RESOURCE MANUAL

for The Principles of Accreditation:

Foundations for Quality Enhancement

SACS COC™

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges

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SECTION 6: Faculty

6.1   **The institution employs an adequate number of full-time faculty members to support the mission and goals of the institution.** *(Full-time faculty)* **[CR]**

Rationale and Notes

Achievement of the institution's mission with respect to teaching, research, and service requires a critical mass of full-time qualified faculty to provide direction and oversight of the academic programs. Due to this significant role, it is imperative that an effective system of evaluation be in place for all faculty members that addresses the institution's obligation to foster intellectual freedom of faculty to teach, serve, research, and publish.

The number of such faculty will need to be sufficient to fulfill basic functions of curriculum design, development, and evaluation; teaching; identification and assessment of appropriate student learning outcomes; student advising; research and creative activity; and institutional, community, and professional service. Consequently, an institution relies on full-time faculty engagement in all aspects of the academic program; its quality and integrity are not driven solely by the number of hours that full-time faculty are teaching. The work of the core faculty may be supplemented and enhanced by judicious assignment of professional staff, part-time faculty, and graduate teaching assistants whose qualifications broaden and enrich the curriculum, increase learning opportunities for students, and enhance the mission of the institution.

> *NOTE*
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> *This requirement addresses the more "macro" critical mass issue of the adequacy of the number of full-time faculty. The qualifications of faculty are addressed in Standard 6.2.a* (Faculty qualifications) *and the more "micro" issue of the sufficiency of the number of full-time faculty for each program is addressed in Standard 6.2.b* (Program faculty).

Questions to Consider

- What are the institution's definitions of terms such as full-time faculty, regular/permanent faculty, part-time faculty, student-faculty ratio?

- How does the mission of the institution affect the number and type of faculty employed?

- What is the organizational structure of the academic functions of the institution? How does this structure affect the critical mass of faculty needed?

- What process does the institution use to determine the number of full-time faculty needed to achieve its mission?

- What are the responsibilities of full-time faculty members, and do the number of faculty constitute a sufficient resource for carrying out basic faculty functions?

- How are traditional faculty functions being carried out in nontraditional ways?

- What are the institution's policies on employment of part-time or adjunct faculty?

Sample Documentation

- Definition of full-time and part-time faculty.

- References to faculty handbooks or other official publications that define terms (e.g., full-time faculty) and give insight into the expectations of the institution in terms of the role of the faculty.

- A narrative describing the role of full-time faculty supporting the adequacy of the mission of the institution, including research and service.

- Policies describing the role of full-time faculty (and others) in carrying out the basic functions of the faculty as described in the rationale and notes.

- Data such as number of faculty; number of students; faculty workloads (contractual and actual); proportion of courses taught by full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and graduate assistants; comparisons of peer institutions; student credit hours generated by full-time and part-time faculty.

- Policies governing the employment of part-time faculty and graduate assistants.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

None noted.

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

Standard 6.2.a   *(Faculty qualifications)*
Standard 6.2.b   *(Program faculty)*
Standard 6.2.c   *(Program coordination)*

6.2.a **For each of its educational programs, the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members.** *(Faculty qualifications)*

Rationale and Notes

Qualified, effective faculty members are essential to carry out the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. The emphasis is on overall qualifications of a faculty member, rather than simply academic credentials. While academic credentials in most cases may well be the standard qualification for faculty members, other types of qualifications may prove to be appropriate. Examples could include appropriately related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications related to the teaching assignment, honors and awards, continuing professional development, relevant peer-reviewed publications, and/or continuous documented excellence in teaching. These types of qualifications are especially important in professional, technical, and technology-dependent fields.

It is the institution's obligation to justify and document the qualifications of its faculty. Determining the acceptability of faculty qualifications requires judicious use of professional judgment, especially when persons do not hold degrees in the teaching discipline or are qualified based on criteria other than their academic credentials. Similarly, persons holding a degree at the same or lower level than the level at which the course is taught require additional qualifications and the application of professional judgment. Additional justification is needed for these cases as compared to cases where the academic credentials are a "perfect match" for the teaching assignments. Appropriate qualifications may also differ depending on whether a course is generally transferable to other institutions; qualifications for teaching nontransferable technical courses depend heavily on professional experience and appropriate certifications or work experience.

Judicious use of professional judgment should also be exercised by those asked to serve as external reviewers of faculty qualifications

NOTES

For institutions seeking reaffirmation of accreditation, faculty qualifications must be reported for all faculty hired since the submission of the last Compliance Certification, as well as continuing faculty who are teaching courses different in content or level than during the previous review.

Continuing faculty members whose qualifications have already undergone peer review, and who are teaching courses with the same content and at the same level as taught at the time of the prior comprehensive review (i.e., initial accreditation visit or reaffirmation visit), may simply be listed by discipline and title, using the form provided by SACSCOC. (Note: This form is under development at the time of publication of this Resource Manual.*) For other faculty, institutions should use the Commission's Faculty Roster Form for Full-time and Part-Time Faculty, or an appropriate facsimile, to justify qualifications. These forms can be found under Institutional Resources on the SACSCOC website. The website also has an Instructions page for the Faculty Roster form.*

Information requested on the Faculty Roster Form for Full-time and Part-Time Faculty should be provided for all full-time and part-time faculty teaching credit courses that can be part of a degree, certificate, diploma, or other credential (i.e., are transcribed as the institution's own courses). Faculty teaching developmental/remedial courses should also be included. Teaching assistants should be included only if they are the instructor of record. In some cases, instructors should be included even if they are not employees of the institution (e.g., high school dual-credit programs, ROTC faculty, some international faculty, or faculty teaching courses in a statewide online consortium that are transcribed as "home" courses).

An institution is responsible for identifying the instructor of record; that is, the person qualified to teach the course and who has overall responsibility for the development/ implementation of the syllabus, the achievement of student learning outcomes included as part of the syllabus, and for issuing grades. For the submission of the Compliance Certification as part of the reaffirmation process, a Track A institution (offering only undergraduate degrees) should

submit rosters for fall term of the current academic year and spring term of the previous academic year. A Track B institution (offering graduate degrees) should submit rosters for fall and spring term of the previous academic year.

Transcripts for faculty should be available during on-site reviews (as requested by reviewers) but are not required to be part of the documentation provided as part of the Compliance Certification or a substantive change application/prospectus. However, sufficient information is needed in these other processes for reviewers to determine whether faculty are appropriately qualified.

Institutions seeking candidacy or initial accreditation must report on all faculty. Units of a SACSCOC accredited institution seeking separate accreditation from the parent institution may utilize the same procedure as an institution undergoing reaffirmation.

If concerns about qualifications of continuing faculty arise during the reaffirmation review, the Reaffirmation Committee may review the qualifications of all faculty members.

Questions to Consider

- How does the mission of the institution influence the selection and qualifications of faculty?

- How does the institution determine the competencies of faculty members and justify that their qualifications meet these competencies?

- Who should be included as faculty to ensure all courses offered for credit are included?

- How does the institution document and justify the qualifications for each faculty member? Would a reasonable person find this documentation and justification acceptable?

Sample Documentation

- A completed "Faculty from Prior Review" form, should the institution choose to submit one.

- A complete roster of all other faculty, including teaching assignments and qualifications.

- Institutional policies or guidelines governing the expected qualifications of faculty members.

- Institutional policies for defining the instructor of record.

- As needed, additional justification of qualifications of specific faculty when the roster form is insufficient.

- Available on site: access to faculty files or portfolios.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

SACSCOC forms: Faculty From Prior Review (under development)

Faculty Roster Form

Faculty Roster Instructions with sample

Cross-References to Other related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

CR 6.1   *(Full-time faculty)*

Standard 6.2.b   *(Program faculty)*

Standard 6.2.c   *(Program coordination)*

Standard 6.3   *(Faculty appointment and evaluation)*

6.2.b **For each of its educational programs, the institution employs a sufficient number of full-time faculty members to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review.** *(Program faculty)*

Rationale and Notes

When an institution commits to offering specific academic programs, there is an expectation that it will also provide sufficient faculty resources to maintain the quality and integrity of those programs. In addition to teaching, full-time faculty provide academic services such as curriculum design, development, and evaluation; identification and assessment of appropriate student learning outcomes; student advising; research and creative activity; and institutional and professional service. The work of the core faculty may be supplemented and enhanced by judicious assignment of professional staff, part-time faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and even contracted services. However, program quality and integrity still call for a sufficient number of full-time faculty. Building on definitions and policies discussed in Standard 6.1 *(Full-time faculty)*, in this standard the institution should present evidence that each academic program has sufficient full-time faculty to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review.

For purposes of this standard, an academic program is a credential as defined by the institution. A degree with a defined major is clearly a program. The Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews should be consistent with how programs are defined within this standard. Academic organizational structures do not always follow academic program structures, although in many cases they will overlap significantly. For example, an accounting department will have primary responsibility for degrees with majors in accounting. But faculty in that department will also be part of programs such as a master of business administration degree or an undergraduate business degree. A technical studies division may include programs as diverse as welding, automotive repair, and web design; there may be overlap across these programs, but that is not always the case. In other situations, a program may have no true "home" because it is intentionally designed to be highly interdisciplinary; faculty in the program may come from a variety of departments. Thus the number of full-time faculty in a department, discipline, or division may not be a good indicator of the number of full-time faculty involved in an educational program. Because of these nuances, a well-crafted narrative for this standard should be more than a set of tables and numbers.

That said, reviewers do expect to see data with some degree of disaggregation by academic program. However, in exercising professional judgment, both institutions preparing materials and persons reviewing materials should be aware that the number of full-time faculty contributing to

a program is often more than—and in other cases often less than – the number of full-time faculty within a specific academic department, discipline, or division.

A narrative for this standard should generally contain:

- An explanation of the nature of the oversight of academic programs and academic processes (not just oversight of broad areas such as social sciences, humanities, or technical studies, and not just broad degree categories such as associate of applied sciences or bachelor of science).

- A description of the distribution/disaggregation of full-time and part-time faculty by academic program.

- The prevalence of work overloads among full-time faculty within the academic program.

- The responsibilities and functions of full-time faculty charged to support and ensure the quality and integrity of each academic program.

- A narrative that provides evidence that the number of full-time faculty in each academic program is adequate to fulfill those responsibilities.

- If distance education and multiple sites are characteristics of program delivery at the institution, the narrative should address how that affects compliance.

Questions to Consider

- How does the institution define academic programs?

- How does the institution define full-time and part-time faculty?

- How does the organizational structure of academic units affect how faculty are involved in program delivery?

- How does the institution determine whether the number of full-time faculty in a program is sufficient?

- What is the best way to present data on full-time faculty by program?

- Are there traditional "faculty functions" that are delivered by other means?

- What are the responsibilities of full-time faculty members and do they constitute a sufficient resource for carrying out basic faculty functions within academic programs?

- What is the role of full-time faculty in program oversight and supervision?

- If applicable, what is the role of full-time faculty in delivering programs at off-campus locations or via distance education?

- How do mission expectations regarding research and public service affect the use of and need for full-time faculty in different programs?

- What is the institutional policy on full-time faculty workload, and how are overloads managed?

- Are there special programs to strengthen part-time faculty (and graduate assistant) involvement and pedagogy?

Sample Documentation

- Definition of full-time and part-time faculty.

- Policies and procedures governing the training and oversight of part-time faculty and graduate assistants.

- Institutionally generated tables and charts summarizing program size and the number of full-time and part-time faculty by program.

- Institutionally generated tables and charts summarizing program delivery (e.g., credit hours generated) by full-time and part-time faculty.

- Institutional policies and procedures affecting the responsibilities and functions of the faculty.

- Workload data across different programs.

- Comparisons with peer institutions or with external benchmarks.

- Data on full-time faculty oversight and participation at various locations and across modes of delivery.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

SACSCOC document: Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

Standard 6.1   *(Full-time faculty)*
Standard 6.2.a   *(Faculty qualifications)*
Standard 6.2.c   *(Program coordination)*
Standard 6.3   *(Faculty appointment and evaluation)*

6.2.c **For each of its educational programs, the institution assigns appropriate responsibility for program coordination.** *(Program coordination)*

Rationale and Notes

Because student learning is central to the institution's mission and educational degrees, the faculty has responsibility for directing the learning enterprise, including overseeing and coordinating educational programs to assure that each contains essential curricular components, has appropriate content and pedagogy, and maintains discipline currency.

The definition of an academic program under this standard should parallel that found in Standard 6.2.b *(Program faculty)*. To repeat:

For purposes of this standard, an academic program is a credential as defined by the institution. A degree with a defined major is clearly a program. The Institutional Summary

[Form Prepared for Commission Reviews](#) should be consistent with how programs are defined within this standard. Academic organizational structures do not always follow academic program structures, although in many cases they will overlap significantly.

By requiring that "the institution assigns appropriate responsibility," there is an expectation that persons responsible for overseeing the curricular content aspects of program coordination are qualified in fields appropriate to the curricular content (and degree level) of the program. The importance of ensuring the quality of educational programs is the essence of this standard. Thus the assignment of responsibility does not necessarily imply the department chair or the dean of a division is the person with the responsibility. Consider the example in Standard 6.2.b of a technical studies division including programs in welding, automotive repair, and web design. Who is responsible for curricular coordination in welding? Who is responsible for curricular coordination in automotive repair? Who is responsible for web design? The division chair is responsible for many aspects of program management—scheduling classes, for example. But unless that chair is an extremely broadly educated and trained person, it is doubtful the chair can serve the program coordination function in its entirety. In such cases, there may be faculty (not the chair) who have such curricular responsibilities. If responsibility for coordinating curriculum development and review are assigned to persons other than faculty with qualifications in fields related to the content, the institution would need to provide appropriate documentation and explanation as to how the quality of the educational program can be maintained. The institution also should describe program coordination for interdisciplinary programs, specifically related to curriculum development and review by representative faculty with appropriate expertise.

Questions to Consider

- How does the organizational structure of academic units affect the assignment of appropriate responsibility for program coordination?

- If the organizational structure does not track the content of curricula, how is appropriate input gained from those with expertise in the field?

- Do coordinators have qualifications appropriate for the degree level of the program (e.g., undergraduate, master's, doctoral)?

- In what sense are these responsibilities "assigned"?

Sample Documentation

- Roster of program coordinators, their area or areas of responsibility, and their qualifications for coordinating the designated program(s).

- Description of coordinator responsibilities.

- Wording in contracts, faculty handbooks, or other documents that outline program coordination responsibilities.

- Academic organization charts and narrative that clarify coordination responsibilities.

- Examples of appropriate coordination of curricular content, especially when it does not fit the organizational charts.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

SACSCOC document: [Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews](#)

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

Standard 6.2.a   *(Faculty qualifications)*
Standard 6.2.b   *(Program faculty)*

6.3   **The institution publishes and implements policies regarding the appointment, employment, and regular evaluation of faculty members, regardless of contract or tenure status.** *(Faculty appointment and evaluation)*

Rationale and Notes

Since the members of the faculty direct the learning enterprise of an academic institution and are responsible for assuring the quality of the academic programs, it is imperative that the institution maintains an effective system of appointing faculty members, continuing faculty members in employment, evaluating the quality of their work, and if necessary, discontinuing faculty. Appropriately approved processes should be in place and the institution should be able to show it consistently follows its own policies and procedures.

Policies relating to appointment of faculty would entail areas such as search processes, who has authority to make offers of employment, and how contractual relationships are established. Policies relating to employment would include rights and responsibilities of faculty, promotion policies, grievance processes (not related to academic freedom, which has a separate standard [see Standard 6.4 (Academic freedom)], dismissal processes, workload, and the like.

The concept of faculty evaluation encompasses a range of processes designed to assess the quality and effectiveness of the performance of each member of the faculty, including tenured, contractual, and adjunct/part-time faculty. Different types of faculty may be evaluated utilizing different procedures and perhaps on different expectations relative to teaching, service, research, and publishing. The expectation is that the policies and criteria are published. The overall evaluation system may include a variety of components; but regardless of the evaluation types used, it is critical that the faculty evaluation system be consistent with the institution's mission.

NOTES

This standard applies to faculty regardless of contractual status. However, it does not apply to student assistants, graduate assistants, and the like.

Student course evaluations, when used in isolation, are often deemed to be insufficient as a means of faculty evaluation.

Questions to Consider

- What are the policies regarding appointing, employing, and evaluating faculty?

- How are such policies developed and approved?

- How are the policies disseminated to ensure that all personnel are informed?

- Is the institution's documentation concerning faculty appointment, employment, and evaluation practices consistent with its published policies and procedures?

- Are evaluations administered on a regular and timely basis (at least every three years)?

- How does the institution ensure that faculty evaluation policies are appropriate for faculty members with different contractual statuses (tenured, tenure-track, non-tenured, adjunct)?

- How are faculty evaluations administered and used in ensuring the effectiveness of all faculty (especially in terms of student learning) while also ensuring fairness?

Sample Documentation

- Documents and publications that include the policies, procedures, and criteria used for appointment, employment, and evaluation of faculty.

- Directives, emails, minutes that show policies and procedures are followed in general terms.

- Specific examples showing policy compliance such as search committee processes, handling of grievances, promotion and tenure processes, evaluation of different contractual status faculty, etc. Examples would usually be redacted for privacy purposes but leave enough detail to show compliance.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

This standard requires a policy or procedure; see Appendix A of this document for implications. See also:

SACSCOC good practices: Developing Policy and Procedures Documents

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

Standard 5.4   *(Qualified administrative/academic officers)*
Standard 5.5   *(Personnel appointment and evaluation)*

6.4 The institution publishes and implements appropriate policies and procedures for preserving and protecting academic freedom.
(Academic freedom)

Rationale and Notes

The essential role of institutions of higher education is the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. Academic freedom respects the dignity and rights of others while fostering intellectual freedom of faculty to teach, research, and publish. Responsible academic freedom enriches the contributions of higher education to society.

> *NOTE*
>
> *If the institution has had no academic freedom grievances or publicized cases regarding academic freedom, and, therefore, has not applied its policies, it should indicate that examples of implementation are unavailable because no such cases have arisen.*

Questions to Consider

- How does the institution define academic freedom?
- What are the institutional policies and procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom of faculty?
- How are these policies approved or modified?
- How does the institution publicize its policies on academic freedom for faculty?
- If there have been any instances in which issues involving academic freedom have emerged, how have these issues been resolved?

Sample Documentation

- Publications that include the institution's academic freedom policies.
- Details and evidence associated with approval or modification of policies.
- Evidence regarding the handling of institutional academic freedom issues, if available.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

This standard requires a policy or procedure; see Appendix A of this document for implications. See also:

SACSCOC good practices: Developing Policy and Procedures Documents

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

None noted.

6.5 **The institution provides ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty members as teachers, scholars, and practitioners, consistent with the institutional mission.** *(Faculty development)*

Rationale and Notes

Faculty members are at the core of institutional mission-driven activities, and therefore need to stay current, improve their own knowledge and skills, and have the opportunity to actively participate in their profession, including (as appropriate) conducting research, and engaging in scholarship and clinical practice. In order to establish and sustain a culture where faculty professional development is valued and pervasive, it is important that institutions develop a systematic and comprehensive approach to offering and supporting activities and programs that assist and encourage members of the faculty to pursue professional development. Because of the wide range of institutions within the SACSCOC membership, faculty development policies should be crafted—and reviewed—in light of the institution's mission.

Questions to Consider

- Does the institution have its own definition of what constitutes professional development? What activities are classified as professional development?

- How does the institution support faculty professional development? This may include release time, direct funding, mini-grants, travel reimbursement, and the like.

- What are the policies, procedures, and programs dealing with the professional development of faculty members?

- How are faculty members informed of professional development opportunities?

- Are there development opportunities for adjunct faculty or dual-enrollment faculty?

- Is there evidence that faculty are actively engaged in professional development activities?

Sample Documentation

- Policies and procedures governing faculty professional development, and evidence these policies are implemented.

- Descriptions of ongoing professional development activities supported by the institution.

- Description of resources allocated by the institution in support of ongoing faculty professional development.

- Evidence that members of the faculty are involved in professional development.

- Description of how faculty share their professional development experience with other members of the faculty or external groups.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

None noted.

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

Standard 11.3   *(Library and learning/information resources)*
CR 12.1   *(Student support services)*