

CS 3.7.1 - 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 Commission guidelines “Faculty Credentials.”)

Compliance Finding: Partial Compliance

Narrative:

The University of South Carolina Beaufort (USC Beaufort) is in compliance with the spirit of the comprehensive standard but not in compliance with the technical requirements of the standard. A limited number of faculty transcripts were received from the faculty member’s institution’s registrar but delivered by the faculty. These transcripts were in sealed envelopes, with proper registrar stamps. However, when opened by the appropriate USC Beaufort employee, “issued to student” was printed on the transcript. This does not meet the requirements of an “official transcript.”

Action Plan: All faculty in these cases have been notified and are ordering transcripts that will be sent directly to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs office. USC Beaufort expects to be in full compliance by April 30, 2008.

As a baccalaureate institution, new faculty members at the University of South Carolina Beaufort (USC Beaufort) are recruited based on their academic credentials (usually terminal degrees), experience in teaching, and research record, thus supporting the mission [i] of the institution "to bring the mission of teaching, research, scholarship and public service to the rapidly growing Lowcountry of South Carolina."

Faculty searches at the USC Beaufort are governed by the search procedures outlined in the USC Beaufort Faculty Manual [ii] and in the USC Policies and Procedures: ACAF 1.00 [iii], ACAF 1.01 [iv] ACAF 1.03 [v] . That process involves a partnership between faculty and administration in appointing committees that conduct nation-wide searches to ensure the most qualified candidate pools. Criteria utilized by search committees to recruit the most qualified candidates include, but are not limited to: graduate and undergraduate degrees, teaching effectiveness, related work experience, honors and awards, and other competencies that demonstrate effective teaching and student learning outcomes. Search Committee Chairs submit full reports on the strengths and weaknesses of all candidates interviewed, and provide reports on the applicant pool. A short list of candidates from the committee and department chair are forwarded to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (EVCAA) who makes the final decision, negotiates the offer, and prepares a letter of appointment. Reports of the interviews and review of applicants are submitted to Human Resources after each search is concluded [vi].

The competence of the permanent faculty has been a priority of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Eighty percent (80.4%) of fulltime faculty hold the terminal degree and 33% of full time instructional faculty are tenured. Two senior administrators have faculty rank and are tenured but do not teach [[vii](#)].

The institution seeks qualified faculty who possess a terminal degree in the field. Instructors must hold a Master's degree and at least 18 credit hours in the field in which they teach. A few highly competent faculty members possess special certificates documenting their expertise by exception but only at the instructor, non-tenure track ranks. USC Beaufort has from time to time hired candidates with tenure if they had achieved tenure at accredited peer institutions. These are normally at either associate professor or professor ranks. Two appointments made during USC Beaufort's prior status as a Level I institution remain as tenured faculty at the associate rank without terminal degrees.

USC Beaufort faculty have established minimum credential guidelines to ensure that the institution employs competent faculty qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the university. With the approval of the new Faculty Manual in August 2007, the USC Beaufort academic structure has shifted to eight departments with newly elected chairs. All faculty hiring decisions for the eight departments are now the responsibility of the Chairs and their faculty, with final approval from the EVCAA. To reflect this change in structure and to ease in the transition, the Office of Academic Affairs has developed a process to ensure the certification of all faculty credentials. The process and accompanying forms were presented to the Academic Affairs Council and Department Chairs for their input and approval in September 2007.

A summary of guidelines for Chairs to follow when hiring new faculty for their departments, the Certification of Faculty Credentials Checklist, is a form that documents that faculty appointed to teaching positions meet these minimum standards. In exceptional cases, adequate justification of alternative professional experience and demonstrated contributions to the teaching discipline must be provided and approved, in lieu of formal academic preparations.

Faculty that do not explicitly meet minimum guidelines on degree and coursework must be certified on an individual basis by documenting alternative credentials and exceptional expertise in the field. The Guidelines for the Justification of Alternative Credentials for Faculty are used to ensure that faculty not meeting minimum standards are highly qualified in the field in which they teach. A letter of justification of alternative credentials, along with supporting evidence and documentation, must be attached to the Certification of Faculty Credentials Checklist for any faculty candidate not meeting the minimum USC Beaufort requirements for teaching courses. If a candidate's transcripts come from a university outside the U.S., a Foreign Academic Credentials Evaluation [[viii](#)] from an accredited credentials agency is also required.

Supporting Documentation

- [i USC Beaufort Mission](#)
- [ii USC Beaufort Faculty Manual -- Search Procedures](#)
- [iii USC Policy ACAF 1.00](#)
- [iv USC Policy ACAF 1.01](#)
- [v USC Policy ACAF 1.03](#)
- [vi USC Beaufort Faculty Hiring Guidelines](#)
- [vii USC Beaufort Fact Book](#)

