HE Teaching - Professional Experience Equivalence Policy and Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') is committed to quality and excellence in all its activities, with a clear focus on delivering meaningful outcomes and impact. The University strives to ensure that all we do is of high quality and that we are responsive to the needs of our students, industries, and communities.

(2) The University endeavours to implement high-quality standards, processes, and outcomes. Students are entitled to expect that they are being taught by academic staff who are qualified in a relevant field of study, at a level more advanced than the level of the course being taught.

Section 2 - Purpose

(3) This policy and procedure provides a framework for assessing the equivalence of qualifications through professional experience for higher education academic staff members.

(4) This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the Recruitment and Selection Policy.

Section 3 - Scope

(5) This policy and procedure applies to current and prospective academic staff, including casual academic staff, who teach and/or assess students in higher education coursework courses and units, including those delivered by any of the University's third-party teaching partners.

(6) This policy and procedure does not apply to:

a. guest lecturers;
b. internships or other forms of work-integrated learning; or
c. the supervision of HDR candidates (refer to the Higher Degree by Research - Supervision Procedure).

Section 4 - Policy

(7) The University is committed to delivering high-quality learning, teaching, and research activities and ensuring academic staff are appropriately qualified to lead students in intellectual inquiry and achieve the learning outcomes of their course.

(8) To ensure the delivery of quality education, academic teaching staff must either:

a. hold a qualification at least one (1) AQF level higher than the course of study in which they are teaching; or
b. hold a qualification equal to the AQF level in which they are teaching and have equivalent academic or

professional or practice-based experience and expertise equivalent to one (1) AQF level higher than the course in which they are teaching.

(9) Where a course leads to more than one award at different levels, the highest award defines the level of the course.

(10) Where a unit is listed as a course requirement for more than one course, academic teaching staff must have the level of qualification for the course that leads to the highest award.

(11) In the instance an individual does not hold the requisite qualification, a determination of the individual's professional or practice-based experience and expertise may be used to ensure teaching requirements under the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 are met.

(12) Equivalence of professional experience is granted for one (1) AQF level increment only.

(13) The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the assessment and approval of an academic staff member's qualifications and equivalence of professional experience.

(14) The University will consider the full range of relevant, verifiable professional activities of the individual in determining the equivalence of professional experience. This includes consideration of:

a. teaching experience, scholarship, and professional practice;
b. the minimum academic qualification required to teach at the level of the course to which the individual is assigned; and
c. any specific criteria for assessing professional equivalence at the relevant AQF level.

(15) When determining equivalence, the professional experience must be current, relevant to the discipline and AQF level being taught, and must be demonstrated by meeting the criteria outlined in this policy and procedure. See Table 1 below for further information about currency.

(16) Where a staff member does not meet all relevant criteria outlined in this policy, an explicit and time-limited professional development plan, which may include mentoring or team teaching, must be put in place to enable the staff member to make the transition to academic teaching successfully.

(17) The University acknowledges that First Nations knowledges and some emerging academic disciplines or highly professional specialist subjects may require some flexibility in the application of this policy and procedure. The Provost may approve alternative arrangements that are in keeping with the intent of this policy and procedure. The Provost will consult with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership when considering alternative arrangements on the basis of First Nations knowledges.

(18) An academic staff member with specialised expertise (such as expert practitioners or teachers undergoing training) may be engaged to teach specialised components of a course, under the supervision of a University staff member with the required AQF level qualifications.

Section 5 - Procedure

(19) Prior to any offer of casual, fixed-term, or continuing employment being made to an individual who does not hold a qualification at least one (1) AQF level higher than the course in which they would teach, the hiring manager will refer the application to the relevant Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor.

(20) The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor will assess whether the individual's qualifications and academic, professional, or practice-based experience are equivalent to a qualification at least one (1) AQF level higher than the course in which they would teach.

a. A record of the determination, including the AQF level the staff member can teach to and the evidence on which the determination was based, must be provided to People and Culture with the staff appointment forms.

(21) When assessing professional equivalence on its merits, the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor must:

a. ensure the staff member meets the minimum qualification level of the course to be taught; and
b. assess all applicable and verifiable professional experience including relevant teaching experience (such as teaching at lower AQF levels, conducting professional development seminars, giving public lectures), scholarship, and professional practice.

(22) Where an individual is appointed based on professional experience equivalence, or does not meet the standard requirement and has been appointed to teach a specialised component of a course, the Letter of Offer may specify additional requirements or conditions, such as the requirement to:

a. commence the relevant higher education AQF level course within the first 6 months of employment and regularly demonstrate satisfactory progress towards completing the course;
b. participate in professional development and scholarly activities relevant to their discipline/field; and
c. establish a supervision plan with an appropriately qualified academic staff member.

(23) The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor or delegate is responsible for reviewing, at least annually, the progression of a staff member appointed based on the equivalence of professional experience, until such time the required AQF Level qualification has been achieved.

Minimum qualification levels and relevant experience

(24) Table 1 outlines the minimum qualification requirements for academic staff and criteria to demonstrate the equivalence of professional experience for each of the AQF levels.

a. These are not exhaustive and should be interpreted as a guide within the context of each discipline and professional area.
b. Qualifications should be in the same (or a cognate) discipline as the course content and materials being taught.

Table 1 – Minimum qualification levels and relevant experience

AQF Level being assessed/taught	Minimum AQF qualification of academic staff	Professional experience equivalence criteria for academic staff
AQF Level 5 – Diploma	AQF Level 6 – Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree	If no AQF 6: - An AQF Level 5 qualification; and - current membership/registration (or equivalent) to practice within a relevant profession. Plus either: - 3 years' relevant professional experience within the last 5 years; or - enrolment and demonstrated satisfactory progress in a relevant AQF level 6 course.
AQF Level 6 – Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree	AQF Level 7 – Bachelor Degree	If no AQF 7: - An AQF Level 6 qualification; and - current membership/registration (or equivalent) to practise within a relevant profession (if applicable to the profession). Plus either: - 3 years' relevant professional experience within the last 5 years; or - enrolment and demonstrated satisfactory progress in a relevant AQF level 7 course.

AQF Level being assessed/taught	Minimum AQF qualification of academic staff	Professional experience equivalence criteria for academic staff
AQF Level 7 – Bachelor Degree	AQF Level 8 – Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma or Bachelor Honours Degree	If no AQF 8: - An AQF Level 7 qualification; and - current membership/registration (or equivalent) to practise within a relevant profession (if applicable to the profession). Plus either: - 3 years' relevant professional experience within the last 5 years; or - enrolment and demonstrated satisfactory progress in an AQF Level 8 or above course in addition to relevant professional experience, together totalling 3 years.
AQF Level 8 – Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma or Bachelor Honours Degree	AQF Level 9 – Masters Degree by Coursework	If no AQF 9: - An AQF Level 8 qualification; and - current membership/registration (or equivalent) to practise within a relevant profession (if applicable to the profession). Plus either: -5 years relevant professional experience in the last 10 years; or -enrolment in and demonstrated satisfactory progress in a relevant AQF Level 9 or above course in addition to relevant professional experience, together totalling 5 years.
AQF Level 9 – Masters Degree by Coursework	AQF Level 10 – Doctoral Degree	If no AQF 10: - An AQF Level 9 qualification; and - current membership/registration (or equivalent) to practise within a relevant profession (if applicable to the profession). Plus either: - 5 years relevant professional experience in the last 10 years; or - enrolment in and demonstrated satisfactory progress in a relevant AQF level 10 course, in addition to relevant professional experience, totalling 5 years.

Assessing evidence of professional experience

(25) Relevant and verifiable evidence that may be considered in determining the equivalence of professional experience includes, but is not limited to, the potential sources of evidence outlined in Table 2.

(26) Letters of support, recommendations, or references from anyone with a close personal relationship with the applicant or where another potential, perceived, or actual conflict of interest exists will not be considered as relevant and verifiable evidence. The University's approach to managing conflicts of interest is outlined in the Conflicts of Interest Policy and Conflicts of Interest Procedure.

Table 2 – Relevant and verifiable evidence

Activity/Experience	Potential sources of evidence
Leadership in the development of professional standards	If available, draft or completed standards. Copies of notices of appointment/public announcements.
Performing in a role that requires high-order judgement and the provision of expert advice, or roles at a senior level	Letters of support from current/past employers detailing relevant aspects of the role/s, leadership, and specific contribution. Letters of support from recognised peers in the relevant field. Details of mentoring and support of colleagues. Copies of notices of appointment/public announcements or media releases.
Managing significant projects in the field	Letters of support from employer/s or stakeholders associated with key projects. If relevant, copies of project reports or outcomes.

Activity/Experience	Potential sources of evidence
Testimonials, awards or other recognition that acknowledges leadership or expertise in the field of education	Copies of the award or testimonial. Student evaluations. Teaching awards or commendations. Annual professional/clinical development endorsed by the relevant industry body. May include photographs, portfolios or other representations of creative work, as well as non-academic publications.
Contributions in the field of education through participation in advisory boards and professional networks	Professional recommendations and references. Certificates of attendance/completion. Copies of speaking invitations or event programs on which listed as a speaker.
Peer reviewed publications in the field of education	Citations for peer reviewed journal articles in the preceding five years. Copies or citations of authorship or co-authorship of book/s.
Other publications such as books and reports	Copies of certifications and citations.
Leadership or management of research acknowledged by peers	Participation in successful competitive grant applications. Recognition in their field.

Records of assessment

(27) All decisions made based on equivalence require a record of assessment which must be maintained by People and Culture.

(28) Records of assessment will be:

a. kept and maintained in accordance with the Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure and the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy; and
b. disposed of according to the relevant Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Section 6 - Non-Compliance

(29) Non-compliance with governance documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Employees or the Code of Conduct - Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct - Students.

(30) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees and Complaints Policy - Students.

(31) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	26th June 2026
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Approval Authority	Academic Board
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Responsible Executive	Louise King Provost
Implementation Officer	Lisa Papatraianou Deputy Provost
Enquiries Contact	Lisa Papatraianou Deputy Provost Teaching and Learning Connect

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - Charles Darwin University, a body corporate established under section 4 of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003. The University is comprised of the various faculties, CDU TAFE, organisational units, and formal committees, including the governing University Council and Academic Board.

"Professional experience" - For higher education teaching academics, professional experience is experience gained through employment in a field relevant to their teaching and at an appropriate level to be assessed for equivalence to academic qualifications. Professional experience includes demonstrable experience, recognised by relevant cultural authorities, of maintaining and/or revitalising First Nations knowledge practices, such as cultural, language, ceremonial and/or environmental practices.

"Governance document" - means policy or procedure published in the Governance Document Library. Policies and procedures are collectively called ‘governance documents’ and are often referred to as ‘policy’ or ‘University policy’.

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