



NEW MEXICO TECH POLICY ON MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

Sponsor: Office of Academic Affairs

Replaces Interim Policy of August 30, 2017
Policy Approved by NMT President February 1, 2018

The purpose of this document is to establish minimum qualifications for instructional staff at New Mexico Tech.

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The quality of New Mexico Tech's academic programs depends upon having highly qualified instructional staff. This document describes the minimum qualifications required for staff who teach with appointments as faculty or instructional academic staff, including those with part-time appointments, defined here collectively as "instructional staff". This policy does not apply to instructors who are students enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by qualified instructional staff. There are two approaches to determining whether or not someone meets the minimum qualifications necessary for New Mexico Tech's instructional staff:

Using Credentials

Qualifications for instructional staff are typically judged principally on the basis of earned degrees relevant to the courses taught following the assumed practices of our accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Key elements of these assumed practices, as adopted by the HLC in June 2015 and revised in October 2015 and March 2016, are as follows:

- *Faculty [instructional staff] teaching in higher education institutions should have completed a program of study in the discipline or subfield (as applicable) in which they teach, and/or for which they develop curricula, with coursework at least one level above that of the courses being taught or developed.*
- *... Faculty [instructional staff] 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.*
- *Faculty [instructional staff] 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.*
- *Faculty [instructional staff] guiding doctoral education should have a record of scholarship and preparation to teach at the doctoral level. Research and scholarship should be appropriate to the program and degree offered.*

Note: The terms "discipline" and "subfield" in this context are to be interpreted as "appropriate to the program as determined by the department and/or program". For instance, a degree in Chemical Engineering is appropriate for teaching courses in Materials Engineering.

Using Tested Experience

In some circumstances instructional staff who do not meet minimum qualifications based upon earned degrees may qualify on the basis of *tested experience* outside of the classroom that New Mexico Tech determines is equivalent to the degree requirements described above. New Mexico Tech's policy is to allow academic departments to determine when such experience is sufficient to ensure quality instruction. To use this pathway academic departments must establish a formal procedure for determining the minimum threshold of experience necessary to allow qualification. Information to consider includes professional work directly related to course content, a record of publications in the relevant field, and other evidence of equivalent tested experience. Academic departments requesting the exception for tested experience must submit the instructor's current CV, a letter explaining the nature of the instructor's relevant experience, and a copy of their formal department procedure to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for approval. Once approved this documentation will be kept in the instructor's employment file in the Office of Academic Affairs.