PROPOSED CHANGES

Policy on Composition of Evaluation Teams

Key to Changes: Delete, Add

There are two types of evaluation team visits: comprehensive and focused. A comprehensive team visit, including a review of institutional compliance with all standards, is conducted when an institution is considered for candidate status, accredited status, or reaffirmation of accreditation. The Commission on Accreditation (COA) may call for a focused team visit to review compliance with selected standards when an institution is placed on sanction, continued on sanction, or experiences significant changes that raise questions about institutional compliance with specific standards.

Composition of an Evaluation Team

The selection of evaluation team members is based upon competence as documented by professional credentials, experience and expertise in a particular area, and performance on previous evaluation teams or recommendation of a respected reference. There must be no conflict of interest between the evaluator and the institution to be visited as detailed in the Policy on Conflicts of Interest. The team should contain only one person from a given institution and no more than two people from institutions of the same denomination. Evaluation teams will include representation from appropriately qualified administrators and appropriately qualified academicians. ABHE staff members will not be eligible for service as a team evaluator. Current Commissioners are limited to serving on one evaluation team per year and must recuse themselves from any discussion of that institution at COA meetings.

A comprehensive evaluation team for review for candidate status or initial accreditation is normally composed of five members, although larger or smaller teams may be assigned. A comprehensive evaluation team for reaffirmation of accreditation may include fewer evaluators when the institution has not experienced significant changes since the last comprehensive visit or had notable concerns expressed by the COA since the last comprehensive visit. Regardless of the number of evaluators, a comprehensive visit will include a review of all standards; however, a reaffirmation visit may focus on areas of COA concern and include evaluators with specialized expertise in those areas. The composition and size of teams may vary, depending upon the level of education offered and complexity.
of the institution. In some instances, a smaller on-site evaluation team may be supplemented by additional off-site evaluators with specialized expertise.

A focused visit team is normally composed of two or three members with specialized expertise related to the areas of specific concern.

A minimum of half of the evaluators on a team must be current or recent employees of an ABHECOA accredited institution. Other evaluators (public, retired, etc.) may serve on a team provided they have completed the appropriate ABHE Team Evaluator Training within the last three years and have the appropriate professional qualifications.

At least one evaluator on a team to an institution offering programs via distance education will have three years of experience working with students at a distance in a postsecondary institution and have completed the ABHE evaluation team training unit on distance education.

For an evaluation team to an institution offering graduate programs, the academic evaluator and at least one other evaluator on the team must have an earned doctoral degree or three years of relevant experience in a postsecondary institution that offers graduate study, and completion of the ABHE evaluation team training on graduate programs.

A visit for candidate status or initial accreditation will normally include a credentialed librarian as the faculty/library evaluator, where these areas may be evaluated by an academic or faculty evaluator in reaffirmation visits.

ABHE does not participate in joint or coordinated accreditation visits with other accrediting bodies. Concurrent visits are possible, and common documentation may be submitted to both accrediting teams where appropriate; however, the ABHE evaluation team will function as an independent review entity reflecting the same composition and responsibilities of an ABHE evaluation team not engaged in a concurrent visit.

Teams for programmatic accreditation visits will normally have two or three members who meet the qualifications listed above. One of the evaluators must be a practitioner in the field of the education being evaluated. Another must be an educator from an ABHE accredited institution. Team members will be selected with sensitivity to the nature of the programs being evaluated (Refer to Policy on Procedures for Programmatic Visits).

When developing the evaluator pool and constructing evaluation teams, the COA Director should be sensitive to the need for obtaining representation from diverse perspectives.
Qualifications of Team Evaluators

Administrative Evaluator: Minimum of three years of experience in program or institutional leadership as a senior administrator (e.g., CEO, executive vice president, chief academic officer, division director, institutional effectiveness/assessment director, or other cabinet-level administrator) in a postsecondary institution or similar nonprofit organization, master’s degree or a graduate degree in an appropriate academic or professional discipline, plus completion of ABHE evaluation team training, including the units for an administrative evaluator.

Academic Evaluator: Minimum of three years of experience as an educator engaged in academic leadership (e.g., provost, academic dean, assistant provost/dean, academic division director, program director, registrar) in a postsecondary institution, master’s degree or a graduate degree in an appropriate academic or professional discipline (doctorate required for evaluation of graduate programs), plus completion of ABHE evaluation team training, including the units for an academic evaluator.

Student Services Evaluator: Minimum of three years of experience in student development, student life, student support services, or student ministry leadership in a postsecondary institution, master’s degree in an appropriate academic or professional discipline, or a qualified student at a COA accredited institution, plus completion of ABHE evaluation team training, including the units for a student services evaluator. A current or recent student at a COA accredited institution who has completed the required evaluation team training and is recommended by the institution may serve as a student services evaluator, provided the individual is a junior, senior, graduate student, or a former student at one of these levels within the past five years.

Resources Evaluator: Minimum of three years of experience in resource development or finance in a postsecondary institution or similar nonprofit organization or an appropriate academic or professional degree, plus completion of ABHE evaluation team training, including the units for a resources evaluator.

Library Evaluator: Minimum of three years of experience in librarianship in a postsecondary institution or a library science degree (e.g., MLS/MLIS), plus completion of ABHE evaluation team training, including the units for the faculty/library evaluator role.

Faculty Evaluator: Minimum of three years of teaching or research experience in a postsecondary institution, master’s degree or a graduate degree in an appropriate academic or professional discipline (doctorate required for evaluation of graduate programs), plus
completion of ABHE evaluation team training, including the units for the faculty/library evaluator role.

Assessment Evaluator: Minimum of three years of experience in assessment of student learning, institutional effectiveness, and/or planning in a postsecondary institution, **master’s degree or a graduate degree** in an appropriate academic or professional discipline, plus completion of ABHE evaluation team training, including the units for the administrator and academic evaluator role.

**Designation Categories for Evaluators**

Administrator: An individual currently or recently engaged in a significant manner in program or institutional administration at the postsecondary level.

Academic: An individual currently or recently engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary teaching and/or research (including learning resource and research support, and/or curriculum development).

Public: An individual who does not reflect the characteristics of administrator or academic above but has the professional qualifications and experience to serve as an evaluator and has completed the ABHE evaluation team training related to the respective evaluator role.

**Selection of the Team Chair**

The team chair will be free from potential conflict of interest, have had at least three successful experiences as an evaluator, and completed the ABHE training unit for evaluation team chairs. Normally, the chair will be a senior administrator of an ABHECOA accredited institution.

**Institution’s Right to Review**

The institution to be evaluated has the right to review the names of proposed team members and to request the replacement of any proposed member that it feels would have a bias or conflict of interest in evaluating the institution.

**COA Staff Representative**

A member of the COA professional staff will normally accompany a comprehensive evaluation team as an observer and procedural guide to review requirements but will not participate in the evaluative judgments of the team. The staff member will also review the
evaluation team report for completeness and ensure the submission of the report in the appropriate format.

**Representative from the State/Province**

A representative from the respective state or province higher education Commission on Accreditation may elect to serve as an observer of the team visit.

**Observer**

With consent of the COA Director and the institution being evaluated, an observer from another ABHE institution preparing for an evaluation team visit, a sister accrediting agency, or an educational researcher may accompany the team as an observer. The observer will have access to team materials and discussion but will not participate in the evaluation of the institution and is responsible for all travel expenses related to observing the visit (including onsite hotel and meals). Normally not more than one observer may accompany an evaluation team.

**Canadian Institutions**

Insofar as possible, Canadian institutions should be evaluated by Canadian evaluators.

**Evaluation Team Expenses**

Within the context of constructing a quality evaluation team, the COA will make every effort to minimize evaluation team travel expenses. The institution being evaluated is responsible for all travel expenses of evaluators and the accompanying COA staff representative. If the state or province requires payment of expenses for an official observer, the institution is responsible for those expenses as well.