

Got what it takes?

As engineers and training providers alike seek independent assessment of competence, SOE is seeking some additional assessors, interviewers and mentors. Brian Tingham explains

Do you think you've got what it takes to become an assessor for SOE – helping the institute's professional standards team to assess academic partners' and training providers' courses (whether specialist training firms or companies' internal training departments) for IPlantE accreditation? For that matter, are you willing and able to assist SOE with interviewing and mentoring budding engineers and technicians, wanting to put themselves forward for registration with the Engineering Council?

SOE is increasingly being asked to provide both: independent validation of plant engineering courses to Engineering Council standards; and assistance with (and examination of) engineers on their journeys through continuing professional development. And, as the SOE grows in popularity among engineers and engineering organisations (academic and industrial), opportunities to get involved are growing.

Two-way street

Roger O'Loughlin, a long-standing SOE trustee board and membership and professional standards committee member, and also an SOE assessor, says that volunteering is a two-way street. "Whether you get involved in professional review, mentoring engineers with their technical reports or assessing engineering training courses for accreditation, you're putting something back into engineering. But you'll also find you make friends with common interests. And there are the networking opportunities."

Roddy Mackenzie, another long-timer and SOE assessor stalwart, who sits on the SOE's trustee board, makes much the same points. But he also adds that, for SOE to continue to flourish, it must keep on growing its professional services to members and would-be members. "That includes for engineers in the armed forces, providing, for example, professional recognition for MOD courses, so that recruits can see they are valued, both during and after their service careers."

For SOE, that's a challenging point, not least because, with three distinct professional sectors (IPlantE, BES and IRTE) and IPlantE being so diverse, in terms of its engineering content, providing assessors, interviewers and mentors demands a significant bank of equally wide-ranging talent. And that talent also needs to be at all three of the professional engineering levels (EngTech, IEng or CEng), as well as from both academia and industry, in order to provide appropriate advice and

understanding in all cases.

As O'Loughlin says: "If, for example, a training provider is going for accreditation of a maintenance engineering technician advanced apprenticeship course, then at least one of the accrediting panel members must be IPlantE. We also need the right mix of engineering and possibly academic backgrounds. And volunteers also need to be trained – starting by coming along as observers, before moving on to become formal panel members and eventually lead assessors."

It's a similar story when it comes to professional review interviewers. "They have to be registrants with the Engineering Council, but that doesn't just mean at CEng. Experienced EngTechs are very useful people and we also need engineers registered to IEng for accrediting applicants to IEng. And, since at least one of the interviewing panel has to be familiar with the discipline involved, we need quite a mix of people to call upon."

Returning to the job of accrediting courses, however, there is one other aspect. It's important to note that part of the examining process necessarily involves a desktop audit of the training provider's paperwork, including the syllabus, to check that it's comprehensive and thorough. That being the case, SOE's guidance requires that at least one panel member should have an academic background or experience with national training standards.

As O'Loughlin explains: "Advanced apprenticeship courses have two parts. One is the technical certificate – qualifications equivalent to National Certificate Level 3 and City and Guilds part 3. The other is NVQ 3, which means you're looking at a work-based portfolio. So we need people familiar with both elements – for example, an Engineering Council registrant and an experienced engineer with a quality assurance background." 

Pointers

- SOE is looking for volunteer assessors, interviewers and mentors for engineers and organisations wanting to gain accreditation
- You need to be professionally qualified to EngTech, IEng or CEng
- You need to be good at talking to people at all levels and listening to their answers
- SOE needs plant engineers from a range of industrial and academic backgrounds
- Rewards include giving something to engineering and making new friends

Below: Roger O'Loughlin and Roddy Mackenzie: giving something back to the engineering community

