

Professional Equivalency Policy **(Recognition of Equivalence in Academic Staff Qualifications and Experience)**

1. Purpose

This policy provides guidance on the factors which should be considered when assessing whether teaching staff have the required qualifications and experience for a teaching appointment at King's Own Institute (KOI). The Higher Education Standards Framework 2021 requires that 'staff with responsibilities for academic oversight and those with teaching and supervisory roles in courses or units of study have a qualification in a relevant discipline at least one level higher [based on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)] than is awarded for the course of study, or equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice-based experience and expertise'.

2. Principles

Professional equivalency. Academic staff will normally have the requisite level of qualification, without the need to rely on professional experience to demonstrate equivalence. It is recognised that some disciplines require a combination of registration, experience, and qualifications to achieve expert-level professional standards, especially in professional areas in which qualification standards have evolved over time, such as Accounting, Finance, Law, Management and TESOL. The teaching of subject content in such areas relies on the academics involved being current members of the professions in their area of expertise, as legislation and practices in such disciplines are constantly being updated or amended. Thought leaders in these areas are to be found in universities, professional associations, government and industry. Those who have spent considerable time outside the university environment build their knowledge and skills through professional activities rather than through academic qualifications. This is the basis of 'professional equivalence'.

The way in which 'professional equivalency' is measured depends on the discipline, the level of the program and the nature of the role. Both current scholarship and professional practice in the discipline are important considerations to ensure that students gain a sound academic appreciation of the subject and engage with the current professional practices of the industry which they are preparing to enter. Relevant academic qualifications and professional experience are essential for transferring the skills and knowledge necessary to help students achieve the graduate attributes of their courses. Current scholarship and professional experience also create a platform for lifelong learning in the discipline of the subject.

Academic staff who are assessed on a combination of formal qualifications and professional experience must have formal qualifications to at least the same level as that being taught. Professional experience will only be used to assess one AQF Qualification Standards level above that being taught.

Where subjects form part of nested courses, the qualification requirements of academic staff will relate to the highest-level course in which any student in the subject is enrolled.

The criteria below are considered minimum guidelines for employment of academic staff who hold leadership or oversight roles or lecture in significant components of a course of study.

Other requirements for the academic staff profile include the need for staff to have

- knowledge of contemporary development in the discipline or field, which is informed by continuing scholarship or research or advances in practice
- skills in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment principles relevant to the discipline, their role, modes of delivery and the needs of particular student cohorts.

The Staff Review and Development Policy describes the procedures for performance review and identification of professional development needs to maintain an appropriate academic staffing profile for each course of study.

Position descriptions. This policy applies to all academic staff as lecturers on either a full-time, part-time or sessional basis and with responsibilities for development of subject materials and subject assessment.

Lecturer. A lecturer is expected to make contributions to the teaching effort, including preparation and delivery of classes, development of teaching materials, subject coordination, supervision of coursework students, assessment and consultation with students, and to carry out activities to maintain and develop their scholarly and/or professional activities relevant to the profession or discipline.

A lecturer should usually hold a relevant postgraduate degree and appropriate professional qualifications and have successful teaching experience in higher education. Extensive teaching experience in higher education may be an alternative to a higher degree. Lecturers responsible for course development and review should usually hold a doctoral degree in a relevant discipline or be actively progressing towards such a qualification.

In most cases, lecturers teaching undergraduate subjects should hold a postgraduate qualification and those teaching postgraduate subjects should have a doctoral qualification.

Supervisor of a research project. This description applies to the principal supervisor of a research project in a postgraduate degree by coursework. The supervisor is the student's mentor during the project and will set milestones for the project, check the student's progress and provide detailed feedback on drafts of the project report.

Supervisors should have the same qualifications and experience as lecturers at this level.

Head of Program. In addition to their teaching role, a Head of Program is responsible for leadership and development of teaching and scholarship, quality control of academic standards and student performance, and professional development of the teaching staff in their program.

A Head of Program should usually hold a doctoral degree in a relevant discipline, or equivalent professional qualifications, and have a minimum of 5 years higher education teaching and research or professional experience. Extensive teaching and leadership experience in higher education or their profession may be an alternative to a higher degree.

In determining experience relative to qualifications, consideration is given to teaching experience, experience in research and professional practice, experience outside tertiary education, creative achievement, professional contributions and/or technical achievement.

Both qualifications and professional experience must be current and relevant to the area being taught.

Other teaching roles. The qualification requirements do not apply to

- junior teaching staff (that is, tutors and instructors) working under the supervision of a lecturer and not responsible for development of teaching materials, design of teaching activities and assessment; junior teaching staff must be qualified at the AQF level in which they are teaching and will usually be in a further training program and/or receiving professional development support and/or supervision for teaching at that level
- guest lecturers invited to present lectures related to their particular professional expertise; guest lecturers are selected for the distinctive and necessary expertise they bring to a class
- adjunct staff engaged as associate supervisors for the research project to support the principal supervisor
- adjunct staff involved in practicum subjects, such as professional placement subjects, internships and work experience placements.

In these cases, the responsibility for the quality assurance of the teaching rests with the Subject Coordinator

3. Guidelines

AQF Course level	Subject Coordinator AQF Level or Equivalence
Level 7 – Bachelors (including nested Level 5 – 6 Diplomas)	The usual qualification level to teach in courses at Bachelor or Diploma level is a Level 8 qualification (Bachelor Honours, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma) or higher. The minimum qualification level to teach at Bachelor or Diploma level is a Bachelor degree PLUS 3 years higher education teaching experience PLUS EITHER 3 years relevant professional experience in the last 5 years, or - enrolment in a relevant level 8 (graduate certificate or graduate diploma) course, plus some relevant professional experience, together totalling 3 years, or - creative work or publications providing evidence of independent scholarly or professional work
Level 8 – Graduate Certificates, Graduate Diplomas	The usual qualification is a Level 9 Masters Degree The minimum qualification is a Level 8 qualification and eligibility for full membership within the relevant professional body (where applicable) PLUS 3 years higher education teaching experience PLUS EITHER 3 years relevant professional experience in the last 5 years, or - enrolment in a relevant level 9 (Masters) course, plus some relevant professional experience, together totalling 3 years, or - creative work or publications providing evidence of independent scholarly or professional work
Level 9 - Masters by coursework	The usual qualification is a Level 10 Doctoral Degree The minimum qualification is a Level 9 qualification and eligibility for full membership within the relevant professional body (where applicable) PLUS 3 years higher education teaching experience PLUS EITHER 5 years relevant professional experience in the last 10 years, or - enrolment in a relevant doctoral program plus some relevant professional experience, together totalling 5 years, or - research or professional publications in the discipline and/or its pedagogy, or - consistent record of continuing professional education in the discipline such as: - creative work providing evidence of independent scholarly or professional work, - sustained practice-based applied research, quality assurance, organisation and evaluation of projects in professional settings, - developing and delivering advanced training programs in professional settings, - participation in academic or professional conferences - Fellow of a relevant Learned or Professional Society (Fellows of learned or professional societies will be considered to satisfy these equivalence guidelines only where such appointments are made to honour exceptional achievement and/or service.)

There may be cases not covered by these guidelines. In such cases the principles of *Recognition of Prior Learning* should be applied and an academically defensible case made for each individual case.

4. Procedures

The Head of Program must demonstrate that the claims for equivalence for an academic staff member have been assessed for the relevant AQF level. The assessment of qualifications and experience will be based on certified documentation, interview and/or professional references.

The Vice-President (Academic) must provide the details of how each individual academic staff member was assessed as meeting these guidelines, as part of the *Recommendation to Employ* submitted to the CEO and President. The details will also be attached to the academic's employment file.

The Vice-President (Academic) must seek the approval of the CEO and President for exceptions to these guidelines. Any case submitted for approval must be evidence-based and document how the appropriate level of skills, knowledge and the application of skills and knowledge have been met.

The CEO and President will maintain a record of all decisions under this policy.

The CEO and President will provide an annual report to the Academic Board and Council on the operation of the policy.

The Academic Board will review the policy and its application annually in the light of decisions on appointments and evidence of teaching quality.

5. Legislation and TEQSA Guidance Note

This policy is based on the following National standards, policy, legislation and TEQSA Guidance Note:

Australian Qualifications Framework Second Edition January 2013

Commonwealth of Australia Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 Higher Education Standards Framework 2021

TEQSA Guidance Note: Determining Equivalence of Professional Experience and Academic Qualifications

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