

Conditional Educational Accreditation

The current Educational Accreditation process has been established and running for over ten years. Courses are independently reviewed after a cohort has undertaken the full undergraduate or postgraduate programme. As a result, a strong brand has been built and the overall process continues to improve and raise standards and links with Industry.

However, there is a strong argument to review courses early on before the students have completed their programme. This can ensure quality right from the start of the programme and also enables early changes to be incorporated to compensate for any short falls. Applying for accreditation before students have undertaken the full undergraduate or postgraduate programme can now be instigated and is called Conditional Educational Accreditation.

To qualify for the award of 'Conditional Educational Accreditation' (CEA) a programme can be reviewed after validation or at any time during the programme prior to its completion. Ideally CEA would take place during its first year of delivery. It would not be recommended, for obvious practical reasons of being so close to finishing, to apply for CEA during the final year, although there may be benefits for applying during the second year.

Irrespective of when CEA is applied for there will be a full panel of assessors to review the course outline and there will be an assessor visit during each of the subsequent years of the programme. Typically, three or four visits during a three year or four year BSc respectively. Full Educational Accreditation can only be granted after the full programme has been completed.

As noted there will generally be a single assessor for the final visit during the final year. The assessor will either recommend to the EAC full Educational Accreditation or continued CEA. There may be incidents when, on reaching the final year of the programme, when the institution is seeking the full educational accreditation that it is more appropriate for a full panel visit rather than a single assessor. The instigation of a full assessor panel would be implemented if the 2nd year visit and the 3rd year submission don't show the progress that was expected.

In the event of the institution not being granted full Educational Accreditation at the end of the final year it is acceptable to the CSFS for CEA to be extended for one more year. This gives ample time for any quality improvements to be implemented and ensure that the Component Standards are met.

At the end of the further year, there are only three possible outcomes in relation to full Educational Accreditation.

1. Full Educational Accreditation granted
2. Withdrawal of Conditional Educational Accreditation
3. In the event of withdrawal of Conditional Educational Accreditation, then the EAC may consider if Recognition is appropriate.

The institution would be required to wait at least a further two years before reapplying for Conditional Educational Accreditation or Educational Accreditation.

The institution may also opt for consideration of Educational Recognition rather than full Educational Accreditation or continued CEA.

The primary benefits of CEA to the institution are for marketing purposes and for the Professional Body it enables early sight of the quality of the course supported by on-going visits.