

Guidance on the JBM Professional Qualifications Policy for Academic Staff

Introduction

The decision has been taken by the JBM that by 2015, '50% of all academic staff designated as delivering the accredited degree programmes must be professionally qualified'. From 2012 onwards, if this figure is less than 50%, universities will be asked to demonstrate how they are planning to meet the 2015 deadline.

The final guidelines below were approved at the 10th February, 2012, JBM Board meeting. These guidelines are based on extensive consultation with academics including Heads of Departments and members of the JBM.

Principles

- Academics who contribute to accredited programmes must be able to demonstrate that they are competent to do so and that competence could be demonstrated through a professional qualification in addition to any teaching qualifications.
- Academics who contribute to an accredited programme can be seen by students as role models. Given that students aspire to become professionally qualified it is expected that academics will want to demonstrate that they are committed to their profession.
- The diversity of civil engineering means that the background of academics will be wide ranging and hence they could be eligible to belong to a number of professional institutions including overseas institutions.
- The percentage of professionally qualified academics will vary depending on the academic staff profile and the opportunities academics have had for initial professional development to be able to demonstrate competence in their discipline. However, it is expected that all academics will either be professionally qualified or be aiming to be professionally qualified. This implies that departments will have a policy on the development of academics including the need to become professionally qualified.
- Many departments make use of professionally qualified people in industry to help deliver their programmes. These should be included in the staff¹ profile of the department if they are making a significant contribution to the programme.
- A lack of sufficient professionally qualified staff would not be a de-accreditation issue on its own, but failure to provide sufficient staff could be an indicator that together with other issues could lead to de-accreditation

Evidence

Departments are asked to provide the following:-

1. The policy document on how academics are supported to become professionally qualified
2. The list of staff (academics and those from industry) who are professionally qualified to deliver the core subjects indicating their professional qualification and discipline
3. The list of all other staff who are professionally qualified indicating their professional qualification and discipline.

¹ There are many people who contribute to degree programmes including academics, technicians, teaching fellows, research assistants and visiting lecturers. These are collectively referred to as staff.

4. The list of staff (academics and those from industry) who are actively undergoing the process of becoming professionally qualified, including their disciplines and expected qualification dates.
5. The list of staff who are not professionally qualified indicating their disciplines

Staff Profile

While the JBM do not wish to be prescriptive a request is often made by a department for JBM to be precise.

Examples for inclusion as professionally qualified in (1)-(5) above:

- A. Given the diversity of civil engineering and the fact that the underlying scientific and engineering principles are common to all engineering subjects, then academics who are registered with the Engineering Council should be considered.
- B. Civil engineering programmes include the core subjects of materials, geotechnics and structures. Therefore some academics must be either a professionally qualified structural or civil engineers.
- C. The topics covered by civil engineering programmes are diverse and therefore require expertise from different disciplines such as geology, environmental science, planning, building and surveying, transport and architecture. Therefore staff who are professionally qualified with an appropriate professional body in these disciplines should be considered.
- D. Some academics will have an overseas professional qualification (e.g. licences professional engineer in USA; European Engineer). These should be considered.
- E. Professionally qualified experts (e.g. practicing engineers) who make a significant contribution to the degree programmes should be considered. Examples of significant contribution could include mentoring of student projects including design projects or delivering the equivalent of 25% of a module.
- F. Technical staff should be considered especially if they are encouraged to become EngTech.

Many academics will already be eligible to be professionally qualified but have not taken steps to achieve such a qualification. HESA data show that, on average, 70% of academics in engineering departments would have had the opportunity to meet the criteria to become professionally qualified through their experience. The number of professionally qualified academics is significantly less than that. This policy suggests that 70% of all academics should be professionally qualified. Given the many pressures facing the universities and the need for support from the JBM institutions it is suggested that this policy will be considered now but the number of appropriately professionally qualified staff should be 50% by 2015.

JBM Support

The four institutions forming the JBM support those that are aspiring to become members of an institution or to become professionally qualified. This includes academics. The four institutions will take positive action to help heads of departments develop their policy on supporting staff to become professionally qualified, review the profile of their staff in terms of professional qualifications and help staff develop their application to become professionally qualified. The four institutions need to supply JBM with actions taken to support universities.

The Visit Teams will take the opportunity to discuss professional qualification with academics during a visit and report back to the institutions.