

Responding to this Consultation

Responses to this consultation should be sent via the website www.bis.gov.uk/HEreform by 27 October 2011 – the response form is available at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LTNJCLL>. Alternatively a response can be submitted by email to HE.consultation@bis.gsi.gov.uk or by post to Simon Batchelor, Higher Education Directorate, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2 St Pauls Place, 125 Norfolk Street, Sheffield, S1 2FJ; Tel: 0114 207 5015. E-mail: HE.consultation@bis.gsi.gov.uk

Consultation Questions

- **Question 1:** Respondent details:
 - Name: Dr Piers Baker
 - Are you responding on behalf of an organisation? If so, which one?
The Engineering Professors' Council
 - What type of organisation is it? (e.g. HEI, FEC, Regulatory Body etc.)
The Engineering Professors' Council (EPC) provides a forum for senior academics responsible for engineering teaching and research in higher education. It has over 1600 members and represents virtually all of the universities in the UK which offer degrees in engineering.

Chapter 2: A single regulatory framework for provider designation for student support and HEFCE teaching grant

- **Question 8:** We welcome views on how flexible provision such as two year courses could be encouraged.

Industrial interaction and research-informed teaching are the bedrock of a high-quality higher education in engineering. Any institution running degrees which compressed three years of work into two would need to increase the annual fee commensurately in order to cover the cost of the extra teaching, particularly if staff are unable to generate the research income that they currently generate during the summer (when undergraduates are not resident). If staff were delivering teaching all year it is hard to see how maintaining interaction with industry and carrying out research could be maintained. Challenging and interesting undergraduate project work is also highly dependent on the range of industrial interactions most engineering academics nurture through the supposed 'vacations'. Given the intensity of engineering programmes, many students use the vacations for private study and often to gain experience working in industry. Two year degrees threaten this private study and more importantly threaten the ability of students to meet their learning outcomes because of the available time for study.

Two year degrees would also not be recognized outside the UK, regardless of learning outcomes achieved, because they would fail to meet the Bologna requirement for a 3-year first cycle degree. They would be seen as highly undesirable in the vital overseas market, as well by home/EU students looking to work for multinationals, or interested in other forms of mobility.

For these reasons the EPC would not wish to see two year degrees encouraged for engineering.

Chapter 4: Reforms to Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) and University Title (UT) criteria

- **Question 20:** Do you agree with our proposal to reduce the numbers criterion for university title to 1,000 full-time equivalent higher education students of which at least 750 are studying for a degree alongside a requirement that more than 50% FTE of an organisation's overall student body is studying HE? If you do not agree with this proposal could you please explain your reasons and also suggest an alternative proposal and why you think this would be better.

The overriding criterion should be meeting the established academic standards, not the size of the institution.

Additional comments

- **Question 23:** Do you have any other comments on any area of the document 'A new fit for purpose regulatory framework for the higher education sector'?

The key criterion should be quality of provision; it is essential to avoid new institutions setting up that would risk undermining the reputation of the UK HE sector.

For this reason, it is surprising that there is no reference to the QAA in the document.

Nor is there reference to accreditation, e.g. by related professional bodies where this applies, as it does for engineering; there would, for example, be advantage in requiring small monotechnics to state whether or not their programmes are accredited, where applicable, as part of the requirement for applying for degree-awarding powers / university title.