

Responses to questions regarding minimum faculty standards

9.30.09

Question 1: Do instructors of introduction to computers courses need to have a master's degree in computer science?

Response 1: No. Full-time and contracted part-time instructors of introductory computer courses that are arts and sciences courses must meet the minimum faculty standards for arts and science instructors per 281 – IAC 21.3. Adjunct instructors must meet minimum faculty standards by July 1, 2011. The standards require instructors to have a master's degree **(in any field)** and 12 graduate credit hours in the field of instruction. For purposes of introductory computer courses, a business background with 12 graduate credit hours within the field of instruction will suffice. The field of instruction is defined based on accepted practices of regionally accredited two and four year institutions of higher education. If the course(s) are taught as a part of a career and technical education program only, then the instructor must meet the standards for CTE instructors per 281 – IAC 21.3. These requirements include either a baccalaureate or graduate degree in the area or related area of study in which the instructor is teaching courses or special training and at least 6,000 hours of recent and relevant work experience in the occupational area or related occupational area.

Question 2: The rules for arts and sciences instructors state that a master's degree is needed from a regionally accredited institution – it says nothing about the degree being related to the discipline. We are interpreting that to mean if a high school teacher has any master's degree plus 12 graduate credit hours in the specific discipline, they can teach for us. Most of the master's degrees in question are in education, curriculum, administration, etc. – not discipline-specific. Is this correct?

Response 2: Yes, this is the correct interpretation. To teach arts and sciences courses an instructor must have: 1) a master's degree and 2) completed 12 graduate level credit hours within the field of instruction. For the purposes of state minimum standards, the master's degree itself does not need to be within the field of instruction.

That being said, concurrent enrollment instructors must meet the same requirements as on-campus faculty (281—IAC 22.3(1), Iowa Code 261E.3(2)(a)(1)). In other words, if the community college sets hiring requirements for on-campus adjunct faculty within an academic department to teach a given course (e.g. requiring a masters degree in the discipline), concurrent enrollment instructors must meet the same requirements.

Questions 3: I understand that I am to hire as I would on campus. For computer information technology, we might hire an adjunct with a master's degree in some other discipline (education or business) who has computer experience to teach an applications course. We will now require these folks to get 12 graduate hours in the field of instruction. For full-time people we require a masters in the discipline (or closely related discipline with 12 graduate credit hours), but they are expected to be able to teach the whole curriculum, not just a beginning course. So, in the high schools, I am accepting *any* master's degree with 12 graduate hours in computers to teach applications, web design, or networking. Is this acceptable?

Response 3: As indicated, concurrent enrollment instructors must meet the same requirements as on-campus faculty ((281—IAC 22.3(1), Iowa Code 261E.3(2)(a)(1)) by July 1, 2011. Therefore, if a potential instructor has credentials that do not meet the college's hiring standard for on-campus adjunct faculty, then the instructor is not eligible to teach concurrent enrollment courses. If the college's hiring policy allows an instructor with any master's degree and 12 graduate credit hours in the area of instruction to teach the given courses, then the instructor may be eligible. As noted in response 2, arts and sciences instructors may have a master's degree in any discipline and meet state minimum standards, provided they have completed 12 graduate credit hours in the area of instruction.

Question 4: I have a full-time instructor with a master's in Agriculture from the 1970s who was hired years ago as a career and technical instructor (meeting the 6,000 hours of computer work experience requirement for CTE instructors). Since he teaches courses that are used in either AAS or AA degree programs, he now needs 12 graduate hours in computer science. This instructor has a variety of Microsoft and other industry certifications. I am using those industry certifications to replace graduate credit or serve as licensure such as a PE or CPA. It's not a license *required* by industry but it's what is expected if you want to advance in the field. The courses and exams are just as expensive, rigorous and important as a graduate class.

Response 4: If any courses are arts and sciences, the instructor must meet the minimum standards for arts and sciences instructors. As noted in response 1, the instructor may not need 12 graduate credit hours in computer science, provided the graduate credit hours are within the area of instruction. Because post-baccalaureate recognition or professional licensure is not necessary for practice in the occupational field, professional experience alone cannot substitute for the requirement of a master's degree and 12 graduate credit hours within the field of instruction.

The Department recognizes the importance of industry credentials, however the law requires certain other credentials or experience. State minimum faculty standards are not intended to be an accurate measure of whether a given faculty member is qualified to teach a given community college course. Instead, faculty standards assure faculty have certain basic credentials deemed necessary for college-level instruction. Each community college is responsible for determining whether faculty are qualified and setting its own standards. Additionally, the Higher Learning Commission has guidance for determining quality faculty for purposes of accreditation.

Question 5: Music lessons at our college are private lessons, not courses. My instructors are experienced and qualified instructors. Some of these folks have bachelor's degrees, but few have masters. These instructors are classified as independent contractors, not adjunct faculty. They are hired differently, paid differently and have different expectations than adjunct faculty.

Response 5: If these are indeed noncredit lessons, then there is no issue as 281-21.3 does not set standards for noncredit instructor qualifications (they would also not be subject to quality faculty plan requirements, etc). However, if they are college credit courses in applied music (e.g. college credit is being awarded, they are in the catalog as such, it is reported on the management information system as such, etc.), the instructor must meet minimum faculty standards.