

**Manhattan Area Technical College
Institutional Policy and Procedure Manual**

Policy No. 7.3.3

Title: Faculty Credential Levels and Minimum Qualifications	
Originated By: Vice President of Instructional Services	Date: 8/31/2011
President / Board of Directors Approval Date: 8/31/2011	
Revised by: VP/EE/CAO	
Revision/Review Date: 2/2026	

Policy Statement: According to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) guidelines, qualified faculty members are identified primarily by their academic credentials; however, additional factors such as progress toward academic credentials, equivalent experience, and relevant industry certifications may also be considered. Instructors must hold an academic degree that is relevant to the subject they teach and at least one level above the level of instruction unless equivalent tested experience has been established or as required by accrediting bodies. All individuals considered for faculty employment are expected to demonstrate a commitment to the quality and completeness of the educational experience, as well as evidence of or the potential for effective teaching.

Rationale: Institutions are responsible for ensuring that faculty members who deliver college level instruction are appropriately qualified, in accordance with the Higher Learning Commission guidelines published in September 2025. These guidelines apply to all faculty, including full-time instructors, adjunct instructors, and those who teach dual credit or concurrent credit courses. The HLC requires that college credit awarded through dual credit arrangements meet the same standards of quality, integrity, and comparability as credit offered on the institution's main campus or at any other instructional site. Consequently, faculty who teach dual credit courses must hold the same minimum qualifications expected of the institution's regular faculty.

Procedures:

1. First Level Approval

Faculty who teach general education courses or other nonoccupational transfer level courses are expected to hold a master's degree or higher in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.

2. Second Level Approval

i. Faculty who hold a master's degree or higher in a discipline or subfield other than the one in which they teach should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline or subfield of instruction. Equivalency credits may be considered for graduate credit in accordance with the currently approved Faculty Negotiated Agreement, or

ii. Progress toward academic credentials: demonstrable, current, and consistent advancement toward the academic credential(s) the institution deems relevant for an instructor to be considered qualified. An instructor who is qualified on the basis of progress toward academic credentials is not intended to remain qualified on that basis permanently; rather, the expectation is that the instructor will ultimately meet qualification standards through academic credentials, equivalent tested experience, or another approved pathway. The progress plan must be documented and approved by the CAO.

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iii. When no appropriately qualified instructor is available, an individual who has not yet completed the 18 graduate hours may be assigned to teach on a limited, semester by semester basis. In such cases, the institution must be able to explain and justify the decision to assign the individual to the courses taught.

3. Third Level Approval

i. Faculty who teach in career and technical education programs, including college level certificate and occupational associate degree programs, should hold a bachelor's degree in the field or a combination of education, relevant credentials, training, and tested experience.

a. Faculty may be qualified on the basis of tested experience when the institution determines that such experience is equivalent to the degree that would otherwise be required. Tested experience must include significant, discipline specific, real world experience outside the classroom.

b. Faculty should hold a valid, current, industry recognized credential in the specific career or technical field they teach.

c. Tested industry experience should include a minimum of 4,000 hours (two years) of documented work experience in the relevant career or technical field. Previous years of classroom instruction does not alone constitute equivalent experience.