



RULES REGARDING PRIOR PEER REVIEWER EVALUATION AND IAC DECISION-MAKING ACTIVITY

Policy Change Approved on First Reading

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) approved this policy on first reading at its meeting on June 23, 2022.

Background

HLC’s policies include requirements indicating when peer reviewers may be assigned to an evaluation of an institution after having previously participated in an evaluation or HLC Academy activity involving the same institution. The proposed policy changes would set similar requirements for members of the Institutional Actions Council (IAC). The changes would also indicate when peer reviewers and IAC members may be assigned to an evaluation or decision-making activity regarding an institution after having previously participated in an IAC decision-making activity involving the same institution.

Comments Invited

HLC invites comments on this change before the Board takes final action at its meeting on November 3–4, 2022. Comments can be sent to policycomments@hlcommission.org. Comments are due by September 19, 2022.

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: Institutional Actions Council

Number: INST.D.20.010

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Conflict of Interest

HLC expects that all IAC members will act with objectivity and without conflict of interest when participating in IAC activities.

HLC will not knowingly allow any IAC member to participate in discussions, recommendations, or actions where the IAC member has a conflict of interest that may cause the IAC member to lack objectivity, that may result in the appearance of bias, or that may otherwise call into question the integrity, fairness, or credibility of IAC processes.

IAC members will periodically be required to confirm their agreement to abide by the conflict of interest and objectivity requirements for IAC members set forth by HLC.

IAC members will also periodically be required to disclose specific circumstances that may result in a conflict of interest. IAC members are expected to promptly update these disclosures, including during an Institutional Actions Council Meeting Committee or Institutional Actions Council Hearing Committee, as needed.

Any conflicts of interest or other recusals will be noted in minutes, as applicable.

Previous HLC Evaluation Activities

An IAC member who participated as a peer reviewer in a comprehensive evaluation of an institution shall not participate in IAC decision-making activity regarding that institution for a period of ten years.

An IAC member who participated in an IAC Hearing regarding an institution shall not participate in IAC decision-making activity regarding that institution for a period of ten years.

With the exception of where deemed appropriate by HLC staff, for example, for continuity purposes, an IAC member who participated as a peer reviewer in an HLC panel or evaluative activity other than a comprehensive evaluation, in IAC decision-making activity, or in an Academy assignment may not participate in IAC decision-making activity regarding that institution for a period of three years.

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Policy History

Last Revised: June 2022

First Adopted: June 2011

Revision History: April 2013, June 2014, November 2019, June 2020, November 2020, June 2021, June 2022

Notes: Policies combined November 2012 - 2.2(d)1.2, 2.2(d)1.2a, 2.2(d)1.2b, 2.2(d)1.2b1, 2.2(d)1.2b2. In February 2021, references to the Higher Learning Commission as “the Commission” were replaced with the term “HLC.”

Related Policies: INST.D.40.010 Institutional Actions Council Processes

Policy Title: Peer Corps Members on HLC Evaluation Activities

Number: PEER.A.10.050

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With the exception of allowing for one peer reviewer from a reaffirmation visit to be placed on the following ~~mid-cycle~~ **Standard or Open Pathway Year 4 review** team for the purpose of improved historical context for the ~~mid-cycle~~ review, HLC staff shall not assign a peer reviewer who participated in an HLC comprehensive ~~reaffirmation~~ evaluation **or an IAC Hearing** 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 HLC staff, **for example, for continuity purposes**, a peer reviewer who participated in an HLC panel or ~~other~~ evaluative activity ~~not involving reaffirmation~~ **other than a comprehensive evaluation**, in an HLC IAC decision-making ~~body activity~~, or in an Academy assignment may not be assigned to another evaluative ~~or decision-making~~ assignment ~~at or~~ regarding that same institution for a period of three years. ...

Policy History

Last Revised: June 2021

First Adopted: February 1994

Revision History: October 2003, November 2012, June 2018, February 2020, June 2021

Notes: Former policy number 6.7, 6.8. In February 2021, references to the Higher Learning Commission as “the Commission” were replaced with the term “HLC.”

Related Policies: