



## PEER REVIEWER ASSIGNMENTS

### Policy Change Adopted on Second Reading

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The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) adopted this policy on second reading at its meeting on February 27–28, 2020.

#### Background

The adopted change allows some additional flexibility to general rules prohibiting peer reviewers from being assigned to an evaluative or decision-making role other than for a Reaffirmation of Accreditation involving institutions they had previously evaluated or mentored in an HLC Academy. The policy previously prohibited reassigning a peer reviewer to these activities if the peer reviewer participated in an HLC evaluative activity not involving Reaffirmation of Accreditation, in an HLC decision-making body, or in an HLC Academy assignment concerning the same institution during the last three years. The adopted change allows HLC staff to exercise discretion in reassigning a peer reviewer to the same institution in the interest of promoting continuity through historical context. This change aligns the rules for this category of activities to a similar exception for reassigning a peer reviewer who participated in an institution’s comprehensive evaluation for Reaffirmation of Accreditation to the same institution’s mid-cycle review.

HLC circulated these policy changes to the membership and other interested parties after the Board’s November 2019 meeting. No comments were received.

#### Implementation

This policy is effective immediately.

#### Adopted Policy

Wording that was deleted or revised is shown as strikethrough (~~old wording~~); new language, whether through addition or revision, is shown in bold (**new wording**). These revisions have been made on HLC’s website at [hlcommission.org/policies](https://hlcommission.org/policies).

**Policy Title:** Peer Corps Members on HLC Evaluation Activities

**Number:** PEER.A.10.050

The Commission staff shall determine the specific number of peer reviewers comprising any evaluation activity following Commission policies related to the specific type of evaluation being conducted. The panel, committee, team or other evaluative group shall be large enough to make a thorough and professional evaluation of the particular institution. In composing the team or evaluative group, staff will weigh variables such as institutional mission, number of students served, number of degree levels offered, number of programs offered, breadth of services provided students and other constituencies, and number and type of off-campus offerings supported by the institution. Matters unique to a review (e.g., unusual new institutional dynamics, pending implementation of significant changes, response to alternative evaluation agreements) may add to the size of the group of peer reviewers conducting the review. Staff may also consider institutional requests for a large enough group of peer reviewers to ensure that specific institutional issues are addressed.

With the exception of allowing for one peer reviewer from a reaffirmation visit to be placed on the following mid-cycle review team for the purpose of improved historical context for the mid-cycle review, Commission staff shall not assign a peer reviewer who participated in a Commission comprehensive reaffirmation evaluation to another evaluative assignment at that same institution for a period of ten years.

**With the exception of where deemed appropriate for continuity purposes by Commission staff,** A peer reviewer who participated in a Commission panel or other evaluative activity not involving reaffirmation, in a Commission decision-making body, or in an Academy assignment may **not** be assigned to another evaluative or decision-making assignment at or regarding that same institution ~~after~~ **for** a period of three years. In addition, Commission staff has the discretion to exclude or remove from any evaluative activity, decision-making body or Academy assignment any peer reviewer who is employed by an institution on a Commission sanction or that has been the subject of a show-cause order or withdrawal action.

**Institutional Review of Peer Reviewers Identified for a Team.** The names of persons proposed by the Commission staff to compose a team to visit an institution will be submitted to the institution. The institution will be free to comment on the composition of the team, and staff will take such comments into consideration in completing the team. Should any changes in the team be necessary

after the initial team is set, the changes will be discussed with the institution by the staff, and institutional comments will be given consideration in making necessary changes.

The Commission reserves final responsibility and authority for composing teams that visit institutions as part of a Commission evaluation. In exercising that responsibility, the Commission has determined that issues of equity and diversity will be addressed as well as issues of institutional fit and educational and administrative emphases.

#### Policy Number Key

*Section PEER: Commitment to Peer Review*

*Chapter A: Policies Applicable to All Peer Reviewers*

*Part 10: General*

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*Last Revised: February 2020*

*First Adopted: February 1994*

*Revision History: October 2003, November 2012, June 2018, February 2020*

*Notes: Former policy number 6.7, 6.8*

*Related Policies:*