

## EQUIVALENCE OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS POLICY

<b>Approving authority</b>	Academic Board
<b>Purpose</b>	To ensure that academic staff at the Institute are be qualified to at least one level[1]of qualification higher than the course of study being taught (AQF+1)
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Academic Leadership team (Academic Dean and Head of Academic Programs)
<b>Next scheduled review</b>	April 2031
<b>Document Location</b>	<a href="http://www.ozford.edu.au/higher-education/policies-and-procedures/">http://www.ozford.edu.au/higher-education/policies-and-procedures/</a>
<b>Associated documents</b>	Position Descriptions Human Resources Policy and Procedures (Manual)

### 1. PRINCIPLES

The Standards in the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (HES Framework) concerned with staffing require registered higher education providers to ensure that academic staff appointed to teach students are appropriately qualified in the relevant discipline for their level of teaching (see Section 3.2). In particular, the Standards specify that academic teaching staff must be qualified to at least one level [1] of qualification higher than the course of study being taught (AQF+1), or have equivalent relevant academic, professional or practice-based experience and expertise, except for staff who are supervising doctoral degrees, who must have a doctoral degree or equivalent research experience.

### 2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all staff involved in the appointments of Academic staff.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

#### **AQF qualification**

An AQF qualification is the result of an accredited complete program of learning that leads to formal certification that a graduate has achieved learning outcomes as described in the AQF.

#### **Professional Experience**

Professional experience means experience obtained through the practice of a profession, including teaching experience, scholarship and professional practice and from which the professional competency, knowledge, skills and learning outcomes achieved can be assessed.

## 4. POLICY

- 4.1 The Institute ensures that all teaching staff who are delivering coursework to its students are appropriately qualified to do so. This upholds the Institute's commitment to academic quality and standards.
- 4.2 This Policy provides the framework by which the Institute 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) 2021.
- 4.3 The Institute 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.
- 4.4 As a general rule, it is policy that for employment as academic staff at the Institute, individuals must be qualified to at least one level [1] of qualification higher than the course of study being taught (AQF+1) on commencement of employment.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 In the case where students are undertaking different AQF level awards are taught together, staff are expected to hold the relevant qualification level for the higher of the awards.
- 4.7 In making decisions on the determination of equivalence of experience, the Institute acknowledges that in some areas that are professionally focussed, developing academic disciplines, or highly specialist programs, that some flexibility with regard to the application of the policy may be required. However, circumstances requiring flexible application of the policy, must not curb the intent and general application of the policy.
- 4.8 Professional experience equivalence will usually be 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.
- 4.9 The following categories of staff may be exempted from these general requirements, but must have a level of knowledge and expertise that will demonstrably enhance the learning experiences of students:
  - Occasional guest lecturers and teachers/instructors who do not teach more than one-third of the unit in any teaching session may be exempted from the requirements.
  - Workplace learning educators and workplace learning supervisors are generally expected to have at least a Bachelor's qualification plus two years' full-time equivalent experience in the discipline in the past 10 years. If they do not possess a Bachelor's qualification, they will require extensive workplace experience as deemed appropriate by the Academic Leadership team.

## Assessing Equivalence of Professional Experience

4.10 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. 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:

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

4.11 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. In assessing professional equivalence to teach in coursework programs, the following should be considered:

- teaching experience, scholarship activity and range of professional experience;
- minimum requirement for academic qualifications; and
- any specific criteria for assessing equivalence at each AQF level.

4.12 Each case must be assessed on its merits and approved by the Academic Leadership team.

4.13

4.14 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.

## **Exemptions from AQF or Equivalence of Professional Experience**

4.15 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.

- 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.

- Teachers/instructors who teach specialised components or a course of study, such as experienced practitioners and teachers undergoing training, who may not fully meet the standard for qualification or experience 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.
- Teachers who may have current enrolment in the relevant AQF Level qualification may also be approved as an interim arrangement and have their teaching guided and overseen by staff who meet the standard. 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, except where there are demonstrable mitigating circumstances.
- The workplace supervisor for Work Integrated Learning (WIL) units of study and do not have responsibility for the WIL unit's content or summative assessment of the unit.

## Reporting and Monitoring

4.16 A report will be provided to the Academic Board (AB) annually that includes a listing of staff and their qualifications and sets out information about any academic staff where Equivalence of Professional Experience has been approved by the Academic Leadership team.

## 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

To ensure that this policy is fit for purpose and meet the requirements of the TEQSA Compliance Frameworks the policy will be;

- 5.1 internally endorsed by the Executive Management Team on development or review, prior to approval by the Academic Board or other delegated authority;
- 5.2 externally reviewed as part of any independent review of the TEQSA Compliance Frameworks approved by the Governing Board;
- 5.3 internally reviewed by the Responsible Officer every five years from the date of approval (if not earlier).
- 5.4 referenced to the applicable TEQSA Compliance Frameworks requirement(s) and/or other legislation/regulation.

## 6. FEEDBACK

Feedback or comments on this policy is welcomed by the listed Responsible officer of the Institute.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This policy has been developed with reference to the following:

- University of Sunshine Coast Australia, 2024, Determining equivalence of professional experience to academic qualifications - Operational Policy ([Determining equivalence of professional](#)

[experience to academic qualifications - Operational Policy | UniSC | University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia \(usc.edu.au\)](#)

- Victoria University, 2018, Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards - Equivalence of Professional Experience to Qualifications (Staff) Procedure ([Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards - Equivalence of Professional Experience to Qualifications \(Staff\) Procedure / Document / Victoria University Policy Library](#))
- University of New England, 2024, AQF PLUS 1 and Professional Experience Equivalence Policy ([AQF plus 1 and Professional Experience Equivalence Policy / Document / UNE Policy Register](#))
- TEQSA, Guidance note: Determining equivalence of professional experience and academic qualifications, Version 2.2, 2017

## 8. VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date approved	Description	Approved by
1.0	August 2018	Initial issue	AB
2.0	September 2023	Internal Review	AB
2.1	April 2026	Internal Review	AB
Related legislation/ regulation/standard	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act 2011 Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021		

Note: AB = Academic Board

## Appendix 1: Guidelines for the Assessment of Professional Experience Equivalence

AQF Level Being Taught	Required AQF Level for Staff	Professional Experience Equivalence
AQF Level 5 Diploma	AQF Level 6	<p>A Level 5 qualification and an appropriate combination of:</p> <p>Enrolment in a relevant AQF 7 or higher program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration (or equivalent) to practice within a relevant profession (where applicable)</li> <li>• 3 years relevant professional experience within the last 5 years</li> <li>• Be currently research active; have published academic papers or presented refereed papers presented at international or national conferences over the past 5 years (min number to be determined by Schools)</li> <li>• Current or recent membership of an Academic Board or other formal academic governance committees and working groups; leadership in development of academic standards relevant to the discipline, unit field or unit; leadership or management of research acknowledged by peers; and or engagement with peer review and quality assurance (internal or external)</li> </ul>
AQF Level 6 Advanced Diploma /Associate Degree	AQF Level 7	<p>A Level 6 qualification and an appropriate combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolment in a relevant AQF 7 or higher program</li> <li>• Registration to practice within a relevant profession (where applicable)</li> <li>• 3 years relevant professional experience within the last 5 years</li> <li>• Be currently research active; have published academic papers or presented refereed papers presented at international or national conferences over the past 5 years (min number to be determined by Schools)</li> <li>• Current or recent membership of an Academic Board or other formal academic governance committees and working groups; leadership in development of academic standards relevant to the discipline, unit field or unit; leadership or</li> </ul>

AQF Level Being Taught	Required AQF Level for Staff	Professional Experience Equivalence
		management of research acknowledged by peers; and or engagement with peer review and quality assurance (internal or external)
QF Level 7 Bachelor Degree	AQF Level 8	<p>A Level 7 qualification and an appropriate combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolment in a relevant AQF level 8 or higher program</li> <li>• Current registration to practice within a relevant profession (where applicable)</li> <li>• 3 years relevant professional experience within the last 5 years</li> <li>• Be currently research active; have published academic papers or presented refereed papers presented at international or national conferences over the past 5 years (min number to be determined by Schools)</li> <li>• Current or recent membership of an Academic Board or other formal academic governance committees and working groups; leadership in development of academic standards relevant to the discipline, unit field or unit; leadership or management of research acknowledged by peers; and or engagement with peer review and quality assurance (internal or external)</li> </ul>
AQF Level 8 Graduate Certificate/ Graduate Diploma/ Bachelor Honours Degree	AQF Level 9	<p>A Level 8 qualification and an appropriate combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolment in a relevant AQF level 9 or higher program</li> <li>• Current registration to practice within a relevant profession (where applicable)</li> <li>• 3 years relevant professional experience within the last 5 years</li> <li>• Be currently research active; have published academic papers or presented refereed papers presented at international or national conferences over the past 5 years (min number to be determined by Schools)</li> <li>• Current or recent membership of an Academic Board or other formal academic governance committees and working groups; leadership in development of academic standards</li> </ul>

AQF Level Being Taught	Required AQF Level for Staff	Professional Experience Equivalence
		<p>relevant to the discipline, unit field or unit; leadership or management of research acknowledged by peers; and or engagement with peer review and quality assurance (internal or external)</p>
<p>QF Level 9 Masters Degree by Coursework</p>	<p>AQF Level 10</p>	<p>A Level 9 qualification and an appropriate combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolment in a relevant AQF level 10 program</li> <li>• Current registration to practice within a relevant profession (where applicable)</li> <li>• 6 years relevant professional experience within the last 10 years</li> <li>• Be currently research active; have published academic papers or presented refereed papers presented at international or national conferences over the past 5 years (min number to be determined by Schools)</li> <li>• Current or recent membership of an Academic Board or other formal academic governance committees and working groups; leadership in development of academic standards relevant to the discipline, unit field or unit; leadership or management of research acknowledged by peers; and or engagement with peer review and quality assurance (internal or external)</li> <li>• Fellowship of a nationally recognised professional/vocational body requiring advanced extensive work experience, professional standing and ongoing professional development</li> </ul>