

Academic Staff Qualifications Procedure - Teaching

Section 1 - Key Information

Policy Type and Approval Body	Academic – Academic Board
Accountable Executive - Policy	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Responsible Manager - Policy	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
Review Date	29 April 2028

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) The [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) ('the Standards') specify that academic teaching staff must be qualified to at least one level of qualification higher than the course of study being taught, or have equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice-based experience and expertise.

(2) This Procedure outlines the ways in which the University ensures that:

- a. academic staff at each level of teaching are appropriately qualified in accordance with the [Standards](#);
- b. where an incumbent or applicant does not possess the usual minimum qualification as defined in the [Standards](#) there is a robust framework under which the University:
 - i. assesses the comparability of their professional experience with academic qualifications;
 - ii. establishes and manages professional development plans for staff who are not assessed as having equivalent qualifications.

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This Procedure applies to all staff who teach students enrolled in La Trobe award courses, including students enrolled in La Trobe courses taught under educational partnership agreements.

Section 4 - Key Decisions

Key Decisions	Role
Appointment of Course Coordinators	Dean
Appointment of Subject Coordinators	Dean or nominee in collaboration with Course Coordinator
Approval of case for Professional Equivalence	Dean or nominee
Approval of any exemptions from this Procedure	Dean

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(4) This Procedure is part of the [Academic Staff Qualifications Policy](#) which governs its application.

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Responsibility for Appointment of Academic Staff

(5) Qualified staff for subject teaching are appointed by the Subject Coordinator in conjunction with the Head of Department where they exist or other responsible person and the Course Coordinator.

(6) Academic staff with appropriate qualifications are appointed for coordination roles as follows:

- a. Course Coordinators are appointed by the Dean;
- b. Subject Coordinators are appointed by the Dean, the relevant Head of Department, or the Discipline Lead in collaboration with the Course Coordinator or other responsible person.

(7) Staff with academic coordination duties must hold a fixed term or ongoing appointment at La Trobe, or at the relevant third party teaching partner organisation.

Teaching Staff Provided by Educational Partners

(8) The La Trobe University Academic Program Director for a partnership arrangement evaluates and records 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.

(9) In addition to appropriate qualifications in the cognate area as outlined in this Procedure, partner staff must be able to demonstrate a high level of competence in English through a combination of qualifications and/or other competency measures. Exemptions for English language competence may be granted under agreements where courses are to be taught in a language other than English.

Part B - Overview of Staff Teaching Qualifications Requirements

(10) The following sections of this Procedure detail the qualification levels required for teaching staff at La Trobe, the requirements for determining Professional Equivalence, and the steps to be taken for staff who do not meet Professional Equivalence. Teaching staff are assessed as falling into one of three categories for each course in which they teach as outlined in the following table:

Assessment	Appointment type	Actions	Academic Duties
Meets the Standard (AQF) plus one) in the appropriate cognate area	All	Normal staff supervision	Full teaching duties
Meets Professional Equivalence	All	Normal staff supervision	Full teaching duties
Does not meet Professional Equivalence	Ongoing or Fixed Term	Specific Professional Development Plan and additional staff supervision requirements to be put in place	Teaching duties are limited (may not be involved in course design or graded or hurdle assessment) until the staff member is deemed to have reached Professional Equivalence

Assessment	Appointment type	Actions	Academic Duties
	Casual	Additional staff supervision requirements to be put in place	Teaching duties are limited (may not be involved in course design or graded or hurdle assessment) for the duration of the appointment

(11) Occasional guest lecturers and teachers/instructors who teach less than 12 hours in a subject per teaching period, and who do not have responsibility for the content or graded or hurdle assessment of a subject or course, may be exempted from these general requirements but must have a level of knowledge and expertise that demonstrably enhances the learning experiences of students.

Part C - Qualification Levels for Academic Teaching Staff

General Rules

(12) 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, with the following variations:

- a. staff teaching in a non-AQF course such as a Professional Certificate are expected to have a cognate qualification at least one level above the 'AQF-equivalent' level of the course
- b. staff teaching and supervising doctoral candidates may be qualified at the same level.

(13) In the case of nested exit qualifications, where students are enrolled in an award course but may be eligible to exit with a lower 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.

(14) 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.

(15) 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.

Part D - Equivalence of Professional Experience to Academic Qualifications

(16) 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.

(17) Where a member or potential member of academic staff does not hold the requisite qualification for a given level of award, an assessment must be undertaken by the supervisor or potential supervisor to assess whether the individual has Professional Equivalence at the appropriate level. 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.

Assessments

(18) In assessing evidence of professional experience to determine its equivalence, the relevant supervisor must consider the full range of relevant, verifiable professional activities of the individual.

(19) In each case, it is expected that the assessed experience:

- a. is at least commensurate with the required qualification level;
- b. is of at least three (3) years' duration; and
- c. includes evidence within the last five (5) years.

(20) General criteria for these assessments are provided in the Guidelines for the Assessment of Professional Equivalence (see Appendix to this Procedure).

(21) Each case must be assessed on its merits and approved by the relevant Dean or their nominee. The nominee must be a direct report of the Dean and not the relevant hiring staff member.

(22) 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. Such cases must be approved by the relevant Dean.

Applications and Required Evidence

(23) Prospective or current staff members seeking professional equivalence to teach at a specific level must complete the [Application for Professional Equivalence](#) and attach the required evidence for submission to their potential or current supervisor for approval.

(24) Any verifiable source of relevant evidence may be considered in determining the weight and value of a staff member's 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 recognises 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 E - Staff Without Professional Equivalence

All Staff

(25) Any staff member who has been assessed as not meeting Professional Equivalence (ongoing, fixed term or casual) must:

- a. have their teaching guided and overseen by a staff member who meets the Standard;
- b. participate only in teaching duties that do not involve responsibility for the content or graded or hurdle assessment of a subject or course (see table in Part B).

Ongoing or Fixed Term Staff

(26) Where an ongoing or fixed term staff member does not meet the criteria for Professional Equivalence, a specific Professional Development Plan must be put in place for a period of time deemed appropriate to meet the Standard. This will be noted on the Professional Equivalence Form. Staff in this category can be identified through the University's Teaching Qualifications Portlet.

(27) Professional Development Plans for staff in this category are established and managed through the University's performance management lifecycle. Plans must include measures that will, over time, assist staff to meet the criteria for Professional Equivalence. Such measures 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.

(28) The relevant responsible supervisor will complete a new Assessment of Professional Equivalence when they deem that the staff member has met the required standard.

(29) These requirements do not apply to casual staff.

Part F - Recording of Staff Qualifications

Formal Qualifications

(30) Formal qualifications of all La Trobe academic staff, including professional registration where appropriate, are captured and stored through the Teaching Qualifications Portlet in [MyHR](#) (Success Factors), as follows:

- a. for academic staff newly appointed to the University the relevant People & Culture representative uploads and verifies the certified qualifications at the point of recruitment;
- b. existing academic staff members who complete a new qualification can upload evidence of the qualification via the Portlet. New documentation workflows to the immediate supervisor for the relevant school for verification prior to an update to the individual's record.

Equivalence Assessments

(31) The outcome of the assessment of Professional Equivalence is reflected in the staff member's record in the People & Culture database. Approved Professional Equivalence forms are stored online within the Office of the Provost.

Part G - Reporting and Quality Assurance

(32) The following mechanisms are employed to ensure that appropriately qualified staff are teaching into La Trobe courses:

- a. data is sourced from the MyHR (Success Factors) Portlet and enterprise reporting platforms to generate reports for review;
- b. analysis and reporting of staff qualifications is undertaken at course level through course reviews under the provisions of the [Course and Subject Management Procedure – Monitoring and Review](#);
- c. staff qualification levels are included in biannual Academic Workload Planning reports submitted to the Senior Executive Group.

Section 7 - Appendix

Part H - Guidelines for the Assessment of Professional Experience Equivalence

Minimum Criteria

(33) 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 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	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	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.

Section 8 - Definitions

(34) For the purpose of this Procedure:

- graded assessment: any assessment for which marks contribute towards a student's final grade for a subject;
- hurdle assessment: any assessment for which a pass is required in order for a student to pass a subject;
- Professional Equivalence: a status conferred on an individual who, while not meeting the formal qualifications specified for the AQF level at which they are teaching, is assessed to have qualifications and/or experience at a level deemed equivalent to the required level in the relevant cognate area;
- staff supervision: the process by which a staff member without Professional Equivalence is guided by a more senior member of staff to ensure that the supervised staff member engages in:
 - teaching duties that are appropriate for their level of qualification;
 - professional development that progresses their ability to meet Professional Equivalence at a future date.

Section 9 - Authority and Associated Information

(35) This Procedure is made under the [La Trobe University Act 2009](#).

(36) Associated information includes:

- a. [Professional Equivalence Review Template](#);
- b. [Recruitment Policy](#);
- c. [Subject and Course Coordinator Guidelines and Role Descriptions](#);
- d. [TPT Assessment of Professional Equivalence](#).

Status and Details

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Responsible Manager - Policy	Sharna Spittle Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
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