

## **QAA Draft revised *Recognition scheme for benchmark statements***

### **Background**

The Engineering Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on this scheme.

The Engineering Council sets and maintains the standards for the engineering profession and sets the overall requirements for the accreditation of engineering degrees. In 2006, QAA adopted the standards in the Engineering Council's UK Standard for Professional Engineering Competence (UK-SPEC) as the subject benchmark statement for engineering. This alignment was strongly supported by the academic community, and continues to be welcomed as a way of reducing the regulatory burden on the HE sector as well as strengthening the case for the accreditation of engineering degrees undertaken by the engineering profession.

The Engineering Council licenses Professional Engineering Institutions to carry out accreditation of degree programmes on its behalf. The decision to accredit a programme is made on the basis of the programme delivering the learning outcomes stated in UK-SPEC ie meeting the expectations in the QAA's engineering subject benchmark statement. Accredited degrees are the most widespread, though not the only, exemplifying academic awards for Incorporated and Chartered Engineer status.

### **Comments**

The stated intentions of the subject benchmark statements are sound and our experience to date suggests that the intentions are being realised. The potential for variety and flexibility in the design of programmes, and the opportunity afforded for the development of innovative provision, are of particular importance for a subject as diverse as engineering.

QAA may wish to consider expansion of the footnote about foundation degrees on page 4 to include mention of endorsement of foundation degrees.

As the engineering subject benchmark statements have already been adopted by QAA, the following comments refer mainly to the section dealing with the review of published benchmark statements.

It is important to allow sufficient time for the benchmark statement to become established whilst also ensuring that they remain current. We feel that the stated time periods for subject benchmark reviews are appropriate.

Involving the subject community is essential. We would urge QAA to ensure that the subject community is given at least 12 months notice of the review, and ideally more, so that the lead association or network can align its own activity in support of the review.

No reference is made to on-going contact between the QAA and the subject community once the benchmark statement has been published and before the periodic review. We suggest that there should be a statement of expectation about this. Regular dialogue benefits both parties and enables each to be informed about developments that may have a bearing on future reviews. For example, we recently advised QAA about the Engineering Council's intention to explore the possibility of developing learning outcomes for MSc programmes, and QAA indicated that the review of the engineering benchmark statement is scheduled for 2013. It is in both our interests for our MSc-related work to be scheduled so that it can feed into the QAA's review.

The draft would benefit from clarification about the type of support that QAA will provide (page 11) for the processes of recognition and for review, for example with regard to the secretariat for a benchmarking group in a review.

We welcome the clear statement that a review will not necessarily result in changes to the statement.

### **About the Engineering Council**

The Engineering Council holds the national registers of Chartered Engineers (CEng), Incorporated Engineers (IEng), Engineering Technicians (EngTech) and Information and Communication Technology Technicians (ICTTech). It also sets and maintains the internationally recognised standards of competence and ethics that govern the award and retention of these titles. Licences are granted by the Engineering Council to professional engineering institutions, allowing them to assess candidates for inclusion on its registers, and to accredit academic programmes and professional development schemes.