to provide the appropriate documentation by the established deadline may result in the withdrawal of the offer, even if the candidate has attempted to formally accept the offer” (JMU [Policy 2101](#), 6.1.1.5).

This documentation includes, but is not limited to:

- *Official transcripts of the highest degree attained.* If that degree is not directly related to the teaching assignment, an official transcript of the relevant degree must also be submitted.
 - Only transcripts from an accredited college or university will be accepted for credentialing faculty members.
 - Transcripts from outside the United States must be independently evaluated for equivalency using one of the [university-approved providers](#). The evaluation needs to include courses taken toward the degree.
- *Copies of appropriate licenses or certifications.* Faculty members teaching in disciplines that require licensure and/or certifications must submit documentation, including issuing agency and expiration date, of those credentials. These licensures/certifications must be current at the time of application.
- *Verification of work experience related to teaching (as needed).* If the applicant/prospective faculty member is qualified to teach based on alternate credentials, that individual must provide, when requested, satisfactory documentation for all criteria used to meet the alternate credentialing requirements. A curriculum vitae or resume is not sufficient documentation. Verification examples are provided under the *Academic Unit Head Responsibilities* section below.
- *Cost.* The cost to obtain official transcripts, credential evaluations and copies of licenses and certifications is borne by the prospective faculty member.

Current Faculty Member Responsibilities

The current faculty member will be responsible for providing:

- *Official transcripts.* If a faculty member is hired in anticipation of, but prior to having fulfilled all requirements for a particular degree (such as a Ph.D.) the individual will “provide the official transcript of the pending degree within 15 working days after it is awarded.” (JMU [Policy 2101](#), 6.1.1.8)
- *Copies of appropriate licenses or certifications.* It is the responsibility of faculty members teaching in disciplines that require licensure and/or certifications to provide documentation of such licensure and/or certification, including issuing agency and expiration date, promptly. Updates will be completed by the Academic Accreditation Coordinator if information is available on an appropriate online site (i.e., state licensing board). If the Academic Accreditation Coordinator is unable to update, it is the responsibility of the faculty member to update documentation of such licensure and/or certification.
- *Verification of work experience related to teaching (as needed).* If the teaching

assignment changes, the faculty member must provide satisfactory documentation for all criteria used to meet the alternate credentialing. A curriculum vitae or resume is not sufficient documentation. Verification examples provided under the section below- *Academic Unit Head Responsibilities*.

- **Cost.** The cost to obtain official transcripts and copies of licenses and certifications is borne by the faculty member.

Academic Unit Head (AUH)/Department Head Responsibilities

The academic unit head will:

- Ensure course information is completed in the PeopleSoft Student Administration System as soon as possible and no later than the end of the third week of the semester.
 - All course sections must have an instructor of record identified.
 - Special Topics courses must have a topic that identifies the content/focus of the course of study.
- Validate the credentials of the faculty member and verify that the credentials are consistent with JMU policy and the university's regional accreditation guidelines in advance of the faculty member teaching the course.
 - Faculty teaching in cross-listed courses must demonstrate qualifications/credentials in all areas as cross-listed courses are seen by SACSCOC as separate courses. Documentation may need to be provided that the academic fields are similar enough to cross-teach, such as astronomy and physics.
- Submit written justification if the degrees represented by the official transcripts are not directly related to the teaching assignment. Validation of expertise must not just be in the teaching discipline but in the specific area/topic being taught. The written justification, for use of alternate credentials, must explicitly address how the individual's accomplishments constitute a level of preparation for the instructional assignment/particular course comparable to that of a person holding a graduate degree in the teaching field.

It is understood there are certain subject areas/emerging disciplines where limited graduate programs, degrees and courses are available. Professional, technical and technology-dependent fields may need to utilize these types of qualifications. In those instances, the following strategies could also be used to complete a hiring justification:

Appropriately related/relevant qualifications and experiences in the teaching discipline and related to specific teaching/instructional assignment may include:

- An official transcript showing documentation of a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline, with an identified list of courses that are appropriate to the specific courses/area. The documentation may call for more than one degree. Thesis, dissertation, internship and similar credits do not count toward this documentation, nor do pedagogy or courses on how to teach. Directed independent study courses can be counted only if there is documentation of the content and outcome of the course.
- Master's theses/doctoral dissertation topics, documented on transcripts or other official means.

- Original documentation to validate any alternate credentials. A curriculum vitae (CV) or resume is not sufficient documentation of qualifications. Demonstrated competence, effectiveness and capacity in the teaching discipline and including as appropriate. Documentation should be a combination of:
- Undergraduate and graduate degrees (official transcripts). Official transcripts are maintained in Faculty Affairs and Curriculum. A copy may be maintained in the department.
- Professional licensure and certifications, including title/name, issuing agency, date earned and expiration date. Licensure or certification dates must be documented.
- Additional course work and/or continuous professional development, with official transcripts showing courses identified beyond the qualifying degree.
- CEUs from relevant workshops attended.
- Appropriately related work experience or professional experience, Reference letters must be on agency/institution letterhead (see below). May also include letters of agreement or acknowledgement and copies of contracts.
- Appropriately related clinical or professional practice reference letters on agency/institution letterhead (see below). May also include letters of agreement or acknowledgement and copies of contracts.
- Relevant peer-reviewed research/publications. Must include a full bibliographic citation and, if requested, publication tables of contents or first/title page.
- Creative achievements, performances and/or artistic accomplishments. Must include portfolios, copies of programs and/or critical reviews.
- Relevant grants, documented by the official award notification.
- Honors and awards, documented by copies of the awards with date conferred and awarding agency/institution.
- Continuous documented excellence in teaching, shown through copies of evaluations, peer review or the supervisor's summative reporting of evaluative/review process.
- Similar activities to those listed above that may be combined to verify the instructor's expertise.
- Maintain all alternative documentation in the academic unit available for review upon request of the dean, provost, Academic Accreditation Coordinator or site visitor during an accreditation visit.

In some instances, it may be necessary to link appropriate experiences directly to the course objectives/student learning outcomes in a course matrix. If used, the course matrix would identify key course objectives and explain the evidence for concluding that the individual is prepared to meet those objectives. The documentation should show how the prospective/current faculty member's experience and accomplishments have prepared him or her to effectively deliver the instructional assignment, focusing on accomplishments across a career but with particular weight given to recent and current work.

Reference Letters

If work/professional experience is noted on the CV/resume, documentation must include letters (emails accepted) from former employers. The letter must document the reference's position and organization. The reference must provide information on the applicant including

but not limited to:

- Position title and responsibilities (especially those related specifically to the job for which individual is being hired)
- Length of time in position(s)
- Job performance, including performance strengths and weaknesses
- Collegiality and interpersonal skills
- Relationships with and evaluations by students
- Other information deemed important by the hiring unit.

The same level of detail used for reference letters is required for publications, certificates, licensures, etc. on the CV if they are being used to verify a faculty member's qualifications to teach a specific course. The Academic Accreditation Coordinator will review the submitted documentation for compliance.

Graduate Director Supervising Teaching Assistants (TAs) Responsibilities

The graduate director will:

- Ensure that the TA holds a master's in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate credit hours in the teaching discipline for all courses for which the TA is the instructor of record. Fewer credit hours may be acceptable for the TA when they serve as in-class supervisors for supplemental sessions, i.e., labs; these justifications must be documented and provided to the AUH prior to final class assignments.
- Ensure direct supervision of the TA by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline
- Conduct regular in-service training for teaching assistants, as well as planned and periodic evaluations.

Dean Responsibilities

The dean will:

- Ensure implementation and compliance with the qualifications and credentialing procedures.
- Verify the AUH's assessment of the faculty member's qualifications and/or justification is consistent with JMU policy and the university's regional accreditation guidelines.

Academic Accreditation Coordinator Responsibilities

The Academic Accreditation Coordinator, as a representative of the Provost's Office, will:

- Remain knowledgeable of SACSCOC credentialing requirements, specifically as related to faculty.
- Maintain a faculty roster ensuring that faculty members meet the criteria specified in JMU policy and the university's regional guidelines ([SACSCOC Sample Faculty Roster](#)).
- Review and certify the qualifications/credentials of each faculty member for each course taught by the faculty member.
- Review and certify the qualifications for graduate teaching assistants who are listed as Instructor of Record.
- Collaborate with AUHs to determine and verify alternative credentials, such as licensure or certifications; matching course objectives to link instructor to course; previous work assignments and support documentation, etc., for all faculty in their assigned courses.
- Ensure accurate representation of faculty and their credentials on academic unit publications, such as websites.
- Answer questions related to faculty qualifications and credentialing.
- Review changes to associated policies, procedures, guidelines, handbooks and forms to ensure consistency with faculty credentialing policy.
- Annually review and, as appropriate update the *Faculty Qualifications and Credentials Manual*.
- Participate as a member of the JMU SACSCOC Working Group.
- Attend SACSCOC, state and regional meetings as appropriate.

JMU SACSCOC Advisory Council Responsibilities

Membership includes representatives from the Office of the President; college deans and academic unit heads; representatives from various administrative divisions on campus; and members of the SACSCOC Working Group. This group will

- Stay current with SACSCOC issues and requirements.
- Recommend appropriate policies.
- Communicate clearly regarding SACSCOC-related issues/requirements.
- Receive feedback on SACSCOC-related issues from faculty, administrators and staff.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does my curriculum vitae (CV)/resume provide evidence of qualification?

- A CV/resume alone cannot be used as evidence of qualification or work experience for faculty credentialing purposes. Written justifications and/or references must explicitly address how the individual's accomplishments constitute a level of preparation for the instructional assignment/particular course comparable to that of a person holding a graduate degree in the teaching field. A general rule is that the work experience must be at least five years in duration (preferably more) (See Page 4).

How do I submit my transcripts?

- For Degrees Earned from Accredited U.S. Institutions:
 - If you're sending a transcript using a service such as Parchment, National Student Clearinghouse or Escrip, please use the email facultycredentials@jmu.edu as the recipient.
 - If electronic submission is not possible, official paper transcripts can be either brought in person or mailed to the following address:
JMU Faculty Affairs and Curriculum
Attn: Kathryn Brown
Sheldon Hall
71 Alumnae Drive, MSC 7503
Harrisonburg, VA 22807
 - Please note that transcripts in unsealed envelopes, emailed PDFs, and scanned copies cannot be accepted.
- For Degrees Earned at Foreign Institutions:
 - Transcripts from outside the United States must be independently evaluated for equivalency using one of the [university-approved providers](#). The evaluation needs to include courses taken toward the degree.

Do I need to submit copies of appropriate licenses or certification?

- If teaching in a discipline(s) that requires licensure and/or certifications the employee must submit documentation, including issuing agency and expiration date, of those credentials.

Do official transcripts for graduate teaching assistants need to be submitted?

- If a graduate student is hired as a second-year graduate teaching assistant (TA) as part of a graduate teaching contract, a transcript(s) does not need to be submitted to Faculty Affairs and Curriculum. The Academic Accreditation Coordinator verifies their transcript(s) through The Graduate School. However, if the TA also teaches an extra class beyond their formal TA contract, an official contract must be submitted.

Contact

If a question arises and the answer does not appear to be in the *Faculty Qualifications and Credentials Manual*, contact:

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