

The University of Texas at Tyler

ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS OF EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

UT Tyler graduate program reviews are based upon a peer review process that requires program reviewers to make decisions about the program quality, effectiveness, and relevance. In order to maintain the credibility of those decisions, external evaluators are responsible for conducting reviews that uphold the highest level of integrity in all aspects. Integrity of the process mandates at least the following ethical obligations and understandings. External reviewers must affirm that they have no conflict of interest related to UT Tyler and to the program under review.

Eligibility of External Evaluators and Obligations of UT Tyler Faculty and Administrators

The process for the external review of a UT Tyler program based on the professional judgment of external reviewers demands informed review, thoughtful analysis, and reasoned decision making. External evaluators must have subject-matter expertise and must currently serve as a faculty member in a program nationally recognized for excellence in the discipline.

UT Tyler program faculty and administrators have an obligation to select external reviewers with the highest caliber of integrity. It is paramount that evaluators are qualified in their external reviewer role to provide actionable advice based on their review of the self-study information and verified through interviews with faculty, students, administrators, and staff.

Confidentiality

Without a commitment to confidentiality by all external reviewers and in all aspects of the review process, external evaluators cannot freely execute their responsibility to conduct themselves with professional integrity in accreditation activities and decisions.

External program reviewers must maintain complete confidentiality in all activities and decisions. Confidentiality applies to all documents, correspondence, and discussions relative to all phases of the external program review. External reviewers may not disclose information about the program, including discussions with the program and institutional representatives before, during, or following the review process. Written documents include but are not limited to the program self-study, program or institutional resource material and support evidence, and the external review report.

External program reviewers may not use generative AI to create all or part of the external review report. No UT Tyler documents, including the program self-study report or institutional resource material, may be uploaded to a generative AI platform. Generative AI may not be used to analyze any UT Tyler data provided as part of the external review.

Conflict of Interest

External reviewers should not accept appointment to serve when a conflict of interest or the *appearance* of conflict of interest, exists. External reviewers affirm electronically that they have no conflict of interest with UT Tyler or the program under review as part of the process of accepting a formal invitation to serve.

UT Tyler relies on the personal and professional integrity of individual external reviewers, expects them to be sensitive to potential conflicts of interest in the review process, and assumes reviewers will act accordingly. If it is discovered that a conflict of interest situation may have affected the external program review, the Provost and Graduate School Dean may initiate further program evaluation to determine the validity of the original findings of the external reviewer.

As examples, an evaluator would have a conflict of interest if the individual

- Is employed at a Texas higher education institution;
- has been a consultant at UT Tyler within the last ten years;
- has been an employee of UT Tyler or any UT System higher education institution;
- has been a candidate for employment at UT Tyler within the last ten years;
- is a graduate of UT Tyler;
- has a close personal or familial relationship with persons at UT Tyler;
- has a strong bias regarding UT Tyler;
- has any other relationship that could serve as an impediment to rendering an impartial, objective professional judgment regarding the program evaluation.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge that I have read the *UT Tyler Ethical Obligations of External Reviewers* Policy and my signature below affirms that I am eligible to serve as an external reviewer for the

_____, without conflict of interest as defined in the policy.

PROSPECTIVE EXTERNAL REVIEWER: _____ DATE: _____

I acknowledge that _____ meets required eligibility qualifications and no conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest exists.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR: _____ DATE: _____

DEPARTMENT CHAIR: _____ DATE: _____

COLLEGE/SCHOOL DEAN: _____ DATE: _____