



Policy for Addressing Concerns Regarding Peer Reviewer Performance

Introduction

This policy describes the actions AAM may take in response to peer reviewer performance that does not meet AAM's stated expectations.¹ The evaluation process generates the primary information on peer reviewer performance.

The purpose of the peer reviewer evaluation process is to:

- provide peer reviewers with regular, consistent, and constructive feedback on their performance related to the expectations of the program.
- ensure each museum taking part in the Accreditation or Museum Assessment Program has a high-quality experience

By providing AAM with consistent feedback on peer review performance and identifying areas of concern, both roster-wide and individually, the peer reviewer evaluation process protects the integrity of the Museum Assessment Program and the Accreditation Program.

Proactive Strategies

AAM recognizes there are some situations that make meeting AAM's expectations particularly challenging. These include:

- A reviewer's first visit (or first visit for a specific program) and
- Visiting a museum with substantial operational concerns.

To reduce the potential difficulty these situations represent, AAM program staff:

- Call a reviewer conducting his/her first visit for a program within one week of the visit date to answer questions, offer support, and give guidance if needed.
- Strongly encourage any Accreditation Visiting Committee team considering submitting an Advisory Conclusion suggesting denial of Accreditation to request program staff review a draft of the report

before final submission. The line between objective description of a serious concern and consultative language or undue criticism can be very fine. Program staff can also provide insight into commission decision-making.

- Are on hand for consultation, report review, or general guidance anytime a reviewer struggles with difficult situations, challenging wording, or delicate politics.

Actions to Address Peer Reviewer Performance Concerns

General Philosophy

The following actions available to AAM reflect our commitment to individual learning and our accountability to participating museums, stakeholders, and the field at large.

AAM is committed to providing constructive feedback and professional development to peer reviewers, whose work supports the efforts of AAM to advance the museum field. Therefore, our primary response to peer reviewer performance concerns is to communicate to the peer reviewer the basis of the concern and provide positive suggestions and appropriate resources.

A goal of the peer reviewer evaluation process is to ensure the credibility and consistency of the peer review supported programs (MAP & Accreditation). Therefore, when a reviewer is not willing or able to meet the expectations of the programs, it is irresponsible to continue to involve that reviewer in future reviews.

A peer reviewer will always be given an option to respond when any concerns are raised and before any of the following actions are taken by AAM. The choice of action, from those listed below, will be based on the seriousness of the concern, the interest of the peer reviewer in addressing the concern, and the past performance of the peer reviewer.

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Notice of Concern

This is a positive action intended to improve the performance of the peer reviewer for future reviews.

It will include a concrete description of

- the concern and the related expectation of the program
- suggestions of steps that may be taken to address the concern, and
- resources for accomplishing those steps.

Examples of situations for which a notice of concern can be appropriate are:

- Not enough analysis or big picture perspective in a report
- First late report
- Difficulty maintaining appropriate program role
- Report tone not diplomatic and/or fair
- Lack of responsiveness or timeliness in arranging a visit

Probation

This action is intended to remedy a serious concern that diminishes the ability of the program to effectively meet its goals; but one that a peer reviewer has the opportunity to address. It will include a concrete description of

- the concern and the related expectation of the program,
- what steps need to be taken to address the concern, and
- how outcomes will be recognized and probation lifted.
- If the peer reviewer is not interested or able to address the concern, then AAM will terminate his/her participation in peer review.

Examples of situations for which probation can be appropriate are:

- Repeated late reports
- Consistent non-participation in peer review (e.g., turn down visits repeatedly) or non-responsive to

communication from staff, museum, and/or team member

- Revealing confidential information
- Problematic behavior (e.g., too aggressive, insulting, or inconsistent with role required by program)
- Abuse of hospitality and/or funds of host museum

Termination

This action ends an individual's participation as an AAM peer reviewer. The most serious action AAM can take, termination is used only when the concern cannot be addressed or the credibility of the program would be damaged by the continued involvement of the peer reviewer. Generally, termination is a last resort, but may be used as the first response when the peer reviewer's actions cause a museum's participation in the program to be seriously impeded or are professionally, ethically, or legally unacceptable.

Examples of situations for which termination response can be appropriate are:

- Consistently submitting poorly written or late reports
- Canceling a visit commitment at the last minute without a compelling reason
- Going on a visit and not submitting report
- Unwillingness to revise an unusable report (as determined by AAM staff)
- Personal conduct on a site visit that is legally actionable (e.g., theft, harassment)

Determining an Action to be Taken

AAM acknowledges evaluation data do not offer a full description of the events or circumstances and the parties involved do not always share the same perspective. Therefore, the peer reviewer will be notified of any concern prior to any action by AAM and have the option to share his/her perspective on



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the situation via letter or phone conversation. This communication will be appended to the evaluation in question and taken into consideration. The complete set of information will be reviewed impartially before any action is taken. A peer reviewer may appeal the action in writing.

For AAM's procedures when allegations of unprofessional action are made by a museum about a peer reviewer's conduct related to a site visit, refer to the Allegations of Unprofessional Action by an AAM Peer Reviewer.

Peer Reviewer Appeal Process

A peer reviewer may appeal an action of probation or termination by submitting a letter and any relevant documentation to the peer reviewer manager. A committee comprised of the peer reviewer manager, the director of Museum Advancement & Excellence, and the appropriate program assistant director(s) will review the materials and decide whether to approve or repeal AAM's action. The decision of this committee is final and not subject to additional appeal.

Notes:

1. These expectations are stated throughout the *Peer Review Manual*, in the Peer Reviewer Qualifications for Service, and specific policies, such as the Site Visit Expectations.