

Faculty Online Credentialing System (FOCS)
Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost
Virginia Tech

All **instructors of record** at Virginia Tech must meet the credentialing requirements outlined in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Faculty Credentials Guidelines (see Appendix A below). Documenting the credentials of instructors of record is the responsibility of the department in which the course originates.

TEACHING CREDENTIALS BY COURSE LEVEL

Course Level Permission	SACS Standard	SACS Credential Guideline
Baccalaureate/ Undergraduate (Graduate Teaching Assistants)	3.7.1f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree in the teaching discipline, or • A minimum of 18 graduate hours in the teaching discipline**; direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, planned and periodic evaluations
Baccalaureate/ Undergraduate (Instructors, Adjunct Faculty, Faculty)	3.7.1a 3.7.1d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctorate or terminal* degree in the teaching discipline, or • Master's degree in the teaching discipline, or • Master's degree, with at least 18 graduate hours in the teaching discipline
Graduate/ Post-baccalaureate (Instructors, Adjunct Faculty, Faculty)	3.7.1e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earned doctorate/terminal* degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline

*In addition to the doctorate (PhD, EdD, and other doctoral degrees), Virginia Tech recognizes the following degrees as terminal degrees in specific fields:

- BVSC Bachelor of Veterinary Science (foreign degree equivalent to the DVM) with appropriate board certification
- DVM Doctor of Veterinary Medicine with appropriate board certification
- JD Juris Doctorate, appropriate only for fields where law is the principal academic expertise
- MArch Master of Architecture (but not the MA in Architecture) MD Doctor of Medicine (with board certification)

MFA	Master of Fine Arts, applicable to several fields such as Creative Writing, Theater, or Art
MLA	Master of Landscape Architecture (but not the MA/MS)
MM	Master of Music

**Virginia Tech recognizes that specific courses offered by the Graduate School promote teaching competency in graduate students as they prepare for future faculty careers. Completion of the following courses may be counted within the 18 graduate credit hours required for minimum credentialing:

- GRAD 5114, Contemporary Pedagogy
- GRAD 5004, GTA Training Workshop
- GRAD 5124, Library Research Skills

The graduate school must approve additional proposed pedagogy-related coursework to be included in the minimum 18-credit hours required *prior to* assignment as instructor of record.

PROOF OF HIGHEST DEGREE

Virginia Tech requires **official transcripts** of the highest degree for all instructors of record. In exceptional cases (if approved by the hiring department head/chair and college dean), certification by the registrar or other appropriate official of the degree, granting institution of the highest degree awarded, or visual verification of the original diploma (with raised seal) by the department head/chair or designee, and copy of the diploma will be allowed.

- Official transcripts and transcript cover sheets for all salaried teaching faculty are sent to Human Resources. Degree information is entered and stored electronically in the Banner system. Data entry is completed by Human Resources. After the transcript and cover sheet are processed and entered into the Banner Document Management System, the transcript will be returned to the faculty member.
- Official transcripts and cover sheets for all adjunct faculty and graduate teaching assistants are sent to the university's SACS compliance officer, currently housed in Institutional Research and Effectiveness. Degree information is entered and stored electronically in the Banner system, with data entry being completed by the SACS compliance officer or his/her designee. After the transcript and cover sheet are processed and entered into the Banner Document Management System, the transcript will be returned to the faculty member.

TRANSCRIPT COVER SHEETS (available on the provost's website)

Transcript cover sheets contain verification of degrees appropriate for the teaching discipline, international degree equivalencies* (if necessary), and other specifications justifying the instructor's qualifications for the teaching discipline, if not obvious from the terminal degree (e.g., work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, or other achievements contributing to effective teaching and student learning outcomes).

Salaried teaching faculty, adjunct faculty, and graduate teaching assistants who are the instructors of record for at least one course must complete a transcript cover sheet and have that cover sheet validated by the department head/chair. The transcript cover sheet is found in Appendix B. Once these cover sheets have been validated by the department head/chair, the cover sheet is attached to the official transcript and forwarded to Human Resources, in the case of salaried faculty, or to Institutional Research and Effectiveness in the case of adjunct faculty or graduate teaching assistants.

It is important for department heads/chairs to think broadly in terms of what a particular faculty member or graduate teaching assistant would be certified to teach. In most cases, it would be sufficient to designate the subject area (e.g., PSYC) in which the person is certified to teach.

* Virginia Tech routinely hires faculty with credentials from foreign institutions and these internationally

trained faculty add to the diversity and richness of the teaching and learning environment. It is the responsibility of the department head/chair to verify the quality and equivalency of any highest degree awarded from an international institution. The signature of the department head on the transcript cover sheet attests to the certification of equivalent international credentials.

CROSS-LISTED COURSES

It is the responsibility of the course origination department to verify the credentials of the primary instructor, regardless if the course is cross-listed with other departments. The instructor of record is *not* credentialed de facto for other courses outside the origination department by virtue of the course being cross-listed.

OTHER QUALIFICATIONS FOR SPECIFIC FIELDS

Virginia Tech has developed the following faculty credential guide for departments where the terminal degree may not be the only consideration for teaching competency. The transcript cover sheet from the department head/chair must provide a thorough justification of other qualifications; this is submitted with the transcript of highest degree.

College of Architecture and Urban Studies

- *School of Architecture + Design*: Faculty members in tenure-track positions with the School of Architecture + Design typically hold a PhD, the MArch¹, or the MLA². For most courses, these degrees are in the teaching discipline or a closely related field and thus, are considered sufficient credentials for teaching at all levels. Professional registration is expected for those teaching design studios. Instructors are also expected to have a terminal degree and professional certification. Exceptional professional credentials validated by regional or national awards/recognitions for professional products and significant experience in professional practice may act in lieu of the terminal degree and must be documented on the transcript cover sheet.
- *Myers-Lawson School of Construction*: Faculty members in tenure-track positions with the Myers-Lawson School of Construction typically hold a doctorate degree. For most courses, these degrees are in the teaching discipline or a closely related field and thus, are considered sufficient credentials for teaching at all levels. Exceptional professional credentials validated by regional or national awards/recognitions for professional products and significant experience in professional practice may act in lieu of the terminal degree and must be documented on the transcript cover sheet.
- *School of Visual Arts*:
 - Faculty members in tenure-track positions in *Art History* typically hold a doctorate degree. For most courses, these degrees are in the teaching discipline or a closely related field and thus, are considered sufficient credentials for teaching at all levels.
 - In *art, design, and new media*, tenure-track faculty and faculty in instructor-level positions typically hold a terminal degree, usually the MFA. For most courses, these terminal degrees are in the teaching discipline or a closely related field and thus, are considered sufficient credentials for teaching at all levels. In cases of extraordinary achievement in the areas of juried exhibitions, awards, and honors, the ensuing national and international recognition may also act in lieu of the terminal or master's degree and must be documented on the transcript cover sheet.

¹ The MArch is the terminal professional degree in architecture.

² The MLA is the terminal professional degree in landscape architecture.

College of Business

Instructors of record without the terminal degree in the appropriate teaching field may be approved by the college as academically or professionally qualified. Academically qualified instructors make extraordinary contributions to scholarship, including but not limited to authoring book chapters and publications in peer-reviewed journals. Professionally qualified instructors must possess exceptional business leadership qualifications such as an executive level business position or business ownership. The academic qualifications or professional qualifications must be documented on the transcript cover sheet.

Instructors with the MBA as the highest degree must have the 18 graduate hours in the teaching discipline verified by the department head on the transcript cover sheet.

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences

- *Communication*: Instructors (full-time and part-time, continuing and temporary) must possess an earned master's degree in communication, or a closely related field. An earned bachelor's degree with exceptional qualifications (as attested to by years of professional experience directly applicable to the teaching assignment or as attested to by regionally and nationally recognized accomplishments in areas such as publications, awards, honors, and creative/professional activity) may act in lieu of the master's degree and must be documented on the transcript cover sheet.
- *Creative Writing*: In the areas of creative writing, the Master of Fine Arts is considered the terminal degree. A master's degree (non-MFA), with the following qualifications, may act in lieu of the terminal degree: exceptional qualifications as attested to by nationally recognized publications in fiction, poetry, playwriting, creative nonfiction, or new media writing. In cases of extraordinary achievement in the areas of publications, awards, and honors, the ensuing national and international recognition may also act in lieu of the terminal or master's degree. Instructors (full-time and part-time, continuing and temporary) must possess an earned master's degree in English, or a closely related field. An earned bachelor's degree with exceptional qualifications (as attested to by years of professional experience directly applicable to the teaching assignment or as attested to by regionally and nationally recognized accomplishments in areas such as publications, awards, honors, and creative/professional activity) may act in lieu of the master's degree and must be documented on the transcript cover sheet.
- *Theatre*:
 - In the areas of theatre history and criticism, the doctorate (e.g., PhD, EdD, DA) is considered the terminal degree. For most courses, these degrees are in the teaching discipline or a closely related field and thus, are considered sufficient credentials for teaching at all levels.
 - In the areas of performance, design, directing, technical theatre, or management, the MFA is considered a terminal degree. For most courses, these degrees are in the teaching discipline or a closely related field and thus, are considered sufficient credentials for teaching at all levels. The master's degree (non-MFA) with the following qualifications, may act in lieu of the terminal degree: an additional 21 graduate credits and/or exceptional qualifications as attested to by professional experience directly applicable to the teaching assignment or by regionally and nationally recognized accomplishments in areas such as publications, awards, performances, honors, and scholarly/professional activity. These alternative credentials will be considered sufficient credentials for teaching at all levels and must be documented on the transcript cover sheet.
 - Also in the areas of performance, design, directing, technical theatre, or management, an earned bachelor's degree with exceptional qualifications (as attested to by years of professional experience directly applicable to the teaching assignment and regionally and nationally recognized accomplishments in areas such as publications, awards, performances, honors, and scholarly/professional activity) may act in lieu of the master's/terminal degree. If no terminal degree is held, faculty teaching performance-related courses must have expertise as a performer in the profession at the regional, national, or international level. Those teaching directing courses must have professional directing experience. These alternative credentials will be considered sufficient credentials for teaching at all levels and must be documented on the transcript cover sheet.

- *Foreign Languages and Literatures*: Faculty members in tenure-track positions typically hold a PhD in an appropriate field. For most courses, these degrees are in the teaching discipline or a closely related field and thus, are considered sufficient credentials for teaching at all levels. Instructors must have a master's degree in the discipline or at least 18 graduate credit hours in the teaching discipline to teach undergraduate courses in the department. In exceptional cases, a bachelor's degree, native speaking ability, and significant successful teaching experience may substitute for the master's degree.
- *Music*: The terminal degree in music history and music theory is the PhD. The terminal degree in music education is the PhD or EdD. The terminal degree in performance, conducting, or composition of music is the Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA). The master's degree (e.g., MM, MA, Artist Diploma), an additional 24 graduate credits, and exceptional qualifications as attested to by regionally and nationally recognized accomplishments (publications, awards, performances, honors, scholarly/professional activity) may act in lieu of the terminal degree. Part-time faculty teaching studio and laboratory courses must have a bachelor's degree plus 18 hours at the graduate level and/or documentation of five years of professional experience. For performance-related courses, faculty must have expertise as performers at the regional level. Piano accompaniment faculty not assigned to course teaching must have at least five years of accompaniment experience in more than one medium. Part-time faculty assigned to the academic classroom must have a master's level degree with 18 hours in course work related to the assignment. Exceptions may be made only if professional experiences in the assigned area are directly applicable to the teaching assignment.
- *ROTC*: The faculty of the ROTC departments at Virginia Tech (Army, Navy, and Air Force) are qualified, active duty military officers. They teach ROTC courses which are aligned with their military service and for which they have received instructor training by their military service.

College of Veterinary Medicine

Assistant professors must possess either: (1) a DVM (Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine) or equivalent degree, completion of a residency training program in the specialty field, and board certification (or board-eligible status) in the most appropriate specialty board or college recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (foreign specialty board eligibility or certification may be considered). If not board certified at the beginning of employment, board certification is expected during the probationary period, or (2) a PhD with or without a DVM or equivalent degree.

Associate professors or professors must possess either: (1) a DVM or equivalent degree and board certification in the most appropriate specialty board or college recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (foreign specialty board certification may be considered), or (2) a PhD with or without a DVM or equivalent degree.

Clinical instructors and clinical assistant professors must possess the appropriate professional degree with preference given to individuals eligible for or certified in the most appropriate specialty board or college recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (foreign specialty board qualification or certification may be considered).

Clinical associate professors or clinical professors must possess the appropriate professional degree and certification in the most appropriate specialty board or college recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (foreign specialty board certification may be considered).

Faculty hired in any of these ranks would be considered qualified to teach at the graduate and undergraduate level in the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Appendix A
SACS Faculty Credentials Guidelines



*Commission on Colleges
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097*

**FACULTY CREDENTIALS
Guidelines**

Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1 of the *Principles of Accreditation* reads as follows:

The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

When an institution defines faculty qualifications using faculty credentials, institutions should use the following as credential guidelines:

- a. Faculty teaching general education courses at the undergraduate level: doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
- b. Faculty teaching associate degree courses designed for transfer to a baccalaureate degree: doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
- c. Faculty teaching associate degree courses not designed for transfer to the baccalaureate degree: bachelor's degree in the teaching discipline, or associate's degree and demonstrated competencies in the teaching discipline.
- d. Faculty teaching baccalaureate courses: doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
- e. Faculty teaching graduate and post-baccalaureate course work: earned doctorate/terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline.
- f. Graduate teaching assistants: master's in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline with direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic evaluations.

Approved: College Delegate Assembly, December 2006

Appendix B
Transcript Cover Sheet for Course Credentialing

Instructors of record must have teaching credentials verified by the department head/chair from which the course(s) originates **BEFORE** being allowed to teach. If the instructor of record attains new degrees/qualifications or new teaching responsibilities (i.e., new subject), this course credentialing document must be resubmitted.

Section I. Instructor of Record Information

Name: _____ VT Identification Number: _____

Address/Mail Code: _____

Name of Hiring Dept.: _____ Name of Course Dept. (if different): _____

Please indicate the person's current primary VT designation:

- Salaried Faculty Member (Teaching and Research)
- Salaried Faculty Member (Administrative/Professional)
- Adjunct Instructor (wage or unpaid)
- Graduate Student (GTA, GA, Graduate Instructor)
- Other (please explain: _____)

Section IIA. Course Credentialing

For Salaried Faculty (Teaching and Research) ONLY

Please indicate the level of credential used for verification:

- Doctorate/Terminal degree in teaching or related discipline (credentialed for undergraduate or graduate courses)
- Additional qualifications explained in the Other Qualifications section (Section IIB).

For Graduate Students, Adjunct Instructors and those designated as Other ONLY

Please indicate the highest level of credential that the instructor of record has attained to date:

- 18 graduate hours or master's degree in teaching or related discipline (credentialed for undergraduate courses only)
- Doctoral (or terminal) degree in teaching or related discipline
- Additional qualifications explained in the Other Qualifications section (Section IIB).

Section IIB. Other Qualifications: Include professional licensure and certifications, awards, commendations, publications, professional experience, etc.

Section III. Course Information

Courses that this instructor of record will be certified to teach:		
Subject Abbreviation (e.g., PSYC):	Specific courses only (please list below)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All undergraduate courses	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All graduate courses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Subject Abbreviation (e.g., PSYC):	Specific courses only (please list below)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All undergraduate courses	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All graduate courses	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the instructor of record is approved to teach only specific courses, please list those courses here:

Prefix 1:	Course Number (Title is optional):
Prefix 2:	Course Number (Title is optional):
Prefix 3:	Course Number (Title is optional):
Prefix 4:	Course Number (Title is optional):

NOTE: If the instructor of record is assigned to a course with a prefix that is different than the one(s) listed above, a new course credentialing document must be submitted.

Section IV. Verification of International Credentials

- Degree awarded by non-U.S. institution has been determined to be equivalent to U.S. degree and is appropriate to the teaching discipline. See *VT Credentials Guidelines* document, available at www.provost.vt.edu, for required steps.

Equivalent U.S. degree level and major:

Section V. Department Head/Chair Verification

Dept. Head/Chair Name:

Dept. Head/Chair Signature:

Date:

Section VI. Department Contact Information

Dept. Contact Name:

E-mail:

Phone:

Mail Code:

NOTE:

For Salaried Faculty ONLY attach *official, original transcript* with raised seal, and submit the documents to **Human Resources (Mail Code 0318)** – please keep a copy for your records.

For Graduate Students, Adjunct Instructors and those designated as Other ONLY attach *official, original transcript* with raised seal, and submit the documents to **Institutional Research and Effectiveness (Mail Code 0433)** – please keep a copy for your records.

Appendix C
HIRING DEPARTMENT CHECKLIST

- √ **Teaching Credentials Explicitly Stated:** Credentials appropriate to the teaching assignment are explicitly stated in any recruitment and selection process, whether a full search is conducted or not.

- √ **Transcripts of Highest Degree Documented:** Original transcripts of the highest degree earned are required of all new teaching faculty upon employment. This condition is stated explicitly in all recruitment and selection communication, terms of offer, and any agreements with adjunct or wage faculty members. Continuation of employment is contingent upon receipt and verification of such credentials by the department head/chair or designee.
 - For all salaried A/P teaching faculty, the department is responsible for making sure that the original transcript is received, a transcript cover sheet is completed, and these documents are forwarded to Human Resources. It is recommended that the department retain copies of these documents prior to submission to Human Resources. An original transcript must have an official raised seal from the institutional source.
 - For adjunct/wage faculty appointments, the department is responsible for making sure that the original transcript is received, a transcript cover sheet is completed, and these documents are forwarded to Institutional Research. It is recommended that the department retain copies of these documents prior to submission to Institutional Research.
 - For faculty members whose assignments do not include teaching, such as post-docs or other special research faculty, or administrative/professional faculty, adjunct/wage faculty transcripts of highest degree earned are also required. In these cases, the department is responsible for making sure that the original transcript is received and forwarded to Human Resources. The department is encouraged to complete the transcript cover sheet with name, hiring department and primary VT designation only. The department is responsible for making sure that these documents are forwarded to Human Resources; copies are kept in the departmental personnel file.

- √ **Other Qualifications Documented:** Academic programs in a number of fields, particularly professional programs and the creative, visual, and performing arts, often benefit from faculty whose accomplishments and significant professional experiences are outside the academy. Qualifications of faculty members with a credential less than the terminal degree but with exceptional experience or accomplishments must be documented by the department head on the transcript cover sheet that accompanies the transcript of the highest degree earned.

- √ **International Institution Certification:** Virginia Tech routinely hires faculty with credentials from foreign institutions and these internationally trained faculty add to the diversity and richness of the teaching and learning environment. It is the responsibility of the department head to verify the quality and equivalency of any highest degree awarded from an international institution. The signature of the department head on the transcript cover sheet attests to the certification of equivalent international credentials.

Appendix D
COURSE ORIGINATION DEPARTMENT CHECKLIST

- √ **Transcripts of Highest Degree Documented:** If the instructor of record for a course in a department is not a faculty member of that department with credentials verified upon hire, the teaching credentials appropriate for the course content and level must be verified. All faculty members and graduate teaching assistants assigned as instructor of record in the course origination department must have teaching credentials verified by the course origination department head/chair. In this case, copies of the transcript are acceptable if the faculty member or graduate assistant has an official transcript documented either in the department or elsewhere at Virginia Tech. The course origination department head/chair will submit a transcript cover sheet with alternative credential documentation when appropriate. Instructional faculty members who earned their highest degree at Virginia Tech must also obtain an official transcript from the registrar for their individual personnel file.

- √ **Other Qualifications Documented:** For instructors with a credential less than what is required by the SACS guidelines, the department head will document other qualifications with a transcript cover sheet sent to Human Resources, if the faculty member is a salaried faculty member, or Institutional Research in all other cases. If the department has questions regarding what would be considered appropriate in terms of other qualifications, they are encouraged to contact the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs.

- √ **International Credentials Certified:** For faculty whose highest degree is from an international institution, the department must:
 - Complete both (1) and (2):**
 - (1) Confirm the institution is listed in the *World List of Universities*. Copies of this book are located in the university registrar's office and in undergraduate admissions, and
 - (2) If the transcript is in any language other than English, the faculty candidate must submit a translated transcript as a condition of employment. The translation must come from the institution, a transcript translation service provider, or an approved Virginia Tech translator.
 - and one from (3) – (5):**
 - (3) Have the translated transcript certified as equivalent by a Virginia Tech employee who is familiar with the institution and discipline,
 - (4) Have the translated transcript certified as equivalent by a professional colleague who is familiar with the institution and discipline, or
 - (5) Pay for an international degree verification service from an approved service provider such as World Education Services

- √ **Teaching Load/Census Date Audit:** Department heads/chairs will review the teaching load file and the online faculty roster at census date to ensure all qualifications of instructors of record are appropriately documented.

Appendix E
HUMAN RESOURCES CHECKLIST

- √ **Credential Information Entered in Database:** For new salaried faculty members, Human Resources enters degree information into the Banner record based on information provided on the faculty vita if the transcript is not yet available. When the original transcript and transcript cover sheet are forwarded by the hiring department, degree information is verified and reconciled with any previous Banner entries. Other qualifications are also entered in Banner from the transcript cover sheet. Discrepancies are referred to the dean's office for investigation and resolution.

For adjunct faculty (including federal employees, ROTC, and wage) and graduate students who are assigned as instructors of record, the transcript cover sheet is attached to the official transcript for the highest degree and forwarded to the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. The credential information will be entered into Banner and the transcript returned to the faculty member once data entry is complete.

- √ **Faculty Members Earning Virginia Tech Degrees:** To update current employee records with recently awarded Virginia Tech degrees, Human Resources will match active employee records with degrees awarded by Virginia Tech at the end of each semester and create appropriate records in Banner for those employees. Instructional faculty members who earned their highest degree at Virginia Tech must also obtain an official transcript from the registrar for their individual personnel file. Human Resources will indicate on the Banner record if the transcript has been received and such missing documentation will be flagged by regular management reports. The date, major, and degree designation for a Virginia Tech-awarded degree shall be the official student record provided by the registrar.

- √ **Audit of Degree Documentation and Credential Records:** Human Resources (in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness) will produce frequent management reports to review all faculty records for missing degree information, and follow up with department contacts to obtain original documentation. Additionally, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness will merge the teaching load database with the Human Resources database (Banner) to identify any instructors of record who do not appear to have the credentials appropriate to their teaching role. These reports will be discussed with appropriate department chairs, deans, and the provost's office, to determine compliance.