

### 3.7.1

#### **Faculty: Faculty competence**

The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. (See the Commission guidelines "Faculty Credentials.")

#### **Judgment**

Compliance     Partial Compliance     Non-Compliance     Not Applicable

#### **Narrative**

Tennessee Technological University (TTU) employs competent faculty qualified to accomplish the mission of the University. This narrative describes the policies and procedures designed to ensure that competent faculty are hired and the process used to verify that each faculty member has acceptable qualifications. The faculty credential database system documents TTU faculty qualifications and shows that the TTU faculty credentials essentially meet the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Faculty Credentials guidelines. The data used to demonstrate compliance are based on the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters.

#### **Overview**

As the state's only technological university, TTU's mission is to "provide leadership and outstanding programs in engineering, the sciences, and related areas that benefit the people of Tennessee and the nation. The University also provides strong programs in the arts and sciences, business, education, agriculture and human ecology, nursing, music, art, and interdisciplinary studies. TTU serves students from throughout the state, nation, and many other countries, but it retains a special commitment to enrich the lives of people and communities in the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee."

To accomplish its mission, the University strives to recruit and retain highly qualified faculty by ensuring that competent faculty members are providing a quality education to students. When assigning a faculty member to a course, the University gives primary consideration to the highest degree earned by that faculty member in the discipline. The University also considers the individual's competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate coursework, professional expertise, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, and continuous excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. To verify faculty competence, the University implemented the Faculty Qualification Certification (FQC) process by requiring the completion of an FQC form. The use of the FQC form also ensures that the University is in compliance with SACSCOC faculty competency regulations. Table 3.7.1 provides the faculty roster for the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 and demonstrates that the instructor for each course has appropriate qualifications to teach the course.

As highlighted in the following sections, this narrative

- identifies the policies and procedures related to faculty hiring and illustrates the process of faculty selection
- describes TTU's faculty credentials verification process that helps control and manage faculty teaching credentials for instructors of record
- summarizes the case for compliance for CS 3.7.1.

## **Faculty Hiring Policies and Procedures**

TTU faculty hiring policies are based on the criteria and process in the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) Faculty Appointments Policy/Guideline [1] and published online in the TTU Employment Procedures [2] and TTU Faculty Handbook/Appointments [3]. The TTU Employment Procedures are designed to ensure the appointment of qualified faculty and the success of the affirmative action program at the University. The procedures describe the external as well as the internal search processes, including the information relating to advertisement, the application process, appointment of an applicant, and background investigation. The Office of the Provost and the University Human Resources Office are responsible for monitoring compliance with employment procedures for faculty positions. The TTU Employment Procedures apply to all regular, full-time positions and all regular part-time positions [2].

In addition, the Human Resources office provides employment checklists related to faculty personnel appointments [4]. The checklists include the steps from "Approval to Advertise and Fill Position" to "Notification of Applicants" to ensure the consistency of the appointment practice with the Employment Procedures.

### **Selection of faculty members.**

**Selection of Search Committee.** As outlined in the TTU Employment Procedures [2], a search committee assists in the search for all faculty positions. The departmental chairperson calls a meeting of all departmental faculty members, who vote to determine the composition of the search committee, which may include the departmental chairperson and may include faculty members outside the department. The search committee elects its own chairperson.

**Advertising.** The faculty search committee is responsible for drafting a position description that should define the type of position, essential functions, qualifications (minimum required and preferred), required applicant documents (cover letter, resume, transcripts, etc.) [5]. The position description, an advertising plan, and a proposed advertisement must be submitted to Human Resources and approved by the dean, provost, and Affirmative Action. The advertising plan must comply with the provisions of TBR Personnel Transactions & Recommended Forms: P-010 [6]. Faculty positions must be advertised through appropriate professional and higher education publications, registries, list serves, etc. Faculty positions must be advertised for a minimum of 30 days.

**Reviewing, screening, and interviewing.** The search committee begins to review the application materials after the screening date. After reviewing all candidate applications/resumes/vitas, etc., the search committee completes an evaluation matrix and chooses those applicants they wish to interview. The search committee chair shall submit a request for pool and interview approval via email to the dean, the Office of the Provost, and the Affirmative Action officer. The evaluation matrix should clearly demonstrate the strengths of the candidates selected for interviews.

After the request for interview is approved, the chair is to make the appropriate interview appointments. The purpose of the interview is to collect additional information on the candidate's job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities, which should be helpful in selecting the individual most likely to succeed in the position. In addition, the interview on campus gives the hiring unit faculty the opportunity to hear the candidate's presentation of his or her scholarship and to engage in questions and answers relative to all aspects of the faculty position.

**Appointment and notification.** After screening/interviewing, the search committee chair makes a final recommendation of an applicant, accompanied by the required documentation, to the dean,

Affirmative Action Officer, provost, and Human Resources Director for approvals [7]. The required documentation includes a completed Personnel Action Form (PAF) [8], a completed Faculty Qualification Certification (FQC) form [9], official transcripts of all degrees conferred required for faculty positions, and any other documentation involved in the search. Once approvals have been granted, the department chair writes a formal offer letter to the successful candidate. The candidate should be asked to respond in writing to the University President. A completed Background Investigation Authorization Form from the recommended candidate must be sent to Human Resources. Human Resources will conduct appropriate background checks on the selected candidate.

**Adjunct faculty.** Temporary appointments of adjunct faculty are based on demand each semester. The TTU employment policies and procedures are in effect for hiring adjunct faculty. Due to the nature of the temporary position, a search is not required to fill an adjunct teaching position. The chairperson of the hiring department has the responsibilities to select qualified adjunct faculty members. General criteria used in adjunct faculty member selection include the appropriate degree for the teaching assignment and the professional credentials of the candidate. Individual departments may have additional criteria depending, again, on the needs of the teaching assignment. When an employee is hired on an adjunct basis, a completed PAF and a completed FQC Form accompanied by an application form (resume/curriculum vitae, and official transcripts for all degrees conferred for adjunct faculty) are forwarded through proper signatory channels prior to the date the adjunct is needed [2]. An adjunct faculty member undergoes the same supervision and evaluation as a full-time faculty member.

As described above, the selection of the faculty should be based on the faculty candidates' qualifications, competency, and other reasonable criteria. The Personnel Action Approval (PAF)/routing processes require various levels of reviews and approvals in the appointment process to further validate that the TTU Employment Procedures are properly followed. A Faculty Qualification Certification (FQC) form approved by the departmental chair and the dean, and the candidate's official transcripts of all degrees conferred are required at the time of hire for a new faculty member.

### **Faculty Credential/Qualification Verification Process**

**Background of the FQC development.** TTU developed and implemented a procedure for processing the FQC in 1995 following the recommendations made by the SACSCOC visiting committee during the 1995 Reaffirmation of Accreditation [10]. The procedure ensured a process to verify faculty qualifications and to collect and maintain the basic faculty academic credentials information. The initial focus then was on the qualifications of adjuncts and part-time faculty, and it was expanded to one-year and permanent faculty later. In 2006, in preparing for the Reaffirmation of Accreditation, requiring official transcripts and curriculum vita became mandatory for faculty appointments. As required in the process for new faculty hiring (permanent, one-year appointment, or adjunct), a completed FQC form, official transcripts, and curriculum vitae must be submitted at the time of hire as a condition of employment.

**Review and revision of FQC form.** The FQC form and instructions were recently reviewed and revised to accurately reflect the current practice at the University and to be consistent with the SACSCOC faculty credentials guidelines [11][12]. The departmental chairs and the college deans were asked to re-examine and verify the qualifications of faculty in their academic units by completing the revised FQC form. The form applies to all faculty who carry teaching responsibilities at TTU. As shown in the FQC form, it is upon the judgment/discretion of academic departmental chairs and college deans to recognize an academic discipline, concentration, and/or field of study and to justify and document the faculty member's qualifications relevant to the disciplines that are components of the course.

In completing an FQC form for a faculty member, the departmental chair and the college dean examine the faculty credentials by checking appropriate boxes of faculty qualifications and the program level(s) that the faculty member is qualified to teach. For exceptional cases, such as when a faculty member's qualifications are based on his/her outstanding professional experience and demonstrated contributions to the teaching discipline, an explanatory memo and other supporting documentation must be attached with the FQC. Both departmental chair and college dean are required to sign and date the FQC form.

The credentials for faculty who have terminal degrees from international institutions are collected and

verified following the University procedures. An original transcript should be mailed directly from the international institutions to the Office of the Provost at TTU. If the transcripts are not translated into English or without an English translation, the Office of the Provost sends these transcripts to a translator within the University (e.g., Department of Foreign Languages), and the faculty's major department verifies the transcripts. If necessary, the University may use a recognized transcript evaluation service to establish the equivalency of foreign degrees.

**Graduate student teaching qualifications.** To ensure the graduate teaching assistants possess the required qualifications for teaching, a Graduate Student Teaching Qualification Certification (GSTQC) form was developed in 2014 [13]. The criteria described on the GSTQC form regarding the qualifications and other conditions are consistent with the SACSCOC guidelines. The GSTQC form is required before any graduate student may take responsibility for instruction and evaluation in an undergraduate course. The GSTQC form should be completed by the department with initial instructional appointment and kept in the student's personnel file. The graduate teaching assistant's transcript(s) and other required documentation must accompany the GSTQC form.

### **Faculty Teaching Assignments**

Teaching assignments are made by the administration of the academic department that offers the courses. The University delegates responsibility for making assignments to the department. Departmental chairs are responsible for assigning the best-qualified faculty to appropriate courses by carefully aligning faculty members' credentials as verified in the faculty FQC form. The primary consideration should be given to the highest degree earned by that faculty member in the discipline. Departmental chairs also monitor the quality of instruction and, thus, the effectiveness of the instructor through review of student IDEA course evaluations. The college deans and the provost may be involved in making teaching assignments when departments require assistance in certain circumstances.

### **Faculty Evaluations**

All full-time, regular faculty members, both tenured and non-tenured, are evaluated annually by the departmental chairperson and the college dean per the Annual Faculty Evaluations Procedures. Part-time/adjunct faculty members are evaluated each semester using a form recommended by the chairperson and approved by the dean. The University has a systematic process for evaluating its faculty, which is further described in detail and documented in Comprehensive Standard 3.7.2 (Faculty Evaluation).

### **Graduate Faculty Qualifications**

**Graduate faculty qualifications.** Graduate faculty members are classified into one of four membership categories: full; associate; adjunct; or clinical. Graduate faculty must hold an earned doctorate or equivalent terminal degree in an appropriate discipline from an appropriately accredited institution (clinical faculty may hold a master's degree with professional certification). Eligibility for full membership includes full-time faculty member, emeriti, senior affiliate faculty, or academic administrator holding faculty rank; rank of assistant professor or higher; tenured or tenure-track. Full members must have achieved an appropriate level of scholarship or creative activity and erudition characterized by peer-reviewed publications, conference publications, recitals, exhibitions, externally funded research grants; and demonstrated (by institutional involvement) commitment to the academic community, the University, his or her students, and academic discipline [14].

**Graduate faculty approval procedures.** All appointments to membership of the TTU graduate faculty are made by the provost based upon the careful review of applications and recommendations submitted by departmental chairpersons with suitable endorsement from the dean of the college, and the dean of Graduate Studies. Graduate faculty membership application forms are available on the College of Graduate Studies website [15]. Applications for membership will be completed by the faculty member and departmental chair. Once the application is reviewed and approved by the provost, written notification of approval is provided to the faculty member's chairperson, the college dean, and the College of Graduate Studies. All graduate faculty membership applications and approval forms are maintained in the graduate faculty database housed in the College of Graduate Studies and are also

entered into the TTU University-wide faculty credential database.

**Credential review procedures.** Graduate faculty member credentials are reviewed every six years for full members and every three years for associate, adjunct, and clinical membership. Criteria for reappointment to graduate faculty are based on evidence of a continued pattern of scholarly or creative activity of the quality expected for initial membership. The departmental chairperson is notified by the College of Graduate Studies when a six- or three-year credential review is required. Upon notification of required credential review, the department and college will be required to send a new application to the Provost for approval to continue in the graduate faculty.

**Publication of the graduate faculty information.** The TTU Graduate Studies website provides information on the qualifications and procedures for applying to become a member of the TTU graduate faculty. The website provides a summary of the four categories of membership, eligibility requirements, terms of membership, responsibilities of graduate faculty membership, and links to the four application forms [16]. The graduate faculty information is also provided in the online Graduate Catalog by following the link labeled "organization of the Graduate School" [17].

### **Faculty Qualifications for Student Success Courses**

All TTU freshmen are required to take a student success course, also called a University Connection course. A University Connection course is a one-credit-hour class designed to help new students build the academic, social, and professional connections needed for a successful college career at TTU. The goals of the course are (1) to connect students with other students, encouraging both academic and personal networks; (2) to connect students with the University and the department; and (3) to connect students' college experience with their future plans and ambitions. Offering the University Connection courses is the University's effort to promote student success and enhance students' experience in their first year. Academic units and programs throughout the University offer the University Connection courses [18]. As described in the *Memo for the Qualifications of Student Success Instructors* [19], all instructors of first-year experience courses should have earned at least a master's degree and also serve as permanent employees of the University. Occasionally, a graduate student who received his or her undergraduate degree at TTU and has earned at least 18 hours of graduate credit may be hired to teach a first-year experience course. More information on the First-Year Connections courses is available on the TTU website [20].

### **Faculty Qualifications for Supervising Thesis, Dissertation, Direct Study, and Other Independent Study Courses**

As a general category, thesis, dissertation, direct study, or other independent study denote the courses that foster students' independent learning experiences and provide a mechanism for students to work on a specific topic with an individual faculty member for academic credit. This type of course is mostly applicable to graduate students and could be offered to undergraduate students.

Graduate students take independent study courses to satisfy degree requirements. For instance, a master's student takes 6990 - Research and Thesis when a thesis is required in the student's program of study. Similarly, a PhD student is required to 7990 - Research and Dissertation. A student who chooses a nonthesis option in a master's program would normally take 6980 - Directed student/Special Topic or equivalent independent study course. The departmental chairs have the responsibility of ensuring that appropriate graduate faculty members are assigned to supervise graduate students for these courses. Undergraduate students may take independent study courses to meet the Honors program requirements, to work on undergraduate research course projects, or to participate in internships. Faculty serving as mentors for students in these courses should have appropriate qualifications for undergraduate teaching.

Because of the nature of one-on-one interaction in these courses, faculty supervision of the students in thesis, dissertation, direct study and independent study is normally considered as faculty work load for research, advisement, or service. A faculty's Agreement on Responsibilities Form that is agreed to and signed by the faculty and departmental chair includes faculty work loads on teaching, advisement, research/scholarly activities, service/outreach, and administration if applicable [21].

## **Analysis of Faculty Qualifications**

For Fall 2014, the number of full-time faculty was 415. The instructional faculty includes 393 full-time faculty and 262 part-time faculty. Additional data on the number and type of faculty at the University are provided in Core Requirement 2.8 (Faculty). Of the full-time *instructional* faculty, 78.1 percent hold doctoral degrees in their disciplines. The remaining faculty achieved a master's or other terminal degree (2.8 percent), education specialist degree (2.0 percent), or a master's degree (17.1 percent).

## **TTU's Faculty Credentials Database System**

TTU uses the Compliance Assist database systems developed by Campus Labs. This system provides an infrastructure to manage the faculty teaching credentials for teachers of record for all classes.

Specifically, the database maintains information including name, degree information, transcripts, FQC form, CVs, course syllabi, etc. The system can produce the SACSCOC faculty roster and other reports necessary for program review and accreditation purposes.

The departmental chairs upload the required faculty credential documents in each faculty member's account. If an exceptional case is identified, the departmental chairs enter additional qualifications and other credential documentation such as justification memos for faculty credentials/qualifications in the teaching discipline in the database system. The original official transcripts, in paper form, are on file in the Office of the Provost, and the scanned electronic files of official transcripts are available in the faculty database system. Departmental chairs and academic deans for each college or school have reviewed and signed the FQC forms for the faculty in their units

Table 3.7.1 presents the faculty roster of all full-time and part-time faculty for Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters, as required by SACSCOC. The information in Table 3.7.1 includes faculty names and academic degrees, courses taught in Fall 2014 semester and Spring 2015 semester, and any additional documentation for faculty qualifications if applicable. More information can be found in Comprehensive Standard 3.7.2.

## **Conclusion**

TTU has policies and procedures that support employment of competent faculty to fulfill the University mission. As evidenced by the process and supporting documentation on faculty hiring, determination of faculty competence is a central component of the hiring process. The Faculty Qualifications Certification process ensures the adequacy of faculty credentials for instructors of record. When assigning a faculty member to a course, the University gives primary consideration to the highest degree earned by that faculty member in the discipline. Based on the presence, functioning, and University-wide adherence to the faculty employment and credentials policies and procedures, TTU is in compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1.

## Credentials

- [-] Faculty Roster Form - Fall 2014 & Spring 2015
  - [-] Roster by Department
    - Accounting and Business Law
    - Art
    - Basic Engineering
    - Biology
    - Chemical Engineering
    - Chemistry
    - Civil and Environmental Engineering
    - College of Business Student Success Center
    - Communication
    - Computer Science
    - Counseling and Psychology
    - Curriculum and Instruction
    - Decision Sciences and Management
    - Earth Sciences
    - Economics, Finance and Marketing
    - Electrical and Computer Engineering
    - English
    - Exercise Science, Physical Education and Wellness
    - Foreign Languages
    - History
    - Honors Program
    - Learning Support
    - Manufacturing and Engineering Technology
    - Mathematics
    - Mechanical Engineering
    - Military Science
    - Music
    - Physics
    - School of Agriculture
    - School of Environmental Studies

School of Human Ecology  
School of Interdisciplinary Studies  
School of Professional Studies  
Sociology and Political Science  
UNIV 1020  
Whitson-Hester School of Nursing

## Sources

-  [01] TBR Policy\_Faculty Appointments at Universities\_5\_02\_07\_10
-  [02] Employment\_Procedures\_Rev\_A\_12012011
-  [03] Faculty Appointments
-  [04] Checklist Related to Faculty Personnel Appointments
-  [05] Sample Faculty Job Description
-  [06] Personnel Transactions and Recommended Forms\_P\_010
-  [07] Sample Request for Faculty Appointment
-  [08] Sample Personnel Action Approval (PAF) Form
-  [09] Sample Faculty Qualifications Certification (FQC)
-  [10] Memorandum from Provost Barker\_1995
-  [11] Faculty Qualification Certification Form Revised\_September\_2014
-  [12] Faculty Qualification Certification Form Procedures\_February\_2014
-  [13] Graduate Student Teaching Qualification Certification Form
-  [14] Appointment and Qualifications of Graduate Faculty
-  [15] Graduate Faculty Membership Application Forms
-  [16] Graduate Faculty on TTUs Graduate Studies Website
-  [17] Graduate Faculty on Graduate Catalog
-  [18] List of University Connection Courses
-  [19] Memo for the Qualifications of Student Success Instructors
-  [20] University\_1020
-  [21] Agreement on Responsibilities Rev\_Spring\_2015