

EPC Protocol for Consultations

1 Background

- 1.1 The EPC responds to a variety of consultations from Government, the funding councils and other stakeholders. The response should be representative of the views and interests of all the membership. However, determining those views within the timeframe of the consultation is not always possible in a systematic way. As a result, the EPC Executive tends to determine on an ad hoc basis what internal process is feasible to develop the consultation response within the time available.
- 1.2 This approach has the benefit of flexibility, allowing a broad internal consultation when appropriate and possible, while also allowing a speedy response when necessary. However, it also has disadvantages: the Executive may tend to opt for easier and quicker processes in preference to more representative ones; the absence of a clear rationale behind the process used undermines the accountability of the Executive; and, most importantly, an ad hoc consultation process is less inclusive of the wider membership and misses an opportunity for engagement on issues of relevance to them.

2 Proposed changes

- 2.1 The EPC Protocol for Consultations allows both the flexibility required for quick responses when necessary, but also encourages wider accountability and representation whenever practical.

3 Notifying members

- 3.1 The EPC Executive will monitor consultation calls and public inquiries and, when a consultation is deemed to be relevant, they will notify members that the EPC is preparing a response (or has chosen not to).
- 3.2 Notification of all such consultations shall be published on the website. The listing shall include the organisation conducting the consultation, a brief descriptive line (where necessary), the official deadline, the internal consultation process (see figure below), any internal deadlines that are part of that process, and instructions/links for members to contribute to the consultation.
- 3.3 Notification of all such consultations will also be published in the EPC Bulletin.

4 Internal consultation process

- 4.1 The EPC will follow one of four pathways outlined below to prepare its consultation response. The EPC Executive will decide which pathway to use depending on the timing and scope of the consultation (see figure below).
- 4.2 The Executive will use the following criteria to determine which pathway to use for any given consultation:
 - 4.2.1 The presumed pathway should always involve the widest possible internal consultation subject to the time available.
 - 4.2.2 The presumed pathway may be downgraded if:
 - the subject of the consultation is of only indirect consequence to the interests of engineering academia;
 - the views of the membership in relation to the subject of the consultation have already been made clear (for example, in response to a separate recent consultation);
 - in the clear view of the Executive, the subject of the consultation is sufficiently uncontroversial or the EPC's position is already sufficiently evident that a wider internal consultation would be unlikely to provide new insight.
- 4.3 The Executive's decisions on consultation pathways will be reported to the Committee.

Consultation invitation received				
Executive determines pathway				
Pathway	Full consultation	Representative consultation	Executive response	No collective response
Timing required	At least 6 weeks	4 to 6 weeks	Less than 4 weeks	Any
Contributors	All members of the EPC and EAN	EPC Committee	Executive and invited individuals (e.g. President) only	None
Process	<p>As well as the notification as outlined above, a mailing will be sent to all Council members (i.e. named member representatives in each institution) inviting responses to the consultation. This will also be distributed through the Engineering Academic Network and to the Committee, Sub-Committees and Sectoral Group heads.</p> <p>Opinions will usually be invited through an online survey, the submission of comments by email, or occasionally through an event such as a workshop or seminar. Surveys will be open for not less than 10 days.</p> <p>The Executive will collate responses and compile a draft response, which will be submitted to the Committee and any relevant sub-committees for discussion and approval.</p>	<p>The Executive will invite comments from members of the Committee. Where the Consultation is relevant to a specific sub-Committee, its members will also be invited to comment. If a meeting of the Committee or Sub-Committee is scheduled during the consultation period, it will be discussed during the meeting.</p> <p>The Executive will collate responses and compile a draft response, which, subject to the agreement of the Committee, will either be submitted directly or approved by the President before submission.</p>	<p>The Executive will draft a response, which will either be submitted directly or approved by the President before submission.</p>	<p>Should the Executive determine that a consultation is relevant but that it does not merit a collective response from the EPC, the membership will be notified as above and provided with details for making individual submissions.</p>