Higher Learning Commission Faculty Qualifications
Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the new guidelines?
   To be more in line with other accrediting bodies in the U.S., the HLC recently adopted a clarification to its Assumed Practice B.2., which focuses on faculty roles and qualifications. Their latest guidelines, which go into effect starting September 1, 2017, can be found on their website.¹ In short, the revised guidelines state the following:
   - Instructors must possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach.
   - 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.
     - When faculty members are employed based on equivalent experience, the institution needs to define 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, should 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 he or she is teaching, that faculty member should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.

2. When do the new guidelines go into effect?
The revised assumed practice is effective starting September 1, 2017. We must be in compliance by that time.

3. How do the new guidelines affect me?
   Many of you will not be affected at all and can continue to teach the courses you usually teach. Others of you may find yourselves needing to accrue additional graduate credits or other credentials to continue to teach the courses you usually teach by the time the guidelines go into effect.

4. To what extent is Jackson College’s Adjunct Certification Process related to these HLC revised guidelines?
   JC’s Adjunct Certification process and the HLC revised guidelines are completely separate. The new guidelines apply equally to both Adjuncts and Master Adjuncts.

5. What is Jackson College doing in response to these new guidelines?
   Throughout the summer, a team of at least two people, including the Provost, deans, and the Director of Instructional Innovation, has met with each lead faculty member to discuss the faculty qualifications needed for the courses we offer. This process is nearly complete. The college also has reviewed the academic transcripts and earned credentials of nearly all of JC’s full-time faculty members to determine what courses they would be qualified to teach under the revised guidelines. We have begun to review the academic transcripts and earned credentials of our adjunct faculty members as well. The goal is to complete this process by the end of Fall 2016.

6. What does the review of adjunct faculty qualifications involve?
   The appropriate dean, lead faculty, and the Director of Instructional Innovation meet to review adjunct transcripts and qualifications in each area/discipline. Adjunct faculty will receive a letter indicating the

¹ http://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB.pdf
results of that review. Please note that if you teach in multiple disciplines, you will receive separate letter(s) regarding your eligibility to continue to teach in each discipline. Contact Kate Thirolf, Director of Instructional Innovation, with any questions. The goal is to complete this process by the end of Fall 2016.

7. **I’m not sure if HR has my most current academic transcripts. What should I do?**
   If you have accrued any new graduate credits since the time you were hired, be sure HR has your most up-to-date, official academic transcripts.

8. **I teach general education courses, and my master’s degree is in a field other than the subject that I teach. I’m not sure I have the 18 graduate credits in the field to meet HLC’s revised guidelines. What can I do between now and when I’ll hear about my qualification status?**
   You are encouraged to review your academic transcripts and identify graduate credits earned that you believe should count towards the 18 credit minimum. Pull course descriptions and/or syllabi to help make your case. Review course descriptions and syllabi from graduate coursework in the discipline you teach and compare it with the graduate level courses you took to see if there are strong parallels. In short, compile supporting documentation for the credits that you think should count towards the 18 minimum.

9. **I teach general education courses and know I need to go back to school to accrue additional graduate credits, so I can continue to teach the courses I teach. What kind of support can I get from JC?**
   Every year, adjunct faculty can receive up to $500 of external professional development funding (as long as the budget allotment is available). This is a rare benefit that not many colleges provide to adjunct faculty. You are encouraged to use these funds to cover costs associated with accruing any new graduate credits you may need. The Adjunct Professional Development Funds Request Form can be found on the Adjunct Resources page of the JC website.

10. **I teach general education courses and don’t have the graduate credits to keep teaching what I’m teaching, but I cannot or do not want to go back to school to accrue additional graduate credits. What options are there for me?**
    Unfortunately, the short answer is there are not too many options after guidelines go into effect on September 1, 2017. If you teach in general education and have a master’s degree in any field, you may be qualified to teach Seminar 140, Seminar in Life Pathways, but those opportunities are limited. You also may be qualified to teach developmental education courses (i.e., courses that start with a zero); however, those opportunities are limited as well. To be reassigned a developmental course, past experience teaching developmental students is much preferred. (Please note that co-requisite courses like ENG131/090BC are not developmental courses.) If under the revised guidelines you will not be qualified to teach the courses you usually teach, the college cannot make any guarantees in terms of alternate assignments. You are strongly encouraged to accrue any additional graduate credits you might need.

11. **How can I learn more information about the new guidelines and their potential impact on me?**
    Academic leadership will provide updates as the college moves forward with determining the faculty credentials and qualifications for each course we offer. Lead faculty, deans, and the Director of Instructional Innovation are available to help address your questions and concerns. Thank you for your patience as we work through this process.

---

2 https://www.jccmi.edu/academic-deans/adjunct-resources/