

CREDENTIALING

A FRAMEWORK

There's a hot topic on campus: faculty qualifications, or what accrediting bodies often call credentialing. While the vast majority of faculty are qualified to teach based on their academic degrees, some faculty (particularly adjuncts or those in health sciences or business) may be qualified based work experience, licenses, certifications or other qualifying activities.

Given the range of expectations from regional accrediting bodies, plus the requirements of professional accreditors, is it better to take a high-level, overview approach, or get into the details of individual courses? We've worked with institutions across regions to develop a framework for credentialing that should allow you to provide the qualification information needed to satisfy any accreditor.



One of the things that's valuable about Digital Measures by Watermark is that faculty see the data, and they have an interest in ensuring it's correct. The more you let the sun shine on data, the more accurate it gets and the more useful it becomes."

Ray Whiting

**Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness for
Assessment and Special Education Initiatives, Augusta University**

CREDENTIALING FRAMEWORK ADVISORS

Institutions like yours from across accrediting regions have reviewed and confirmed that this framework allows them to satisfy their accrediting body.



BASIC APPROACH

This approach is easier, but less detailed. You'll document faculty's education, licenses, certification and scheduled teaching, then provide a method to capture "additional qualifications," such as a text box. The additional information is then available in a consistent format for use in reporting. This information is then reviewed by someone from the Office of Accreditation, the dean's office or a peer reviewer, who can determine if they align.

COURSE-LEVEL APPROACH

This approach requires significant upfront work to populate the information, plus ongoing work to maintain your dataset.

To use the course-level approach, you'll need:

- a. Qualification categories
- b. Selections for specific degrees, licenses/certifications and work history
- c. A place for additional text and files to support the qualification and
- d. A method for connecting qualifications to relevant courses



The first time I tried out the faculty qualification report, with literally three clicks, I got what I needed. It was like a wonderful gift—the time savings, but also the report presentation. It really transforms how you can get information. As an institution, we have to show our processes are working and show our outcomes. Rather than write a description of what we do, we can now elevate it to an argument based on analysis of data.”

Jan Smith
Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness,
Pittsburg State University

DEFINING YOUR PROCESS

Whether you take the basic or course-level approach, you'll need to define your internal process for determining qualifications. It is important to identify the person (or persons) at your institution who is responsible for reviewing and updating this information. At some institutions this may be a single person in an Office of Accreditation while at others, deans or department chairs may be responsible. No matter how you assign this responsibility, you will want to have a single person who can help ensure the information is being correctly entered and kept up to date.

Addressing these questions is essential. If you don't have a well-defined process or it isn't sustainable, it won't live up to the requirements of peer reviewers from your regional accreditor.

CHOOSING THE BEST APPROACH FOR YOUR INSTITUTION

It takes a good deal of effort to capture and maintain the information needed for course-level credentialing, so here are some factors to consider when deciding.

If your institution falls into one of these categories, consider course-level credentialing:

- You don't currently have a clearly documented process
- You're in the SACSCOC region
- You're a for-profit institution
- You have a very large adjunct population



Course-level credentialing is a substantial undertaking. As a benchmark, be prepared to dedicate someone essentially full-time during implementation, and consider keeping someone at least partially dedicated on an ongoing basis to maintaining and updating information.

All others should consider taking the basic approach.

The basic approach is a good choice if:

- A large majority of your faculty are qualified solely based on their highest degree
- You have a well-defined process to evaluate qualifications for the few faculty who aren't qualified based on their academic credentials.



SCHEDULE A CREDENTIALING CONSULTATION

The way your institution documents faculty qualifications will depend on the level of detail needed to satisfy accreditors and other stakeholders.

We're here to help. **Contact us today for free a credentialing consultation.**