

FAQ's about Technical Committees and the PDC Process

1. Who is involved with the PDC proposal review process?

The Continuing Education Committee (CEC), technical committees and AIHA staff.

2. What are their various roles?

The CEC is responsible for ensuring that AIHce presents the best possible overall PDC Program for the attendees who participate in PDC sessions. This is achieved by:

- a) Ensuring the quality of the courses per the bi-level peer review process
- b) Achieving an optimal balance and composition of topics
- c) Working within the parameters of contracted meeting space limitations, and
- d) Striking the right balance of course offerings in relation to the projected attendance

The technical committees are responsible for reviewing PDC proposals under their topic area (committee sponsored and non-committee sponsored) for:

- a) Technical content and
- b) Rank ordering them for possible placement in the program

Technical committees should appoint a "PDC reviewer(s) who is responsible for completing the PDC review process on behalf of their committee. The PDC Reviewer will complete one PDC Review Sheet for each PDC proposal they receive and return them to AIHA by the established deadline.

AIHA Staff is responsible for coordinating the PDC submission and review process from advertising the Call for PDCs through peer review and program publication.

3. Why would a PDC proposal not be selected, if the technical committee gave it a high rating?

AIHce is in the fortunate position of having many more PDC proposals submitted than can possibly be accommodated at the AIHce. The up side to this is the competitive process encourages quality and creativity. The average PDC rating at the 2006 AIHce was a 4.09 on a 5.0 scale (where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.)

The downside is that many PDCs are not selected and some find this discouraging. Generally, only 55-65% of those submitted can be accepted. The fact is, PDCs are rarely declined as a result of the technical committee review process. You can help us to select the highest quality PDCs by providing honest, objective feedback in your reviews.

4. What criteria does the CEC use to accept/reject PDCs?

A variety of criteria are used:

- a) Quality of the PDC proposal (complete, accurate, timely, relevant)
- b) Evaluations from the prior year (if a "repeat" PDC)
- c) Marketing data and attendance statistics (demand for the topic)
- d) Imbalance of courses in one area or similar content to another course
- e) Balance of committee PDCs and non-committee PDCs
- f) Balance of "repeat" PDCs and "new" PDCs
- g) Balance of introductory, intermediate, and advanced PDCs
- h) Scheduling conflict with instructor or resources
- i) Technical committee peer review
- j) Course rotation
- k) Other

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The CEC spends a full day and a half conducting their PDC review meeting, in addition to multiple hours of individual and team review prior to this meeting. An extensive array of documentation (reports, marketing surveys, evaluations, ratings, rankings, attendance stats, historical information, technical peer review sheets) is used by the CEC to assist in decision-making.

5. What is the background of CEC members? Shouldn't they be technical experts?

Members of the CEC come from a variety of backgrounds. Most are CIHs and many are CSPs. They can't be experts in all the areas that are represented by PDCs. That is why the CEC relies on technical committees for one phase of the review process. The CEC is more concerned with the quality of the educational experience in terms of student needs, consistency and quality of course materials, instructor qualifications and meeting stated course objectives. The CEC must also look at all the criteria listed in #4. The CEC functions in a manner that is very similar to how the Permanent Conference Committee (PCC) works with technical committees to build the AIHce Technical Program.

6. Why are some PDCs listed as "committee sponsored" when the committee has not been involved?

- a) Sometimes, the person submitting the PDC proposal checks off that the PDC is "committee sponsored" when it is not. (A definition is provided below at #7, on the electronic submission form and in the *Call for PDCs* so a determination can be made.)
- b) Because of this, we ask Technical Committees to double check the committee "sponsorship" listing when they provide a technical review of proposals under their topic category. Committees are asked to complete a Technical Committee PDC Review Sheet – which specifically asks for this information. If the form comes back, and the committee reviewer(s) deny sponsorship, then staff removes "committee sponsorship" from the PDC listing. If the Technical Committee Review Sheet comes back with the committee reviewer(s) agreement or indication that the PDC is "committee sponsored" then we list it that way.

Note: In the case of multiple PDC reviewers from one committee – all must agree that the PDC is committee sponsored. This is where staff has gotten into trouble in the past. PDCs used to be listed as "committee sponsored" as long as one PDC reviewer thought it was. Again, now all reviewers must agree and submit consistent Technical Committee Review Sheets before a PDC will be listed as "committee sponsored."

- c) For some reason – sometimes none of these "checks" is foolproof. Sometimes technical committees check-off "sponsorship" when they simply "like" the PDC. That does not constitute sponsorship. Sometimes a committee reviewer does not know that the PDC is committee sponsored so they don't check it off when they should. In either case – *staff is only as good as the information they get.*

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7. What criteria must be met in order for a PDC to be listed as “committee sponsored?”

The following conditions must be met:

- a) Members of the committee must produce the PDC.
- b) The sponsorship decision was determined at a committee meeting (usually at AIHce) or a conference call and has been documented in the committee minutes.
- c) One person cannot decree sponsorship.
- d) Committees can't elect to sponsor courses once they get a review packet and the course “looks good.”

In essence, the committee as a group, and with consensus, has agreed in advance of the August 15th submission deadline to endorse the proposed course.

Once accepted, all PDCs are classified and posted under subject categories for promotion on the AIHce website and in the Advance Program. Some are “committee sponsored” and some are not. Committees sometimes think that just a listing under the committee's topic category means their committee sponsors it. This may or may not be the case - - as outlined above in #6 and #7.

8. How are “non-committee” PDCs obtained?

The Call for PDCs is advertised through many vehicles such as the Synergist, AIHce website, and various mailing lists. It is an open submission process, as with the AIHce technical program. This is to encourage new ideas, diversity of thought, and creativity.

9. Doesn't that compete with committee PDCs?

Yes – to some extent it does. However, the majority of PDCs are from AIHA committees, and the CEC strives to maintain that edge. Additionally, attendees like having a PDC selection that encompasses both committee and non-committee sponsored PDCs.

10. If PDCs are not selected, can the committee find out the reason why?

Yes. “non-select letters” all include a brief rationale for the decision and are sent to the individual who submitted the proposal (primary instructor). In that letter, we encourage the primary instructor to notify all involved parties, including committee chairs, vice chairs, etc. If the primary instructor would like amplification of the reason for the rejection, the AIHce PDC Coordinator can always be contacted. Remember, we are in the fortunate position of having many more PDC proposals submitted than can possibly be accommodated at the AIHce.

11. It is discouraging to have a PDC rejected after spending the time needed to make sure it's a quality proposal and course.

We understand and regret any frustration you may experience through the PDC process. Although you will need to ensure that you are submitting a quality proposal, we suggest that you not spend a lot of time on course development and course presentation until your PDC has been accepted. This will help to minimize your investment in producing your PDC until you know for a fact it's been accepted. Additionally, if your PDC is not accepted one year, that does not mean it won't be accepted the following year.

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12. Why is the cycle for PDC review “so tight” in the eyes of some?

Dates for peer review are based upon juggling the needs of the following audiences:

- a) Providing time to promote the new Call for PDCs, update the submission site, and allow time to for instructors to prepare new submissions
- b) Providing time for a bi-level peer review process involving technical committees and CEC
- c) Providing time for staff to process and prepare proposals for review
- d) Allowing time to meet print and production schedules
- e) Allowing time to properly promote the AIHce program and receive registrations
- f) Allowing time to communicate PDC space and logistical data to facilities

Note: Beginning in 2004 and since, AIHA staff was able to add one full week to the technical committee review process creating an unprecedented 3 weeks to complete their part of the process. The average PDC review “workload” is 6 PDCs/committee (some have more, some have less).

12. How is the maximum number of students determined? Why are some PDCs listed as “sold out” when it appears that the room can clearly accommodate more students?

The instructor determines the “course limit” for their PDC. This information is received on each PDC submission. Instructors have varying reasons for selecting the number of students they can successfully teach in their course.

13. Why are some PDCs cancelled prior to the conference?

Some PDCs must be cancelled due to low attendance. The average PDC attendance is 32. If a PDC has fewer than 10 people after the “early-bird” deadline has passed, it must be cancelled. AIHce cannot afford to run courses that are this small. We have found, through years of experience and registration data collected that once a course has been “on the market” for 4 months (since December), without generating sufficient attendance, adding additional time (3-4 weeks) does not produce results.

One month prior to AIHce, registration is shut down so that the registrar can prepare for on-site registration. There is no registration taking place in the last 4 weeks prior to the AIHce. Years of statistical tracking also shows that very little registration takes place on site.

AIHce sends instructors a “low registration alert” 3 weeks prior to the early-bird deadline. This gives instructors and committees a chance to informally network to potentially encourage their colleagues to enroll. Depending on the effort made by the instructor/committee, that can produce results.

14. Can technical committees submit a progressive series of PDCs for consideration as a “certificate program?”

After careful thought and consideration, the CEC has decided this would not be in the best interests of the overall PDC program. Because topic interests can shift remarkably from year to year, “locking up” PDC slots with permanent certificates makes it difficult to program the most timely, cutting-edge array of courses for attendees. This would be especially true as the number of requested “certificates” would likely expand if the concept was introduced.

Plus, there would be no guarantee, from year to year that “certificate program PDCs” would be presented. The same quality and attendance standards would need to be met as non-certificate PDCs.

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15. Isn't there already a Management Certificate Program?

Yes. However, this program was developed from an original curriculum created when the AIHA Board hired a consultant to help program the now defunct two week Yale University Management Institute. The original concept for the Yale Management Institute was to offer industrial hygienists a more business oriented curriculum that many in the scientific fields may not have experienced in their formal education or practical work experience. The AIHA Board wanted to reformat their investment in management training and an AIHce management certificate program was created. It is taught by non-member, management consultants who are not in the IH/OEHS profession.

16. What would you suggest if a technical committee is interested in submitting a few related PDCs?

Talk to AIHA's Manager of Continuing Education. She can advise you of the best potential number of PDCs to submit, based upon recent and historical PDC marketing and attendance data. Keep in mind that all PDC proposals go through a bi-level peer review process and there are no guarantees of acceptance.

17. Do you have any suggestions that would make the PDC review and acceptance process even better for committees?

Yes – we have a few suggestions.

- a) Decide what PDCs your committee would like to do at the prior year's AIHce committee meeting
- b) Request staff assistance prior to August 15 in determining a realistic number of PDCs proposals to submit, based upon marketing data and other metrics.
- c) Decide also – who your "PDC reviewer(s)" will be (just as you decide who your session arranger will be).
- d) Make sure your committee reps read past PDC evaluations from attendees and auditors before re-submitting
- e) If CEC feedback has been supplied in a letter – make sure it's addressed in your next proposal
- f) Make sure you follow the instructions on the proposal, and meet the **August 15** deadline. A schedule of various deadlines and milestones are listed below:

AIHce 2008 Schedule of Various Deadlines/Milestones

Note: the deadlines and/or milestones are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>
8/15/07	Deadline for receipt of PDC proposals
8/24/07	PDC packets sent to TC reviewers
9/17/07	Review sheets due back to AIHA
9/28/07	CEC review meeting
10/5/07	Notification letters sent to submitters
12/31/07	Audio Visual and Room setup forms due (<i>Newly Advanced</i>)
3/31/08	Handouts for reproduction by AIHA due (paper & digital originals)
4/11/08	Final instructor additions/changes/deletions due
4/18/08	Review copies of handouts due (instructor produced sets)

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Additional Assistance and Support

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