

## Oberlin College Policy for Hiring Faculty Based on Tested Experience in Lieu of Academic Credentials

In accordance with the requirements and expectations of the Higher Learning Commission, Oberlin College and Conservatory is required to document a written policy for hiring faculty based on tested experience in lieu of academic credentials.

From Higher Learning Commission, **Assumed Practice B. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support:**

“Qualified faculty members are identified primarily by credentials, but other factors, including but not limited to equivalent experience, may be considered by the institution in determining whether a faculty member is qualified.” (p. 3)

From Higher Learning Commission, **Using Tested Experience as a Basis for Determining Minimally Qualified Faculty:**

“Tested experience may substitute for an earned credential or portions thereof. Assumed Practice B.2. allows an institution to determine that a faculty member is qualified based on experience that the institution determines is equivalent to the degree it would otherwise require for a faculty position. This experience should be tested experience in that it includes a breadth and depth of experience outside of the classroom in real-world situations relevant to the discipline in which the faculty member would be teaching.” (p. 4)

Evaluation of earned academic credentials (generally, but not always, the terminal degree in a faculty member’s discipline) is the primary method used for determining faculty qualifications at Oberlin College and Conservatory. However, using **tested experience** to determine faculty qualifications is sometimes a more appropriate or necessary method, particularly in certain disciplines taught at Oberlin such as music, dance, art, and theatre, as well as in the instruction of foreign languages.

### Policy of Tested Experience

Faculty members may have a breadth and depth of experience outside of the classroom or teaching studio in real-world situations relevant to the discipline in which the faculty member teaches that clearly contribute to student learning outcomes and can be considered in lieu of, or in addition to, formal academic preparation. In such cases, the faculty member may present objective documentation of those experiences relevant to the teaching assignment to be considered for determining if the faculty member is qualified.

Faculty must demonstrate expertise, ability, and talent validated through at least one of the following:

- **Artistic talent:** a faculty member may have their artistic expertise, ability, and talent validated through publications (including recordings) and performances or through wide critical and public acclaim, including acclaim from prominent practitioners in the discipline or artistic field (or a closely related one) under consideration.
- **Professional accomplishment:** a faculty member can provide evidence of exemplary work and accomplishment as a practitioner in their field.
- **Language proficiency:** a faculty member teaching foreign language courses may demonstrate their qualification through recognition of competence by a nationally recognized rating of proficiency in foreign language.

In cases of faculty qualification via tested experience by virtue of artistic talent, professional accomplishment, or language proficiency, the College or Conservatory Dean or designee will review the documentation and may approve such exceptions in writing for all new hires. A signed letter by the College or Conservatory Dean or designee of "Tested Experience Approval Documentation" and copy of said documentation must be kept in the faculty member's file.

Approved by David Kamitsuka, Acting Dean of Arts and Sciences and William Quillen, Acting Dean of the Conservatory of Music  
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