

Professional Competency Exam



by Ir. Lai Sze Ching

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Many engineers have been informed of the amendment to the Registration of Engineers Act 1967 and that a new examination known as Professional Competency Exam will be introduced.

So what is the Professional Competency Exam and how will it affect engineers?

Under The Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974, only Professional Architects or Professional Engineers are qualified to be a “submitting person”, i.e. the person with the authority to submit plans other than building plans, to the local authority or other relevant statutory authority in accordance with the Act or any by-laws made thereunder.

Between 2009 and 2011, over 200 complaints were made to the Board of Engineers Malaysia (BEM) by members of the public, government bodies, house buyers and even engineers. Among the main complaints were the failure of engineering works in Bukit Antarabangsa (KL) Hill Slope collapse, Jaya supermarket (Petaling Jaya) structure collapse, Gong Badak (Kuala Terengganu) Stadium roof collapse etc. All these prompted the public to voice their grave concerns over the competency of the engineers who had carried out the design and construction of the said structures.

In view of the many engineering failures and the liberalisation of engineering services, the Registration of Engineers Act (The “Act”) underwent major amendments and the Amendment Bill was finally passed by Parliament in December 2014 and gazetted on 24 February 2015.

One of the proposed amendments is the introduction of Professional Competency Examination (PCE), aimed at complementing the current Professional Assessment Examination (PAE). This is vital for the following purposes:

- Upholding the standard of engineering professionalism
- Maintaining a minimum standard of proficiency and competency in the building industry
- Safeguarding measures to protect public’s interest against sub-standard engineering services provided by local engineers and/ or foreign engineers (whose registration has been made possible under the liberalisation of engineering services).



Members sitting for examination

This is why one of the major amendments under The Act is to introduce a two-tier system for the registration of Professional Engineers. Under this system, one class of Professional Engineers will comprise those who have passed the existing PAE or who are Corporate Members of the Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM). The other class will be professional engineers who possess valid Practising Certificates.

Pursuant to the amendment, it is incumbent for a Professional Engineer who wishes to be a submitting person to obtain a valid Practising Certificate by passing the PCE. Accordingly, the submitting person has to be a Professional Engineer with a valid Practising Certificate.

The main aim of the Professional Competency Examination is to test the competency of candidates within the limits of “professional engineering services” as defined by the Registration of Engineers Act 1967, in the engineering disciplines of civil & structural, mechanical and electrical engineering.

The PCE will be structured to test the candidate’s knowledge, experience and application of:

- Regulations and rules of engineering practice by BEM
- Statutory laws, design codes, regulations and
- Standards of professionalism and ethical behaviour imposed by BEM

With the introduction of this two-tier system, it is hoped that the quality of engineering services will show marked improvement in view of better knowledge and higher quality to be expected from an engineer.

As for current Professional Engineers registered with BEM, the amending Act stipulates that they may apply to BEM for the Practising Certificate within one year from the date of The Act coming into force. If they do not do so within the stipulated period, they will be required to sit for the PCE and pass in order to obtain the Practising Certificate. ■