

ENGINEERS AUSTRALIA

ACCREDITATION BOARD

ACCREDITATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

FOR

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

(COMPETENCY BASED)

IN THE OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY OF ENGINEERING ASSOCIATE

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0	Associate Director – Accreditation. Professor Alan Bradley.	Chair of the Accreditation Board. Professor Robin King.	1 October, 2010



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1. INTRODUCING NEW PROGRAMS

1.1. New Program Implementation on the Home Campus

An established school of engineering may choose to introduce a new learning and assessment program listed on the national training register and based on either (a) a nationally endorsed training package or (b) a state or territory accredited course. Either approach may be within the context of a Registered Training Organisation's (RTO's) existing scope of registration, operating framework and established Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) quality systems previously considered by Engineers Australia as part of the most recent general review of program(s).

Where the new program is in a new field of engineering or where an RTO is approaching Engineers Australia for accreditation in the first instance, advice may be sought from the Accreditation Board. In such cases, the Board may appoint an experienced person to respond to questions, or may suggest persons who may be consulted directly.

Provision of such advice expressly does not constitute any guarantee of ultimate accreditation. Furthermore, the Board or any of its members will not involve themselves in any way in the engagement of consultants, or in any other active contribution to program development and or implementation.

Where the intention is to seek accreditation for a new program then Engineers Australia should be notified in writing of the proposal prior to commencement of the first learner cohort. It is suggested that this notification be instigated at the time the proposal is submitted for approval through the RTO's internal processes.

Application for provisional accreditation of the new program should be made in the first year of operation. Where this falls within the normal 5-year general review cycle, the written submission should be prepared as a supplement to the most recent written submission for general review.

The submission for provisional accreditation should be developed against the accreditation criteria provided in Reference 1 and follow the guidelines provided in Reference 2. It should not however duplicate material already submitted for the most recent general review.

In most instances the criteria dealing with the operating environment and the quality system will have been substantially addressed in the most recent general review submission. It is only necessary to respond to individual criterion where circumstances or issues are differentiated for the new program or where changes in the environment have occurred since the most recent general review.

With regard to the learning and assessment program criteria, it will be necessary to develop an appropriate response addressing the specific vocational objectives of the program, the selection of the designated units of competency, the program title, structure, content, implementation details, assessment guidelines and professional practice exposure issues unique to the new program.

It is particularly critical that a clear rationale is presented for the implementation of the new program. This should demonstrate appropriate consultation with industry and other research that has established the projected demand for graduates, leading to the choice of the program title which underpins the selection of the program

discipline, the selection of the designated units of competency, the program structure, and content including the delivery and assessment.

For an engineering school or RTO that has not previously engaged with Engineers Australia for accreditation, then the submission documents naturally will address all aspects of the accreditation criteria.

The new program cannot be considered for full accreditation until the first, sizeable, regular cohort of learners enters the final stages of the program close to the point of graduation. Again Engineers Australia should be advised in writing once this cohort enters its final year of study. An update on the submission for provisional accreditation should be prepared, again responding to the accreditation criteria by addressing any changes in circumstances and the experiences and outcomes arising from implementation of the program. It is particularly important that the submission for full accreditation reports in detail on the actions taken and progress made against the recommendations of the provisional accreditation evaluation panel.

1.1.1. Consideration of Provisional Accreditation

For a new program in a well-established school in good standing, provisional accreditation of a new program may occasionally be granted on the basis of a desk-top assessment of the submitted documentation. 'Good standing' means that all programs offered by the school were accredited at the last general review without significant difficulty.

In the majority of circumstances however, the Accreditation Board will require a panel visit to consider a new program for provisional accreditation. This would normally occur in the first year of operation, where a sizeable cohort of learners has been enrolled. The Board has discretion to determine whether a visit is required and when provisional accreditation is appropriate. The Board will appoint an appropriate assessment panel in every case.

Assessment for provisional accreditation provides an opportunity for the Accreditation Board to identify issues that may need to be addressed before a transition to full accreditation can be considered. It provides some assurance to the RTO and to enrolled students that full accreditation will be achievable provided identified issues are satisfactorily addressed.

1.1.2. Transition to Full Accreditation

Key considerations for the transition of programs from provisional to full accreditation status will be the schools' documented response to recommendations provided in the report prepared by the provisional accreditation evaluation panel as well as the quality of assessed learner work throughout the program.

A visit will normally be necessary to assess transition to full accreditation. This assessment will follow a formally documented submission from the engineering school. Assessment could be undertaken as early as during the final semester of study of the first graduating cohort, provided sufficient access can be provided to representative examples of assessed final year learner work, and also to a representative group of graduating learners.

In submitting a provisionally accredited program for full accreditation, the RTO will prepare a submission document as a supplement to earlier submission(s) and in particular, respond to the recommendations that were made at the time provisional

accreditation was granted. Assessment will be based on progress against these recommendations, perceived quality of graduates and examples of learner work, and on the outcomes of discussions with stakeholders.

At the very latest, full accreditation should be sought at the next scheduled general review following the emergence of the first graduates. Full accreditation will commonly be backdated to the year that provisional accreditation was first accorded, thus covering the first enrolled cohort, provided the RTO has satisfactorily addressed issues raised in the provisional accreditation evaluation process.

Assessment for transition to full accreditation will in every case be undertaken by an appropriate panel appointed by the Accreditation Board.

1.1.3. New Program Implementation for a Regional or Offshore Campus

For an established regional or offshore campus, with accredited engineering associate programs already in place, the accreditation of a new program offering should follow the guidelines detailed in 1.1 above. Where the new offering is a secondary implementation of a program already established and accredited for implementation at the RTO's headquarters campus or on another campus, (ie an undifferentiated offering) then the documentation for both provisional, and subsequently full accreditation, may well build on documentation previously submitted for implementations of the same program at the alternative campus. This possibility is discussed in Reference 3.

Where an established program on the headquarters campus is to be newly implemented at a regional or offshore campus or where a new program is to be introduced for the first time at a regional or offshore campus, the Board will normally require a visit to consider the implementation for provisional accreditation.

Where a new regional campus or offshore operation is first being established and provisional accreditation is to be considered for the first program offerings then the submitted documentation will need to be more comprehensive than that expected for just an added program offering within an established operating environment. The submitted documentation in this case will need to respond to all aspects of the accreditation criteria, with particular attention to the sections dealing with the quality systems and the operating environment. It is critical that the submission analyses all aspects of the development, delivery and management of the program and in particular the differentiating features associated with the new operating environment. These circumstances are further discussed in Reference 3.

2. PROGRAM AMENDMENT

The terms of accreditation provide for the on-going development of the learning and assessment program and content and in fact encourage enhancement and innovation within the defined quality management framework.

Changes to the designated units of competency within the existing specification of the learning and assessment program are welcomed and expected within the accreditation cycle as part of the process of continuous quality improvement. Engineers Australia will monitor program amendments through written advice received from the RTO. The RTO should ensure that all changes are within the accreditation guidelines, such that the program and the engineering school as a whole continue to comply with the accreditation criteria.

Formal review of changes will normally occur at the next scheduled general review of programs by Engineers Australia.

Where a proposed program amendment is of such significance that it involves a change to the program title and/or program code listed on the national training register, or to the overall specification of the learning and assessment program's vocational objectives then Engineers Australia must be notified in writing prior to implementation of the change. Under such major changes the Accreditation Board, once satisfied that the accreditation criteria continues to be met, will make a decision on whether to continue the current accreditation status or to accord provisional accreditation to an essentially new program definition.

Engineers Australia should also be notified of significant changes to the operating environment within an engineering school or RTO, where these changes will potentially impact the program delivery, management or quality systems.

3. REFERENCES

1	S02EA_ _Comp	Accreditation Criteria Summary
2	G06EA_ _Comp	Preparation of Submission Documentation
3	G05EA_ _Comp	Alternative Implementation Pathways