



THE
ACE IMPACT
ACCREDITATION and
CONSULTANCY
HANDBOOK

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Accreditation for ACE-Impact

The ACE-IMPACT project requires both institutional and subject-level accreditation. Institutional accreditation considers whether institution-wide quality assurance processes are effective and comparable with international good practice. Subject-level accreditation considers whether a particular degree programme meets its stated objectives and delivers graduates suited for employment in relevant fields.

The Royal Society of Biology is only concerned with subject-level accreditation/consultancy in programmes with a significant component of biology, relevant to the ACE themes of agriculture and health. Subject-level accreditation requires specific evidence of institutional support for the programmes being accredited, such as institutional policies, but Royal Society of Biology accreditation does not need full institutional accreditation to be in place. Therefore, subject-level accreditation with the Royal Society of Biology can happen independently and before institutional accreditation.

The accreditation panel used to assess a degree programme will consist of specialist biologists, trained for accreditation, including at least one member from Africa. The Royal Society of Biology also recognises that some institutions operate in a Francophone environment and, in those cases, the panel will include at least one member who is fluent in French. Where possible, the accreditation panel will visit the Centre of Excellence to assess the facilities and to meet staff and students. Where a personal visit is not possible, alternative arrangements will be made. The final decision on accreditation will be made by the Royal Society of Biology's Accreditation Committee, based in London.

About the Royal Society of Biology

The Royal Society of Biology is a single unified voice for biology: advising Government and influencing policy; advancing education and professional development; supporting our members; and engaging and encouraging public interest in the life sciences. With more than 18,000 individual members and over 100 member organisations, the Society represents a significant and diverse membership including students, practising scientists, industry leaders, academics and interested non-professionals.

The Royal Society of Biology initiated the development of accreditation for bioscience degrees after multiple reports highlighted the need for graduates with a common set of knowledge and skills to undertake successful careers in bioscience research. Following substantial consultation with the bioscience community. Accreditation, first launched in October 2012, recognises programmes that produce highly-skilled life-science graduates, ready to address the needs of employers. Due to the success of Accreditation in the UK and requests from the wider community, the Society expanded the Accreditation programme internationally.

The Royal Society of Biology is committed to promoting biology as a subject of choice to students in schools, colleges and universities. Through accreditation, we support and recognise excellence in biology teaching; champion a biology curriculum that challenges students and encourages their passion for biology; support young scientists through higher education; and provide career guidance at all levels. We offer a range of tools to assist the professional development of our members working in education; we respond to education policy consultations; and we contribute to curriculum development. Through partnership with other leading science organisations, we aim to increase our influence over the advancement of biology education.

For more information about the Royal Society of Biology, see www.rsb.org.uk

About this document

This handbook is the main source of reference for those institutions in Africa seeking to apply for **International Consultancy** and/or **International Advanced Accreditation** from the Royal Society of Biology.

International Consultancy involves a review of the curriculum structure, delivery and student experience using the criteria for accreditation as a template. This includes ongoing support over a fixed period, in the form of review and advice, as well as identifying aspects of good practice which can be built on. Although Accreditation is not an immediate outcome of consultancy, the advice provided through our review can help produce programmes of international repute, ready to undergo accreditation.

International Advanced Accreditation is acknowledgement by an external body, that a degree programme meets a defined set of overarching criteria. Graduates from accredited degree programmes are equipped with well-rounded knowledge and skill sets, making them highly employable both within and beyond their chosen field.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact accreditation@rsb.org.uk, for help and advice.

Introduction to International Consultancy

RSB International Consultancy involves a review of the curriculum structure, delivery and student experience using the criteria for accreditation as a template. Accreditation is not an immediate outcome of consultancy. Instead, it is a point in time review which gives advice on how to develop the academic curriculum and set strategies for the ongoing enhancement of student experience, helping to produce programmes of international repute which are ready to undergo accreditation. We offer ongoing support over a fixed period, in the form of review and advice, as well as identifying aspects of good practice which can be built on.

International Consultancy takes into account the local context and environment. The focus of our consultancy programme is the student experience and educational attainment (i.e. the learning outcomes) within a course. The consultancy process also often brings to light recommendations that are applicable to other programmes (e.g. audit of academic quality, teaching and learning and assessment). As part of the preparation for the review, we train one member of local academic staff in the process and principles used for review and accreditation, and we would expect that member of staff to be fully involved with the review.

As a professional body we are interested in what students learn and achieve, not just in subject knowledge and understanding but also subject-specific and transferable skills. To assess this, we need to see clearly articulated learning outcomes (see [Glossary](#)). We also need to see a clear teaching, learning and assessment strategy. In some cases, the links between programme learning outcomes, course learning outcomes and student assessment is unclear. The consultancy process highlights these connections and provides a stimulus for a team approach to teaching.

Our aim is to help you produce programmes of international repute.

Process of International Consultancy

The consultancy process is usually achieved in four Stages and will normally take a period of up to twelve months. This is outlined below, with further information on the method of submission detailed in [Appendix A](#).

01

Stage One

Institutions are required to electronically submit evidence to the Society. Full details are listed in [Appendix A](#).

The evidence will be assessed by a Consultancy Panel, who will produce a Stage One Report summarising the assessment. This will be sent to the institution for fact checking and will act as a guideline for questions likely to arise at stage two. Institutions will have the opportunity to submit additional evidence following this report and prior to entering the next step of the process.

02

Stage Two

Key members of staff from the applying institution are required to travel to the UK to hold face-to-face discussions with the Panel or, at the discretion of the Society, the applying institution can request a site visit by the panel to the university. The Panel will also carry out an evaluation of the institute's facilities and speak to students (via video conference for a [UK visit](#)).

Informal feedback will be given to the programme team at the end of the visit.

A stage two report will be produced by The Panel and submitted for ratification. Universities will be kept informed of likely timescales involved for ratification to occur.

03

Stage Three

The Consultancy Panel will produce a Recommendation letter highlighting areas of good practice and recommending areas for improvement. Examples and advice will be given on how these improvements can be achieved within the local context.

04

Stage Four

Ongoing support will be available, with up to four video conferences possible within the following 12 months. After the final video conference, the Panel will produce a concluding report which will detail the actions already taken by the institution and any recommended future actions. This report will also advise whether an application for accreditation is recommended though it is at the institution's discretion whether this is to be undertaken.

The visit to the UK for the review meetings will be arranged by mutual convenience of the Society and the University. Please note that students and recent graduates (if applicable) need to be available for video conference during the review visit (see [Appendix C](#)). There is also an option for the Consultancy Panel to travel to the university in-person to conduct the site visit. This option takes into account the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office advice on travel to the country and would follow the plan used in Accreditation site visits, as outlined in [Appendix D](#).

The assessment reports produced by the Consultancy Panel (the Panel) will not be made publicly available. However, the Society will share reports produced by the Panel with any sponsors of the programme(s); please see the formal expression of interest form for more information.

Video conferencing requirements

The RSB will require details of the video conferencing software that will be used to communicate with the students. The RSB uses Zoom, however alternative video conferencing software can be considered on a case by case basis. The RSB will request a practice run through of the software at least one week prior to the UK visit.

The virtual tour of the facilities can be pre-recorded, however the video footage should be recent and representative of the actual learning environment.

Travel Documentation

The RSB recognises that some HEIs will require visas for travel to the UK. If you require additional documents such as an invitation letter from the Society to support your visa application, please notify the Society once you have submitted your formal expression of interest form. Please note that supporting visa letters will only be provided to delegates from the applying HEI who will be attending the UK visit and once all relevant details have been satisfactory provided.

Detailed process for International Consultancy

01

Stage One

HEI submits evidence electronically to Royal Society of Biology

Evidence assessed by Consultancy Panel

Consultancy Panel produce a Stage One Report

Report submitted to HEI for factual check

02

Stage Two

Institution representatives visit the UK to meet with Consultancy Panel or the panel visits the university

HEI may submit further evidence and documentation

Consultancy Panel produces Stage Two Report

Report submitted to HEI for factual check

03

Stage Three

Consultancy Panel produces a Recommendation Letter stating the areas where the Institution does not meet the criteria and suggestions as to how this could be rectified.

04

Stage Four

Up to four video conferences with Programme Team and Consultancy Panel to discuss progress and offer further advice on implementing the recommendations.

Consultancy Panel produces a concluding report, summarising the changes implemented already and the planned next steps.

Costs of international consultancy

Institutions applying for International consultancy will be charged a fee to cover the Society's administrative costs, including any likely costs incurred through the review process. Universities will also be required to pay the travel costs associated with representatives from the programme team visiting the UK to meet with the Consultancy Panel or vice versa.

The cost of consultancy will be decided on a case by case basis and will take into account various factors, including the number of courses put forward. The RSB will offer a discount to any university that undergoes an [accreditation application](#) having first completed consultancy.

For more information, please email accreditation@rsb.org.uk

Consultancy panel membership and role

A Panel will include a panel Chair with experience of chairing, approvals, and quality assurance, and up to three panel members with a variety of backgrounds but could include members from academia, industry and other relevant sectors. Panel members are selected based on their experience and subject area expertise. Panel members are experts in the current practices, methodologies, and advancements in their area of expertise. Panellists will also have an understanding of the scientific content of degree programmes. The RSB provides administrative support and a panel secretary for the meetings.

The size and composition of a Panel will depend on the type of programme(s) being reviewed. All panel members will provide insight into the practical value of the skills taught by each degree programme. Panellists from industry will give clearer context to the significance of the learning outcomes from the point of view of the employer. For applications from areas in which English is not the spoken language, we will make sure to have at least one panel member who speaks the official language of the region.

Members of the Review Panel have:

- Completed a comprehensive training course
- Read all initial documentation submitted by the applying HEI and worked with the Chair to complete the Stage One Report
- Take part in all meetings and assist in producing reports necessary for the completion of the consultancy process

Further information on the guidelines for panel Chairs and members can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Introduction to Accreditation

Accreditation is acknowledgement by an external body that a programme meets a defined set of overarching criteria. Accreditation by the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) recognises and supports the advancement of skills and education in the biosciences, throughout the UK and internationally. Graduates from accredited programmes are equipped with well-rounded knowledge and skills, making them highly employable both within and beyond their chosen field.

Accreditation aims to:

- Recognise academic achievement
- Drive up standards of learning and teaching in the biosciences
- Enhance competitiveness for students in a global jobs market
- Provide industry with an assurance of the level of employability skills and subject relevant bioscience skills provided by a programme
- Provide an international mark of "good practice" allowing wide ranging comparability among high performing institutions

The biosciences are predominately an experimental set of subjects, which require a hands-on approach to learning. Accredited programmes incorporate learning outcomes associated with key skills in laboratory and/or fieldwork thereby providing a high standard of competence. Transferable graduate skills such as communication, problem solving and team working are integral to the programmes. Biologists must be equipped with the skills necessary for self-learning and the ability to apply basic principles of maths, chemistry, physics and information technology to their learning and career. These should be taught and assessed at all levels, providing a gradual development of ability and self-confidence in students, culminating at graduation. Students will have been encouraged and supported to develop their creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

All graduates will have experienced self-learning and will have satisfactorily completed a substantial research experience demonstrating independence of thought and analysis of data.

Accredited programmes are highly regarded within the learning and teaching community and by employers. Accredited programmes are delivered by subject experts and produce graduates who will excel in their chosen field.

The accreditation process does not seek to define a highly specified curriculum. Accreditation is built around broad minimum standards of achievement, while focussing on those areas that the RSB believes fully prepare bioscience graduates for their place in the world.

Accreditation is based on the assumption that the course can be defined as 'biology' or a sub-section or specialism within biology. It may not be appropriate for courses where the overall objective of the course is not biology *per se*, but where biology may be a component (e.g. pharmacy and health-care professions). Such courses may not encompass all the necessary intended learning outcomes for a biology programme, and may be accredited by other professional or statutory bodies.

We welcome applications from programmes taught in French. In these cases, the main documents must be supplied in English, but supporting documents can be supplied in their original French.

Benefits of accreditation

Benefits of accreditation for HEIs

Recognition of academic quality

Accreditation provides a mark of 'good practice', as well as providing an assurance to employers that graduates have appropriate skills and knowledge, increasing graduate competitiveness in the global jobs market.

ACE-IMPACT release of funding

Successful accreditation triggers the release of funds from the ACE-IMPACT project.

Enhanced student recruitment opportunities

Potential students have the confidence in knowing they will study a course that meets a set of criteria determined by bioscience professionals independent of the institution. Accreditation is informed by the needs of employers and developed in collaboration with experts from industry. Employers recognise the value of accredited degree programmes and the graduates they produce.

External review of programmes and mechanism to drive change within an institution

The process of accreditation not only assesses degree programmes but also shares and highlights good practice. As part of the application process, programmes will be assessed by senior academics who may suggest improvements to the programme, and identify existing areas of excellence. As such, institutions that have undergone an assessment have reported that the process of accreditation is extremely beneficial in its own right.

Publicity following successful accreditation

Institutions will be entitled to use the RSB logo and associated literature to advertise that the degree(s) is accredited (online and in printed literature). The RSB will advertise the institution as accredited on our website, which is viewed by prospective students looking to study a bioscience degree. Institutions will be able to quote aspects of good practice, highlighted during the visit, on their website and at open days.

Benefits of accreditation for students

Greater employability prospects and enhanced competitiveness in a global jobs market

The accreditation programme establishes a profile of key skills that bioscience employers can recognise in graduates from accredited degrees.

Professional body accreditation of their degree

Students can be confident that the degree they are choosing is of a high standard and has been assessed and enhanced by the accreditation process. The RSB bases accreditation on a set of wide-ranging criteria, meaning students will be aware of not only the technical skills and knowledge gained in their course, but also the transferable skills such as teamwork, communication and entrepreneurship.

Free membership/registration to the RSB

Graduates from accredited programmes are entitled to a free year of membership to the Society. This will enable access to a significant network of bioscience professionals, making it easier to stay up-to-date with biology-related developments (e.g. via the free weekly bulletin of key discoveries, initiatives and policies worldwide) and provide graduates with additional recognition of their skills and experiences. This is extremely beneficial to graduates, particularly at a time when they are applying for their first employment. Membership of the Society gives students and graduates a feeling of belonging to a wide community of biologists, interested in biology for its own sake but also to contribute their knowledge and skills to help meet world challenges.

Quotes in support of accreditation

UK Institutions

"Our experience with the RSB has been nothing other than superb; I would have no hesitation in recommending the RSB to all my colleagues and students. The Accreditation Team were exceptionally professional and more importantly knowledgeable and helpful which made the accreditation process a joy."

Dr Chris Tselepis | Programme Director for Biomedical Science | University of Birmingham

[Accreditation] "was for us as a course(s) team, a very useful and rewarding experience. It made us reflect on our teaching and assessment, challenged us to be self-critical and gave us extremely valuable advice and guidance to improve our students' experience."

Dr Elaine Green | Associate Head (Quality and Accreditation) | Coventry University

"We have always had a good experience in the last few years of working with the Royal Society of Biology, and our experience of applying for Master's Accreditation was no exception. Throughout our engagement with the pilot phase of the Master's accreditation scheme, it was clear that RSB were genuinely seeking to enhance education and skills within the sector. The site visit was professional, constructive and supportive, and while the recommendations made have enhanced our programmes it has also given us cause to reflect upon and celebrate the strengths of our postgraduate provision."

Dr Dan Lloyd | Director of Graduate Studies | University of Kent

"The process was excellent and we always knew what we had to do. I think the instructions are very clear and the process is of a very high and professional standard."

Dr Karin Garrie | Biosciences Undergraduate Courses Manager | Nottingham Trent University

"Thanks to [the panel] for their valuable feedback on our pathways - we very much appreciate their attention to detail and their positive approach to the discussion. It was a pleasure to engage with you all."

Dr Angela Mousley | Programme Coordinator (Biological Science) | Queen's University Belfast

"I found the process of the panel visit very thought provoking and productive, and a very worthwhile undertaking."

Dr Shauna Cunningham | Course Leader for Applied Bioscience | Robert Gordon University

"We were very excited to be involved in the accreditation process for our foundation degree programme and then to be awarded accreditation status. We wanted to have the recognition for our graduates and improve their employability as well as have an opportunity to both identify what we do well and to drive forward change for how we could improve the programme. The process was rigorous but enjoyable and extremely rewarding for the whole programme team and the students involved. Accreditation really took into account the unique aspects of degree level bioscience teaching in our HEI. We have made some changes to the programme following accreditation that will really enhance what we do to prepare our students for their continuing careers."

Luke Peakman | Programme Manager and Lecturer | South Devon College

"The accreditation process was extremely useful to us, including the mapping out of our degree schemes and skills, meeting yourselves and getting the opportunity to share our Swansea University Bioscience experience and the positive outcome of gaining accreditation. It was a lot of hard work for us, but it has really helped us to focus and refine our curriculum, it was a very positive experience."

Dr Penny Neyland | Biosciences Programme Director | Swansea University

International Institutions

"This is a major step forward in our quest to become a leader in higher education excellence in Africa. The validation of our training quality by the RSB helps us attract the best students and gives funders further confidence to invest in our programmes."

**Professor Gordon Awandare | Head of Department of Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology
| University of Ghana**

"The RSB team put us at ease i.e. that they were not there to attack the programme but to help us make it a better one and help guide us through the application procedure."

Dr Susan Ho | Deputy Enrolment Officer | Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)

"External audit of our programme in Biological Sciences through international accreditation proved to be an excellent way to ensure that it remained relevant and of high quality. We found the process developed by the RSB to be well-thought-out, constructive and helpful. Accreditation will undoubtedly enhance the employment prospects of our graduates."

**Professor C. David O'Connor | Head, Department of Biological Sciences | Xi'an Jiaotong-
Liverpool University**

"International Advanced Accreditation by the RSB has allowed us to position ourselves amongst the top universities in Latin America offering programmes in Biological Sciences. The thorough process of review by the RSB team helped us to identify critical areas of opportunity. By attending such recommendations, we were able to improve our programme, thereby becoming one of the best options to study Biology in Mexico"

**Dr Martin Serrano | Dean of Research and Graduate Studies | Universidad de las Américas
Puebla**

"The RSB team was helpful and prompt in response, and the accreditation process was smooth, efficient, and productive."

**Dr Moriaki Yasuhara | Associate Professor, School of Biological Sciences | The University of
Hong Kong**

Industry

“Covance is always in search of graduates who demonstrate they have industry skills, knowledge and, most importantly, the desire to be exceptional in their field. We’ve found graduates from the Degree Accreditation Programme bring diverse and emerging skills. Our hiring managers appreciate how quickly they demonstrate their academic rigor as they swiftly respond and adapt to real-world situations on the job.”

Robert Watts | Covance

“We believe that by accrediting degrees, students and employers will be better placed to identify quality courses that provide depth of study in their discipline and strong practical skills. In future, we are confident students who graduate from these courses will have the opportunity to find rewarding work in the life sciences sector or can go on to undertake further research as a postgraduate.”

Stephen Whitehead | CEO | Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry

“To deliver the next generation of life changing medicines we need to recruit talented young scientists who combine a passion for drug discovery with strong fundamental science knowledge. All our applicants undergo a thorough assessment process designed to test their scientific and technical knowledge, ensuring that our new recruits can be confident and effective in a laboratory environment from day one. This is why at AstraZeneca we support degree accreditation by the Society of Biology and actively encourage applications from graduates with accredited degrees – it really can help individuals stand out from the crowd.”

Donna Watkin | Global Graduate Programme Manager AstraZeneca, Research & Development | Innovative Medicines

“MedImmune recognises that strong scientific knowledge is integral to much of its success. And when we, as potential employers, are looking out at the outside world, we need a way to understand and evaluate the research that has been undertaken by applicants. That’s why the Royal Society of Biology’s Degree Accreditation Programme is so valuable. It provides a very visible signal of the quality of a degree and the high standard of academic rigour which students on those degree courses achieve. This naturally translates into an assurance of employability for those students who complete those courses.”

Jacqui Hall | Vice President; Learning, Standards and Skills | AstraZeneca

Process of accreditation assessment

The accreditation assessment process is normally achieved in three stages and will generally take a period of six to twelve months. This is outlined in Figure 1, with further information on the method of submission in [Appendix A](#).

Applications will be considered as soon as possible following receipt of the submission. If the application appears to meet the requirements of stage one, as described below, then the site visit will be arranged by mutual convenience of the Society and the University. Please note that students and recent graduates (if applicable) need to be present during the site visit. The assessment reports produced by the Accreditation Assessment Panel will not be made publicly available. However, the Society may share reports produced by the Panel with any sponsors of the programme(s); this will be declared at the start of the application process.

01

Stage One

Universities are required to submit, electronically, evidence to the Society in support of their application. Full details are listed in [Appendix A](#). This process, designed to be brief and not to replicate existing paperwork or to be unduly bureaucratic, outlines how the institution believes that it achieves the intended learning outcomes as stipulated in the accreditation criteria.

The application will be assessed by an Accreditation Assessment Panel (the Panel), which will produce a Stage One Report summarising the assessment. This will be sent to the University for fact checking and will act as a guideline for questions likely to arise at stage two. Universities will have the opportunity to submit additional evidence following receipt of this report.

If the programme is deemed suitable, the Panel will recommend that the application progresses to assessment stage two. However, in some cases, the Panel may feel that the programme is not ready for accreditation, and will recommend the consultancy process.

02

Stage Two

The Panel will carry out a [site visit](#), or an agreed alternative, to evaluate the university's facilities, speak to students about their learning experience, and hold face-to-face discussions with the programme team. Key staff with direct responsibility for resources should attend the meeting and/or be available throughout the visit. A provisional recommendation on accreditation will be provided at the end of this evaluation, where appropriate. Outcomes of stage two will be summarised in a Stage Two Report and sent to the University for fact checking.

The Panel will make a recommendation to the Accreditation Committee to award or withhold accreditation. Universities will be kept informed of likely timescales involved for ratification to occur.

03

Stage Three

The Accreditation Committee will make a decision that:

1. The programme should be accredited
2. The programme should be accredited subject to conditions
3. The programme should not be accredited

A Stage Three Report will be sent to the University where actions relating to conditions and/or recommendations should be evidenced. The University will have a period of six weeks to complete the Stage Three Report and provide any

supporting documentation. Accreditation is not formally awarded until the completed Stage Three Report has been approved by the Society.

Accreditation awarded

Following a successful assessment, accreditation will normally be awarded for a period of five years. The RSB will list accredited degree programme titles and universities on its website, and provide a link to the universities' web pages. Universities are required to provide graduate destination data for all accredited programmes on an annual basis.

Graduates from advanced and master's accredited degree programmes will receive one year of free membership of the Royal Society of Biology at Associate level (AMRSB). Additionally, in recognition of the period of practice, the RSB will offer graduates of advanced accredited programmes membership of the Royal Society of Biology at MRSB level after just two further years of practice, rather than the usual three years.

For more information on publicity guidelines following accreditation, please see [Appendix E](#).

Accreditation subject to conditions

The University will receive a Stage Three Report listing any conditions, and details of the actions taken to address the highlighted areas will be required. The University will have a period of six weeks to complete the Stage Three Report and provide any supporting documentation. Accreditation is not formally awarded until the Stage Three Report has been completed and approved by the Society.

If internal university approval is required for the amendments, then it would normally be expected within the six weeks, however extensions can be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Accreditation withheld

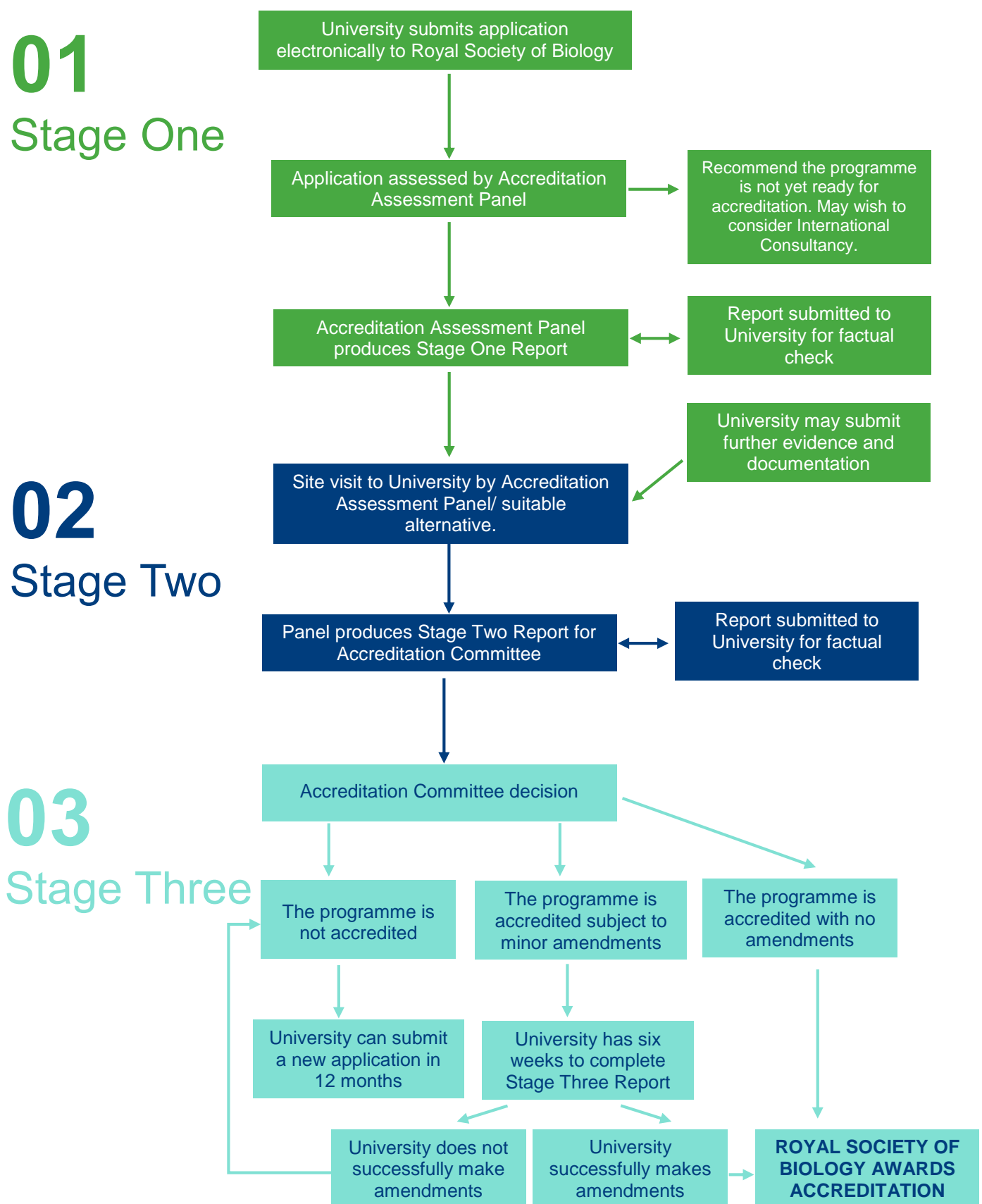
If the programme does not meet the accreditation criteria, guidance will be provided by the RSB on how the programme could meet the criteria. Usually the programme will not be reconsidered for accreditation until a period of 12 months has elapsed from the date the Stage Two Report is received by the University. For reconsideration, a full report will be required from the programme organisers explaining and documenting changes made to address each of the points made by the Accreditation Assessment Panel. If internal approval is required for the amendments, it would normally be expected that approval has been given before the programme is reconsidered. The Accreditation Committee shall decide whether a further full panel site visit, light touch visit, or no visit, is required.

The RSB maintains an appeals procedure for universities that wish to challenge specific decisions, where they feel that an assessment was not conducted as it should have been and in a fair and transparent manner. Universities cannot appeal against a judgement, only aspects of the process.

Appeals should be made to the Accreditation Committee in the first instance. If the University feels that an unfair decision has been reached by the Accreditation Committee, a follow-up appeal can be made to RSB Council, whose decision will be final. Further details about the appeals process are available on request.

The international accreditation process will be conducted in accordance with English Law and the Royal Society of Biology's code of practice. As part of the accreditation process, the Assessment Panel will also consider issues relating to diversity and openness. Where the FCO recommends caution, or other relevant organisations suggest there may be some risks to health or personal security, an accreditation site visit may not be possible and a suitable alternative will be arranged. All international travel is at the discretion of the Royal Society of Biology.

Figure 1 – Process of Accreditation



Degree regulations

The Society's accreditation criteria must be evident in programme learning outcomes (LOs). Unless otherwise indicated, it will be assumed that all programme LOs must be achieved by a student in order to graduate with the award. Generic regulations, and where necessary programme-specific regulations, must ensure that all students graduating with an accredited degree have achieved these outcomes. Compensation, where permitted within the regulations of the University, must only be applied if, and when, the relevant LOs are achieved in an alternative, passed course(s) covering the same LO(s). Compensation cannot be applied if a programme LO is identified specifically and uniquely with a single course and consequently assessed only once. Specifically, compensation cannot be applied to the capstone experience.

The Society expects universities to have policies and procedures in place that support and enable students with mitigating and/or extenuating circumstances to meet the LOs of a programme.

The University must make the assessment regulations available to accreditation panels, and inform the Society annually of any changes to regulations during the period of accreditation.

Articulation agreements

If the University applying for accreditation has a formally approved articulation agreement with a Partner Organisation (PO) in the home country or overseas it must be indicated in the Letter of Intent. An articulation agreement is defined as a formal arrangement whereby PO students may transfer to the University's programme and graduate from the University. For the assessment of accreditation, the panel will wish to assure itself that key learning outcomes normally achieved in the part of the programme prior to the students' transfer (the articulation) are met.

Where universities have agreements with POs, either to franchise programmes, or to deliver equivalent programmes in other locations, these programmes will be treated as separate from the parent programme. Accreditation may look at all courses within the same application, but each version of the programme will be individually assessed for accreditation.

Costs of accreditation

Universities applying for International Accreditation will be charged a fee to cover the Society's administrative costs, including any likely costs occurred in relation to the accreditation site visit (travel, subsistence and honorariums). Universities will be required to book accommodation, including breakfast, for the panel members in a suitable nearby hotel for the duration of the site visit. Where universities are seeking accreditation of multiple programmes, the Society will determine the most appropriate fee, based on the level of similarity between programmes.

For more information, please email accreditation@rsb.org.uk.

Changes made before re-accreditation

Programmes of study evolve to reflect the latest developments in the subject and to meet the needs of students, external influences such as professional and statutory bodies and policy changes. Variations in human and physical resources may also bring about programme changes.

The University must inform the RSB immediately of any significant planned changes to the accredited programme(s), which occur during the period of accreditation, as well as providing a clear rationale for the change. Universities are required to complete and submit a review form on an annual basis, highlighting any changes that may have been made. The rationale behind any changes impacting the accreditation criteria must be explained. There may be a charge for assessing accredited programmes if significant changes have been made. The RSB reserves the right to remove accreditation from a programme if significant changes are made to the programme that deviate from the learning outcomes defined by the Society.

Re-accreditation processes

Universities that have an accredited degree programme will be contacted by the RSB towards the end of the period of accreditation to invite them to submit their programme for re-accreditation. Where there are significant changes to a programme within the accreditation period, the University may be asked to re-submit earlier.

Re-accreditation will follow the three-stage process of accreditation and will involve a full review of all programmes submitted.

If a university chooses not to apply for re-accreditation the following withdrawal of accreditation guidance will apply.

Removal of accreditation

Reasons for the Society to consider the withdrawal of accreditation from a previously accredited course:

1. Failure of the University to pay the continuing cost of accreditation.
2. Failure of the University to notify the Society of changes made to the accredited programme structure or changes that affect the delivery of the programme.
3. Changes made to the programme specification so that some of the learning outcomes are not being met.
4. Changes made to the programme specification that alter the learning outcomes so that some accreditation criteria cannot be met.
5. Any changes made to the University that result in a failure to deliver the learning outcomes of the programme which result in a departure from the Society's accreditation criteria.

The withdrawal of accreditation from a course will not be done without consultation with the University. The degree awarding University should notify the Society of change(s) made to the programme structure or its delivery, with a clear rationale for the change(s). The Society will review the changes and appoint a review panel for a site visit, if necessary. If it is found that the change(s) lead(s) to a failure to deliver a learning outcome(s) that covers accreditation criteria/criterion, then conditions will be set. If these conditions are not met within the academic year of the assessment, the accreditation status may be withdrawn.

If accreditation is removed, all reference to the RSB accreditation must be removed from websites and public documents. While the RSB understands that course guides may be published many months in advance of a new cohort starting, information on websites can, and should be, removed as soon as the accreditation is rescinded. Because loss of accreditation means that RSB can no longer comment on the quality even of degree cohorts already at the University, only cohorts who have graduated during the accreditation period can claim benefit of an accredited degree. The RSB will remove the University programmes from the list of accredited programmes maintained on the RSB website. Information relevant to the accreditation will be kept for the five years following a lapse in Accreditation, in case of questions by graduates of the programmes.

International Advanced accreditation

International Advanced Accreditation by the RSB highlights degrees and training programmes which support the development of specific skill sets, competencies and training which will enhance Life and Health Science research. The International Advanced Accreditation criteria require institutions to provide evidence that their graduates meet defined sets of learning outcomes, including gaining substantial research experience.

Full time Master's or Doctoral training programmes, taken over a 12-month period, must include a period of research practice in an environment appropriate to the subject of the training programme – many of the core requirements will have been recognised in the admissions process to the Master's programme.

When learning outcomes have been designed to align with or fulfil a particular need, the university should clearly explain this link so that the review panel can accurately assess the success of the course in delivering its stated objectives. This could include, for example, the expectations of employers, learned societies or other similar sponsor or stakeholder.

Please contact the accreditation team at accreditation@rsb.org.uk for any further information about our services or to start an application.

Criteria for International Advanced Accreditation

To achieve International Advanced Accreditation for a programme, universities will need to provide robust evidence of excellence in support of their application, which will be judged by peer review against the standard metrics listed below. The evidence for (A) and (E) should show how the appropriate intended learning outcomes are being achieved through appropriate assessment strategies.

A. Does the documentation indicate that the programme incorporates academic excellence within the teaching programme supporting a structured learning opportunity? Does documentation provide evidence of academic excellence:

- i. Knowledge and understanding of the specialist subject informed by current scholarship and research
- ii. Proven practical expertise in the laboratory, field and elsewhere appropriate for the main research project
- iii. Knowledge and understanding of research methodology
- iv. A critical awareness of current issues and developments in the subject area
- v. Completion of an extended research project in the subject area, including a clear demonstration of critical analysis
- vi. Communication of the research outcomes appropriately and effectively
- vii. Appropriate and clear assessment criteria, mapped to the learning outcomes
- viii. Specialisation in a subject area that supports the development of specific skills

B. Research-active environment, as evidenced by:

- i. An appropriate breadth in the area being offered for accreditation
- ii. Research excellence, as defined by appropriate national and international criteria
- iii. Appropriate training in research methodology and techniques and assessment
- iv. The provision of projects in research-active environments, where the effort required by the student for the research component of this work would normally be the equivalent of at least 2/3 of the total credits in a year, of which 3/4 should be accounted for by the project

C. Does the documentation provide evidence of an infrastructure supporting the incorporation of excellence within the teaching programme? This will include:

- i. Access to, and standards of, library and information and communications technology
- ii. Learning and teaching environments and research laboratories and facilities
- iii. Experience and expertise of teaching team
- iv. Processes to support monitoring achievement throughout, including process of approving progression to higher levels
- v. A track record of success for the programme's graduates in research in industry or higher education
- vi. Provision of necessary and appropriate research facilities and equipment
- vii. There is an approach to general management skills, including project management
- viii. Ethical, health and safety and regulatory issues are appropriately addressed

D. Does the documentation provide evidence of generic and specific skill acquisition appropriate to the degree title? This will include:

- i. Appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding in physics, chemistry and mathematics necessary to apply advanced bioscience techniques related to the subject area
- ii. The ability to study independently
- iii. Experience of using a range of techniques and research methods in a safe and responsible manner
- iv. An analytical, problem-solving approach to their work and the ability to critically evaluate evidence
- v. An understanding of research design
- vi. Effective communication through a variety of media, to non-specialist audiences
- vii. An appreciation for the significance of ethical, social and legal issues and critical awareness of current developments in the subject
- viii. Prepare the student for a future career
- ix. There is evidence of an approach to the development of teams and different team members (including leadership)
- x. Students should understand the statistical aspects of experimental procedures, encompassing the analysis of collected data, the design and analysis of studies, the development of calibration and analysis techniques, and the robustness of data
- xi. Awareness of data banks and analysis of large data sets
- xii. Health and safety training in the laboratory/field

E. The period of practice is that part of the course concerned with a research project completed in a work environment – it is where the student experiences the practice of science. The nature of the research may be experimental, where it is performed in a laboratory, or computational linked to bioinformatics, or it may be more related to bio-enterprise. It is expected that the research will generate information that can be critically evaluated. The work environment may be a research laboratory within an academic institute or at an industrial or commercial company, or in a designated research area such as a specific field location or aboard a research ship. For accreditation, when the student is working away from the home institution, it is important that the mechanisms for monitoring student progress be clearly described.

- i. A period of practice will allow the student to apply the knowledge and learning gained in their academic training while carrying out their own supervised research in an active research environment
- ii. The research will be related to, and draw on, the theoretical knowledge and skills already acquired during the degree programme
- iii. The student effort should be substantial (equivalent to 1/2 of the total credits in a year or more for a research-based course), and evidence of achieving the learning outcomes should be clearly documented against the produced written work
- iv. Throughout the period of practice, the interaction of the student with the supervisor should be documented allowing progress to be clearly monitored
- v. The period of practice should be passed for the award of the degree

Please contact the Accreditation Team at accreditation@rsb.org.uk to register your interest and for provision of the International Advanced Accreditation formal expression of interest form and template evidence matrix.

Appendix A – Process of applying for accreditation or consultancy

Universities should first indicate their interest in seeking accreditation/consultancy by contacting the Accreditation Team at accreditation@rsb.org.uk. Following initial conversations, the University will be required to complete and submit a formal expression of interest form, which the accreditation team will send through upon request.

Once a site visit/suitable alternative to a visit or conference call date has been agreed, a suitable document submission date shall be arranged (usually 8 weeks before). Documentation for the stage one review should be submitted to the Accreditation Team by 17:00 (UK time) on the specified date. For guidance, please contact the Accreditation Team by emailing accreditation@rsb.org.uk.

The following documents should be submitted electronically to the Royal Society of Biology:

1. Letter of intent

This should summarise how the programme meets the criteria for accreditation and characteristics of an accredited programme (see advice below). Only one letter of intent is required per application, and must refer to all programmes seeking accreditation/consultancy.

The letter of intent must include:

- a list of the degree titles for which accreditation/consultancy is sought
- a brief summary of the structure of the degrees and any options
- a declaration of any articulation agreements if appropriate
- the numbers of students enrolled on each degree programme
- date of the last periodic review
- paragraphs summarising how the programme(s) meet each of the criteria
- a brief explanation of how the submitted evidence is organised (e.g. a list of folders and their contents, this can be provided as a separate paper attached to the letter of intent if desired)

2. Completed evidence matrix

3. Table of technical skills

4. Programme specifications

5. Programme details, including:

- programme structure including optional routes (where only a specific route or pathway within the core degree programme will meet the accreditation criteria, the University should ensure that this is made clear)
- knowledge and skills learning outcomes
- list of acronyms and definitions used by the University
- the learning, teaching and assessment strategy
- student handbook(s)

International applications should include a general description of the structure of degrees for their institution, i.e. if using credit hours, how many hours do the different forms of teaching equate to; how many credits are prescribed as general or specialist; any other requirements for graduation.

6. Course (or unit) descriptors and handbooks

7. Resource documents:
 - an overview of the facilities available at the University relating to the programme
 - brief résumés (or equivalent) for the programme leader(s) and key academic staff involved in the programme
8. Appropriate internal and/or external reviews and reports
9. Details of procedures and processes adopted within the University, for consideration and approval of ethical issues and Home Office Licences (or equivalent), as relevant to the programme submitted for accreditation. Evidence of student exposure to and understanding of these processes
10. Destination data for recent graduates of the programme
11. Most recent summative assessments (e.g. examination papers, etc.); coursework assessments may be listed and/or described in student handbooks (item 5) or course descriptors (item 6), if so they need not be sent as a separate file

Where internal programme reviews contain the required information (i.e. items 4 to 11), it is perfectly acceptable to submit these.

Wherever possible, online access to the University's e-learning facilities should be made available to the Assessment Panel.

Evidence matrix

All applying Universities must complete at least one evidence matrix. For a complex and broad set of programmes the University may consider it easier to present a matrix for each set of related awards, however, this should be discussed with the Accreditation Team in the first instance. If existing documentation does not summarise where skills are taught and assessed additional tables as appendices to the matrix should be supplied.

For ease of reference, the matrix is based on the criteria and closely follows the template for the Stage One Report used by assessors.

A template for the matrix can be provided by the Accreditation team upon request – please email accreditation@rsb.org.uk.

Appendix B – Assessment/Consultancy panel membership and guidelines

The Assessment/Consultancy Panel considers the evidence submitted by universities through an initial application and site visit. If accreditation is sought, the panel will provide a recommendation to the Accreditation Review Panel (a subcommittee of the Accreditation Committee). The decision approval process for accreditation is shown in Figure 2 below. The assessment is not simply a tick-box exercise and requires academic judgement.

Figure 2 – Decision Approval Process for Accreditation



A Panel will include a panel Chair with experience of chairing, approvals, and quality assurance, and at least one other panel member. Panel members are selected based on their experience and subject area expertise. The RSB provides training for panel members, administrative support, and a panel secretary for the site visit.

The size and composition of a Panel may depend on the type of programme(s) under review. Members of the Panel are expected to be up to date with current practice in higher education with a focus on quality assurance, programme design and content. One member of the Panel will be from Africa. For programmes delivered in French, at least one member of the Panel will be French-speaking.

Members of the Panel are expected to:

- Complete a comprehensive online distance training course
- Read all initial documentation submitted by the applying University and work with the Chair to complete the Stage One Report
- Take part in a pre-meeting with other panel members
- Attend a stage two site visit to the applying University, or an agreed alternative
- Work with the panel Chair to draft a Stage Two Report for submission to the Accreditation Review Panel

Members of the Panel must abide by the Royal Society of Biology Code of Conduct and declare, prior to the start of the process, any potential conflicts of interest with the degree programme under review.

Conflicts of interest

Members of the Panel must not have worked for, or acted as an external examiner for, the University being assessed in the last five years. Members of the Panel are expected to (and will be given the opportunity to) declare any previous working relationships with the University that would prevent them assessing a particular application.

Code of Conduct

In the course of conducting assessments for the RSB, the Panel may come in contact with individually identifiable, commercially sensitive and/or confidential information. Panel members must treat all information received or obtained while performing any duties on behalf of the RSB as confidential and not divulge such information to any other person or organisation unless authorised to do so. This responsibility continues after the assessment has concluded.

In order to ensure that universities, the scientific community, and the wider public may have confidence in the effectiveness and impartiality of the RSB's Degree Accreditation Programme, members of the Panel must undertake to:

- Inform the RSB of any potential conflicts of interest as soon as possible
- Not use their position as a member of the Panel to promote their personal, professional or business interests
- Respect the confidentiality of information acquired to them solely by virtue of their position as a member of the Panel and not discuss any specific aspects of an ongoing application with anyone working/studying at, or associated with, the University being accredited or any other unauthorised person
- Attend all meetings at which their presence is required
- Prepare for meetings by reading all papers issued beforehand
- Direct relevant questions about an accreditation event to the RSB
- Be fair, open-minded, unbiased and non-prejudicial on grounds of gender, race, disability, lifestyle, culture, beliefs, sexuality, age or any other irrelevant ground and not use any language that could be deemed offensive or discriminatory
- Not request or accept any inducement, gift, commission, discount or any other profit from the University being assessed or from any other interested person

Adhering to this Code of Conduct is a minimum expectation of all members of the Royal Society of Biology Panel. The RSB reserves the right to revoke membership of the Panel if any panel member does not abide by this Code of Conduct.

The Panel will be covered by public liability and/or indemnity insurance for committee members held by the Society whilst carrying out assessments.

Appendix C – Guidance for Consultancy meeting in the UK

Key representatives from the programme team of the applying institution are expected to visit the UK in order to meet with the Consultancy Panel. The Panel shall make it known in advance, who they would like to attend the meetings in the UK, but at a minimum, the representatives should be knowledgeable about the programmes being reviewed. The Society shall be responsible for organising a venue for the two days of the visit. It is likely that this venue shall be at, or close to, the offices of the Royal Society of Biology in London, but this shall be confirmed during the application. Please note that there is an option for the visit to take place at the university if desired. In this case, the visit will follow a similar process as that in Appendix D.

Day 1

09:00 – 11:00 Private meeting of Consultancy Panel

11:00 – 13:00 Introductions and presentation by Programme Team representatives

The visiting representative(s) from the Programme Team should prepare a presentation of no longer than 30 minutes duration on the degree programme(s) being submitted for review. This should describe any unique or particularly valuable features of the programme(s) and highlight the links between research and teaching on the programme. This will be followed by a discussion of the programmes with the assessors.

13:00 – 13:30 Lunch

The Society shall provide a light lunch for the visiting programme team representatives and the Panel.

13:30 – 15:00 Meeting with students

The HEI should issue an invitation to students and recent graduates to speak to the Panel about their learning experiences via a video conference. The Panel ask that a selection of 10-20 student representatives across all years of the programme should be available, including, if possible, recent graduates and students currently undertaking placements. The timing of this stage of the visit is flexible in order to take account of, and facilitate, any time difference.

15:00 – 17:00 Virtual Tour of facilities

A tour *via* live video conference or pre-recorded video should be arranged to give the Panel a chance to see laboratories and other facilities available to students on the programme(s) being considered. This should concentrate on facilities integral to learning and teaching for students on the programme(s) being assessed.

The Panel may request to see particular laboratories or facilities and advance notice will be given if this is the case. The timing of this stage of the visit is flexible in order to take account of, and facilitate, any time difference. Please alert the RSB if this is not a suitable time for the tour.

17:00 – 17:30 Private meeting of Consultancy Panel

17:30 End of Day 1

Day 2**09:00 – 10:30 Private meeting of Consultancy Panel****10:30 – 12:00 Meeting with Programme Team**

The Panel will meet with the visiting representatives from the Programme Team. If appropriate, the rest of the Programme Team may be included *via* video conference.

The Panel will discuss aspects arising from the Stage One Report. Normally this report will set the agenda for the meeting; however, it is possible that topics may arise from the presentation or any documentation submitted after receipt of the Stage One Report. The programme team will have the opportunity to respond and provide further evidence. The programme team may wish to explain how they have addressed, or plan to address, any issues or to query the Panel's interpretation of the evidence provided.

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch with Programme Team

The Society shall provide a light lunch for the visiting programme team representatives and the Panel.

13:00 – 15:00 Private meeting of Panel

The Panel may require that additional information is made available during this meeting.

15:00 – 16:00 (approx.) Feedback to the Programme Team

The timing of the feedback session is flexible depending on the private meeting of the Panel. The Chair will deliver feedback to the visiting programme team representatives including the provisional outcome of the process where possible (final decisions are made by the RSB's Accreditation Committee). If appropriate, the rest of the Programme Team may be included via video conference.

16:00 End of Day 2

Appendix D – Guidance for the Accreditation site visit

The RSB is developing a network of African assessors to be involved in accreditation assessments, alongside the assessment panel based in the UK. The exact agenda for each site visit will be decided through discussions between the RSB and the centre undergoing accreditation.

Before the site visit

The University will book accommodation including breakfast for the Panel members in a suitable nearby hotel. If necessary, the University should also arrange transport for the Panel to the venue for 09:00 on the mornings of the visit.

Days of site visit

The example agenda and guidance provided below are flexible and subject to change, depending on individual circumstances. All times given are approximate. A conference room, large enough for all meetings, with tea, coffee and water, set out in boardroom style should be provided. Student project reports and any additional documentation requested should be made available for viewing.

Day 1

09:00 – 11:00

Private meeting of Assessment Panel

A private room should be provided for this meeting. During this time, student project reports and any additional documentation requested should be made available for viewing by the Panel.

11:00 – 13:00

Introductions and presentation by Programme Team

The University should prepare a presentation of no longer than 30 minutes duration on the degree programme(s) being submitted for accreditation, preferably given by the programme leader. This should describe any unique or particularly valuable features of the programme(s) and provide details of any optional pathways. The presentation should not attempt to answer any of the questions arising from the Stage One report.

13:00 – 15:00

Lunch and meeting with students

The University should provide a light lunch for the Panel and the students in a suitable venue. The University should issue an invitation to students and recent graduates to speak to the Panel about their learning experiences. The Panel ask that a selection of 10-20 student representatives across all years of the programme should attend, including, if possible, recent graduates.

15:00 – 17:00

Tour of facilities

A tour should be arranged to give the Panel a chance to see laboratories and other facilities available to students on the programme(s) being considered. This should concentrate on facilities integral to learning and teaching for students on the programme(s) being assessed.

The Panel may request to see particular laboratories or facilities and advance notice will be given if this is the case. Where visits to particular facilities that may have restricted access are required, the University is kindly asked to arrange this in advance. The timing of this stage of the visit is flexible to

ensure that the labs will be in use during the tour of the facilities. Please alert the RSB if this is not a suitable time for the tour.

17:00 – 17:30 **Private meeting of Assessment Panel**

17:30 **End of day 1**

Day 2

09:00 – 10:30 **Private meeting of Panel**

A private meeting room should be provided. The Panel may require that additional documentation is made available during this meeting. Therefore, the contact details of a member of staff, who will be available to assist, should be provided.

10:30 – 12:00 **Meeting with Programme Team**

The Panel will meet with up to 10 key individuals from the Programme Team. The Panel may request particular individuals to be present, and the programme leader, placement co-ordinator and assessment officer (or equivalent) should all be present. The University should provide name boards including job titles for all attendees of this meeting.

The Panel will discuss aspects arising from the Stage One Report. Normally this report will set the agenda for the meeting; however, it is possible that topics may arise from the presentation or any documentation submitted after receipt of the Stage One Report. The programme team will have the opportunity to respond and provide further evidence. The programme team may wish to explain how they have addressed, or plan to address, any issues or to query the Panel's interpretation of the evidence provided.

12:00 – 13:00 **Lunch with Programme Team**

The University should provide a light lunch for the Panel and the programme team in a suitable venue.

13:00 – 15:00 **Private meeting of Panel**

A private meeting room should be provided. The Panel may require that additional documentation is made available during this meeting. Therefore, the contact details of a member of staff, who will be available to assist, should be provided.

15:00 – 16:00 **Feedback to the Programme Team**

The timing of the feedback session is flexible depending on the private meeting of the Panel. The Chair will deliver feedback to the programme team including the provisional outcome of the process where possible (final decisions are made by the RSB's Accreditation Committee).

16:00 **End of visit**

Appendix E – Guidelines for publicity following successful accreditation

Programmes undertaking the accreditation process will not be publicly announced until they have successfully completed the accreditation process and we ask that the University keep their participation confidential.

Further tailored publicity guidance (dependent on the type of accreditation awarded) will be sent once the University is successfully awarded accreditation.

Upon completion, successfully accredited degree programmes will be entitled to:

- Receive a certificate of Accreditation from the Royal Society of Biology
- Promote the accredited degree programme(s) and the benefits of studying and graduating from an accredited programme in marketing materials
- Use the Royal Society of Biology's name and logo on all materials relating to an accredited degree programme(s)
- Use the Royal Society of Biology's name and logo on the University's website in relation to the accredited degree programme(s)
- Use the Royal Society of Biology's name and logo on other marketing materials relating to the accredited degree programme(s), following permission from the Royal Society of Biology
- Use the following statement on the University's website in relation to the accredited degree programme(s):

This programme has been accredited by the Royal Society of Biology following an independent and rigorous assessment. Accredited degree programmes contain a solid academic foundation in biological knowledge and key skills, and prepare graduates to address the needs of employers. The accreditation criteria require evidence that graduates from accredited programmes meet defined sets of learning outcomes, including subject knowledge, technical ability and transferable skills.

Participating universities must not imply that other establishments, yet to achieve accreditation, are not offering relevant, high-quality programmes when referring to the Accreditation Programme in external literature.

The Royal Society of Biology maintains the right to request the removal of its name and all of its trademarks, including its logo, from printed or electronic material or publications at any time.

Appendix F – Glossary

Credit	An Academic credit is a unit giving weight to the value, level or time requirements for a given course. A number of different credit systems exist that are used in higher education including the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), CATS (Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme) in the UK, and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), while in the USA the Carnegie Unit and Student hour are used.
Contact hours	Refers to the amount of time a student spends learning in contact with teaching or associated staff.
Course Descriptor	Course descriptors set out all the information that students and staff need to know about individual courses, including: course aims, an outline of the topics covered/content, the number of credits associated with the course, restriction/prerequisites, how the content will be delivered and how content will be assessed.
Accreditation	Acknowledgement by an external body that a degree programme meets certain prescribed specifications.
Formative Assessment	Method of assessing student progress while learning is happening rather than at the end of a topic or sequence of lessons. Formative assessments can help teachers to identify areas that students are struggling with, so teaching can be adapted if needed.
International Consultancy	A process of improvement, based on the criteria for accreditation, available to courses that do not currently meet the key criteria for formal accreditation.
Learning outcomes	Statements that specify what a graduate will know, understand, or be capable of doing as a result of obtaining a qualification. Learning outcomes are expressed knowledge, understanding, skills, and attributes, and will have been assessed in the degree programme.

Outcomes-based procedures	The methods our Accreditation Assessment Panel use to judge applications for accreditation. Graduates of these courses meet our learning outcomes within the specified criteria upon graduation.
Period of practice	A planned period of learning which is designed to support the student's attainment of a defined set of learning outcomes relating to supervised practice in the particular subject area. It includes those circumstances where students have arranged their own learning opportunity with a provider, with the approval of the University. In all cases, programme providers are responsible for monitoring the quality of the learning experience, and its ongoing capacity to meet students' needs.
Programme	A coherent learning experience followed by an individual, the successful completion of which results in the conferment of a named higher education award.
Programme specification	A concise description of the intended learning outcomes of a University programme, and the means by which the outcomes are achieved and demonstrated.
Programme structure	Content of the programme, including mandatory and optional courses, rules for combining units and any specified pathways.
Quality assurance	A range of review procedures designed to safeguard academic standards and promote learning opportunities for students of acceptable quality.
RSB International Advanced Accreditation	Externally recognises academic excellence in the biosciences, highlighting degrees which educate the research and development leaders and innovators of the future.
Student workload	The time required for students to complete all planned learning activities such as attending lectures, seminars, independent and private study, placements, preparation of project examinations and so forth.
Subject Benchmark Statement (UK)	This is overseen by QAA in England, and provides a reference point against which outcomes can be measured. Subject Benchmark Statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject. They also represent general expectations about the standards for the award of qualifications at a given level and articulate the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should be able to demonstrate.
Summative assessment	Summative assessments are intended to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition and academic achievement at the end of a defined instructional period.



Becoming a member

The Royal Society of Biology is the leading professional body for the life sciences in the UK. Our vision is to represent all who are committed to biology in academia, industry, education and research; facilitate the promotion and translation of advances in biological science for national and international benefit; and engage and encourage public interest in the life sciences.

The Society represents more than 18,000 individual members, including professionals from industry, academia and education; practising scientists; students; and interested non-professionals.

As a member, you will receive a wide range of benefits, all designed to support you as a biologist, which include:

- **Access to Professional Registers and Continuing Professional Development programme:** Chartered Scientist (CSci), Chartered Biologist (CBiol), Chartered Science Teacher (CSciTeach), Registered Scientist (RSci) and Registered Science Technician (RSciTech)
- **Discounted training courses:** members save up to 50% when attending courses from our newly-expanded training programme
- **Networking events:** members are invited to attend nationally and locally organised events throughout the year, where they can meet peers, other biologists and senior Society staff
- **The Biologist magazine:** all members receive a subscription to our award-winning magazine, published six times a year
- **Opportunities to proactively support the future of UK biology:** input to our science and education policy work, and support our public engagement regional activities
- **Post-nominal letters:** Associates, Members and Fellows of the Society can use the appropriate post-nominal letters (AMRSB, MRSB or FRSB) to signify their status as a professional biologist





To find out more about degree accreditation visit www.rsb.org.uk/education/accreditation or contact the Accreditation Team at accreditation@rsb.org.uk

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