



EPC Bulletin | July 2019 |

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Have you checked out what the EPC achieved in the last year? It has been another busy year for EPC in what continues to be an uncertain landscape: Brexit, degree inflation, tuition fees, fair (transparent) admissions, TEF... Please do take a look at our [Annual Review](#) to see how the EPC served you in 2018/19.

The need for EPC to represent the views of the entire engineering community within HE has never been more crucial. One way we do this is through consultation responses to policy issues and our work is continuing through the summer together with colleagues across the engineering sector (through E4E) to develop a response to the DfE consultation on improving higher technical education.

Other key work in progress is on the formalising of a Professional Engineering Institution and Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education working group – chaired by EPC and with Engineering Council as the secretariat – resulting from the EPC's influential degree apprenticeships work and the publication of [Experience Enhanced](#). This is ground-breaking work in which the EPC plays a pivotal role in bringing the two parties together to ensure degree apprenticeships are fit for purpose.

You won't be surprised to know that planning for next year's Congress began as soon as this year's ended and we're thrilled to announce that the EPC Annual Congress 2020 will be held at Sheffield Hallam University following a competitive open bidding process. We are also looking forward to our Autumn events: the EPC Recruitment and Admissions Forum, to be held for the first time in Wales at UWTSD, Swansea, and a major pedagogical conference as part of our New Approaches initiative (watch this space).

Have a great summer break.

EPC news

EPC Annual Congress

It is our pleasure to announce that the EPC Annual Congress 2020 will be held at Sheffield Hallam University. The dates will be announced in the autumn. Congratulations also to UWE, which will host Congress in 2021.

For those of you not lucky enough to attend EPC Annual Congress 2019, a brief summary of proceedings is now available on the [EPC website](#). Delegates will have now received a password-protected link to the [reports and slides](#) which are available online. If you attended Congress but haven't received an email, please contact [the EPC Executive](#). If you would like to access these materials but didn't attend, please check the [delegate list](#) to see who, if anyone, attended from your university. Think you're missing out? Then join us for next year's Congress at Sheffield Hallam.

EXPERIENCE ENHANCED: improving engineering degree apprenticeships

The EPC Engineering Education, Employability and Skills (EEES) Committee continues to develop our work on degree apprenticeships. A meeting between the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and PEIs, hosted by the Engineering Council and chaired by the EPC, was held in June to facilitate closer alignment with professional standards and closer working relationships going forwards. The PEIs were well represented and it was a positive meeting. Among the outcomes of the meeting was that the dialogue would now remain open through regular meetings, facilitated by the EPC. The next meeting is planned for the Autumn.

All recommendations, including a full set of responses from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), can be viewed on the [EPC website](#).

ENGINEERING ETHICS: A ten-year vision

Following the Conference that the EPC was pleased to organise with partners led by [IDEA](#) at Leeds University, the team at IDEA has now distilled the discussion into a draft vision document for embedding ethics in engineering. [Read it here](#) and please take a few moments to [share your feedback](#) in the consultation exercise. So many of our members share the vision of Engineering being a force for good, it is important to work together to make change positive.

ACCREDITATION REVIEW: Engineering Council

Following the success of our submission to the Engineering Council, Professor Lisa Brodie of UWE has been appointed to represent the EPC on the Engineering Council's accreditation review Steering Group. Additionally, our call for engineering academics who have experience of having their programmes accredited has led us to nominate a group of experts to in take part in some more in-depth focus groups in July.

We have also received many comments in relation to Engineering Council's compensation and condonement policy update and will be liaising with members to feed back to the Engineering Council in due course.

Upcoming events

EPC EVENT: RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS FORUM 2019: 27th November 2019

The [2019 Recruitment and Admissions Forum](#) will be held at University of Wales Trinity St David, Swansea, on 27th November 2019. The EPC's annual Recruitment and Admissions Forum is the must-attend event for staff at all levels in engineering departments who share the responsibility for attracting, selecting, admitting and retaining students. [Book your place now](#).

Highlights of this year's programme include:

- New data and analysis on student admissions patterns in Engineering, revealing previously unexplored trends (drawn from Dr Tim Bullough's ground-breaking research, which he will present).
- Professor Vikki Boliver, whose work on context admissions has been highly influential on OfS's guidance on access.
- The latest findings from EPC's exclusive Enrolment Survey: the first snapshot of 2019/20 recruitment.

Following its success in 2018, delegates are now invited to submit, share and network over recruitment and admissions posters. Poster presentation should focus on one of the four key strands of the forum:

- ATTRACTION
- ADMISSIONS
- RECRUITMENT
- RETENTION

The delegate fee (£99 non-EPC members, £75 members) will be waived for one delegate per poster where poster submissions are successful. Note that space is limited and submission is not a guarantee of acceptance. [Submit your poster presentation outline now!](#)

For more details and to reserve your space, with or without a poster, please visit our [booking site](#).

EPC EVENT: New Approaches to Engineering Education 2019: November 2019

Two years on from the EPC's landmark international conference, held in partnership with the IET, and all the work on innovative pedagogies that has spun off since then, the IET is hosting a new conference showcasing exemplars of new approaches through Engineering HE.

The exact date will be confirmed shortly and there will be an open call for papers (case studies of innovative pedagogical practice). Watch this space.

EPC SECTORAL GROUP EVENTS: ICMR 2019, 10th – 12th September 2019

The 17th International Conference on Manufacturing Research (ICMR 2019) incorporating the 34th National Conference on Manufacturing Research will be held from 10th- 12th September 2019 at Queen's University Belfast. For more information and to register for the event, please visit the [EPC website](#).

EPC SECTORAL GROUP EVENTS: ACED ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 7th – 8th November 2019

This year's ACED annual 2-day conference will be hosted by Coventry University. Please save the date. Further information will be posted on the [EPC website](#) once available.

EPC SECTORAL GROUP EVENTS: AAU ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 14th – 15th December 2019

The 14th Annual AAU Conference will be held in December in Dubai as part of the Multiphysics Conference on Saturday 14 – Sunday 15 Dec 2019 in Dubai. The Aerospace Sectoral Group / the Association of Aerospace Universities will be sponsoring the Aerospace session. Further information will be posted on the [EPC website](#) once available.

EPC COMMUNITY EVENTS: UK and Ireland Engineering Education Research Network Annual Symposium, Monday 16th & Tuesday 17th December, 2019

The UK & Ireland EERN are pleased to announce their 7th Annual Symposium – Excellence in

Engineering Education for the 21st Century: The Role of Engineering Education Research – to be hosted by WMG & the School of Engineering, University of Warwick in December this year.

Please see the [EPC website](#) for more information.

The 2018 Conference Proceedings are available on the 'events' tab of the [RAEng / HE Focus website](#).

In the news

NEW BROOMS

As you may have noticed, we have a new Prime Minister which means the EPC has a new cast of characters to engage with on its members' behalf.

Boris Johnson has reinstated his brother, Jo, as Universities Minister. Johnson – Jo, that is – was removed from the post last year by Theresa May over his opposition to setting up the Augar Review. He was replaced by Sam Gyimah, who then resigned a few months ago over May's line on Brexit and her opposition to a second referendum. Gyimah was then replaced by Chris Skidmore – keeping up? – who also held a temporary brief as an Energy Minister (covering for maternity) and as the Government's champion for engineering).

Johnson – Jo, that is – was the Universities Minister who introduced TEF, which is now under review by Dame Shirley Pearce, who may recommend changes. It will be interesting to see how that plays out, but, given that Johnson – Jo, that is – didn't think the Augar Review was necessary, he's unlikely to pursue its recommendations in full. Johnson – Jo, that is – also triggered KEF, so doubts about its utility are likely to be ignored. He's also been a staunch champion of the benefits of international students, which given that (unlike all other Universities Ministers since David Willetts) he will sit in Cabinet, bodes well given that the room is not otherwise likely to be pro-immigration.

Gavin Williamson, meanwhile, is the new Secretary of State for education. He is the former Chief Whip who kept a tarantula on his desk. He was also sacked just weeks into his tenure as Defence Secretary for leaking security secrets from Cabinet.

The new Business, Industrial Strategy & Energy Secretary is Andrea Leadsom, erstwhile PM hopeful, arch Brexiteer and Leader of the House who, when she first became an Energy Minister said she needed to be convinced climate change is real.

AUGAR REVIEW

The Government-commissioned review of Post-18 education in England, known as the [Augar Review](#), was published in May. The review was a thorough analysis, containing 53 recommendations. Although the review is not a White Paper (i.e. a plan for legislation), or even a consultation document, there are some areas worth highlighting.

Of gravest concern to the EPC though is the fee cut: the Review recommends a cut in the headline tuition fee from £9,250 to £7,500. Obviously, for most engineering departments, that's way below the cost of delivery per student. However, the Review also recommends that the total investment in the HE sector remains the same – topped up by teaching grants – albeit frozen for the next few years.

It argues that this will be manageable because there is a demographic uplift in the number of 18-year olds coming until 2025. The increased economies of scale should mitigate the freeze. But, we note that there are potential drops in international and EU students following the reputational fallout from Brexit. Plus, some universities financial projections based on growth will be over-optimistic.

The Review does not envisage that top-up grants are evenly spread. Courses with good employment outcomes – measured, for the most part, in terms of salaries – would receive far bigger top-ups than those that result in less easily measured value. This appears to be good news for Engineering, which is specifically cited as a discipline where there are skills shortages and costs are recognised as high, and bad news for Creative Arts subjects which get a lot of stick for producing many graduates without clear earnings premiums.

But it's not as simple as that. Unless the top-up for Engineering is high enough to reflect the additional cost of teaching, we may have a situation where cheaper courses can still yield a margin on the basis of lower fees, but expensive ones not only cannot contribute to institutional overheads, but they can't even pay for themselves. The commercial pressure will be to axe the expensive courses and do exactly the opposite of what the Review hopes to achieve.

Other areas of concern are the recommendations around level 4 and 5, interim qualifications, disadvantaged students, foundation courses and entry requirements.

For a full analysis by our Chief Executive, Johnny Rich, please see the [EPC website](#).

GRADE INFLATION

A new release of outcomes data from the Office for Students (OfS) aimed at calling out 'grade inflation' has added fuel to the media fire surrounding the 'soaring' number of first-class degrees. In our response to the [UKSCQA degree classification consultation](#) earlier this year, the EPC highlighted that the evidence of improvement in teaching (and the development of pedagogy in UK universities) is much stronger than the evidence for grade inflation. There are many reasons not addressed by OfS for degree outcome uplift, not least the massive expansion of student numbers in the last 20 years (leading to a less socially constrained pool of students); greater awareness of student support needs; the increased cost of higher education to students; more incentivised and focused students; and improved teaching in both schools and universities.

An [EPC data blog](#) looking at the latest HESA data, highlights comparative changes in engineering degree outcomes to see if engineering is different from other subjects.

ADMISSIONS REVIEW

A major review of university admissions has been announced this week, to ensure they are fair, transparent and operating in the best interests of students. Drawing on admissions practice from across the UK, this review will collect evidence on how the current system works and identify the challenges relating to offer making. It will recommend best practice to drive improvements in the admissions system to the benefit of different types of university applicant and consider how the interests of students can best be served.

While UCAS confirmed at last year's EPC Recruitment and Admissions Forum that unconditional offer making is seemingly not a problem in engineering, this will be a key practice of interest.

If you share the responsibility for attracting, selecting, admitting and retaining students in your university, don't miss the must-attend 2019 [EPC Recruitment and Admissions Forum](#) which will be held at University of Wales Trinity St David, Swansea, on 27th November 2019.

Consultations

STANDARDS REVIEW: Engineering Council

The Engineering Council's standards review includes the Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes (AHEP) document and learning outcomes for accreditation and the broadening of the process for recognition of apprenticeships to include higher apprenticeships (including degree apprenticeships).

As well as seeking feedback on the draft of Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes (AHEP) through the online Standards review consultation the Engineering Council are seeking feedback via the online consultation on the Approval and Accreditation of Qualifications and Apprenticeships Handbook (AAQAH) which will probably be of interest to those of you following the EPC's Experience Enhanced work; and the UK Standard for Professional Engineering Competence (UK-SPEC).

The EPC is currently drafting a representative response, which you can contribute to by contacting [Georgina Harris](#) directly. The Engineering Council [online consultation](#) is currently open until 2nd August and you are encouraged to comment if you can.

IMPROVING HIGHER TECHNICAL EDUCATION: Department for Education

The Department for Education has opened [a consultation on improving the quality of classroom-based higher technical education](#) and are collecting views on a new system to make it clearer which higher technical qualifications provide the skills employers want; work to recognise and develop high-quality provision of higher technical education; and to make higher technical education a more positive and popular choice by raising awareness and understanding of it among potential students and employers. The EPC will be responding to the consultation and is currently working with E4E to consider the best approach. The consultation closes on 29th September 2019.

You can read EPC Protocol for Consultations [here](#).

Opportunities

CALL FOR SHORT PAPERS: UK and Ireland EERN Annual Symposium

Building on the success of their previous annual symposium and colloquium the UK & Ireland EERN invites colleagues to submit extended abstracts for presentation at the 2019 Annual Symposium. This year they are inviting colleagues to submit short papers of between 1,500 and 2,500 words. All papers will be independently and anonymously reviewed by two colleagues. Unlike previous years we will be publishing the Conference Findings at the event itself, hence all accepted papers will be included in the findings.

For more information, please see the [EPC website](#).

ENHANCE SURVEY ON ENGINEERING EDUCATION: help shape the engineering curriculum

You are invited to take part in the project ENHANCE survey on engineering education. The project seeks to optimise the education of the next generation of engineers so that they can tackle humanitarian challenges, and thereby transform their own communities.

By taking part in this study you can influence and shape the engineering curriculum and models of engineering education in order to produce the talent needed and you can help us develop effective graduate engineering programmes in the Asian region (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam).

The survey will take 10 - 20 minutes to complete. For a full-text version of the invitation, and to complete the survey, please see the [EPC website](#).



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