

NSPE Position Statement No. 09-1737—Licensure & Qualifications for Practice

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NSPE Contact: Committee on Policy and Advocacy

Professional Policy Supported: 09-Licensure

The licensing or registration of engineers in the United States and its jurisdictions has been a key goal of NSPE since its founding in 1934. This position statement is made to expand and detail NSPE's Professional Policy No. 09-Licensure.

Background:

1. *Scope of Engineering Education* – NSPE believes engineering education programs must prepare graduates for the practice of professional engineering. The programs should include elements that illustrate and teach engineering problem-solving skills, provide engineering graduates with competent technical and managerial skills, and provide cultural education in the humanities and social sciences. NSPE also believes it is critical that engineering curricula incorporate instruction designed to instill in engineering students the concepts of professionalism and the ethical practice of engineering.
2. *Lifelong Learning* – NSPE believes that engineering education is, and should be, a lifelong learning experience. The universe of engineering knowledge continues to expand with time. Just as evolving technical precepts are integrated into classroom instruction, so too the practicing engineer must grow in knowledge to remain effective and competent. That portion of the lifelong learning experience which follows formal engineering education is referred to as continuing professional development.
3. *Continuing Professional Development* – It is the position of NSPE that continuing professional development in a prescribed, but flexible form, should be a condition precedent for licensure and for periodic renewal of the license to practice engineering. Recognizing that jurisdictions have differing continuing professional development requirements, it is also the position of NSPE that jurisdictions should accept that a professional engineer licensed in multiple jurisdictions, and who has fulfilled the most stringent continuing professional development requirement of the jurisdictions in which he/she is licensed will be considered to have satisfied the continuing professional development obligation in all jurisdictions. Under this precept, each state and territorial jurisdiction

would be recognized as being “substantially equivalent” with the continuing professional development standards of all other jurisdictions for the purpose of licensing by comity.

4. *Engineering Licensure* – “Licensure as a professional engineer” is the statutory process through which a person meets the legal requirements sufficient to be permitted by law to practice engineering in that jurisdiction. Licensure and registration are the terms used, often interchangeably, in state statutes to establish these requirements. State licensure laws for design professionals are predicated upon and justified only as a means to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. The public interest is best served by the licensure of all qualified individuals within the engineering profession.
5. *Licensure Law* – NSPE endorses enactment of uniform licensure laws in all jurisdictions. The National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) has developed Model Laws as guides for use by engineering licensure (registration) boards and legislatures in the interest of achieving uniform laws for the licensure of engineers in all jurisdictions. NSPE endorses the NCEES Model Law definitions of the “practice of engineering” and the “practice of land surveying” and encourages enactment of Model Law provisions in all jurisdictions. NSPE endorses and supports the concept of licensure of engineers only as a “professional engineer” and opposes licensure status by designated branches or specialties of engineering.
6. *Qualifications* – NSPE encourages the adoption of the following provisions for all jurisdictions:
 - a. Establish the bachelor’s degree in engineering from a program accredited by the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology/Engineering Accreditation Commission (ABET/EAC) or one assessed by ABET/EAC as substantially comparable, as the base educational requirement for licensure. NSPE supports the concept of lifelong learning and the concept of engineering licensure candidates meeting additional educational requirements as a prerequisite for engineering licensure. Education requirements post-Baccalaureate degree and pre-licensure should include options for either formal education or alternative approaches consistent with NSPE Professional Policy No. 168, Engineering Education Requirements.
 - b. Pass the Fundamentals of Engineering and Principles and Practice examinations as prepared and administered by NCEES. NSPE

encourages all eligible students to take and pass the NCEES Fundamentals of Engineering examination prior to graduation.

- c. To more adequately reflect the educational achievement of candidates for licensure and their progression toward professional engineer status, NSPE supports NCEES Model Law use of the title engineer intern (EI), formerly engineer in training (EIT), for individuals who have passed the Fundamentals of Engineering examination.
 - d. Obtain at least four years of professional experience after the degree described above, with experience credit allowed for graduate study of engineering or teaching of advanced engineering subjects in an ABET/EAC-accredited engineering curriculum.
 - e. Permit a non-licensed individual who holds both an ABET/EAC accredited undergraduate degree or its equivalent and a Ph.D. from an engineering program that is ABET/EAC accredited at the undergraduate level to be excused from taking the Fundamentals of Engineering examination.
 - f. Engineering faculty who hold an ABET/EAC accredited undergraduate degree, or hold a Ph.D. in engineering from an institution that offers an ABET/EAC accredited undergraduate degree, should be excused from taking the Fundamentals of Engineering exam.
7. *Certification Programs* – Following licensure as a professional engineer, individuals may voluntarily have their expertise in a specified field of engineering recognized through an appropriate specialty certification program. Such certification must not imply that other licensed professional engineers are less qualified for practice in a particular field of specialty. Professional engineering licensure is the only qualification for engineering practice. NSPE and its state societies actively oppose attempts to enact any local, state, or federal legislation or rule that would mandate certification in lieu of or beyond licensure as a legal requirement for the practice of engineering. Certification programs may count towards the continuing professional development requirements described above. Additional detail regarding certifications is provided in NSPE Position Statement 1774: Use of Certification Credentials.
8. *Enforcement* – NSPE and its state societies should take an active role in assisting state licensure (registration) boards in the enforcement and disciplinary provisions assigned by statute.

ABET Program Evaluation Visitors – NSPE and its state societies should take an active role to encourage members to train for and assist as ABET Program Evaluation Visitors (PEV's) and be participants in the accreditation process.

Model Legislation, page 120, Item 1