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| **Sinclair’s Faculty Credential Requirements and Tested Experience Policy** |
| **Faculty Credential Requirements**: The Chief Academic Officer has determined that the primary method of establishing faculty qualifications at Sinclair are the credentialing guidelines established by the Higher Learning Commission and the Ohio Department of Higher Education:   * Faculty teaching occupational courses designed to prepare students directly for a career are required to hold a degree at least one level above that of the program in which they are teaching. * Faculty teaching general education courses or other non-occupational courses must hold a master’s degree or higher in the discipline or subfield, or have a master’s degree and a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.  Tested experience cannot be used to qualify faculty for general education or other non-occupational courses.  General education courses are courses that fulfill general education requirements or are designed to be taken in university transfer courses of study.   **Tested Experience Policy**: The Tested Experience criteria that would qualify faculty to teach **non-general education** courses for Sinclair in lieu of qualifying via HLC-specified credentials are as follows:  Minimum of an associate degree in the discipline plus one or more of the following:   * Possession and maintenance of a widely accepted credential or certification that is the generally recognized industry standard (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean). * Three years of experience in a field specifically related to the course to be taught (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean). * Possession of a specific skill set (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean) in a field for which no widely accepted credential or certification exists. * Five years of college or university teaching in a field specifically related to the course to be taught (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean).   Incases where the prospective faculty member lacks an associate degree in the discipline, in select cases faculty may be approved under the following conditions:   * Possession of an appropriate industry license, credential, or certification that qualifies the individual to teach the content (if there is no applicable license, credential, or certification in the content area, individuals may be qualified by completion of a formal assessment conducted by the department chair that is documented by the appropriate Sinclair form), and * Five years of experience working in a field specifically related to the course to be taught and/or college or university teaching in a field specifically related to the course to be taught (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean), and * In addition to the appropriate industry license, credential, or certification that qualifies the individual to teach the content and the years of experience requirements above, potential instructors attempting to qualify under those criteria also require review and approval by the chairperson, division dean, and the Provost’s Office. |

**APPENDIX**

**Additional Detail Regarding Sinclair's Policy on Tested Experience Requirements for Non-Credential-Based Qualification of Instructors**

**Revised November 2016**

On October 1, 2015, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) released "Determining Qualified Faculty through HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices" which mandated new requirements for credentialing of faculty at institutions accredited by the HLC (see <http://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB.pdf> ).  While these new rules made clear that “Accreditation agencies expect that accredited institutions will use *credentials* as the primary mechanism to ascertain minimal faculty qualifications,” and that faculty members teaching "general education courses" (defined in the October 2015 document as "courses not designed to prepare people directly for a career") must have a master's degree and 18 graduate credit hours minimum in the discipline or subfield in which they teach, the document goes on to add that “HLC recognizes that *experience* also may be considered in determining faculty qualifications.” In March of 2016 the HLC released a revised version of these guidelines.

Two key passages from the March 2016 document provide the assumptions that underlie Sinclair’s Policy on Tested Experience requirements:

* “…faculty teaching in undergraduate programs should hold a degree at least one level above that of the program in which they are teaching. If a faculty member holds a master’s degree or higher in a discipline 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 in which he or she is teaching. If an individual faculty member has not achieved 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline in which he or she teaches, *the institution should be able to explain and justify its decision to assign the individual to the courses taught. These decisions should be supported by policy and procedure that are acceptable to the professional judgment of HLC peer reviewers* (emphasis added).
* “Faculty teaching in career and technical education college-level certificate and occupational associate’s degree programs should hold a bachelor’s degree in the field *and/or a combination of education, training and tested experience* (emphasis added)...Such qualifications are allowable even in instances where technical/occupational courses transfer, which HLC recognizes is an increasing practice.”

Under the heading “**Using Tested Experience as a Basis for Determining Minimally Qualified Faculty,**” page 4 of the March 2016 version of these guidelines contains the following two paragraphs regarding "Tested Experience:"

“Tested experience may substitute for an earned credential or portions thereof. Assumed Practice B.2. allows an institution to determine that a faculty member is qualified based on experience that the institution determines is equivalent to the degree it would otherwise require for a faculty position. This experience should be *tested experience* in that it includes a breadth and depth of experience outside of the classroom in real-world situations relevant to the discipline in which the faculty member would be teaching. (Note: *Tested experience*…is typically not based exclusively on years of teaching experience, although other experiential factors as noted below may be considered on a case-by case basis.)

The value of using tested experience to determine minimal faculty qualifications depends upon the relevance of the individual faculty member’s experience both to the degree level and to the specific content of the courses the faculty member is teaching. An institution that intends to use tested experience as a basis for hiring faculty must have well-defined policies, procedures and documentation that demonstrate when such experience is sufficient to determine that the faculty member has the expertise necessary to teach students in that discipline. In their policies on tested experience as a basis for hiring faculty members, institutions are encouraged to develop faculty hiring qualifications that outline a minimum threshold of experience and a system of evaluation. Tested experience qualifications should be established for specific disciplines and programs and could include skill sets, types of certifications or additional credentials, and experiences. Documented qualifications would ensure consistency and transparency in hiring and human resources policies. The faculty hiring qualifications related to tested experience should be reviewed and approved through the faculty governance process at the institution—a step that should be highlighted for peer review teams, as appropriate.”

Further consultation with HLC personnel established that the “faculty hiring qualifications” referred to in the second paragraph above may consist of broad institution-wide parameters that individual departments meet in ways that are most appropriate for their discipline, so long as they fall within the broader institutional parameters.

**Context for the Tested Experience Policy**

Sinclair has always maintained rigorous criteria for qualifying faculty to teach its college-level courses, in accordance with HLC and state requirements. For general education courses it has always been typical for departments to require a master’s degree in the content area applicable to the field of study, and for non-general education courses it has been customary to require a degree one degree level higher than the program of study the offering is being used in, which would be a bachelor’s degree. There have, however, been times when exceptions were made for non-general education courses where the chairperson determined that there was sufficient skill and experience to ensure instruction at the same level of quality, although no formal institution-wide policy guided the implementation of these exceptions.

Sinclair had developed relationships with area high schools for a number of years, and in 2010 began expanding its dual credit offerings in local high schools. Often high schools requested that their high school teachers be allowed to teach college level courses at the high school, and since for the most part they requested general education courses, Sinclair maintained the standard that in order to qualify high school teachers had to have a master’s in the discipline of study. Because of strict adherence to this standard, relationships with local school districts were often strained when high school instructors were not allowed to teach Sinclair courses, particularly in cases where schools were aware that other higher education providers in the area were not maintaining these same standards. Sinclair’s policy had always been to hold dual credit instructors to the same standard as any other instructor.

Sinclair set these standards in alignment with historic HLC requirements. However, over time HLC expectations had been provided in various documents that had been revised multiple times, and it was felt by the HLC’s Board of Trustees that these expectations were not as clear as they had once been. Accordingly, the HLC revised its Assumed Practice B.2 in June 2015 to codify these expectations in the Assumed Practices. To provide further guidance to member institutions, in October 2015 the HLC released “Determining Qualified Faculty through HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices”. There were a number of impacts associated with the release of this document for Sinclair:

* It reinforced existing Sinclair practices regarding the requirement of a master’s degree in the discipline for general education courses.
* With its section on “Tested Experience”, it provided a framework for development of institution-wide criteria other than traditional credentials for qualification of faculty to teach non-general education courses.
* It clearly stated that “The institution must assure that the faculty members teaching dual credit courses hold the same minimal qualifications as the faculty teaching on its own campus”, reinforcing Sinclair’s existing practice of requiring dual credit faculty teaching general education courses to have a master’s degree in the discipline like other Sinclair faculty.

These new requirements were to be effective Fall 2017. With the release of the October 2015 document, Sinclair immediately began drafting a Tested Experience policy. Feedback from Sinclair’s HLC Liaison on October 15, 2015, indicated that “individual departments may certainly apply discipline-specific forms of credentials or evidence for determining suitable preparation to teach as a faculty member.”

In November 2016 HLC announced that institutions could apply for an extension that would delay implementation of these requirements for dual credit instructors for five years. Details of this extension were released in March 2016, and Sinclair applied for this extension in April 2016. Sinclair received approval for an extension in November 2016, and the extension expires on September 1, 2022.

Multiple drafts of the Tested Experience policy document were developed and reviewed over the following months, and in February 2016 the current version of the Tested Experience policy was submitted to Department Chairpersons Council and Faculty Senate for approval by Sinclair’s shared governance bodies. Department Chairpersons Council approved it without modification on February 9, 2016, and Faculty Senate did the same on March 2.

However, at about the same time in March 2016 the HLC released an updated version of “Determining Qualified Faculty through HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices.” One key difference between the March 2016 version of this document and the October 2015 version involved qualifications for dual credit instructors, who could now qualify to teach dual credit offerings with a master’s of education and “graduate-level content in the discipline and methods courses that are specifically for the teaching of that discipline.” Sinclair confirmed with the HLC liaison that these revised criteria applied only to dual credit instruction, and could not be applied more widely to other faculty teaching for Sinclair, and for the first time a different standard for Sinclair dual credit instructors compared to other instructors was established.

This document represents the culmination of Sinclair’s efforts to produce a policy aligned with the latest requirements released by HLC, and compliant with Ohio Department of Higher Education requirements. The policy requirements that follow are effective beginning September 1, 2017 (with the exception of dual credit instructors, for whom they will become binding on September 1, 2022). This policy may be revised at any time as changes to HLC or Ohio Department of Higher Education requirements occur.  
  
**Sinclair Community College's Tested Experience Policy**  
  
The policy statement that follows represents Sinclair's official criteria surrounding the use of Tested Experience to qualify faculty to teach non-general education courses, which are defined as courses that

* do not fulfill general education requirements in a program of study, and
* are used in programs that prepare students directly for a career

The Chief Academic Officer has determined that the primary method of establishing faculty qualifications at Sinclair are the credentialing guidelines established by the Higher Learning Commission and the Ohio Department of Higher Education:

* Faculty teaching occupational courses designed to prepare students directly for a career are required to hold a degree at least one level above that of the program in which they are teaching.
* Faculty teaching general education courses or other non-occupational courses must hold a master’s degree or higher in the discipline or subfield, or have a master’s degree and a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.  Tested experience cannot be used to qualify faculty for general education or other non-occupational courses.  General education courses are courses that fulfill general education requirements or are designed to be taken in university transfer courses of study.

In March 2016, the HLC released new requirements regarding the credentialing of instructors in dual credit arrangements, which apply to Sinclair’s College Credit Plus (CCP) course offerings. In response to concerns that the HLC had not previously addressed dual credit instruction adequately, the HLC noted that:

To address these concerns, HLC determined that accredited institutions awarding college credit by means of dual credit arrangements must assure the quality and integrity of such offerings and their comparability to the same college credit offered on the institution’s main campus or at the institution’s other locations. As such, the faculty members teaching dual credit courses should hold the same minimal qualifications as required by the institution of its own faculty. These expectations extend to minimally qualified dual credit faculty, as stated in Criterion Three (3.A., 3.C.2.), Criterion Four (4.A.4.), and Assumed Practice B.2.

This requirement is not intended to discount or in any way diminish the experience that the high school teacher brings into a dual credit classroom. Such classroom experience alone, however lengthy or respected, is not a substitute for the content knowledge needed for college credit.

HLC recognizes that many high school teachers possess tested experience beyond their years in the classroom that may account for content knowledge for the dual credit courses they may teach. These teachers may have gained relevant experience while working in other sectors or through professional development or other relevant experience that now informs their teaching. They may be active in professional organizations and learned societies through presentations and publications on topics relevant to the dual credit courses they may teach. In combination with other credentials and/or tested experience, they may be able to provide direct evidence of their students’ achievement on college-level tests that reflects a level of teaching and learning akin to a college classroom. However, evidence of students’ achievement, on its own, is not sufficient to demonstrate minimal qualifications.

HLC also recognizes that dual credit faculty members who have obtained a Master of Education degree but not a master’s degree in a discipline such as English, Communication, History, Mathematics, etc., may have academic preparation to satisfy HLC’s expectations. In this context, the curricula of graduate degrees in the field of Education, when inclusive of graduate-level content in the discipline and methods courses that are specifically for the teaching of that discipline, satisfy HLC’s dual credit faculty expectations. In other words, the attainment of a Master of Education degree does not demonstrate a qualification to teach dual credit courses in a particular discipline unless it is demonstrated that the content of that faculty member’s Master of Education degree is sufficiently related to the discipline of the dual credit course.

Accredited institutions should monitor closely the earned credentials along with the tested experience of dual credit faculty with the understanding that allowances for tested experience may occur.

In compliance with these new requirements, instructors may be qualified to teach Sinclair CCP general education offerings as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean with the following:

* + Master of Education degree, and
  + 18 hours of graduate-level content in the discipline and methods courses that are specifically for the teaching of that discipline demonstrating that the content of the faculty member’s Master of Education degree is sufficiently related to the discipline of the dual credit course offerings, as determined by the department chairperson

Per guidance from the HLC, the above qualifications are applicable only to faculty teaching CCP general education course offerings, and cannot be applied to any other general education course offerings. It should be noted that Sinclair applied for an extension of the implementation of these HLC requirements for current CCP faculty, and in November 2016 received confirmation from the HLC that Sinclair’s request had been approved for an extension for faculty providing dual credit instruction until September 1, 2022.

For non-general education courses that prepare students directly for a career, both the HLC and the Ohio Department of Higher Education recognize that there are circumstances where experience other than the qualifications listed above may qualify faculty to teach college level occupational courses.  The Tested Experience criteria that would qualify faculty to teach **non-general education** courses for Sinclair in lieu of qualifying via HLC-specified credentials are as follows:

* Minimum of an associate degree in the discipline, and
* Possession and maintenance of a widely accepted credential or certification that is the generally recognized industry standard (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean).

OR

* Minimum of an associate degree in the discipline, and
* Three years of experience in a field specifically related to the course to be taught (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean).

OR

* Minimum of an associate degree in the discipline, and
* Possession of a specific skill set (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean) in a field for which no widely accepted credential or certification exists.

OR

* Minimum of an associate degree in the discipline with related coursework/training (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean), and
* Five years of college or university teaching in a field specifically related to the course to be taught (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean).

OR

* Possession of an appropriate industry license, credential, or certification that qualifies the individual to teach the content (if there is no applicable license, credential, or certification in the content area, individuals may be qualified by completion of a formal assessment conducted by the department chair that is documented by the appropriate Sinclair form), and
* Five years of experience working in a field specifically related to the course to be taught and/or college or university teaching in a field specifically related to the course to be taught (as determined by the department chairperson and approved by the division dean), and
* In addition to the appropriate industry license, credential, or certification that qualifies the individual to teach the content and the years of experience requirements above, potential instructors attempting to qualify under those criteria also require review and approval by the chairperson, division dean, and the Provost’s Office.

**Individuals who fail to meet either the credential requirements or the Tested Experience requirements shall not be allowed to teach a credit-bearing course at Sinclair as lead instructor except in accordance with exceptions specifically granted to Sinclair by the HLC.**

**Resolution of College Credit Plus Issues**

In recognition of the need for development of processes to resolve issues that arise regarding College Credit Plus sections, the following are established as part of this policy:

* + **Process for addressing concerns and complaints involving College Credit Plus sections.** When concerns and complaints arise regarding the conduct of a specific CCP section, the appropriate department chairperson or the College Credit Plus office (on behalf of itself or a partner high school) shall attempt to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible with the parties involved. Should the process reach an impasse and a resolution is not met, a meeting shall be called between the chairperson, the division dean, a representative of the Provost’s Office, and a representative of the College Credit Plus office. This ad hoc group will be charged with resolving the concern or complaint for the specific situation at hand to the fullest extent possible. Ongoing or repeated issues may need to be forwarded to the College Credit Plus Policy and Practice Council for resolution as described in the section that follows.
  + **College Credit Plus Policy and Practice Council.** In order to adequately address more systemic issues that arise, a College Credit Plus Policy and Practice Council shall be established with membership comprised of the following:
    - Two representatives from Department Chairpersons Council, one of whom is from a department that offers CCP sections
    - Two faculty representatives selected by Faculty Senate, one of whom is a faculty member currently teaching at least one CCP section
    - At least one representative from the Provost’s Office
    - At least one representative from the College Credit Plus Office

This council shall meet monthly to discuss systemic or frequent issues that need to be resolved regarding College Credit Plus. The Provost’s Office representative shall schedule the meetings and set the agenda with input from the other members of the Council. This Council shall be empowered to establish procedures to govern regular operations of CCP sections and to recommend broad policy changes as required to executive College leadership.