



TIIS
THE INSTITUTE
OF INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES



Qualification Equivalence Policy

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Policy No: AB-14

Version No: 2.0

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Policy Overview

The Institute of International Studies (TIIS) is committed to maintaining high academic standards by ensuring that all teaching and supervisory staff are appropriately qualified. In accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, particularly Standard 3.2.3, academic staff are generally expected to hold a qualification one AQF level above the course they are teaching.

However, TIIS recognises that, particularly in postgraduate education, professional experience, expertise, and scholarly engagement may substitute for formal academic qualifications where equivalence is clearly demonstrated. Therefore, in justified cases, TIIS may determine that an academic staff member is suitably qualified through equivalent professional or practice-based experience, supported by documented evidence and a formal equivalence assessment.

Purpose

This policy provides a structured and transparent framework for determining equivalence to formal AQF qualifications for academic staff at TIIS. It ensures compliance with:

- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, Standard 3.2.3.
- TEQSA's Guidance Note: Staffing;
- AQF Second Edition (2013).
- TIIS's internal quality assurance and academic integrity standards.

Scope

This policy applies to all academic appointments, including those involved in:

1. Course and unit coordination
2. Lecturing and teaching
3. Supervision of student research
4. Assessment of student learning

Definitions

Unless otherwise defined in this document, all capitalised terms are defined in the [glossary](#).

Policy Principles

TIIS adheres to the following principles when assessing qualifications and equivalence:

- Academic Precedence: A formal qualification one level above (AQF+1) the level being taught is the default benchmark.
- Equivalence by Exception: Professional or practice-based experience may be accepted only where formal qualifications at the required level are absent, and must be rigorously justified.
- Evidence-Based Judgement: Determinations of equivalence must be supported by clear, verifiable evidence.
- Compliance and Transparency: All decisions must be documented and approved in accordance with academic governance processes.

Criteria for Professional Equivalence

For teaching at AQF Level 9 (Master's Degree), academic staff must meet at least one of the following:

Option	Criteria
A	Hold a Doctoral Degree (AQF Level 10) in a relevant field
B	Hold a Master's Degree (AQF Level 9) in a relevant discipline plus at least five (5) years of relevant professional or higher education teaching experience in the discipline being taught

Where Option B is invoked, the academic staff member must provide evidence that their experience reflects the scope and depth of learning outcomes at AQF Level 10.

Professional Equivalence Assessment Framework

When assessing equivalence, the following dimensions will be considered:

- **Depth of Knowledge:** Contribution to the field through publications, scholarly engagement, or recognised leadership.
- **Advanced Practice:** Demonstrated high-level professional roles, innovation, or impact in the discipline.
- **Teaching Experience:** Minimum five years of effective teaching in the higher education sector or equivalent.
- **Curriculum Design:** Experience in developing or delivering postgraduate content.
- **Recognition:** Industry awards, accreditations, keynote speaking, board memberships, or equivalent recognition.
- **Continued Professional Development:** Evidence of formal and informal learning aligned with AQF descriptors.

A formal Professional Equivalence Assessment Report must be completed and submitted to the Academic Board for endorsement.

Exceptional Considerations

The following categories of staff are exempt from the AQF+1 requirement, but must demonstrate relevant expertise:

1. **Guest Lecturers and Industry Experts:** Invited on an ad hoc basis to provide specialised insight that enhances student learning outcomes.
2. **Field Supervisors or Workplace Mentors:** Supporting students on placement but not responsible for course design or grading.
3. **Other exceptional cases,** as determined by the Dean and approved by the Academic Board, provided sufficient evidence is presented to demonstrate alignment with AQF learning outcome expectations for the relevant level.

Approval Process & Recordkeeping

- **Initial Recommendation:** Proposed by Dean or nominee at the time of recruitment or review.
- **Evidence Submission:** Candidate must submit a portfolio of evidence including CV, references, and professional achievements.
- **Assessment:** Completed using the TIIS Equivalence Assessment Template.

- **Governance Approval:** Endorsed by the Dean and approved by the Academic Board.
- **Documentation:** Stored in the HR system and academic staff qualification register for TEQSA compliance.

Related Policies and Documents

- Staff Handbook
- Scholarly Activity and Professional Development Policy
- Academic Promotions Policy
- Staff Equivalence of Academic Qualifications Policy
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (Cth)
- Australian Qualifications Framework (2nd ed., 2013)
- TEQSA Guidance Note: Academic Staffing (latest version)
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required due to changes in regulatory requirements or institutional priorities. All equivalence decisions are audited periodically by the **Academic Dean or delegate** to ensure consistency and compliance.

Version History

Policy title	Qualification Equivalence Policy
Current version	2.0
Previous Policies (if relevant)	A10 Qualification Equivalence Policy
Policy Approver	Academic Board
Date of Approval from Academic Board	28 th July 2025
Date of Creation	January 2025
Date of approval from Board of Directors	25 February 2026
Date of next review	3 Years from the Approval Date

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Academic Board	16 June 2017	
1.1	Academic Board	7 October 2020	Minor changes
2.0	Academic Board	26 February 2026	

*****END OF POLICY and PROCEDURE*****