

Engineering Accreditation Board (EAB)

EAB Annual Report 2009

As required by the EAB's Terms of Reference, this report to the Board's constituent Institutions summarises EAB's activity during 2009, including visits undertaken, items discussed, decisions taken and documentation produced.

1. Introduction

The EAB met four times in 2009 – on 24 March, 23 June, 15 September and 8 December. These meetings were hosted by IMechE, IMarEST, ICE and BCS respectively. A key element of EAB's work this year has been directed towards process improvement and a consideration of the issues that affect the accreditation of an increasing range of HE provision.

A major Engineering Council conference 'Accreditation of engineering degree programmes – current requirements and future challenges' was held on 14 October 2009 at IMarEST, and this has helped to shape EAB's thinking.

2. Accreditation Visits

2.1. At each meeting, the recent visit reports were discussed, and new applications for accreditation visits received by the Secretariat were noted.

2.2. In 2009, a range of academic programmes were looked at during 10 EAB visits to the following Universities:

University visited	Date of visit (2009)	Participating PEIs	Number / level of programmes looked at
Southampton	10/11 February	*IMarEST, IMechE, *RAeS, RINA	7 (CEng)
Durham	18/19 February	IET, *IMechE, JBM	13 (CEng)
Leicester	3/4 March	IET, *IMechE, InstMC,	48 (CEng)
Cardiff	10/11 March	EI, *IET, IMechE	20 (CEng)
Bristol	17/18 March	*IED, IET, IMechE, JBM, *RAeS	4 (CEng)
Sheffield	12/13 May	*IET, *IMechE, IoM ³ *RAeS	7 (CEng)
Manchester NTEC	19/20 May	EI, *IET, *IMechE, IoM ³	1 (CEng)
Manchester	20/21 October	*IMechE, RAeS, *SOE	22 (CEng / IEng)
Exeter	10/11 November	*IMechE, IoM ³	9 (CEng)
Bath	9/10 December	*IET, *IMechE, InstMC, *RAeS	20 (CEng)

* Provided staff support on the visit

2.3. EAB noted the following visits and a review planned for 2010: to Newcastle University (January), University of Glasgow (February), University of Aberdeen (February), Loughborough University (March), Oxford (March – paper review) Newcastle University (April), Cranfield University (May) and City University (May).

Requests have also been received for two overseas visits to Egypt: British University of Egypt (BUE) and Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport (AASTMT)

During the past year there has been a significant increase in EAB activity and suggests that the joint accreditation approach is valued.

3. EAB documentation and website

3.1. In 2009, several new documents were produced in order to clarify various issues related to accreditation and EAB processes. Changes were also made to improve further some of the existing EAB documentation.

3.2. A new EAB document 'Chair's brief' was produced. This was to help chairs of EAB visits to ensure that the EAB visit was conducted as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The EAB Foundation Degrees Working Group developed a statement about the accreditation of Foundation Degrees that was subsequently discussed and approved by RSC, and published by the Engineering Council.

The EAB Distance Learning Working Group developed a guidance note on the accreditation of distance learning programmes that was subsequently discussed and approved by RSC, and published by the Engineering Council.

A new Engineering Council document 'Principles for assessing applications to waive the requirement to make an accreditation visit' provides guidance to members of RSC when considering applications from PEIs to waive the requirement to visit a provider. EAB contributed to this Engineering Council document and the final statement was noted by EAB.

3.3. Amendments were also made to the initial data form and report template. The EAB secretariat is currently reviewing all documentation to ensure administrative process improvement and, where possible reduction of the burden on HEIs.

3.4. The key changes to existing documentation and processes are as follows:

- Clarification to distinguish between the terms 'recommendation' and 'requirement' in EAB visit reports.
- A progress note has been added as a standing item on the EAB agenda. This helps members to note the progress from the time of the visit until the date the decision letter is finally sent to the HEI. This follows concerns raised at EAB about the length of time that could be taken to send the final decision letter. Long delays were likely to cause friction with the HEIs and make the EAB and the institutions involved in the visit appear unprofessional. Members agreed that as EAB has no control over the scheduling of institution committee meetings, an interim solution would be to manage expectations by informing the HEIs of committee meeting dates. Professor Bob Cryan, EAB Chairman wrote to all the

Chairmen of Accreditation Committees to ask for their support in any way possible to expedite the decision making process.

- The accreditation visit timetable was amended to include time for the Chairman's Introduction and brief Overview of visit.

Sharing of best practice

The EAB agenda includes a standing agenda item 'Update on EAB members' accreditation policy and practice. This gives members the opportunity to discuss developments in their own institutions and also exchange views on issues related to accreditation for example: charging for accreditation, data protection issues, and documentation.

EAB noted that there is a high level of conformity between EAB's processes and those set out in the European Standard and Guidance for Accreditation Agencies.

EAB asks HEIs to complete a feedback form following accreditation visits and below is a summary of the feedback received so far for the 2009 EAB visits;

Documentation

- All universities contacted the EAB for assistance with completion of the documentation prior to the visit. There was a range of responses with some HEIs finding the EAB documentation more difficult to complete and others finding it relatively easy to complete. The issues raised are being addressed by the EAB during the process improvement work.

Preparation for the visit

- All universities received the timetable for the visit in sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.

The visit

- All the universities visited either strongly agreed or tended to agree that the visit aims had been met in a well organised and constructive manner. Specific comments included:

"The EAB visit was well organised and ran smoothly despite one member having to pull out at the last minute. We see no major issues with organization or conduct of such EAB visits that require attention."

"A single EAB visit was extremely useful to our Department. To arrange separate visits would have very difficult to organise, in terms of staff and student availability on each visit day. Future developments towards a School of Engineering, and the provision of an increasingly diverse range of degree programmes, reinforce the benefits of an EAB approach."

Overall

In overall terms, the feedback received so far from the HEIs indicates that they were very satisfied with the visit they received.

4. Working Groups

4.1. Distance Learning Working Group

4.1.1. The Distance Learning Working Group met for the first time on 8 May 2009. The Group was formed following discussions at EAB on how to deal with the increasing number of programmes being put forward for accreditation by HEIs in which the mode of delivery is distance learning/remote learning. The Working Group was tasked with producing guidance for EAB member institutions, and was chaired by BCS representative, Professor Sunil Vadera. The Engineering Council guidance note on accreditation of distance learning programmes was approved by RSC and is now published on the Engineering Council Extranet.

4.2. Foundation Degree Working Group (FDWG)

4.2.1. The Foundation Degree Working Group (FDWG) was formed following discussions at EAB about the increasing number of Foundation Degrees (FDs) being put forward for accreditation. The Working Group discussed the issues surrounding FDs and produced a statement for member Institutions, building on previous RSC advice, encouraging them to consider FDs for accreditation. The Group was chaired by the ICE representative, Mr Brian Counter and the Engineering Council Statement has been published on the EAB website.

5. Other accreditation-related Issues

5.1. Charging for accreditation

5.1.1. Charging for accreditation was discussed by EAB on several occasions. Members noted that several Institutions were already charging or were looking to introduce a charge for accreditation in 2009/2010 in line with their business plans.

6. Presentations and other events

6.1. Engineering Council conference - Accreditation of engineering degree programmes – current requirements and future challenges

This successful conference, chaired by EAB Chairman Professor Bob Cryan, took place on 14 October 2009 at IMarEST.

The conference aimed to tackle the important issue of ensuring that students' education meets the standards set by the profession and equips them not only to be competent but also innovative and ground breaking.

Delegates heard a range of perspectives from the conference speakers, and there was much interesting discussion.

Discussions have begun about how best to take forward these issues.

The conference programme and the presentations are available on the Engineering Council website at www.engc.org.uk

Annex A

2009 EAB Membership

Prof Sunil Vadera	British Computer Society
Ms Elizabeth Friend	British Computer Society
Mr Alan Mosedale	Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
Ms Marie Dignan	Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
Dr Doug Harris	Energy Institute
Ms Kate Dunk	Energy Institute
Mr Simon Bennett	Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers
Dr Alistair Greig	Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology
Mr Ben Saunders	Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology
Dr Ken Strafford	Institute of Materials, Minerals & Mining
Mr Gordon Stewart	Institute of Materials, Minerals & Mining
Prof Geoff Roberts	Institute of Measurement & Control
Mr Peter Martindale	Institute of Measurement & Control
Dr Deric Jones	Institute of Physics & Engineering in Medicine
Mr Robert Neilson	Institute of Physics & Engineering in Medicine
Dr Rob Best / Prof Colin Grant	Institution of Chemical Engineers
Mr Neil Atkinson	Institution of Chemical Engineers
Prof Barry Clarke (Vice-Chair)	Institution of Civil Engineers
Ms Ellen Ryan	Institution of Civil Engineers
Ms Alison Haggart	Institution of Engineering & Technology
Prof Bob Cryan (Chair)	Institution of Engineering & Technology
Prof Peter Hicks	Institution of Engineering & Technology
Prof Kevin Edwards / Dr Andrew Tizzard	Institution of Engineering Designers
Ms Anna Clarke	Institution of Engineering Designers
Mr Dougal Drysdale	Institution of Fire Engineers
Ms Louise Craig	Institution of Fire Engineers
Mr John Barratt	Institution of Gas Engineers & Managers
Ms Claire McHugh	Institution of Gas Engineers & Managers
Mr Alan Silver	Institution of Highways & Transportation
Ms Sue Stevens	Institution of Highways & Transportation
Prof Ieuan Owen	Institution of Mechanical Engineers
Ms Katy Hayday	Institution of Mechanical Engineers
Mr Richard Eastwood	Institution of Structural Engineers
Mr Darren Byrne	Institution of Structural Engineers
Prof Mike Graham	Royal Aeronautical Society
Ms Lynn Beattie	Royal Aeronautical Society
Dr David Fellows	Royal Institution of Naval Architects
Mr Giuseppe Gigantesco	Royal Institution of Naval Architects
Mr Paul Bayly	Society of Operations Engineers
Mr Geoff Disley	Society of Operations Engineers