

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION ACAF Academic Affairs		POLICY NUMBER ACAF 1.06
POLICY TITLE Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions		
SCOPE OF POLICY USC System	DATE OF REVISION February 24, 2025	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost	ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE Office of the Provost	

PURPOSE

This policy defines the academic titles authorized for faculty appointments and appointments of other academic personnel engaged in instruction, research and clinical activities for the University of South Carolina system.

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Faculty: University personnel who are engaged in research, instruction both inside and outside the classroom, service and/or administration. Faculty can be further classified as having tenure-track, professional-track, or honorific appointments.

Hiring authority - the individual who decides which candidate to hire and who is responsible for ensuring a fair and open search for a particular faculty position in accordance with university policies.

Unclassified academic staff –University personnel who are not appointed as faculty but are engaged in academic functions.

POLICY

Faculty and unclassified academic staff may only be appointed to positions using one of the academic titles specified below. Additionally, all university faculty and other academic personnel involved in instruction must meet the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) credential requirements for teaching at the appropriate level as outlined in policy [ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record](#). The hiring authority will confirm that the correct title is used and that the candidates meet the required criteria for appointment.

Academic personnel with responsibilities and/or credentials not included in this policy must be appointed in accordance with standard hiring guidelines of the Division of Human Resources. See also policy [HR 1.24 Appointment, Transfer, and Promotion of Classified, Research Grant, Time Limited or Unclassified Staff Employees](#).

A. Oversight and Approval

See policy [ACAF 1.00 Appointment and Recruitment of Tenured, Tenure-Track and Professional-Track Faculty](#) for complete information about recruitment and appointment of academic personnel.

1. The hiring authority must be identified prior to the initiation of recruitment for a faculty position at any level and named in the official search record.
 - a. At USC Columbia, the hiring authority for faculty positions is the dean of the college or school unless otherwise specified by the executive vice president for academic affairs and provost. The dean may delegate this responsibility or specific aspects of this responsibility in writing.
 - b. At the regional Palmetto College campuses, the hiring authority for faculty positions is the chancellor of Palmetto College unless otherwise specified by the president. The chancellor may delegate this responsibility or specific aspects of this responsibility in writing.
 - c. At comprehensive universities, the hiring authority for faculty positions is the executive or senior vice chancellor for academic affairs unless otherwise specified by the chancellor. The executive or senior vice chancellor may delegate this responsibility or specific aspects of this responsibility in writing.

2. Chief Academic Officer

The term "chief academic officer" is used throughout this policy and defined for each campus as follows:

- a. At USC Columbia, the chief academic officer is the executive vice president for academic affairs and provost.
- b. At the regional Palmetto College campuses, the chief academic officer is the chancellor of Palmetto College.
- c. At the comprehensive universities, the chief academic officer is the executive or senior vice chancellor for academic affairs unless otherwise specified by the chancellor.

B. Academic Titles for USC System

The following titles will be used for all faculty and unclassified academic staff positions across the USC system. The definitions of these roles will vary by campus and are outlined in Section C. below.

1. Tenure-Track Faculty Titles
 - Professor
 - Associate Professor
 - Assistant Professor
 - Librarian (USC Columbia only)

- Associate Librarian
- Assistant Librarian
- Assistant Professor, Associate Professor or Professor of Library Science (comprehensive universities only)
- Assistant Professor, Associate Professor or Professor (Library faculty on regional Palmetto College campuses only)

2. Professional -Track Faculty Titles

- Principal Instructor or Principal Lecturer
- Senior Instructor or Senior Lecturer
- Instructor or Lecturer
- Instructor Librarian
- Legal Writing Instructor
- Professor, Part-Time
- Associate Professor, Part-Time
- Assistant Professor, Part-Time
- Clinical Professor
- Clinical Associate Professor
- Clinical Assistant Professor
- Principal Clinical Instructor or Principal Clinical Lecturer
- Clinical Senior Instructor or Clinical Senior Lecturer
- Clinical Instructor or Clinical Lecturer
- Research Professor
- Research Associate Professor
- Research Assistant Professor
- Professor of Practice
- Teaching Professor
- Teaching Associate Professor
- Teaching Assistant Professor

3. Honorific and Temporary Titles

- Visiting Professor
- Visiting Associate Professor
- Visiting Assistant Professor
- Adjunct Professor
- Adjunct Associate Professor
- Adjunct Assistant Professor
- Adjunct Instructor
- Librarian Emeritus/Emerita
- Distinguished Professor Emeritus/Emerita
- Professor Emeritus/Emerita
- Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus/Emerita

- Distinguished Clinical Professor Emeritus/Emerita
- Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus/Emerita
- Research Professor Emeritus/Emerita
- Clinical Professor Emeritus/Emerita
- Teaching Professor Emeritus/Emerita
- Endowed Chair Emeritus/Emerita or Named Professorship Emeritus/Emerita

4. Unclassified Academic Staff Titles

- University-Supported Post-Doctoral Fellow
- Fellowship-Supported Post-Doctoral Fellow
- Academic Affiliate
- Academic Program Director
- Academic Program Manager
- Teaching Associate
- Senior Teaching Associate
- Research Associate
- Senior Research Associate
- Master Teacher I
- Master Teacher II
- Post-Doctoral Fellow
- Assistant Scientist
- Associate Scientist
- Scientist
- Senior Scientist

C. Descriptions and Minimum Qualifications for Academic Appointments

The academic titles listed in Section B above are defined by institution as outlined below.

1. Comprehensive Universities

All positions on the comprehensive campuses will follow definitions outlined in their respective [Faculty Manuals](#).

2. Palmetto College Campuses

Tenure-track faculty positions on the regional Palmetto College campuses will follow the definitions outlined in the Palmetto College Campuses [Faculty Manual](#).

All other faculty positions, professional-track faculty positions and other unclassified academic staff positions on the Palmetto College campuses will follow the definitions outlined below in policy section C.3.b - f.

3. USC Columbia

All faculty and unclassified academic staff positions at USC Columbia will follow the definitions outlined below.

a. Tenure-Track Faculty

Tenure-Track appointments are regular, full-time faculty appointments of individuals who have an earned doctorate or a terminal degree unless otherwise noted below.

- i. Professor: To be eligible for appointment at the rank of professor, a faculty member must have a record of superior performance usually involving both teaching and research, or creativity or performance in the arts, or recognized professional contributions. The faculty member normally is expected to hold the earned doctoral degree and have at least nine years of effective, relevant experience. Professors are eligible for tenure. Upon approval by the Board of Trustees, the title Distinguished Professor shall be awarded to tenured professors who do not hold endowed or named professorships in their final year of service.
- ii. Associate Professor: To be eligible for appointment at the rank of associate professor, a faculty member must have a record of strong performance usually involving both teaching and research, or creativity or performance in the arts, or recognized professional contributions. The faculty member normally is expected to hold the earned doctoral degree and must possess strong potential for further development as a teacher and scholar. Associate professors are eligible for tenure.
- iii. Assistant Professor: To be eligible for appointment at the rank of assistant professor, a faculty member normally is expected to hold the earned doctoral degree or its equivalent and must possess strong potential for development as a teacher and scholar. Assistant professors in the tenure track are not eligible for tenure; however, service under such an appointment is considered part of the probationary period for tenure consideration.
- iv. Librarian: An individual appointed at the rank of Librarian will usually have a terminal degree in a specific field and a master's degree in library science, and strong potential for effective professional service. Librarians are eligible for tenure. This title may be expanded to Assistant Librarian or Associate Librarian as appropriate to the status of the individual.

b. Professional-Track Faculty Titles and Qualifications

Professional-track faculty are appointed on an annual or multi-year basis. Service in a non-tenure-track appointment is not considered part of a probationary period for tenure consideration. See also policy ACAF 1.16 Professional-Track Faculty.

Professional-track faculty have highly varied responsibilities across the university as indicated by titles, qualifications, and workload distribution. This section presents titles

and qualifications associated with FTE positions, although the same titles and qualifications may apply to non-FTE positions. Qualifications for appointment, set forth below, are not intended as justification for automatic promotion; conversely, justified exceptions may be made.

i. Instructional Faculty

The primary responsibility of an individual appointed as an instructor, lecturer or teaching professor is teaching; however, other duties may be assigned. Instructional faculty appointments are regular, full-time, or part-time appointments of individuals of substantial professional caliber to supervise and instruct students in classroom or laboratory settings and/or to engage in practice and outreach and/or have substantial professional caliber to administer academic programs and other administrative activities.

- Teaching Professor
 1. Teaching Professor: An individual appointed as a Teaching Professor must have a record of excellent instruction and student mentorship as defined by the academic unit and at least nine years of effective, relevant experience. This rank is reserved for individuals with proven stature in instructional roles. A terminal degree is required, usually an earned doctorate.
 2. Teaching Associate Professor: An individual appointed as a Teaching Associate Professor must have a record of effective professional performance as defined by the academic unit, have at least five years of effective, relevant experience, and have strong potential for further development as an instructor and student mentor. A terminal degree is required, usually an earned doctorate.
 3. Teaching Assistant Professor: . An individual appointed as a Teaching Assistant Professor must have strong potential for development as an instructor and student mentor. A terminal degree is required, usually an earned doctorate
- Instructor/Lecturer
 1. Principal Instructor or Principal Lecturer: Promotion to principal instructor or principal lecturer requires the equivalent of nine years of full-time teaching experience and a record of excellent instruction as defined by the academic unit. A master's degree in the teaching discipline or a master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline) is required.
 2. Senior Instructor or Senior Lecturer: An individual appointed as or promoted to the rank of Senior Instructor or Senior Lecturer must have the equivalent of five years of full-time teaching experience in higher

education

3. Instructor or Lecturer: To be eligible for appointment at the rank of instructor, a faculty member normally is expected to possess a master's degree in the teaching discipline or a master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline).
4. Instructor Librarian: An individual appointed as an instructor librarian will usually possess a terminal degree in a library-related discipline and is expected to perform the responsibilities of librarianship and instruction.
5. Legal Writing Instructor: An individual appointed as Legal Writing Instructor is expected to possess at least a juris doctor degree.

ii. Clinical Faculty

Clinical Faculty appointments are regular, full-time or part-time appointments of individuals of substantial professional caliber to supervise and instruct students in clinical, field, classroom, or laboratory settings, and/or to engage in practice and outreach, and/or have substantial professional caliber to administer academic programs and other administrative activities. Clinical Faculty usually have an earned medical or terminal degree unless noted below. The education, certification, and licensure of an individual must meet the minimum regulatory requirements of the respective accrediting agency or board. The accrediting organization must be recognized by the U. S. Department of Education. According to individual circumstances, faculty in these positions may or may not be salaried.

For the Schools of Medicine, clinical providers who are employed by an affiliated health system may be appointed as clinical faculty, contingent on satisfying the above general qualifications and following rank-specific qualifications.

- **Clinical Professor**

1. Clinical Professor: An individual appointed as a Clinical Professor must have a record of outstanding professional performance as defined by the academic unit, and have at least nine years of effective, relevant professional experience. This rank is reserved for individuals with proven stature as a clinician or practitioner. A terminal degree is required, usually an earned doctorate and/or MD degree.
2. Clinical Associate Professor: An individual appointed as a Clinical Associate Professor must have a record of effective, relevant professional performance as defined by the academic unit, have at least five years of effective, relevant professional experience, and have strong potential for

further development as a clinician or practitioner. A terminal degree is required, usually an earned doctorate and/or MD degree.

3. **Clinical Assistant Professor:** An individual appointed as a Clinical Assistant Professor must have strong potential for development as a clinician or practitioner. A terminal degree is required, usually an earned doctorate and/or MD degree.
- **Clinical Instructor / Lecturer**
 1. **Principal Clinical Instructor or Principal Clinical Lecturer:** The title of principal clinical instructor or principal clinical lecturer requires the equivalent of nine years of full-time relevant clinical, practice and/or teaching experience and a record of excellent performance as defined by the academic unit in the areas of responsibility. A master's degree in the teaching discipline or a master's degree with a concentration in the teaching discipline (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline) is required.
 2. **Clinical Senior Instructor or Clinical Senior Lecturer:** An individual appointed as or promoted to the rank of Clinical Senior Instructor or Clinical Senior Lecturer must have a minimum of five years of higher education experience
 3. **Clinical Instructor or Clinical Lecturer:** An individual appointed as a Clinical Instructor or Clinical Lecturer is expected to possess at least a master's degree in the teaching discipline or at least a master's degree with a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline.

iii. Research Faculty

Research faculty appointments are regular, full-time or part-time appointments of individuals with research expertise, experience and evidence of scholarly accomplishment. Research faculty will be engaged primarily in independent research such as serving as principal investigator or co-principal investigator on externally funded research and having significant refereed publications. Research faculty should have a terminal degree, usually the earned doctorate.

1. **Research Professor:** An individual appointed as a research professor must be recognized internationally/nationally in their field and have at least nine years of effective, relevant experience. This rank is reserved for individuals with proven stature in research.
2. **Research Associate Professor:** An individual appointed as a research associate professor must have an established reputation in their field, at least five years

of effective, relevant experience, and demonstrate potential for further development.

3. Research Assistant Professor: An individual appointed as a research assistant professor must have research expertise in their field. This position may not be used as a substitute for post-doctoral fellow positions. (See also Section I.C.3.d. Post-Doctoral Fellows.)

iv. Professor of Practice

A Professor of Practice appointment is a full-time or part-time appointment of an individual engaged in instruction, creative work, and leadership in professional practice. The individual must have a proven reputation in professional achievement and expertise, experience, and international/national recognition in their professional field. Professors of Practice usually have a master's degree in the teaching discipline or a master's degree with a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline. The title of Professor of Practice is used only on rare occasions and must have prior approval, through academic channels, of the president.

v. Part-Time Faculty

These titles are only used for tenured faculty who move off the tenure track and become part-time, in accordance with policy [ACAF 1.18 Change of Status between Tenure Track and Professional Track](#). **These titles cannot be used for appointment of temporary faculty.**

1. Professor, Part-Time: The requirements are the same as for the title of Professor, but the individual is appointed on a part-time basis. Part-time Professors are not eligible for tenure, and tenured Professors who become part-time relinquish their tenure.
2. Associate Professor, Part-Time: The requirements are the same as for the title of Associate Professor, but the individual is appointed on a part-time basis. Part-time Associate Professors are not eligible for tenure, and tenured Associate Professors who become part-time relinquish their tenure.
3. Assistant Professor, Part-Time: The requirements are the same as for the title of Assistant Professor, but the individual is appointed on a part-time basis. Part-time Assistant Professors are not eligible for tenure.

c. Honorific and Temporary Faculty Titles

i. Temporary Faculty

An individual may be hired into any of the Professional –track titles on a temporary

basis in accordance with policies [HR 1.24 Appointment, Transfer and Promotion of Classified, Research Grant, Time Limited or Unclassified Staff Employees](#) and [ACAF 1.16 Professional-Track Faculty](#). Temporary faculty may be hired for no more than one academic year. All temporary faculty must meet the minimum credential requirements of the title or position. Temporary faculty are normally part-time but can be hired full-time on an emergency basis (see policies [ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-track, and Professional-track Faculty](#) and [ACAF 1.16 Professional-track Faculty](#)).

ii. Visiting Faculty

A Visiting Faculty appointment is a full-time appointment, usually for no more than two years, of an individual who has either academic rank or high professional status at a different institution or organization and is on leave of absence from their home organization or is qualified for but does not currently serve in an academic position. This title may be expanded to Visiting Assistant Professor, Visiting Associate Professor, or Visiting Professor as appropriate to the status of the individual.

iii. Adjunct faculty

An individual appointed as an adjunct faculty member serves as an honorary member of the faculty of a department, school, or college. This title may be expanded to adjunct instructor, adjunct assistant professor, adjunct associate professor, or adjunct professor as appropriate to the status of the individual. An adjunct faculty member may be a University of South Carolina faculty member or an individual from another institution. Depending on circumstances, adjunct faculty members may or may not be salaried. Typically, salaried adjunct faculty are employed as temporary faculty. If not a USC employee, the individual should be appointed as an academic affiliate (see policy [UNIV 2.50 Affiliate Appointments](#)).

iv. Faculty Emeriti

The titles below may be awarded only when formally requested and approved by the chief academic officer of the faculty member's academic unit, the president and the Board of Trustees. The Office of the Provost coordinates the review and approval of requests for the titles below for the university system.

1. Librarian Emeritus/Emerita: The title normally shall be conferred on any tenured librarian at the time of retirement.
2. Distinguished Professor Emeritus/Emerita:
 - a. The title *Distinguished Professor* shall be awarded to tenured professors who do not hold named or chaired professorships in their final year of service.

- b. Upon retirement, this title shall change to *Distinguished Professor Emeritus/Emerita*.
 - 3. Professor Emeritus/Emerita: The title normally shall be conferred on any tenured assistant or associate professor at the time of retirement.
 - 4. Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus/Emerita, Distinguished Clinical Professor Emeritus/Emerita or Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus/Emerita:
 - a. The title *Distinguished Research Professor, Distinguished Clinical Professor or Distinguished Teaching Professor* shall be awarded to those who do not hold named or chaired professorships in their final year of service.
 - b. Upon retirement, this title shall change to *Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus/Emerita, Distinguished Clinical Professor Emeritus/Emerita or Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus/Emerita*.
 - 5. Research Professor Emeritus/Emerita, Clinical Professor Emeritus/Emerita or Teaching Professor Emeritus/Emerita: The title normally may be conferred on any research, clinical or teaching assistant or associate professor at the time of retirement.
 - 6. Endowed Chairs and Named Professorships: Individuals who retire from the University while they are chair holders may have the title Emeritus/Emerita conferred. See also policy ACAF 1.21 Appointment and Review of Endowed Chairs and Named Professorships.
- d. Unclassified Academic Staff Titles

The unclassified academic staff positions defined below may be appointed on a permanent or temporary basis (annual or multi-year). Service under such appointments is not considered part of a probationary period for tenure consideration.

- 1. University-supported Post-Doctoral Fellows: Post-Doctoral Fellows employed as university employees, i.e., as unclassified academic staff, supported by University funds and extramural contracts, and/or grants.
- 2. Fellowship-supported Post-Doctoral Fellows: Post-Doctoral Fellows directly supported by fellowships from an external agency are not considered to be University employees.
- 3. Academic Affiliates: Individuals appointed as affiliates are engaged by the University to participate in activities or functions, or are recognized for their

contribution to the University, and receive no remuneration from the University. See also policy UNIV 2.50 Affiliate Appointments.

4. Academic Program Director: Individuals appointed to this position serve as manager/director of larger academic, administrative or institutional programs under academic oversight. Responsibilities include program operations, management and technological services.
5. Academic Program Manager: Individuals appointed to this position serve as manager/director of smaller academic, administrative or institutional programs under academic oversight. Responsibilities include program operations, management and technological services.
6. Teaching Associate: An individual appointed as a Teaching Associate must have no less than a bachelor's degree. The title of Teaching Associate is to be used only for individuals whose primary duty is teaching non-credit courses.
7. Senior Teaching Associate: Initial appointments may not be made into this title. An individual promoted to the title of Senior Teaching Associate must have a master's degree and have held the title of Teaching Associate at the University of South Carolina for a minimum of six consecutive years. Promotion from the title of Teaching Associate must be approved through appropriate channels.
8. Research Associate: An individual appointed as a Research Associate must have no less than a master's degree. Research Associates plan and conduct research, training projects, and/or community-based service projects.
9. Senior Research Associate: An individual appointed as a Senior Research Associate must have all of the qualifications of the Research Associate with a minimum of five years of experience in the research field.
10. Master Teacher I: An individual appointed as a Master Teacher I must have a minimum of a Child Development Associate Credential or an equivalent child development credential. Master Teacher I's assist lead teachers in the Children's Center at the University of South Carolina.
11. Master Teacher II: An individual appointed as a Master Teacher II must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field. A master's degree in Early Childhood Education is desired but not required. Master Teacher II's are lead teachers who plan, develop, and manage classroom activities in the Children's Center at the University of South Carolina.
12. Post-Doctoral Fellows: A Post-Doctoral Fellow is an individual who has received the terminal degree, usually the earned doctorate, in his or her discipline and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or

her chosen career path. Appointment is on an annual or multi-year basis and service under such an appointment is not considered part of a probationary period for tenure consideration.

PROCEDURES

A. Procedures for Comprehensive Universities

Comprehensive campuses will implement this policy using campus-specific policies and procedures as outlined in their respective [Faculty Manuals](#).

B. Procedures for USC Columbia and Palmetto College Campuses

1. Responsible Units

- a. Units hiring faculty and other academic personnel involved in instruction, research and clinical activities must use the academic titles defined in this policy on all Human Resources documentation.
- b. Units within campuses, colleges and schools including departments, all human resources officers throughout the system, the office of the chief academic officer, and the office of Palmetto College should confirm that the correct title has been used and the candidates meet the required criteria for each hire.
- c. The Division of Human Resources will process only personnel forms using academic titles found on this list. All exceptions must be approved in writing by the campus chief academic officer or designee. The written approval should accompany the related personnel forms submitted to Human Resources for processing.

2. Written Criteria in Academic Units

- a. Tenuring units will have written and approved tenure and promotion criteria for tenure-track faculty in accordance with the *Faculty Manual*.
- b. At USC Columbia, colleges and schools must have written criteria and internal procedures for promotion of professional-track faculty in accordance with policy ACAF 1.16 Professional-Track Faculty. Additionally, colleges and schools must have written review criteria and internal procedures for all other non-tenure-track positions.

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

[USC Columbia Faculty Manual](#)

[USC Palmetto College Campuses Faculty Manual](#)

[USC Aiken Faculty Manual](#)

[USC Beaufort Faculty Manual](#)

[USC Upstate Faculty Manual](#)

[ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Professional-Track Faculty](#)

[ACAF 1.01 Recruitment and Appointment of Academic Administrators](#)

[ACAF 1.16 Professional-Track Faculty](#)

[ACAF 1.18 Change in Status between Tenure Track and Professional Track](#)

[ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record](#)

[CR 1.00 Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#)

[CR 2.00 Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#)

[HR 1.24 Appointment, Transfer and Promotion of Classified, Research Grant, Time Limited or Unclassified Staff Employees](#)

[HR 1.87 Unclassified Staff Researcher Positions](#)

[HR 1.90 Job Reference and Background Checks](#)

[UNIV 2.00 Freedom of Information Policy](#)

[UNIV 2.50 Affiliate Appointments](#)

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
February 1, 1995	New policy approval
March 24, 2016	Policy revised to update titles.
May 5, 2017	Policy revised to update titles, reference related policy, ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record, and to remove outdated procedures regarding SACSCOC Faculty Roster responsibilities.
June 3, 2021	Reformatting to new template; change non-tenure-track to professional track and update position titles and descriptions.
August 8, 2022	Clarification of temporary faculty
August 15, 2023	Titles updated to reflect new HR 1.87 policy
February 24, 2025	Titles updated per State Human Resources Guidelines.