Teaching and Learning the Finite-Element Method – Experiences with a Diverse Graduate Student Body

Topic area: D. CEM in Education

Authors and affiliations: Annette Muetze, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Kay Hameyer, RWTH-Aachen University

Authors’ full addresses: Ass. Prof. Dr.-Ing. Annette Muetze, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, 2557A Engineering Hall, 1415 Engineering Drive, Madison, WI 53706, USA Phone: +1 (608) 261-1946, Fax: +1 (608) 262-5559 Email: muetze@engr.wisc.edu

Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. habil. Dr. h.c. Kay Hameyer Institute of Electrical Machines, RWTH-Aachen University Schinkelstrasse 4, 52056 Aachen, Germany Phone: +49 (241) 80 97667, Fax: +49 (241) 80 92270 Email: kay.hameyer@iem.rwth-aachen.de

Abstract

The paper reports on aspects of teaching the finite element method (FEM) to power engineering graduate students with different backgrounds, research interests, and professional ambitions at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (USA). The activities described aim to strengthen the ability of the students to discern and identify the important parameters for use of FEM, the students' perceptions of the advantages and limits of numerical simulation tools and their reasonable use, and the need for selective analytical verification. The discussion is extended to include experiences obtained at the Institute of Electrical Machines (IEM) at RWTH-Aachen University. Thereby, the paper seeks to help identify teaching methodologies and best practice for given settings and purposes.