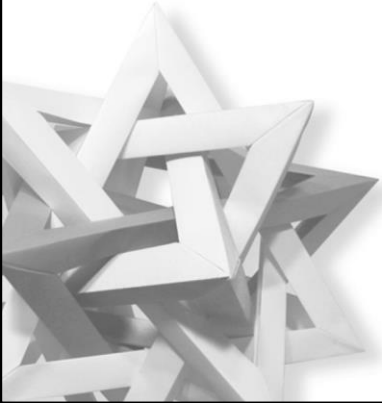


Engineering Council Response to Covid-19



Catherine Elliott
Education and Skills
Manager

The Engineering Council response to Covid-19

Supporting the engineering profession, educators and society

- The Engineering Council exists to advance education in, and to promote the science and practice of, engineering (including relevant technology) for the public benefit.
- Our vision is that society continues to have confidence and trust in the engineering profession.
- We are working with professional engineering institutions (PEIs) to ensure that activities such as accreditation and registration continue where sensible, adapting safely to the challenges posed by Covid-19, without reducing standards.



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The Engineering Council exists to advance education in, and to promote the science and practice of, engineering for the public benefit. Our vision is that society continues to have confidence and trust in the engineering profession.

Engineering Council staff are working hard to support all stakeholders, including educators, through difficult times. We recognise that HEIs need to prioritise changes to teaching learning and assessment; support to staff and students; and planning as far as practical for the next academic year and beyond.

We have extended deadlines for existing consultations and will consider delaying others and revising timing of some future activities to minimise requests for input from busy stakeholders.

The Engineering Council has used its communication channels to encourage engineers to support the national and international response to Covid-19, for example by helping with construction of Nightingale Hospitals, production of PPE and research.

Staff have been keeping informed through webinars, blogs etc and sharing key information with stakeholders, and we are confident that our approach is consistent with that of the QAA. Covid 19 has been on the agenda of many of our meetings.

Engineering Council staff have been working at home during the Covid-10 emergency, with many adapting their roles in response to the ongoing situation. Staff have been reassured that they will not be expected to return to the office until it is safe to do so and a survey of staff has sought views on returning to the office.

The Engineering Council response to Covid-19

Supporting the licensed Professional Engineering Institutions



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- The Engineering Council licenses professional engineering institutions (PEIs) to:
 - Register Chartered Engineers (CEng), Incorporated Engineers (IEng), Engineering Technicians (EngTech) and ICT Technicians (ICTech).
 - Accredit and approve educational and apprenticeship programmes.
- It has been agreed that a number of licenses may be extended for up to 12 months as a result of postponing reviews.

The Engineering Council licenses professional engineering institutions (PEIs) to register Chartered Engineers, Incorporated Engineering, Engineering Technicians and ICT Technicians, and accredit and approve educational and apprenticeship programmes.

Use of online resources means that whilst the principle has been agreed that licenses can be extended by up to a year a number of reviews are being completed remotely during a shorter time period.

Information was collected from PEIs on how they were operating in lockdown to identify any issues, this confirmed that most were not furloughing staff.

Revisions have been made to licensing manuals to ensure licensing activity is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in working practices amongst professional engineering institutions.

PEIs have been encouraged to complete professional review interviews remotely.

The Engineering Council facilitates sharing of practice between PEIs, including through committees most of which have discussed responses to the Covid emergency. We have signposted guidance include that from QAA and the Office for Students.

Covid-19 and accredited degrees

Changes to accredited degree programmes

- It is a condition of accreditation that providers inform accrediting PEIs of changes to programme delivery and assessment.
- The Engineering Council does not prescribe modes of delivery or assessment, although some PEIs may set specific requirements.
- The Engineering Council recognises that HEIs face significant challenges in light of the Covid-19 emergency and is encouraging PEIs to take a flexible approach whilst ensuring that accredited degrees continue to deliver the required learning outcomes.

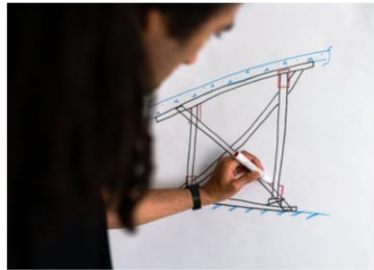


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It is a condition of accreditation that providers inform accrediting PEIs of changes to programme delivery and assessment.

The purpose of notifying PEIs of changes is so that they can assure themselves that all graduates from accredited programmes will continue to demonstrate the required learning outcomes.

It is recognised that HEIs are making adjustments to programme delivery and assessment in light of Covid-19 – none of which should affect accreditation as long as the accrediting PEIs are provided with the information they need to remain confident that all graduates will demonstrate the required learning outcomes.

Accredited engineering degrees are recognised internationally through a number of accords and agreements and we are keeping in touch with international partners to mitigate the risk of UK graduates being disadvantaged in the future. Current indications are that our approach is similar to that in other jurisdictions but we will continue to monitor the situation.

A template has been produced in consultation with PEIs that they can invite HEIs to use when submitting information about changes to programmes.

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Covid-19 and accreditation visits

Accreditation visits

- Many accreditation visits will not be able to proceed as planned due to Covid-19, and it may be difficult to schedule future visits.
- The Engineering Council's advice to PEIs where visits cannot proceed is to consider the following options:
 - Postponing the visit
 - Completing a remote assessment. This may result in a decision to accredit for a limited period with a follow up visit when possible.
 - A one year extension to accreditation (where neither of the above options are appropriate)



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Engineering Council regulations require visits to consider programmes for accreditation except in exceptional circumstances where the accrediting PEI has confidence in the delivery of the Department. Visits are required to see samples of students' work, which may sometimes be physical products; to tour laboratories and speak to staff and students.

Many accreditation visits will not be able to proceed as planned due to Covid-19. Accreditation visits will only be able to go ahead if all parties feel all aspects can be carried out safely (including travel to the university; meetings between panel members and with staff, students and industrial advisory panels, and tours of facilities)

It may be difficult to schedule future visits not only because of the uncertainties surround Covid-19, but also because it is likely that PEIs will have a backload of visits to support.

The Engineering Council's advice to PEIs where visits cannot proceed is to consider the following options:

Postponing the visit

Completing a remote assessment. This may result in a decision to accredit for a limited period with a follow up visit when possible.

A one year extension to accreditation (where neither of the above options are appropriate)

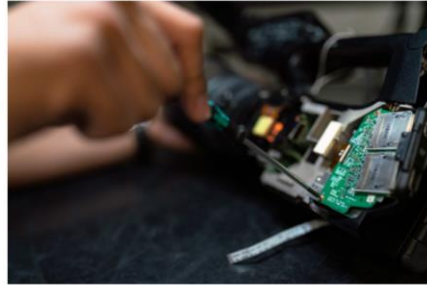
Remote visits may use video conferencing etc but may not be possible if university campuses are effectively closed, and would only take place where a PEI has confidence in the track records of the department and that the evidence required to make an accreditation decision can be assessed remotely.

Covid-19 and approved apprenticeships and qualifications

Approved apprenticeships and qualifications

- Apprenticeships and qualifications can be approved as delivering the underpinning knowledge and understanding for Engtech or ICTech registration.
- Covid-19 should not pose such a barrier to approval activity as it does to accreditation, because a visit is not required.

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Apprenticeships and qualifications can be approved as delivering the underpinning knowledge and understanding for technician level registration. This will widen when our new Standards are introduced to cover higher levels and accreditation as well as approval

Approval focuses upon nationally approved programmes so does not require a visit, as awarding bodies are relied upon to ensure facilities, delivery and assessment are to an appropriate standard.

Covid-19 should not pose such a barrier to approval activity as it does to accreditation, because a visit is not required.

It is condition of approval that approving professional engineering institutions are satisfied that appropriate quality assurance process are in place. It is expected that awarding organisations and regulators are taking appropriate steps to ensure maintenance of quality during Covid-19.

Engineering Council staff are continuing to monitor the impact of Covid on all areas of education and upon apprenticeships, but have not receive many queries related to non degree qualifications and apprenticeships in the context of Covid. We have confirmed that as with degrees we are flexible so long as confidence remains that required learning outcomes are achieved. We do share wider concerns that Covid-19 may make entry to the engineering profession harder and reduce opportunities for delivery of apprenticeships and work experience.

Covid-19 and Continuing Professional Development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

- Professionally registered engineers are required to conduct CPD and maintain records of their CPD.
- The Engineering Council is not prescriptive in terms of what counts as CPD, recognising that needs will vary depending on individual circumstances.
- PEIs sample their registrant members to ensure that CPD is being completed.
- It is recognised that CPD activity may look very different in light of Covid-19, and in some cases may not take place at all.



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PEIs sample their registrant members to ensure that CPD is being completed.

It is recognised that CPD activity may look very different in light of Covid-19, and in some cases may not take place at all.

PEIs are encouraged to be flexible both in how they support, and monitor the CPD of their registrants, and to consider exempting from CPD sampling registrants whose time may be limited due to essential work, eg for the NHS.

Covid-19 and the future

Looking to the future

- The Engineering Council will shortly publish updated Standards.
- Alternative approaches deployed in response to Covid-19, such as virtual visits, will also be considered as guidance is updated.
- We will seek to support stakeholders navigate the challenges Covid-19 will pose in the future.



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The Engineering Council will shortly publish updated Standards:

The UK Standard for Professional Engineering Competence

The Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes

The Approval and Accreditation of Qualifications and Apprenticeships

(replacing The Approval of Qualifications and Apprenticeships Handbook)
and

The Registration Code of Practice (which sets out the Standards for licensed
PEIs in conducting registration, accreditation and approval activities)

The challenges stakeholders face in responding to Covid-19 are being considered in relation to implementation schedules.

Alternative approaches deployed in response to Covid-19, such as virtual visits, will be considered as guidance to support the Standards is updated. We are also conducting a review of accreditation processes and this, alone with lessons learnt from adapting to Covid, may result to changes in the future. Engineering academics are encouraged to respond to a consultation on options posed as part of the accreditation review, the deadline for this consultation has been extended until the end of October as we recognise academics have other priorities in light of Covid. We will continue to support stakeholders to navigate the challenges Covid-19 will pose challenges into the next academic year and beyond, including for the next five year cycle of accreditation activity which will be significantly challenging as postponed visits need to be scheduled alongside other visits.

Engineering Council guidance

Guidance

- The Engineering Council has published guidance to HEIs in light of Covid-19 at www.engc.org.uk/media/3263/covid-19-information-for-he-providers.pdf
- Broader information for HEIs is available on the Engineering Council website www.engc.org.uk/education-skills/accreditation-of-higher-education-programmes/information-for-higher-education-providers/
- If you have questions for the Engineering Council please pose them in the later panel session or email accreditation@engc.org.uk



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The Engineering Council has published guidance to HEIs in light of Covid-19, which is available online alongside other information for HEIs.

We have received a number of requests from academics to provide additional guidance focusing upon delivery and assessment. We have reached the conclusion, in discussion with professional engineering institutions at the Engineering Accreditation Board, that this would not be appropriate as it is a matter for individual university departments to decide upon the delivery and assessment methods that best suit their curriculum, students and circumstances.

Guidance for PEIs on our partner portal extranet site addresses professional reviews, disruption of delivery of recognised educational provision, future accreditation activity and CPD

Providers are asked to direct queries related to specific accreditation or approval activity to the relevant professional engineering institution(s).