

23. Policy on Selection and Training of Evaluators

The DETC Accrediting Commission prides itself on being able to attract competent and knowledgeable individuals to serve as on-site evaluators and subject specialists. The selection of evaluators and subject specialist reviewers is based upon the judgment of the Executive Director acting under the established guidelines of this policy.

On-Site Evaluators

The Commission trains and uses top executives and other staff from accredited institutions as on-site Evaluators, as well as highly qualified academic experts from other accredited higher education institutions and from other sectors of society. In the vast majority of cases, the CEOs or senior executive officers of accredited institutions comprise the members of each examining committee, thus ensuring an authentic “peer review” from the ranks of the most highly respected practitioners in the field.

Evaluators are also selected from among accredited public and private institution educators, executives, and practitioners in business, technical, and service fields. Evaluation teams are made up of a mix of educators and practitioners. Some of the Evaluators are retired persons who have otherwise remained active in their field of expertise.

As an added safeguard to insure against potential or perceived conflicts in the selection of visiting evaluators, applicant institutions receive an Examination Schedule containing the names and affiliations of visiting evaluators, and short biographies on each evaluator. The institutions then have an opportunity to discuss any specific objections they may have to a particular evaluator. In the case where an objection is expressed, the Director of Accreditation will appoint another evaluator to take the place of the evaluator in question.

To become a qualified examiner, one must complete a training program entitled “DETC Evaluator Training Program” and receive a certificate of completion. The Accrediting Commission maintains a record of the qualifications of people who have been trained as on-site evaluators through this training program. Since 2007, this training program has also been available online.

Before new evaluators are asked to serve on an on-site Examining Committee, they must:

1. Have demonstrated expertise, ability, and accomplishment in the area they are selected to examine;
2. Be free of conflicting interests with the institution to be visited, including direct competitive interests;
3. Have completed the training program *DETC Evaluator Training Program*; and
4. In most cases, have served as an evaluator-in-training with at least one Examining Committee.

In selecting evaluators for visits, the Director of Accreditation considers the nature of the institution being visited, the methods of operation unique to the institution, the nature of the program(s) offered, and the expertise and past examining experience of the evaluator. For visits to degree-granting institutions, a subject specialist is always included. These evaluators must possess an academic degree that is in a similar field and one higher than the degrees being offered by the institution, or the relevant terminal degree.

For doctoral degrees program evaluations, the evaluator must have the appropriate doctorate degree and have practiced in the field for several years before he or she would be considered for the Degree Subject Specialist Evaluator position.

Normally, an evaluator will be asked to serve as an “evaluator-in-training” with at least one Examining Committee. The “trainee” accompanies the Examining Committee to the institution. Under close supervision, trainees act as full-fledged evaluators. Trainees are counseled by the Commission Staff Observer throughout the visit. An evaluation of the trainee’s conduct, performance, and written report is made jointly by the Committee Chair and the Accrediting Commission Observer. Upon successful service as an evaluator-in-training, the Director of Accreditation places the evaluator’s name on file for future use.

Each evaluator has a copy of the appropriate rating forms needed to aid the evaluators with their reviews. These forms are sent along with each institution’s Self-Evaluation Report. In addition to the rating forms, the following Commission documents are included in the package for guidance (depending on the position in which they are serving on the committee):

1. Examination Schedule
2. Memo From the Director of Accreditation
3. Completed Student Surveys with Summary Sheet
4. Any Subject Specialists Report received
5. Letter on Completion and Graduation Rates
6. Copies of any complaints received

Each evaluator must use the appropriate rating form(s), depending on the purpose of the visit (i.e., degree program, doctoral degree program, change of location, combination distance-study resident programs, non-U.S. institutions, and institutions participating in Title IV, etc.).

Each on-site evaluator (and subject specialist) must submit a copy of his or her resume or curriculum vitae. The Director of Accreditation maintains these “resumes” on file, along with a database record listing a history of visits conducted by each evaluator and the latest edition of the *DETC Accreditation Handbook* that they have received.

Subject Specialists

Special care is given to select professionals for subject specialists who are current and knowledgeable in their area of expertise (i.e., evaluation of curriculum content that reflects up-to-date technologies and skills). The vast majority of subject matter experts come to the Commission from regionally accredited institutions of higher learning, often by personal recommendation of the executive officers of higher education associations, e.g., the American Council on Education or any of the regional accrediting associations. A rich source of potential qualified subject specialist evaluators is the various specialized accrediting associations. DETC makes effective use of its working relationships with the various accrediting bodies to obtain and build an extensive roster of highly qualified experts.

To be selected as a subject specialist, the Commission asks that the person have no bias against the distance education method. For vocational courses, special care is given in selecting current practitioners who are working in the field of study. As discussed above, for degree programs, the subject specialists must have the appropriate academic degrees from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Typically, the subject specialist must have a degree that is one

higher than the degree being evaluated or the appropriate terminal degree. The degrees must be constructive to the degrees being evaluated. For doctorate degrees, the evaluator must have the same doctorate degree and have practiced in the field for several years before he or she would be considered for the evaluation.

The duty of a subject specialist is to determine if curriculum materials offered by the institution are complete, accurate, and up-to-date in light of the stated objectives of the course. The subject specialist must judge whether the course is of good quality and whether it meets the published standards of the Accrediting Commission. For credit-bearing courses, the subject specialists must be able to judge the comparability of curricula to resident programs.

Subject Specialists are used for evaluating courses off-site and on-site. The Commission's Guide for Subject Specialist Evaluators on DETC's web site describes the responsibilities for both types of reviewers. Each subject specialist is given the appropriate rating forms. In addition, all Subject Specialists are encouraged to take DETC's course, *DETC Evaluators Training Program*.

For visits to degree-granting institutions, a subject specialist is always appointed to the on-site committee visiting the institution. When a subject specialist accompanies an Examining Committee to the institution, he/she is able to follow-up on questions related to the course materials by examining the institution's procedures for offering its educational programs.

DETC staff is available to answer any questions from subject specialists concerning the accreditation standards, policies, and procedures.

Please visit DETC's web site at www.detc.org and select "Member Services" tab and "Evaluator's Documents." When asked to sign in, use the word "guest" for your user name and password. There are sample reports under this section. The templates for writing report is found under "Templates" under the "Member Services" tab.

Evaluator's Documents

A. Rating Forms

1. Examiner's Rating Form for All Institutions
2. Rating Form for Off-Site Vocational Subject Specialists
3. Rating Form for Off-Site Degree Subject Specialists
4. Rating Form for On-Site Subject Specialists
5. Examiner's Rating Form for Change of Location
6. Examiner's Rating Form for Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs
7. Examiner's Rating Form for Non-U.S. Institutions
8. Examiner's Rating Form for Institutions Participating in Title IV
9. Examiner's Rating Form for Doctoral Degree Programs

B. Guides

1. Guide to Writing a Chair's Report
2. Guide to Writing an Evaluator's Report
3. Guide to Writing a Readiness Assessment Report
4. Guide to Writing an On-Site Subject Specialist Report

5. Guide for Writing an Off-Site Subject Specialist Report
6. Guide to Standard V. for On-Site Reviews

C. Critical Documents

1. Catalog
2. Contracts
3. Course Development Manual
4. Faculty Handbook/Manual
5. Institutional Improvement Plan
6. Outcomes Assessment Plan
7. Student Handbook
8. Study Guide
9. Succession Plan
10. Transcripts
11. Web Site Checklist
12. Financial Statement Analysis

D. Miscellaneous

1. Survey of On-Site Examiners
2. Tips for Accrediting Commission Evaluators
3. A Special Message to Evaluators of the Confidentiality of DETC Accreditation
4. Chair's Agenda for On-Site Visit
5. Statement of Expenses for School Examinations
6. Student Survey Form
7. Q & A on Standard V – Outcomes Assessment

E. Sample Reports

1. Chair's Report
2. Educational Evaluator's Report
3. Business Standards Report
4. On-Site Subject Specialist Report
5. Off-Site Vocational Subject Specialist Report
6. Off-Site Degree Subject Specialist
7. Readiness Assessment Report
8. Course/Program Report for Degree Program
9. Course/Program Report for Vocational Program