

Teacher Certification and HQ with regards to the SC Charter School Law

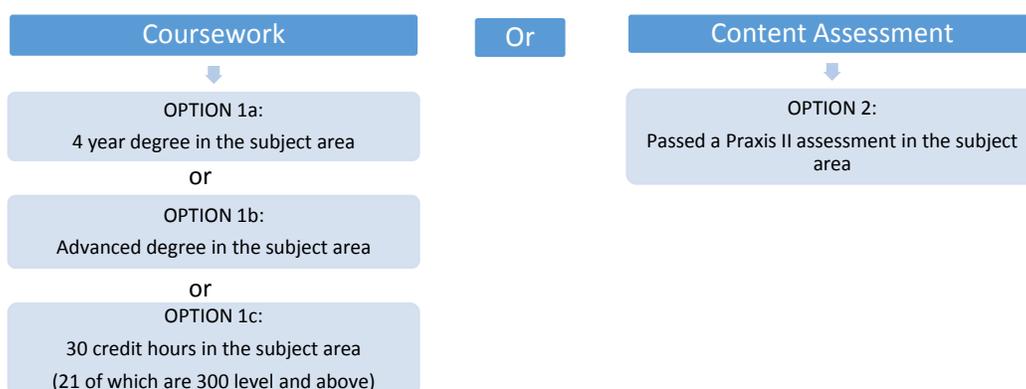
A flexibility overview for school leaders.

According to the [59-40-50 \(5\)](#) of the SC Charter School Law, which pertains to teacher certification and flexibility, charter schools (non-conversion schools) must, at a minimum, have 75% of their core classes taught by appropriately certified and highly qualified teachers. In addition, the SC Charter school law provides flexibility for charter schools to allow up to 25% of its core courses to be taught by teachers who are noncertified or who are certified, but are not highly qualified in the subject area(s) to which they teach. As per the South Carolina Department of Education, Office of Federal and State Accountability, these teachers need to **demonstrate content knowledge** for each core class to which they are the teacher of record. If content knowledge can be demonstrated, the teacher is considered, per the SC Charter School Law, “allowable to teach that particular course.”

Core Courses - The core academic subjects are: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics, government, economics, history, geography, dance, art, and music.

Demonstrating Content Knowledge – It is the interpretation of the South Carolina Department of Education, Office of Federal and State Accountability that in addition to holding a 4 year degree, the charter school teacher must demonstrate content knowledge by meeting one of the options listed below. Content knowledge can be demonstrated either through previous coursework or through passing a content specific examination ([Praxis II](#)).

Demonstration of Content Knowledge (in addition to holding a 4 year degree in *any* subject)



Special education, early childhood and elementary teachers need 30 semester hours in each of the four core subject areas taught in self-contained classrooms, e.g. math, science, social studies and language arts. However, there are teachers who might have the hours in one of the four areas, such as language arts. That teacher could be HQ to only instruct language arts classes for the appropriate students. At times, this is relevant to special education teachers or specialists who only instruct one subject area in lower grades. Additionally, for special education, early childhood and elementary teachers, the only current option for those areas of certification is the PRAXIS II. Certified special education teachers who wish to teach elementary students must take the elementary PRAXIS II.

Documentation: For teachers who fall under the 25% flexibility allowance, evidence of a 4 year degree and evidence of content knowledge must be on file with the [SC Licensure Office](#).

Examples:

1. Teacher A is teaching a high school English course in a charter school, but is not certified. However, Teacher A holds a 4 year degree in English. Since Teacher A has a 4 year degree in a subject that s/he is teaching, **Teacher A has demonstrated content knowledge**, therefore its allowable* (for up to 25% of the school’s courses).
2. Teacher B is teaching a middle school English course in a charter school, but is not certified. Teacher B has a 4 year degree in marketing. Teacher B has also taken and passed the Praxis II exam (English Language Arts: Content and Analysis – 5039). Since Teacher B has a 4 year degree and has passed the Praxis II subject exam in the area that s/he is teaching, **Teacher B has demonstrated content knowledge**, therefore is allowable* (for up to 25% of the school’s courses).
3. Teacher C, an international teacher from Spain, is teaching a high school Spanish course in a charter school, but is certified and highly qualified in South Carolina in the area of math. Other than the required documents for her certification in math, there are no other documents on file at the SC Licensure Office. Since Teacher C does not have any evidence of content knowledge for Spanish (no coursework for Spanish or exam for Spanish), Teacher C **has not demonstrated content knowledge** in Spanish, therefore is not allowable. To become allowable, this teacher would, at a minimum, need to take and pass the Praxis II exam (Spanish: World Language – 5195).

*Any teacher in a South Carolina charter school who falls under the 25% rule, which means they are “allowable to teach that particular course per the SC Charter School Law,” is not considered highly qualified.

HQ Letter (Title I Schools only): For all Title I schools that have any core course taught by a non-HQ teacher (including the teachers that fall under the 25% rule) for longer than four weeks, must send [HQ letter](#) to the parents.