

Policy on ~~the~~ Assignment of Primary and Secondary Readers

Proposed changes align this policy with proposed changes to the *Policy on Conflicts of Interest*.

Cases to be considered by the Commission on Accreditation (COA) as a whole, COA panels, and the Substantive Change Committee ~~will be~~ are assigned to both a primary and a secondary reader. This procedure enables a division of labor and assures objectivity. It also provides for thoroughness, the opportunity for a second opinion, and ~~a~~ backup, given the unforeseen absence of the primary reader.

To assure objectivity, enhance fairness, and avoid conflicts of interest, primary and secondary readers will not be assigned to a particular institution in the following circumstances:

- Current service at an institution with the same denominational/fellowship affiliation
- Current service at an institution with the same geographical base of constituency
- Previous attendance at or graduation from the institution
- Previous employment as a faculty or staff member at the institution within the past ten years
- Submission of an application for employment to the institution within the past five ten years
- Previous service as a board member at an institution within the past ten years
- Service as an independent consultant at the institution during the current accreditation cycle
- Previous service as a team evaluator for the institution within the past five years
- ~~Previous service as an independent consultant within the past five years~~
- Previous service as a reader (primary or secondary) for the institution at a meeting of the full COA within ~~a two-year period~~ the past two years
- Current or previous employment of a parent, child, spouse, or sibling at the institution
- Acceptance of substantive gifts or honoraria for self or spouse from the institution or an individual acting as an agent of the institution ~~apart from scheduled fees during the accreditation process, including any appeals processes~~
- ~~Previous attendance at, or graduation from, the institution being considered~~
- ~~Submission of an application for employment to the institution within the past five years~~
- Any other situation that could affect an individual's ability to be impartial

Commissioners will further agree to recuse themselves from consideration of any institution where they are aware of a potential conflict of interest. Recusal means that the Commissioner will declare a recusal before discussion begins, leave the table, and avoid participating in any discussion related to the institution or the decision that the COA makes relative to the institution under consideration. Only one reader is typically assigned to committee deliberations.

Revised October 1990, October 1992, June 2014, February 2023; Proposed February 2026