

**Pittsburg State University**  
**Progress toward Terminal Degree & Equivalent Experience Guidance**

Higher Learning Commission (HLC) guidance states that each faculty is qualified to teach on the basis of achievement of academic credentials, progress toward academic credentials, or equivalent experience. Achievement of academic credentials requires a degree in the discipline or subfield that is one level higher than the course being taught or a terminal degree in the case of courses in terminal degree programs. Graduate level courses therefore require a faculty with a terminal degree in the discipline or subfield to qualify on the basis of achievement of academic credentials.

Alternatively, faculty may be qualified to teach graduate level courses on a temporary basis provided they have made demonstrable, current, and consistent progress toward the academic credential(s) deemed relevant by the institution or they may be qualified to teach on the basis of equivalent experience. Equivalent experience means experience that is commensurate with a terminal degree such that it qualifies an instructor for the instruction. This could include through a minimum threshold of experience; research and/or scholarship; recognized achievement; and/or other activities and factors deemed relevant by the institution. Equivalent experience may differ by discipline or program. Previous years of classroom instruction do not *alone* constitute equivalent experience.

Applications submitted for Graduate Service or Graduate Research Associate on the basis of progress toward a terminal degree must be prepared to show that the applicant's progress is demonstrable, current, and consistent. This could include, for example, terminal degree candidates who have recently completed their coursework and are in the process of completing their thesis/dissertation. The summary on the application form must briefly affirm the three criteria with a description, and this must be consistent with information in the applicant's curriculum vitae.

Applications submitted for Graduate Service, Graduate Research Associate, or Graduate Faculty on the basis of equivalent experience must be prepared to show how the applicant's experience qualifies them for graduate level instruction. The summary on the application form must include each of the relevant elements necessary for the Graduate Council to affirm their status.

Examples of potential equivalent experience:

- *Substantial* work experience or documented mastery in the discipline or subfield
- National or state-issued license or certification in the discipline or subfield
- Discipline-based expertise through professional and/or scholarly activities such as publications, presentations, consulting, honors and awards, and/or continuing education.