

PROCEDURES FOR THE PRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF RESPONSES TO ENQUIRIES FROM GOVERNMENT AND OTHERS

*Approved by the Standing Committee for Engineering - 9 December 2002
Approved by Council – 30 June 2003*

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline Quality Control procedures designed to ensure the maintenance of the Academy's reputation with respect to the responses that it provides to enquiries from Parliamentary Select Committees, Government departments and like bodies.

2. Scope

These procedures apply to all responses submitted by The Royal Academy of Engineering in answer to questions and consultation documents from Parliamentary and other bodies. The procedures do not apply to reports of the Academy's own devising (covered in *Procedures for the Production and Review of Proactive Academy Reports and Statements (2002)*) or to Press Releases which may be issued by The Academy from time to time.

3. Key Elements

Responses required from The Academy will vary in nature according to the body which makes the enquiry. However, there are certain features which need to be managed and checked. They are as follows:

- The procedure for assembling a response
- The review procedure

4. The procedure for assembling a response

The objective with any response from The Academy is to inform, advise and influence policy making on issues of national importance, drawing on the multi-disciplinary expertise of Fellows who have useful and relevant knowledge.

Any response shall be written in a manner which is easily read and understood and likely to be valued by the intended audience.

The task of assembling a response shall be carried out under the supervision of the most appropriate Director within the Secretariat of The Academy, taking into account the above considerations.

On occasion it may be determined that a response needs to be dealt with by the creation of a small working party, rather than by more general canvassing of Fellows' opinion. In such cases the procedure to be adopted for review of the response shall be as specified in the Academy document 'Procedures for the production and review of proactive Academy reports and statements' (2002).

It is important to recognise that when the outside world receives a response from The Royal Academy of Engineering it is entitled to assume that the response represents the views of a representative cross-section of Fellows. It is the Fellows, above all, who constitute The Academy's principal asset. Whilst it may be appropriate in a Press Release to quote one Fellow or a few Fellows, this is not acceptable practice in a submission to Parliament and comparable bodies.

However a response is compiled the end product must be subject to appropriate review on completion. This is dealt with in the following section.

5. The procedure for reviewing a response

Responses shall be subject to two stages of quality control before being sent by the Chief Executive to the intended recipient.

Firstly, the Director responsible for organising the preparation of the response shall check that the document satisfies the following requirements:

- 1. Does the response answer the questions posed?*
- 2. Are the points made in the response supportable with evidence from a sufficiently broad cross-section of Fellows? (If not, then it may be appropriate to decline to make an Academy submission.)*
- 3. Is the response balanced and fair in reflecting the evidence available?*
- 4. Is the response balanced in recognising dissension among Fellows? Have contradictions in the evidence received been satisfactorily avoided in the response itself?*
- 5. Are data and analyses handled competently?*
- 6. Are the style, tone and presentation of the response effective?*
- 7. Is the response likely to lead to an invitation to the giving of oral evidence? If so, are we sure that strong points in the evidence are supportable with the evidence of particular individuals?*
- 8. Is an Executive Summary appropriate? If so, does it concisely and accurately describe the key elements of the response?*

When the above process has been completed the response will be passed as a stand-alone document for final approval by a member of the responsible Standing Committee. The questions to be addressed by the reviewer shall be as follows:

- 1. Are the style, tone and presentation of the response effective?*
- 2. Are sensitive policy areas treated with sufficient care?*
- 3. Is the response fair? Is its tone impartial and devoid of special pleading?*
- 4. Does any Executive Summary concisely and accurately describe the key aspects of the response? (Note that an Executive Summary may not be appropriate, particularly in the case of short responses.)*
- 5. What improvements, if any, might be made to the response?*
- 6. Are you satisfied that your comments are unaffected by your own personal interests or knowledge? Have you avoided the temptation to introduce additional views of your own?*

Following satisfactory completion of this process the response shall be despatched by the Chief Executive.

6. Final Note

No set of procedures can cover all possible circumstances which might be faced by the Academy. However, the underlying principles are clear enough and should be followed when the procedures outlined above are found to be wanting or inappropriate.