

Engineering Gateways degree framework: transfer of successful practice

Critical success factors – employers’ views

The following responses from employers are taken from Engineering Gateways reports, specifically the Interim and 5-year reports. The latter report included in-depth research with five employers and one sector-wide employer organisation.

Since then, the number of employers with employees enrolled on ‘engineering gateways’ degrees has increased significantly to approximately fifty. Contact with the employers is established by the provider universities, therefore employers’ comments on a draft version of this collation had to be sought via the provider universities. One of the provider universities responded, but there were no responses from employers. However, this does not mean that the following summary is not a useful basis on which to proceed.

General

All involved (employer, employee, university) must understand the principles of the Engineering Gateways degree framework

Effective lines of communication must be established between the employer and the university’s staff; regular contact between the university, the employer and the employee; mutual understanding of any data protection constraints and/or confidential/commercially sensitive business that impact the reporting of an individuals’ development

Ensuring that professional competence (derived from UK-SPEC) is embedded in the negotiated programme

The differing time-frames under which the key stakeholders operate must be effectively managed; specifically, the time taken for contract negotiation and approval by the Professional Engineering Institution (PEI) must be kept to a minimum

The source of funding for the individual’s HE fees must be agreed up front

In-company

There must be a clear and agreed role for the employer in the delivery of the model

The employer needs to be involved in the negotiation process

A mechanism is in place to measure the individual’s progress; dovetailing the individual’s programme with an employer’s IPD scheme (if available) to avoid duplication of recording

Ideally, support from the highest level in the company

The employer must be confident of being able to provide workplace opportunities for the individual at a level that will enable the development of knowledge, understanding and skills to meet professional registration requirements (IEng or CEng)

Ideally, there should be access to a wide range of diverse work-place projects and activities

Mentoring and support

Mentoring support and guidance for the individual by a suitably qualified person (from within or outside the company) in relation to their demonstration, development and recording of competence towards IEng or CEng

Support from a PEI that is relevant to the business

Expectations of the university

Employer confidence in the university, particularly its assessment methods, employer/sponsor engagement strategy, ability to and/or experience of supporting WB students

University staff being willing to visit the employer

Other

Demonstrable commitment is required from the individual

Other employer feedback: perceived benefits rather than critical success factors

The flexible and negotiated nature of the Engineering Gateways model allows employees to work on real-time projects without being absent from the work-place

The flexibility allows for conflicting pressures of work to be accommodated

Being work-based might enable the individual to undertake the programme from any site, and not necessarily in the UK, although some feel that regular face-to-face contact is important.