

Changes to licensing process coming soon

The Licensure Qualifications Oversight Group (LQOG) was given its official “get-to-work” authorization at the 2003 Annual Meeting in Baltimore by an overwhelming vote of Member Boards. Over this year and the next, LQOG will review and evaluate the findings of the NCEES Engineering Licensure Qualifications Task Force (ELQTF).

The Council launched ELQTF some two and a half years ago to address concerns regarding the U.S. engineering licensure model. ELQTF was designed from the outset to capture the vision of the engineering profession as represented by a variety of professional and related associations. The engagement and participation of these associations were crucial to the success of ELQTF, and their input is reflected in the committee report and results, which Chair Jon Nelson presented to the Council body at the 2003 Annual Meeting. This important report—available on the NCEES Web site (www.ncees.org)—is required reading for every member of the Council who wants to stay connected to the on-going review of the engineering licensure model.

LQOG’s role is a complementary one: to bring the ELQTF findings “inside” NCEES for additional thorough inspection. Just as it made great sense for NCEES to be the facilitator for acquiring, sorting, debating, reconciling, and presenting the broad range of input from various professional associations, it makes sense for NCEES to play a parallel role on behalf of its Member Boards. LQOG was formed for this purpose. It exists to take the results and findings from the ELQTF report which address identified deficiencies in the current licensure system, and illuminate those results that are suitable for widespread implementation by our jurisdictional regulating bodies.

In general then, LQOG’s process is to (1) examine the ELQTF results under the bright light of public

health, safety, and welfare; (2) determine the impact of ELQTF recommendations on Member Boards and the Council; (3) assemble the best ideas—fine-tuning if necessary—into a package to carry forward; and (4) develop an implementation plan to facilitate adoption of these principles throughout our licensing jurisdictions. I believe that if this process is followed, the outcome will not result in merely a patch here and there on the existing licensure system, but will constitute a self-contained and integrated whole.

LQOG is made up of 20 talented and dedicated men and women: members and staff of Member Boards; NCEES emeritus members; engineers and surveyors hailing from Alaska to Florida and from California to New Hampshire, including states with permissive licensure laws and states with restrictive laws. Its members represent, in short, a solid cross-section of the Council. LQOG is not, however, stopping there. It is actively seeking the thoughtful input of all Member Boards. LQOG has instituted a program to keep in contact with a representative of each engineering Member Board to ask questions, give information, and generally keep the licensure dialogue going. LQOG has already circulated to Member Boards a “mini-survey” of five points relating to LQOG’s current thinking.

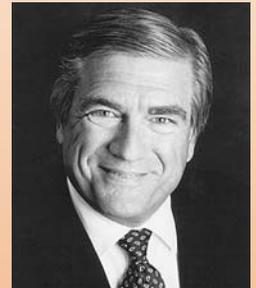
LQOG last met in November 2003. The group debated issues of substance and recorded preliminary recommendations. The oversight group learned what some of the “slam-dunk” ELQTF recommendations are and where some of the controversy may lie. It is gratifying, though by no means pre-ordained, that many of the concepts that received broad support in ELQTF (representing the profession) are likewise receiving broad support in LQOG (representing NCEES Member Boards).

LQOG’s work will be presented at the 2004 spring zone meetings and I hope will generate much thoughtful discussion. The oversight group

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also intends to present substantive, if interim, results to the delegate body at the 2004 Annual Meeting and anticipates completion of its work in 2005. The outcome will be specific recommendations to the Council that, if approved, will be incorporated into the Model Law and other instruments by the subsequent work of appropriate NCEES committees.

LQOG and the Council at large are facing some of the same challenges that the initial proponents of engineering licensure must have faced a century ago. Our licensure model has evolved since then and is now poised for the next step in that evolution. The ideas that have survived the ELQTF/LQOG process thus far have been well-deliberated and are of high value. This forthcoming evolutionary step will be successful if the Council can develop and support a model relevant to the

foreseeable (key word) future, even if it requires a bit of a stretch in thinking. As Charles Darwin said, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

Read the ELQTF report. Connect its recommendations to your activities as board members or administrators. Ask your board's LQOG contact about the LQOG mini-survey, and stay in the loop. Visualize the impact on the public of a new licensure system with more reliably and consistently qualified professionals. Imagine a world with a significantly increased proportion of engineering practitioners within the licensure fold. We are at the threshold of new and great things. Be there.

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New Jersey Board visits engineering colleges to promote licensure



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In an effort to promote licensure, the New Jersey State Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors has formed a committee to visit with the deans and presidents of New Jersey's institutions of higher learning to discuss the value and benefits of engineering licensure. During its visit, the committee emphasizes that engineering faculty should be licensed and that engineering colleges should explain the process of licensure to students in order to prepare them for the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) exam and their future. To date, Board members Edward Vernick, P.E., and Rishi Raj, Ph.D., have met with representatives of the New Jersey Institute of Technology and have plans to meet with representatives of Princeton University, Stevens Institute of Technology, Rutgers University, and Rowan University.

Committee members report that discussions held thus far have included typical questions, for example: Would professors receive credit for their higher degrees and not have to take the FE exam?



Would teaching experience count toward engineering experience? (In New Jersey, a candidate for licensure must show two years of original design experience as part of the required four years of experience.) The committee also presented various viewpoints on issues related to licensure, including raising the academic standard for licensure from a bachelor of science degree to a master of science degree in engineering and requiring the successful passing of the FE exam as a prerequisite for graduation.

The committee reported that its first visit went well and that members are looking forward to meeting with the other college representatives in the near future. At the conclusion of the visits, the committee plans to invite all the institution representatives to gather for a joint meeting with the full New Jersey Board in order to continue discussions and formulate plans for the promotion of licensure in the state of New Jersey.

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