

Engineering recruitment back on track

2013-14 figures assuage fears of course closures



The number of students starting engineering courses has recovered after sharp falls in recruitment last year, a survey indicates, easing fears that some departments might close.

Forty-six out of 82 university engineering departments that responded to an Engineering Professors' Council poll say that their intake of home and European Union undergraduates has increased in 2013-14, with about half of those schools recording growth of at least 10 per cent.

Student numbers have fallen at only 19 departments associated with the council and 17 say recruitment levels are about the same.

Recruitment of non-EU undergraduate as well as home and international postgraduate engineering students also improved at many departments this year after a **dramatic slump in demand in 2012-13**, according to the data, which were published at a conference held at the Institution of Civil Engineers in London on 4 November.

At 33 of the 82 departments, non-EU undergraduate numbers have risen, compared with only 10 where numbers have dipped, says the poll – one of the earliest indications of 2013-14 recruitment levels.

Domestic postgraduate numbers climbed at 26 departments (declining at only 14) out of 83 respondents, while international postgraduate numbers have risen at 30 (falling at 18).

The recruitment upturn, particularly for international postgraduates, was welcomed by engineering academics who had expressed fears that last year's dip in recruitment might force many courses to close.

'Welcome recovery'

Susan Kay, executive director of the council, said the figures represented a "welcome recovery" after disappointing recruitment in 2012-13 – the first year in which £9,000 tuition fees were charged.

"There are some marked increases in home and EU undergraduates, possibly as students seek programmes with good employment prospects," Ms Kay said.

Higher recruitment on taught postgraduate courses was also good news, but many departments remained under pressure, she added.

"The situation in [taught postgraduate courses] probably represents a return to the position pre-2011, rather than a net increase overall," she said.

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