

**Science Council Registration Authority  
Accreditation Working Party**  
Review of Accreditation of Academic  
Programmes at Masters Level



**Purpose of the AWP**

Part of the remit of the Registration Authority (RA) is to ensure that quality standards met by Licensed Bodies are not just upheld but continue to be raised over time. One of the areas in which this is particularly important is in the procedures Licensed Bodies use to assess the requirement for M-Level education in their professional area, be it through formal accreditation of academic courses and workplace training schemes, or otherwise through assessing professional development.

A working party of the Registration Authority was set up to look into this and to make some recommendations to the RA to be used as guidance notes for future Licence renewals and applications. In the first instance, the AWP considered the accreditation procedures for academic programmes at Masters Level.

**Working Party**

Tony Ashmore (Chair)	Registration Authority / Royal Society of Chemistry
Mike Carpenter	British Psychological Society
Ed Hanson	Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology
Alan Wainwright	Institute of Biomedical Science
Ali Orr (Secretary)	Science Council

**The process**

The working party scrutinised several accreditation procedures provided by Licensed Bodies, looking at how the M-level is defined, how it is measured, any areas of good practice to share, and deficiencies to be learned from.

**Findings**

The general observation from the procedures that were scrutinised was that while there was a reasonable level of attention paid to processes, most Licensed Bodies insufficiently articulated the M-level within the professional area, and how in practice they satisfy themselves that the level has been met.

## **Guidelines**

The following are guidelines from the RA which the Science Council will use in assessing both Licence Applications and Renewals. Although Licensed Bodies would not be expected to structure their procedures exactly as set out, a statement against each of the guidelines detailing how they are met will be required at the application and review stages.

### **1. Definition of Accreditation and its purpose**

#### **1.1 Purpose of Accreditation**

That all graduates have fulfilled the set course outcomes and thereby meet the exemplifying academic requirements for Chartered Scientist registration.

#### **1.2 Academic Requirements for CSci registration**

Masters-level degrees awarded to students graduating from accredited courses are appropriate to their field of practice.

### **2. Definition of the professional area, in scientific terms**

There must be a clear elucidation of the professional area in which the Licensed Body operates, in a scientific context.

### **3. Definition of M-level in the professional area, against the QAA qualification framework**

The Licensed Body should interpret the QAA qualification framework (and by inference, the European Qualifications Framework) for Masters level against their own definition of the professional area in which they operate, to ensure that the criteria are such that all students on an accredited course have achieved M-level in that professional area.

### **4. Course content/structure**

The way that Licensed Bodies go about evaluating course content and structure is for them to decide. The Licensed Body would, however, need to satisfy itself that its definition of M-level in the professional area is met in practice by the course outcomes.

## **5. Quality Assurance (QA)**

The Licensed Body is expected to satisfy itself that QA and learning resources in the institution, applied to the course, are appropriate for delivery of the learning outcomes. These should include staffing and facilities.

## **6. Learning outside of the Home Institution**

Due attention should be paid to the learning that takes place outside of the Home Institution, both through years in industry and time spent at institutions abroad. Licensed bodies should satisfy themselves that time spent as part of the course, but outside the institution, enables students to meet course aims and that satisfactory QA procedures are in place.

## **7. Assessment of learning**

Licensed bodies should satisfy themselves that assessments require students to display the learning and skills required for successful achievement of the outcomes of the course and for the professional area. Licensed Bodies should satisfy themselves that appropriate QA systems are in place, including external moderation of the main elements of the assessment.

## **8. Sources of evidence for accreditation**

Licensed bodies should develop procedures for the systematic collection and evaluation of evidence from institutions, drawing as far as possible upon documents prepared by institutions for their own internal purposes. Self-evaluation by the institution, feedback from students and site visits are encouraged.

## **9. Mechanism for ongoing monitoring**

9.1 The Science Council would expect there to be an ongoing dialogue between the University and the Licensed Body for the period of accreditation.

9.2 The decision process should be a holistic one, rather than merely a checklist or audit of procedures.

9.3 The maximum duration for the accreditation of any course should be five years. Significant alterations to the course would require re-accreditation, in whole or in part.