

Peer Evaluators Policy Call for Comments (Feb 27 – Mar 13, 2018)

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education invited input on the draft *Peer Evaluators Policy* from Feb 27 through Mar 13, 2018. The Call for Comments period has concluded. Thank you for your comments.

Title of Policy: Peer Evaluator Policy

Purpose of Policy: The purpose of this policy is to define the requirements and responsibilities of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) with regard to the utilization of competent, knowledgeable, and qualified peer evaluators in the accreditation process.

Status of Policy: New

The document *Peer Evaluator Procedures* referenced in the draft policy is under development. The policy and procedures, taken together, will replace the existing *Selection of Peer Evaluators* guidelines.

Deadline for Comments: **Tuesday, March 13, 2018**

Link to Provide Comment: [Peer Evaluators Policy - Call for Comment](#)

Next steps: Comments will be reviewed and incorporated into the draft as appropriate. The policy will be reviewed and approved by the Commission at its June 2018 meeting. The policy will then be submitted to member institutions for approval. The approved policy and related procedures will become effective September 1, 2018.

Questions: Any questions about the draft policy, or MSCHE policy in general, should be directed to Policy@msche.org. Any questions about accessing the comment form or MSCHE website should be directed to Support@msche.org.



Peer Evaluators Policy

v. 022018, *DRAFT CALL FOR COMMENTS*
Proposed Effective Date: September 1, 2018

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I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the requirements and responsibilities of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE or the Commission) with regard to the utilization of competent, knowledgeable, and qualified peer evaluators. See also the Commission's *Peer Evaluators Procedures*.

II. Statement of Policy

Commission staff shall establish a pool of peer evaluators who are competent, knowledgeable, appropriately qualified by educational and professional experience, and shall provide opportunities for regular training to support MSCHE peer review processes. Commission staff shall implement recruitment, training, assignment, and assessment procedures in accordance with *34 CFR §602.15(a)(2)*.

A. Recruitment of Peer Evaluators

Commission staff shall employ a systematic process to recruit potential peer evaluators with the necessary educational and professional experience to implement the peer review and accreditation decision making process. Commission staff shall develop selection criteria for peer evaluators and any requirements for their participation.

B. Training of Peer Evaluators

Commission staff shall train potential peer evaluators on their roles and responsibilities, as appropriate to their assignments, to conduct any and all evaluations on behalf of MSCHE, in accordance with *34 CFR §602.15(a)(2)* and through established procedures. Peer evaluators shall be trained to implement the peer review process and make accreditation decisions in accordance with Commission requirements of affiliation, standards for accreditation, policies, and procedures.

C. Assignment of Peer Evaluators

Commission staff shall assign qualified evaluators to support all of MSCHE's peer review processes. Commission staff will assure appropriate training and representation, including the use of academic and administrative personnel, to meet federal regulation (*34 CFR §602.15(a)(3)*) and shall take into consideration peer institutions and characteristics of peer evaluators deemed appropriate by the institution.

D. Assessment of Peer Evaluators

Commission staff shall conduct appropriate assessments to ensure the effectiveness of its recruitment, training, and assignment procedures. The results of such assessments are confidential and used for internal planning purposes only.

III. Protection from Liability in the Event of Legal Action

Volunteer peer evaluators are entitled to protection from liability and civil immunity in the event of a lawsuit or other legal proceeding that arises out of representation of the organization in the peer review process. This indemnification right includes the provision of legal counsel to defend evaluators. MSCHE maintains liability insurance that must be notified promptly of any claim and the insurance carrier has a right to select the legal counsel to defend the organization and its representatives. If an evaluator has reason to believe that a third party may assert, or has asserted, a claim against him or her or MSCHE, it must be reported to MSCHE's Vice President for Legal Affairs and Chief of Staff immediately.

This immunity and protection from personal liability will be forfeited if a peer evaluator's actions are not in good faith and are not in the best interests of the Commission. The Commission's policies and procedures, including its *Peer Evaluator Acceptance of Assignment*, establish the standards that all volunteers for the organization are expected to practice. Any conduct that is in violation of MSCHE's policies and procedures, falls substantially below these standards or creates a substantial risk of harm to the person or the property of another will result in a loss of the Commission's indemnification and the legal immunity that a peer evaluator would otherwise be entitled to receive under MSCHE's bylaws or applicable law.

IV. Procedures

The Commission staff will develop procedures as are necessary to ensure the consistent implementation of policies. See the Commission's *Peer Evaluators Procedures*.

V. Definitions

- a. Academic Representative - An individual who is currently or recently engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary teaching and/or research, or other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's educational programs (*34 CFR §602.15(a)(3)*).
- b. Administrative Representative - An individual who is currently or recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary program or institutional administration (*34 CFR §602.15(a)(3)*).
- c. Peer Evaluator – Any individual who represents or serves the Commission during the peer review process.

Number:

Version: v. 022018, DRAFT CALL FOR COMMENT

Effective Date:

Previously Issued: N/A

Approved/Created: 2018

Revisions:

Related Documents: *Peer Evaluators Procedures (UNDER DEVELOPMENT)*

Federal Regulations: *34 CFR Part §602.15(a)(2) Competent and knowledgeable individuals and §602.15(a)(3) Academic and administrative personnel*