



## PEER REVIEWER ASSIGNMENTS

### Policy Change Approved on First Reading

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The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) approved this policy on first reading at its meeting on November 7–8, 2019.

#### Background

The proposed change would allow some flexibility to general rules prohibiting peer reviewers from being assigned to an evaluative or decision-making role involving institutions they had previously evaluated or mentored in an HLC Academy. The policy currently prohibits reassigning a peer reviewer to an evaluative or decision-making assignment concerning an institution if the peer reviewer participated in an HLC evaluative activity not involving Reaffirmation of Accreditation, or in an HLC decision-making body, or in an HLC Academy assignment concerning the same institution during the last three years. The proposed change represents an exception to the general rule that would allow HLC staff to exercise discretion in reassigning a peer reviewer to the same institution in the interest of promoting continuity through historical context. The policy already allows 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.

#### Comments Invited

HLC invites comments on this change before the Board takes final action at its meeting on February 27–28, 2020. Comments can be sent to [policycomments@hlcommission.org](mailto:policycomments@hlcommission.org). Comments are due by January 13, 2020.

#### Proposed Change

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**).

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 **for** ~~after~~ 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 History

*Last Revised: June 2018*

*First Adopted: February 1994*

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

*Notes: Former policy number 6.7, 6.8*

*Related Policies:*