

606.1 - Faculty Qualifications

Purpose:

In alignment with the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices, BSC will ensure that students have access to qualified faculty members who are experts in the subject matter they teach and who can communicate knowledge in that subject to their students.

Policy:

Bismarck State College, as a community college serving both on-campus and online students, shall employ qualified faculty to develop and deliver its various curricula. BSC will develop and employ a system for evaluating faculty qualifications as part of the hiring process and will seek to hire the best qualified applicants. Current and newly hired faculty who have not met minimal qualifications as outlined below will be assisted in developing a plan of study to bring them into compliance within a reasonable amount of time.

Definitions:

Faculty – For the purposes of this policy “faculty” refers to all employees of the college for whom teaching is a significant portion of their responsibilities. This includes, but is not limited to, the following categories: tenured, tenure track, non-tenure track, full-time benefitted, part-time benefitted, part-time non-benefitted, adjunct, dual-credit, and temporary. Guest lecturers, visiting authors, artists, political and business leaders, and others who upon occasion visit classrooms, deliver lectures, or demonstrate specialized skills, but are not hired by the college for that purpose or otherwise used by the college to develop and deliver curriculum, are exempt.

Minimum Qualification Guidelines:

In alignment with HLC recommendations, BSC has established and maintains policies and procedures to determine that faculty are qualified.

The factors that BSC considers as part of these policies and procedures include but are not limited to the achievement of academic credentials, progress toward academic credentials, equivalent experience, or some combination thereof. BSC extends this responsibility to all instructors. The appropriate degree, equivalent experience, or combination of education and experience for each discipline/program will be defined within [BSC's Faculty Qualifications Matrix](#).

Achievement of Academic Credentials:

Achievement of academic credentials means that an instructor possesses 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. In terminal degree programs, an instructor possesses the same level of degree.

In the context of general education courses, or other non-occupational courses, achievement of academic credentials typically means that an instructor holds a master's degree or higher. Generally, this degree is in the discipline or subfield in which the instructor is teaching. If an instructor holds the degree in a discipline or subfield other than that in which they are teaching, the individual has completed a reasonable amount of coursework in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.

Progress toward academic credentials:

Progress toward academic credentials means demonstrable, current, and consistent progress toward the academic credential(s) deemed relevant by BSC for an instructor to be qualified. It is expected that an instructor who is qualified because of progress toward academic credentials will not permanently be qualified on that basis; rather, the instructor will eventually be qualified on another basis. An instructor who is qualified based on progress toward academic credentials has access to and engages with resources that the institution provides to support their teaching. This could include, for example, professional development opportunities or opportunities to collaborate with other qualified faculty members who are not qualified based solely on progress toward academic credentials.

Equivalent Experience:

Equivalent experience means experience that is commensurate with achievement of academic credentials such that it qualifies an instructor for the instruction. This could include through a minimum threshold of experience; research and/or scholarship; recognized achievement; and/or other activities and factors. Equivalent experience may differ by discipline or program. Previous years of classroom instruction does not alone constitute equivalent experience.

References:

[606.1 Faculty Qualifications Policy Procedure.pdf](#)

History of This Policy:

First policy drafted by Vice President for Academic Affairs and Deans, approved by the Faculty Senate on May 5, 2017, reviewed by Operations Council on July 26, 2017, and approved by the Executive Council on August 14, 2017; May 23, 2018.

Reviewed by Campus Council on August 20, 2025, Executive Council on September 5, 2025, and approved by the President on September 9, 2025.