

COUNCIL CLARIFIES PEO'S FUNDAMENTAL ACADEMIC ADMISSION PRINCIPLES

499TH MEETING, MARCH 26, 27, 2015

By Jennifer Coombes

COUNCIL HAS affirmed the fundamental academic principles for PEO licensure, in response to a request to do so from the Academic Requirements Committee (ARC). ARC was prompted to the move by its concerns about Engineers Canada's application to perform educational credential assessments for international engineering graduates under Citizen and Immigration Canada's (CIC's) Federal Skilled Worker Program.

PEO currently confirms academic depth and breadth of a P.Eng. applicant by verifying that he or she has done at least one of: passed PEO exams; graduated from a CEAB-accredited engineering program that institutes a minimum path requirement linked to courses and is independent of institution-reviewed exams; passed an Experience Requirements Committee interview/oral exam; or graduated with a master's and/or PhD degree that includes relevant, graded engineering courses.

ARC is concerned that Engineers Canada, in the committee's opinion, lacks the expertise to conduct an academic evaluation beyond authenticating documents submitted by international applicants and that, as a result, several of PEO's fundamental admissions principles may be threatened. ARC is also concerned that any document issued by Engineers Canada stating that an immigrant's degree is equivalent to a Canadian engineering degree, no matter the wording used, may harm PEO's licensing process and interfere with PEO's ability to protect the public. It would like CIC to take its concerns into consideration when evaluating Engineers Canada's application to be designated to perform educational credential assessments.

Accordingly, council considered and approved a motion at the March meeting that affirms the following fundamental academic principles for PEO licensure:

1. Individuals, not programs or institutions, are assessed for the purposes of determining P.Eng. licence qualifications;
2. All P.Eng. licensees must meet PEO's standards for academic depth and breadth;
3. All P.Eng. licensees must pass PEO-approved examinations to confirm their academics, a principle that is also referred to as "exams for all"; and
4. The minimum path requirement of accreditation is essential to meeting the PEO-approved examinations assessment of an individual applicant (where the

minimum path means the minimum requirements for a program with electives).

Engineers Canada, the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board and the Canadian Engineering Qualifications Board are to be informed of PEO council's support of these fundamental academic principles for licensure.

During the council discussion, Bob Dony, PhD, P.Eng., councillor-at-large and past chair of ARC, said: "We need to be sure that every individual has met the criteria, which is a cornerstone of our [licensing] process. Until we have first-hand knowledge of the programs overseas, we assign exams to ensure the same rigour is exercised in our process."

REPORTING SAFETY CONCERNS

Council has approved steps to be taken by the registrar when information about a possible public safety concern arising from the conduct of the holder of an Ontario engineering licence or Certificate of Authorization (C of A) comes to the attention of PEO from media, or through a complaint investigation.

In the case of information communicated to PEO that is already in the public domain, the registrar is to report the safety concern to the appropriate regulatory authority.

When the information is not in the public domain and comes to PEO's attention some other way, through a complaint investigation, for example, the process is not as straightforward because all parties in a PEO investigation are entitled to considerations of confidentiality under the *Professional Engineers Act*. PEO's discipline process has the authority to assign punitive and rehabilitative penalties to licence or C of A holders found to have committed professional misconduct or been shown to be incompetent, but lacks the authority to address and remedy deficient engineering work for which a member or holder may be responsible.

At this meeting, council approved pursuing an external legal opinion concerning whether a report that comes to PEO in confidence in the course of a complaint or registrar's investigation may be disclosed to a third-party regulatory authority without contravening the confidentiality provisions of section 28 of the act.

APTIFY DATABASE UPDATE

Council has approved a budget increase of just over \$600,000 to complete phase one of the Aptify licensing database and get the project to a go-live stage. The funds have been diverted from the second phase of the Aptify project, which was expected to start in 2015, as well as from 2015 IT projects that have been put on hold. Aptify previously went live in December 2014; however, problems were identified almost immediately and PEO reverted to its former database, LicenseEase. LicenseEase has exceeded its lifespan and is no longer supported by its vendor.

Council was told application development and staff training is on track to enable a relaunch of the Aptify database in late fall 2015. Σ