

# North Dakota State University

## Policy Manual

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### SECTION 339

#### NDSU POLICY ON COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY

SOURCE: Faculty Senate Policy  
SBHE Policy Manual, Section 609  
N.D.C.C. Section 15-10-13.1

1. PURPOSE: NDSU has established a process for verifying communication skills for all personnel whose appointments include classroom instruction. Communication, both oral and written, is, by definition, an interchange involving both the sender and the receiver. The policy affirms the university commitment to cultural diversity, as articulated by the NDSU mission statement and general education outcomes.

The policy is supportive of all NDSU instructional personnel and their efforts to continuously improve their communication skills.

2. PROCESS AND STANDARDS FOR VALIDATING AND ASSESSING PROFICIENCY

- 2.1 New Faculty and Other Instructional Staff:

Every faculty recruiting committee will include faculty from the unit and at least one student. A unit may wish to include both an undergraduate and a graduate student on the committee. The minimum qualifications for the position will include "effective oral and written communication skills." To assist the recruiting committee, each unit must have procedures for obtaining faculty and student input concerning communication proficiency of each candidate who is formally interviewed. Faculty involvement should be unit wide at this point in the process. Student(s) should be selected by the unit and should be representative of the type(s) of student(s) that the candidate will be teaching if he/she is hired. Comments and evaluations concerning communication proficiency received by the recruiting committee from faculty and students from the unit should be stated on the interview form. Academic Deans will verify that these procedures have been followed prior to forwarding a Request to Offer.

- 2.1.1 Validating written communication proficiency:

Candidates who are formally interviewed must provide materials suitable for evaluating written communication proficiency. Such materials should include a letter of application and samples of their written work(s). In addition, the recruiting committee may wish to specifically request that letters of reference include comments concerning communication.

Members of the recruiting committee, with assistance from faculty and students as described above, will use categories of excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory in evaluating written communication proficiency. An overall rating of satisfactory is considered to be a minimal qualification.

- 2.1.2 Validating spoken communication proficiency:

Candidates who are formally interviewed will make an oral presentation suitable for evaluating communication proficiency. Members of the recruiting committee, with assistance from faculty and students as described above, will use categories of excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory in evaluating spoken communication proficiency. An overall rating of satisfactory is considered to be a minimal qualification.

## 2.2 Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs):

Before an academic unit assigns a teaching responsibility to a graduate student (or an undergraduate student in unusual cases), the Graduate School and University requirements described below must be met. There may be additional requirements in units with special needs.

### 2.2.1 Comprehensive English Language Proficiency:

All potential teaching assistants whose first language is not English must submit evidence of comprehensive English language proficiency. Evidence may consist of the results from a standardized test of English language proficiency. Specific requirements will be determined by the NDSU Graduate School and posted in the *Graduate Bulletin*.

### 2.2.2 Requirements for spoken communications proficiency:

All potential teaching assistants whose first language is not English must provide evidence of spoken communication proficiency in the English language. Evidence may consist of the results from a standardized test of English spoken language proficiency. Specific requirements will be determined by the NDSU Graduate School and posted in the *Graduate Bulletin*.

### 2.2.3 Requirements for written communication proficiency:

All potential teaching assistants must provide evidence of their proficiency in written communication skills in the English Language. Evidence may consist of previous coursework in the English composition or technical writing, the results of a standardized test of English written language proficiency, or successful completion of an intensive English language program. Specific requirements will be determined by the NDSU Graduate School and posted in the *Graduate Bulletin*.

## 2.3 Temporary Instructional Staff:

Departments/units are responsible for determining and documenting the communication proficiency of temporary or part-time instructional staff who are not hired through an open search process (see Section 1 above).

## 3. DETERMINATION OF PROFICIENCY PRIOR TO EMPLOYMENT:

As described within Section 2, potential teaching assistants and faculty are evaluated for proficiency prior to employment.

## 4. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY

Each NDSU instructor is evaluated annually within the unit in which he/she works, using specific procedures developed within the unit. The head of the unit is always involved, but others may be involved as well.

Instruction in all NDSU courses are assessed each term as described in NDSU [Policy 332](#). In general, annual evaluation procedures within units must include quantitative assessment measures and should include the student evaluation information.

Other procedures that units might employ in evaluation of communication proficiency include classroom visits, consideration of materials generated for classroom use and other purposes, seminars and other presentations, and solicitation of input from peers and students. Based on the results of the evaluation within the unit, an instructor may choose to or be required to participate in an improvement program.

The University is continuously engaged in programs and mechanisms to improve communication proficiency. Example means of improvement may include:

- Mentoring
- Workshops sponsored by various offices and campus organizations
- Personal and professional development materials and initiatives
- Programs led by persons with training in improving articulation, intonation, rhythm, and other presentation skills
- Programs led by persons with training in diminishing accents, stuttering, stress, and other barriers to effective presentation

## 5. REGISTRATION OF CONCERNS

The resolution of conflicts concerning communication proficiency is best solved as close to the source as possible. Students are urged to contact the instructor to discuss concerns. If the conflict cannot be resolved with the instructor, the student may meet with the chair of the department, the dean of the college, and the Provost or designee. Administrators who receive formal complaints must respond and take appropriate action within 15 days. Students should move from one level to another only if an acceptable resolution cannot be reached at the lower level.

The ultimate responsibility for the resolution of such complaints will reside with the Office of the Provost. This office will be responsible for verifying the appropriate remedial action, if needed, is carried out.

## 6. REVIEWING EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY

This policy will be reviewed periodically but at an interval of not less than every two years by the Office of the Provost.

## 7. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS

Employees who feel that they may have been discriminated against by the application of this policy may file a complaint with the Equity Office, per Policy 156: Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Complaint Procedures.

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HISTORY:

New	June 1994
Amended	May 2004
Amended	March 2006
Amended	October 2007
Housekeeping	February 14, 2011
Amended	February 20, 2019