

COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO
PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC
POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS AND
PROGRAMS

RULES AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

REVIEWED 2013

The Puerto Rico State Approval Agency does not discriminate against any person for reasons of race, color, gender, age, marital status, nationality or social origin, physical or mental handicaps, political ideas, religion and/or sexual orientation or veteran status.

Copy of this handbook is available in hardcopy in the following address: PRSAA Tres Monjitas Industrial Park Calaf Street #38 Hato Rey, Puerto Rico 00918 and in the website: www.de.gobierno.pr in the agency link.

ABOUT THE AGENCY

The Puerto Rico State Approval Agency (PRSAA) is an organism legally authorized to facilitate the evaluation process of public postsecondary institutions and programs of Vocational and Technical Education in Puerto Rico. It is an within inside the Puerto Rico Department of Education.

The office was created in response to the amendments made in 1980 to the Higher Education Act of 1965, where appears the elimination of the automatic eligibility enjoyed by vocational and technical programs of the whole public educational system and a requirement to pass through an approval process in order to participate in federal programs and available federal financial aid for students.

By virtue of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and the Code of Federal Regulations, 34CFR600, all public institutions of postsecondary vocational and technical education may participate, as long as they meet the following requirements:

1. The meaning of what is a postsecondary occupational institution, must be aligned to the one stated by the Public Law 96-374 of 1980.
2. The institution and its programs must be approved by a State Agency, recognized by the Secretary of Education of the United States as bona fide authority of postsecondary occupational education.

As a result, the Puerto Rico Department of Education issued Circular Letter number 4 1982-1983 and the Secretary of Education of the United States endorsed and recognized us as the bona fide authority to approve public occupational and technical institutions in Puerto Rico and measure the quality of their programs and procedures.

Table of Content

About the PRSAA.....	2
Table of content.....	3-4
Objectives	5
Functions and scope of the State Approval Agency.....	6-7
Rules of performance.....	7-9
Evaluation Committee.....	10-21
Guidelines	
Administrative Performance	22-23
Programmatic Performance	24-25
Approval process and stages	26-28
Assistance to Applicant Institution	28
The self-study	28
The self-study process	29-30
The site evaluation	31-32
The steering committee.....	32
Appealing a non-approve status	32-35
Credit hour policy.....	35-38
Grievances and appeal process of individuals complaints	
against institutions or programs.....	38-41
Ethical Standards	41-45
Annual Report	45-46
Corrective plans.....	46
Special Reports.....	46-47
Contingencies.....	47
Annual Report Process	47-48
Findings and non-compliance.....	49

Adding Programs after approval.....	49
Innovation Encouragement.....	49-50
Whole revision and targeted revision.....	50
Divulgateion, awareness and dissemination processes	51
Handbook amendments and availability	51
References	52

Attachments

- Narrative Report for the On-Site Visit Template
- Annual Report Template

Objectives and goals of the Agency

The objectives and goals of the Puerto Rico State Approval Agency are:

1. Open more training opportunities for adult students.
2. Meet the needs of individuals and the nearby communities.
3. Improve the opportunities for workforce, employers and the economical health of the state.
4. Establish quality standards for programs development, instruction, outcomes, processes, and services to assure quality in adult education.
5. Increase enrollment in institutions, according to students' needs and interests.
6. Provide approval services at a reasonable cost for institution systems that allow pertinent measure and develop immediate response to approval needs.
7. Guarantee accountability and ethics into the approval process, using the best practices and guidelines.
8. Boost collaboration between the Agency and institutions.

Functions and scope of work of the State Approval Agency

The State Approval Agency, conscious of the importance of self-evaluation and in accordance with what is provided by law, fulfills its obligations in the following way:

Reviews- the applications of the institutions and/or programs that request approval.

Determines- the eligibility of the institution and/or postsecondary programs that request approval in accordance with the established definition of the Federal Code, Title 34, Section 602.2.

Handles documents relating the self-evaluation to be performed, the rules, criteria and the established procedures.

Advises- in technical and academic issues to the institutions and programs that apply for approval.

Selects- the members of the Evaluation Committee and keeps updated files of their professionals skills.

Schedules- trainings for the Evaluation Committee regarding the approval process.

Evaluates- the quality of the programs and institutions to determine the extent of the benefit from financial aid program.

Coordinates- with the regulatory agency the revision of the instruments and approvals of institutions and programs.

Produces- written reports to the institutions in the evaluation process, as well as the information related to the approval process, complaints and appeals.

Recommends- the approval, denial, reconsideration, revocation, or suspension of an approval.

Keeps- and protects the reports and all documents related to the approval process.

Reports- about any revision of the criteria, rules and policies that the agency may issue.

Disseminates- information to the Puerto Rican community about all approved programs and institutions.

Guides- groups or educational committees interested in the services, operation and capacity of the Agency.

Follow up- to the implementation of the recommendations offered to the evaluated programs and institutions.

Rules of performance

The State Approval Agency of Programs and Postsecondary Public Institutions of Vocational and Technical Education established the following operational rules.

1. The Agency shall encourage the interests of the directors of vocational schools and technological institutions to obtain and preserve the eligibility to participate on the federal financial aid available for those students registered in programs of postsecondary level in public institutions across Puerto Rico.

2. The Agency, through annual follow up visits, shall encourage the programs and postsecondary public institutions of vocational and technical education in Puerto Rico to establish a process of continuous self-evaluation, focusing on promoting and improving the quality of the educational services and generating among the faculty action aimed toward improvement.

3. The Agency shall report the findings and recommendations to the Advisory Board for the approval of those institutions and programs whose quality of educational services comply with the rules and requirements in accordance with the following criteria and standards in the Administrative Performance Area of the programs.

4. The Agency must act as a liaison agent, for approval purposes, between the regulatory agency of the Program of Technological Education, the Evaluation Committee and the Vocational and Technical Institutions at the postsecondary level in Puerto Rico.

5. The Agency shall maintain the institutions informed about the requirements needed to renew and preserve the approval.

6. The Agency shall require the approved institutions written notification that the Application Letters for the extension of their approval status were sent. This application should be submitted a year prior to the due date, being due date four years since the approval status has been issued.

7. The Agency shall request the institutions an annual report of compliance, updating the progress in the implementation of recommendations for the correction of findings on previous evaluations. This report shall reflect any substantial change, if any, including but not limited to:

- Change in the mission, vision or objectives of the institution
- Change of legal capacity or administration good standing of the institution
- If a program or programs were mentioned or targeted in a past evaluation, the institution must inform additional courses or programs that represent a significant change in content or teaching strategies or methodologies.
- Changes in the number of credit hours or time required to complete a course or program.

8. The Agency shall perform corroborative investigations of facts to obtain evidence in case that any institution is exercising practices or procedures against the established rules or that has adopted any substantial change without previous notice to the Agency.

9. The Agency shall notify the Director of the institution identifying the existence of irregularities according to the findings of the investigations and grant a period of sixty labors (60) days if the institution demonstrates the effort performed to eliminate them.

10. The Agency shall render a report with recommendations to the Advisory Board once the period of a hundred and twenty (120) labors day, granted as the maximum to correct the irregularities, has elapsed. The Agency shall notify the final decision to the institution.

11. The Agency shall inform to the State and Federal agencies, by written notification, the taken decision.

12. The Agency shall visit the approved institutions, without previous notification, to confirm that the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee has been complied according The Higher Education Act and the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR 602.11).

13. The Agency shall issue an annual report with a summary of all the activities related to the process of approval and overall performance, and shall be circulated among all parties with interest.

Evaluation Committee

Selection of the members

The Agency has established a pool of different kinds of professional candidates such as public (government) functionaries and employees, employers, former postsecondary and occupational students, postsecondary educators, university professors, private schools directors, and executives that will be participating as evaluators during the on-site visit.

The Evaluation Committee will be constituted by a group of persons, free of prejudices, interest conflicts and academic attachments, willing and able to judge in a responsible and professional manner the effectiveness in terms of the expected outcomes, deliverables, and outlined objectives. An evaluator must promote the constructive interaction between parties and a transparent, clear, and sharp process. Members of the Evaluation Committee will be carefully selected by the Agency according to:

1. Education and experience as professor and administrator in the occupational, vocational, and technical fields.
2. Occupational, technical or professional preparation and experience in the field they represent.
3. Depth of knowledge of the relevant characteristics of a postsecondary institution, in terms of organization, administration, and operation of vocational or technical education.

Although the Agency prefers experienced evaluators, also recognizes the importance of incorporate some team members without prior experience to introduce fresh and different perspectives.

The qualifications for each category are as follows:

Administrators- Someone currently or recently directly engage in a significant manner in postsecondary programs or institutional administration, for example a President// Chief Executive Officer of accredited postsecondary institution.

Educators- Someone currently or recently directly engage in a significant manner in postsecondary education in a academic capacity, example professor, instructor, academic dean.

Practitioner-Someone currently or recently directly engage in a significant manner in the practice of professions in the area being evaluate, for example an individual working parts or full time using the knowledge and skills related to the area.

It is essential that evaluators approach their responsibilities in an objective, impartial, and consistent manner. Evaluators must also be able to fully understand the mission, vision, objectives, goals, and culture of the institution that is under review.

The inclusion of team members with different areas of expertise will provide a comprehensive evaluation in the reviewing of the institutions compliance with the standards of approval. These areas of expertise and experience include, but are not limited to: institutional finance, assessment, and teaching, as well as online methods and offerings, administration and governance, student support and coaching, planning and institutional research, and graduate programs.

At least one member of the evaluation team, who will become the Team Leader, must demonstrate skills in leadership, problem solving, coaching, and organization planning. After the on-site visit, the Team Leader will prepare an official written evaluation report with findings that should include strengths, weakness, and qualitative and quantitative information.

Comprehensive evaluations teams will have a minimum of six (6) members including the Team Leader, in order to assure different points of view and an adequate coverage of each one of the standards and expected outcomes.

Since the integrity of the Agency and the quality of the postsecondary public offerings are jeopardized if there is any conflict of interests, all evaluators must be unbiased and must demonstrate good faith, integrity, good behavior and proven expertise. The Agency will make sure that no evaluator is assigned to review certain institution if there is a conflict of interests. Individuals should not provide any service on behalf the Agency to any institution for which he or she has served during the previous natural year, including participation in any discussion or decision related to the approval process.

Training of members

The Agency will provide compulsory trainings and technical assistance to all evaluators in order to create awareness among them of the importance and scope of the functions they will assume. The agency will develop a training schedule spread through the year and will provide requirements, logistics data and information about the institution to team members. The first trainings will include topics as:

- How to prepare for the site evaluation
- Reviewing the organizational profile of institutions
- How to evaluate a course or program and which are the components of the analysis (occupational, performance, competencies, skills, results, outcomes, etc.)
- Tips for being a successful evaluator
- Tips for being a successful interviewer
- Assessment (what to assess? how to assess? when to assess?)

- Conflicts of interest and ethical standards: What the agency expects from evaluators?
- Public Policy: What is the legal frame of the in-site evaluation process?
- How to prepare an evaluator report
- How to make assertive suggestions and recommendations to institutions

Evaluators will also receive formal training in the Credit Hours Policy of the Agency as amended in 2010 by the Higher Education Act.

All evaluators will receive an instruction manual with all rules, regulations and procedures in order to successfully complete their assignment.

Functions and Scope of Evaluators

1. Perform on site evaluations of the institutions that request approval.
2. Develop a working plan to manage the evaluation activities that takes place during the visit.
3. The duration of the regular visit could be from one (1) to three (3) labor days. If additional time is necessary, evaluator must request authorization to the Advisory Board in order to accomplish the approval goal.
4. Prepare a report to the Agency about the results of the evaluation performed, based on the self-evaluation submitted by the institution.
5. Respond to the Team Leader, who will compile and submit a report to the Director of the Agency and later to the Advisory Board who will take the final decision to approve or deny accreditation.

Responsibilities of the evaluator toward the Agency

1. Attend and participate in all the scheduled trainings.
2. Attend and perform meetings regarding on-site visits planning.

3. Participate in the selection of the evaluators' leader.
4. Prepare a work plan aligned to the Committee Work Plan.
5. Study and analyze all the documents provided by the Agency related to the institution and the approval process, keeping them in strict confidentiality.
6. Attend to the on-site visits as planned.
7. Make recommendations to the Agency about how to improve evaluation process.

Responsibilities of the evaluator toward the institution

1. Participate in a meticulous investigation of the strengths and areas that require improvement regarding the institution or program. Meetings will be conducted between the on-site review team, the faculty members, and administrative staff, which include the Director and students.
2. Verify and validate the projected image in the self-evaluation of the institution or the program.
3. Verify through the analysis of the presented evidence, the information obtained from the self-evaluation.
4. Determine the degree of authenticity that the self-evaluation report reflects, and details about the actual conditions of the institution.
5. Validate the system or methodology, used by the institution to conduct the self-evaluation.
6. Verify and validate the scope of their findings and how those correspond to the needs and objectives of the institutions or programs.
7. Add to the self-evaluation report any necessary data or document.

THE ON SITE EVALUATION VISIT FOR EVALUATORS (Evaluators Instructions)

Activities prior to the visit

Evaluation Committee

- Attend and actively participate in the training meetings.
- Prepare the Evaluation Committee Work Plan.

The Work Plan is a fundamental document for the effectiveness of the visit. This shall indicate how it will distribute the time the Committee disposes of to perform the evaluation activities and the group meeting. The visit will take place for a minimum of two (2) days when is a whole revision and a minimum of one (1) day.

What to wait during the on-site visit?

In the following is outlined a series of the normal activities that happen before, during and after the on-site visit. (Annex 5)

- Initial interview with the director of the institution and the Steering Committee that prepared the self-evaluation report.
- Familiarization with the rest of the institutional community.
- Group revision of the self-evaluation and the aspects that require attention related with the PRSAA standards.

Observation visits and group and individual evaluation interviews. It is important that the Evaluation Committee and the Steering Committee of the institution reach an agreement about the strategies and agenda to follow during the visit and the evaluation interviews.

Preparing the report.

- Exit conference with Steering Committee.

- Evaluation Report presented by the Evaluation Committee leader.

Studying and analyze the self-evaluation documents

The self-evaluation documents presented by the institution and its programs represent the effort by such in the approval process. The institution dedicated time and energy to perform its self-evaluation. This document shall be:

- The main source of information about the institution to be visited.
- An index of the focus used in the evaluation.
- The focal point of the Committee during evaluation visit.

Questions to be use as guidelines in the analysis of the self-evaluation report.

What is the philosophy, mission of the institution and its programs?

What are the objectives of the institution and what educational obligations has it assumed?

Are the objectives of the institution adjusted to the existing demands and the students it serves?

Are the activities of the institution matched with its objectives?

Are its programs and activities designed to achieve its objectives?

Is there bona fide evidence that the objectives of the institution are being achieved?

Does the institution actually count with the human, physical, and financial resources necessary for the achievement of its objectives?

Will these resources be available in the near future?

Is the institution got an ethical standards set and promote them?

Is the institution got and use the Credit Hour Policy (if applies) according to the Higher Education Act (as amended)?

Prior to the on site visit the evaluator shall:

- Prepare a list of the aspects that should be elaborated.
- Clarify the inconsistencies.
- Analyze the effectiveness in the achievement of the objectives.
- Prepare a list of the persons he/she wishes to interview.
- List the strengths and weaknesses of the institution and its programs.

The State Approval Agency role

The Agency will be in charge of the following activities prior to the evaluation visit of the Committee.

- Organize and carry out the training meetings for the members of the Committee with the purpose of:
 - a) Familiarizing them with the evaluation process.
 - b) Training them regarding the particularities of the institution.
 - c) Familiarizing them with those norms and criteria to be examined.
- Handing them copies of the following documents:
 - a) Copies of the Agency Rules and Procedures Handbook

- b) Copies of the Guide for the Evaluation of Public Postsecondary Vocational and Technical Education in Puerto Rico.

- c) Copies of the documents submitted by the institution related with the self-evaluation.

The Evaluation Process

Rating

During the visit, and utilizing the self-evaluation submitted by the institution, the evaluator shall, in his/her analysis, make a red mark next to those indicators in which it is in disagreement with the ratings assigned by the institution. (See Annex 1). To support his/her observations, the evaluator shall make a red mark in the space provided for those means and will assign the rating it seems pertinent. It shall prepare the Narrative Report and the Overall Evaluation. (Annexes, 1, 2, 3, 5A, 5B)

Before leaving the institution, the evaluator shall deliver these reports to the Committee leader.

Reports

Each member of the evaluation Committee will deliver an individual narrative report of his/her observations, findings, and recommendations. This report should be as complete as possible, as it will be used by the Committee leader to write the final evaluation report.

The following is required:

- Use the form titled Narrative Report, Area of Administrative Performance. Area of Program's Performance or General Courses Performance (as applicable) to render the report. (Annexes 1, 2 and 3)

- Complete each section of the heading as indicated.

- Include the findings in the corresponding columns identified with the titles of strengths, weaknesses and recommendations. It is suggested that for every area

marked that requires improvement (weaknesses), it is given recommendations for the correction of the same. The areas for improvement will be based on the analysis of the evidence and the ratings of the indicators.

- Every narrative report is confidential, it contains privileged information and it is the responsibility of the Committee leader and the Agency to ensure that it has adequately disposed of all the copies.
- A certification of the mandatory interviews must be included.

Exit Conference

After reaching a consensus about the evaluation results, the Evaluation Committee will meet with the director of the institution and the Steering Committee.

This meeting is known as the Exit Conference and in it only participate the Steering Committee and those persons invited by the Director of the Institution, if determined convenient.

The purpose of this meeting is to inform the institution and to its program the findings in general terms. This preliminary report is product of analyzing the analysis of the evidence of the self-studies presented by the institutions to the members of the Evaluation Committee.

Final Report

The major responsibility of the Evaluation Committee leader is the preparation of the final report to be sent, in writing. The reference report is a compendium of all documents and reports submitted by each member of the Evaluation Committee and notes taken at the discussions with the persons interviewed. It is a document that is to be coherent and revealing of the findings and recommendations of the Committee. **The leader of the on-site review team has 30 days to submit the final on-site report. The Agency Director has 15 days to send the report to the Director of the Institution who in turn has 15 days to submit the responses to the Agency Director.**

The group discussions are vital in the preparation of this report. The consensus of opinions is important, but the differences must be included in the report from the leader. The Committee's final evaluation meeting, prior to the Conference, is the opportunity to clarify the basic concepts of the evaluation and count with a defined and clear summary of the findings and recommendations. It is also the opportunity for each member to

collaborate with the leader in the preparation of the final report. The Evaluation Committee shall call its members to a meeting with the purpose of discussing the report before sending it to the Agency. The date of the meeting shall be determined by the members of the Committee and after the Exit Conference.

The following is required:

- Use the format provided by the Agency to the Committee leader. (Annex 4)
- Complete the requested information in each one of the sections of the outline that is included in the format.
- Include in the document all the weaknesses and those strengths observed, in addition to those informed by the institution. That will facilitate future evaluations in which it may be determined if the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee were implemented to correct the findings.
- The evaluators must interview the following people: faculty members, administrative staff, students and other appropriate persons, all those they consider necessary to clarify and assure the due process during the evaluation, and present a certification of those interviews as part of the report.
- Submit to the Agency the narrative report of the Evaluation Committee in or before thirty (30) calendar days after the visit.
- Send two copies of the Evaluation Committee's report in different envelopes. This will avoid possible losses in the mail. The leader shall retain a copy of the report.

Before returning the copies of the self-study to the Agency it shall ensure the following:

- Mark in red those forms used by the Evaluation Committee that reveal changes in the rating of the indicators. This makes the work performed to stand out and points out the aspects to be improved.
- Mark a copy as "Official Report of the Committee". The leader must be sure it is complete and correct. This document will become a permanent copy of the Agency's files.
- Include the signature of the evaluator that verified the document.

- Return the documents of the self-study to the Agency, as soon as possible.
- Maintain the confidentiality by part of the Evaluation Committee about the information obtained by the institution; it should not be commented on with anybody.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE TO THE STATE APPROVAL AGENCY

Related with the process

The group leader must submit to the State Approval Agency, in addition to the final evaluation, the form with recommendations and commentaries related with the report process, known as Individual Observations of the Evaluation Committee Members during the On Site Visit. (Annex 6).

The recommendations or commentaries should address in the documents or forms provide used by the State Approval Agency, the evaluative processes, the personal appreciation about the participation in the process, the circumstances that could have affected the process and any other commentary that results in the growth and development of the institution and the program of the Agency and the institution must be part of the report.

Related to the Agency

Every document used by the Evaluation Committee members shall be returned to the Agency. This will take into consideration the commentaries and recommendations to submit them to the Board of Examiners of the State Approval Agency for its recommendations and make the final decision.

Guidelines

a) Administrative Performance

Criteria number 1 - Administration

Mission, Objectives, Philosophy and Ethical Standards

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, shall establish its own mission and objectives. Those components should take in consideration the demands of the workforce and must include all administrative personnel in the elaboration of the mission and objectives. The institution is required to publish and keep an updated catalogue to inform and create awareness among general public. Also the requesting institution must demonstrate the existence, use and divulgation of a set of Ethical Standards.

Organization, Planning and Credit Hour Policy

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, shall evidence a systematic process of organization and functionality, and also establish a budget to address the needs. It shall evidence a systematic, democratic, flexible, and realistic planning including, but not limited to, time charts, flowcharts, fiscal, educational and financial planning and the use of the Credit Hour Policy.

Information systems

Every institution interest in being evaluated for approval should have a database including both quantitative and qualitative data that serves as benchmark and milestone for planning, decision taking, research, and administrative and programmatic evaluation.

Retention and employability

Every institution interest in being evaluated for approval shall provide enough evidence about their capacity of maintaining a retention and employability percentage of no less than seventy percent (70%).

Criteria number 2 - Physical Facilities and Safety

Every institution interest in being evaluated for approval, shall count with an adequate physical facility to offer the educational services and guarantee the safety of the students, teachers and all institution workers.

Criteria number 3 - Learning Resources and Credit Hour Policy

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, shall count with the appropriate and necessary resources for teaching and learning in order to obtain the expected outcomes and reach the goals those goals must be align with the Credit Hour Policy.

Criteria number 4 - Students Support, Technical Assistance and Awareness

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, shall comply with the established requirements for promotion, recruitment, admission, registration, orientation and counseling, placement, and student support. The institution must ensure that they are offering information and services, as well as guarantee the availability of the necessary resources that would help students in the decision making process in harmony with their academic and professional interests.

b) Programmatic Performance

Criteria Number 1 – Planning, Organization of Programs and Credit Hour Policy

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, shall count with a philosophy that reflects a valuable system related to the fundamental principles and concepts of the program. It is necessary that every program could demonstrate a programmatic, administrative and evaluation plan that guarantee the expected outcomes, the resources, the timeline, and the performance evidence. Every institution must demonstrate to have and implement a credit hour policy aligned to the federal guidance.

Criteria Number - 2 Equipment, Tools and Materials

Every institution interest in being evaluated for approval, shall count with the necessary equipment, tools and materials to achieve the objectives and guarantee the achievements of goals.

Criterion Number 3 – Curriculum and Credit Hour Policy

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, shall be organized, administered and directed to develop the occupational skills in accordance with the technological advances and with the workforce trends. The institution must demonstrate the availability of a curriculum specially developed for each and every program. The curriculum must be developed by a expert in the matter and must be aligned with the vision, mission and general objectives of the institution and must be align with public policy including the Credit Hour policy.

Criterion Number 4 - Advisory Committee

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, shall create an Advisory Committee composed of students, faculty, employees, employer, former institution students and community members. This committee will help in the developing and

reviewing process of the curricular content. The Advisory Committee must act as a link between the students and the upper management team of the institution. The committee is also responsible for the maintenance of a constant review of the inner processes and the objectives, mission, vision and expected outcomes of the institution in order to assure the best practices and the alignment of the offering with the actual needs and social reality.

Criteria Number 5 – Safety and Ethical Standard

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, shall have a trained team in charge of protecting the health, safety and life of the students, faculty, workers and visitors from the outside community and establish it as part of the Ethical Standards of the Institution. It is required that every program develops a safety protocol aligned to the reality and risk scale of every program. Every student of the institution must receive an initial training about how to handle and use every material, equipment and tool provided. Every classroom must show a written compendium of the safety protocol.

Criteria Number 6 - Teaching and Learning Processes

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, shall count with a teaching staff that demonstrates full domain and expertise in their respective matter. It is also required that every teacher must be interviewed, qualified and trained in order to assure the best practices in teaching. It is also necessary that the institution designs and implements evaluation and professional development plans for teachers, and requests from them: teaching plans, activities, reports, meeting and pre establish processes to assure teaching quality and expected learning outcomes. Teachers must respect and promote the Ethical Standards of the Institution and must demonstrate knowledge about Public Policy including domain of the Credit Hour Policy.

Approval process and stages

The Agency pursues the mission of evaluate, approve, and authorize public postsecondary vocational and technical institutions and programs. The Agency only will approve those institutions and programs that demonstrate compliance with agency standards and public policy. Each evaluation will be conduct follow strictly measures to assure and impartial and objective judgment.

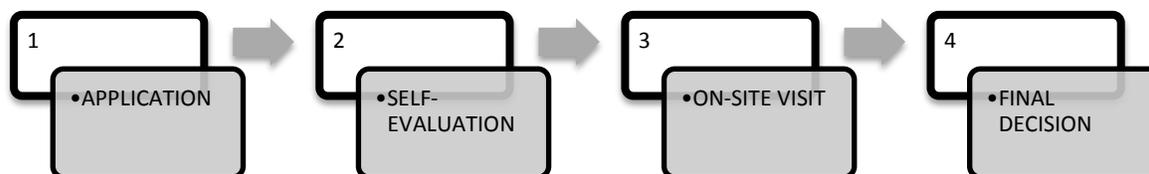
Stages of the approval process:

1. **Application:** A year before the evaluation, every institution shall file a voluntary approval or re-approval application. The re-approval application shall be filed a year before the approval due date.
2. **Self-evaluation:** It is the voluntary process to establish the strengths and weaknesses in the performance of the educational programs and the institutional operations, including achievements of objectives and corrective actions for the weaknesses.
3. **On-site visit:** This visit shall be performed by the evaluation committee, composed of professional experts in the areas to be evaluated. The purpose of the visit is to determine if the information provided in the self-study is aligned to the current situation of institution or program. The evaluation committee leader prepares a final on-site visit report within the next thirty (30) days after the visit.
4. **Final action:** In this stage the Agency Director has fifteen (15) labor days to send the report to the CEO (institution director), who will have another fifteen (15) labor days to respond back. The Agency sends the report to the Advisory Board that makes the final decision after analyzing it, taking into account the recommendations of the final on-site visit report, the reaction report of the

institution and the submitted improvement plan (if any) This final decision can be either approved, revoked, denied, or reinstated to the approval process.

5. Approved status- A status that shows the institution is in compliance with all required standards or has been submit a compliance plan that allow them to comply in a reasonable time.
6. Revoked – A status results when the authorization of the institution is rid off because a non-compliance with that agency standards.
7. Denied- A status that shows the institution is in non-compliance with all or a significant quantity of the standards and/or the compliance plan is not satisfactory according the Agency Standards.
8. Reinstated- A status that shows that a revoked institution presented new evidence that prove they are in compliance or in way to be in compliance with all the agency standards.

Approval process flow-chart



Assistance to requesting institutions

Technical Assistance is available to provide overall guidance about the federal, state and Puerto Rico State Approval Agency standards and procedures and about the Puerto Rico post-secondary vocational education approval. Agency personnel are available to answer written questions and clarify doubts before the application, during the process or after final decision.

The self-study

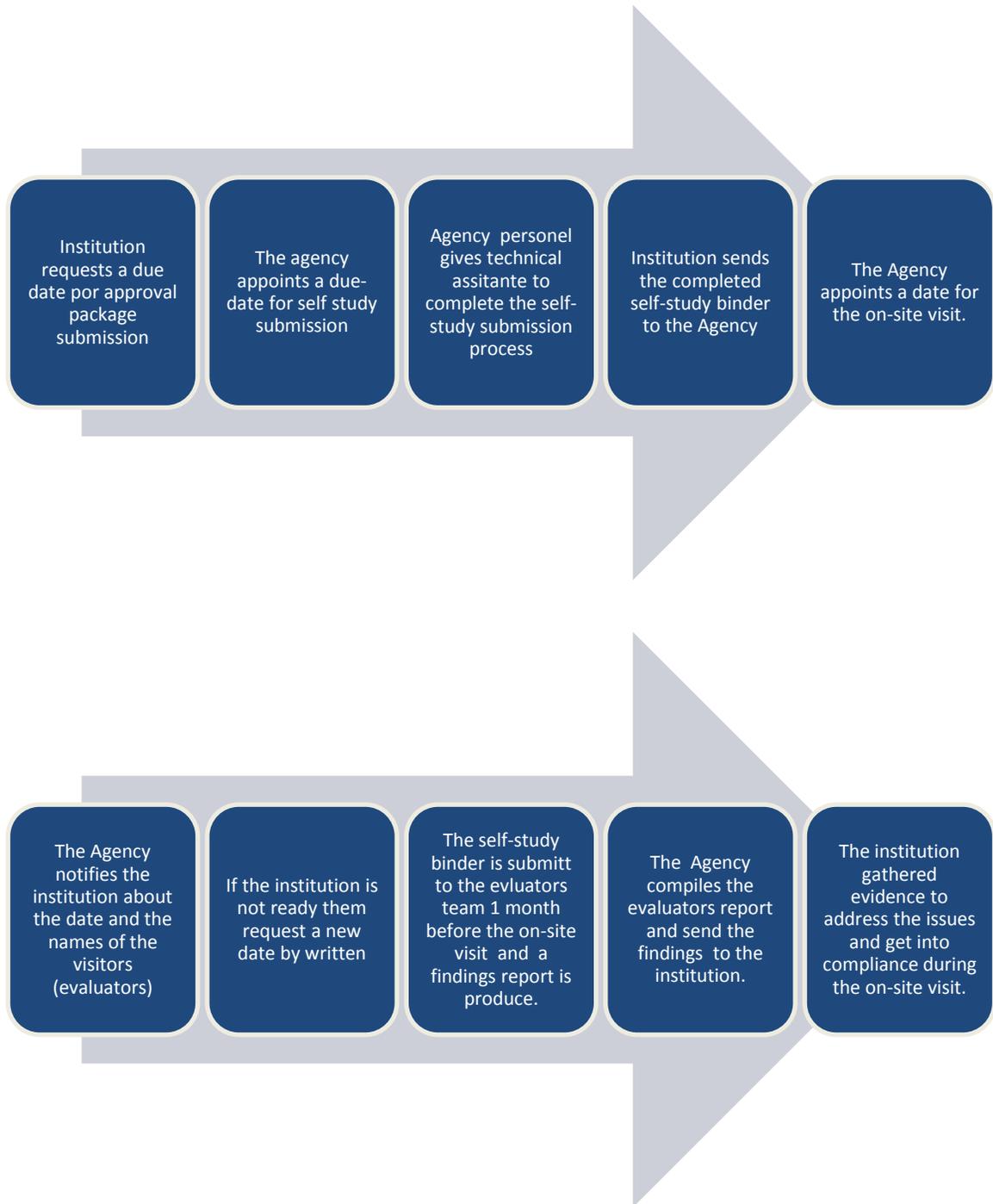
Institutions are required to submit the Agency a self-study binder in order to give it a snapshot of the institution's guidelines and procedures, and include samples of each sub-category. This report must include information of the last six (6) months of the Institution operations. Agency personnel are available to help institutions conduct their preliminary self-study and to identify the necessary site-evaluation data and information. The self-study provides advanced information to the evaluation team, which also results in a time saving process whereas creates efficiency during the on-site visit. The self-study is a qualitative assessment that measure the strengthens and weakness of the institution and the meet objectives accord the work plan. The self-study steering committee will include a representative portion of the administrative personnel, faculty

members, students, and the governing body of the requesting institution. More information about the steering committee is available on page 32 of this document.

Self-study process

1. The institution works with the Agency on appointing a projected date for the approval package submission.
2. The Agency appoints according to the institution a due-date to complete and submit the self-study
3. The Agency personnel are available to bring technical support for the self-study submission.
4. The institution sends the completed self-study to the Agency.
5. Once the institution is ready for the on-site visit, the Agency coordinates a date with the team of evaluators.
6. The agency notifies the institution the date and the names of the evaluators that will be visiting the institution.
7. If the institution notifies that is not ready for the on-site visit, they must contact the Agency and provide a justification for the request of a new date to initiate the approval process.
8. The self-study will be submitted to the evaluation team one month before the on-site visit due date. The evaluation committee will produce a recommendation document indicating the areas that will be targeted during the on-site visit.
9. Agency personnel will compile the comments and recommendations and send them to an institution representative in order to let them prepare for the visit.
10. The institution personnel will gather information to address the evaluators' comments prior to the on-site visit.

The self-study graphic process



The site evaluation

As establish before, there is a minimum of two (2) days for whole revision visits and a minimum of one (1) day for programs evaluation. Some institutions may require more days due to the number of programs offered and/or their locations. The agenda will be determined by the institution and the Agency prior to the site evaluation in order to ensure efficiency and best use of time.

During the afternoon of the second day (in a two days visit), each team will provide the team leader a consolidated preliminary report, including comments and scores. The team leader then will present findings to the evaluation team in a compiled report and will pursuit and oral report to the institutions designated personnel. The written report will include: strengthens, weaknesses and, areas to be improved. The report will also include the related recommendations.

The oral report must be:

- a) Clear - just cover the essential points (remember this is an official report)
- b) Not a forum for debate or argumentation - only clarification questions are allowed; there is not room for debate or discussions.

The written report:

After receiving the report from the visiting team , the Agency will submit a preliminary report to the institution under review. Then the institution will have thirty (30) labor days to respond to any findings or request reconsideration. Also the institutions have the opportunity to file supplemental materials pertinent the facts and conclusions in the written report of the visiting team, prior to the Agency take any decision.

- a) If the institution does not respond within thirty (30) labor days, the preliminary report will be sent to the Advisory Board of the Agency for review and considerations. The Advisory Board will make a recommendation to the Agency.
- b) If the institution responds with comments or supporting documents within the thirty (30) labor days, the Agency will review them and reconvene the original site team of evaluators if necessary.
- c) The Agency will update the preliminary report to include the evaluators' decision after considering the evidence submitted by the institution.
- d) The preliminary report with the evaluators' determination will be referred to the Advisory Board.
- e) The Advisory Board will make comments and recommendations on approval status to the Agency.
- f) The Agency will review the preliminary report and will send the final report to the institution.

The steering committee

The institution must constitute an ad-hoc steering committee for purposes of self-study and on-site visit. The self-study steering committee is an essential part of the approval process and will include a representative portion of the administrative personnel, faculty members, students and the governing body of the requesting institution. This committee will help in the developing and reviewing process of the self-study and must be present during the on-site visit of evaluators.

Appealing a non-approval status

Any institution or program pending of appeal will continue the approval status until the final decision is resolved. If the final written determination (with a specific statement of

the reasons) is denied, revoked, or keeps the institution pending with a corrective plan, the institution or program represented by the CEO (institution director) will have the right to initiate an appeal process as follows:

First step

The institution or program that receives the final written determination of denial, revocation or approval pending status, will submit a written request within the next ten (10) labor days after the notification to initiate an appeal process. The due date will be calculated using the date issued in the envelope of the notification. In that communication the institution will indicate the specific reasons to request an appeal.

Within the next ten (10) labor days, the Agency will summon a formal hearing with the CEO (institution director). The purpose of the hearing will be:

- a) Explain the procedures, findings and recommendations received.
- b) Clarify any doubts about the decision.
- c) Initiate the second step of the process, if necessary, and get to the end the controversy if an agreement is reached.
- d) A minute of the hearing will be prepared and a copy will be submitted to the CEO and the Agency officer.

Second step

1. After the hearing, if the CEO of the institution (director) disagrees with the decision of the Agency, he or she may request reconsideration within the next ten (10) labor days after notification.

2. The reconsideration must be in written and addressed to the Advisory Board of the Agency. The institution will have the opportunity to provide pertinent, relevant and justifiable evidence for the evaluation or reconsideration of the status.
3. The Advisory Board has twenty (20) labor days after receiving the request to analyze and answer the CEO (institution director). The Advisory Board may visit or call the institution in order to verify or review any conditions that has been addressed during the reconsideration process. The Advisory Board must finish all visits and calls before the submission of recommendations. A minute will be taken for every visit, call or meeting.
4. If the CEO (institution director) still disagrees with the decision of the Advisory Board after the second step, he or she may request a third and last reconsideration. For this step the CEO will have ten (10) labor days after the receiving the answer from the Advisory Board. In this occasion, the revision will be send directly to Advisory Commission.

Third and last step

1. The Advisory Commission has twenty (20) labor days, after receiving the request, to analyze and answer the CEO (institution director) request letter. As part of that process, the Advisory Commission will act as an examiner official and could visit or call the institution in order to verify any conditions that have been addressed during the reconsideration process. All visits and calls have to be made before the submission of the recommendations report.
2. The final determination must be supported by findings and reasons for such findings. Based on those findings, the Agency will provide the institution a written report of the final decision, which will be one of the following:
 - a) Maintain the original determination.

- b) Amend the original determination.
- c) Revoke the original determination and send the written decision to the agency to continue with the typical procedure.

Copy of the final determination will be send to the Secretary of Education of The United States Department of Education and The Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. A minute of each meeting, call or visit during the process will be prepared and filed in the Agency office.

This step will put end to the administrative process and any resolution at this point will be final. Parts with interest must invoke other forum or mechanism (if available) to review a decision by the Agency.

Credit hour policy

The United States Department of Education published regulation concerning the definition of a credit hour and guidance about its implementation. The establishment of a credit hour is necessary because students are awarded with financial aid based on their enrollment of curses and the amount of credits. The credit hour, according to the Federal Department of Education, is: “A unit of measure that gives value to the level of instruction, academic rigor, and time requirements for a course taken at an educational institution” (Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as Defined in the Final Regulations Published on October 29, 2010)

The cited document says: “At its most basic sense, a credit hour is a proxy measurement of a quantity of student learning. The higher education community has long used the credit hour, as defined by the Carnegie unit, as part of a process to

establish a standard measure of faculty workloads, costs of instruction, and rates of educational efficiencies, as well as a measure of student work for transfer students”.

Using the Federal standards allow the Agency to establish a consistent measure of the minimum requirements of a student academic load. The Agency will review the Credit Hour Policy of every requesting institution or program in order to verify that it is aligned to the federal and state regulations. From the Agency’s point of view, the credit hour is a measure that reflects the intended learning outcomes, and establishes the expected student achievement for a given time aligned to the equivalencies of the institution.

Institutions will be reviewed based on the established learning outcomes and verifiable achievement of those outcomes. The Agency will also review the institution assignment of credit hours as per the Agency credit/clock hour conversion, as follows:

15 theory hours = 1 credit

20 lab hours = 1 credit

30 internship/externship hours = 1 credit

The credit hours awarded for the programs are compliant with the definition of a credit hour under the Higher Education Act of 2010, section 34 CFR 600.2 for the purpose of federal program and provision, related to approval agencies’ assessment of the determinations of the intuitions of credit hours or other measures of student work under 34 CFR 602.24 (f) for purposes of the Title IV student financial assistance programs.

The institution provides clock hours, that are the basis for the awarded credit hours.

The formula is as follows:

1. A semester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction;

2. A trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction; and

Credits may be awarded on the basis of documentation regarding the amount of work that an average student is expected to complete within a pre-determined amount of time.

Methodology for Credit Hour Calculation

- The institution must identify, among every course, the different competencies (concepts, skills, attitudes and aptitudes) that the student must be exposed in order to receive recognition that employers in the chosen field of study consider useful.
- Identify the different educational activities that are necessary to achieve the necessary knowledge and skills to receive a title, degree or certificate. These activities are: classroom hour, direct faculty instruction including outside the classroom, laboratory work, internships, and community services.
- These activities are aligned with the different matters or topics.
- The sum of the time period will be calculated for each unit of one (1) credit equivalent to thirty seven point five (37.5) hours.

Applicability

An institution is responsible for determining the credit hour for every coursework in the programs, in accordance with the Federal Program definition of a credit hour. Those educational institutions must review their policies and procedures for determining the credit hours and the application to its program and coursework, and take proper action to comply with this policy of the definition of credit hours before requesting approval or re-approval from the Agency. Those educational institutions that grant certificate will be required ad here it to the Policy established. Non-compliance with the institution with the credit hours policy will result in a negative recommendation and an immediate correction

plan. The review of credit hour policy and all standards compliance will be continuous and the Agency may conduct visits without prior advice to confirm the pursuing of all policies and objectives. If the Agency becomes aware of any non-compliance situation regarding the credit hours policy, the Agency will activate the special report mechanism described in this document.

The Agency will notify the situation to the Secretary of the Department of Education of the United States and the Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Education for further actions.

Grievances and appeal processes from individuals regarding institutions or programs decisions

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to give the opportunity to any person affected by a decision or action taken by an institution and approved by the Agency to count with a procedure that can help to solve grievances as quickly and fairly as possible, aligned with public policy, due process of law and equal law protection.

I What is a complaint? What a complaint must include?

Is important to highlight that according to the policy and procedures of the State Approval Agency, a grievance is a written notification received by the agency, in which a complaint against an institution or program that has been evaluated and established. The complaint must express:

An unethical action according with the Agency Ethical Standards, the use of false information, or changes in violation with established and published policies of the Agency rules. The complaint has to be sufficiently precise as to clearly identify: a) the situation b) the complainants c) the institution or program against which the allegation is presented and, d) the opportunity for the institution or program to respond to presented allegations.

II Complaints timeline

The institution or program will have ten (10) days after the complaint is filed by the Agency to answer the allegations. If the allegations proceed, the institution or program will have one hundred and twenty (120) days to address the situation and show corrective action.

III Scope and consequences of a proven complaint

The Agency will only consider those complaints that would prevent the operation of the institution and affect educational rights and the quality of the educational offerings. Each complaint should be identified according to the Agency's rules that are considered violated. If an institution or program relies on unethical or non-professional actions to make a decision or take some action, it will result in a negative impact on the process of approval of the institution or program.

IV Corrective plan and compliance

If the State Approval Agency finds that the complaint is valid, it may request a corrective action from the institution within sixty (60) days since the complaint was filed. Failing by the institution or program to take the corrective action during the established period could result in revoking the approval of the institution or program. The institution or program has the right to appeal through the procedure established by the agency, as explained in page 26 of this document. The institution or program will have the opportunity to present evidence of compliance within the next sixty (60) days, and correct the deficiencies within one hundred and twenty (120) labor days.

V Ad-hoc committee

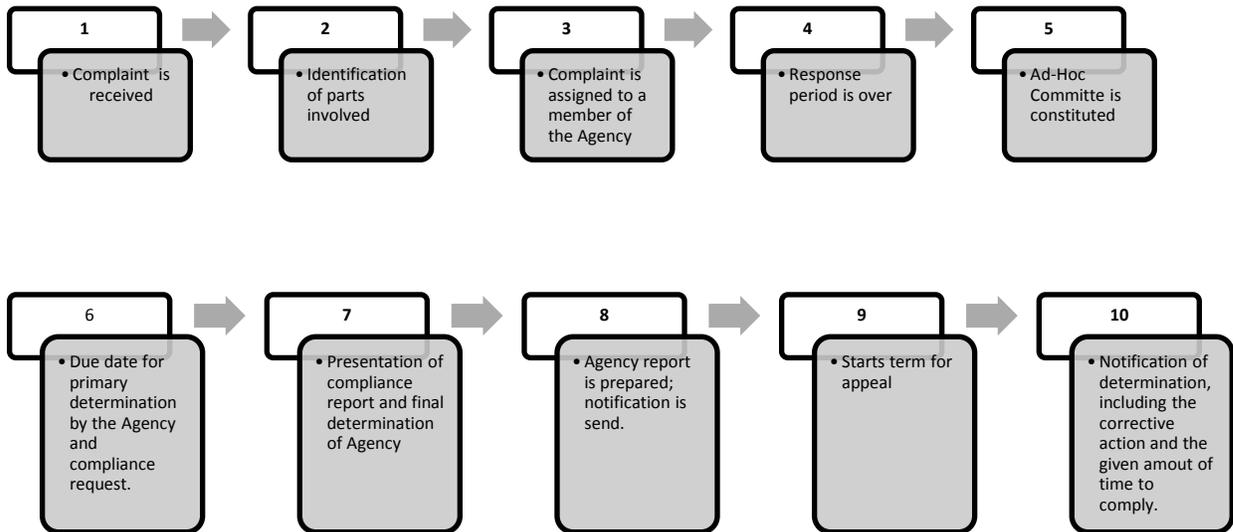
Before a determination is reached, the institution or program complaint and response will be reviewed by an Ad-Hoc Committee appointed by the Secretary of Education of the Puerto Rico Department of Education. This Committee will strictly follow the ethical standards of the agency and must have no conflict of interest. Members of this committee should be people with high moral and ethical standards and strong knowledge about postsecondary education and vocational and technical areas.

VI Final resolution

The final resolution of the complaint shall be determined within one hundred and twenty days (120) labor days. Each decision regarding a complaint will become final as soon

as the Agency notifies and reports the determination in writing. The notification will be send by certified mail.

VII Process flow-chart and explanation



- 1) The complaint is received; a file is open with a case number.
- 2) Parts involved are identified by name, address, and telephone number.
- 3) The file is assigned to a member of the Agency to investigate and follow the standard procedure
- 4) The date of submission of the complaint and the date for the initial response are due.
- 5) Ad-hoc Committee members are appointed to review the complaint. Documentation of assigned date and committee member's names and particulars circumstances if any. Term for committee response begins.
- 6) Take into account the date when the complaint was presented. Establish due date for initial determination of the Agency and due date for compliance request.
- 7) Presentation of compliance report by the institution or program and final determination by the Agency.
- 8) Agency prepares a report about compliance. Notifications are mailed to the involved parts and the file is kept inactive until appeal period expires.
- 9) Term to appeal begins.

10) Notification of determination by the Agency including the corrective action and the given amount of time to comply.

VIII Appeal Process of Complaints

Once a final determination regarding a complaint presented against an institution or program is received, the institution or program should submit a written request within the next ten (10) labor days (beginning the date stated at the received notification) in order to initiate an appellation process.

If the authorization or approved status of the institution or program has been revoked as per the complaint resolution, the approval status will continue until the appellation process is finished and a decision taken.

The Agency will have the last pronouncement and decision regarding appeals. An examiner officer will be appointed for every appeal, according to his or her background and the matter of the complaint to be reviewed. The main task of the examiner officer will be to review all the file content and only take acknowledgement of the facts, allegations and evidences contained on it. New evidence or allegations are not under the scope of the officer. The examiner officer will produce a report for the Agency Director with recommended corrective actions. The Director must notify the final results of the appealing process to the parts within ten (10) days after receiving the report and recommendations by the examiner officer. The Agency will consider every appeal resolution as final. Parts with interest must invoke other forums or mechanisms (if available) to review a decision by the Agency.

Ethical Standards required to institutions

One of the purposes of the on-site visit of the Evaluation Committee is to verify if the institution has a set of standards governing the institutional, administrative, and programmatic and evaluation plans. The Agency will require the evaluation team to

conduct a review of the existing ethical standards. The lack of standards may result in a delay of the approval process and may cause a written recommendation of the committee. The requesting institution must prove that all of its standards and procedures are ethical, including, but not limited to: recruitment, advertising, transcripts, fair and equitable students' tuition refunds and students' placement services. The ethical standards of the institutions must include at least:

A. Institutional policy about program discontinuation or closure

The institution must provide a document stating the policy in case of closing or discontinuation of a program. The document should include all kind of opportunities to the students in order to complete the program requirements and be able to receive the degree. Those alternatives can include, but are not limited to on-line courses, under contract courses, and self-study sessions. The institution must pledge that the student will be given the opportunity to complete its program of study.

B. Honesty and Academic Integrity

The institution must provide evidence of the policy regarding the intellectual property, personal, social and well-being of the student. The institution will not tolerate plagiarism, fraud, grades changes, ideological falsification, false documentation, false identity practices, or any act opposite to the identity or the intellectual produce of a student or any person. It will be considered unlawful and must represent severe discipline and legal measures.

C. Credit hour policy compliance

The institution must provide evidence of their policy of credit hours and that policy must be align with the dispositions of the Higher Education Act and the related federal regulations as amended.

D. Confidentiality of Students Records

The institution must follow the federal dispositions regarding the management of students' records and information (Family Educational Rights Privacy Act, FERPA, 1974). The institution will not produce, give or disseminate any information related to a student without written consent of the student or parent or legal guardian if the student is less than eighteen years old. Every student has the right to receive a copy of his or her student records and to be informed about any changes or practices that can affect those records. The students also have the right to request revisions and corrections of any mistake on their records.

E. Security and student right to know

The institution must comply with federal dispositions regarding security issues in higher education institutions (Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act, SRTK, 1990). As stated in the mentioned act, every institution that participates in higher education programs must disseminate to the students all information regarding the institutional, operational, and academic offerings, economic assistance, and security issues, as well as any other important or relevant information that may affect student.

F. Non -discrimination policy

The institution will guarantee to the employees and the students the equal protection of law. The institution will not discriminate against any student or prospect on the basis of

race, gender, color, nationality, social condition, political ideology, religious beliefs, or any disability. The institution understands its obligation of reviewing and updating periodically the non-discrimination policies in order to incorporate changes and new requirements.

G. Sexual Harassment Policy

The institution must provide evidence of a written sexual harassment policy, including training to teachers and other personnel, and awareness to students about what is sexual harassment and how to file a complaint of sexual harassment. The institution must observe zero tolerance practices and policies regarding sexual harassment.

H. American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

No student will be discriminated because of a physical or mental condition or disability. The institution must prove to have the capacity of providing reasonable accommodation to those students and make sure that the personnel have been trained accordingly.

I. Rights and Responsibility of Students

All students have the right to receive an education besides the classroom. The institution will prove the existence of other activities and strategies to enrich student academic life such as peer to peer coaching activities, collaborative activities with other students, professors and other personnel within the educational environment, availability of resources like libraries, technology or data centers, etc. The student has the responsibility to behave appropriately and will not interfere with the rights of education of other students within the campus.

J. Drug and Substance Control

The institution must establish a policy of drug-free environment. This policy must include information about the use and abuse of illegal drugs, alcohol and other potentially dangerous substances. The institution must have the capacity and information needed to orient students about available prevention and rehabilitation programs that deals with drugs and alcohol dependence.

K. Fair and equitable services to students

Institutions must prove that they provide the same opportunities and access to information to all students. Students must know their rights, from the recruitment process and all through the duration of their studies in the institution. Students have constant and updated information about available financial aid, repayment plans, deferrals and deferments. The institution must demonstrate the existence of a refunds and reimbursements policy, aligned to the federal dispositions and how is the divulgation and awareness process to students.

Annual Report

Once a year, the approved institutions must submit a compliance report to the Agency, due on August 31 of every year, including the period from August to May of the reported year. To be in compliance with the Annual Report, the institution shall include all approval standards (see standards on the above section of this document). The objective of the Annual Report is to assure the best practices in occupational and technical education, to prove the compliance of the institutions and to allow the Agency to use the obtained information as a benchmark for the continuous improvement of the Agency and institutions programmatic, administrative and evaluative plans. The agency will receive the reports, which will be date stamped when the report is receive.

An initial review will be made to ensure materials have been submitted for each section of the required report.

If material is lacking, the Agency will notify the institution and request the additional information.

When the report is complete, the Agency will coordinate a review of the annual report with the institution if necessary.

During the review the staff will look for red flags (if any) that indicate areas of deficiency.

If materials are deficient and red flags have been identified, the Agency and staff will arrive at a consensus that a deficiency exists.

A notification letter telling the institution about the founded deficiencies will be sent with a request to provide additional evidence.

The Agency will review additional materials and arrives a consensus on the sufficiency of that evidence.

The institution will be notified they met the standards and will continue with full approval status.

Corrective Plans

If an institution does not meet full approval, the Agency will prepare a notification letter and the institution must submit a corrective action plan within thirty (30) labor days from the date of the letter. The Agency will schedule a site visit and the Puerto Rico Department of Education and United States Department Education will be notified when an institution does not meet the standards.

The Advisory Committee will be the reviewers of the submitted action plans of the non-compliance institutions and they will make the recommendations to the Agency Director.

Subsequent reports may be requested to the institution in order to get in compliance. Every report requested and submitted after a Corrective Action Plan may be considered a special report.

Special reports

Special reports must be submitted by institutions if there are any changes in the administrative or programmatic plans previously submitted to the Agency and when a Corrective Action Plan does not meet the requirements of the Agency. The Agency may request special reports when one of the following things happened:

- An institution adds programs
- An institution closes programs
- An institution falls in non-compliance with one or more standards due to external or internal factors.
- An institution presented a Corrective Action Plan that does not comply with the expected requirements.
- Any other substantial change that may affect students' opportunities and academic achievements.

Contingencies

If the SAA becomes aware of any non-compliance situation regarding ethical practices, including but limited to recruitment, advertising, transcripts, fair and equitable students' tuition refunds, and students' placement services, will activate the special report mechanism described in this handbook. Also if the SAA becomes aware of non-

compliance issues with the Credit Hour Policy the special report mechanism will be activate.

Annual Report Process

The agency will receive the reports, which will be date stamped when the report is receive.

An initial review will be made to ensure materials have been submitted for each section of the required report using a rubric.

If material is lacking, the Agency will notify the institution and request the additional information.

When the report is complete, the Agency will coordinate a review of the annual report with the Puerto Rico Department of Education staff.

During the review the staff will look for red flags (if any) that indicate areas of deficiency.

If materials are deficient and red flags have been identified, the Agency and staff will arrive at a consensus that a deficiency exists.

A notification letter telling the institution about the founded deficiencies will be sent within ten (10) days with a request to provide additional evidence.

The Agency will review the additional materials and determines if it's in compliance, arrives a consensus on the sufficiency of that evidence.

The institution will be notified they met the standards and will continue with full approval status within thirty (30) days from the review process has been initiated.

If an institution does not meet full approval the Agency will prepare a notification letter and the institution must submit a corrective action plan within thirty (30) labor days from the date of the letter. The Agency will schedule a site visit and the United States Department of Education and the Puerto Rico Department of Education will be notified when an institution does not meet the standards.

The Advisory Committee will be the reviewers of the submitted action plans of the non-compliance institutions and they will make the recommendations to the Agency Director.

Findings and non-compliance

Institutions must answer every finding or non compliance issue in their Annual Report; if they failed to answer any finding or non-compliance issue, they must submit an amendment to their Annual Report. If findings or non-compliances are pointed out ninety (90) or more days before Annual Report deadline, a special report must be submitted.

Adding programs after approval

New programs will be reviewed by the Agency and the program specialist for the area. The CEO (institution director) must sign and swear a statement declaring that the new program meets all the requirements and standards issued for institutions and submit that document, as well as a written request, to the Agency that will later submit the request to the Advisory Board.

Innovation Encouragement

All institutions are required to periodically submit strategic plans to the Agency, including both short and long terms plans and establishing how they will incorporate new strategies and proven practices and new learning methods. The Agency expects that all

approved and requesting institutions to be engaged in promoting innovative programs and effective learning experiences. All institutions are required to periodically submit strategic plans to the Agency, including both short and long terms plans and establishing how they will incorporate new strategies and proven practices and new learning methods. The Agency expects that all approved and requesting institutions to be engaged in promoting innovative programs and effective learning experiences. As established in the USDE document Investing in America Future A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education (April 2012) the Institutions must incorporate innovation in their practices to be align with the exigencies and competence of the present. Institutions must demonstrate that they constantly review and improve their career counseling services, use proven educational strategies like: action research, cooperative learning, etc., and give opportunities to teacher in order to obtain tools and information (professional development). Taking into account the public policy established in the document mentioned above institutions will be asked to propose projects that develop or expand innovations and build competitive high performance, knowledge workforce able to solve the most pressing problems facing our nation in both the local and the global area.

Whole revision (programmatic and administrative) and targeted revision

Programs will be review depend on the approval day. Some programs approval date will be align with the institution approval date.

When a block of programs or a single program requires being review, a whole review will be conducted (programmatic and administrative).

Divulcation, awareness and dissemination processes

The Agency will publish all new policies and documents amendments in order to allow public to comment, make recommendations or be oppose with those changes. All changes will be available in the Agency web-site for thirty (30) days to receive public opinion. The Regulations and Procedures Handbook will be always available in the website www.de.gobierno.pr at the PRSAA link, to allow institution and general public use the document as reference. Hardcopies of all Agency regulations and procedures will be available upon request in the Agency offices. Requests may be also making by telephone at: (787) 773-2252.

Handbook amendments and availability

Any amendment to this handbook must be approved by the Advisory Committee and will be notified to the public in the Puerto Rico Department of Education webpage through the Agency link. This Handbook is also available in the Agency link. Hardcopies of this Handbook are available upon request in the Agency offices.

References:

Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended. Retrieved from: <http://www.usde.gov>

Pennsylvania Department of Education (2013), Public Postsecondary Vocational Education, Accreditation Guidelines . Retrieved from: www.portal.state.pa.us

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (2012), *Oklahoma Technology Center Profiles*, Retrieved from: www.okcarrertech.org

United States Department of Education (2012), Investing in America Future. A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education, Retrieved from: www.usde.gov

Websites: www.incommonfederation.org/accrediting.html

ATTACHMENTS

**PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR THE APPROVAL
OF PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL
PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS**

**NARRATIVE REPORT
ON SITE VISIT**

AREA OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

R /2013

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 1 – Administration

1.1 Vision , Mission, Philosophy , Objectives and Ethical Standards

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 14

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 1 – Administration

1.2 Organization ,Planning and Credit Hour Policy

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 48

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 1 – Administration

1.3 Information system

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 14

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 2 – Physical Facilities and Safety

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 36

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSAA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 3 – Learning Resources and Credit Hour Policy

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 32

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 4 – Student Support Services

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 58

Percentage (A÷B) _____

**PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR THE APPROVAL
OF PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL
PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS**

**NARRATIVE REPORT
ON SITE VISIT**

AREA OF PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

R / 2013

PUERTO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Program:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 1 – Planning, Organization of Programs and Credit Hour Policy

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 12

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSAA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Program:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 2– Equipment, tools and materials

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 12

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSAA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Program:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 3 – Curriculum and Credit Hour Policy

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 12

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSAA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Program:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 4 – Advisory Committee

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 14

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Program:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 5 – Safety and Ethical Standards

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 22

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

AREA OF PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Program:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 6 – Teaching-Learning Process , Ethical Standards and Credit Hour Policy

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 30

Percentage (A÷B) _____

**PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR THE APPROVAL
OF PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL
PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS**

NARRATIVE REPORT

ON SITE VISIT

AREA OF GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES PERFORMANCE

R/2013

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Course

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 1 – Planning, Organization and Credit Hour Policy

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 12

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Course

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 2– Equipment, tools and materials

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 12

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Course

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 3 – Curriculum and Credit Hour Policy

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 20

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE FOR APROVAL (PRSAA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Course:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 4 – Safety and Ethical Standards

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 14

Percentage (A÷B) _____

PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR APPROVAL (PRSA)

NARRATIVE REPORT

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES PERFORMANCE

Name of Evaluated Institution:

Name of Evaluated Course:

Evaluation Date:

Name of Evaluator:

Signature of Evaluator:

Criterion 5 – Teaching-Learning Process, Ethical Standards and Credit Hour Policy

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Total of accumulated points _____

B. Maximum points 24 _____

Percentage (A÷B) _____

I. Introduction: (Existing situation of the institution).

II. Composition of Evaluation Committee and job description

A. Members of the Evaluation Committee

1. Name
2. Telephone
3. Evaluated criteria

B. Organization and Work Plan

1. Copy of Committee's Work Plan

C. Evaluation Report

1. Area of Administrative Performance

Point out the strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for each criterion. For each weakness there must be a recommendation made. The findings should be relevant to the compliance of the norms of the Agency and the Department of Education of Puerto Rico.

2. Area of Program's Performance
Area of General Education Courses

Point out the strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for each criterion. For each weakness there must be a recommendation made. The findings should be relevant to the compliance of the norms of the Agency and the Department of Education of Puerto Rico.

3. General Findings and Recommendations
4. Final recommendation related to the approval. (The recommendation to be approved can be for a two or four-year period).
5. Overall Evaluation

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OVERALL EVALUATION

When the Evaluator finishes with each of the criteria, he/she will sum up the total of points obtained in each indicator. The total amount of points obtained will be written in the space provided at the end of each criterion identified as Total of accumulated points. The total score of each criterion will be transferred to the end of the Evaluation Guide, in order to find out the overall rating of the institution.

OVERALL EVALUATION SHEET

ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

Evaluated Institution:

Evaluation Date:

<u>Criterion</u>	A Total score of Criterion	B Maximum score of Criterion	C=A÷B Percentage %
1. Administration 1.1 Philosophy, Vision, Mission , Ethical Standards and Objectives			
1.2 Organization Planning and Credit Hour Policy			
1.3 Information System			
2. Physical Facilities and Safety			
3. Learning Resources and Credit Hour Policy			
4. Student Support Services			

GRAND TOTAL			
	(D) ÷	(E) =	(F)

Legend:

(D) Total score of criterion

(E) Maximum score of criterion

(F) Overall percentage

**PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR THE APPROVAL
OF PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL
INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS**

OVERALL EVALUATION SHEET

PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

Evaluated Institution:

Evaluation Date:

Program or Course:

<u>Criterion</u>	A Total score of Criterion	B Maximum score of Criterion	C=A÷B Percentage %
1. Planning and Organization of Program and Credit Hour Policy			
2. Equipment, tools and materials			

3. Curriculum			
4. Advisory Committee			
5. Safety and Ethical Standards			
6. Teaching-Learning Process, Ethical Standards and Credit Hour Policy			
GRAND TOTAL			
	(D) ÷	(E) =	(F)

Legend:

(D) Total score of criterion

(E) Maximum score of criterion

(F) Overall percentage

**PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR THE APPROVAL
OF PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL
INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS**

OVERALL EVALUATION SHEET

GENERAL EDUCATION PERFORMANCE

Evaluated Institution:

Evaluation Date:

<u>Criterion</u>	A Total score of Criterion	B Maximum score of Criterion	C=A÷B Percentage %
1. Planning and Organization of the General Education Courses and Credit			

Hour Policy			
2. Equipment, tools and materials			
3. Curriculum			
4. Safety and Ethical Standards			
5. Teaching-Learning Process, Ethical Standards and Credit Hour Policy			
GRAND TOTAL			
	(D) ÷	(E) =	(F)

Legend:

(D) Total score of criterion

(E) Maximum score of criterion

(F) Overall percentage

**Individual Observations of the Evaluation Committee Members During the
On Site Visit**

Name of the evaluator:

Institution and Program Evaluated:

Dates of the On Site Visits:

Composition of Team

1. Has the team demonstrated that it possesses knowledge and experience in the field of vocational education?

2. Were the number of members and the composition of the Evaluation Committee appropriate for the magnitude and reach of the work?

3. Was the place chosen adequate for the deliberative meeting of the Evaluation Committee?

4. Were the interviews and the exchange of information with the vocational program personnel conducted in an atmosphere of cordiality and mutual confidence?

5. Was the information requested by the Evaluation Committee available?

Travel and Schedule

6. Was there any problem driving to, or when returning from, the institution?
7. Was there any problem in terms of the time of the visit to the institution/program that was to be evaluated?

Leadership

8. Were the objectives for the approval clear for the Evaluation Committee?
9. Were the materials and instructions provided by the Agency adequate for the approval objectives?
10. Was the time provided for enough for the evaluation and approval process?
11. What kind of evaluation and approval techniques recommended by the Agency proved to be more effective?
12. What observations or recommendations can you make to improve the evaluation and approval process of the Agency, particularly regarding the procedures and the norms? (Use additional sheets of paper if needed).

13. Could you participate in the future as a member of the Evaluation Committee?

_____For Agency use only_____

Date sent:

Date received:

Name of the Agency's representative:

**PUERTO RICO STATE AGENCY FOR THE APPROVAL
OF PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL
INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS**

EVALUATION COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Institution:

Program:

Date:		Date:		Date:	
Schedule	Activities	Schedule	Activities	Schedule	Activities

Date:		Date:		Date:	
Schedule	Activities	Schedule	Activities	Schedule	Activities

**COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO
PUERTO RICO STATE APPROVAL AGENCY
OF THE PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS AND
PROGRAMS**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR YEAR _____

Institution name: _____

Information of Academic Programs

Instructions: Prepare a report for each program approved in the Institution, regardless this program got enrolled students. Although you going to submit report parts such narratives and attachments as additional parts, please present this document as cover for the report.

1. Name of the program:

2. Physical Address of the institution:

3. Phone number: _____

4. E-mail address: _____

5. Degree awarded: _____ Certificate _____ Associate Degree

6. Program duration: _____ Total of credits

A. Number of Contact Hours _____

B. Weeks by Academic Year _____

C. Number of years _____

7. Students enrolled in the program for the year of the report: _____

8. Enrolled in the program by August 1, of the year of the report: _____

9. Additional enrollment during school year of the report: _____

a. Enrollment for courses that began in August of year of the report _____ - January of the year of the report _____.

b. Readmissions _____

c. Transfers between programs _____

10. Total program enrollment during the school year (add the number in items 8+9+9b+9c) _____

11. How many of the total in item 10?

a. graduated _____

b. withdrawals _____

c. enrolled at the end of June of the year of report _____

Important note: Total from 11 a to 11 C must be the same as total in item number 10

12. From the total included in item number 11, how many withdrew to work in a related job? _____

13. From graduated students how many?

a. work in the area of study _____

b. work in a related area _____

c. work in a non-related area _____

d. is not able to work due pregnancy _____

e. is not available to work due to health reasons _____

f. is not available to work due military service _____

g. still studying _____

h. is not working _____

i: other: (explain) _____

Important note: Total of 13 a to 13 I must be the same as 11a

13. Calculate the percent of retention and employability in this program at the Institution.

Program retention = $(10-11/10)$ _____ %

14. Calculate the percent of the employability of this program at the Institution.

Employability of the program= $(13a+13b/11a-[13f+13g])$ _____ %

15. Calculate the % of students that approved the final examination for degree in this program in the Institution (if applicable)

a. Total of graduated students_____

b. Total of students who are working and took the final examination for degree_____

c. Total of students who passed the final examination for degree_____

16. Percent of students who passed the final examination for degree(c/b)_____ %

17. Percent of students who took the final examination for degree (b/a)_____ %

18. Explain how this program is in complying with the guidelines, standards and policies of the PRSAA exactly that they appear in the Rules and Procedures Handbook ? (Because the deep of analysis required to this part please submit it as an additional narrative and provide supporting documents)

Guidelines

Ethical standards

Grievances and appeal policy

Credit Hour Policy

19 Explain how the Institution is implementing and reviewing the practices related with the Federal Hour Policy in this program? (Please provide supporting documents)

20. Explain how the institution is promoting and encourage innovation in the teaching and learning processes in this program? (Please provide supporting documents)

21 Submit a narrative of no more of 500 words about projections and plans related to this project in the Institution

22. Explain how you create awareness among community about the existence of the program and the

Institution: _____

23. Explain how you promote involvement of the community with the program and the Institution plans and activities:

24. Explain how your institution assures the review and amend the practices and policies to align them with public policy changes.

25. How many projects did the institution develop for the year of the report?

_____ related with the program _____ non related with the program

26. Main source of financial for projects development

____ federal grant _____ state grants ____ private sector
other: _____

27. Additional information that you understand is relevant for this report purposes:

Name of the Person who is submitting the
report: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

-----FOR USE OF THE PRSSA-----

DATE: _____

NAME OF THE PERSON WHO RECEIVED THE REPORT: _____