

# Guide for Reviewers

## Introduction

Participating in peer review of the interprofessional educational is a vital responsibility that ensures the quality, originality, and reliability of the continuing education activities and is integral to the Joint Accreditation process. Ad hoc peer review is recognized as an essential component of a clinician educator's curriculum vitae or resume as it demonstrates one's ability to apply his/her knowledge and expertise in determining the educational worth and accuracy of a continuing education application.

The Interprofessional Continuing Education (IPCE) Committee seeks reviewers with specific interest and expertise in subject areas relevant to the educational applications submitted to the Continuing Education (CE) Department.

This document serves to orient and guide individuals who provide peer review of educational applications. It is not intended to be a comprehensive document, but rather to demystify the process, ensure rigorous educational standards are met, and maximize the effectiveness of the peer review process.

## Process of peer review

Upon receiving an application for consideration of approval, the Continuing Education Department reviews the submission to ensure all required components are included and completed.

Applications deemed appropriate for consideration of approval are then assigned to at least two peer reviewers. Selection of these reviewers is a critical component in the peer review process as well as ensuring quality interprofessional education at Boston Children's Hospital. Reviewers are chosen based on their expertise in the topic's content and who profess no conflict of interest. As such, determination of the reviewer's areas of interest and expertise are integral to the timeliness and quality of the process.

Once the two individuals are selected, the CE department sends an email requesting the review. Individuals are given 48 hours to choose to conduct (or not to conduct) the review. If the Continuing Education Department does not receive an email response, another person is chosen to review the application. Statistics on individual reviewers are maintained by the CE Department and reviewed by the IPCE committee, including the number of reviews requested (and those accepted, uninvited, and refused). These data help in the process of evaluating the overall quality of a reviewer.

Once accepted, the reviewer has 14 days to complete the review (components of a review are described in more detail below). One reminder is sent during this timeframe. When the reviewer has completed the peer review process, the IPEC committee carefully considers his/her comments and recommendations and makes a decision regarding the suitability of the application. It is the responsibility of the reviewer to provide a recommendation to the IPCE Committee so it may be given full consideration; however, the IPCE Committee makes the final decision in approval of the application.

Peer reviewers may select from the following recommendations for each application:

1. Accept without modification
2. Accept with minor modification. Application requires modifications to improve its quality.
3. Major modifications required before it can be accepted. Application requires extensive revision and reevaluation prior to potential acceptance
4. Reject, application does not meet the criteria for interprofessional education

The reviewer provides two types of comments about the application – blinded commentary that is sent to the course directors, and confidential commentary that is sent to the IPCE Committee. It is strongly encouraged that the reviewer provides confidential comments to the IPCE Committee regarding the application to help the Committee fully understand the reviewer's recommendation and assist in properly determining an application's disposition. In addition, completing the application rating form helps to support a reviewer's recommendation for the application's disposition, and assists the CE Department in justifying the final decision to the course directors.

The CE Department will send an email with their final decision to the course directors who have 60 days to revise their application if deemed appropriate. Upon receipt of the authors' replies to the reviewers and revised application, the CE Department may forward this information to the reviewers of the original application for re-consideration and recommendation (employing the same method and timeline as the primary review), or adjudicate the application disposition themselves. The peer reviewer is notified of the ultimate disposition of the application once it has been decided.

#### **General expectations and opportunities for peer review**

There are a number of criteria that determine a quality review of an Interprofessional Education application, and a number of responsibilities that come with being a peer reviewer that further enhances the review process.

1. Timeliness – Given the time sensitive nature of many applications, rapid return of a solicited peer review minimizes the timeline between submission and decision (which helps the course director[s] with resubmission if the application is rejected or needs modification, or, if accepted without revisions, helps the CE Department to present the application to IPEC within a shorter timeframe). Thus, the reviewer plays an important role in the expeditious dissemination of data. Peer reviewers should not agree to review an application that cannot be completed on time; every effort should be made to complete accepted reviews within the time allotted.
2. Fairness – A reviewer has a responsibility to both CE Department and the course director(s) to provide a review that is thoughtful and complete. While the immediate goal of peer review is provide a decision regarding the suitability of the application, an additional goal is to provide the course director(s) with input that will ultimately improve the application and the educational activity. For those applications which are approved, quality peer review will ensure the highest quality of an interprofessional educational activity is achieved. Peer reviewers should not agree

to review content areas outside of the areas of their expertise. If the reviewer discovers this is the case after agreeing to review an application he/she is asked to recommend someone who could provide a quality review.

3. Collegiality – It is rare for any application to be reviewed without comments or criticisms. However, the responsibility of the reviewers is to provide these critiques constructively, objectively, and in a fashion that is collegial and respectful. It is best to consider that each application was written by a valued colleague when drafting a peer review.
4. Clarity – The goal of peer review is to provide an advisory recommendation to the CE Department as to the suitability of an interprofessional application. The reviewer is expected to provide comments and criticisms to the CE Department that clearly justifies their recommendation for disposition of the application. The CE Department then shares the comments with the IPCE Committee when necessary. It is also critical that the comments to the Department are consistent with those made to the course director(s) (such that the comments of the reviewer justify the recommendation regarding the disposition of the application).
5. Comprehensiveness – A quality review will include a number of considerations, and may be specific to the application being reviewed. In order for an application to be considered for approval, it must meet all of the Joint Accreditation criteria. It is important that the application highlights in a clear and appropriate way the problems in clinical practice that the activity is designed to change or address. A reviewer is expected to comment on the course objectives, along with the strengths and limitations of the application.

#### Ethical responsibilities of the reviewer

Given the sensitive nature of peer review, there are ethical responsibilities of the reviewer and review process. It is important for reviewers to identify potential conflicts of interest with the authors and the application's subject area. The CE Department requires reviewers to disclose potential and relevant conflicts of interest related to employment, consultancies, stock ownership, and receipt of honoraria, patents, a professional relationship with, or direct competition in the course's subject field. The reviewer has a responsibility to review the conflict of interest forms submitted by the course director(s), which specifically document any relevant financial relationships.

Given the role of reviewer as an expert in the application's subject area as well as in interprofessional education, a reviewer is requested to report any known situations of duplicate submissions (an application or an activity that may be under concurrent review at another organization), fraudulent data, or plagiarism in an application. If identified, these comments should be conveyed to the CE Department (in the additional comments section – all comments are confidential) so they can be appropriately addressed. Since peer review of an application allows a reviewer to view data that might not yet be in the public domain, strict confidentiality is critical to ensure integrity; destruction of documents and files related to peer review is also mandatory once the review is complete.

### Basic Principles to which Peer Reviewers Should Adhere

1. Respect the confidentiality of peer review and not reveal any details of a application or its review, during or after the peer review process
2. Not use information obtained during the peer review process for their own or any other person's or organization's advantage, or to disadvantage or discredit others
3. Only agree to review application for which they have the subject expertise required to carry out a proper assessment and which they can assess within a reasonable time-frame
4. Not allow their reviews to be influenced by the origins of an application, by the nationality, religion, political beliefs, gender or other characteristics of the course directors, or by commercial considerations
5. Be objective and constructive in their reviews, refraining from being hostile or inflammatory and from making libelous or derogatory personal comments
6. Acknowledge that peer review is largely a reciprocal endeavor and undertake to carry out their fair share of reviewing, in a timely manner
7. Provide personal and professional information that is accurate and a true representation of their expertise

### Review of the reviewer

The CE Department evaluates the quality of a review upon its receipt. Utilizing the criteria defining a quality review (timely, fair, collegial, clear, and comprehensive), a reviewer is evaluated and scored (from 0-100) based on their review. This statistic, in combination with a separate statistic regarding the timeliness of the review, is helpful in assigning subsequent reviews. Furthermore, reviews that do not achieve a score of 50 are not eligible for the reviewer to receive Academy participation credit. Reviewers with low scores or late reviews are not considered highly for subsequent reviews.

### Why be a reviewer?

There are a number of benefits to being a reviewer. Many institutions and practices value the service of peer review when evaluating a candidate for promotion and tenure, and increasingly accrediting bodies value peer review as an external benchmark for provider quality assurance. A reviewer may directly benefit from the peer review process by learning from the work of others prior to activity. Reviewer's insights may also lead to future educational activities, improvements in their own educational activities and application preparation.

### Summary

Peer review is a critically important component in maximizing the quality of the Joint Accreditation process and improving interprofessional education at Boston Children's Hospital. The reviewer has a unique opportunity to impact this endeavor, which comes with substantial responsibility. Through education of reviewers on the technical aspects, expectations, and opportunities of peer review, the process and impact of peer review is optimally maximized.