

The Design of Outcomes-based Project Units within Engineering Courses

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Abstract

A feature of engineering courses for many decades has been the requirement for students to undertake a significant final year project representative of professional practice. Project units are quite different to other units in several respects, including that the major issue in their design is framing a management policy. This is difficult, as it needs to be detailed and extensive, and that creates a reluctance to alter any existing practices.

The move to outcomes-based courses is a significant development, but because of the role of project work within a course and its clear links to graduate outcomes, there has been a tendency to see these as the easiest to adjust. This paper challenges that assumption. A typical set of outcomes for project units is proposed. Then key elements of project units are examined that influence the design of a management policy. This shows that current management practices are not tenable and must significantly change if the units are to be in keeping with the paradigm.