

## Statement of Faculty Qualifications

Saint Mary's University of Minnesota hires, develops, and maintains a qualified faculty as an essential component of carrying out its institutional mission. Teaching is the process of “awakening, nurturing, and empowering” students with primary emphasis on the learner and learning rather than on the teacher and teaching. Therefore, teaching at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota is grounded in the university-wide position on Learning in the Lasallian Tradition (found in the handbook):

“Learning at Saint Mary's University is active, collaborative, and contextual, and is supported by a Lasallian commitment to serve the needs of individual learners.”

The Learning in the Lasallian Tradition statement continues to elaborate on the learning outcomes expected of all graduates from the respective units of the Colleges and the Schools of Graduate and Professional Programs. (*Catalogs of the College and Schools of Graduate and Professional Programs*). While all faculty of the university are expected to meet the highest standards, distinctions exist based on the degree levels and intended learning outcomes for graduates. These expectations exemplify the focus on learning and the specialized role faculty play in designing, delivering, and assessing learning. The emphasis is on knowing what learning must occur across degree levels and disciplines as well as how to determine that successful learning has in fact resulted from instruction.

The faculty at Saint Mary's University serve varied and essential roles and are categorized as tenured, term (a.k.a., annually-contracted, or multi-year contracted), or course-contracted (a.k.a., adjunct or part-time). Tenured and term faculty are responsible for teaching, leading programs or departments, administering curricula and assessment processes, or some combination of these essential functions, and may also include research/scholarship, service, and advising as outlined in the faculty handbook(s). Course-contracted faculty serve primarily in a teaching role and may be involved in additional roles based on the departmental or program structures and employee composition. All faculty are assigned to the academic ranks of Lecturer, Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor based on universitywide ranking criteria.

## The Process of Qualifying Faculty

To ensure candidates meet the necessary qualifications to teach in Saint Mary's courses and departments, supporting documents are evaluated and candidates are interviewed. Faculty qualifications are based on six criteria: academic credentials, disciplinary content, professional expertise, teaching expertise, scholarly and creative/artistic productivity, and commitment to university mission.

1. Academic credentials - The initial screen for qualified faculty is the academic degree earned. The university seeks to hire faculty with academic degrees that are at least one level higher than the level of the teaching assignment. Faculty teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the discipline and have a record of research or achievement appropriate for teaching in the graduate program. In certain situations, Saint Mary's may recognize five or more years of tested experience as a valid substitute for an earned terminal credential or portions thereof. Approval of tested experience will occur on a case-by-case basis and will depend on the relevance of the faculty member's experience to the degree level and content of the courses the faculty member teaches. The evidence used to determine qualified faculty on this criterion is the listing of the degree award on an official transcript from an accredited institution or international equivalent. To ensure diverse academic backgrounds, the institution granting the degree may be considered when reviewing multiple candidates for a position.
2. Disciplinary content - Faculty must know the content of the discipline to be taught, including historical context, currently understood theories, and application. For technical or professional programs, content knowledge must reflect the times in which the coursework is delivered. For example, faculty for a technology focused program must be versed in the current methods for electronic communication. This criterion refers to the "18 graduate credits in the discipline or subfield in which they teach" ([HLC's \*Determining Qualified Faculty\*](#)).
3. Professional expertise - Faculty must be able to demonstrate the intellectual and technical skills of the discipline. Content knowledge alone is insufficient. Fulfilling this criterion varies with the discipline and reaches beyond the knowledge level of the previous criterion. Professional expertise requires that the faculty can do something within the discipline. This may include the generation of new knowledge, the evaluation of current practices, the application of technical processes, and/or the performance of professional roles. This criterion is commonly referred to as "tested experience".

The evidence used to determine qualified faculty on this criterion is an analysis of positions held, a review of professional reference letters, the responses to interview scenarios, a demonstration of a process or artistic work, and a review of scholarly publications and presentations.

4. Teaching experience - The primary function of a faculty member at Saint Mary's is to teach. This criterion emphasizes the elements of planning curricula and courses, delivering instruction, and assessing learning. Faculty may be early-career scholars or mid-career professionals, seeking to become teachers.

The evidence used to determine qualified faculty on this criterion is participation in specialized training programs for preparing teachers in higher education, an analysis of professional references, the responses to interview questions, participation in Saint Mary's CELT programs, evaluations of teaching from other institutions, and a scoring of a teaching demonstration.

5. Scholarly and creative/artistic productivity - Faculty are expected to expand disciplinary knowledge or create artistic experiences. They must continue to remain engaged in their professions through development and dissemination of the products reflective of the discipline that contribute to the public and profession.

The evidence used to determine qualified faculty on this criterion is citation of publications; listing of presentations, workshops, and exhibits; presentation of the creative works and performances; and documentation of discoveries or inventions.

6. Commitment to University Mission - A central value of the university's Lasallian Catholic mission is to see and treat each person as a unique child of God. This focus is operationalized by individualizing both instruction and collegial interaction within the communal setting of the university - "together and by association". To be an effective faculty member at Saint Mary's University, the person must possess a disposition that enables empathetic human interaction - beyond professional courtesy or civil discourse.

The evidence used to determine qualified faculty on this criterion is an analysis of professional references and the responses to interview questions.

## **Implementation**

Saint Mary's University of Minnesota has a responsibility to demonstrate the quality of its educational programs through qualified faculty. Thresholds for recruiting, hiring, and retaining quality faculty must embrace a path that enables faculty to succeed and thereby provides a

foundation for student success. The following steps outline the procedures used to meet these responsibilities:

1. Faculty are hired using consistent search processes that are based on the primary function and institutional structure of the faculty assignment. An evaluation form is completed for each hire to document the decision based on the six criteria of qualified faculty. [Faculty Qualifications Form - Users Guide](#)
2. Faculty must have their expertise verified and documented when hired for courses that require a high level of technical/professional expertise and/or when tested experience is considered in addition to credentials and disciplinary content.