

## COVID19: Information for higher education providers

### Interruption to accredited programme delivery and assessment

The Engineering Council and Professional Engineering Institutions (PEIs) are aware that education providers have experienced and may continue to experience interruption to delivery and assessment during and beyond the COVID 19 outbreak.

It is expected that providers of accredited degrees will have aimed to maintain delivery of full programmes, but will have made and may continue to make adjustments to delivery and assessment. This may include to delivery format, order in which modules are delivered, assessment methodologies, re-scheduling of learning and assessment into holiday periods, and possibly extension of end dates to enable work that has had to be suspended to be completed and assessed.

**It is a condition of accreditation that providers inform accrediting PEIs of any changes to programme delivery and assessment.** The PEI(s) must then satisfy itself/themselves that all the required learning outcomes at the required level will still be achieved by all graduates. Providers must therefore maintain a fully-documented record of changes, including changes following easing of restrictions, which demonstrates that all graduates will achieve the required learning outcomes, and keep accrediting PEIs informed.

The Engineering Council is not prescriptive regarding mode of delivery or assessment etc, although some PEIs may set specific requirements. However, it is noted that some practices that were introduced in an emergency may not be accepted by PEIs in future such as extended online exams using questions suited to traditional closed book exams or extrapolating coursework marks to represent 100% of module assessment where other assessments have been cancelled. Providers must ensure that there are robust checks for plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct to prevent cheating in coursework and/or exams submitted online for accredited programmes.

Where a student is or has been unable to complete a module or project that delivers required Learning Outcomes, the provider will need to set out the alternative mechanisms for assessing the achievement of those outcomes, and/or demonstrate that those particular Learning Outcomes are also achieved in other elements of the programme that have been successfully completed. Please note that where 'no-detriment' rules have been applied it is important that these will not permit a student to graduate with any condoned (failed) modules, or with more compensated modules than your current accreditation allows. This Engineering Council rule<sup>1</sup> will be expected to be applied without exception in 2021-22, to ensure no cohort of students is disadvantaged in achieving accredited engineering degrees, compared with engineering graduates from other cohorts.

A more extreme situation may have seen an extended period of closure, with all delivery and assessment having to be suspended. In principle the above would still apply. If interruption to programme delivery led to a reduced number of credits or award of the degree without completing a project, PEIs would need to determine the scope of the evidence they would need to assure them that all graduates would still achieve all the learning outcomes at the applicable level taking account of the changes.

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<sup>1</sup> **Registration Code of Practice RCoP 4.0, rule 45 applies to student intakes from academic year 2022-23 onwards; current compensation and condonement agreed at the most recent accreditation applies until then.**

An updated [University Impact Report template](#) has been created by the IET to assist providers in submitting relevant information about adjustments. Other PEIs may request that providers use a similar template to confirm adjustment.

### **Cancellation or changes to accreditation visits**

During the Covid 19 outbreak some accreditation visits were not able to proceed as planned. This may be due to ability of accreditors (many of whom may be or live with people considered to be high risk) to travel to visits, unavailability of staff, students and/or industrial advisory panel members, or other factors.

The Engineering Council is temporarily giving discretion to PEIs to consider the following options, where usual visit arrangements are not possible:

1. a virtual visit may be carried out, using video conferencing, virtual laboratory tours, and electronic submission of assessed work and other information;
2. a one-year extension to accreditation may be granted;
3. accreditation activity may be rescheduled if:
  - a) neither a virtual visit nor extension of accreditation is possible or appropriate, or
  - b) a virtual visit does not provide sufficient and satisfactory evidence for accreditation to be awarded.

It is at the discretion of PEIs to decide after a virtual visit whether to award accreditation with or without a follow-up visit.

The need to catch up on visits that were delayed or rescheduled due to the pandemic, combined with additional workloads associated with virtual visits and other changes in response to the pandemic, is likely to have an impact upon how soon new accreditation visits can be scheduled, as PEIs are limited in how many visits they and their volunteers can resource in an academic year.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has published [guidance](#) related to Covid-19. This includes examples of HEI and PSRB approaches, with topics including academic standards, lab-based assessment, and work-based learning including apprenticeships and study abroad.

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