

AP 6210[A] ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES: MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND EQUIVALENCIES

References:

Education Code Sections 87001, 87003, and 87743.2;
Title 5 Sections 53400 et seq.;
ACCJC Accreditation Standard III.A.2-4

I. Equivalency Application

If an individual's degrees and qualifications differ from the minimum qualifications listed for a position, but the individual possesses preparation that is at least the equivalent of the minimum qualification, the individual may apply for equivalency. Human Resources and Employee Relations is responsible for maintaining an equivalency application form.

Any applicant for a position or current faculty employee who wishes to submit an equivalency application, shall include the following required and optional information:

Required

1. A cover letter identifying the equivalency requested and all considerations the applicant sees as relevant to the claim of equivalency
2. Minimum qualification for which the applicant claims equivalency
3. The educational preparation applicable to the major field of study or general education requirement identified in the minimum qualifications
4. An unofficial academic transcript from the institution that granted the degree being used by the applicant as a basis for claiming equivalency (official transcripts will be required upon granting of equivalency)

Optional

5. Copies of the appropriate pages from the catalog of the institution that granted the degree being used by the applicant as a basis for claiming equivalency
6. Publications or other work products that support a claim of equivalency
7. A detailed description of work experience which the applicant believes establishes equivalency to the minimum qualifications. If the applicant is using work products or other items which cannot be submitted, detailed information from an objective source about the nature of this work product or experience should be provided.

Equivalency decisions do not guarantee a part-time or full-time candidate will be hired, nor that a current faculty member will be guaranteed an assignment within the specified discipline.

II. District Equivalency Committee

The District Equivalency Committee shall be composed of faculty appointed by the Academic Senate Presidents from each college. Each Academic Senate President shall retain authority over appointment, removal, and replacement for the respective committee members originating from their college. The Academic Senate President at each college will appoint 2 faculty members to serve on the committee for a 3-year term. The Academic Senate at each college will ratify all appointments, removals, and replacements originating from their respective college. Ideal candidates will have experience with hiring, chairing, and/or curriculum work. The equivalency committee will select its own chair at the beginning of each academic year, rotating by college annually, and the chair will not vote. The chair will facilitate deliberations and serve as a contact point with HRER.

The equivalency committee will meet at least once at the beginning of each academic year to:

- determine its chair
- review the current equivalency procedure and minimum qualifications guidance from the state chancellor's office and ASCCC
- determine its method for distributing/rotating representation of members for ad hoc equivalency panels
- review and assist with updating the annual list of discipline subject matter experts (and closely related disciplines, as needed) designated for ad hoc equivalency panels.

The annually updated list of ad hoc equivalency panel designees will be accessible to department chairs, deans, Human Resources and Employee Relations, the Vice Chancellor of Education Services and Strategic Planning, the District Academic Senate, and the District Equivalency Committee.

At the end of each academic year, or upon District Academic Senate request, the equivalency committee will deliver an activity report to the District Academic Senate (total equivalencies granted and denied, disciplines requested, total procedural appeals if any). The committee may also recommend or request a review of the equivalency procedure.

III. Subject Matter Discipline Experts

Subject-matter discipline experts will be pre-designated annually by each discipline at each college. Designees will stand ready to serve for 1 year as needed for equivalency panels within their disciplines or when needed as representatives from closely related disciplines. Designees may serve more than once or not at all during that year, depending upon the equivalency applications submitted.

The names of discipline subject matter experts designated for equivalency panel representation will be provided to each department chair and updated annually by the District Equivalency Committee and maintained by the Office of the Vice Chancellor Education Services and Strategic Planning. Disciplines will also work with their department chairs to identify closely related disciplines, if needed, for the list.

IV. Ad Hoc Equivalency Panels

When HR receives an equivalency application, the equivalency committee shall appoint two (2) members from its body, and three (3) designated subject matter discipline experts, ideally one from each college, for the ad hoc equivalency panel.

Discipline subject matter experts designated for ad hoc equivalency panels will be contacted by Human Resources and Employee Relations, with assistance as needed from the equivalency committee (or department chairs).

The District Equivalency Committee may encounter special cases for equivalency requests, such as with brand new disciplines that do not yet exist within the district, or for disciplines that do not exist at all three colleges. In these or other unique situations, the District Equivalency Committee may consult with the Vice Chancellor of Educational Services, the President of District Academic Senate, and discipline subject matter experts or closely-related subject matter experts as designated to assist the District Equivalency Committee in making a determination.

V. Process for Initiation of Equivalency

To determine when an equivalency applicant possesses qualifications that are equivalent to the minimum qualifications specified in the Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges Handbook, the following process has been established:

1. When Human Resources and Employee Relations is informed by a hiring committee or by receipt of an application that a determination of equivalency is needed, the chair of the Equivalency Committee and discipline expert designees will be contacted as soon as possible to form the ad hoc panel. Human Resources and Employee Relations will provide members of the equivalency panel with the necessary information to determine equivalency no less than three working days prior to the meeting.
2. In the case of applications for part-time faculty positions (associate faculty), the Department Chair will initiate the petition for equivalency by indicating the need for equivalency on the Associate Faculty Intent to Hire form.
3. The ad hoc equivalency panel shall select one of the equivalency committee representatives to serve as chair. All members of the panel will review submitted materials, deliberate, and vote. A simple majority vote decides.
4. The ad hoc panel will review the supplied documentation and determine if the applicant has qualifications that are at least equivalent to the minimum qualifications of the discipline as specified in the Disciplines List. The panel will consult the criteria listed on the Equivalency Application along with minimum qualifications guidance from the State Chancellor's office and ASCCC.
5. The chair of the ad hoc equivalency panel will document the panel's determination in writing and will submit a panel-approved summary on the official form to Human Resources and Employee Relations within 5 working days upon reaching a decision. Individual voting by ad hoc panel members will not be recorded.
6. Human Resources and Employee Relations will forward the written notice of the equivalency panel decision to the applicant, chair, and dean within three (3) days of the panel's determination.
7. The results of the ad hoc equivalency panel decision shall be documented by Human Resources and Employee Relations and records kept of all decisions.

Appeal of a Denial of Equivalency

Current employees have five (5) days from date of notice of denial of equivalency to request an appeal by email to Human Resources and Employee Relations. Human Resources and Employee Relations will notify the District Equivalency Committee of the appeal request.

The equivalency committee will decide an appeal based on the following procedural questions:

- a. Was the decision made in accord with the procedure?
- b. Did the equivalency panel follow the Standards and Criteria Applicable for Determining Equivalency stated in this procedure?
- c. Did the equivalency panel review all of evidence submitted as indicated in the applicant's cover letter/form?

Following deliberation, a majority vote of the committee will be final, and the decision will be forwarded to Human Resources and Employee Relations, who will in turn forward written notice to the applicant, chair, and dean within three (3) days of determination.

VI. Standards and Criteria Applicable for Determining Equivalency

The following standards, general principles, and criteria apply when determining equivalency:

1. Equivalency determinations are intended to be holistic evaluations of a candidate's breadth of qualifications to determine if such qualifications are equivalent to at least the minimum qualifications set forth in the Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges approved by the board of governors. It is understood that committee and panel members who make equivalency decisions shall exercise their independent discretion to make a good faith determination if the qualifications presented are equivalent to the minimum standards of the respective discipline.
2. Minimum qualifications in a discipline—and, by extension, equivalency—are the same whether the position is for a full-time or part-time faculty member.
3. Equivalency is determined for an entire discipline, not on a course-by-course basis.
4. The granting of equivalency is on a case-by-case basis and does not set precedent for future determinations.
5. Past equivalency decisions in the discipline will be made available as needed to the equivalency committee to aid in their deliberations and can be considered when determining equivalency, though they do not establish precedent.
6. Equivalencies supersede limited credentials. Individuals who possess a Lifetime Credential in a discipline they wish to teach are judged to have met the minimum qualifications to teach in that discipline. Current or former RCCD faculty members who taught in a discipline under an Eminence or Limited Services credential at RCCD during the 1989-90 academic year are judged to have met the minimum qualifications of that discipline.
7. Part-time faculty hired at RCCD under a previous determination of meeting the minimum qualifications, or the equivalent, within the District remain eligible for employment.
8. Degrees and credits establishing equivalency must be from accredited institutions.
9. An occupational license or certificate is required in certain instances (see Title 5 Section 53417).
10. Should an equivalency be granted to a faculty job applicant, that decision shall not give the applicant any more or any less consideration than other applicants. A granting of equivalency establishes an applicant's eligibility for hiring consideration as equal to other

applicants possessing the minimum qualifications. In addition, granting an equivalency neither guarantees an interview, nor a job, nor a particular discipline assignment (including for current faculty).

11. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide all documentation in support of equivalency and to be available for questions. Applicants wishing to establish equivalency through work experience should provide objective, detailed information about those work experiences. Any applicant who fails to provide evidence to support his/her claim of a credential, or of minimum qualifications, or of equivalency may be eliminated from the applicant pool.
12. Various occupational experiences may be combined to total the required number of years established by the minimum qualifications; all experience must have taken place within the ten years preceding the date of application with at least one year of qualified experience occurring within the three years immediately preceding the date of application.
13. No candidate for a full-time position shall be recommended as a finalist for the position without meeting the minimum qualifications or having been awarded equivalency.
14. No candidate for part-time employment shall be hired without either meeting the minimum qualifications or having been awarded equivalency per these procedures.

In all cases in which equivalency is granted or denied, an officially signed form shall be filed with the Office of Human Resources and Employee Relations and the Office of Academic Affairs. This form shall include a summary of the panel or committee's reasons (without attribution) for determining that a candidate does or does not have the equivalent of the minimum qualifications for the position. Human Resources and Employee Relations is responsible for creating and maintaining this documentation. This documentation may be requested by the candidate for the purpose of review.

Guidelines For Consideration Of Equivalency To Minimum Qualifications In Disciplines Requiring A Master's Degree (May Vary by Discipline)

In order to be considered for equivalency, in the case of disciplines normally requiring a Master's degree, the decision-makers may consider any of the following to guide them in exercising their independent discretion in making the holistic determination of equivalency:

1. A Master's degree in a discipline which is not specifically named in Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges for the discipline in question, but which, when courses (and course descriptions) are carefully reviewed, clearly constitutes parallel and/or closely related coursework to the discipline which is specifically listed in Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges.
2. In specific disciplines as named by the Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges, a bachelor's degree in the discipline, plus licensure by an appropriate state agency, plus at least two years of professional experience, verified in writing.
3. A Master's degree in any discipline plus at least 30 semester units of upper division and/or graduate units in the relevant discipline, or a combination of upper division and/or graduate

units, teaching, and/or other professional experience in the relevant discipline that would be equivalent to a Master's degree in the discipline.

4. A Bachelor's degree in the relevant discipline or a related discipline plus the unit/course equivalent to a Master's degree in the discipline.
5. A Bachelor's degree in the relevant discipline plus a Master's degree in any discipline and work experience related to the relevant discipline.
6. With regard to teaching experience, the equivalency committee or panel will carefully scrutinize, when applicable, an applicant's Graduate Teaching Assistant experience (GTA) and/or other Teaching Assistant experience (TA) to assure that it is equivalent to full-time teaching experience in the discipline at an accredited institution. Indeed, the applicant for equivalency must be able to document that the GTA and/or TA experience is equivalent to full-time teaching experience in the discipline at an accredited institution; otherwise, the GTA and/or TA experience may not be considered for equivalency. In addition, mentor or preceptor roles should not be considered directly equivalent to teaching experience or serving as instructor of record in an educational institution.
7. In addition to #1-6 above, an applicant may choose to include a record of accomplishments for consideration that demonstrate expertise and skill in the relevant discipline beyond those normally achieved through possession of a Master's degree in the discipline. See the definition of Eminence in the Appendix.

Guidelines For Consideration Of Equivalency To Minimum Qualifications In Disciplines That Do Not Require A Master's Degree (May Vary by Discipline)

In order to be considered for equivalency in the case of disciplines not requiring a Master's degree, the decisionmakers may consider any of the following to guide them in exercising their independent discretion in making the holistic determination of equivalency:

1. An Associate degree plus six years of related experience
2. Bachelor's degree plus two years of related experience,
3. Associate degree plus graduation from an institution specific to that field, plus two years of professional experience in the discipline, verified in writing, plus appropriate certification to practice or licensure, if applicable.
4. Pursuant to Title 5 § 53406, all degrees and coursework must be from colleges/universities accredited by one of the intersegmental accrediting agencies: Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Associations of Colleges and Schools, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges.
5. Licensure or certification in lieu of experience or education. General Educations units and work experience may be considered to balance the licensure or certification so as to equal that required in an Associate degree. General Education that is part of the attainment of the licensure or certification must be documented.

6. Accomplishments which demonstrate expertise and skill in the relevant discipline beyond those normally achieved through possession of the minimum qualifications specified in the Disciplines List. See the definition of Eminence in the appendix.
7. Mentor or preceptor roles should not be considered directly equivalent to teaching experience or serving as instructor of record in an educational institution.

VII. No Provisional Equivalency Allowed

The District Equivalency Committee and ad hoc equivalency panels will not grant provisional or temporary equivalency. All faculty hires must possess the minimum qualifications or be awarded equivalency to be employed by the District.

VIII. Qualifications Established By Degrees And Coursework From Educational Institutions Outside Of The United States

Applicants wishing to be granted equivalency based on coursework completed at an educational institution outside of the United States must provide the following:

1. A transcript assessment by a third-party degree assessment service.
2. Proof that the institution is accredited in its country of operation or in the United States.

IX. Local Minimum Qualifications And Equivalencies

Disciplines wishing to add local qualifications for hiring to their discipline beyond the minimum qualifications established by the Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges may do so with approval of the Academic Senate with a recommendation from the Equivalency Committee. Local requirements may not be added on a course-by-course basis. Equivalency for the local requirement will be determined through the equivalency process. Local requirements cannot exclude the consideration of equivalency.

X. Appendix of Relevant Terms

1. **Faculty Service Area (FSA)** A Faculty Service Area (FSA) is a service or instructional subject area or group of related services or instructional subject areas performed by faculty and established by a community college district.
2. **Discipline** A discipline is a curricular subject matter area designated by the Board of Governors and used in establishing Minimum Qualifications for faculty. Equivalencies are granted by discipline, not by single course. Discipline is also defined as a group of courses that share a common academic or vocational preparation. These courses are usually defined by a degree or degrees, such as an MFA, MA, BA, or MS, or by specific professional preparation. Disciplines are different from local departments or subject areas.
3. **Subject Matter Discipline Experts** (or Discipline SMEs): An individual with qualifications and experience in a particular field or work process; an individual who by education, training, and/or experience is a recognized expert on a particular subject, topic, or system.

4. **Eminence:** Eminence are those qualifications which, as evidenced by prominence and celebrity, are established by the specific industry and/or community at large and may be deemed equivalent to minimum qualifications. This may include appropriate local, state, national and/or international associations, trade unions, guilds or communities comprised of experts, who are themselves renowned in the specific field or subfield, and who can attest, in writing, to the prominence or celebrity of the applicant. It should be noted that within specific disciplines, eminence may be relative to a specific sphere of influence and expertise (e.g. eminence in classical guitar, but not, generally, in “music”).
Eminence alone is not sufficient to grant equivalency. An application of equivalency based on eminence must be accompanied by conclusive evidence that the applicant exemplifies qualities of a college-educated person and brings to the college district the knowledge and ability to be expected at the college level. The applicant must provide documentation supporting the status of eminence and establishing the evidence of impact within a specific sphere of influence within the discipline or field.
5. **Minimum Qualifications:** The goal of the Riverside Community College District is to provide a faculty of highly qualified professional educators who are experts in their fields, skilled in teaching, and serve the needs of a varied student population. The District also seeks those who can promote overall college effectiveness and who are sensitive to the diversity of the District community. The District shall employ faculty who possess at least the minimum qualifications, as established by the California State Chancellor’s Office. To comply with the requirements of the Community College Reform Act (AB 1725) all current RCCD faculty members who wish to change or expand their teaching area(s) and all new applicants for RCCD teaching positions must meet at least the minimum qualifications for the discipline(s) in which they wish to teach, as specified in the Board of Governor’s Disciplines List. For courses with dual designators, deans and chairs from all relevant programs will collaborate to ensure that minimum qualifications are met.
6. **Equivalency:** Equivalency applies in cases where the individual’s qualifications are not identical to the minimum qualifications specified in the Disciplines List, but are equal to or exceed those qualifications in substance. All community college faculty should exemplify the qualities of a college educated person.
Any current RCCD faculty member or RCCD teaching position applicant who does not possess qualifications identical to the minimum qualifications specified in the Board of Governors’ Disciplines List may petition for equivalency.
Equivalency is not a waiver of minimum qualifications.
Equivalency may be recognized in three major ways: course work, work experience (including teaching experience), and eminence in the field—or a combination of the three.

Also see BP/AP 6410 Nondiscrimination, BP/AP 6420 Equal Employment Opportunity, BP/AP 6120 Recruitment and Hiring, BP/AP 6210 Academic Employees, AP 6212 Temporary Faculty, and the collective bargaining agreement.

Office of Primary Responsibility: Vice Chancellor, Human Resources & Employee Relations

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