

Enhancing the EIT Program

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Today's engineering graduates face two important issues—the relevance of the professional engineer licence and the changing nature of the engineering profession.

Engineering students who are now graduating, and will be applying for their licence, represent the future of our profession. If we are to maintain the high level of professionalism for which PEO is known, we have to attract and keep these fresh minds.

A study on the future of engineering work commissioned by the Canadian Engineering Resources Board identified engineer-in-training programs as important tools in helping graduates gain the experience necessary for professional licensing. Recently, PEO's Admissions Department demonstrated its commitment to providing this type of training, by hiring a full-time manager to further develop the association's program.

The program's name has been changed to the Engineering Internship Training Program, to reflect the fact that many of the applicants registered in it have gained considerable experience in other countries. The use of the term "intern" accommodates both the recent graduate and the experienced applicant, and is also comparable to the terms used by other professions.

Program goals

The mandate of PEO's EIT program is to provide guidance and assistance to recent graduates and other applicants in:

- ◆ gaining the work experience required to be licensed as a professional engineer;
- ◆ understanding PEO's licensing requirements; and
- ◆ appreciating the value of being licensed as a P.Eng.

We want to raise awareness among new graduates of the value of a professional licence and help guide them in gaining the experience necessary for licensing. We are currently in the process of enhancing the EIT program. Over the next few months, we will be introducing new services for engineering interns, which will be announced as we roll them out.

Expanding services to interns

It's critical that engineering interns gain the experience necessary to obtain their licence. As engineering interns progress through the initial stages of their careers, many are looking for a more detailed review of the relevance of their experience for licensing purposes. They want timely and ongoing feedback on whether their experience meets PEO's requirements. The EIT program will continue to provide this important service and will look for ways to improve the quality and the effectiveness of experience reviews.

Several companies have approached PEO for assistance in reviewing their EIT programs, to ensure that these programs provide the opportunity for EITs to receive the experience necessary for professional licensing. PEO will work with companies interested in this type of assistance. Over the coming months, it will also promote the benefits of a company-run EIT program to various industries.

Since engineering interns have asked for a publication specific to their needs, we will be relaunching the *Engineer MENTOR*, a newsletter for engineering interns. Some of the topics we plan to cover include case studies related to PEO's Professional Practice Examination, professional development, job search and interview skills, and guidance in interpreting the experience requirements. We also plan to feature the careers of some engineering interns and show how others

are participating in PEO's activities.

Another goal is to make greater use of the Internet in delivering information to engineering interns. Over the next few months, we plan to redesign the EIT section of PEO's website to provide all the information an applicant needs in one location. The EIT section of the site is also expected to include:

- ◆ access to copies of the *Engineer MENTOR* on line;
- ◆ a discussion area for EIT issues;
- ◆ advice on licensing requirements and samples of experience reports; and
- ◆ a question and answer area, where engineering interns can ask questions and get expert responses. Help from PEO members in answering questions and in guiding new engineering interns will be crucial.

Providing a seamless transition

Since PEO launched the Student Membership Program (SMP) in January 2000, over 2700 students have signed up. The EIT program will work closely with the SMP in nurturing these future engineers. Ontario universities produce over 4000 engineering graduates a year. Currently, 2500 engineering interns are registered in the EIT program. PEO also licenses about 2000 new engineers annually, with about 70 per cent coming from Canadian schools. Our goal is to make the transition from student member, to engineering intern, to fully licensed professional engineer a seamless and natural progression.

Enhancements to the EIT program will be ongoing, and any comments or advice would be appreciated. For more information or to provide input, please contact me at (416) 224-9582, ext. 479, or by email at gmeade@peo.on.ca. ◆