

Changes affecting recognised programmes: interruption to recognised programme delivery and/or assessment.

Guidance for professional engineering institutions, education providers, and awarding organisations.

The Engineering Council and Professional Engineering Institutions (PEIs) are aware that exceptional events (such as industrial action, disruption to access to buildings, and medical incidents) may affect delivery and/or assessment of recognised (approved or accredited) programmes, including degrees, apprenticeships and other qualifications.

Where adjustments are made PEIs, awarding organisations and providers must remain confident that students completing a recognised programme will have achieved the required learning outcomes (and competences if recognised as delivering competences).

PEIs must ensure that all decisions are carefully thought through and documented, and that a comprehensive audit trail is maintained.

It is expected that providers and awarding organisations will aim to maintain delivery of full programmes, but events outside of the control of engineering providers/employers may sometimes result in disruption to delivery and assessment. This may result in the need to make changes, for example, to:

- The delivery format
- The order in which modules are delivered
- Assessment methodologies
- Scheduling of learning and assessment (sometimes into holiday periods or later years of study)
- End dates to enable work or assessment that has had to be suspended to be completed.

Although the circumstances may differ, education providers and PEIs adapted to the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and may find some of the processes, guidance and changes introduced as a result useful when adapting to other changes that impact education programmes and assessment. For example, PEIs may already have processes to enable providers to report changes to programmes, and providers may have provisions in their regulations for determining when and how students can progress in the event of teaching and/or assessment being disrupted.

Potential measures education providers and/or awarding organisations might consider taking to support student progression may include:

- Clear communication to students of any changes to teaching and/or assessment activities and/or timings.
- Prioritising activities that may have greater impact upon students if delayed, for example laboratory work, any work-based activities, presentations and vivas.
- Prioritising activities required to provide assurance that students will demonstrate required learning outcomes (or competences where recognition relates to these) before completing their programme. This may be informed by reviewing which learning outcomes have already been assessed and, where possible, prioritising assessment of those which have not. Module mapping presented for accreditation or approval purposes should be reviewed and, if necessary, updated to enable the PEI(s) to assure themselves that the required learning outcomes will have been demonstrated by all students.

- Considering where trailing/postponing credit, modules or assessment to a later year of study may be an appropriate solution.
- Additional measures, perhaps suggested by PEIs, education regulators, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) or other bodies, that help students to progress while continuing to complete expected learning and demonstrate required learning outcomes.

It is a condition of recognition that PEIs are informed of any changes to programme delivery and assessment. PEIs must then satisfy themselves that all the required learning outcomes will still be achieved by everyone awarded a degree or qualification.

Providers of accredited programmes and awarding organisations for approved programmes must therefore:

- Maintain a fully documented record of changes, which demonstrates that everyone awarded an approved or accredited degree, apprenticeship or other qualification will achieve the required learning outcomes.
- Keep PEIs informed.

The Engineering Council is not prescriptive regarding mode of delivery or assessment etc, although some PEIs may set specific requirements. For an individual to be considered to have achieved a recognised programme they are usually only required to achieve a threshold pass¹.

Where a student is unable to complete or be assessed for a piece of work that delivers the required learning outcomes, the provider or awarding organisation will need to set out the alternative mechanisms for assessing the achievement of those outcomes.

If unavoidable, students who are not in their final year of study when a programme is impacted by unavoidable changes may be permitted to make up any missed credit and/or learning outcomes during later years of study. This should be avoided if possible as it may put students under extra pressure if having to complete additional work in later years.

If interruption to programme delivery or assessment leads to a reduced number of credits or the awarding of a degree or other qualification with some assessments not being complete, PEIs would need to:

- Determine the scope of the evidence they would need to assure themselves that all graduates would still achieve all of the learning outcomes at the applicable level, taking account of the changes.
- Assure themselves that students do not graduate from accredited degree programmes with compensation or condonement of credit beyond that permitted by Engineering Council [policy](#).

It is understood that students may, in exceptional circumstances, for example following industrial action and through no fault of their own, be awarded a qualification or permitted to graduate with some assessments or marking of assessments being incomplete. This is not an approach we would encourage if it is possible to delay the award of a degree or qualification until all assessments have been marked. If degrees or qualifications are awarded prior to marking of all assessments, PEIs must be informed, and ideally such

¹ A threshold pass means a pass at or above the minimum for the qualification, which must be a pass with honours for an accredited honours degree. Conditions of accreditation must be met, including in relation to compensation and condonement.

awards will be provisional with any incomplete or unmarked assessments addressed at a later date.

If assessments which demonstrate required learning outcomes are expected to be incomplete or unmarked at the point when a student is awarded a qualification, providers and/or awarding organisations must provide PEIs with information as to where else (if anywhere) attainment of the learning outcomes has been demonstrated by students. This may refer to other modules or assessments that address the learning outcomes, and may include updates to the module mapping that was considered during accreditation. In exceptional circumstances PEIs may consider whether less formal mechanisms for assessing learning outcomes can be accepted, for example if regular interactions between staff and students or interim assessments during a module or project can give confidence that learning outcomes have been achieved despite an assessment being incomplete or unmarked.

If it is identified that students will be awarded a qualification with gaps in assessed learning outcomes this must be clearly recorded by PEIs on the Engineering Council course search database, confirming which learning outcomes may be missed and for which student cohort(s). This should be exceptional and may affect future recognition of the programme, including internationally, for the cohorts concerned. PEIs will need to seek evidence during professional review that applicants for registration from affected cohorts are able to demonstrate any missed learning outcomes.

Interruptions impacting accreditation and approval activity

There may be occasions when factors outside the control of education providers, awarding organisations and PEIs impact upon accreditation and approval processes. These may include circumstances where it is not possible to accommodate some or all in-person elements of an accreditation visit, for example due to industrial action or health and safety issues.

The risk-based accreditation visits policy (summarised [online](#)) permits some accreditation activities to be completed remotely, at the discretion of the PEIs and in circumstances where there is not a requirement for a significant in person element as set out in the policy.

PEIs may in exceptional circumstances consider backdating or extending accreditation or approval because it has not been possible to complete the recognition activity when scheduled.

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