



European Network for Accreditation of
Engineering Education

ENAE

Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation Agencies

Table of Contents

1. Introductory Note	2
2. Review of Accreditation Agencies – Procedure.....	3
3. Evaluation of Accreditation Agencies – Standards and Guidelines.....	5
3.1 Accreditation Standards (Compliance with “EUR-ACE Framework Standards”).....	5
3.2 Accreditation Procedure (Compliance with “EUR-ACE Framework Standards”).....	6
3.3 Institution (Compliance with the European standards and guidelines for external accreditation agencies).....	6

1. Introductory Note

The purpose of this document is to describe the guidelines and procedures for agencies intending to apply for authorisation or reauthorisation to award the EUR-ACE label to degree programmes in engineering. These guidelines do not form part of the standards to be met, which are specified in “EUR-ACE Framework Standards for the Accreditation of Engineering Programmes”.

The framework developed within the EUR-ACE project (2004-2006) is applicable to the accreditation of engineering programmes within Europe at the First and Second Cycle levels, and proposed the award of the EUR-ACE label to accredited programmes. The framework also accommodates the accreditation of “Integrated Programmes” (i. e. programmes leading directly to a Second Cycle degree), if the EUR-ACE program outcomes of the combined levels are achieved.

The EUR-ACE Implementation project (2006-2008) aims to use the framework of the EUR-ACE project to establish, on a permanent and self-supporting basis, a system for the accreditation of engineering programmes within Europe. It is intended as a decentralised system in which national (or regional) bodies will accredit the individual programmes, and mutually recognize two quality labels, namely the “EUR-ACE Bachelor” (European Accredited Engineering Bachelor) and the “EUR-ACE Master” (European Accredited Engineering Master), corresponding respectively to First Cycle and Second Cycle accredited degrees in engineering.

An international, non-profit association, the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAAE), has been established to administer the necessary organization and planning, and to support the accreditation system. The Administrative Council of the ENAAE has appointed a EUR-ACE Label Committee, composed of representatives of European engineering accreditation agencies, to evaluate applications from agencies wishing to award the EUR-ACE label and to recommend agencies to be authorized to award the EUR-ACE label. Agencies from countries within the European Higher Education Area that accredit engineering programmes are eligible to apply for authorization to award the EUR-ACE label.

The next section outlines the procedure for evaluating applications, and the final section provides detailed guidance on making an application.

In formulating the Framework, the document “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” adopted by the Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education on May 19-20, 2005, were taken into consideration.¹

¹ Cf. ENQA Report “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area”, 2005, http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050221_ENQA_report.pdf.

2. Review of Accreditation Agencies – Procedure

This section outlines the procedure for evaluating an application for the authority to award the EUR-ACE label. There are five phases

(i) Application.

An accreditation agency (subsequently referred to as the Applicant) seeking the authority to award the EUR-ACE label should apply to ENAAE by submitting in English the information listed below. The application should be addressed to the EUR-ACE Label Committee, and sent to the ENAAE Secretariat (c/o FEANI_{AISBL}, avenue Roger Vandendriessche 18, 1150 Bruxelles, Belgium, E-mail: enaee@feani.org). The information supplied will be treated in confidence, and will be used only for the purposes of the application.

Four paper copies and one electronic copy of the following information are required:

- A completed Application Form (attached) explaining how the standards and procedures of the Applicant comply with those of the EUR-ACE Framework. Detailed guidance on completing the Application Form is given in the next section. The completed Application Form is essentially a self-evaluation document, and can refer to existing documentation of the Applicant.
- Supporting documentation (in English), and in particular that referred to in the Application Form. All references to information in the supporting documentation should be precise and detailed.

The EUR-ACE Label Committee will review the application for formal completeness and, if necessary, ask the Applicant to provide additional information. A complete application is a precondition for the initiation of the review process.

(ii) Appointment of Review Team.

The EUR-ACE Label Committee will appoint a team of at least three auditors (usually one member of the Label Committee plus two other experts), which will be responsible for the evaluation of the application. The members of the Review Team should be completely independent of the Applicant, and have the necessary knowledge, experience and expertise to conduct the review. Nominations of experts will be sought from a wide range of sources – including other agencies, stakeholders, local authorities, etc, but the selection and appointment will be carried out by the EUR-ACE Label Committee to ensure the consistency and integrity of the process. The Applicant may request that auditors be replaced, if there is a possible conflict of interest.

The responsibilities of the Review Team are to:

- evaluate the submitted application and supporting documents;
- observe and evaluate *at least two visits* of the Applicant to accredit *at least one degree programme at each programme level covered by the agency* (First Cycle degree, Second Cycle degree and/or integrated programmes) and at least two programmes, if only one level is covered by the agency, as appropriate;

- observe and evaluate the decision making process at a meeting of the decision making body of the Applicant, and preferably the one in which the decisions on the observed accreditation visits are to be reached;
- submit an evaluation report to the Label Committee.

(iii) Visits by the Review Team

The details of the duration and schedule of the visit may vary for different reviews. The length of the visit will be determined at the beginning of the review process when the terms and conditions are being decided upon. It is likely that a visit of at least two days will be necessary for a Review Team to validate fully the documentation and clarify any points at issue. In general, the visits will be conducted in English.

The date of the visit and its agenda will be coordinated by the Chair of the Review Team. The date will depend on the availability of the Review Team, but the Applicant may indicate convenient dates when submitting the application.

(iv) Report on the Application.

After assessing all the evidence, the Review Team will draft a report on the application. This draft report will be sent to the Applicant for the correction of any errors of fact. The corrected report, together with recommendation of the Review Team, will be submitted to the EUR-ACE Label Committee for consideration.

(v) Decision on Authorisation

The EUR-ACE Label Committee will evaluate the report of the Review Team, and decide whether or not to recommend to the ENAAE Administrative Council that the Applicant should be authorised to award the EUR-ACE label. The Applicant will be informed of the decision by the ENAAE Administrative Council, and receive a final version of the report. The Applicant may ask, in writing, for further information about the decision.

If the decision is not to authorise the Applicant to award the EUR-ACE label, the Applicant may appeal to the ENAAE Administrative Council. If the Applicant decides to re-apply, the Label Committee may decide on a shortened procedure to evaluate the re-application.

The maximum period of authorisation is five years. Before the expiration of this period, an authorised agency should apply for re-evaluation to demonstrate compliance with the current EUR-ACE Standards and Procedures. A shortened procedure may be used for such a re-evaluation.

3. Evaluation of Accreditation Agencies – Standards and Guidelines

3.1 Accreditation Standards (Compliance with “EUR-ACE Framework Standards”)

(1) Programme Outcomes

Standard: The programme outcomes published as a standard by the applicant agency should fully comply with each of the six outcomes in Section 1 of the “EUR-ACE Framework Standards for the Accreditation of Engineering Programmes”.

Guidelines: Programme Outcomes must form a part of the accreditation standards. Demonstrate the compliance of the programme outcomes against which degree programmes are accredited by aligning them with the EUR-ACE programme outcomes, for example by listing them side-by-side in a tabular overview. A template for the alignment can be found on the ENAAE website (<http://www.feani.org/ENAAE/ENAAEHomepage.htm>).

The six EUR-ACE programme outcomes of accredited engineering degree programmes are:

- Knowledge and Understanding;
- Engineering Analysis;
- Engineering Design;
- Investigations;
- Engineering Practice;
- Transferable Skills.

Although all six of the programme outcomes apply to both First Cycle and Second Cycle programmes, there are important differences in the requirements at the two levels. These differences in the levels of First and Second Cycle accredited engineering programmes should inform the interpretation of the programme outcomes by HEIs and by accrediting panels. The differences are particularly relevant to those learning activities that contribute directly to the three programme outcomes concerned with engineering applications, Engineering Analysis, Engineering Design, and Investigations.

Integrated programmes leading directly to a qualification equivalent to that of a Second Cycle qualification will must be assessed against the programme outcomes for both First and Second Cycle Degree Programmes.

(2) Programme Organisation

Standard: The accreditation criteria published as a standard by the applicant agency should fully comply with the Guidelines for Programme Assessment and Programme Accreditation for Accreditation as set out in the “EUR-ACE Framework Standards for the Accreditation of Engineering Programmes” (Section 2).

Guidelines: This question is about the course structure, content and organisation to ensure that the students that enter the programme are able to achieve the Programme Outcomes detailed in Question II.1. The specific information we are seeking is tabulated in Section 2 of A1 (EUR-ACE Framework) under five headings:

1. Needs, Objectives and Outcomes

2. Educational Process
3. Resources and Partnerships
4. Assessment of Educational Process
5. Management System.

and your reply should be organised under these headings. The third column of the table in A1 lists the questions to which we would like answers, and the fourth column indicates where we would expect the evidence for the answer to be found.

3.2 Accreditation Procedure (Compliance with “EUR-ACE Framework Standards”)

Standard: The procedures for program assessment and accreditation published as a standard by the applicant agency should fully comply with the procedures for programme assessment and programme accreditation as set out in the “EUR-ACE Framework Standards for the Accreditation of Engineering Programmes” (Section 2).

Guidelines: Procedural guidelines for programme assessment must be specified in written form. Demonstrate that the procedure for programme assessment (based on self-assessment of the HEI followed by external assessment) correspond to the EUR-ACE standards.

Individual accreditation agencies may add further requirements to those standards to adapt to nationally and culturally distinctive features of Higher Education in engineering and to ensure compliance with national legislation. At least the following aspects need to be addressed:

- Documentation to be provided by HEIs
- Composition of accreditation team
- Duration of the accreditation visit
- Structure of the accreditation visit
- Verification and validation of the report by the accreditation agency/commission
- Decision on accreditation
- Publication of results
- Procedures for appeals

3.3 Institution (Compliance with the European standards and guidelines for external accreditation agencies²)

(1) Official status

Standard: Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities as agencies with responsibilities for the accreditation of study programmes in the field of engineering and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

² This section is based on Part 3 of the ENQA Report “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area”, 2005 (“European Standards and Guidelines for External Accreditation Agencies”) adopted by the Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 19-20 May 2005; <http://www.enqa.net/files/ENQA%20Bergen%20Report.pdf>.

(2) Activities

Standard: Agencies should undertake accreditation activities (at programme level) on a regular basis. These should be part of the core functions of the agency.

(3) Resources

Standard: Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their accreditation process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

(4) Mission statement

Standard: Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

Guidelines: These statements should describe the goals and objectives of agencies' accreditation processes, the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of their work. The statements should make clear that the accreditation process is a major activity of the agency and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statements are translated into a clear policy and management plan.

(5) Independence

Standard: Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

Guidelines: An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as:

- Its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts).
- The definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its accreditation processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence.
- While relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of accreditation processes, the final outcomes of the accreditation processes remain the responsibility of the agency.

(6) Accountability procedures

Standard: Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

Guidelines: These procedures are expected to include the following:

1. A published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website;

2. Documentation which demonstrates that:

- the agency's processes and results reflect its mission and goals of accreditation;
- the agency has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts;
- the agency has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its accreditation procedure are subcontracted to other parties;
- the agency has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/board); an internal reflection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement.

3. A mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years.