

ABET 2018 and the Technical Communication Program

Background on the Role of the Technical Communication Program in ABET

ABET is the accreditation board for engineering programs, and this board periodically reviews and re-accredits our twelve undergraduate (Bachelor of Science) programs. A degree from an accredited engineering program is valuable to students for many reasons, but among the most important reasons is that it can be difficult to get a Professional Engineering license without a degree from an accredited institution. Accreditation can help when a student applies to graduate school, and it can help enhance a student's job prospects. Parents look for accreditation when they are advising their high school age students about prospective colleges, too. ABET is a quality assurance organization that is recognized worldwide.

Technical Communication plays an important role in the ABET assessment process, and this document is a summary of our responsibilities.

The Role of EPD 397 (Technical Communication) in CoE ABET Assessment

EPD 397 assessment data and analysis have been used in every undergraduate engineering program's self study. Since our Technical Communication course is a requirement for most of the engineering programs in the College of Engineering, it makes sense that we are involved in the assessment of communication, teamwork, ethics, and other skills that we develop in our required courses.

The evaluators are provided with EPD 397 materials that include Alumni Surveys, minutes from our Industrial Advisory Board meetings, and sample assignments, rubrics, and student work from each discipline of engineering.

We periodically provide student outcomes assessment data to our undergraduate programs to show how our students have performed in the following ABET Student Outcomes:

ABET Student Outcomes Assessed in EPD 397

d. an ability to function on multi-disciplinary teams;

f. an understanding of professional and ethical responsibility;

g. an ability to communicate effectively;

h. the broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global, economic, environmental, and societal context;

i. a recognition of the need for and the ability to engage in life-long learning; and

j. a knowledge of contemporary issues.

Our grading rubrics for EPD 397 show “Performance Indicators” that help us measure each of these broadly stated ABET Student Outcomes. ABET did not dictate the performance indicators that we use; we developed them ourselves with input from our Industrial Advisory Board and engineering senior design faculty

Continuous Improvement in Technical Communication

Part of our continuous improvement in Technical Communication over the past six years has been our effort to develop appropriate performance indicators through engagement with faculty, industrial advisory board members, and alumni; we have also used our rubrics to attempt to align our own expectations for EPD 397, combating some of the problems we have had over the years with differences between the different instructors of EPD 397. ABET has helped our program work toward better connections with senior design faculty, since many senior design faculty adopted several of our performance indicators for their ABET data collection purposes.

Our next challenge will be to find even more meaningful ways to engage with senior design faculty to ensure a coordinated approach to communication and ethics college-wide.