

COVID19: Interruption to accredited programme delivery and assessment

It is understandable that providers are planning for interruption to delivery and assessment if this becomes necessary during the COVID 19 outbreak.

It would seem reasonable to expect that providers would aim to maintain delivery of the full programme and this would likely mean adjustments 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.

- The Registration Code of Practice regulation 29 requires that ‘Licensed Members must place a requirement on the awarding institution to inform the accrediting institution of any major changes during the period of accreditation *that affect the delivery of the specified programme outcomes.*’
- AHEP states (p6) ‘Following accreditation, the educational institution must notify the accrediting institution about any major changes made to an accredited programme.’
- The Guidance Note on Accreditation section 5 sets out the following:
 - **‘What should accreditation decision letters include?’** Under Paragraph 29 of the Registration Code, the awarding institution must be required to inform the accrediting institution of any major changes during the period of accreditation that affect the delivery of the specified programme outcomes. Examples are changes to compensation regulations, change of title, substitutions of modules, discontinuation of a module or loss of a critical resource.’
 - **‘Do HEIs have to advise of changes to accredited programmes during the accreditation period?’** Yes. however, it is expected that programmes will change over time. Significant and therefore notifiable changes are mentioned above (decision letter contents).’
- The onus is therefore on the provider to notify the accrediting PEI(s) 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.

When notified of changes the key consideration for accreditation is that all graduates of the programme achieve all the learning outcomes at the specified level. This is implicit in the current Registration Code of Practice and AHEP, and explicit in the policy on compensation and condonement. The Engineering Council is not prescriptive regarding mode of delivery or assessment etc.

For quality assurance purposes the PEI should ensure they maintain a fully-documented and transparent audit trail of the evidence and decision-making process supporting the conclusion that the required outcomes are still being achieved. Where multiple PEIs have accredited the same programme it would seem sensible for them to confer as part of that process and justify any variance in the conclusions reached.

A more extreme situation may see an extended period of closure, with all delivery and

assessment having to be suspended. In principle the above would still apply. The Engineering Council does not prescribe duration of study or number of credits¹ other than in respect of compensation where the policy allows for:

‘3. A maximum of 30 credits in a Bachelors or integrated Masters degree programme can be compensated, and a maximum of 20 credits in a Masters degree other than the integrated Masters degree.

‘4. Major individual and group-based project modules must not be compensated.’

In October 2019, in the context of the review of AHEP, RSC discussed whether AHEP should refer to projects and *‘agreed that AHEP should not mandate or define projects, however it would be hard to see how some of the LOs could be met without them.’*

Where a student is unable to complete a project that delivers required Learning Outcomes, the provider will need to set out the alternative mechanisms for assessing the achievement of those outcomes.

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 of the learning outcomes at the applicable level taking account of the changes.

PEIs are asked to notify the Engineering Council of any adjustments made and decisions taken. These will be summarised for QAC and RSC information.

10 March 2020

¹ Except for EUR-ACE labels where a minimum of 180 ECTS is required to meet EUR-ACE Bachelor label requirements