

EAB

Engineering Accreditation Board

Statement on confidentiality agreements and accreditation visits

The following statement relates to use of confidentiality agreements (sometimes referred to as non-disclosure agreements) with regards to Engineering Accreditation Board (EAB) visits. Professional engineering institutions may adopt the same approach or issue their own guidance for non-EAB accreditation visits.

A majority of university departments that participate in EAB visits do not request that panel members sign confidentiality agreements.

It is not generally felt appropriate for volunteers, professional engineering institution staff or the EAB Secretariat to be asked by HEIs to sign confidentiality agreements when participating in EAB visits.

EAB processes require:

- Production of a written report by the EAB Secretariat (and some professional engineering institutions also produce their own reports)
- Discussion with committees that make accreditation decisions, of information seen prior to and during an accreditation visit. Generic confidentiality agreements tend to forbid such sharing of information which would prevent normal accreditation decision making processes.

It is recognised that some student work may be covered by confidentiality agreements with industry. In such instances the HEI may decide not to include this work in the

materials available for review by the visit panel, or to present work in such a way that information is removed or anonymised as appropriate.

Should an HEI consider it impossible for an accreditation visit to proceed without participants signing confidentiality agreements they should:

- Make the EAB Secretariat aware at the earliest opportunity of the request for confidentiality agreements to be signed, and provide any draft agreement with or prior to the final submission.
- Recognise that a request for a confidentiality agreement to be signed may restrict the professional engineering institutions that feel able to participate in a visit or even make it impossible for a visit to go ahead.
- Provide a confidentiality agreement that is suitable for the purpose of an EAB visit, bearing in mind that:
 - Accreditation processes require production of a written report and discussions, including with committee that make accreditation decisions, of information seen prior to and during an accreditation visit.
 - Participants in a visit are primarily volunteers and should not be asked to sign anything that infers personal liability.