

Guidelines for Choosing Arm's Length Reviewers

(The following information has been taken directly from the Guide to the Quality Assurance Framework prepared by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance.)

Best practice in quality assurance ensures that reviewers are at arm's length from the program under review. This means that reviewers/consultants are not close friends, current or recent collaborators, former supervisor, advisor, or colleague.

"Arm's length" does not mean that the reviewer must never have met or even heard of a single member of the program. It does mean that reviewers should not be chosen who are likely, or perceived to be likely, to be predisposed, positively or negatively, about the program. It may be helpful to provide some examples of what does and does not constitute a close connection that would violate the arm's length requirement.

Examples of what does not violate the arm's length requirement:

- Appeared on a panel at a conference with a member of the program
- Served on a granting council selection panel with a member of the program
- Author of an article in a journal edited by a member of the program, or of a chapter in a book edited by a member of the program
- External examiner of a dissertation by a doctoral student in the program
- Presented a paper at a conference held at the university where the program is located
- Invited a member of the program to present a paper at a conference organized by the reviewer, or to write a chapter in a book edited by the reviewer
- Received a bachelor's degree from the university (especially if in another program)
- Co-author or research collaborator with a member of the program more than seven years ago
- Presented a guest lecture at the university
- Reviewed for publication a manuscript written by a member of the program

Examples of what does violate the arm's length requirement:

- A previous member of the program or department under review (including being a visiting professor)
- Received a graduate degree from the program under review
- A regular co-author and research collaborator with a member of the program, within the past seven years, and especially if that collaboration is ongoing
- Close family/friend relationship with a member of the program
- A regular or repeated external examiner of dissertations by doctoral students in the program

- The doctoral supervisor of one or more members of the program
- A previous external reviewer for a Cyclical Program Review or a New Program Proposal in the department/unit in question. Whilst this is preferable, in cases where it is not ideal, at least one of the external reviewers must not have previously reviewed a program in the department/unit.