



Middle Georgia State University

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Introduction: Faculty Credentialing and Qualifications Guidelines

Middle Georgia State University (MGA) offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, certificates, and minors in the traditional disciplines, as well as applied and professional fields. To ensure the academic success of students and to preserve the integrity of each academic program, the institution is committed to hiring faculty with diverse academic preparation and professional experiences. This practice is in keeping with the University System of Georgia's definition of Corps of Instruction:

Full-time professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, lecturers, senior lecturers, and teaching personnel with such other titles as may be approved by the Board, shall be the Corps of Instruction. Full-time research and extension personnel and duly certified librarians will be included in the Corps of Instruction on the basis of comparable training. Persons holding adjunct appointments or other honorary titles shall not be considered to be members of the faculty [3.2.1.1 <http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section3/C337>].

The institution is mindful that teaching is the primary responsibility of the members of the Corps of Instruction. All faculty, whether full time or part time, are held to high academic standards for the teaching disciplines. It is the expectation of the Office of the Provost that all members of the Corp of Instruction are credentialed to advance the mission of the institution within their respective disciplines and contractual **obligations**. SACSCOC speaks directly to these principles:

For each of its educational programs, the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members. [E]ffective faculty members are essential to carry out the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. **The emphasis is on overall qualifications of a faculty member, rather than simply academic credentials.** While academic credentials in most cases may well be the standard qualification for faculty members, other types of qualifications may prove to be appropriate. Examples could include appropriately related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications related to the teaching assignment, honors and awards, continuing professional development, relevant peer-reviewed publications, and/or continuous documented excellence in teaching. These types of qualifications are especially important in professional, technical, and technology-dependent fields.

It is the institution's obligation to justify and document the qualifications of its faculty.

Determining the acceptability of faculty qualifications requires judicious use of professional judgment, especially when persons do not hold degrees in the teaching discipline or are qualified based on criteria other than their academic credentials. Similarly, persons holding a

degree at the same or lower level than the level at which the course is taught require additional qualifications and the application of professional judgment. Additional justification is needed for these cases as compared to cases where the academic credentials are a “perfect match” for the teaching assignments. Appropriate qualifications may also differ depending on whether a course is generally transferable to other institutions; qualifications for teaching nontransferable technical courses depend heavily on professional experience and appropriate certifications or work experience.

[6.2.a SACSCOC *Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, pp. 44 – 45, effective January 2018]

Qualified, effective faculty members are essential to carry out the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. The emphasis is on overall qualifications of a faculty member, rather than simply academic credentials. While academic credentials in most cases may well be the standard qualification for faculty members, other types of qualifications may prove to be appropriate. Examples could include appropriately related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications related to the teaching assignment, honors and awards, continuing professional development, relevant peer-reviewed publications, and/or continuous documented excellence in teaching. These types of qualifications are especially important in professional, technical, and technology-dependent fields.

[6.2.a SACSCOC *Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, p. 44, effective January 2018]

It shall be noted that **CR 6.1** (Full-time faculty), **Standard 6.2.b** (Program faculty), **Standard 6.2.c** (Program coordination), and **Standard 6.3** (Faculty appointment and evaluation) are interrelated Commission statements on faculty matters. These [MGA Faculty Credentialing Guidelines](#) provide the institution framework by which these above-noted Commission statements are integrated into the University’s internal assessment and accreditation compliance.

The MGA Faculty Credentialing Guidelines are designed to assist faculty and academic administrative officers in assessing the credentials of the members of the Corps of Instruction. It is not inclusive of every staffing scenario, but provides support in the decision making process on determining appropriate credentials for the faculty in each academic unit.

Faculty Credentials

Middle Georgia State University (MGA) has adopted faculty credentials consistent with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools institutional standards and in accordance with the University System of Georgia’s (USG) policy on minimum qualifications for employment for all academic ranks. The USG policy has set the minimum standards for employment as:

1. Evidence of ability as a teacher;

2. Evidence of ability and activity as a scholar in all other aspects of duties assigned;
3. Successful experience (this must necessarily be waived in the case of those just entering the academic profession who meet all other requirements); and,
4. Desirable personal qualities judged on the basis of personal interview, complete biographical data, and recommendations.

[USG BOR Policy 8.3.1.2 <http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section8/C245/#n8312>; MGA Faculty Handbook Section 4.02.01].

Included herein, faculty qualifications and terminal degrees have been determined based on a comparison of regional USG and non-USG institutions' credentialing guidelines, MGA degree course content and students learning outcomes, and iPEDS CIP codes for sub-disciplines appropriate for the MGA curriculum; these determinations are further supported by periodic review by University administrators in consultation with the faculty. For the majority of the academic disciplines in the **Arts and Sciences**, the terminal degree is considered the doctorate in the discipline; for the Fine Arts, the highest terminal degree is usually an MFA. Education, Nursing, Respiratory Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Information Technology are accredited by their national organizations. Each national organization speaks to and evaluates faculty credentials. For the School of Health Sciences, the departments with nursing, respiratory therapy, and occupational therapy align their designation of terminal degrees with their national accrediting bodies (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, and Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education). For the School of Business, the guidelines established by AACSB are used in determining the highest credential, which is a doctorate in the disciplines in business. For the School of Aviation, credentialing guidelines for programs nationwide were included in the review. Although a doctorate in discipline is ideal, the highest degree, depending on degree award (B.S., A.S., A.A.S), is typically the master's degree with appropriate FAA certifications and aerospace experiences; a bachelor's degree with appropriate FAA certifications and aerospace experiences; or, in some circumstances, an associate's degree with FAA certifications and aerospace experiences.

A. Process for Evaluating Faculty Credentials at Time of Hire

Academic transcripts and curriculum vita are required as part of the application process. The process manual for all new hires is available on the HR website. Questions about HR processes should be directed to that office. [http://www.mga.edu/human-resources/docs/processes/Hiring_Process_14-15.pdf].

Preference for new hires will be the candidate with an appropriate terminal degree that supports the mission of the institution. For review of applicant files, an unofficial copy of the academic transcript showing the awarding of the highest degree earned and any post-secondary degree coursework is acceptable to determine appropriateness of credentials for the academic unit. **Official transcripts will be required to be on file in the Office of the Provost as a condition of employment.** Faculty with international transcripts must provide a translated version from a "certified" translation firm;

transcription service providers must be approved by the lead administrative assistant in the Office of the Provost, unless the already approved firm of Joseph Silny is retained. <http://www.jsilny.org/>

The Office of the Provost can expedite the credentialing process if credentialing documents are sent to the Office of the Provost for a review prior to an invitation to interview. Normally, the SACSCOC Institutional Liaison reviews credentials in consultation with school deans and chairs, who have reviewed department paperwork created by faculty and/or administrative staff; during times of critical hiring, an additional academic dean may provide a second dean's signature on the credentialing form if, for example, a holiday or work assignment prevents the SACSCOC Institutional Liaison from having immediate access to an applicant's credentialing paperwork.

Credentialing documents include the applicant's **academic transcript, CV, statement of teaching philosophy, letter of application, and any other documentation** used for determining if the individual will satisfy the USG criteria for employment; this same evidence is used to review SACSCOC's expectation that the instructor of record will be competent, effective, and have the capacity to engage a diverse student body in the teaching and learning process. **Documents with reviewer comments and/or signatures shall be confirmed by the Office of the Provost prior to scheduling the campus interview.** See Appendix C for the Certification of Faculty Credentials Form.

B. Determining Instructional Assignments

Each academic unit has the responsibility to define and approve appropriate degrees and/or credentials for its faculty and its programs. These are to be reviewed periodically in consultation with the Provost, or designee, and amended as necessary to ensure that the faculty has the capacity to provide a quality education to a diverse student body. As a member of the University System of Georgia, MGA must adhere to system policies and directives. USG BOR policy *2.4.4 Areas A-F of the Core Curriculum* must be considered in the design of any faculty credentialing policy. Specifically,

[A]ll courses in Area A–E must be taught at the collegiate level and be broadly focused. They must clearly address the general education learning outcomes of the institution. They must be consistent with the USG's mission and strategic plan.

For instructional assignments in the professional and applied fields, degree credentials may be insufficient evidence of the candidate's teaching competence, effectiveness, and capacity. Certificates, licenses, badges, professional experiences - to include previous experience teaching relevant courses - and publications in the content area, e.g., would be evidence of non-credit bearing competencies. Both academic and non-academic evidence for proving faculty credentials must be included on the Certification of Faculty Credentials Form [see Appendix C].

Guided by USG BOR policies, SACSCOC standards, and best practice for each academic discipline, instructional assignments should be determined as follows:

Faculty Who Hold a Terminal Degree in Teaching Discipline

- A terminal degree in the teaching discipline qualifies a person to teach throughout the broad scope of the teaching discipline(s) in Areas A-E of the Core Curriculum (1000-2000).
- For AREA F courses and upper division courses in the major (3000-4000), criteria for judging qualifications are content expertise and professional experiences. The terminal degree may or may not be the sole evidence of the faculty's credentials for the instructional assignments.

Faculty Who Hold a Terminal Degree in Related Discipline

With Area of Specialty Specific to Major

- Faculty who hold a terminal degree in an area of specialty specific to the major and aligned with the learning outcomes for the instructional assignment (s) qualifies faculty to teach throughout the *broad scope of that specialty* in upper division courses in the major (3000-4000). **Area of specialization is defined by 18 semester hours of academic credit OR a combination of course work and other teaching credentials.**
- Faculty who hold a terminal degree unrelated to the discipline *may be* qualified for the instructional assignment. **Consideration is on a case-by-case basis.** Other teaching credentials include, but are not limited to: scholarship, teaching experience, professional experiences, licensures and certificates, honors and awards.

Faculty with an appropriate terminal degree in the teaching discipline may not always be available nor the best qualified for the instructional assignment (s). Credentialing guidelines for faculty without a terminal degree are as follows:

Faculty Who Do Not Hold a Terminal Degree

- Faculty with a *Master's degree* in teaching discipline

Faculty with a master's degree and (ideally but not essential*) 18 hours in the teaching discipline may be qualified to teach (1) throughout the broad scope of the teaching discipline(s) in Areas A-E of the Core Curriculum at the baccalaureate level, (2) AREA F and upper division courses in the major (3000-4000), (3) associate degree courses designed for transfer, and (4) associate degree courses not designed for transfer.

***Please note, throughout these Guidelines and its appendices, that 18 hours in the teaching discipline is ideal but not essential; and as in other credentialing decisions, evidence and justification must be provided on the credentialing form and, when needed, the SACSCOC Faculty Roster.**

- Faculty with a *Master's degree in a related discipline and 18 hours* in an area of specialization

Faculty with a Master's degree and 18 hours in an area of specialization within the teaching discipline may be qualified to teach (1) throughout the broad scope of the specialty in Areas A-E of the Core Curriculum at the baccalaureate level, (2) AREA F and upper division courses in the major (3000-4000), (3) associate degree courses designed for transfer, and (4) associate degree courses not designed for transfer.

- Faculty with a *baccalaureate degree* in the teaching discipline

Faculty with a baccalaureate degree in the teaching discipline may teach associate degree courses that are non-transferable.

- Faculty with an *associate's degree* in the teaching discipline

Faculty with an associate's degree in the teaching discipline may teach associate degree courses that are non-transferable.

- Faculty *without a baccalaureate or an associate's degree* in the teaching discipline

Faculty who cannot be credentialed by degree alone, may be qualified for the instructional assignment. Consideration is on a case-by-case basis. Supporting documentation is required.

Faculty Who Cannot be Credentialed by Academic Degree Alone

Faculty who cannot be credentialed by academic degree alone may be credentialed on the basis of professional experiences or continued professional development, but only on a course by course basis. The list below is not inclusive but does encompass most evidential categories to support the argument that the instructional assignment is appropriate. Documentation is required. The categories are:

- Undergraduate or graduate level courses applicable to the instructional assignment
Use these courses where degree relationship may be questionable. List by name and course hours for each course (or highlight the transcript).
- Work experience prior to employment at Middle Georgia State University (MGA). Verifiable
experience required. Include years of service, employer, and duties. If prior experience is with an academic institution, list courses taught at that institution relevant to the instructional assignment.
- Licensures and Certifications
Attach copies of appropriate licensures and certifications. Note whether the license/certificate is current or expired and if valid in Georgia.
- Publications, Presented Papers, and Visual and Performing Arts Activities
A record of peer-reviewed, refereed or invited presentations, presented papers, exhibitions, performances or juried creative activities at the state, national or international level appropriate for a tenure and/or promotion portfolio.
- Post degree Facilitated Learning Experience
Examples include a continuing education course, a practiced based professional learning experience, or POST law enforcement training. Criteria for determining the importance in the credentialing process should include level of intensity of the experience and whether there was an evaluative component to the learning experience.
- One-time Provisional Teaching Assignment
MGA may credential an instructor in a one-time or provisional capacity by supplementing the standard credentialing form with a memo of provisional teaching assignment, which may, for example, outline the requirement of additional supervision by a program chair or coordinator to include, e.g., classroom observation and course outcome/syllabus review beyond the normal department oversight.

Credentialing Exceptions for Select Professional and Applied Programs

For the associates and baccalaureate degree nursing programs, MGA adheres to Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing 2013 Baccalaureate Standards and Criteria Standard 2.1 which reads: “Full-time faculty hold a minimum of a graduate degree with a major in nursing; a minimum of 25% of the full-time faculty also hold an earned doctorate or are currently enrolled in doctoral study. Full- and part-time faculty includes those individuals teaching and/or evaluating students in classroom, clinical, or laboratory settings.”

For the associates and the baccalaureate degree in Respiratory Therapy, MGA adheres to the commonly accepted highest-degree earned for the Respiratory Care profession, which is a master’s degree in a field related to Respiratory Care including therapy, education, management and leadership, research, administration or a specialty area of science. Faculty without the master’s degree may be hired to teach baccalaureate-level clinical courses if they hold a baccalaureate degree with specific clinical expertise or hold national professional credentials in respiratory care (RRT, RRT-NPS, RRT-SDS, RPFT, RRT-ACCS) that meet external guidelines according to the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care and with the appropriate justification as required by SACSCOC guidelines.

C. Course Level Credential Checks

Beginning fall 2019, at the beginning of each semester, OTR will run a CIP Banner report to determine the alignment of assigned faculty to the courses they are teaching. If the report generates “exceptions” the Dean / Chair / Program Coordinator within respective academic units will be directed by the Office of the Provost to conduct a credentials check to determine if the faculty members are correctly coded by CIP on the Faculty Credentialing Form. If narrative justification needs to be provided, that will be entered into the narrative space Banner provides. The respective academic administrator will additionally submit an updated Faculty Certification of Credentials form (updated fall 2018 to include new column for CIP codes) for review to the Office of the Provost.

D. Guidelines for Determining Graduate Faculty Status

SACSCOC requires that institutions establish and follow their own guidelines for faculty credentialing, and that they are in compliance with Commission standards, including the assignment of faculty to graduate courses (**6.2.a: The institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members.**).

The MGA Faculty Credentialing Guidelines 2018-2019 has been updated to outline graduate credentialing policies for Middle Georgia State University. The fall 2018 memo to deans and the Office of the Provost addresses the responsibility of deans in assigning and documenting faculty as having either **Graduate Faculty Status** or **Provisional Graduate Faculty Status**.

Graduate Faculty Status (all bullet points apply)

- Holds rank of Assistant Professor (and **has** successfully completed third-year review), Associate Professor, or Professor
- Holds terminal degree in teaching discipline
- Has significant experience as a college or university teacher
- Has evidence of scholarship

Provisional Graduate Faculty Status (some but not all bullet points apply)

- Holds the rank of Assistant Professor (but **has not** successfully completed third-year review), Senior Lecturer, Lecturer, or part-timer
- Holds a master's degree in area and/or a terminal degree outside of teaching discipline
- Has graduate classes that map to particular graduate class descriptions and outcomes
- Has training, job experience, certification, awards, publications, or other evidence providing qualifications that map to particular graduate class descriptions and outcomes
- Has experience as a college or university teacher
- Has potential for or evidence of scholarship

For each full-time or part-time faculty member teaching a graduate course, there must be a memo on file that identifies the status of any faculty member who has 1) taught or is teaching a graduate class, or 2) who will be teaching a graduate class. This memo is written by the respective dean of the school and is addressed to the Provost and the Dean of Graduate Studies who maintains a roster of graduate faculty.

If the memo assigns a faculty member to **Graduate Faculty Status**, the memo shall speak to the requirements of each bullet point, providing adequate detail to include current rank; names and dates of degrees; a summary of teaching experience; and, especially, the “potential for or evidence of scholarship.” **This memo must be updated with a new memo when there is a change in rank and/or when a faculty member is evaluated through post-tenure review.** All copies shall be maintained in the personnel file of the Provost's Office, the academic unit, and the Office of Graduate Studies.

If the memo assigns a faculty member to **Provisional Graduate Faculty Status**, the memo shall speak to the requirements of each bullet point, providing adequate detail to include current rank; names, dates, and suitability of degrees; any additional graduate classes; any training, job experience, certification, awards, publications, or other evidence providing qualifications; a summary of teaching experience; and, especially, the “potential for or evidence of scholarship.” **This memo must be reviewed and initialed each year or updated with a new memo if there is a change in rank.** All copies shall be maintained in the personnel file of the Provost’s Office, the academic unit, and the Office of Graduate Studies.

For instances of Provisional Graduate Faculty Status, graduate deans should be especially careful in making these appointments and in applying their best professional judgment as guided by SACSCOC policy and the MGA Faculty Credentialing Guidelines. **SACSCOC additionally addresses the standard of a “sufficient number of full-time faculty members to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review” (6.2.b).** Hence, 6.2.b should guide the judgment of the dean in managing the number of Provisionals over time.

In making the above determinations and in following these policies, graduate deans shall consult their senior faculty and the Graduate Program Coordinator about the appropriateness of academic credentials for graduate teaching assignments. A record of this consultation should be in the form of minutes from a department or school meeting. For the purposes of hiring, this memo does not need to be completed at the time of the campus interview, but must be completed at the time of hire and attached to the offer letter; additionally, this memo is an addendum to the credentialing form.

Finally, at the time of annual faculty evaluation, deans shall detail in their summaries that graduate faculty are meeting high standards in the classroom and are otherwise meeting the standards of their faculty status; if a faculty member is not meeting the standards of teaching or scholarship, the dean’s annual evaluation shall note this for the record and provide a path and timetable for remediation. If a faculty member is removed from any level of graduate faculty status, a letter shall be sent to the faculty member and placed in his or her personnel file.

[Approved by Faculty Senate Fall 2018]

E. Credentialing Form

Please verify before completing the credentialing form that it is the most updated version. Call Jennifer Jones at 478-471-2730 for questions. **Note:** When completing the form, use an asterisk (*) in a field to indicate a supplemental memo or supporting document, for example: See *Supplemental Memo Dated 12/1/18.

[Faculty Credentialing Form](#)