

Summary report on 2023-2024 survey on impacts of the Engineering Council's Compensation and Condonement policy – July 2024

Introduction

This summary report presents feedback in response to a survey of HEI engineering departments to identify what if any impacts the Engineering Council's policy on compensation and condonement has had.

Links to the survey were published on both the Engineering Council website and the Engineering Professors' Council website. Invitations to respond were circulated to engineering departments via professional engineering institutions (PEIs) and the Engineering Accreditation Board (EAB).

The survey was conducted during winter 2023-2024. This provided an opportunity for HEIs to provide feedback after a full academic year of the policy being mandatory for students entering accredited degrees, and five years after the policy was published.

The Engineering Council's compensation and condonement policy and associated documentation is available on the Engineering Council website at www.engc.org.uk/compensation

Summary

Responses were received from seventy-seven UK Higher Education Institutions (HEI), and eleven non-UK HEIs or campuses.

98% of respondents confirmed that their school, department or faculty currently has programmes accredited on behalf of the Engineering Council.

7% of respondents indicated that Engineering Council rules on compensation and condonement have resulted in their HEI not seeking accreditation for one or more programmes. In each instance where a respondent indicated that the rules resulted in one or more programmes not being put forward for accreditation, another respondent from the same HEI responded indicating that the policy hadn't resulted in accreditation not being sought, suggesting inconsistency within HEIs and that no HEIs were entirely unable to meet the requirements of the policy.

32% of respondents confirmed that one or more non-accredited variants of programmes had been introduced in response to the policy.

42% of respondents confirmed that a least one other non-accredited engineering pathway was offered.

54% of respondents said their department had obtained new or revised derogations from standard university degree regulations in order to meet the Engineering Council's compensation and condonement policy.

An increase in the number of students who are unable to progress or graduate from accredited degrees due to disruptors (such as Covid, industrial action and RAAC) was reported by 18% of respondents. Text comments suggest Covid was the disruptor which had the biggest impact.

Many respondents provided general comments and/or comments in relation to specific questions. Quite a few of the comments suggested that it was too soon to meaningfully assess the impact of the policy.

Next steps

It has been agreed that a follow up survey will be conducted during the 2025/26 academic year, by which time HEIs should be better placed to feedback on any impact of the policy on longer duration programmes such as bachelors and integrated masters.

As feedback did not indicate any additional concerns to those previously considered by a Working Group in 2020-21 no change or further action is proposed until feedback from the 2025/26 survey has been considered, unless any significant additional feedback is received in the interim.

Anyone who wishes to provide further feedback or raise any questions related to the policy should please email edskills@engc.org.uk

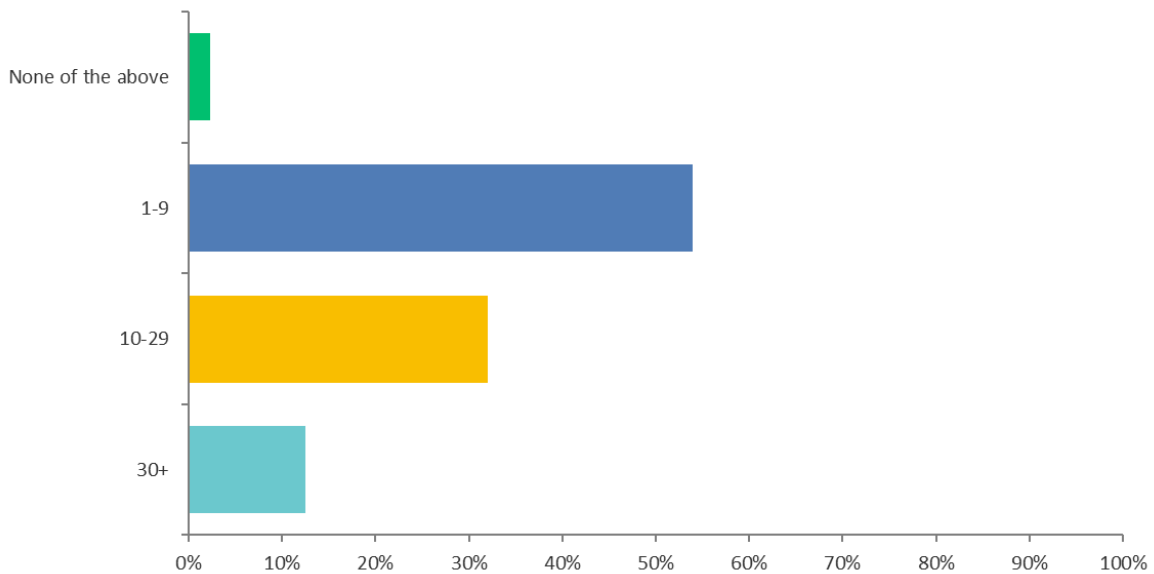
Q1. Please identify your department to ensure that we are not counting any duplicate responses.

128 individual responses were received, from eighty five HEIs and three overseas campuses of UK HEIs.

Twenty-two HEIs submitted two or more responses, none of them are clear duplicates as responses from the same HEI have been received from different schools or departments.

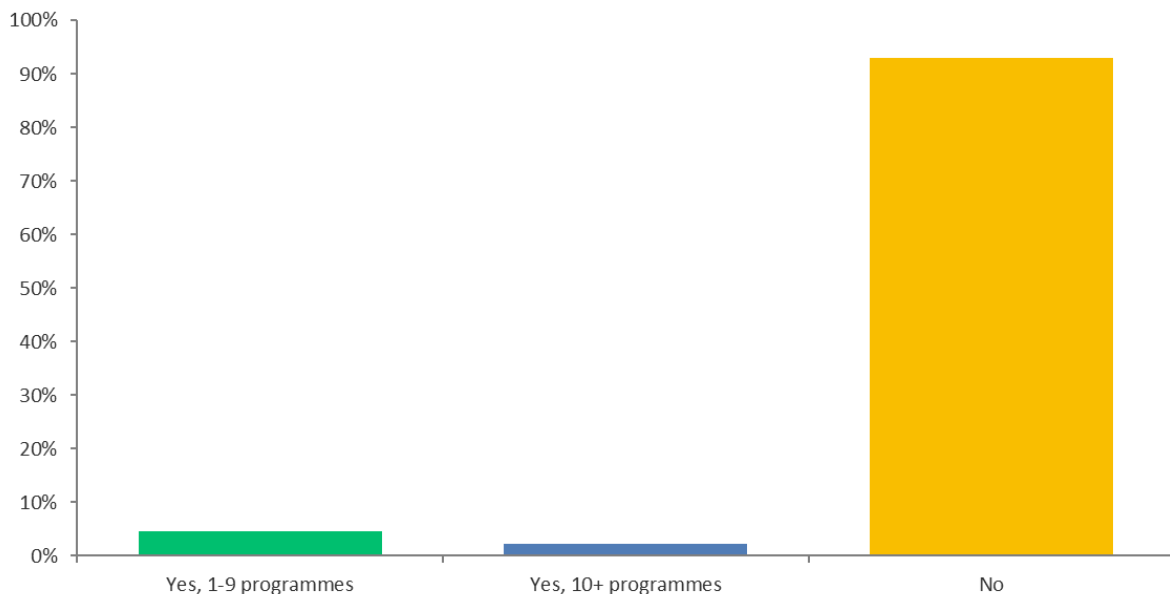
Broken down by location, eleven non-UK HEIs or campuses were represented, with responses from seventy-seven UK HEIs.

Q2. How many programmes does your faculty/department/school offer that are currently accredited by one or more professional engineering institutions on behalf of the Engineering Council?



Some responses appear to be at faculty level and some at department level, so there may be some inconsistency in what is measured in this report. Where two or more responses have been received from the same HEI responses are not consistent. Each of the three responses that have no programmes currently accredited are from UK HEIs which have provided two or more survey responses, and other responses from the same HEIs confirm that there are some accredited programmes within the HEI. There are both UK and international HEIs represented in each of the range of accredited programme numbers.

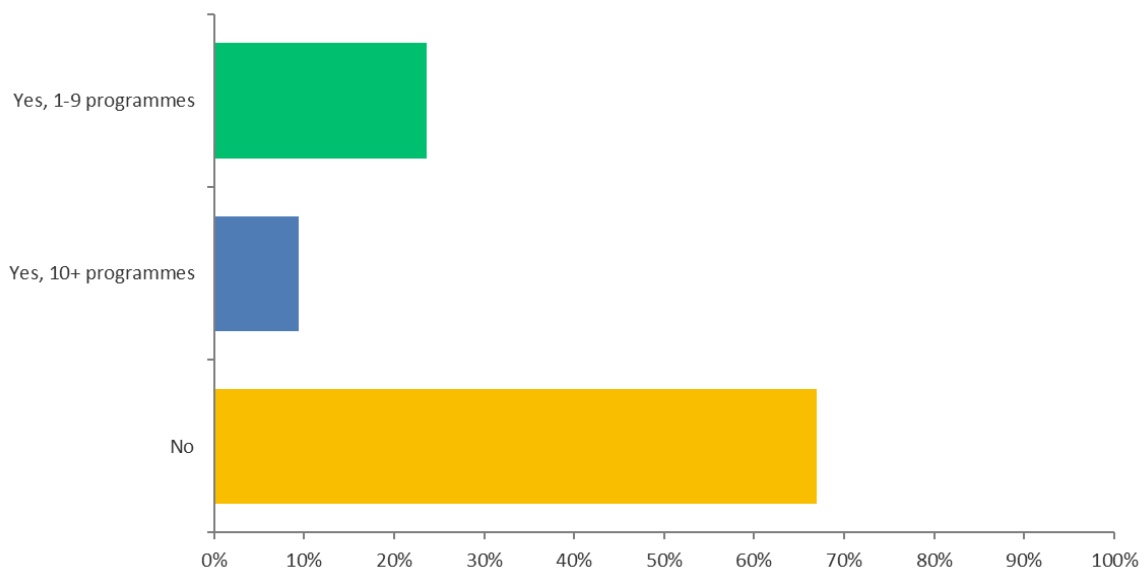
Q3: Have the Engineering Council rules on compensation and condonement resulted in your HEI not seeking accreditation for any programmes?



In all cases where a yes response was given another respondent from the same HEI replied no to this question. This suggests that there has been inconsistency in approach within some HEIs and that where a response points to a HEI not seeking accreditation of its programme(s) due to the policy, the policy has not had the same impact in another department, which indicates that the policy does not make it impossible for the HEI to run accredited programmes.

No non-UK HEIs replied yes to this question.

Q4: Have the Engineering Council rules on compensation and condonement resulted in your HEI adding additional non-accredited programme variants?



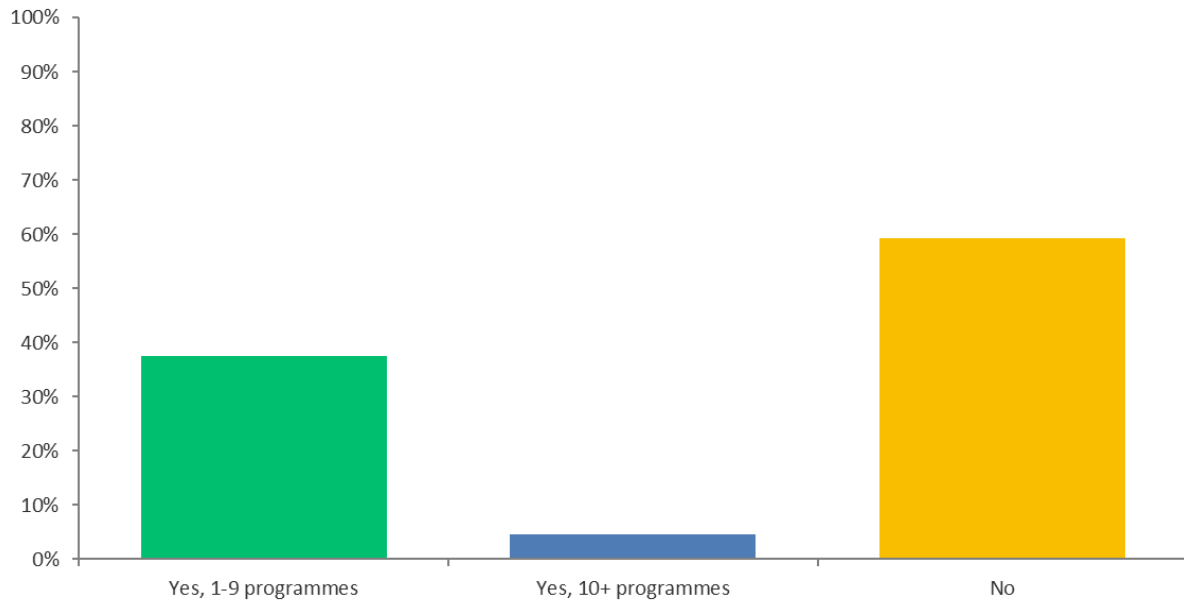
Of the HEIs that answered yes to this question, one submitted two responses which said 'yes 1-0 programmes', two submitted both one 'yes 1-9 programmes' and one 'yes 10+ programmes response', and one submitted one 'yes 1-9 programmes', one 'yes 10+ programmes' and one 'no response'.

If duplicate responses from the same HEI are not double counted 39 HEIs have added non-accredited variants, 76 have not.

No non-UK HEIs replied yes to this question, and none made comments.

A number of comments suggest that it may be too early to really tell the impact of the compensation and condonement policy. Some respondents' comments confirm that a number of students have transferred to non-accredited programmes whilst others say this has not yet happened.

Q5: Does your faculty/department/school offer any other unaccredited engineering degree pathways for students?

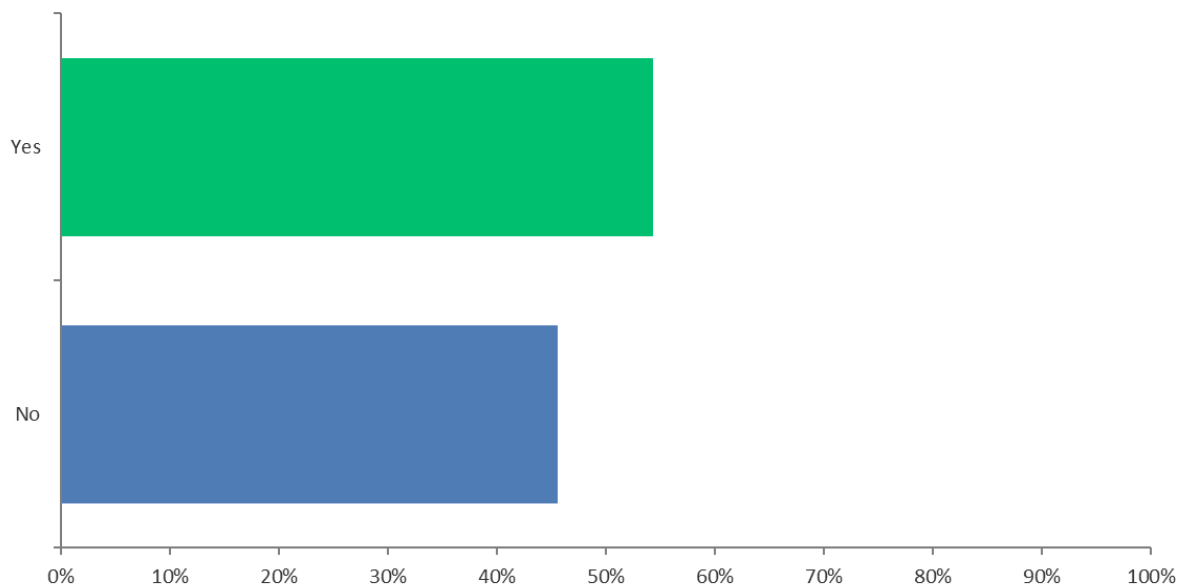


Of the HEIs that answered yes to this question, two submitted two responses which said 'yes 1-0 programmes', two submitted both one 'yes 1-9 programmes' and one 'yes 10+ programmes response', and one submitted one 'yes 1-9 programmes', one 'yes 10+ programmes' and one 'no response'.

One non-UK HEIs replied yes, 1-9 programmes, ten non-UK HEIs replied no.

Comments suggest that in many cases non-accredited programmes are either variants with specific modes of study (such as 'with year abroad' or distance learning), joint with other providers, one or a small number of specialist programmes, programmes which aren't full degrees (such as foundation degrees, conversion courses, top-up programmes), or programmes which have not yet been put forward for accreditation. Only one comment in response to this question explicitly referred to the compensation and condonement policy as a reason for not seeking accreditation.

Q6: Has your department obtained new or revised derogations from your standard university degree regulations in order to meet the Engineering Council's revised compensation and condonement policy?



Of the UK HEIs that answered yes to this question, three HEI submitted two yes responses and another three multiple yes responses. Ten HEIs submitted both a yes and a no response.

Three non-UK HEIs replied yes, five non-UK HEIs replied no, one non-UK HEI submitted both a yes and a no response.

Most comments from respondents that said yes summarised the changes or just confirmed that the changes had been made. Two HEIs referred to university policy allowing department or faculty deviation from HEIs regulations where required to meet PSRB requirements. A couple suggested that the HEI had updated its regulations on progression in response to the Engineering Council policy. A small number highlighted specific issues, including:

- our University does not count first year towards total compensation so we have to manually do this
- [HEI] is concerned with having to have elements within a module being non-condonable. The requirement comes about because we allow students to take a lot of options during the third and fourth year, so we end up with relatively few modules/credits that make up our guaranteed LOs in the degree programme at level 6 and 7 (only 45 credits of compulsory modules in each year). AHEP4 has made this more challenging because of requiring LOs at level 6 and 7, even though we may well have met the LO at the required level in earlier years given the structure of the [programme]. In addition, the Faculty progression/award rules were changed from [HEI] rules to meet the EC compensation/condonement policy. But [HEI] rules still apply in that modules are condoned before students are given the opportunity for reassessment. This means students may be forced to use up their condonement opportunities early in the degree and will be unable to meet accreditation requirements because of this. We do of course have the unaccredited exit routes for such students.

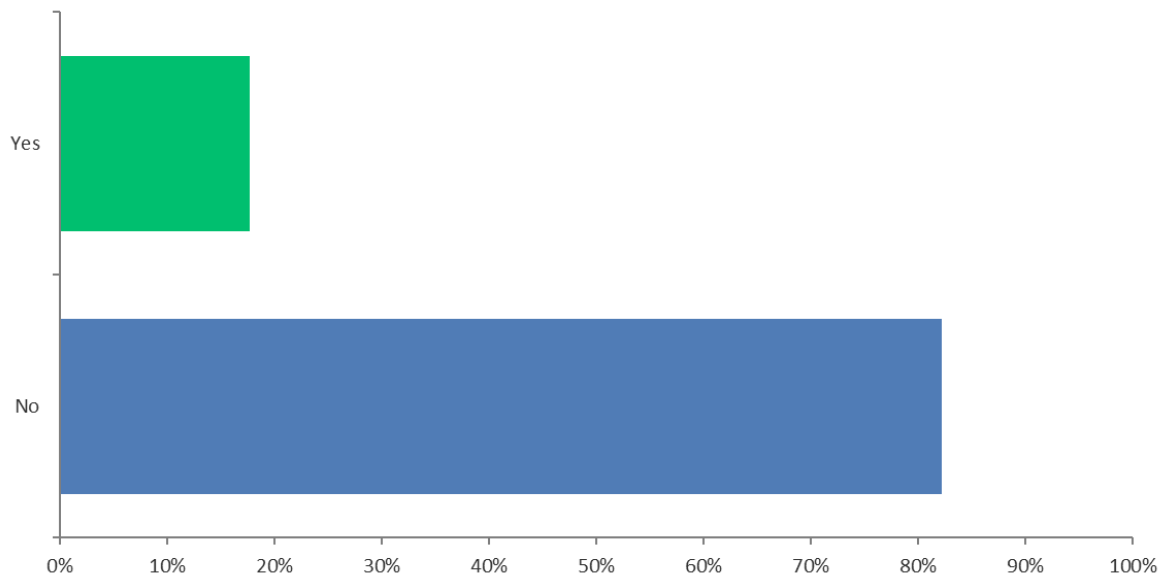
- Extremely complex and time consuming negotiation was required as degrees in [HEI] are not modular and the EC C&C requirements assume modularity.

Comments from those who replied pointed towards not needing to make changes.

Q7: Has there been an increase in the number of students who are unable to progress or graduate from your department’s accredited degrees due to disruptors?

The question suggested the following disruptors:

- students struggling due to their education prior to HE being disrupted by the Covid pandemic;
- teaching and/or assessment of their degree being disrupted during Covid restrictions;
- teaching or assessment interrupted by industrial action;
- laboratories closed due to presence of RAAC concrete?



Five non-UKs submitted a yes response to this question, but each of those also submitted a no response.

One non-UK HEI replied yes, seven non-UK HEIs replied no, one submitted both a yes and a no response.

Covid was the most commonly identified disruptor (amongst both those who replied yes and those who replied no), with various references to impact on students whose HE experience was impacted by the pandemic, to those whose education prior to HE was impacted, and students struggling to adapt to ways of study and/or assessment that due to the pandemic they are not used to. Amongst respondents who responded yes to this question one referred to minor impact from industrial action and another referred to mental health.

Many of those who responded no to this question referred to Covid as a disruptor but said it had not impacted on progression or it was too early to tell if it was impacting on progression.

Only one respondent made specific reference to the Engineering Council's policy on compensation and condonement in response to this question, having responded no they wrote 'Only impacts were relating to engineering council'.

Q8. Do you have any further comments, or questions you would like to raise?

More than four respondents made comments. Some comments confirmed that the policy hasn't caused problems, how a department has responded, or that it was too early to tell what impacts it might have. Some comments highlighted specific challenges that the policy had or might present (in some cases pointing towards potential misunderstanding of / need for clarification on aspects of the policy or accreditation requirements). Some suggestions were made for revisions. Much of the feedback reflects that received previously and considered by a Working Group in 2020/2021 which resulted in updates to [Guidance](#), publication of [Q&A](#) and publication of a [Chair's summary of decisions](#)

Some themes are repeated in a number of responses, including:

- General objections to the policy/its complexity.
- Questioning the need for the policy to apply to modules that don't address AHEP LOs or that address AHEP LOs that are addressed elsewhere.
- The policy is resulting in some students being unable to achieve accredited degrees.
- Student choices/advice to students on elective choices being influenced by the policy.
- Programme design decisions being made in response to the policy.
- Impacts specific to joint degrees (degrees offered with another HEI or department)
- Consideration of/not seeking accreditation for some or all programmes due to the policy.
- The policy added to workload within HEIs.
- The policy resulted in an increase in students completing resits.
- Inconsistency between PEIs in their approach to implementation of the policy.
- There is a small amount of support for the policy (counter to much of the feedback).

Q9. If you would like to discuss the impact of the Engineering Council's compensation and condonement policy further, please provide contact details:

Thirty-four respondents provided their email address.

Thanks

The Engineering Council thanks all respondents to the survey, and the Engineering Professors' Council for sharing the survey link on their website.