

Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation – National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration

August 9, 2011

White Paper on Academically and Professionally Qualified Faculty

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Standard 3.1: Academically and Professionally Qualified Faculty

The professional graduate public service programs accredited by NASPAA strive to provide a high quality educational experience to prepare graduates for careers in public service. Traditionally, that education is delivered by academically qualified individuals. These are individuals who might or might not have much professional experience in the field, but will have the academic qualifications generally in the form of a terminal degree and some continuous research activity in their instruction field. However, professional qualifications are also important assets for graduate programs in public affairs. Sometimes, and depending on the subject matter, students stand to benefit substantially from being exposed to individuals who have rich public service experience, but who do not have a terminal degree in their field of study. The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation refers to these individuals as “professionally qualified” individuals.

Definitions

Under current NASPAA Standards all those who teach in accredited graduate public affairs programs must be either Academically or Professionally Qualified. Standard 3.1 states “**Faculty Qualifications: The program's faculty members will be academically or professionally qualified to pursue the program's mission.**”

To help programs assess the qualifications of faculty the self-study instructions require programs to answer the following question, “Does the program demonstrate quality through its decisions to hire appropriately trained and credentialed faculty that are both current and qualified?”

Appropriately trained and credentialed faculty are identified as academically or professionally qualified, according to the following definitions:

Academically Qualified: “A faculty member who holds a terminal degree related to his or her teaching responsibilities and either has received the degree within five years of the self-study or meets the following criteria: who publishes peer-reviewed (both collegial and editorial) scholarship, whether in print or electronic format, related to the instructor's course topics and dated within five years of the self-study; who uses class syllabi that demonstrate current knowledge and technique; or who engages in

professional and community service in the area of the instructor's teaching responsibilities." ¹

Professionally Qualified: "A full-time faculty member can be professionally qualified by virtue of having a record of outstanding professional experience directly relevant to the faculty member's Program responsibilities. In general, a professionally qualified faculty member will have a terminal degree in his or her area of responsibility."

Further, the Self-Study Instructions indicate the basis for judgment:

- "In general, a professionally qualified faculty member will have a terminal level degree in his or her area of responsibility. The burden is on the Program to document the qualifications of all of its faculty members. One way to demonstrate that a Program's faculty members meet this standard if at least 75% are academically qualified to pursue the Program's mission by virtue of 1) their holding earned doctorates or equivalent terminal professional level degrees in their areas of teaching and 2) their remaining current in their teaching areas. A faculty member can be professionally qualified by virtue of having a record of outstanding professional experience directly relevant to the faculty member's Program responsibilities.
- "NASPAA accepts as prima facie evidence that students are being taught by qualified faculty who are engaged in the Program where:
 - at least 50% of the courses are taught by full time faculty
 - at least 50% of the courses delivering required competencies are taught by qualified nucleus faculty members employed by the institution.
- *"The program's decision to use professionally qualified faculty should be consistent with its mission."* (Emphasis added)

¹ The following language has been proposed and will be voted on at COPRA's fall meeting October 17-19, 2011 in Kansas City, Missouri. It would replace the entire quote for academically qualified as currently found in the self-study instructions. This change is not substantive, but an effort to clear up the language. "A faculty member who holds a terminal degree related to his or her teaching responsibilities. If the faculty member received their degree more than 5 years prior to the self-study, they need to show currency in the field in at least one of the following ways: 1.) publishes peer-reviewed (both collegial and editorial) scholarship, whether in print or electronic format, related to the instructor's course topics and dated within five years of the self-study; 2.) uses class syllabi that demonstrate current knowledge and technique; or 3.) engages in professional and community service in the area of the instructor's teaching responsibilities."

Issues

What constitutes a terminal degree for Academically Qualified?

In general, a terminal degree is a completed doctorate (e.g., Ph.D. or DPA). Accordingly, other degrees are not prima facie cases as terminal degrees and an institution would need to make a compelling case for another degree to be considered a terminal degree in this context. For example, if a program uses an attorney to teach a course they would bear the burden of proof that the JD is a terminal degree.

What is the time-frame for Academically Qualified?

COPRA assumes that faculty who have recently completed their doctorates, that is completed them within the last five years, meet the academically qualified standard as a prima facie case. All other faculty will need to demonstrate their academic qualification with evidence in addition to the earned doctorate. The table below summarizes some strategies that might be used to demonstrate academic qualifications for faculty who received their degrees more than five years prior to the self study year.

Academically Qualified		
Received Terminal Degree	Within the last 5 years	No further evidence required
Received Terminal Degree	Longer than 5 years ago	Further Evidence Required. This may include: publishing in areas related to teaching within the last five years; documenting that class syllabi demonstrate current knowledge and technique; or demonstrating that the faculty is engaged in professional and community service in the area of the instructor's teaching responsibilities

Adjunct or Part-Time Faculty

Programs must also demonstrate that adjunct or part-time faculty are also either academically or professionally qualified. The same standards for academic and professional qualification apply to adjuncts or part-time faculty as they do for full-time faculty.

Self-Study Requirements

In the self study report submitted by programs seeking accreditation for the first time or reaccreditation, programs are asked to report on whether their faculty are academically or professionally qualified and the basis upon which such determination is made. Programs are expected to have some guidelines on how they make that determination. Programs will also be

asked to provide evidence that their faculty are qualified, professionally or academically, to teach the program's courses (see Self Study Instructions in Text Box). A program may claim that each faculty member is either professionally qualified or academically qualified, but not both.

COPRA does not require all programs to follow the same set of academic and professional qualifications guidelines. COPRA expects that each program will identify the criteria used to evaluate the academic and professional qualifications of faculty, as appropriate to the program's own mission and goals. The burden of proof that faculty are qualified lies with the program and should be delineated in the self study report. COPRA does recognize that an earned doctorate alone is generally not sufficient evidence of professional or academic qualification, except for those cases where the doctorate was earned in the five years prior to the self study year.

Highlights from the Self Study Instructions:

3.1.2. Provide your program's policy for academically and professionally qualified faculty and the mission-based rationale for the extent of use of professionally qualified faculty in your program. If you have any faculty members who are neither academically nor professionally qualified, please justify their extent of use in your program. (Limit 500 words)

3.1.4. Provide the percentage of courses in each category that are taught by academically and/ or professionally qualified faculty in the self-study year.

3.1.4	Academically Qualified	Professionally Qualified	Full Time	Part Time
All Courses	%	%	%	%
Required Courses	%	%	%	%

3.1.5. Describe the steps and strategies the program uses to support faculty in their efforts to remain current in the field. (Limit 500 words)

For each faculty member (nucleus & non-nucleus) who teaches in the program, each program reports the following information relevant to their qualifications:

Name

Rank

Tenure Status

Full- or Part-time

How the faculty member demonstrates their academic or professional qualifications (Publishes in area of program responsibility; Attends annual conferences and/or workshops associated with area of program responsibility; Provides community or professional service in the area of program responsibility; Is currently or previously employed in field associated with area of program responsibility; Maintains professional certification in area of program responsibility; Other)

Highest Degree Earned