

Program Outcome Assessment Issues and ABET EC 2000 Accreditation

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Regular ABET Engineering Criteria (EC) 2000 accreditation for engineering and technology programs started this past academic year after three years of testing with a selected number of universities. While the requirements for accreditation remain mostly the same, the review process was carried out with stricter interpretations of the criteria contained in EC 2000.

The Program Self-Study Report, which serves as the basis for the accreditation review, deals with issues that are mostly the same as those in the old requirements. Two new items that are the "soul" of EC 2000 are the difficult topics to deal with. They are the program educational objectives and program outcomes and assessment.

In preparing statements on program educational objectives, it is important to keep in mind that over-stating or under-stating the objectives is undesirable. By over-stating the program educational objectives, one will find it difficult to justify how those objectives are being met. On the other hand, by under-stating the objectives, one may find that they are not meeting the program specific criteria of one's program. It is also advisable that one should not use words such as "highest" quality, "best," or "strongest;" since it is required to show how the objectives are being accomplished in the program requirements and its graduates.

Program outcomes and assessment is another tough issue to address. There are a number of actions one can make and ways one can use to enhance the assessment process. The most important key to have a successful review on program assessment is to make sure that the assessment process used is closed. One should address problems one discovered in the program, methods used to resolve the problems, implementation of the solutions developed, and how the solutions have improved the program under review.

Based on the experience gained from a successful visit conducted by ABET reviewers last fall, a strategy for a successful EC 2000 accreditation review will be reported in some details. Examples will be given and discussed on what steps to take and how to conduct successful program outcomes and assessment.