

East Tennessee State University
Official Transcript Policy
Faculty and Administrative/Academic Officers

Degree verification is a mandate of our accrediting agencies, but it is also our obligation based on our commitment to quality academic instruction and research, stewardship of resources and the integrity of all educational processes. The Tennessee State Legislature has acknowledged the seriousness of this responsibility by imposing criminal penalties for the misrepresentation of academic credentials.

East Tennessee State University requires official transcripts for its faculty, administrative and academic officers, and a number of professional staff. An official transcript is required for any position listing a college degree or experience as an employment qualification.

Verification of education, documented by official transcripts serves as a safeguard in meeting accreditation standards, principally those of the Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Discipline accreditation is contingent on the university's approved regional accreditation.

Additionally, the university is protected by Tennessee Code Annotated (Sec 49-7-133) that makes misrepresenting academic credentials a misdemeanor. Official transcripts serve as the documentation of valid and acceptable credentials.

ETSU Condition of Employment

Official Transcripts should be attached to appointment/hiring forms. If not, the hiring administrator verifies that an official transcript has been requested. Employment is conditioned on submission of appropriate transcript information.

Contractual Appointments state the official transcript requirement. The prospective employee is the responsible party for providing the transcript prior to commencing employment. The employee signs the contract and thereby acknowledges the obligation to see that the Office of Human Resources has an official transcript on file. Appointment letters for positions requiring official transcripts affirm this pre-condition of employment.

Relevant Forms for all hires and contacts iterate the requirement for official transcripts.

SACS Standards

Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1 The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the

institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. (See *Commission guidelines "Faculty Credentials."*) (Faculty competence)

Comprehensive Standard 3.2.8 The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience, competence, and capacity to lead the institution.

Comprehensive Standard 3.8.3 The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution. (Qualified staff)

Comprehensive Standard 3.9.3 The institution employs qualified personnel to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its student affairs programs. (Qualified staff)

Tennessee Law

Misrepresentation of Academic Credentials T.C.A. Sec. 49-7-133 It is a Class A misdemeanor to misrepresent academic credentials. A person commits the offense of misrepresentation of academic credentials who, knowing that the statement is false and with the intent to secure employment at or admission to an institution of higher education in Tennessee, represents, orally or in writing that such person:

- (1) Has successfully completed the required coursework for and has been awarded one (1) or more degrees or diplomas from an accredited institution of higher education;
- (2) Has successfully completed the required coursework for and has been awarded one (1) or more degrees for diplomas from a particular institution of higher education; or
- (3) Has successfully completed the required coursework for and has been awarded one (1) or more degrees or diplomas in a particular field or specialty from an accredited institution of higher education.

Employment Requirement and Individual Responsibility

Employment at ETSU requires official transcripts for any position that requires a college degree: faculty, administrative/academic officers, and appropriate staff. Official transcripts from regionally accredited institutions or comparably recognized non-U.S. institutions document required academic degrees. Official transcripts are housed in the ETSU Office of Human Resources.

The employee has the ultimate responsibility for ordering an official transcript and verifying it is on file in the Office of Human Resources. A condition precedent to any appointment is the presentation of appropriate transcripts to the Office of Human Resources.

Timeline

Review and verification of credentials are part of the employment process. Generally, official transcripts are received at the time of hire. At times, extenuating circumstances preclude receipt at that time. Personnel are advised in appointment letters that the

appointment is conditional and subject to revocation for failure to comply with this requirement not later than two months from the initial date of employment.

Individual Responsibility and Accountability

Official transcripts must be on file (with the Office of Human Resources) and noted as *transcript on file* in Banner no later than **two** months (60 calendar days) after the initial hire date for all employees for whom transcripts are required, including adjunct and regular employees. If this condition of employment is not fulfilled, the contract is nullified. The individual will not be rehired or another contract will not be renewed. Faculty will be allowed to finish the current semester of instruction.

Human Resources Responsibility and Accountability

The Office of Human Resources is responsible for receiving and housing official transcripts of employees and noting *transcript on file* in Banner. That office is also responsible for notifying vice presidents of faculty or staff that have not complied with the official transcript requirement so that employees can be notified of non-renewal of contracts. The Office of Human Resources will supply reports regarding missing official transcripts on e-print (Banner HR Campus repository folder) at the first of each month. Offices of Vice Presidents, Deans/Directors, and departments will have access to these reports.

The Office of Human Resources will inform University Counsel when official transcripts have not been received.

Once *transcript on file* is noted in Banner for individuals, it is incumbent upon the Office of Human Resources to safeguard the official transcripts. Later, in the event an official transcript is not in an individual's file, the Office of Human Resources has the ultimate responsibility to facilitate the receipt of another official transcript and pay for it.

Supervisory Responsibility and Accountability

Supervisors (Vice Presidents, Deans/Directors, and Chairs) are responsible for reviewing the monthly reports. At the conclusion of the sixty-day grace period and no later than the close of the semester, the Supervisor must verify that the transcript or other satisfactory documentation has been received by Human Resources. If satisfactory documentation has not been received, the employee will be notified by the Office of Human Resources, after review by University Counsel, that the condition precedent of the employment contract has not been fulfilled and that the employment relationship has terminated effective immediately.

Exceptions to Official (hard copy) Transcripts

- If a regionally accredited university has modified its official transcript process to include electronic transmission, the printed transcript and transmittal email sent to the Office of Human Resources from the awarding university will be placed in the employee's transcript file and *transcript on file* in Banner would be affirmative.

- If an official transcript is unavailable for any reason (i.e., records have been destroyed), an official letter stating that an official transcript cannot be furnished is required from the awarding university, if still in existence. The letter will be placed in the employee's transcript file and *transcript on file* in Banner would be affirmative.
- If an official transcript is unavailable from an institution no longer in existence, certified credentials from a credential verification service [e.g., Federation Credentials Verification Service (FCVS)] will be accepted. This paperwork will be placed in the employee's transcript file and *transcript on file* in Banner would be affirmative.
- If a transcript is stamped *Issued to Student*, the transcript must be in a sealed envelope from the school when received by The Office of Human Resources. Human Resources staff will date stamp the receipt, initial if the transcript is acceptable, and place it in the employee's transcript file. *Transcript on file* in Banner would be affirmative.
- If an employee has the original transcript (not *Issued to Student*) and another cannot be obtained, the employee must bring the transcript to the Office of Human Resources. A copy will be made and notarized that it is a true copy of the original. The notarized copy will be placed in the employee's transcript file and *transcript on file* in Banner would be affirmative. The employee would maintain the original.
- If an employee attended a university in a foreign country, certified credentials from a credential verification service [e.g., Federation Credentials Verification Service (FCVS)] will be accepted. This paperwork will be placed in the employee's transcript file and *transcript on file* in Banner would be affirmative.
- If an instructor of record is a graduate assistant or tuition scholar assigned as a Teaching Associate, a copy of the official transcript will be accepted from the School of Graduate Studies. The verified copy will be placed in the transcript file and *transcript on file* in Banner would be affirmative. The School of Graduate Studies will copy the official transcript, stamp "Copied from Official Transcript" on the copy, sign and date it.

Approved at President's Council, November 10, 2010