

# HLC's Credentialing Requirements: An Overview of a Recent Policy Change and Implications for Practice

2024

# HLC Staff Presenters

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# Brief HLC Overview

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# Elevator Speech

Two things:

1. Federally recognized national academic quality assurance entity for institutions of higher education (IHE)
2. Link to federal student financial aid (Title IV) for accredited IHEs - \$30 billion annual volume

# History and Member IHEs

- Founded in 1895
- Private, non-governmental entity
- 961 member IHEs



# Accredited IHE Stats (2022)

- **Top three types of institutions by degree level**
  - 30% associates
  - 22% masters
  - 15% baccalaureate
- **Enrollment**
  - 4.8 million students
    - 700,000 in high school dual enrollment
- **Employment:**
  - 1.1 million faculty, staff, and administrators
- **Credentials Awarded:**
  - 1.2 million degrees awarded
  - 270,000 certificates awarded

# Peer Corps

- About 1,450 volunteer Peer Reviewers
- Faculty, staff and administrators from member IHEs
- Heart of voluntary peer review system



# Accreditation Processes

- 2023
  - 443 Substantive Change Applications
    - Top Two: Program and Location
      - Programs – new programs and certificates in certain cases; changes to programs in certain cases
      - Locations - Opening, closing, relocating or reclassifying a branch campus or additional location
  - 316 Pathway Review processes
    - About 1/3 of members having some touch in their evaluation pathway each year
  - Every member having touches each year, incl. the Institutional Update on financial and non-financial indicators

# Programs & Events

- 2023
  - 22 elective programming events with well over 1,000 participants
    - Academies and Workshops
  - Annual Conference – about 4,000 attendees
  - State Partners and Others Welcome to Participate!

# Policy Process

- **Two committees design and review policy:**
  - Policy Committee – Staff
  - Committee on Accreditation – Trustees
- **Policy adoption**
  - 1st reading and vote by Trustees
  - Comment period
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> reading and adoption by Trustees
  - Policy in effect

# Relevant HLC Requirements

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## Faculty Qualifications: Policy Updates and Implications for Practice

# Relevant HLC Requirements

- **Criterion 3, Core Component 3.C**

*The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.*

- **Criterion 5, Core Component 5.A**

*Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.*

# Assumed Practice Prior to Revisions

## Previously Assumed Practice B.2.a-c

*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 they are teaching, that faculty member should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.*

*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.*

*Instructors teaching at the doctoral level have a record of recognized scholarship, creative endeavor, or achievement in practice commensurate with doctoral expectations.*

# Revised Assumed Practice

- **Assumed Practice B.2.a**

*The institution establishes and maintains reasonable policies and procedures to determine that faculty are qualified.*

*The factors that an institution considers as part of these policies and procedures could include but are not limited to: the achievement of academic credentials, progress toward academic credentials, equivalent experience, or some combination thereof. The institution's obligations in this regard extend to all instructors and all other entities to which it assigns the responsibility of instruction.*

*HLC will maintain "Institutional Policies and Procedures for Determining Faculty Qualifications Guidelines" to further explain requirements for reasonable policies and procedures in accordance with this Assumed Practice.*

# Another Relevant Assumed Practice

- **Assumed Practice B.2.b**

*Faculty participate substantially in...establishment of the qualifications for instructors, including instructors provided by third parties;*



# Guidelines

- **Reasonable policies and procedures**
  - Developed and implemented by the institution
  - Aligned with common understandings in Guidelines
  - Codified
  - Transparent
  - Consistently implemented
  - Regularly reviewed
  - May include factors listed in Assumed Practice OR may include other factors\*\*

# Guidelines

- **Achievement of academic credentials**
  - Academic degree relevant to what teaching AND one level above (except in programs for terminal degrees)
  - General education or other non-occupational courses typically master's degree or higher
  - Generally, in discipline or subfield teaching
  - If degree is in another discipline or subfield, completed a reasonable amount of coursework in discipline or subfield
- **Progress towards academic credentials**
  - Demonstrable, current, consistent progress towards relevant credentials
  - Access to and engagement with resources providing by the institution to support teaching
  - NOT A PERMANENT BASIS OF QUALIFICATION

# Guidelines

- **Equivalent experience**

- Experience commensurate with achievement of academic credentials
- Examples: Minimum threshold of experience, research/scholarship, recognized achievement, etc.
- May differ by discipline or program
- NOT years of classroom experience alone

- **Other entities**

- Contractual or consortial partners
- Dual enrollment partners
- Institutional policies on qualifications still apply

# Institutional Policies

- Institutions are responsible for establishing their own policies and procedures regarding faculty qualifications
- An institution may choose to adopt policies with standards that are “more rigorous than” the common understandings in the Guidelines

# Potential Approaches to Reviewing Evidence Regarding Faculty Qualifications

- Review institutional policies and procedures
- Review websites or other communications that the institution might have regarding faculty qualifications
- Examine evidence of implementation: rubrics, meeting minutes, procedures, systems
- Discuss approaches with those responsible for implementation

# Stay in Touch

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- **Read**
  - Strategic Plan, EVOLVE (Equity, Vision, Outcomes, Leadership, Value, Engagement)
  - Annual Advocacy Agenda
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# Questions?

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