

PROFESSIONAL EQUIVALENCE ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS POLICY

Policy Code	HR12
Policy Lead	Academic Dean
Approving Authority	Academic Board
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Relevant legislation or external requirements	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HESFs: 2.1.3, 3.2, 5.4, 6.3.1) Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act)
Related ASA Documents	Academic Titles Policy Academic Titles Procedure Professional Equivalence Academic Qualifications Procedure Quality Assurance Framework Register of Professional Equivalence of Academic Qualifications Scholarly Activity Policy Scholarly Activity Procedure Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy Staff Recruitment and Selection Procedure Staff Induction Policy Staff Induction Procedure Staff Professional Development Policy Staff Professional Development Procedure Staff Performance Management Policy Staff Performance Management Procedure

1. Purpose

This Policy supports the ASA Institute of Higher Education's (**ASA**) commitment to ensuring that ASA academic staff members are appropriately qualified in the relevant discipline in accordance with Standard 3.2.3 paragraph c, of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (**HESFs**).

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all academic staff members (including prospective academic staff) who teach and assess students enrolled in ASA courses. This Policy does not apply to guest lecturers and speakers.

3. Principles

ASA is committed to ensuring equity for both existing and new staff members. Judgements regarding qualifications are based on fair and transparent processes as outlined in this Policy.

ASA recognises that in some courses of study, professional experience may be needed in some areas of the discipline taught. Accordingly, academic staff may need to have professional experience in addition to formal qualifications to comply with this Policy.

An academic staff member who is to be assessed on a combination of formal academic qualifications and professional experience must have at least academic qualifications at the same AQF level as the course of study that is being taught. Evidence and/or references must be provided to ASA to support any teaching and professional experience confirming that it is current

and relevant to the discipline area.

The key principles at ASA for determining equivalent academic, professional, or practice-based experience are:

- all candidates for an academic position must have academic qualifications at least one AQF level higher than the course of study in which they are teaching (AQF+1); or
- have equivalent relevant academic, professional or practice-based experience and expertise, except for staff who are supervising doctoral degrees, who must have a doctoral degree or equivalent research experience.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
academic staff	A member of staff appointed to undertake a teaching function at ASA, whether full-time, part-time, casual, or sessional.
Approving Authority	The governance body that has the authority or delegated authority (power) to approve the policy for publication and use.
Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Levels and criteria	AQF levels and the AQF levels criteria are an indication of the relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement. AQF level 1 has the lowest complexity and AQF level 10 has the highest complexity.
casual	Casual employment is short-term in nature and allows flexibility to vary hours or modify the employment and includes sessional employment. Casual staff are engaged on an hourly basis (minimum hours will vary according to the applicable industrial agreement) to work on an irregular basis and are used to cover leave absences, provide assistance for additional or seasonal work, or in special project type work.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) / Principal	The Chief Executive Officer is the highest organisational role for ASA and performs the role of Principal as well as their other duties.
equal opportunity	Equal opportunity is a state of fairness in which individuals are treated similarly, without discrimination, except when particular distinctions can be explicitly justified.
fixed-term appointment	Employment for a specified term, for which the employment contract will specify a period of employment and the reason(s) for the appointment being fixed-term. Can be for academic, administrative or professional appointments.
position description	A position description (sometimes referred to as a job description or duty statement) outlines the key responsibilities, duties and objectives of the role plus selection criteria based on essential experience and skills, qualifications, and desirable criteria. Additionally, it can include classification level, Employment Award, type of employment, reporting lines and any direct reports.
Professional equivalence academic qualifications	The need to determine if a staff member meets the equivalent relevant academic, professional or practice-based experience prior to any offer of sessional/casual, fixed term or ongoing employment being made (including verbal offers). In such cases, the Academic Dean must maintain a record of the determination including the AQF level the staff member can teach to and the required evidence on which the determination was based (as set out in this procedure).
professional experience	Experience obtained through the practice of a profession, including teaching experience, scholarship and professional practice and from which the professional competency, knowledge, skills and learning outcomes achieved can be assessed.

5. Policy Statement

ASA recognises that both academic and broader credentials of its academic staff are critical in assuring the quality of its courses; and relevant professional skills may complement academic qualifications when determining the suitability of an individual to teach in its courses and support the provision of a career-oriented learning environment. When determining academic staffing, ASA will:

1. Assess Academic staff candidates in relation to their knowledge, teaching capability, and qualifications as relevant to the specific course for which they are being considered to teach.
2. Ensure that all academic staff are appropriately qualified for their roles by applying the following criteria to be **normally** met by applicants:
 - a. hold knowledge of contemporary developments in a relevant discipline or field, which is informed by continuing scholarship or research or advances in practice;
 - b. have skills in contemporary teaching, learning, and assessment principles relevant to the discipline, role, modes of delivery, and the needs of ASA's student cohorts;
 - c. hold a qualification in a relevant discipline at least one level higher than is awarded for the course of study, or equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice-based experience and expertise; and
 - d. in the case of nested exit qualifications, where students are enrolled in an award course but may be eligible to exit with a lower AQF level award having completed a proportion of the course, teaching staff are expected to hold a minimum qualification one AQF level above the highest qualification in the nested suite.
3. In the case of packaged pathway and nested entry courses, where students may commence in a lower-level award and then progress to higher levels of study following completion of that award, teaching staff are expected to hold a qualification one AQF level above the first award level. For example, staff teaching into a diploma course (AQF Level 5) where students may have the option of progressing to a Bachelor level course would be expected to hold at least an advanced diploma (AQF Level 6) in a relevant field. Similarly, staff teaching into a bachelor course that offers students an opportunity to progress to a postgraduate award would be expected to hold an AQF Level 8 qualification.
4. Consider recognising equivalent experience in place of a higher education qualification **only** where this satisfies a particular educational need of the course that cannot reasonably be addressed in other ways. This may only occur where the candidate's experience demonstrates achievements equivalent or superior to the otherwise required qualification.
5. Ensure that equivalent experience is current and directly relevant to the course of study.
6. Guide and oversee the teaching of specialised components of a course by Academic staff who may not fully meet the above requirements by staff who meet the requirements. ASA may also consider implementing a specific professional development plan or mentoring or coaching program to assist staff in successfully transitioning to academic teaching at the desired level.

When assessing professional experience within a relevant discipline, the principle is that the professional experience of the staff member should provide them with the skills and knowledge equivalent to holding the relevant academic qualification. Therefore, the professional experience should be mapped to the relevant AQF levels to provide evidence of equivalence. The following types of professional experiences may be indicative of equivalence:

- a. Performing in a role requiring high order judgement and provision of expert advice.
- b. Performing in a senior-level role.
- c. Management of significant projects in the field.
- d. Leadership in the development of professional standards.
- e. Testimonials, awards or other recognition that acknowledges leadership or achievement in the discipline.
- f. Contributions to a discipline through participation in governing bodies, advisory boards or professional networks.
- g. Peer-reviewed publications in a relevant discipline.
- h. Other publications (e.g. books, reports) in a relevant discipline.
- i. Professional presentations, conference papers or invited contributions.
- j. Leadership and/or management of research acknowledged by peers in a relevant discipline.

(Note that experience in one of these areas should not be deemed to be conclusive evidence of equivalent professional experience. Rather, judgments regarding equivalence are likely to be based on evidence of the existence of a combination of these types of experience as appropriate to the particular position under consideration.)

The *ASA Professional Equivalence Academic Qualifications Procedure* sets out how professional equivalence is assessed in practice.

The *Register of Professional Equivalence of Academic Qualifications* will be updated each quarter and provided to the Academic Board and Board of Directors on an annual basis.

6. Guidelines for the qualifications or professional equivalence of Academic Candidates

The guidelines at ASA for determining equivalent academic, professional or practice-based experiences are identified in the below table.

Table 1: Guidelines At ASA For Determining Equivalent Experiences

Unit/Course AQF Level being taught	Minimum staff AQF Qualification level	Professional or Practice-based Experience Equivalence Criteria
Level 5 Diploma <i>Only when the Diploma is a stand-alone qualification</i>	Level 6 Associate Degree	AQF Level 5 <u>WITH EITHER</u> Minimum 3 years relevant professional fulltime experience in a relevant field and/or discipline area, together with a sound understanding of current scholarship in the discipline and demonstrated ability to engage students in intellectual inquiry. OR Enrolment in a relevant AQF Level 6 course plus relevant professional experience, together totalling 3 years. OR Current registration to practice within the relevant profession and/or full membership of a relevant professional organisation.
Level 6 Associate Degree <i>Only when the Associate Degree is a stand-alone qualification</i>	Level 7 Bachelor Degree	AQF Level 6 <u>WITH EITHER</u> Minimum 3 years relevant professional fulltime experience in a relevant field and/or discipline area, together with a sound understanding of current scholarship in the discipline and demonstrated ability to engage students in intellectual inquiry. OR Enrolment in a relevant AQF Level 7 course plus relevant professional experience, together totalling 3 years. OR Current registration to practice within the relevant profession and/or full membership of a relevant professional organisation.
Level 7 Bachelor degree <i>Including nested Level 5-6 Diploma and Associate Degree</i>	Level 8 Bachelor Honour's Degree Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma	AQF Level 7 plus registration to practice within the relevant profession and/or full membership of a relevant professional organisation. <u>WITH EITHER</u> Minimum 5 years relevant professional full-time experience in a relevant field and/or discipline area, together with a sound understanding of current scholarship in the discipline and demonstrated ability to engage students in intellectual inquiry. OR Enrolment in a relevant AQF Level 8 course plus relevant professional experience, together totalling 3 years.

Unit/Course AQF Level being taught	Minimum staff AQF Qualification level	Professional or Practice-based Experience Equivalence Criteria
Level 8 Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma	Level 9 Masters Degree by research or coursework	AQF Level 8 plus current registration to practice within the relevant profession and/or full membership of a relevant professional organisation. <u>WITH EITHER</u> Minimum 5 years relevant professional fulltime experience in a relevant field and/or discipline area, together with a sound understanding of current scholarship in the discipline and demonstrated ability to engage students in intellectual inquiry OR Enrolment in a relevant AQF Level 9 course plus relevant professional experience, together totalling 5 years.
Level 9 Masters degree (Coursework)	Level 10 Doctorate by research or coursework	AQF Level 9 plus registration to practice within the relevant profession and/or full membership of a relevant professional organisation. <u>WITH EITHER</u> Minimum 5 years relevant professional fulltime experience in a relevant field and/or discipline area, together with a sound understanding of current scholarship in the discipline and demonstrated ability to engage students in intellectual inquiry. OR Enrolment in a relevant AQF Level 10 course plus relevant professional experience, together totalling 5 years.

7. Relevant HESFs

This Policy and the associated Procedure comply with Higher Education Standards Framework (2021) which specifies that:

Standard 2.1 Facilities and Infrastructure [...]

3. The learning environment, whether physical, virtual or blended, and associated learning activities support academic interactions among students outside of formal teaching.

Standard 3.2 Staffing

1. The staffing complement for each course of study is sufficient to meet the educational, academic support and administrative needs of student cohorts undertaking the course.
2. The academic staffing profile for each course of study provides the level and extent of academic oversight and teaching capacity needed to lead students in intellectual inquiry suited to the nature and level of expected learning outcomes.
3. Staff with responsibilities for academic oversight and those with teaching and supervisory roles in courses or units of study are equipped for their roles, including having:
 - a. knowledge of contemporary developments in the discipline or field, which is informed by continuing scholarship or research or advances in practice
 - b. skills in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment principles relevant to the discipline, their role, modes of delivery and the needs of particular student cohorts, and
 - c. a qualification in a relevant discipline at least one level higher than is awarded for the course of study, or equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice-

based experience and expertise, except for staff supervising doctoral degrees having a doctoral degree or equivalent research experience.

4. Teachers who teach specialised components of a course of study, such as experienced practitioners and teachers undergoing training, who may not fully meet the standard for knowledge, skills and qualification or experience required for teaching or supervision (3.2.3) have their teaching guided and overseen by staff who meet the standard.
5. Teaching staff are accessible to students seeking individual assistance with their studies, at a level consistent with the learning needs of the student cohort.

Standard 5.4 Delivery with Other Parties

1. Work-integrated learning, placements, other community-based learning and collaborative research training arrangements are quality assured, including assurance of the quality of supervision of student experiences.
2. When a course of study, any parts of a course of study, or research training are delivered through arrangements with another party(ies), whether in Australia or overseas, the registered higher education provider remains accountable for the course of study and verifies continuing compliance of the course of study with the standards in the Higher Education Standards Framework that relate to the specific arrangement.

Standard 6.3 Academic Governance

1. Processes and structures are established and responsibilities are assigned that collectively:
 - a. achieve effective academic oversight of the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training
 - b. set and monitor institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes
 - c. establish and maintain academic leadership at an institutional level, consistent with the types and levels of higher education offered, and
 - d. provide competent advice to the corporate governing body and management on academic matters, including advice on academic outcomes, policies and practices.

[...]

8. Version Control

This Policy has been reviewed and approved by the ASA Institute of Higher Education's Academic Board as at April 2024 and is reviewed every three years.

The Policy, with associated Procedure, are published and available on the ASA Institute of Higher Education's website <https://www.asahe.edu.au/policies-and-forms/>.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2024.2	Project Officer	Document formatting updated to reflect change of Trading Name to ASA Institute of Higher Education	28/06/2024 by CEO	01/07/2024
2024.1	Academic Dean	Updated policy to include HESF references, changes in regulatory compliances. Benchmarked against 12 other universities and Higher Education Providers.	03/04/2024	18/04/2024
Previous version archived. New Policy code and numbering system implemented.				
3.1		Academic Board approval	04/11/2020	