

International Accreditation Institute

Peer Reviewer Committee.

External Evaluation Guidelines

2019.

**PEER REVIEWER COMMITTEE
EXTERNAL EVALUATION GUIDELINES
IAI ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

The External Evaluation is part of the accreditation process, and is conducted once the Self-Study is completed. In this phase, based on the self-study report, a team of external peer reviewers, chosen by the Steering Committee (SC), visits the faculty/school and conducts an academic audit, intended to determine if it has appropriate self-regulation mechanisms and policies, besides verifying if their operation allows to assure its quality in the areas defined by the IAI.

Peer reviewers designated by the IAI are members of the community vested with sufficient authority to judge quality. In the accreditation process, they are in charge of issuing a judgment on quality; as such they must be recognized by the community that must respect them, as they stand out as paradigmatic examples of that community.

They have the duty to evaluate relevance, veracity and effectiveness of the internal process as well as the results of the self-study, in light of quality criteria and the instruments defined by the IAI. Peers in charge of external evaluation form a team that issues a rigorous judgment of the conformation of the university institution, its organization, structure, and its functioning, its historical development, processes, results and its social insertion, that is, all of those aspects that allow us to understand the uniqueness of the institutional project.

Peer reviewers receive the self-study report prior to the site visit, as an additional input to understand the faculty/school. In such sense, they verify with primary and secondary sources the factors and characteristics of the process, and analyze the way how they relate to high quality accreditation. Peer reviewers do not examine a faculty/school out of context; they must understand the social task the institution complies with and value it responsibly.

Peer reviewers work as a team to assure a rigorous examination of the different aspects of quality and apply the criteria, instruments and procedures defined by the IAI, the body that designates them. They must behave as a duly articulated team. Even though it is natural, and enriching, to have a variety of opinions and styles among peers reviewers, it is worth remembering that the objective is to agree on a common report, for which it is imperative to be willing to work as a team to achieve a shared objective.

As a consequence, academic external peers are expected to:

- a) Get familiar with the IAI Accreditation model.
- b) Participate in induction processes (face-to-face and/or virtual) aimed at peer reviewers, under the guidance of a technical team from the IAI.

Other characteristics peer reviewers must have during the verification process are:

- Peer reviewers must be sensitive to differences between projects they examine and their own project. They should be able to understand and value training in the context of an Institutional Project they understand and respect, and that will not mean they waive the high quality requirements that law imposes for Accreditation. This implies having in mind, in addition to legal requirements, the academic context and tradition where the academic program is set, as well as the institutional tradition within which the training is given.
- Peer reviewers do not examine an academic program empty of context; they must understand the social task this complies with and value it with responsibility.
- Peer reviewers have in the external evaluation an opportunity to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of an academic program to effectively contribute to the improvement of its quality. This involves assuming criticism in the widest academic sense of the term, that is, as the ability to highlight what deserves to be highlighted and not as a unilateral exploration of what should be rejected.
- Peer reviewers form part of the academic community. They do not represent an institution. They do not judge what they should evaluate by comparing it with the institutions where they work or where they have been trained, but by following academic criteria.
- Peer reviewers must be truthful, honest and respectful, and should keep using an understandable language.
- They must have a proper behavior, that is, they should recognize the rules of the task they perform and act with prudence, honesty and responsibility.

Objectives of the external evaluation site visit conducted by the peer reviewer team to the faculty/school are:

- Verify the objectivity and veracity of self-study.
- Complement the self-study taking into consideration those aspects that have not been contemplated by the institution and that are important for the analysis of the faculty/school.
- Examine, in specific detail, the critical aspects evidenced by the previous study of the documentation.

The School visited assumes the following responsibilities related to the External Evaluation:

a) Disclose to the peer reviewers all the documents that, according to its opinion, may help to understand aspects that are deemed important for the evaluation of the program, as well as those that peer reviewers may consider relevant and may require from the faculty/school.

- b) Take all the necessary measures to assure availability of directors, professors, students, graduates and administrative staff that peer reviewers want to approach, when they consider appropriate to do so.
- c) It will allow peer reviewers to move freely through the places in the faculty/school they judge as relevant in order to comply with their task.
- d) It should provide peer reviewers with all the logistical support required to carry out their tasks such as an office equipped for meetings, a computer, a telephone and a fax, as well as local transportation as required for the completion of the site visit.
- e) Do not give any gifts to peer reviewers and do not invite them to social events of any kind.
- f) Do not offer any job or agreement to render services to peer reviewers since their appointment and up to (6) six months after the site visit took place.
- g) In general, it will give all the support required by peer reviewers without incurring in actions that may be interpreted as harmful to the objectivity of the External Evaluation.

The peer reviewer committee will also have the participation, during the site visit, of two professionals from the IAI technical team designated by the SC, who will have the duty to act as minister of faith of the visit and one of them will serve as coordinator and the other one as secretary of the committee. Technical team members will not be in the position of peer reviewers neither will they perform evaluative duties.

Coordinator will fulfill the following duties.

- a) Agree with the institution on the date and program of the visit, previously discussed with the team of peer reviewers.
- b) Make sure that each of the peer reviewers has the necessary documentation in a timely manner and that they have been familiarized with such information prior to the site visit.
- c) Ensure that the External Evaluation process develops in agreement with the criteria established by the IAI.
- d) Establish a good work relationship with directors of the faculty/school.
- e) Coordinate meetings of the peer reviewer team.
- f) Monitor the work of peer reviewers, help to make adjustments, facilitate consensus among peer reviewers and make sure that work remains adjusted to the objectives of the site visit and the defined evaluation criteria.
- g) Ensure the correct performance of tasks distributed among team members.

The Secretary will perform the following duties

- a) Act as interlocutor between the team of peer reviewers and the faculty to obtain additional documentation that they may need during the visit.

b) Be the secretary rapporteur of the peer reviewers. It will elaborate, in agreement with the team of peer reviewers, the written report of External Evaluation and present it to the IAI.

The peer committee will hold an online meeting (s), preparatory to the visit, whose objective is to exchange opinions regarding the information sent by the faculty / school, identify the aspects in which it is required to deepen the information and formulate the site visit program.

In general, the site visit lasts for three to five (3 to 5) days, with a team of peer reviewers of at least two (2) persons. The visit has a limited time. It is essential to use it well, and for this the preparation for meetings and interviews is a key element. Before each interview, peer reviewers review the topics that need to be covered in it, the questions for which they seek answers and the right people to participate.

The site visit of the peer reviewers will be done according to a work agenda, which should consider various activities, among which are: meetings with the faculty / school directors; interviews with administrative staff, teachers, students and graduates; as well as travel through the infrastructure and facilities.

As already noted, the peer reviewers agree on a visit program. Some elements that must be considered are the following:

- c) Include interviews with all relevant stakeholders, considering each of the areas under evaluation.
- d) Allow time for internal work of the Committee and to complete the evaluation form.
- e) Allow time for the review of documents or other background that have been requested.

Once the established agenda has been completed, the visit will be officially terminated and any relationship between the peer reviewers and the medical school will end.