

FAQs on Minimum Qualifications (MQs)

The following list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) has been compiled to assist individuals in better understanding and interpreting the rules and regulations governing the minimum qualifications (MQs) for faculty and administrators in the California Community College system. The FAQs were collaboratively developed with members of the Standards and Practices Committee of the State Academic Senate and staff from the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges.

Q#1: Who has the responsibility for establishing and maintaining the Disciplines List and enforcing the regulations relating to the MQs?

A. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, in conjunction with the Chancellor's Office, shares that responsibility. The Academic Senate is responsible for reviewing and revising the Disciplines List. A list of Academic Senate papers on minimum qualifications and the Disciplines List is included at the end of this document. An overview of the disciplines list process can be found at:

<http://www.asccc.org/Archives/DisciplineList/DisciplinesList.htm>

Staff from the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges has the responsibility of ensuring that colleges comply with the regulations governing MQs. The regulations can be found by accessing the "Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administration in California Community Colleges" document posted at:

<http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/Reports/2017-Minimum-Qualifications-Handbook-r1-ADA.pdf>

Q#2: Can a California Community College Credential be used to apply for a faculty position at a California Community College?

A: Yes. The issuance of Community College credentials was discontinued in 1990, but lifetime credentials issued before 1990 are "grandfathered" into the MQ process and accepted as meeting the MQs for faculty positions. As a result of Assembly Bill 1725 (1988), MQs are now determined on academic preparation (for both master's and non-master's disciplines) and relevant work experience (for non-master's disciplines) when qualifying individuals for faculty positions---according to the Disciplines List and local equivalency processes.

Q#3: Can a Community College Teaching Certificate issued by a four-year institution (several CSU campuses offer such credentials) be used to apply for a faculty position at a California Community College?

No. The Community College Teaching Certificate, while commendable, has no bearing on meeting the MQs for faculty in the community colleges.

Q#4: What if someone has a single-subject discipline credential, has taught high school in that discipline for 14 years, and recently received a Master's in Educational Administration. Would he/she qualify to teach part-time in the discipline?

A: No. The single-subject and multiple-subject credentials are issued by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and are only valid within the K-12 public education system. To be eligible to teach (full- or part-time) that discipline at any of the California community colleges, a person needs to meet the requirements for the discipline as noted in the Disciplines List. The credential, high school teaching experience and the master's degree (not in a discipline subject) could be used as factors in determining equivalency to the

requirements of a discipline listed in the Disciplines List. Equivalent qualifications are determined by faculty representing their academic senate at the local level and approved by the local governing board

Q#5: Are the MQs for part-time faculty different than those for full-time faculty?

- A. No. The MQs for all faculty members are the same, whether they are full-time or part-time. Note also that MQs are established for a discipline and not a single course. A part-time faculty member, when hired by the college, is hired to teach in the discipline under which a particular course has been assigned. Therefore, it is important that the college ensures the candidate is meeting the MQs in the discipline when hiring both full and part-time faculty.

Q#6: What happens when an academic degree held by an applicant for a faculty position is not listed in the Disciplines List?

- A: One of two processes can occur---determination of an equivalency to an existing discipline, or proposal of a revision to the Disciplines list, either by proposing a new discipline or adding a degree to an existing discipline.

For any degree that is not currently covered in the Disciplines List, follow the guidelines for establishing an equivalency to a discipline as provided in Title 5, Section 53410, Minimum Qualifications for Instructors of Credit Courses, Counselors, and Librarians, which reads as follows:

The minimum qualifications for service as a community college faculty member teaching any credit course, or as a counselor or librarian, shall be satisfied by meeting any one of the following requirements:

- (a) Possession of a master's degree, or equivalent foreign degree, in the discipline of the faculty member's assignment.
- (b) Possession of a master's degree, or equivalent foreign degree, in a discipline reasonably related to the faculty member's assignment and possession of a bachelor's degree, or equivalent foreign degree, in the discipline of the faculty member's assignment.

Title 5 states that, in addition to a master's degree in the specific discipline, a master's degree in a "reasonably related" discipline can satisfy the MQs requirement. Since the Disciplines List does not currently include the degree of the applicant, the district is able to determine the equivalent academic degree that may also fulfill the MQ to the discipline listed in the Disciplines List.

Revisions to the Disciplines List (addition of a new discipline or addition/deletion of an academic degree to an existing discipline) are based upon the recommendation of the Academic Senate to the Board of Governors. Consult the guidelines as listed in the Disciplines List Process of the Academic Senate at:

<http://www.asccc.org/Archives/DisciplineList/DisciplinesList.htm>

Q7: What are good practices in determining an equivalency to the MQs for a discipline?

- A: To maintain the academic integrity of the community colleges and their faculty, equivalency to those minimum qualifications for hire must be granted with careful consideration. The Academic Senate has the following recommendations (from [Equivalence to the Minimum Qualifications](#), 2016):

- Equivalency determinations should be made by an equivalency committee that is a subcommittee or standing committee of the academic senate.

- The equivalency committee should include representatives appointed by the academic senate to ensure that the process is consistent and fair.
- Equivalency should be determined with input from discipline faculty.
- Equivalency processes for part-time faculty and “emergency hires” should be no different from equivalency for full-time faculty.
- Local senates must ensure that their district and college policies and processes do not allow for single-course equivalencies.
- Academic senates should assure consistency of the equivalency process.
- Equivalency decisions should be based on direct evidence of claims (e.g., transcripts, publications, and work products).
- Claims of equivalence must include how both general education and specialization are met.
- Human resources offices should NOT screen for equivalency but maintain records of the outcomes and documentation of the equivalency requests.
- Local senates must never allow equivalency to be delegated to administration or classified staff or to allow determinations to degenerate into becoming a gathering of signatures without discussion.
- Equivalency policies at each district and college should be reviewed regularly.
- Criteria for the acceptance of eminence as a means to establish equivalency must be clearly defined in hiring policy.
- Once the local equivalency process has reached a recommendation regarding an individual applicant, Education Code §87359(a) requires that the governing board take action on the equivalency before hiring occurs.

Q#8: Is an equivalency granted by one district transferable to another district?

A. No. Each district is allowed to establish its own equivalency minimum qualifications for each discipline taught in its jurisdiction. Section 53430 of Title 5 states that:

“A district may hire a person who possesses qualifications different from, but equivalent to, those listed on the disciplines list, according to criteria and procedures agreed upon by the governing board and the academic senate.”

Q#9: Does an equivalency granted by one college in a multi-college district apply to all the colleges in that district?

Yes. An equivalency established by one college in a multi-college district is applicable to all colleges in that district. In order to maintain consistency, colleges in multi-college districts are encouraged to work together on a common equivalency process.

Q#10: What are the parameters by which a district would use eminence when determining whether an applicant for a faculty position meets the MQs for the listed position?

A: The current MQs regulations and disciplines list are silent in defining or referencing the term “eminence.” The State Academic Senate’s Standards and Practices Committee is currently

in the process of developing resources to assist local colleges in making an eminence determination. Access the current paper on minimum qualifications and equivalencies at

http://asccc.org/sites/default/files/equivalency_paper.pdf

Q#11: Isn't the course designation under the TOP code the same as the disciplines in the Disciplines List?

No. Colleges need to be cautious that the course designation under the Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) is not confused with the Disciplines List developed in establishing MQs for faculty to meet when being hired for a position. TOP is a system of numerical codes used at the state level to collect and report information on programs and courses in different colleges throughout the state that have similar outcomes. It is used for purposes other than identifying disciplines for the purposes of hiring and assignment of faculty.

Q#12: How do I go about having a discipline included on the disciplines list?

A: The Disciplines List is updated every two years through a collaborative process involving the State Academic Senate and the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges. An overview of the process can be found on the following web page:

<http://asccc.org/disciplines-list>

Q#13: Are the MQs for distance education faculty different those for a traditional classroom instructor?

A. No. The MQs for all faculty members, regardless of the course delivery mode, are the same. MQs are established for a discipline and not the specific mode of delivery. A faculty member is hired to teach courses in a discipline, regardless of the technological modality by which the course content is delivered. Colleges may establish desirable qualifications for faculty to have in order to teach courses as distance education; however, the MQs remain unchanged based solely on the mode of delivery.

Q#14: Are the MQs for instructors of noncredit courses the same as for instructors of credit instruction.

Not necessarily. The MQs for instructors of noncredit courses are listed in section 53412 of Title 5. Many of the MQs for noncredit courses are the same as the MQs for credit instruction, but there are important exceptions that are noted in this section of Title 5. All of the MQs for noncredit faculty are now listed in the Disciplines List.

Q#16: What is the difference between an FSA (Faculty Service Area) and the Disciplines List (MQs)?

A. The Disciplines List and Faculty Service Areas serve two completely distinct purposes--- one for hiring and one for reductions in force. In order to be hired as a faculty, one must meet the minimum qualifications (MQs) for one of the disciplines listed in the Disciplines List. The MQs in the Disciplines List are established through the Education Code and Title 5 and apply to all faculty throughout the state. Faculty Service Areas are established by each district and serve as the basis for making decisions in the event of a layoff or reduction in force (RIF). Some districts construct their FSAs by designating each discipline listed in the Disciplines List as an FSA. Other districts combine several disciplines into an FSA. And other districts combine all disciplines into one single FSA. Upon hire, a faculty member is placed in the FSA that includes the discipline for their position. If your FSA includes more than one discipline, it does not mean that you are

qualified for service in each of the disciplines listed in that FSA, but only for those in which you meet the MQs.

Q#17: Is it possible to teach at a community college as a faculty intern?

- A. Yes. The governing board of any community college district may establish a faculty internship program. A full description of the requirements and MQs that apply in this type of a situation can be found in §§53500 through 53502 of Title 5, California Code of Regulations. These sections of the regulation can be found by accessing the Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administration in the California Community Colleges document posted at:

<http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/Reports/2017-Minimum-Qualifications-Handbook-r1-ADA.pdf>

Q#18: Does the Coaching discipline listed under the section "Disciplines in Which a Master's Degree is not Generally Expected or Available" permit an individual who is hired as a coach, and does not possess a master's degree, to teach physical education classes?

- A: No. The discipline of coaching permits an individual to coach in a sport, but not to teach the activity classes in a sport. For example, an individual with the coaching MQ could coach the swim team, but would not have the MQs to teach swimming classes---those courses would most likely have been assigned to the discipline of Kinesiology (which requires a master's degree) by the college curriculum committee.

Q#19: If someone earned a professional degree, such as J.D., M.D., L.L.B., D.V.M, D.O., or other recognized degree, what courses can that individual teach at the community college?

- A: The MQ to teach in the Law discipline within the community colleges is the possession of a J.D. or L.L.B. So, an individual with a J.D. or L.L.B. could teach any course that has been assigned the discipline of Law by the curriculum committee. Additionally, the MQ guidelines note that courses in aspects of law for applications to a particular discipline may be classified, for minimum qualifications purposes, in the discipline of the application - i.e., Business Law.

A person with an M.D. or D.V.M or D.O. would not be recognized as meeting the MQs for the discipline of Biological Sciences simply through his or her professional degree coursework. The college equivalency committee would need to examine the person's pre-professional degree coursework to see if the total amount of coursework was equivalent to the MQs for the Biological Sciences discipline.

Q#20: Is it true that in order to teach a class placed within two or more disciplines that the instructor only has to be qualified in ONE of the disciplines to teach it, not both?

- A: Yes, if done properly. Some courses may be appropriately assigned to more than one discipline. For example, a course entitled HIST 177 "Economic History of the United States" may be appropriately placed in both the *economics* and *history* disciplines. The discipline placement for HIST 177 could then be History OR Economics to indicate that a faculty member with minimum qualifications in *either* discipline would be qualified to teach this course, provided that he or she also possesses any additional qualifications established by the governing board in conjunction with its academic senate. However, if the discipline placement for HIST 177 is listed as History AND Economics, then the faculty teaching this course must meet the MQs for both History and Economics. Therefore, curriculum committees must exercise care in how they place courses within multiple disciplines.

Q#21: What is the Interdisciplinary Studies discipline? Does that mean that anyone can teach a course using that discipline?

A: No. Some courses may not clearly fall within a single discipline, but must combine the academic preparation from two or more disciplines to such a degree that they need to be taught by someone with some preparation in the constituent disciplines. These courses are designated as *interdisciplinary*. The entry for Interdisciplinary Studies is as follows:

Master's in the Interdisciplinary area **OR**

Master's in one of the disciplines included in the interdisciplinary area **and** upper division or graduate course work in at least one other constituent discipline[s].

Therefore, the *interdisciplinary* designation requires more specialized minimum qualifications than courses placed within two or more disciplines. Someone who has a master's degree in one of its component disciplines and upper division or graduate course work in at least one of the other constituent disciplines is also eligible to teach this course (exactly how much coursework in a second discipline is not specified in the Disciplines List and must be determined locally).

Agreement on qualifications to teach any such course should be made by the college curriculum committee and based on the course outline of record.

Q#22: Can someone with a degree from a foreign country teach at a community college?

A: Possibly. Title 5 §53406 requires faculty to have earned degrees from accredited institutions. However, §53406 also permits districts to determine the equivalency of foreign degrees through locally determined processes. Within the United States, no government agency monitors the establishment of foreign credential evaluation services. Prior to becoming employed as an instructor with any California community college, the college would need to have an evaluation conducted of the education and degree completed at the foreign college/university to inform the equivalency process. The community college would generally refer transcripts from the foreign college/university to an organization that evaluates foreign credentials.

You can access the full document specifying the California Community Colleges' Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators (commonly known as the **Disciplines List**) by going to the following URL:

<http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/Reports/2017-Minimum-Qualifications-Handbook-r1-ADA.pdf>

This FAQ will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Academic Senate and the Chancellor's Office.

Academic Senate documents on Minimum Qualifications and the Disciplines List process:

Disciplines List Review Process. (adopted Fall 2004).

<http://www.asccc.org/Publications/Papers/DisciplinesListReview2004.html>

Disciplines List Revision Handbook (adopted by the Executive Committee Spring 2014)

http://www.asccc.org/sites/default/files/DLHandbook_Final_0.pdf

Equivalence to the Minimum Qualifications. (adopted Fall 2016).

http://asccc.org/sites/default/files/equivalency_paper.pdf

Qualifications For Faculty Service In The California Community Colleges: Minimum Qualifications, Placement Of Courses Within Disciplines, And Faculty Service Areas. (adopted Spring 2004).

<http://www.asccc.org/Publications/Papers/QualificationsFacultyService.htm>