



Compensation and Condonement

Engineering Professors' Council Response to proposed accreditation regulations

The updated compensation and condonement rules are welcomed for their improved clarity. These terms are regularly defined differently by the various higher education establishments. The Engineering Professors' Council welcome these changes as we believe that this clarity will aid engineering departments in ensuring that the requirements are consistently implemented by all PEI's and all universities so there is a level playing field. That said, there are a number of issues of concern.

The regulations have been articulated in terms of academic credits only and this may be problematic for some higher education institutions. Academic credits are commonly one credit for 10 hours of student work. However, this is not the case for many international higher education partners and as a result this may make it problematic for HEIs who are working to accredit international delivery of their programmes.

The regulations state a maximum value of credits for which compensation is permissible. Many HEIs run their programmes using a common 300-hour (30 credit) model for their programmes. These institutions would be at a disadvantage in relation to those institutions which have retained smaller curriculum delivery blocks as this would mean that no academic modules/units could be compensated. While it is possible to make these administrative changes to academic programmes, this would consume academic time and effort that could otherwise be used in support of curriculum improvement initiatives and student support. Additionally, many HEIs are choosing to transition to modules larger than 30 credits to facilitate novel methods of teaching and facilitate large multi-disciplinary projects, and so the maximum compensation rule would inhibit these innovations in engineering education.

For those students who have exhausted all of their resit opportunities, it may be that the student has met the HEI standards for the award of a degree, however, they have not met the accreditation standard. To mitigate for this, many HEIs have uncredited degree titles as a fall-back for these students. This situation has the potential to cause problems for HEIs as regular reviews of degree titles will pick up these titles and suggest that they be removed from the books due to their inactivity (and low outcomes). In addition, it can be particularly difficult for HEIs to articulate the situation to students who may not have fully understood the importance of accreditation, the benefits of an accredited programme or their regulations. There are already examples of students attempting to sue HEIs after they have been awarded an unaccredited degree title. Their

argument is that they chose to study on an accredited programme and that they did not apply to study the course with the unaccredited programme title. Additional support is needed from the Engineering Council and the professional engineering institutions in order to ensure that the situation is made clear to incoming students and that this form of words will protect HEIs from this type of legal action.

It should be recognised that compensation and condonement rules mean that there is additional burden on academics and students on engineering programmes in comparison with other subjects due to the increased number of resits to enable students to reach the accredited programme standards.

Many HEI regulations will permit students to be awarded a degree based on a set of graduate learning outcomes. As a consequence, bespoke regulations will be needed for the majority of Engineering departments wishing to offer and award accredited degree programmes. This will likely mean that engineering departments are administratively less well supported at examination boards and external examiner reviews as these exceptions to the HEI regulations will need to be checked manually.

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These comments have been compiled on behalf of the EPC Board by Dr Georgina Harris as a reflection of an opinion-gathering exercise among the EPC membership in response to a prompt from Catherine Elliott of the Engineering Council to respond to proposed changes: <http://epc.ac.uk/guest-blog-compensation-and-condonement-incoming-rules-for-accredited-degrees/>. This activity was supported by a team of board members, Professor Lisa Brodie, Professor Dave Allan and Professor Colin Turner. For further information, please contact Johnny Rich, Chief Executive, EPC (j.rich@epc.ac.uk). This commentary was submitted to the Engineering Council at accreditation@engc.org.uk.