

## Compensation and Condonement

### Engineering Council response to proposed accreditation regulations

Thank you for taking the time to gather and share with us views on the Engineering Council's new rules regarding compensation and condonement.

To provide some context, we have updated previous guidance and enhanced the status to rules to ensure consistency in response to concerns expressed by universities who have been experienced an inconsistent approach amongst PEIs, as well as concerns expressed by accreditors and PEI accreditation teams. Feedback from some universities highlighted that Engineering Council guidance related to compensation and condonement was being applied inconsistently by different accreditation panels and PEI committees, which led us to consider whether the guidance should be strengthened by translating it into rules. Concerns were raised by PEI staff and volunteers due to UK universities' regulations increasingly permitting awarding of degrees to students who had failed to pass one or more element of the programme, which would enable students to graduate without having met in full the required learning outcomes for an accredited degree. A significant piece of work was undertaken, by a working group comprised primarily of academics, to consider how best this issue should be addressed resulting in the introduction of new [rules](#) and associated [guidance](#).

As the regulator of the UK engineering profession it is our responsibility to set the standard for accredited engineering degrees. Our longstanding guidance on compensation and condonement has prohibited condonement but permitted some compensation, with the aim of ensuring that graduates of accredited degrees will have achieved all the required learning outcomes. With increasingly flexible approaches to student progression within some UK universities it is important that the engineering profession can continue to be confident that this is the case.

Informal conversations with representatives of regulatory and professional bodies in other professions prior to development of the new rules confirmed that university departments have been able to adhere to rules set by professions that do not permit any compensation or condonement. However, the engineering profession has sought to retain the flexibility of allowing some compensation.

It was recognised that to permit some compensation it was necessary to set a credit limit and that due to variability in programme design the limit set may have greater impact for some programmes than others. There was significant discussion on what the credit limit should be and members of the Engineering Accreditation Board (including academics) were invited to express their views, resulting in agreement on the limits now set out in the rules. Your response suggests that the reference to credits may be problematic within an international context; our understanding is that it is unusual for universities outside the UK to permit compensation.

Other potential issues set out in your feedback are likely to depend upon the approaches taken by individual universities and Departments. As a regulator we would not seek to prescribe how engineering Departments ensure that accredited degrees adhere to our rules, it is for individual universities and Departments to make decisions on matters such as:

- Resit policy (including policies for extenuating circumstances).
- Programme design and credit awards for components of degrees.
- Whether to award an alternative non-accredited degree to students who do not achieve the required credits, and how the availability and (lack of) accreditation status of these awards is communicated.

Nevertheless, if you think there might be merit in the Engineering Council and/or EPC publishing any additional guidance, we would be happy to discuss this with you.

The [Academic Courses Accreditation Database \(ACAD\)](#) on which details of all accredited degree are published, is accompanied by explanatory notes. If you have evidence that universities are regularly awarding students who enrolled on accredited degrees with alternative non-accredited degrees it might be useful for us to consider adding some brief explanatory text.

To allow university Departments time to make or agree any changes necessary an implementation period has been agreed as follows:

These requirements will apply to all students joining the first year of an accredited degree programme from September 2022. There is no requirement or expectation that assessment regulations will be changed for students who enrolled on an accredited degree programme before this date. A phased implementation will be allowed whereby new accreditations must comply from the 2022 implementation date, but existing accreditations will be allowed to continue as they were but must align from the point of reaccreditation. For accreditation visits from September 2019 until September 2022 HEIs will have the option to either change their regulations to conform with the current guidance (section 3 of the [Guidance Note on Academic Accreditation](#)) and then change them again to conform to the new rules by September 2022, or to change their regulations straight away to comply with the new rules in advance of their enforcement.

It is proposed that the rules be reviewed after the 2019-2020 academic year, so that any issues identified within the first year following publication can be considered. We are not proposing to change the rules unless any significant problems come to light, as we recognise that changes may cause confusion for university Departments and accreditors. Additions may be made to the guidance at any time should a need be agreed. If you are happy for us to do so we would like to note your feedback for future consideration and share it with members of the Engineering Accreditation Board.