



GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Puerto Rico State Approval Agency

## **PUERTO RICO STATE APPROVAL AGENCY (PRSAA) OPERATIONAL MANUAL**

AUGUST 2017

AMENDED AUGUST 2019

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](http://www.de.gobierno.pr) in the agency link.

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## **Introduction**

In this document the breakdown of the standards, criteria, indicators and procedures of the Puerto Rico State Approval Agency (PRSAA). They must be met and evidenced by any educational institution applying for accreditation of postsecondary programs of occupational and technical education and non-university post-secondary programs. The PRSAA is a legally authorized body to facilitate the process of evaluating the programs of public institutions of postsecondary occupational and technical education and vocational schools attached to the Department of Education. The PRSAA is authorized to operate as an independent entity attached to the Office of the Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico.

The PRSAA arises as a result of the 1980 amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965 which eliminated automatic eligibility for public institutions of postsecondary occupational and technical education to participate in federal programs of economic assistance to the student.

By the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and the Code of Federal Regulations 34 CFR 600 (Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended) any public post-secondary institution of occupational and technical education can participate in federal economic assistance programs if they meet the following requirements:

1. If the institution meets the definition of what is post-secondary occupational and technical institution, in accordance with Public Law 96-374 of 1980.
2. If the institution and its programs are accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the Secretary of Education of the United States as a bona fide authority of public occupational and technical accrediting.

To such effects, the Puerto Rico Department of Education issued circular letter No. 4-82-83 by creating the PRSAA, attached to the Office of the Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico.

## Definitions

1. **Advisory Commission**- group of professionals whose responsibility it is to review and analyze the rules, processes, standards and public policy related to the PRSAA.
2. **Board of Examiners**- group of professionals who will make recommendations to the PRSAA regarding the review, denial, revocation or suspension of the accreditation of an institution or program, as well as the crediting period.
3. **Evaluation Committee** - a group of high qualified, free from bias, highly trained in the academic, occupational and technological areas, selected by the PRSAA, that are able to judge a program's expected effectiveness in a professionally responsible manner.
4. **AEA** - Spanish acronym that means State Approval Agency. Government organization that reviews, approves, and authorizes the public post-secondary institutions of occupational and technical education.
5. **Operational Manual of the PRSAA** - The main guide of the PRSAA that contains all guides and the framework of the processes.
6. **Accreditation Standards** - are the criteria and indicators to be met and highlighted by all the educational institution applying for accreditation of programs of public post-secondary technology institutions and vocational schools.
7. **Institute** - University that offers an associate degree and certificate in technical, health, occupational and business administration areas.
8. **Vocational School** - school offering courses for high school students and adults who wish to enter the world of work.
9. **Program** - Group of courses focused on the development of knowledge and skills
10. **Evaluator** – a neutral professional with the ability to judge all the components of the operations of the applicant using the methodology and the models set out in the Operational Manual of the PRSAA.
11. **Request**- document issued by an entity or individual applying for accreditation of the program by the PRSAA.

12. **Fiscal Year** - The amount of time that begins in July 1st and ends on June 30 of each calendar year.
13. **Ethical Standards** - a set of standards published by the PRSAA that the Board of Examiners., the group of evaluators, and the institutions requesting accreditation will implement and follow them.
14. **Occupational School**- school organized to provide occupational training in different specialized fields to secondary school students and adults, of one sex or the other, interested in joining the job market.
15. **Referendum**- document that uses the Board of Examiners to issue the crediting period recommended for an institution or program or a denial of accreditation to a program.

## **Chapter 1: Puerto Rico State Approval Agency (PRSAA)**

### **Article 1.1: About the PRSAA**

The PRSAA is an organization authorized by law to facilitate the process of evaluation of the technological institutes, public post-secondary education and occupational education programs in Puerto Rico that are part of the Puerto Rico Department of Education.

### **Article 1.2: Goals of the PRSAA**

Establish accreditation standards addressing the development, services, methods, and results, procedures and services of post-secondary programs and certificates to ensure they provide high quality education.

1. Evaluates the academic offerings and administrative functions in postsecondary institutions and certificates, according to the accreditation standards established by the PRSAA.
2. Guarantee ethics and accountability in the process of accreditation by means of best practices and guidelines.

### **Article 1.3: Objectives of the PRSAA**

1. Review the requests of institutions or programs applying for accreditation.
2. Determine the eligibility of the institution or the post-secondary program requesting accreditation in accordance with the definition of an eligible institution established in 34 CFR 600.2 (The Secretary's Recognition of Accrediting Agencies)

3. Manage the documents related to the self-assessment to be carried out, as well as the regulations, criteria and procedures.
4. Advise the institutions or programs that apply for accreditation on technical and academic issues according to the established laws.
5. Choose the members of the Evaluation Committee from the human resources bank and keeps resumes, certificates, letter of nomination, among others that may reflect their professional skills.
6. Organize a schedule of trainings for the Evaluation Committee and the two boards on the accreditation process. This training will be an electronic training.
7. Assess the quality of programs and institutions to determine the scope of the benefits of the economic aid program.
8. Coordinate with the Advisory Commission the revision of the PRSAA Operational Manual; self-study application and formats; Annual Report format, among others used in the accreditation of institutions and programs every two (2) years or as needed.
9. Produce reports for the institutions during the process of evaluation and work with the information related to the accreditation process, complaints and appeals.
10. Preserve and protect reports and all documents related to the accreditation process for a maximum of five (5) years in active files belonging to the Office of the PRSAA. After five years they are transferred to the general file system of the PRDE.
11. Share information to the accredited institutions, program director, secretary of education, evaluators and members of both commissions any revision of criteria, regulations, and policies that can be issued by the PRSAA.
12. Provide guidance to the groups or committees of education interested in the services, operation and the capacity of the PRSAA.
13. Follow up on the implementation of the recommendations offered to the programs and institutions evaluated.
14. Recommend the accreditation, denial, reconsideration, revocation or suspension of the accreditation of an institution or program.
15. Assess the technical educational program in compliance of issues related to the Higher Education Act; issues related with the establishment of processes, curriculum revision, budget, among others.

## **Article 1.4: Operational Functions**

The PRSAA for Postsecondary Institutions and Programs of Occupational and Technical Education established the following operational rules:

1. The PRSAA will promote the interests of the directors of technological institutions and occupational schools to obtain and preserve the eligibility to participate in the federal financial aid and ensure that aid is available to students enrolled in programs at the post-secondary level in public technology institutions of Puerto Rico.

2. By means of follow-up visits, the PRSAA will motivate the public post-secondary institutions of technical and occupational education of Puerto Rico to establish a process of continuous self-assessment, with a focus on promoting and improving the quality of education services and encouraging faculty to take actions to support improvement.

3. The PRSAA will report the findings and recommendations to the Board of Examiners for the accreditation of programs and institutions whose quality of educational services comply with the regulations, requirements, criteria, and standards in the area of administrative performance, general education and programs.

4. For the purposes of accreditation, the PRSAA should serve as a liaison between the Technical Education Program, the Evaluation Committee and the occupational and technical institutes at the post-secondary level in Puerto Rico.

5. The PRSAA will keep institutions informed of the requirements necessary to upgrade and maintain the accreditation.

6. The PRSAA accredited institutions will submit a written request for the renewal of recognition of its status of approval six (6) months prior to the expiration date.

7. The PRSAA will require an annual report in June providing the statistical data of the institution as well as the compliance with the work plan and must include the projections for the next academic years. Also, timely and accurate statistical information; additional specified reports, including data related to graduation rates; State licensing examination results; job placement rates, and other evidence of the quality of student achievement; record of compliance with its program responsibilities under HEA title IV (including student default rate data, and the results of audits and program

reviews); record of student complaints and their outcomes; and other information pertaining to an institution's compliance with the standards of accreditation.

8. The PRSAA will give follow up to verify progress of implementation of recommendations for correction of findings in previous assessments.

9. The PRSAA will identify any substantial change that has been notified and those not informed. The major change includes, but are not limited to:

- a. A change in the mission, vision or goals of the institution.
- b. Any change in the legal status, form of control or ownership of the institution.
- c. A change in the legal compliance or in the administrative capacity of the institution.
- d. An addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure from the existing offerings of educational programs, or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the PRSAA last evaluated the institution for accreditation.
- e. An addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation.
- f. A change from clock hours to credit hours.
- g. A substantial increase in the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program.
- h. The establishment of an additional location or branch campus or the acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution
- i. If the accreditation granted to the institution enables the institution to seek eligibility to participate in title IV, HEA programs, the entering into a contractual agreement with an entity not certified to participate in Title IV, HEA programs, that offers more than 25 percent of one or more of the institution's program of study.
- j. The establishment of an additional location at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

- k. The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- l. Any administrative situation that affects the proper functioning of the institution including and not limited to recruitment of both teaching and non-teaching personnel and the director of the institution; alteration to the start date or completion of the academic semester; payment of grants; allocation of budget; physical space or building emergencies.

10. The PRSAA investigates institutions that violate the rules or make significant changes without prior notification to the PRSAA. According to the findings of the investigation, the PRSAA shall notify the director of the institution in which irregularities are identified and grant a period of sixty (60) days to eliminate irregularities if the institution demonstrates that it has made an effort to do so.

11. The PRSAA shall render a report with recommendations to the Board of Examiners after 60 days, the maximum period to correct the irregularities. The PRSAA shall render a report of the final decision to the institution.

13. The PRSAA shall inform the institution of the decision of the Board of Examiners by writing to the appropriate state and federal agencies.

14. The PRSAA will visit the accredited institutions, once in the first semester after accreditation with prior notification, to confirm that fostered with the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee, according to the Higher Education Act and the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR 602). All other follow-up visits until the renewal process are without prior notice.

15. The PRSAA will issue an annual report containing a summary of all activities related to the accreditation process and overall performance, which will be circulated among all interested parties. The analysis and preparation of the report will be done by the Advisory Commission.

16. The PRSAA will be in charge of the following processes prior to the evaluation committee onsite visit:

- a. Organize and conduct training meetings for the members of the institutional evaluation committee (steering committee), with the purpose of:

- 1. To become familiar with the evaluation process.

2. Train them on the peculiarities of the institution.
3. To become familiar with the standards and criteria that will be used for evaluations.

b. Provide copies of the following documents to the evaluation committee:

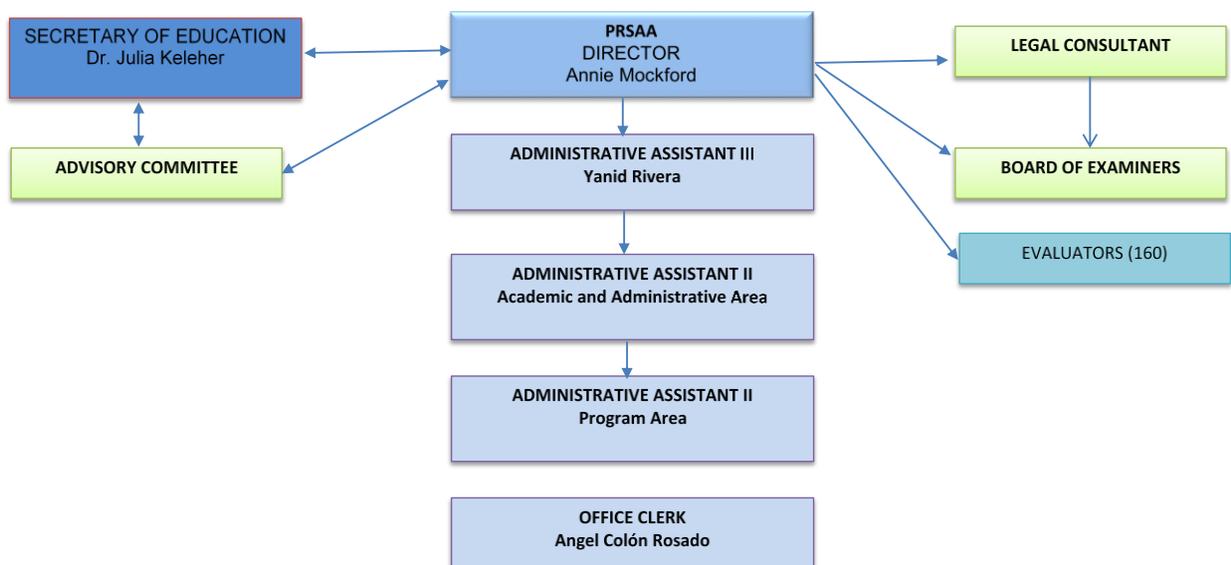
1. Copy of the Operational Manual of the PRSAA
2. Copies of the guide for the evaluation of the public occupational education and technical education institutions in Puerto Rico.
3. Copies of the documents of self-evaluation submitted by the institution.

17. The PRSAA will meet with interested institutions in the accreditation and give guidance to the members of the Steering Committee on accreditation processes established by law.

18. The PRSAA will hold regular meetings with the members of the Advisory Commission to review, analyze, or create instruments related to the accreditation process.

## Article 1.5: PRSAA organizational chart

### PRSAA ORGANIZATION CHART 2017-2019



## **Article 1.6: Qualifications of the PRSAA Personnel**

### **Section 1.6.1: Executive Director**

1. Master or Doctoral degree in Higher education with 3.50 grade point average or higher.
2. Full time work experience as professor or director of a postsecondary institution for three (3) or more years.
3. Work experience as vocational high school director for a minimum of 5 years.
4. Worked as an evaluator or participated in evaluations of postsecondary institutions as employee or by contract with the PR Educational Council; PR Council for Higher Education; PR General Education Council; Middle State Association or another accrediting agency recognized by the USDE
5. Haven't been an employee, professor or director of any postsecondary institutions accredited by the PRSAA for the last 3 years.
6. Haven't been director of the Technical Education Program for the last 5 years.
7. Read, write, speak and interpret correctly in English and Spanish.
8. Availability to travel outside the metropolitan area, Washington, DC and work flexible schedules.

### **Section 1.6.2: Administrative Assistant**

1. Master or doctoral degree with 3.00 grade point average or higher.
2. Full time work experience as professor of a postsecondary institution for three (3) or more years.
3. Worked as an evaluator or participated in evaluation of postsecondary institutions as an employee or by contract with the PR Educational Council; PR Council for Higher Education; PR General Education Council; Middle State Association or other accrediting institution recognized by the USDE.
4. Have been member of the Steering Committee (Accreditation Committee) of the postsecondary institution where it works or have worked.
5. Haven't been employee, director or professor in any of the institution accredited by the PRSAA in the last five (5) years.

6. Haven't been director of the Technical Education Program for the last five (5) years.
7. Read, write, speak and interpret correctly in English and Spanish.
8. Knowledge in the use of word, excel, publisher, power point, etc.
9. Availability to travel outside the metropolitan area, Washington, DC and work flexible schedules.

## **Chapter 2 Standards of Accreditation**

### **Article 2.1: Accreditation Process**

#### **Section 2.1.1: 1st. Stage**

The process begins with the application for accreditation or renewal of accreditation and a written letter indicating the programs to be re-accredited. The director of the institution that is interested in participating in the accreditation process names and organizes the Steering Committee. This committee shall be composed of members of the administration, the student service personnel, the faculty of post-secondary programs to be evaluated and a student. The Steering Committee directs the work of self-evaluation.

In this process, the Administrative Assistant of the PRSAA offers technical assistance to the members of the Steering Committee to carry out its self-evaluation.

#### **Section 2.1.2: 2nd Stage**

The steering committee prepares the self-evaluation of the institution, of the programs and completes the guide for the evaluation. Then, the steering committee will submit the self-evaluation to the PRSAA with all the evidence requested.

Consists of an onsite evaluation visit of the institution. The PRSAA organizes an evaluation committee, from the qualified resources list, composed of experts in the area to be evaluated. The Evaluation Committee will visit the institution with the purpose of verifying if the self-evaluation reflects the

institutional reality. The evaluation committee goes in search of facts and data to verify the information submitted in the self-evaluation. After the onsite visit, the Evaluation Committee shall deliver its visit report to the PRSAA with a narrative assessment – quantitative (PRSAA-2017-07A; PRSAA-2017-07B; PRSAA-2017-07C) and qualitative (PRSAA-2017-06A; PRSAA-2017-06B; PRSAA-2017-06C) information on the outcome of the onsite visit.

### **Section 2.1.3: 3rd. Stage**

When the institution receives the notification of accreditation of its programs, it accepts the obligation to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standards. The PRSAA will use a variety of assessment methods to verify if the institution meets the standards, such as: onsite visit by the evaluation committee, review of the self-study and other documents. The institution will provide all required documentation to the PRSAA in compliance with accreditation standards.

## **Article 2.2: Application for Accreditation**

Every institution shall file the application for accreditation or re-accreditation on a voluntary basis. The institution will be requested, using the official form of the PRSAA in which shall specify the programs seeking accreditation or re-accreditation (PRSAA-2017-01). The request for accreditation will be submitted with a minimum of six (6) months prior to the expiration date of the current accreditation or accreditation of a new program.

## **Article 2.3: Self-study**

The self-study should be a comprehensive analysis of the resources of each institution, in other words, the same as an X-ray, which reflects the institution's strengths and areas for improvement and its ability to achieve the highest level of quality and that they are aligned with best practices, goals and objectives in such a way as to continuously improve the educational services (PRSAA-2017-02A; PRSAA-2017-02B; PRSAA-2017-02C). Each area of the self-study has to include a cover letter signed by the institution director (PRSAA-2017-03).

The self-study must be drawn up by the faculty, students, as well as the administration of the institution to involve the entire academic community. The institution must incorporate this self-study process as a permanent part of their operations.

## **Article 2.4: Evaluation Committee**

Upon receipt of the application for accreditation and self-study of the institution, the PRSAA evaluates each of the self-study to determine if they comply with the PRSAA standards (PRSAA-2017-04A; PRSAA-2017-04B; PRSAA-2017-04C). After this process, starts the preparations for the on-site visit of the evaluation committee. The evaluation committee is a body established by a group of professionals of great competence in the educational, occupational and technical areas, selected by the PRSAA. They carry out the on-site visit to the institution seeking accreditation of their programs (PRSAA-2017-05A; PRSAA-2017-05B; PRSAA-2017-05C). The onsite visit Evaluators Team select a Team Leader that, at the end of the day, may prepare a Team Leader Report (PRSAA-2017-08). The primary purpose of this committee is to verify the accuracy of the self-evaluation report and assess the achievement of the objectives and established accreditation standards. After the evaluators complete the evaluation process, they prepare the quantitative report (PRSAA-2017-07A; PRSAA-2017-07B; PRSAA-2017-07C), before assisting to the exit conference where they will meet with the administration staff, teachers, students, and any other person invited by the director of the institution, to provide general information about conditions, and findings of the institution. In the exit conference each evaluator may advance one positive finding and one finding that may require immediate attention. All the other strengths and weakness will notify to the institution by the PRSAA personnel in the Reaction to Findings Report (PRSAA-2017-09)

During the evaluation process, any doubts should be channeled through the PRSAA and never addressed directly or indirectly with the evaluators.

Each member of the Evaluation Committee shall render a report at the end of the onsite visit of the area that was evaluating. The report is a summary of the strengths and weakness and recommendations (PRSAA-2017-06A; PRSAA-2017-06B; PRSAA-2017-06C). This report is handled to the PRSAA personal once signed. The Evaluation Team

Leader has up to five (5) working days after the visit to submit the Onsite Visit Report to the PRSAA (PRSAA-2018-08). The report may include additional findings and requests for additional information from the institution.

The PRSAA will have fifteen (15) working days to review each evaluators report and submit the Reaction Report (PRSAA-2017-09) and the Corrective Action Plan (PRSAA-2017-10) to the institution. The institution will be provided the opportunity to react and submit additional information within fifteen (15) working days as stipulated by the PRSAA.

The PRSAA receives the Reaction Report and the Corrective Action Plan from the institution for its review. Once reviewed, the report is submitted to the Board of Examiners for the final determination.

## **Article 2.5: Reports**

The PRSAA organizes and submits to the Board of Examiners, the evaluators report of the administration, program and general education area, the Reaction Report (PRSAA-2017-09) and the Corrective Action Plan (PRSAA-2017-10) for the final determination of the accreditation period.

The report of the onsite visit by the Evaluation Committee, the findings and recommendations report, as well as the summary of points obtained in each criterion are confidential and cannot be shared with any third party.

### **Section 2.5.1: Actions you can determine**

The PRSAA is empowered, through the Board of Examiners and the Advisory Commission, in order to, among other things:

- a. Award accreditation
- b. Deny accreditation when the institution does not meet the evaluation criteria,
- c. Defer the decision of accreditation,
- d. Return the documents under consideration when additional information is required or is incomplete,

- e. Notify the institution of the extension of the evaluation period,
- f. Revoke the accreditation.

## **Article 2.6: Appeal**

The institution may appeal the final decision of the Board of Examiners with regard to the non-accreditation to the Advisory Commission in its role of appeal. The appeal shall be filed according to the following procedures:

1. The institution or program that receives the final written determination of refusal, revocation or pending approval status, can submit a request in writing within ten (10) working days after notification to initiate an appeal process. The expiration date is calculated using the date of issuance of the notification letter, the post mark or e-mail, of the first notification was issued. In this communication, the institution shall indicate the specific reasons for requesting an appeal.

2. The appeal must be addressed by the Board of Examiners within thirty (30) working days of receipt of the appeal letter of the Institution.

a. The Institution may send a written request for reconsideration in a written letter addressed to the Board of Examiners of the PRSAA. The institution will have the opportunity to offer relevant and justifiable evidence for the evaluation or the reconsideration of the status.

b. The Board of Examiners has thirty (30) working days after receiving the request to analyze and respond to the director of the institution. In addition, the Board of Examiners can visit or call the institution to verify or review any situation that has been addressed during the reconsideration process.

c. If the director of the institution is still in disagreement with the decision of the Board of Examiners after the second stage, he or she may apply for a third and final review. For this step, the director of the institution shall have ten (10) working days after receiving the response from the Board of Examiners. On this occasion, the request for review shall be sent directly to the Advisory Commission.

d. The Advisory Commission has twenty (20) working days after receipt of the request, to analyze and respond to the letter of appeal and evidence submitted by the director of the institution. As part of this process, the role of the Advisory Commission will be to act as an official examiner. The Advisory

Commission may visit or call the institution in order to verify the conditions that have been considered during the reconsideration process. All visits and phone calls have to be made prior to the submission of the final recommendation report.

e. The final determination made by the Advisory Commission should be supported by the findings of the onsite visit report of the members of the Advisory Commission regarding, the institution's fulfillment of the Action Plan. Based on these conclusions, the PRSAA will provide a written report of the final decision, which will be one of the following:

- i. to maintain the original determination
- ii. modify the original determination
- iii. revoke the original determination. A copy of the final determination will be sent to Title IV and the Puerto Rico Secretary. The minutes of each meeting during the process will be prepared and submitted to the office of the PRSAA. This step puts an end to the administrative processes and any resolution at this point is final.

3. During the process of appeal of a determination by the Board of Examiners of the PRSAA the institution will maintain its accreditation. If the institution appeals to the Advisory Commission will also maintain its accreditation.

## **Article 2.7: Annual Report**

The Annual Report (PRSAA-2017-11) of the institutions are required and reviewed once a year as part of the accreditation retention and compliance with the findings and recommendations of the evaluation committee, if applies. The programs offered by the institution must comply with the accreditation standards set by the PRSAA including the ethical standards. In addition, programs must comply with the competencies required by the occupation of each program offered to students of each institution.

This report must be submitted to the PRSAA the second Friday of June. This report will be reviewed by the Advisory Commission to determine whether it complies with the provisions in the Operational Manual of the PRSAA such as enrolment, retention, employability and approval of state license, if applicable.

## **Article 2.8: Evaluation Criteria**

### **Section 2.8.1 Purpose**

This section establishes the eligibility criteria that institutions must meet in order to obtain and maintain accreditation of their programs. The institution must be in full compliance with these criteria before an application for accreditation or re-accreditation will be considered. Criteria described in Chapter Number 4: Guidelines.

### **Section 2.8.2: Scope of the PRSAA**

Under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended in 1980, the PRSAA is authorized to offer accreditation to only public institutions of occupational and technical postsecondary education attached to the Department of Education of Puerto Rico.

### **Section 2.8.3: Eligibility Requirements**

1. Application for initial accreditation to the PRSAA. In this application, the institution must demonstrate that it meets the following eligibility criteria:
  - a. The institution must comply with the eligibility criteria according to the standards of accreditation. Criteria described in Chapter Number 4.
  - b. The application must be complete so that it complies with all the requirements.
2. Application for renewal of the accreditation. The institution shall submit its application for renewal in compliance with the stipulated time and the requirements of the PRSAA. The same must be complete and show sufficient stability to receive approval.
3. Maintain accreditation. To maintain accreditation, the institution must comply with the accreditation standards and requirements of the PRSAA. This means that the institution must remain in continuous operation, training students according to the primary objectives, for which it was authorized. See Chapter Number 4.

### **Section 2.8.4: Educational Objectives**

1. To prepare the student to enter the world of work with the necessary competencies and skills.
2. The institution ensures that all courses are available with the teachers appointed to enable the student to complete his or her program of study at the stipulated time.
3. The institution may have other educational objectives to strengthen teaching and learning processes such as:
  - a. Additional review training or mentoring program
  - b. Continuing Education
  - c. Others
4. The institution may enter into agreements with the trade, industry and government agencies for purposes of training and developing centers of practice or internship where the students learn by doing.

### **Section 2.8.5: Program Requirements**

This section identifies several elements that will help the institution to achieve its objectives so that it can maintain its accreditation. These elements include the duration of the program, draft of the courses, handbooks, learning objectives, instructional materials and equipment, the availability and access to the materials, learning resources and processes to prepare the student to obtain and maintain employment.

#### **1. General Requirements**

The following requirements apply to all programs of study:

- a. Duration of the program
  - i. Number of credits
  - ii. Credit Hours or Clock Hours
- b. Curriculum sequence by programs
- c. Organization of program
- d. For each program of study must have a detailed outline and the syllabi of the courses.
- e. Equipment, tools and materials of instruction
- f. Thematic Framework

The request shall include a form to present the list of teachers, administrative and non-teaching staff. In this table, the institution introduces and describes the essential demographic information of each staff member. In the case of the teaching staff the institution shall also provide a copy of the teacher certification; or temporary certificate of teacher; regular teacher's certificate in the area that teaches.

## 2. Curricular sequence of each program

The sequence of courses by program and the operation of the same must contain the following criteria:

- a. The curriculum for each program and the policy of credit hours
- b. General Education courses
- c. Core courses
- d. Courses of concentration
- e. Free elective courses
- f. The sequence of courses should be planned to provide the same, starting from the basics to the more advanced
- g. Establish requirements and pre-requisites when needed
- h. Planning and organization of the program and the policy of credit hours
  - i. Syllabi
  - ii. Equipment, tools and materials
  - iii. Security for the equipment and materials
  - iv. The teaching-learning process, ethical standards and the policy of credit hours.

## 3. The Advisory Committee of each program

Each institution to be evaluated for accreditation must have an advisory committee for each program. The members of this committee must be professionals representing the occupation or occupations offered by the institution. The committee must hold at least two (2) meetings per year. The institution must properly maintain minutes of the meetings of the Advisory Committee of each program. Teachers or employees of the

institution may not participate in this advisory committee. Printed evidence of electronic communications, texts and chats are accepted in substitution of one (1) of the meetings.

The duties of the Advisory Committee of the program are the following:

- a. Review, at least every two years the curriculum of the programs and make recommendations concerning the objectives, curriculum content, duration of the program and adequacy of facilities and equipment.
- b. Review and analyze whether students complete their courses on time, meeting the demand for employment in the area of study and if the graduates need a license to practice their profession.

#### 4. The Practice Center

The student internship must be supervised and coordinated by the professor in charge of the program internship. The internship should be based on a written plan that specifies the goals and objectives that the student must achieve and experiences the student should have.

- a. The institution must maintain a balance between the technical classes, laboratories, and the practice in the industry, commerce, and government agencies.
- b. The minimum period shall be as established in the syllabus of the associate degree, certificate, or occupational program.

#### 5. Associate Degree

- a. The associate degree will have a minimum duration of 4 semesters and 65-75 credits, otherwise indicated in the syllabus and institutional catalog. The associate degree shall include a maximum of 9 courses in general education and related courses.

- b. The advertising and promotion of the institution needs to clearly state that this is a program for an occupational and academic associate's degree.

#### 6. Occupational Certificate

- a. Occupational program not leading to an associate degree, bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree, that comply with the demand for work in Puerto Rico and with what is established in the Department of Labor and the Department of State of the Government of Puerto Rico (if applicable).

#### 7. Occupational Programs

- a. Occupational programs should contain the following requirements:
  - i. elements of the post-secondary level at the secondary level (articulation with universities)
  - ii. academic and occupational content aligned,
  - iii. sequential courses endorsed by the industry
  - iv. an occupational certificate and a technical certificate at the post-secondary level of the associate degree or baccalaureate. Also, a high school graduation certification.
  - v. occupations must be of high demand and complex skills.

#### 8. Faculty

The achievement of an educational institution rests primarily on the quality of its faculty. The purpose of this section is to require the institution to count and retain faculty with academic preparation and the required experience. The institution must ensure that its faculty is appropriate and sufficient in number to support the instructional programs it offers. By recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, the institution will be able to offer a quality education in their programs.

- a. The following requirements apply for all programs offered by the institution
  - i. When it is required by law, teachers must be certified and have a teaching license issued by the Teacher Certification Unit of the Department of Education, and keep their professional license up to date, if applicable.
  - ii. The number of specialized personnel should be proportional to the courses offered in the semester.
  - iii. All the teaching staff must maintain good working relationships with students, their colleagues, the administration and non-teaching staff.
  - iv. The institution must have a comprehensive strategic plan, in writing, that includes the improvement of the faculty and budget allocation for that process.
  - v. The director of the institution must have the experience, knowledge and academic preparation required to lead the institution. In addition, the director of the institution must have the license of Director of Technological Institutes issued by the Teacher Certification Unit of the Department of Education.

#### 9. Recruitment of Students

The purpose of this section is to require the institution to properly guide students who wish to enroll, so that they can decide free of pressure from personnel in charge of recruitment. The primary effort of the institution must be to attract students who meet the admission requirements and are able to benefit from the offer of the program of study.

- a. The institution shall observe the ethical practices and procedures required for the recruitment of students. The practices and procedures include, as a minimum:

- i. The institution will use designated employees as recruiters for outreach and recruitment of students. Students should receive information from people with basic knowledge of each program or technology who can serve as effective guides. It is highly recommended that teachers of the programs are involved in this process.
- ii. The institution responds to the laws, state and federal regulations to avoid non-compliance and violations as it relates to the process of student recruitment.
- iii. The institution shall ensure that its recruiters will offer truthful information about the institution, the staff, and the study programs or of its accreditation status to prospective students.
- iv. The recruiter will not be able to make promise of job to the student being recruited.
- v. The institution will only allow payment in money order or manager checks issued to The Secretary of Treasury as payment for the admission application and will provide a receipt of payment for the money charged to the student at the time of submitting the admission papers.
- vi. The institution will not allow the recruiter to become involved in the admission test or in the final decision regarding student admission.
- vii. The institution will establish a policy for cancellation of student registration.
- viii. The institution will give the student a copy of the agreements as part of the enrollment process.
- ix. The staff of the institution should not influence any student or coerce any student to leave another

institution after tuition agreements were signed with that other institution.

#### 10. Institution Catalogue

The catalog of the institution must have the following:

- a. The catalog must accurately represent the educational programs that offers, the resources and facilities, procedures and institutional policies.
- b. The catalog must be designed and written in a clear and orderly that highlight the institution. The illustrations, photographs, and the narrative part should be relevant to the institution and other illustrations and photographs should be clearly identified.
- c. The institution will provide each prospective student the catalog before it signs the enrolment agreement.
- d. The catalog must include the sequence of each program and course descriptions.
- e. The title of the program; the name of the associate degree and credentials awarded; the description of the program and courses must be included in the catalog of the institution.

#### 11. Standards of recruitment and admission policy

These standards should be included in the catalog of the institution. Every candidate must meet the following requirements:

- a. Universal admission test or the *College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB)*
- b. Students are to be classified in the following way:
  - i. Regular students
  - ii. Special education students
  - iii. Students with conditional admission
  - iv. Foreign Students
  - v. Transfer Students

- vi. Students who possess a post-secondary degree or certification

## 12. Enrollment Agreement with the Student

The Enrollment Agreement must include the following criteria:

- a. The applicant must indicate that he or she meets all the requirements for registration.
- b. The agreement must clearly establish the obligations of the applicant and the institution with regard to registration requirements.
- c. The institution shall ensure that each applicant is duly informed of their rights, responsibilities and obligations to the institution or schools and have been advised toward the right to file claims and complaints in the PRSAA.
- d. The enrollment agreement will not be valid until the applicant is accepted by an authorized officer of the institution and the program.
- e. The Enrollment Agreement must be delivered to the applicant at the time he or she accepts an offer and affirms his or her intention to enter the program into which he or she was accepted.

## 13. Advertising and Promotion

All advertising and promotion of the institution must be:

- a. Clear, true, accurate, and free from false and exaggerated expressions or information of the institution, location, name, its staff, the administration and the services they offer.
- b. The publicity and promotion must clearly indicate that education is essential for the student and is not an offer of employment.
- c. The use of the term accredited institution may be used only by institutions accredited by the PRSAA.

- d. The institution may include in the catalog, advertise or promote new programs after being authorized by the Puerto Rico Educational Council and accredited by the PRSAA.
- e. The institution must include its policy of non-discrimination and the source of payment in its advertisements.

#### 14. Admission Policy

The purpose of this section is to ensure that the institution will admit students who meet the requirements and are able to successfully complete the training they offer. The decision of the admission will be based on equitable terms.

- a. The institution shall ensure that each applicant is duly informed of the nature of the training provided.
- b. The institution shall consistently implement admissions standards.
- c. The applicant shall indicate if he or she requires an accommodation under the ADA Act (American Disability Act).
- d. The institution shall not deny admission on the grounds of race, color, political or religious affiliation, sex, age, physical or mental impairments, national origin, sexual orientation or veteran status of the applicant. The institution shall make reasonable accommodations required under applicable federal and state laws, if notified by the student during the registration process.
- e. The PRSAA may require the institution to demonstrate compliance with the institution's processes and admission policy.

#### 15. Institutional Policy of Tuition

- a. The institution shall establish a policy with respect to the charges for tuition, fees, and other services to the

student. The collecting officer will use the circular letter of rules and procedures for the collection of tuition by the institutions.

- b. The costs of tuition, fees and other payments should be reported to the candidates during orientation periods and during the enrollment process.
- c. The institution will provide the PRSAA with information about changes of tuition costs and duration of the courses for each accredited program, to the extent that such changes arise.
- d. The institution must establish a refund policy in compliance with the established requirements. The refund policy has to comply with the following elements:
  - i. How to calculate the refund
  - ii. The date on which the reimbursement should be calculated.
  - iii. At the time, this must be calculated.
- e. The refund policy should be included in the catalog and in the enrolment agreement with the student. The institution must comply with the policy described in the catalog.

## 16. Student Support Services

The purpose of this section is to ensure that the institution remains attentive to student needs. The institution must meet the minimum requirements related to economic aid, maintenance of records, employment and procedures on how to handle complaints and grievances of the students. The institution must provide adequate support to the student and have the necessary resources to provide students with the assistance that they require to maintain satisfactory academic progress in their programs of study.

### a. Advice and Counseling

The institution must maintain an advisory service and counseling service for all its students. This service must be coordinated by personnel with suitable qualifications in the area of counseling and guidance. Counseling staff must have the required license,

appropriate training or work experience in the areas of counseling and guidance to post-secondary students. The institution shall maintain a confidential record of the students who are offered counseling with dates and the location where the service was offered.

b. Files

Student records are maintained in the institution files until the institution is closed. In this case, the Department of Education may get in charge of the student files and applies the public policy existing in that moment.

The personal and financial documents from the student must be kept in a safe place, in a fire and vandalism proof file. The institution shall maintain documentation of the initial employment of graduates and other important matters.

c. Transcript of Credits

Official transcripts will be given to the student when the student graduates, if they do not have debts with the institution. The transcript of credits includes: attendance report, program of study, approved credits, credit hours, grades and certification obtain, if applies. Requests for additional transcripts will be delivered in accordance with the policies and procedures of the institution, that must be included in the institutional catalog.

The Office of the Registrar is responsible for the registration, filing and custody of the records. The delivery of transcripts will be carried out in accordance with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* of 1974, as amended.

d. Claims and Complaints

The institution shall establish public policies and procedures for dealing with student complaints and grievances. The institution will

advise students in writing of its public policies and procedures to address the grievances and complaints. The policies and grievance procedures must be published in the institution catalog. The institution must keep a complete record of all written complaints by students, for a term of five (5) years from their filing. The institution shall appoint a committee to address the grievances and complaints of the students.

Students will be oriented on the process for filing complaints and grievances in the PRSAA, which is the agency in charge of accrediting the educational institutions for the purpose of Title IV funds, Pell grants and loans.

e. The student's academic progress

The purpose of this section is to require the institution to ensure that a large proportion of its students attend class regularly, maintain satisfactory academic progress, complete their program of study and obtain a job in the area in which they were trained, or in related areas. The institution must establish and consistently apply the criteria that provide evaluation objectives of the academic progress of students. The institution must, in addition, maintain written policies and procedures emphasizing the importance of regular class attendance and academic progress of the students.

f. Standards of assistance and rescheduling of classes

The institution should set out clearly in the rules and procedures the class attendance policy. The institution shall publish and enforce a student attendance policy in accordance with the laws and regulations governing these institutions. Teachers will take attendance and report the same to the Registrar's Office on a monthly basis. Students are responsible for attending to the rescheduling of classes.

g. Rules of Discipline

The institution must require students to behave appropriately toward their classmates, teachers and administrative staff; as well as the institutional community in general.

To address discipline issues, the institution must:

i. Establish a discipline committee composed of one (1) professor of the specialty, one (1) academic professor and one (1) counselor. The Director is an ex-officio member of the discipline committee.

ii. Be governed by rules consistent with those generally applicable to Pre-K–12<sup>th</sup> grade students of the Puerto Rico Department of Education and those included in the institution catalog.

#### h. Academic Progress

The institution must set minimum requirements for academic progress to ensure satisfactory student progress. The institution shall publish in the catalog the institutional policy with regard to the satisfactory progress of the grades and attendance of the student.

The institution shall establish rules and standards of academic progress prepared by the registrar or the person in charge of that area. The institution will implement a policy of probationary period for those students with poor academic achievement.

The institution shall determine the maximum amount of time that a student will have to complete the associate degree, certificate, or occupational program based on federal regulations.

The institution shall publish the policy that defines the negative effects that faces the student by the incomplete, rates, grade repetition and academic suspension.

### 17. Student Achievement

The Institution demonstrates through documents, such as: student records, transcripts of credits, records of economic assistance, semi-annual assessments of teachers by

students, student achievement reporting rates, acceptable conduct and placements in the areas of study and compliance in completing the courses at the time stipulated. These rates will be supported by transcripts of the students, the verification of the records of students and other documents available. The evaluation committee will review the academic achievement of students in each program offered by the institution.

## 18. Administration

The purpose of this section is to ensure that the institution has the capacity and complies with the standards of management of all its components. This section emphasizes the requirements that the institution must comply with regarding the administration and the administrative staff, financial stability, the institutional assessment and plans for improving institutional and physical facilities. An institution that does not meet these standards will not be able to assure the student that it operates in compliance with accreditation standards.

### a. Philosophy, Vision, Mission and Objectives

Any institution that wants to be evaluated for approval must have: its philosophy, vision, mission, and goals; take into consideration the occupational demands of the world of work. The institution shall, in addition, publish, promote and maintain an updated catalog available to the general public.

### b. Organization and planning

The institution will demonstrate a systematic process of organization and operation, including:

- i. The Strategic Plan of the institution
- ii. Institutional Work Plan
- iii. Systemic evaluation of teaching staff
- iv. Plan of Training for teaching staff
- v. Create the committee for the management of ethical situations and/or discipline

### c. Administrative capacity

The institution must have an accessible budget that would allow the viability of their offers, a reliable system for management of its finances, collection system, upgrade programs, maintenance, equipment insurance,

admissions policy and an officer of purchases of materials and equipment.

#### d. Student Evaluation and Improvement

The institution must implement activities aimed at institutional evaluation, improvement, and planning. These activities must be appropriate for the institution's scope, management and administration.

The appraisal and the improvement activities should provide for the enrichment of the quality of education offered by using internal staff information, faculty development, planning, and input from students, the Advisory Committee, employers, the community, graduates and others.

The improvement activities and the institutional assessment should include a comprehensive written plan for both the short and long term three (3) years, as well as a review of the institution's operations. This plan must involve the entire institution in the areas of administration, budget, administrative policies, practices and services to students, faculty and administrative staff, curriculum, learning resource centers, equipment and materials, facilities, and student achievement.

#### e. Financial Stability

The financial stability of the institution must be demonstrated by:

- i. Adequate resources for its operations.
- ii. A financial statement in accordance with the acceptable principles of accounting and audit best practices.
- iii. A financial budget for each fiscal year, approved by the Institutional Council.
- iv. Obtaining all the required insurance.

#### f. Physical Structure

Any institution to be evaluated for the accreditation of their programs will have an adequate physical structure to offer educational service programs. The physical facilities must be fit enough to create an effective environment and have a positive impact on the processes of teaching and learning. All the facilities for the administration area, classrooms

and laboratories must comply with the requirements of physical security required by the fire department, environmental health, the office of management of permissions and any other regulatory entity that laws and regulations require.

## **Chapter 3: Rules and Procedures**

### **Article 3.1: Evaluation Committee**

#### **Section 3.1.1: Selection of the members**

The PRSAA has established a bank of professional candidates, including public officials and employees (government), employers, former students of postsecondary education or occupational institutions, post-secondary educators, university level professors, directors of private schools, and executives, who will participate as evaluators during the onsite visit.

The Evaluation Committee shall be constituted of a group of people free from bias, conflicts of interest and academic connections so that they are able to judge the effectiveness, expected results, and objectives of programs in a professionally responsible manner. An evaluator should establish a define process for clear, transparent, and constructive interactions between the parties. (PRSAA-2017-12E)

The PRSAA will carefully select the members of the Evaluation Committee, in accordance with:

1. Their professional preparation and experience as a professor or administrator in the technical and occupational branches to which they belong. (PRSAA-2017-12F)
2. Their depth of knowledge on the relevant features of a post-secondary institution in terms of organization, management and operation of occupational and technical education.

Although the PRSAA prefers evaluators with experience, it also recognizes the importance of incorporating team members without prior experience, with the aim of incorporating new and different perspectives.

### **Section 3.1.2: The qualifications for each category are described below**

*Administrators* - People with the preparation and experience that recently have been or currently are significantly involved in the administration of post-secondary Institutes or programs of a postsecondary accredited private institution.

*Educators* - People with the preparation and experience in academic functions within an institution of postsecondary education, for example, a teacher, instructor or academic dean in a post-secondary private institution.

*Professional* in the area of specialty - people who are significantly involved in the practice of professions related to the areas assessed, for example, a person who works part-time or full using the knowledge and skills related to the area, in the public or private sector.

It is essential that the evaluators exercise their responsibilities objectively, impartially, and consistently. The evaluators must also understand the mission, vision, goals, targets and the culture of the institution under review.

The inclusion of team members with different areas of expertise will provide a thorough evaluation of the review of compliance with the institutions with accreditation standards. These areas of expertise include, but are not limited to: corporate finance, assessment, teaching methods and online courses, administration and governance, support and coaching for the student, planning and institutional research and programs at the graduate level.

At least one of the members of the evaluation team, which will become the Evaluators Team Leader, must demonstrate leadership skills, problem-solving, coaching and organizational planning. After the visit at the facility the Evaluators Team Leader will prepare a final written evaluation with the findings: these should include strengths, weaknesses and qualitative and quantitative information.

A full team will have a minimum of 6 members, depending of the amount of programs to be evaluated, including the leader of the team, in order to ensure that different points of

view are represented and to provide adequate coverage of each of the standards and the expected results.

Since the integrity of the PRSAA and the quality of post-secondary public offerings may be at risk if there is a conflict of interest, all evaluators must be impartial and must demonstrate good will, integrity, good behavior and expertise is evidenced. The PRSAA will ensure that no evaluator is assigned to review any institution with which he or she may have a conflict of interest (PRSAA-2017-12C). To ensure this, the evaluator will sign the certification report prepared by the PRSAA for these purposes. If he or she refuses to sign the document is immediately removed from the process and the area he or she was going to evaluate is coordinated with the institution director for a future visit. People should not provide any service on behalf of the PRSAA for any institution that has served during the preceding two (2) calendar years. This includes the participation in any discussion or decision related to the process of approval. Evaluators will not be able to maintain a contractual relationship, for advice or technical support for five (5) years, with or without financial remuneration, with the Assistant Secretary of Occupational and Technical Area and in the Technical Education Program or Occupational Education Program, as it constitutes a conflict of interest and a lack of ethics. Either couldn't be director or employee at the Puerto Rico State Approval Agency for the past two (2) years before the nomination.

### **Section 3.1.3: Training of the members**

The PRSAA will provide compulsory training and technical assistance to all evaluators in order to raise awareness of the importance and scope of the functions that they will assume. The first training will include topics such as:

1. Review of the organizational profile of the institutions
2. How to prepare for onsite visit
3. How to evaluate a course or program and components of the analysis (occupational, performance, domains, skills and results, among others).
4. Conflicts of interest and ethical standards: What does the PRSAA expect from the evaluators?

5. Public policy: what is the legal framework of the procedure of the evaluations in the facilities?
6. How to prepare a report of the evaluator
7. How to prepare recommendations and suggestions for the institutions
8. How to evaluate student achievement?
9. Requirements of the credit hours policy of the Higher Education Act, as amended in 2010.

Each evaluator will receive a copy of the PRSAA Operational Manual in which they will find the instructions, rules, regulations and procedures necessary to successfully complete the task. In addition, the evaluator must complete all the documents required by the PRSAA (PRSAA-2017-12D, PRSAA-2017-12G, PRSAA-2017-12H).

#### **Section 3.1.4: The Role and Scope of the Evaluators**

1. To make assessments of the facilities of the institutions applying for accreditation.
2. Develop his own work plan for managing the assessment activities carried out during the visit.
3. The duration of the onsite visit is one (1) day. If additional time is required, the evaluators must submit a request for authorization to the PRSAA.
4. Prepare a report to the PRSAA on the results of the assessment that was performed, based on the self-assessment submitted by the institution.
5. Respond to the team leader, who will collect and submit a report to the director of the PRSAA. Then the PRSAA to the Board of Examiners, which will make the final decision to approve or deny the accreditation.

#### **Section 3.1.5: Responsibilities of the Evaluator with the PRSAA**

1. Attend and participate in all training programs organized including

- the online training.
2. To participate in the selection of the leader of the Evaluation Committee.
  3. To prepare his personal work plan aligned with the plan of work of the Committee.
  4. Study and analyze, under strict confidentiality, all documents provided by the PRSAA related to the institution and to the evaluation process.
  5. Attend visits at the facility, as planned.
  6. Make recommendations to the PRSAA on how to improve the evaluation process.
  7. Indicate the availability to continue to serve as an evaluator.

### **Section 3.1.6: Responsibilities of the evaluator with the institution**

1. Thoroughly research the institution, program or occupational schools including its strengths and areas that require improvement. Hold an exit conference at the facility between the review team and the members of faculty and administrative staff, including the director and a student representative.
2. Verify and validate the image projected on the self-assessment by the institution or program.
3. Check, through the analysis of the evidence presented, the information obtained from the self-assessment.
4. Determine the degree of authenticity that reflects the self-evaluation report and the details on the current conditions of the institution.
5. Validate the system or methodology used by the institution to carry out self-evaluation.
6. Verify and validate the scope of its findings and how those correspond to the needs and objectives of the institutions and/or programs.
7. Add any data or document necessary to the self-evaluation report.

### **Section 3.1.7: Evaluators activities prior to the visit**

1. Attend and participate actively in the meetings of training.
2. Prepare a list of the aspects of the plan that need to be developed on the onsite visit.
3. Clarify any inconsistencies between the self-study and the evaluation guide.
4. Analyze the institution's effectiveness in the achieving its objectives.
5. Prepare a list of the people to interview.
6. Make a list of the weaknesses and strengths of the institution and its programs.

### **Section 3.1.8: What to expect during the onsite visit to the facilities**

Below is an overview of the series of regular activities that occur before, during, and after the visit to the facilities. It is important that both the evaluation committee and the steering committee of the institution and the director meet to reach an agreement on the strategies and the agenda for the onsite visit and evaluation interviews.

1. Initial Interview with the head of the institution and with the Steering Committee which prepared the self-evaluation report.
2. Getting to know the rest of the institution community.
3. Review of the self-assessment and of the aspects related to the standards of the PRSAA that require attention.
4. Observation visits, interviews of individuals, and group assessment.

### **Section 3.1.9: Preparation of the Report**

1. Exit conference with the steering committee and director.
2. Evaluation report submitted by each member of the evaluation committee - quantitative and qualitative.
3. Study and analysis of the self-assessment documents.
4. The self-evaluation documents submitted by the institution and its programs represent its effort in the accreditation process. The institution must show that it has devoted time and energy to carry out their self-evaluations.

## **Article 3.2: The Evaluation Process**

### **Section 3.2.1: Rating**

During the onsite visit the evaluator will first check all the doubts and marks he did in the Evaluators Quantitative Document during the analysis of the self-evaluation submitted by the institution. Also, may write additional information of findings or lack of evidence. The evaluator may assign the points he estimates and adds the total of points obtain in each standard. The evaluator will also prepare the narrative report (qualitative) and the overall evaluation.

Before leaving the institution, the evaluator will deliver reports to the PRSAA personnel and a copy for the Evaluators Leader of the evaluation committee and signs the originals.

### **Section 3.2.2: Individual Reports**

Each member of the evaluation committee will provide a narrative report (qualitative) about their observations, findings and recommendations. This report should be as complete as possible and will be used by the leader of the committee to draft the final evaluation report.

The following documents are required:

1. Use the forms of narrative report for the areas of administrative, program or general education performance, as applicable, provided by the PRSAA.
2. Include the findings that correspond to the columns identified with the titles of "strengths", "weaknesses" and "recommendations". It is suggested that each area marked as in need of improvement ("weak") detailing recommendations for correction may be included. Areas of improvement will be based on the analysis of the evidence and in the ratings of indicators.
3. Every narrative report is confidential, it contains privileged information and it is the responsibility of the Evaluator Committee leader and the PRSAA representative to ensure that all copies have been delivered in an appropriate manner.
4. May include a certification of the mandatory interviews with students, institutional personnel and employers.

### **Section 3.2.3: Exit Conference**

After reaching a consensus on the results of the evaluation, the Evaluation Committee will meet for an Exit Conference with the directors of the institution and with the Steering Committee. Only the Steering Committee and the people in the institution invited by the director will participate in this meeting. The purpose of the exit conference is to inform the institution and their programs in general terms about the findings. The preliminary report is the product of the members of the Evaluation Committee's analysis.

### **Section 3.2.4: Final Report of the leader of the Committee**

The main responsibility of the leader of the Evaluation Committee is to prepare the final report that will be sent in writing. The report is a compendium of all the documents and reports submitted by each member of the Evaluation Committee, as well as the notes taken during the interviews with the teachers, students and employers. The leader of the evaluation team has up to five (5) working days to submit the final report of the visit to the PRSAA. The director of the PRSAA has up to 15 working days to send the reports to the director of the institution who, in turn, has 15 working days in which to submit the Reaction Report and the Action Plan to the executive director of the PRSAA.

Group discussions are vital in the preparation of this report. The consensus of opinion is important, but the differences should be included in the report of the leader. The final evaluation meeting of the Committee, prior to the conference, is the opportunity to clarify the basic concepts of evaluation and a summary defined and clear on the findings and recommendations. It is also an opportunity for each member to work with the leader in the preparation of the final report.

The following are required:

1. Use of the official format provided by the leader of the Evaluation Committee to the PRSAA.
2. Complete the information required in each of the sections of the form
3. Include in the document all the weaknesses and strengths observed, in addition to those reported by the institution. This will facilitate future evaluations in which

you can determine whether the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee will be implemented to correct the findings.

4. The evaluators should interview the following persons: members of the faculty, administrative staff, students, employers, members of the steering committee and other appropriate persons. The evaluators also must submit a certification of such interviews as part of the report.
5. Submit to the PRSAA the narrative report of the Evaluation Committee on or before five (5) working days after the visit.
6. Send a copy of the report of the Evaluation Committee by regular mail, by e-mail or on CD-RW or "pen drive" to the PRSAA office.

Before delivering copies of the report to the PRSAA, the leader will ensure the following:

1. Make a copy as "Official Report of the Committee". The leader will ensure that the report is complete and accurate. This document will become a permanent copy of the files of the PRSAA.
2. Include the signature of the evaluator that prepares the report and the initials of the PRSAA who verified the document.
3. Deliver the documents of the self-study to the PRSAA as soon as the evaluation process is completed.
4. Maintain the confidentiality of the Evaluation Committee on the information that was obtained from the institution; it should not be discussed with anyone.

## **Article 3.3: Evaluation of the process of the onsite visit**

### **Section 3.3.1: Related to the process**

In addition to the final evaluation, the group leader must submit to the PRSAA the form with the recommendations and comments on the process of the report, known as the "Individual Observations of the members of the Evaluation Committee during the onsite visit". The recommendations or comments in documents or forms provided by the PRSAA must address the evaluation process, which includes: personal appreciation of the participation in the process; the circumstances that may have affected the process and any other comments that would be reflected in the growth and development of the institution, the PRSAA and the institution agenda.

### **Section 3.3.2: Related to the Agency**

Every document used by the Evaluation Committee members shall be returned to the PRSAA. This will take into consideration the commentaries and recommendations to be submitted to the institution by the PRSAA.

### **Section 3.3.3: Evaluator's Length of Service**

The evaluators are called on the basis of need, with consideration for the expiration of accreditation in the discipline in which they specialize. The structure of the evaluators does not require a specific date of expiry and are only asked their willingness to remain active in the list of potential evaluators and take the training on the changes in the evaluation process. They can evaluate more than one institution if needed.

## **Chapter 4: Guidelines**

### **Article 4.1: Administrative Performance**

#### **Section 4.1.1: Criterion Number 1: Administration**

##### **1. Vision, mission, objectives, philosophy and ethical standards**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation shall establish its own mission, vision and objectives. These components must take into account the requirements of the labor force and must include all the administrative staff in the development of the mission and objectives. The institution is required to publish and keep updated a catalog that reports and raises awareness to the general public. In addition, the institution must demonstrate the existence, use and disclosure of the ethical standards.

##### **2. Organization, planning and Credit Hour Policy**

Each institution interested in receiving an evaluation for accreditation must provide evidence of a systematic process of organization and functionality, in addition to establishing a budget to work with their needs. It must demonstrate a systematic, democratic, flexible and realistic approach to planning that includes, but is not limited to, schedules, flowcharts, educational and financial planning and application of the Credit Hour Policy.

##### **3. Information Systems**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must have a database that includes both quantitative and qualitative data, a frame of reference for the planning, decision-making, research, and administrative and programmatic evaluation.

#### 4. Retention and Employability

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must provide sufficient evidence of its ability to maintain retention and employability percentages of not less than 55%.

##### **Section 4.1.2: Criterion Number 2: Physical Facilities and Security**

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, should have an adequate physical facility to offer the educational services and guarantee the safety of the students, teachers and all institution workers, including but not limited to fire department certification, OSHO and those that apply.

##### **Section 4.1.3: Criterion Number 3: Learning Resources and Credit Hour Policy**

Every institution interested in being evaluated for approval, should have the appropriate and necessary resources for teaching and learning in order to obtain the expected outcomes and reach goals aligned with the Credit Hour Policy.

##### **Section 4.1.4: Criterion Number 4: Student 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 institutions must ensure that they are offering sufficient information and services, as well as guarantee the availability of the resources necessary to help students in the decision-making process.

### **Article 4.2: Program Performance**

##### **Section 4.2.1: Criterion Number 1: Program Planning, Organization and the Credit Hour Policy**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must have a philosophy that reflects a system that values the concepts and fundamental principles of

the program. Each program must be able to highlight a program, administrative, and evaluation plan that ensures the expected results, provides the necessary resources, establishes the timetable and provides the evidence of performance. Each institution must demonstrate and implement a Credit Hour Policy in line with federal regulations at 34 CFR 602.24(f): Credit Hour Policy.

### **Section 4.2.2: Criterion Number 2: Equipment, Tools and Materials**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation shall have the up-to-date equipment, instruments, materials, and required safety gear necessary to achieve the objectives and ensure the achievement of the goals.

### **Section 4.2.3: Criterion Number 3: Curriculum and number of Credit Hours**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must be organized, managed and directed to develop the occupational skills, in line with technological developments and trends in the labor force. The institution must demonstrate the availability of a curriculum developed specifically for each program. The curriculum should be developed by a specialist and must be aligned with the vision, mission and objectives of the institution and the public which includes the Credit Hour Policy.

### **Section 4.2.4: Criterion Number 4: Advisory Committee**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation shall create an Advisory Committee composed of students, employees, and employers, former students of the institution and members of the community. This committee will assist in the process of development and review of the curricular content. The advisory committee should serve as a liaison between the students, teachers and the primary management team of the institution. The committee is also responsible for carrying out a constant evaluation of internal processes and the objectives, mission, vision and the expected results of the institution, to ensure best practices and alignment of the offerings with current needs and social reality. The committee must make at least two meetings a year and keep minutes of the same. One of the meetings could be by chat, conference call.

### **Section 4.2.5: Criterion Number 5: Security and Ethical Standards**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must have a trained team in charge of protecting the health, safety and the life of the students, faculty, workers, and visitors of the community and establish them as a part of the ethical standards of the institution. Each program must develop a security protocol in line with the reality and scale of risk of the program. Each student of the institution must receive initial training on how to manage and use all materials, equipment and tools provided. Each classroom, workshop and laboratory must submit a written compendium of the security protocol and keep evidence.

### **Section 4.2.6: Criterion Number 6: Teaching-learning processes**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must have a teaching staff that demonstrates mastery and expertise in their subject area. All teachers must go through an interview process, qualification and training to ensure the best teaching practices. Also, it is necessary that the institution designs and implements evaluation and professional development plans for teachers and require teachers to ensure that their daily planning, activities, reports, meetings, evaluations and processes yield teaching and learning outcomes of the quality expected. Teachers should respect and promote the ethical standards of the institution and must demonstrate knowledge of the public policy including the Credit Hours Policy.

## **Article 4.3: Performance of the General Education Area**

### **Section 4.3.1: Criterion Number 1: Program Planning, Organization and the Credit Hour Policy**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must have a philosophy that reflects a system that values the concepts and principles in the area of general education. It is necessary that the general education area can show a program, administrative and evaluation plan that ensures the expected results, the resources, the timetable and the evidence of performance. Each institution must demonstrate that it has and implements the Credit Hour Policy in line with federal – regulations at 34 CFR 602.24(f): Credit Hour Policy.

### **Section 4.3.2: Criterion Number 2: Equipment, Tools and Materials**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation shall have the equipment, tools and materials needed and up-to-date in order to achieve the objectives and ensure the achievement of the goals.

### **Section 4.3.3: Criterion Number 3: Curriculum and Credit Hour Policy**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must be organized, managed and directed to develop the occupational skills, in line with technological developments and trends in the labor force. The institution must demonstrate the availability of a curriculum developed specifically for each program. The curriculum should be developed by an expert; it must be aligned with the vision, mission and objectives of the institution and the public policy of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, which includes the Credit Hour Policy.

### **Section 4.3.4: Criterion Number 4: Security and Ethical Standards**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must have a trained team in charge of protecting the health, safety and the life of the students, faculty, workers, and visitors of the community and establish them as a part of the ethical standards of the institution. It is required that each program develop a security protocol in line with the reality and scale of risk of the program. Each student of the institution must receive initial training on how to manage and use all materials, equipment and tools provided. Each classroom, workshops and laboratories must submit a written compendium of the security protocol.

### **Section 4.3.5: Criterion Number 5: The Teaching-learning processes, Ethical Standards and the Credit Hour Policy**

Each institution interested in receiving evaluation for accreditation must have a teaching staff that demonstrates mastery and expertise in their subject area. It also requires that all teachers go through an interview process, qualification and training to ensure the best teaching practices. Also, it is necessary that the institution designs and implements evaluation and professional development plans for teachers and require of them the

daily planning, activities, reports, meetings, evaluations and processes to ensure a quality teaching and learning outcomes expected. Teachers should respect and promote the ethical standards of the institution and must demonstrate knowledge of the public policy including the Credit Hours Policy.

### **Article 4.4: Results of the Quantitative Evaluations**

If the institution obtained from 94 to 100 % in the evaluation area, it would have a four-year accreditation. An institution that obtained a 93 to 87 % would have a three-year accreditation. On the contrary, if the institution obtained from 86 to 80%, it would have an accreditation equivalent to two years. All the above are subject to the decision of the Board of Examiners, which would have the power to consider other scenarios. In addition, that the final decision would rest in the hands of the Advisory Commission, in its role as the official examiner, in the event of an appeal process. Finally, this area will not be able to get more time of accreditation that the administrative area.

1. Approval of the Administrative Area
  - a. For the accreditation of the institution's administrative area it will reach a minimum of 80% in the evaluation.
2. Approval of the Program Area
  - a. For the accreditation of the program area of the institution it will reach a minimum of 80% in the evaluation.
3. Approval of General Education Area
  - a. For the accreditation of the general education area of the institution it will reach a minimum of 80% in the evaluation.

## **Chapter 5: Approval Process**

The mission of the PRSAA is to evaluate, certify and authorize public postsecondary occupational and technical education programs. The Board of Examiners will only approve those institutions and programs that demonstrate compliance with the standards and the public policy of the PRSAA (PRSAA-2017-13). Each evaluation is to be carried out in accordance with strict measures to ensure an objective and impartial judgment.

## **Article 5.1: Application**

Every institution shall file the application for accreditation or re-accreditation on a voluntary basis. The institution will be requested, using the official form of the PRSAA in which shall specify the programs seeking accreditation or re-accreditation. The request for accreditation will be submitted with a minimum of six (6) months prior to the expiration date of the current accreditation or accreditation of a new program.

With regard to the new programs these are evaluated in their entirety, since there is no pre-registration process. The voluntary application of re-accreditation must be submitted 6 months prior to the expiration date. The voluntary application for accreditation of a new program in a pre-accredited institution must be submitted 6 months prior to the start of the program which is planned and evaluated in its entirety, since there is no pre-evaluation and accreditation process. To submit a voluntary application for first time accreditation, an institution must be licensed by the Puerto Rico Educational Council. The institution must submit the request with 6 months in advance of the date that they plan to begin to offer the new program. This process will 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.

## **Article 5.2: Self-study**

Institutions are required to submit to the PRSAA a folder of self-study consisting of an overview of the guidelines and procedures of the institution. This report should include information on the operations of the last 6 months of the institution or the semester prior to the evaluation visit, as applicable. The PRSAA staff is available to help institutions to conduct their preliminary self-study and to identify the data and information necessary for the evaluation onsite visit. The self-study provides advanced information to the evaluation team to save time and promote efficiency during field visits. The self-study is a qualitative evaluation that measures the strengths and weaknesses of the institution and whether it meets the objectives according to the work plan. The Steering Committee of the self-study will include a representative of the administrative staff, members of the faculty, students and the governing body of the institution. More information on the Steering Committee is provided later in this document.

### **Section 5.2.1: Process of Self Study**

The PRSAA works with the institution to designate a date for the presentation of the self-study. In accordance with the institution, the PRSAA designates a deadline to complete and submit the self-study. The PRSAA staff will be available to provide technical support for the preparation and presentation of the self-study.

The institution sends the complete self-study to the PRSAA in a paper copy and three CD-RW or "pen drive" for each area (administrative, general education and program) to be evaluated. At the same time the PRSAA identifies the evaluators, calls and write them to confirm their availability and notifies, in written, the list of evaluators by specialization that will participate in the onsite visit of the institution. The staff of the institution will collect information to address the comments of the evaluators before the field visit.

If the institution is aware that it is not ready for the field visit, it should contact the PRSAA executive director and provide the rationale and evidence why a new evaluation process start date is necessary.

The self-study will be submitted to the onsite visit Evaluation Team one month before the deadline for the on-site visit, for its analysis and to clarify doubts prior to the field visit.

### **Article 5.3: The Steering Committee**

Institutions should establish an *ad hoc steering committee* for purposes of the self-study activities and onsite visit. The self-study steering committee is an essential part of the accreditation process and will include a representative of administrative staff, members of the faculty, students, and the governing body of the institution. This committee will assist in the development and review process of the self-study activities and must be present during the onsite visit of the evaluators.

### **Article 5.4: The evaluation onsite visit**

As stated above, there is a maximum of two days for full review and a minimum of 1 day for the evaluation of the programs. Some institutions may require more days due to the

number of programs offered or their locations. The agenda will be determined by the PRSAA and the institution before the onsite visit, with the purpose of ensuring efficiency and a good time management.

During the afternoon of the first (in a one-day visit) or second day (in a two-day visit), each team will provide their leader a preliminary consolidated report including comments and results. The Evaluators will deliver to the leader of the Evaluation Committee strengths and areas for improvement. The written report will include strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. The report will also include recommendations.

The oral report should be clear and must cover only the essential points (remember that this is an official report). It is not a forum for debate or argument.

### **Article 5.5: Report of the Findings**

After receiving the report of the Evaluation Committee, the PRSAA shall submit a report to the institution under evaluation during the next 15 working days. The institution will then have 15 days to respond to the report of findings. In addition, institutions have the opportunity to submit additional material relevant to the facts and conclusions of the written report of the visiting team, before the PRSAA continues the process sending the institution's reaction report and the corrective action plan to the Board of Examiners. The final decision can be to either approve, revoke, deny, or reinstate the approval status.

1. If the institution does not respond within 15 working days, the preliminary report will be sent to the Board of Examiners of the PRSAA for review and consideration, and the Board of Examiners will make recommendations to the PRSAA. The institution can also request an extension of time to submit additional evidence. This request has to be in written and with justifiable reasons such as natural disasters or death of the institutional director.

1. If the institution responds with comments or supporting documents within 15 days, The PRSAA will review and, if necessary, will request the evaluator to reevaluate his final report or justify his final decision.
2. The PRSAA will update the preliminary report to include the decision of the evaluators after considering the evidence presented by the institution, if necessary.
4. The PRSAA will refer to the Board of Examiners the Reaction Report and the Corrective Action Plan.
5. The Board of Examiners will make comments and recommendations to the PRSAA on the status of approval.
6. The PRSAA will send the final report to the institution with de Board of Examiners  
determination of accreditation status.

### **Article 5.6: Accreditation Status**

1. Accreditation: showing that the institution meets all required standards or has submitted a compliance plan that will enable them to fulfill in a period of sixty (60) calendar days.
2. Revoke: a status that is after the institution loses its authorization due to the lack of compliance with the standards of the PRSAA.
3. Denied: Status that demonstrates that the institution does not comply with all or a significant amount of the standards or that the compliance plan is not satisfactory in accordance with the standards of the PRSAA.
4. Restitution: Status that shows that an institution accreditation previously revoked presents new evidence that proves its compliance with all the standards of the PRSAA.

### **Article 5.7: Appeal of a status of Accreditation**

Any institution or program pending appeal will continue with the status of approval until a final decision is made. If the final written determination is rejected, it is revoked or keeps the institution with a corrective plan (with a specific statement of the reasons), the director of the institution or program shall have the right to start an appeal process of the evaluation as described below:

### **Section 5.7.1: First Stage**

The institution or program that receives the final written determination on the refusal, revocation or accreditation pending status shall submit a request in writing within the next 10 calendar days after notification to initiate an appeal process. The deadline shall be calculated using the date of issuance of the notification. In this communication, the institution shall indicate the specific reasons for requesting the appeal.

### **Section 5.7.2: Second Stage**

The review must be in writing and addressed to the Board of Examiners through the PRSAA director. The institution will have the opportunity to provide pertinent evidence, relevant and justifiable for the evaluation or review of the status. The Board of Examiners has up to 30 working days after receiving the request, to analyze and respond to the institution director. The Board of Examiners may visit or call the institution with the purpose of verifying or reviewing any condition that has been addressed during the reconsideration process. The Board of Examiners must complete all visits and phone calls before presenting the recommendations. A record shall be prepared for each visit, call or meeting.

If the institution director is in disagreement with the decision of the Board of Examiners, even after the second stage, it may request a third and final review. For this stage, the director shall have 10 calendar days after receiving the response from the Board of Examiners. On this occasion, the review shall be sent directly to the Advisory Commission.

### **Section 5.7.3: Third and final stage**

The Advisory Commission, in their examiner role, has up to 20 working days after receiving the request, to analyze and respond to the letter of appeal of the director. As part of the process, the Advisory Commission shall serve as the hearing officer and it will be able to visit or call the institution with the purpose of verifying any condition that has been addressed during the reconsideration process. All visits or calls must be made before the presentation of the report of recommendations. The final determination must be supported by the findings and the reasons for such findings. Based on the findings,

the PRSAA will provide the institution with a written report of the final decision, which will be one of the following:

Retain the original determination

Amend the original determination

Revoke the original determination and send the decision in writing to the PRSAA to continue with the regular procedure.

A copy of the final determination will be sent to the secretariat of the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (DEPR). Minutes of each meeting, phone call or visit will be filed in the office of the PRSAA. This stage culminates the administrative process and any decision shall be final. Interested parties should convene another forum or mechanism to review a decision of the PRSAA.

#### **Section 5.7.4: Follow-up Visits**

1. After the final determination of accreditation, the PRSAA will visit the accredited institution, once per semester. The first visit is with prior notification.
2. The PRSAA will conduct a fact-finding report.
3. The report will be submitted to the Advisory Commission for the determination and evaluation of the same
4. The Advisory Commission will determine whether the institution has complied with the provisions of the Improvement Plan.
5. The PRSAA may carry out monitoring visits without prior notice.

## **Chapter 6: Institutional Policies**

### **Article 6.1: Credit Hour policy**

The United States Department of Education issued regulations on the definition of credit hours (see 34 CFR 600.2) and on the guidance of its implementation. The establishment of credit hours is necessary because students are awarded financial aid based on their course enrollment and the amount of credits earned. The credit hour, in accordance with 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 that

is taken in an educational institution". (A guide to the institutions and accrediting agencies on the credit hours as defined in the final regulations published on 29 October 2010"). (*Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as defined in the Final Regulations Published on October 29, 2010*).

The document states that: "In its most basic sense, a credit hour is a representative measure of a quantity of student learning. The community of higher education credit hours has been used from long ago, as defined by the Carnegie unit and as part of a process to establish a standard measure of workload of the faculty, the costs of instruction, educational efficiency rates and the measure of student work for transfer students".

The federal standards allow the PRSAA establish a consistent measure on the minimum requirements for a student academic load. The PRSAA will review the policy of credit hours of each requesting institution or program in order to check its alignment with federal and state regulations. From the point of view of the PRSAA, the credit hour is a measure that reflects the expected learning outcomes and that sets the student achievement expected for a certain amount of time, consistent throughout the institution.

The review of the institutions will be based on verifiable learning outcomes. The PRSAA will also review the allocation of credit hours of the institution, in accordance with the conversion of time credit/clock of the PRSAA, as described below:

For programs leading to academic degrees, the following equation will be used:

An academic year is equivalent to a period of two semesters with a minimum of 12 credits per semester. The semesters will have a minimum of 16 weeks.

Credit hours are set:

15 theory hours = 1 credit

45 lab hours = 1 credit

45 internship/occupational practice hours = 1 credit

60 clinic hours = 1 credit

For programs leading to certificates and occupational programs, the following equation will be used:

An academic year is equivalent to a period of two semesters. The semesters will have a minimum of 16 weeks.

The credit hours granted to the programs meet the definition of a credit hour under the Higher Education Act of 2010 (HEA), Section 34 CFR 600.2 for purposes of federal programs and provisions related to the accrediting agencies on the determinations of the institutions in terms of credit hours or other measures of student work under subsection (f) of 34 CFR 600.2, for purposes of economic assistance programs for students of Title IV.

The institution provides clock hours and credit may be granted on the basis of the documentation related to the amount of work that an average student is expected to complete within a predetermined amount of time.

### **Section 6.1.1: Methodology for Credit Hour Calculation**

The institution should identify, within each course, the different capabilities (concepts, skills, attitudes, and skills) to which the student must be exposed to receive the recognition that employers in the field of study chosen consider useful. The institution shall identify the various educational activities that are necessary to achieve the skills and knowledge necessary to receive a diploma, degree or certificate. These activities are: classroom hours, direct instruction of the faculty that can be outside of the classroom, laboratory work, internships and community service. These activities will be aligned with the various issues or themes.

A “CREDIT HOUR” is the unit of measuring educational CREDIT, usually based on the number of classroom hours per week throughout a term (DEFINITION OF “CREDIT HOUR” - THE CARNEGIE UNIT: HOW TO CALCULATE STUDENT CONTACT HOURS).

1. A unit of credit equates to three hours of student work per week (1-hour lecture plus 2 hours of homework or 3 hours of lab) for 16 weeks.

2. Short courses are prorated so they contain the same number of hours as if the course were scheduled for a full semester. To maintain the integrity of the instructional program, care must be taken when scheduling short courses so that there is adequate time for students to complete homework assignments or laboratory assignments.

### **Section 6.1.2: Applicability**

The institution is responsible for determining the credit hours for each course in accordance with the federal program definition of a credit hour. Educational institutions should review their policies and procedures for determining the credit hours and the implementation of its programs and each course, to take appropriate action to comply with the credit hour policy before applying for accreditation or re-accreditation by the PRSAA. Educational institutions that grant certificates will be required to apply the definition of credit hours to the policy established. The lack of fulfillment of the institution's policy of credit hours will result in a negative recommendation and a plan for immediate correction.

The review of compliance with the credit hour policy and of all standards will be continuous and the PRSAA may make unannounced visits to confirm the implementation of all policies and objectives. If the PRSAA knows about a situation of non-compliance related to the credit hour policy, the PRSAA will activate the special report mechanism described in this document. The PRSAA notifies to the secretariat of the United States Department of Education and the Secretary of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico for corresponding action.

## **Article 6.2: Grievances and processes of individual complaints against decisions of institutions or programs**

The purpose of this section is to establish a procedure to resolve grievances as quickly and as fairly as possible, for people who have been affected by a decision or action taken by some institution approved by the PRSAA. The procedure should remain aligned with public policy, with the due process of law and equal legal protection.

### **I. What is a complaint and what should it include?**

It is important to stress that, in accordance with the policy and procedures of the PRSAA, a grievance is a written notification –which evaluates and establishes a complaint against an institution or program accredited by the PRSAA. The complaint must include the complainant's name, address and phone number and a detailed explanation of the issue.

The complaint must address:

An unethical action in violation of the ethical standards of the PRSAA, the use of false information or changes that are in violation of the policies established and published in the rules of procedure of the PRSAA. The complaint must be accurate enough to identify with clarity: (1) the situation; (2) the complainants; (3) the institution or program against whom the allegations are made; and (4) the opportunity for the institution or program to respond to the allegations made.

### **Article 6.3: Ethical Standards required for Institutions**

One of the purposes of the visits to the facility by the Evaluation Committee is to verify that the institution has standards for managing institutional administrative, programmatic and evaluation plans. The PRSAA will require that the evaluation team undertake a review of the current ethical standards. The lack of standards may result in a delay in the accreditation process and can give way to a written recommendation of the Committee. The institution applicant must prove that all your standards and procedures are ethical. This includes, but is not limited to: recruitment, advertising, transcripts, tuition reimbursement and fair and location services to students. The ethical standards of the institutions should include at least:

#### **Section 6.3.1: Institutional Policy on the discontinuation or Close Programs**

The institution must provide a document that establishes the policy that applies to the close or discontinuation of a program. The document should contain all kinds of opportunities for students to complete the requirements of the programs and obtain their degree. Alternatives may include, but are not limited to, online courses, courses under contract and study sessions.

### **Section 6.3.2: Academic Honesty and Integrity**

The institution must provide evidence of a policy related to intellectual property and the personal and social well-being of the student. The institution shall not tolerate plagiarism, fraud, the changes of note, the ideological falsification, false documentation, identity or practice, or any act that is opposed to the identity of the intellectual product of a student or any person. Any of these actions will be considered illegal and shall be submitted and subject to severe discipline applying criminal and civil state and federal laws.

### **Section 6.3.3: Compliance with the policy of Credit Hours**

The institution must provide evidence of its policy of Credit Hours, which must be aligned with the provisions of the Federal Higher Education Act (HEA) and with the federal regulations, as amended.

### **Section 6.3.4: Confidentiality of Student Records**

The institutions must follow federal regulations on the handling of documents and information of the students (Federal Privacy Law on the Family Educational Rights of 1974 or FERPA, for its acronym in English). The institution will not produce or disseminate any student information without the written consent of the student or student's parent or guardian, if the student is less than 18 years. Every student has the right to receive a copy of its file and to receive information about any change or practice that could affect his or her files. The student also has the right to request revisions and corrections of any errors in its file.

### **Section 6.3.5: Security and students right to know**

The institution must comply with federal regulations on matters of security in institutions of higher education (The Law of Right Knowledge of Students and the safety of the campus, or *Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act* of 1990). As set out in this Law, each participating institution in higher education programs should disseminate to students all information related to the institutional, operational and academic, economic aid, security matters and any other relevant and important information that may affect the student and maintain copy that the student received the information.

### **Section 6.3.6: Policy of non-discrimination**

The institution shall ensure equal protection of the law to employees and students. The institution shall not discriminate in any way against any student or prospectus by reason of age, race, color, sex, birth, veteran status, political or religious ideology, origin or social status, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability or physical or mental impairment; or being a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The institution understands its obligation to periodically review and update the policies of non-discrimination to include changes and new requirements.

### **Section 6.3.7: Sexual Harassment Policy**

The institution must provide written evidence of a sexual harassment policy; it should also include evidence of training to teachers and other staff and awareness to students about what sexual harassment is and how to file a complaint of sexual harassment. The institution will not tolerate sexual harassment.

### **Section 6.3.8: The Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)**

No student shall be discriminated against on the basis of any condition or physical or mental disability. The institution must demonstrate the ability to provide reasonable accommodations for these students and to ensure that staff receive appropriate training.

### **Section 6.3.9: Rights and Responsibilities of Students**

Every student has the right to receive an education that is not limited to the classroom. The institution will provide other activities and strategies to enrich the academic life of the student, for example, peer coaching activities, collaborative activities with other students, teachers and other staff within the educational environment. The institution will also make available resources such as libraries, technology or data centers, among others. Students have the responsibility to behave appropriately and not interfere with the educational rights of other students on campus.

### **Section 6.3.10: Drugs and Controlled Substances**

The institution must establish a policy for a drug-free environment. This policy should include information about the use and abuse of illegal drugs, alcohol, and other

potentially harmful substances. The institution must have the skills and information needed to guide students on prevention and rehabilitation programs available that work with dependence on alcohol and drugs.

### **Section 6.3.11: Fair and Equitable Services for Students**

The institutions must demonstrate that it will provide the same opportunities and access to information for all students. Students must know their rights beginning with the recruitment process and throughout their studies at the institution. Students will have consistent and up-to-date information on available economic aid, payment plans, extensions and deferrals. The institution must demonstrate the existence of a policy of reimbursement or refund aligned with the federal provisions and the process on how they will be disseminated to the students. Students should know that they have the right to submit complaints to the PRSAA on any matter or violation and keep evidence of this orientation.

## **Article 6.4: Annual Report**

The PRSAA will require an annual report in June providing the statistical data of the institution as well as the compliance with the work plan and must include the projections for the next academic year; timely and accurate statistical information; additional specified reports, including data related to graduation rates; State licensing examination results; job placement rates, and other evidence of the quality of student achievement; record of compliance with its program responsibilities under HEA title IV (including student default rate data, and the results of audits and program reviews); record of student complaints and their outcomes; and other information pertaining to an institution's compliance with the standards of accreditation.

There will be an initial review to ensure that the institutions have submitted materials for each section of the report required. If the material is incomplete, the PRSAA shall notify the institution and request additional information. When the report is complete it is returned to the institution for their revision and final submission in five (5) calendar days.

During the review, the staff will be addressing red flags that may exist and indicating the areas of deficiency. If the materials are poor and if red flags have been identified, the

PRSAA and the staff will come to a consensus on the existence of the deficiency. A letter will be sent to notify the institution on the deficiencies found, together with a request to provide additional evidence.

The PRSAA will review additional materials and come to a consensus on the sufficiency of the evidence. The institution will receive notification that it met the standards and that it will continue with the full approval status.

### **Article 6.5: Special Reports**

The special reports must be submitted by the institutions if there were no changes in administrative or programmatic plans previously presented to the PRSAA; and when a corrective action plan does not comply with the requirements of the PRSAA. The PRSAA can request special reports when one of the following occurs:

1. If the institution adds programs
2. An institution closes programs
3. Curriculum Review
4. An institution fails to comply with one or more of the standards due to internal or external factors
5. An institution submitted a corrective action plan that does not comply with the expected requirements
6. Any other substantial change that may affect the opportunities for students and their academic achievement, including and not limited to appointment of director and teachers and classified staff, allocation of funds, fiscal committee.

### **Article 6.6: Findings and Compliance**

The institutions must respond to each finding or failure in its annual report; if they fail to answer any finding or failure, they must submit an amendment in their annual report. If the findings or noncompliance are 90 days or more prior to the date of the semi-annual report, a special report should be submitted.

## **Article 6.7: Creation of programs after the Accreditation**

The PRSAA and the area program specialist will review the new programs. The director of the institution must sign an affidavit stating that the new program meets all the requirements and standards issued for the institutions, in addition to submitting a request in writing to the PRSAA, and eventually the Advisory Committee.

## **Article 6.8: Contingencies**

If the PRSAA comes in knowledge of any lack of compliance with ethical practices, which include, but are not limited to recruitment, advertising, transcripts, refunds of student enrollment fair and equitable, and placement services for students, the PRSAA will activate the mechanism of special report described in this manual. In addition, if the PRSAA comes to know about non-compliance with the credit hour policy, the PRSAA will activate the mechanism of special report.

## **Article 6.9: Motivation for Innovation**

All institutions must report regularly to the PRSAA regarding strategic short and long term plans establishing how to incorporate new strategies, practices that have been shown to be effective and new methods of learning. The PRSAA expects that all approved institutions and applicants are involved in promoting innovative programs and effective learning experiences. As set out in the USDE document *Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education* (April 2012) institutions must incorporate an innovation plan into their practices, which is aligned with the needs and capabilities of the present. The institutions must demonstrate that they review and constantly improve their occupational counseling services, which use proven educational strategies - such as the action research and community-based learning, among others, and that provide opportunities for professional development. Taking into consideration the public policy established in the document previously mentioned, institutions will be encouraged to propose projects that develop or expand innovations and institute a high academic achievement and a workforce with knowledge and able to solve the most pressing problems facing the nation, both at a local and global level.

## **Article 6.10: Full Review and Targeted Revision**

The programs will be reviewed depending on the day of accreditation. The date of accreditation of some programs will be aligned with the date of accreditation of the institution. If only one program is created, submitted for approval or had a different accreditation due date, the PRSAA will review the administrative, general education areas and the program submitted for first accreditation. When a block of programs or a simple program requiring reviews, we will be conducting a full review (programmatic, administrative and general education).

## **Article 6.11: Processes of awareness and dissemination**

The PRSAA publishes on its website all new policies and amendments in order to allow the public to comment, make recommendations or to oppose the changes. All changes will be available on the website of the PRSAA for 30 days to receive the public opinion. The PRSAA Operational Manual will always be available on the web page [www.de.gobierno.pr](http://www.de.gobierno.pr) under the Office of the Secretary; in the link of the PRSAA, for institutions and the general public can use it as a reference. Printed copies of all regulations and procedures will be available upon request at the offices of the PRSAA. Also, copies can be requested by calling the phone number: (787)773-2252.

## **Chapter 7: Advisory Commission**

### **Article 7.1: Location**

This organization is called the ADVISORY COMMISSION OF THE PR STATE APPROVAL PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS OF POSTSECONDARY OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION OF PUERTO RICO (PRSAA). Known in Spanish as the *Agencia Estatal Aprobadora (AEA)*. The Commission will be located at the Office of PRSAA.

### **Article 7.2: The Main Function**

The main function of the Commission will be to provide technical support and advice to the PRSAA staff and the Secretary of Education of the Government of Puerto Rico so that it can maintain best practices during the accreditation process of the applicants.

The Commission must select a president and secretary from among the members, in order to achieve its objectives and functions.

### **Article 7.3: Objective of the Commission**

To better perform practices related to accreditation and to ensure that the greatest number of compliant institutions are approved and able to benefit students.

### **Article 7.4: Members, Constitution, Quorum, Meetings and Votes**

#### **Section 7.4.1: Constitution**

1. The Advisory Commission shall consist of five (5) members and one (1) substitute member who will attend as a listener and shall vote only if there isn't sufficient quorum. The Commission should include representation of public employment service and employers, employees, occupational and post-secondary educators, students, and the general public, including minority groups.
2. Each member of the Commission must know the sector of the academy that her or she represents; the interests and rights of this particular group. A member could represent more than one area.
3. The eligibility of each member shall depend on the academic training and knowledge of the technical and vocational areas.
4. The PR Commonwealth Department of Education administrative, executives, educational and non-educational or office employees, full time or part time, can't be elected members of the Advisory Commission for five (5) years after the last day they worked for the Department.
5. All members are required to demonstrate knowledge and a global vision of the public policy, the acts and rules related to post-secondary education.

### **Section 7.4.2: Quorum**

The quorum shall be constituted by the presence of three (3) of the five (5) members.

### **Section 7.4.3: Ordinary and extraordinary meetings**

1. The meetings will be held the third Friday of each month indicated by the PRSAA and when it is estimated by the president.
2. Extraordinary meetings may be requested by the chairman of the Commission as often as necessary, provided the communication shall be in writing or by e-mail that is addressed to all the members of the Committee.
3. Vote - Each member of the Commission shall be entitled to one (1) vote on any matter brought to the Commission.
4. Electronic voting (email) will be permitted to accelerate processes

## **Article 7.5: Terms and Vacancies of the Commission Members**

### **Section 7.5.1: Terms**

1. The term of office of the members of the Commission shall be two (2) consecutive years, with the exception of the President, which shall be three (3) consecutive years.
2. The members of the Commission serve for a maximum of three (3) terms or (6) years, and nine (9) years for the president.

### **Section 7.5.2: Vacancy**

1. Any vacancy that occurs before the expiry of the time limit; shall be appointed by the PRSAA.
2. Any member who resigns may be re-elected after a waiting period of twelve (12) months.
3. If a member fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings, the Commission and the PRSAA will take into account and analyze

the reasons for those absences, if the reasons are not sufficient or are not justified, the position will be declared as a vacancy. This position will be filled by the PRSAA not later than two (2) months following the declaration of the vacancy with the advice and assistance of the rest of the members of the Commission.

## **Article 7.6: Roles, responsibilities, scope, the ethical conflicts and interests and lobbying activities**

The Advisory Commission is the branch counselor of the PRSAA and has its own procedures, roles and responsibilities.

### **Section 7.6.1: Roles and Responsibilities**

1. To meet regularly, at least once every 4 to 6 weeks.
2. To prepare, maintain and archive documents for the sessions of the meeting.
3. Review, analyze, recommend and develop documents, policies and practice changes.
4. To elect a President and a Secretary from among the members of the Commission.
5. Review and recommend procedures for the execution of programmatic activities.
6. Improve the performance of the programs through monitoring, in accordance with the rules of the PRSAA indicators of ethics, quality and quantity.
7. Update and recommend appropriate administrative and educational policies to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations.
8. Design and provide a guide for staff's activity programs.
9. Create links of communication and awareness between the institutions, the PRSAA and state and federal officials.

10. To provide training, seminars and conferences in the field of administration, education and information on the labor market, postsecondary education issues and PRSAA processes.
11. Review all the rules, policies and procedures on a regular basis that includes the implementation and integration of the students and members of the community in the processes, taking into account the good practices and public policy changes.

### **Section 7.6.2: the scope of the Commission, ethics, conflicts of interest, and lobbying activities**

The Commission will be part of the decision-making process within the PRSAA and the pursuit of the objectives on behalf of students and members of the academic community. The Commission will be an essential part of the approval process of the institutions and may not have contradictions or conflicts of interest. No member of the Commission will be allowed to receive or exchange of gifts, money or any type of compensation for services rendered. Members must also avoid the appearance of any conflict or quid pro quo and behavior. Members of the Commission cannot act as a pressure group for public institutions or postsecondary institutions to the United States Department of Education or the Puerto Rico Department of Education.

## **Article 7.7: Roles and Responsibilities of the president and the secretary**

### **Section 7.7.1: President**

Convene and hold regular and special meetings

1. Convene special meetings, if necessary.
2. To exercise the other functions related to the office
3. Prepare an agenda for each meeting designated.
4. To maintain order and control during the meetings.
5. Sign and approve minutes of meetings.
6. To represent the Commission in the official activities and communications.

## **Section 7.7.2: Secretary**

Keep a permanent record of all meetings:

1. Publish and distribute to all members copies of the minutes of each meeting of the Commission in good condition.
2. Prepare and send notices of all meetings to members in good standing.
3. Prepare under the request of the President, the agendas of meetings and send by e-mail to all members at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.
4. Keep and maintain a list with all the measures, the documents and the rules adopted by the Commission
5. In the absence of the president, call the meeting and facilitate the election of a temporary President ad interim.
6. Conduct the correspondence of the Commission.

## **Article 7.8: General Provisions**

### **Section 7.8.1: Document Assurance and Management**

The original documents, copies, agendas, minutes, attendance sheets, sheets of referendum, letters and archives applicants will be kept in the general archives of the PRSAA.

### **Section 7.8.2: Confidentiality**

Each member of the Commission shall preserve the confidentiality of the issues and topics in the regular and special meetings for which no decision has yet been made. The dissemination of information should always be with the authorization of the PRSAA.

### **Section 7.8.3: Supplementary or new rules and internal procedures**

Each member of the Commission shall take part in the decision-making process. Once the members have voted, by a rule or process this becomes final and must be respected and recognized by all members of the Commission.

## **Chapter 8: Board of Examiners**

### **Article 8.1: Location**

This organization is called the Board of Examiners of the PR STATE APPROVAL AGENCY, (PRSAA), the acronym PRSAA. The address and the main office of the Board will be located at the office of the PRSAA.

### **Article 8.2: Objectives**

The main objectives and functions of the Board of Examiners are the following:

1. Collaborate with the PRSAA to achieve its objectives.
2. Provide assistance with a view to strengthening the quality of academic offerings of the institutions.
3. Take the decision to approve, deny, revoke or reinstate a requesting institution.
4. Work in collaboration with the Advisory Committee of the PRSAA to further the interest of the vocational, occupational and technical education of Puerto Rico.

### **Article 8.3: Member Eligibility, Notification and Training**

#### **Section 8.3.1: Eligibility**

The criteria used for the selection of the members are:

1. Preparation and educational experience as a teacher or administrator in the occupational, vocational and technical education areas and at the postsecondary level.
2. Degree of knowledge of the relevant characteristics of a post-secondary institution in terms of organization, management and operation of education programs.
3. The PR Commonwealth Department of Education administrative, executives, educational and non-educational or office employee, full time or part time, can't be elected member of the Advisory Commission for five (5) years after the last day worked for the Department.
4. No member of the Board shall have an interest in or to carry out activities in conflict with the aims and purposes of the PRSAA.

5. Potential members must submit a resume or "Curriculum Vitae" updated for the file in the PRSAA.
6. Once selected, every member will receive a notification letter. A copy of this letter will be file in the evaluator record at the PRSAA.
7. Every new member must receive compulsory trainings appointed by the PRSAA, the first one being the operational and programmatic presentation of the Agency.
8. Any member who is absent from the compulsory trainings will be removed from the Board and will have to wait a period of two (2) years for reconsideration

### **Section 8.3.2: Roles and Responsibilities**

Receive and consider the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee to recommend to the PRSAA the accreditation, suspension or denial of a program or public post-secondary institution of vocational and technical education to participate in the federal financial aid programs.

1. Analyze the Report of Reactions and the Corrective Action Plan submitted by the institution after receiving the report of findings submitted by the PRSAA.
2. To recommend to the PRSAA the crediting period for the administrative area, general education and each program.
3. Reassess recommendations issued. If the evaluated institution does not accept the decision made, the board may take relevant decisions, in accordance with the rules and procedures approved by the PRSAA, the Advisory Board may make the final decision.

### **Article 8.4: Procedures**

1. The evaluators through its leader issued the Report of Findings.
2. The PRSAA immediately receives the Report of Findings and writes to the evaluated institution. The PRSAA, sends the findings report to the party who should in turn submit the reaction to the Report and the Plan of improvements to correct the findings within 30 days.

3. The PRSAA receives the report, analyzes it and convenes the Board of Examiners to assess the reports and any other evidence submitted, along with the recommendation of the evaluators and through a sheet of Referendum issues the final recommendation on the period for which it is to be credited or, on the contrary, the denial or condition (s) of any of the programs evaluated for their accreditation.
4. After receiving the report of the Board of Examiners, the PRSAA communicates with the director of the evaluated institution and informs them of the decision of the Board of Examiners and its recommendations, if any, of the programs that has been given specific recommendations for accreditation.
5. The PRSAA notifies the Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico and the Office of the Director of Certification and Eligibility of Postsecondary Schools of Vocational and Technical Education in the Office of the Secretary of Education in the United States of its decision (PRSAA-2017-14).

## **Article 8.5: Composition, Quorum and Meetings**

### **Section 8.5.1: Composition:**

The Board will consist of five (5) members and one (1) substitute member who will attend as a listener and shall vote only if there is insufficient quorum.

### **Section 8.5.2: Quorum**

The quorum is determined as the presence of three of the five members present in the meeting.

### **Section 8.5.3: Ordinary and Extraordinary Meetings of the Board**

The Board shall meet as many times as the PRSAA requires, but shall meet at least three times a year. These meetings will be held at the date, time and place set by the PRSAA. Special meetings of the Board shall be convened by the president of the board. The PRSAA can convene, by written request of at least three members.

## **Article 8.6: Terms of the Members of the Board and Vacancies**

### **Section 8.6.1: Terms**

The term of the Board members shall be two years, except for the president of the group whose term shall be three years, calculated on the basis of twelve months from the nomination date.

### **Section 8.6.2: Vacancy**

Any vacancy on the board that is not by expiration of the term of a member shall be covered by the PRSAA. A member may be elected again after 12 months from his or her last participation.

### **Section 8.6.3: Assistance**

When a member fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Board; the Board and the PRSAA consider the reasons that gave rise to such absences and if it is determined that they are not justified, declare the vacancy. The vacancy arising in this way will be covered by the PRSAA as soon as possible, after consultation with the other members.

## **Article 8.7: General Provisions**

### **Section 8.7.1: File of documents**

Copies of the documents, agendas, minutes, referendum, attendance sheets, copies of letters and documents submitted by the institutions assessed and the PRSAA, shall be kept always in the general archive of the PRSAA.

### **Section 8.7.2: Custody of Documents**

All documents will be in the custody of the PRSAA. No original documents will be circulated, except when the originals were requested by order of a court of competent jurisdiction, or the Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico or the Federal Government.

### **Section 8.7.3: Dissemination of Information**

Without proper authorization of the PRSAA, no member of this board will disclose information on the issues raised in the meetings and on which no decision has been made.

### **Section 8.7.4: Rules**

1. The members of the Board shall be responsible, collectively and in solidarity, for the decisions made;
2. The members of the Board are exempt from liability since their membership is based on a voluntary basis.
3. The absent members in the event of a disagreement with the decisions taken by the other members of the Board shall request in writing during the two (2) months subsequent to the meeting that their disagreement be recorded in the minutes, otherwise they will be considered consenting and accept the same.

## **Chapter 9: Compliance**

### **Article 9.1: General Provisions**

1. If an institution does not comply with the provisions of this Manual, the executive director of the agency shall submit a report of non-compliance to the Advisory Committee for appropriate action.
2. The PRSAA convenes the Advisory Commission to evaluate the reports and any other evidence submitted. Through a written report, the Commission may issue the determination on the period for which the institution or program is accredited or, on the contrary, the denial or condition (s) of any of the programs evaluated for their accreditation. This will be recorded in the minutes.
3. Once an institution receives the report of the Advisory Commission, the PRSAA communicates with the director of the evaluated institution and informs them of the decision and whether any of the programs has been given specific guidelines for accreditation.
4. The PRSAA notifies the Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico and to the Office of the Director of Certification and Eligibility of Postsecondary Schools of Vocational and Technical Education in the Office of the Secretary of Education in the United States.

## **Chapter 10: Amendments and availability of the Operational Manual**

### **Article 10.1: General Provisions**

1. These rules may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members of the Advisory Commission, cited for these purposes.
2. Any amendment to this manual must be approved by the Advisory Commission and notice must be provided to the public of the DEPR via the link of the PRSAA.
3. This manual is also available on the link of the PR. Printed copies of this manual are also available upon request at the offices of the PRSAA.

## **Chapter 11: Exclusion Clause**

### **Article 11.1: General Provisions**

This Regulation entered into effect once it is approved. If any part is declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, this situation will not affect the other parts.

## 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](http://www.portal.state.pa.us)

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

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

Websites: [www.incommonfederation.org/accrediting.html](http://www.incommonfederation.org/accrediting.html)

Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education (April 2012)

<http://www.lasc.edu/students/Credit/20Hour/20Definition/20for/20LASC.pdf>

DEFINITION OF "CREDIT HOUR" - THE CARNEGIE UNIT: HOW TO CALCULATE STUDENT CONTACT HOURS

[www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov) New York State Board of Regents, State Education Department, Office of the Professions (Public Postsecondary Vocational Education, Practical Nursing)

[www.education.state.pa.us](http://www.education.state.pa.us) Pennsylvania State Board of Vocational Education, Bureau of Career and Technical Education

Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended: 34 CFR; Chapter VI; part 600: Subtitle B, Regulations of the Offices of the Department of Education <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI>

## Certification

We, Dr. Juanita Rodríguez, President of the Advisory Commission and Ms. Ann M. Mockford Negrón, Executive Director of PUERTO RICO STATE APPROVAL AGENCY, hereby certify that this is the Operational Manual of the PRSAA amended on August 2019.



Juanita Rodríguez, Ed. D.  
President  
Advisory Commission



Ann M. Mockford-Negrón  
Executive Director  
PR State Approval Agency

August 26, 2019  
Date