Faculty Service Areas, Minimum Qualifications, and Equivalencies

Reference: *Education Code Sections 87001, 87003, 87355-87359.5, 87743.2*  
*Title 5 Sections 53022, 53400 et seq.*

Faculty Service Areas
Faculty Service Areas (FSAs) have been established during the negotiations process and consultation as required by law with the faculty bargaining unit. The requirements around FSAs can be found in Article 18.1 of the faculty contract. As indicated in the contract, FSAs are used as part of determining retreat rights, seniority rights, and bumping rights in times of reduction in workforce and/or services.

Minimum Qualifications
The Ohlone Community College District is committed to hiring highly-qualified faculty who are experts in their fields, skilled in teaching and providing student support services, and who serve the needs of a diverse student population. The District shall employ faculty who possess the minimum qualifications that equal or exceed those established by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, as published in the most recent version of “Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges” and referenced in this procedure as the “Disciplines List.”

In addition to the minimum qualifications specified in the Disciplines List, any hiring requirements set forth by discipline-specific accrediting bodies (such as in the health sciences) shall also be followed.

As established in BP 2510, the Faculty Senate has primary responsibility for the placement of courses within disciplines, and this directly relates to faculty responsibility in determining minimum qualifications. Discipline faculty have the option of making local minimum qualifications for their discipline more restrictive than those in the Disciplines List. Such a restriction should be carefully considered and must be presented to the Faculty Senate for consideration and approval. Once approved by the Board of Trustees, the restricted minimum qualifications for the discipline will be kept on record in the Human Resources office to ensure its use in job announcements within the discipline.

The minimum qualifications are for the discipline as a whole (not individual courses or assignments) and are the same for full-time and adjunct faculty positions. In all cases, the possession of the minimum qualifications (whether directly or through equivalency) does not guarantee an offer of employment.

Equivalencies
Equivalency, as defined in California Education Code section 87359, California Code of Regulations, Title 5, section 53430, and by the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges, was established to credit those whose preparation is at least equal to the state-adopted minimum qualifications as defined in the Disciplines List. Equivalency does not give the District the authority to waive or lower standards and accept less-qualified individuals, and that is in no way our intent. Instead, equivalency provides the opportunity to consider applicants that may have taken non-traditional paths in acquiring the same knowledge base and skill set as those who have taken the more traditional approach to minimum qualifications. The District recognizes that the importance of equivalency is directly connected to our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Ohlone Community College District has developed the procedure below for determining whether an applicant for a faculty position has equivalent minimum qualifications.
Equivalency Committee
The Faculty Senate shall establish an Equivalency Committee that will oversee the equivalency procedure at the College to ensure that, as far as disciplines allow, the same standards are applied in each case uniformly. This oversight includes suggesting improvements to this procedure, creating and modifying forms to facilitate the process, and developing support resources, all of which will require approval by the Faculty Senate. For each faculty position being filled, the Equivalency Committee will work in conjunction with full-time faculty from the discipline in assessing equivalency applications, as detailed later in this procedure. The Equivalency Committee will also provide resources and assistance to ensure that there is a college-wide understanding of the equivalency procedure, particularly by those faculty, staff, and administrators that are involved in faculty hiring, and also to promote clarity for potential applicants for faculty employment at the College.

The Faculty Senate will appoint one full-time faculty member to serve as Chair of the Equivalency Committee, along with at least 3 other full-time faculty to serve as members of the committee. The faculty on the committee shall make all equivalency decisions for the committee and shall come from diverse disciplines, ideally with at least one member coming from a discipline in which a master’s degree is not generally expected or required (as defined in the Disciplines List). The Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) or designee will serve in an advisory capacity to the Equivalency Committee. Additionally, a representative from Human Resources will be designated as a consultant for the Committee, should the need arise.

Categories of Minimum Qualifications (MQs) and Equivalency
- “Direct MQs”: In the situation where the applicant possesses the educational degree(s) and other criteria exactly as listed in the discipline minimum qualifications, the applicant will be determined to have Direct MQs. The applicant must supply transcripts (and other documentation when requested) to be verified by Human Resources staff and the hiring committee chair. There is no need for equivalency justification or assessment in this case.

- “Indirect MQs”: In the situation where the title of the educational degree that the applicant possesses does not exactly match what is listed in the discipline minimum qualifications, but examination of the degree’s course work reveals it to be the same course work as the degree that is listed, the applicant will be determined to have Indirect MQs. In addition to supplying the transcript(s), the applicant may choose to submit a course by course comparison with the corresponding degree at a different accredited college or university to establish the equivalence. The application for Indirect MQs must be assessed by at least two full-time faculty from the discipline (or related discipline when necessary), typically from the hiring committee, and their decision is final. The discipline’s Dean and the Equivalency Committee Chair shall provide assistance to the discipline faculty making this assessment, should they request it.

- “Equivalency Portfolio MQs”: Applicants who do not have Direct MQs or Indirect MQs for the minimum qualifications as listed in the job announcement must complete the Equivalency Portfolio Form and provide evidence that their combination of education, training, and professional experience affords them the same depth and breadth of knowledge and skills as would be achieved through the established minimum qualifications (see below for Equivalency Portfolio Criteria). Applications for Equivalency Portfolio MQs will first be assessed by at least two full-time faculty from the discipline (or related discipline when necessary), typically from the hiring committee, and then assessed by the Equivalency Committee. Application materials will be made available for the members of the Equivalency Committee to review individually, but deliberations and decisions about applications will be done synchronously to establish thorough consideration of each applicant’s qualifications. In cases where the Equivalency Committee disagrees with the discipline faculty’s decision, the two groups will discuss together with the intent of reaching consensus. In the end, the Equivalency Committee’s decision is final.
Once a faculty member has been granted equivalency and employed in the District, that individual retains the equivalency should it be needed again (as in the example of an adjunct faculty member applying for a full-time position). However, the granting of equivalency is on a case-by-case basis and does not automatically set precedence for future applicants.

**Equivalency Portfolio Criteria**

In assessing Equivalency Portfolio MQs, the following criteria will be used. In all cases, the applicants bear the responsibility of ensuring that their applications are complete and thorough enough to demonstrate equivalency. The granting of equivalence to an educational degree for the sake of minimum qualifications should not in any way be construed to be the “conferring” of the degree, and the equivalency will not be taken into account for salary schedule placement, should the applicant be hired.

Note: As it is defined in Title 5 Section 53404, the phrase “professional experience” is used throughout this document to refer to any combination of faculty experience and/or occupational experience.

1. To establish equivalence to a Master’s degree in a specific discipline, the applicant must have earned a Bachelor’s degree with any major plus have any one of the following:
   - 30 semester units of course work relevant to the discipline
   - relevant licensure from an accredited institution
   - certification for instruction in the discipline
   - some combination of additional education/training and/or verifiable professional experience relevant to the discipline.

   No matter the option chosen, the applicant must demonstrate the equivalent depth of discipline-specific knowledge and skills that would be obtained in the Master’s degree.

2. To establish equivalence to an Associate degree or a Bachelor’s degree (as just one component of the minimum qualifications for a discipline), the applicant must have some combination of education/training and/or verifiable professional experience that, in total, is equivalent to the depth and breadth of knowledge and skills that would be obtained in the corresponding degree. The “depth” is intended to mean “discipline-specific” and the “breadth” is intended to mean “general education.”

3. To establish equivalence to professional experience in a specific vocation (as required in disciplines where the Master’s degree is not generally expected), the applicant must provide evidence of having a mastery of the skills of the vocation, as well as extensive knowledge of the working environment of the vocation.

**Guidelines for MQ Assessment within Faculty Hiring Processes**

All applicants for a faculty position that have been determined to have Direct MQs, Indirect MQs, or Equivalency Portfolio MQs will be considered together to be the “qualified applicant pool” for the position and will be treated equally with regard to minimum qualifications. After the MQ assessments are completed for a position, the method by which an applicant achieved minimum qualifications will not be considered in ranking applicants or deliberating about whom to invite for an interview. All MQ assessments for an applicant pool will be completed prior to any deliberations about interview invitations, and the only applicants that will be considered for interviews are those from the “qualified applicant pool.”

For any faculty searches with a specific closing date for application submittal (typically for full-time faculty searches), time will be built into the search schedule specifically for MQ assessment. For disciplines where it has been determined that equivalency applications may be more likely, additional time should be scheduled. Throughout this process, the Equivalency Committee Chair will be kept informed of all search schedules and, as soon as possible, provided the estimated number of Equivalency Portfolio applications in each search.
For any faculty searches without a specific closing date (typically for adjunct faculty pools), MQ assessment will be done on a regular basis (at the minimum, annually), initiated by the division deans and/or the discipline full-time faculty. The VPAA will work with the deans to coordinate the timing of these MQ assessments, so as to spread out the work of the Equivalency Committee throughout the academic year, and not create an undue burden during the time when full-time faculty searches are occurring.

Given that class schedules are developed months in advance, the need for “emergency hires” should be very rare. Planning efforts must be made to maintain pools of applicants that have already been successfully assessed for MQs, so that there are qualified applicants to consider when an unexpected need arises.

For all faculty applicants that are subsequently hired, the “Approval of Personnel Actions” item on the Board of Trustees agenda will indicate the method by which the applicant satisfied minimum qualifications. For applicants with Equivalency Portfolio MQs, a brief indication of the criteria used will be included.

Foreign Transcript Evaluations
Although the word “equivalency” is often used in relation to the assessment of degrees and transcripts from outside of the United States, that process is not to be confused with “equivalency” as discussed above in this procedure. Regardless of minimum qualifications status described above, all applicants with transcripts issued from outside the United States are required to submit a course-by-course analysis with an equivalency statement from a certified transcript evaluation service, verifying the degree equivalency to that of an accredited institution within the U.S. As with other documents required in conjunction with applications, foreign transcript evaluations must be submitted with the rest of the application materials.

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