

Equivalence of Professional Experience with Qualification Levels for Academic Staff Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) La Trobe University ensures that all teaching staff who are delivering coursework to its students are appropriately qualified to do so. This upholds the University's commitment to academic quality and standards.

(2) This Policy provides the framework by which the University assesses the comparability of professional experience with academic qualifications for teaching staff, where the incumbent or applicant does not possess the usual minimum qualification as defined in the [Higher Education Standards \(Threshold Standards\) 2015](#).

Section 2 - Scope

(3) This Policy applies to academic staff teaching and assessing subjects in La Trobe undergraduate and postgraduate courses, excepting Doctoral studies, whether they are employed by the University or by any of the University's third party teaching partners. Also refer to Section 2 of the [Recruitment Policy](#).

(4) Supervision requirements for Doctoral and Masters by Research courses are further outlined in the [Graduate Research Supervision Policy](#).

(5) This Procedure does not apply to the academic teaching staff of institutions in which students are undertaking study as part of a program of outbound student mobility or partner supervisors of students undertaking placements, internships or other forms of work integrated learning. The University assures itself that such individuals are appropriately qualified to teach and/or supervise La Trobe students through the provisions of the [Educational Partnerships Policy](#) and associated procedures.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(6) La Trobe University recognises that professionally experienced staff are critical to providing a rich and career-oriented learning environment and that relevant professional experience and skills may complement academic credentials when determining the suitability of an individual to teach students at a specific level.

General Expectations: Qualification Levels for Academic Teaching Staff

(7) As a general rule, and excepting doctoral studies, La Trobe University expects staff who teach its subjects to have a cognate qualification at least one Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level above that of the highest qualification of the course in which they will be teaching.

(8) In the case of nested exit qualifications, where students are enrolled in an award program but may be eligible to exit with a lower AQF level award having completed a proportion of the course, teaching staff are expected to hold a minimum qualification one AQF level above the highest qualification in the nested suite. For example staff teaching

the first year of a bachelor level course (AQF Level 7) that also comprises a nested diploma (AQF Level 5) would be expected to hold at least an honours or graduate certificate qualification (AQF Level 8) in a relevant field.

(9) In the case of packaged pathway and nested entry courses, where students may commence in a lower level award and then progress to higher levels of study following completion of that award, teaching staff are expected to hold a qualification one AQF level above the first award level. For example staff teaching into a diploma course (AQF Level 5) where students may have the option of progressing to a Bachelor level course would be expected to hold at least an advanced diploma (AQF Level 6) in a relevant field. Similarly, staff teaching into a bachelor course that offers students an opportunity to progress to a postgraduate award would be expected to hold an AQF Level 8 qualification.

(10) In the case where a combination of models is in use and students from both pathway and nested exit awards are taught together, staff are expected to hold the relevant qualification level for the higher of the awards.

(11) Where a member of academic staff does not hold the requisite qualification for a given level of award, an assessment of professional equivalence may be utilised to assess appropriate qualification to teach. The assessed professional experience must be relevant to the discipline being taught but may take into consideration the full range of professional experience, including teaching experience.

Exemptions

(12) The following categories of staff may be exempted from these general requirements, but must have a level of knowledge and expertise that demonstrably enhances the learning experiences of students:

- a. Occasional guest lecturers and teachers/instructors who teach less than 12 hours in a subject per teaching period and do not have responsibility for the content or summative assessment of a subject or course.
- b. Teachers/instructors who have their teaching guided and overseen by staff who meet the standard. Only staff who meet the standard should have responsibility for the content or summative assessment of a subject or course.
- c. Teachers who may have current enrolment in the relevant AQF Level qualification may also be approved as an interim arrangement. In such cases, evidence of progress must be provided on a sufficiently regular basis to determine continued development. The staff member must also complete the qualification within the relevant timely completion period, excepting where there are demonstrable mitigating circumstances.

(13) Where a staff member does not strongly meet the criteria for professional equivalence, it is expected that a professional development plan is put in place for a period of time deemed appropriate to meet the standard. Such plans may include team teaching, mentoring or other mechanisms by which the staff member is supported to gain sufficient experience and achievement to be considered to have achieved professional equivalence through their teaching practice.

(14) The relevant Head of School shall maintain records of these instances.

Section 4 - Procedures

Part A - Assessing the Equivalence of Professional Experience

(15) In assessing evidence of professional experience to determine its equivalence, regard must be given to the full range of relevant, verifiable professional activities of the individual.

(16) In each case, it is expected that the assessed experience will be of at least commensurate standing to the required qualification level; of at least 3 years' duration, and; will include evidence within the last 5 years.

(17) General Criteria for these decision are provided in the Guidelines for the Assessment of Professional Equivalence, refer to Part D.

(18) Each case must be assessed on its merits and approved by the relevant Head of School.

(19) Professional experience equivalence is usually granted for one AQF level increment only. This may be varied in exceptional circumstances. For example, where a staff member demonstrates sufficient commensurate expertise through a combination of activities and evidence, such as recognition of teaching excellence, professional development and certification, scholarship, leadership in the field and/or practice based seniority.

(20) Such cases must be approved by the relevant College Pro Vice Chancellor and records of the approval maintained by the Head of School.

Part B - Required Evidence

(21) Any verifiable source of relevant evidence may be considered in determining the weight and value of the professional experience. This includes, but is not limited to, evidence of:

- a. leadership in the development of professional standards
- b. performing in a role that requires high order judgment and the provision of expert advice, or roles at a senior level
- c. managing significant projects in the field
- d. testimonials, awards or other recognition that recognizes leadership or expertise in the field
- e. contributions in the field through participation in advisory boards and professional networks
- f. peer reviewed publications
- g. other publications such as books, reports and artistic works
- h. leadership or management of research acknowledged by peers
- i. teaching experience including teaching at lower AQF levels, delivery of professional development or public lectures

Part C - Teaching Staff Provided by Educational Partners

(22) All teaching staff provided by educational partners in the delivery of La Trobe courses are included within the ambit of this Procedure, as per the [Educational Partnerships Procedure - Third Party Arrangements](#).

(23) The La Trobe University Academic Program Director for the partnership arrangement will evaluate and record in writing the eligibility of partner staff to deliver the relevant courses or units. This reporting forms part of the Annual Joint Management Committee Review.

Part D - Guidelines for the Assessment of Professional Experience Equivalence

(24) Minimum criteria – The table below outlines the generally expected criteria to demonstrate professional experience equivalence for each of the AQF levels. These are not exhaustive, and should be interpreted as a guide within the context of each discipline and professional area.

AQF Level Being Taught	Required AQF Level for Staff	Professional Experience Equivalence
AQF Level 5 Diploma	AQF Level 6	A Level 5 qualification PLUS: Relevant professional experience within the last 5 years.

AQF Level Being Taught	Required AQF Level for Staff	Professional Experience Equivalence
AQF Level 6 Advanced Diploma /Associate Degree	AQF Level 7	A Level 6 qualification PLUS Relevant professional experience incorporating public recognition, supervision and/or management activity within the last 5 years.
AQF Level 7 Bachelor Degree	AQF Level 8	A Level 7 qualification PLUS Professional experience incorporating public recognition, strategic and/or management activity within the last 5 years AND Evidence of contribution to the profession through leadership at organisational or national level.
AQF Level 8 Graduate Certificate/ Graduate Diploma/ Bachelor Honours Degree	AQF Level 9	A Level 8 qualification PLUS Substantial professional experience incorporating public recognition, high level strategic and/or management activity within the last 8 years AND Evidence of significant contribution to the profession through leadership at organisational or national level.
AQF Level 9 Masters Degree by Coursework	AQF Level 10	A Level 9 qualification PLUS Substantial professional experience incorporating public recognition, high level decision making, strategic and/or management activity within the last 8 years AND Evidence of significant contribution to the field through leadership at a national or international level.

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