### Geography programme accreditation handbook

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Introduction and aims

The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) is the learned society and professional body for geography. Formed in 1830 for ‘the advancement of geographical science’, today we deliver this objective through developing, supporting and promoting geographical research, expeditions and fieldwork, education, public engagement, and geography input to policy. We aim to foster an understanding and informed enjoyment of our world.

The Society supports higher education institutions and departments in their efforts to achieve excellence in their delivery of teaching and learning in geography. The programme accreditation scheme uses professional judgment to appraise geography programmes which seek to deliver the knowledge, understanding, skills, approaches and professional/personal attributes expected of high quality geography graduates, as recorded in the QAA subject benchmark statement for geography.

Programmes which are professionally accredited have been subject to a rigorous evaluation of their curriculum against external standards commonly held by the sector, in this case the geographical community.

The Society’s accreditation scheme aligns the criteria and process for accreditation with the learning outcomes described in the QAA’s subject benchmark statement for geography and existing quality assurance processes\(^1\). In making an application, departments are also given the opportunity to highlight what is distinctive in their delivery of geographical teaching and learning. Providers offering degree programmes in geography are free to decide upon the details of content, organisation and delivery.

For institutions offering geography programmes, receiving accreditation may:

- Help raise awareness and understanding of a programme, e.g. through including a programme’s accreditation status in marketing materials.
- Signal to students and employers (via KIS data and marketing materials) that a department’s teaching and learning is aligned with professional development, including a future career using geographical knowledge and skills
- Encourage programme leaders and other staff to engage in a quality self-assessment process, which will contribute towards existing measures for continuous quality improvement in a department and institution.

The scheme is voluntary and optional. This means that some UK geography programmes are not accredited even if they meet the criteria, or they may be accredited by other organisations. There are many excellent degree programmes delivered by UK universities which do not have accreditation. Departments offering programmes accredited by the Society must not imply that other departments or institutions who are yet to achieve accreditation are not offering relevant and high-quality programmes when making reference to their accreditation.

The programme accreditation scheme will be reviewed after the first year of delivery and changes may be made to the scheme at that time, and from time to time after that as needed. The Society also reserves the right to make spot checks of accredited programmes.

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\(^1\) The Subject Benchmark Statement for Geography defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. It was last updated in December 2014 following wide consultation. Download a copy in PDF format from the QAA website: [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2873#Vufmn-KLSHs](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2873#Vufmn-KLSHs)
Eligibility

The Society’s programme accreditation scheme is appropriate for those programmes which reference the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS) for Geography. This scheme takes account of the breadth of geography and its constituents, as acknowledged in the Subject Benchmark Statement. Applications for accreditation may be made for either existing or new programmes (where institutional approval has been received). In the case of new programmes that have not yet been offered or are in their first year of delivery, a shorter period of accreditation may be recommended.

The accreditation scheme will recognise geography programmes that seek to deliver learning outcomes aligned with the attributes outlined in the Subject Benchmark Statement. It does not accredit individuals who have completed the programme.

The Society welcomes applications for accreditation of:
- Single honours geography programmes;
- Combined programmes where geography makes up at least 60 per cent of the qualification content; and/or
- Integrated Master’s geography programmes, where a Master’s degree is awarded upon completion of a specialist fourth year.

For a geography programme to be considered for accreditation, an application should unambiguously demonstrate that it offers “…an integrated study of the complex reciprocal relationships between human societies and the physical, chemical and biological components of the Earth. Geographers study place, space and time, recognising the great differences and dynamics in cultures, political systems, economies, landscapes and environments across the world, and the links between them.”

[SBS, Section 1.1]

In doing so, accredited programmes are expected to demonstrate that graduates of their geography degrees are able to:

…articulate the knowledge, understanding, skills and approaches that characterise the discipline as a whole. They understand the place of their discipline in contributing a holistic perspective on natural and human worlds, interactions, and processes that is distinctive of geography compared with other disciplines. They understand the complex relationships between natural and human aspects of environments and landscapes.

[SBS, Section 3.2]

To achieve this, the programme is expected to include:
- Modules that deliver the knowledge, understanding, skills and approaches described in Section 3 of the Subject Benchmark Statement, and in particular:
  - “knowledge of the main dimensions and scales of economic, social, political and environmental inequality and difference, are familiar with a range of interpretations of these processes, and are aware that scale itself can be contested and politicised” [SBS, Section 3.8], and
  - “a clear understanding of the drivers of change in the natural world over space and time, demonstrating knowledge of the interactions between climate, ecosystems, and landscapes” [SBS, Section 3.9]
- fieldwork and experiential learning, including knowledge of and skills in a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to inform their conduct;
- progression towards a substantive depth of knowledge in sub-fields of the discipline, underpinned by appropriate skills and philosophies;
- development of a range of academic, professional and generic skills, including the ability to interpret and analyse information, and make use of appropriate information and communication technologies; and
- fostering of personal attributes relevant to the world beyond higher education.

[SBS, Section 2]

The accreditation scheme recognises that “a valued characteristic of the subject is its plurality of ways of knowing and understanding the world, and the depth to which individual specialisms are studied varies according to the nature of specific departments” [SBS, Section 1.6]. However, geography programmes that focus on a particular sub-disciplinary pathway (human geography, physical geography, environmental geography, geospatial/data approaches) are expected to demonstrate the delivery of key concepts, knowledges, understanding, skills, approaches and signature teaching methods that characterise the discipline as a whole, to all students at some point in the programme.

**Definition of ‘a programme’**

A programme is a course of study that leads to a named qualification. A separate application form is needed for each programme submitted for accreditation, but closely similar programmes may be ‘bundled’ into a single application form. A set of application forms from the same department may share a common set of mandatory/supporting evidence (e.g. shared library of module specifications). The application fee (see Fees) is payable for each programme/bundled set of programmes that is accredited, i.e. per application form considered.

**‘Bundled’ applications**

Where programmes share compulsory modules, and it is the optional elements that differentiate them, they may be treated as a single programme for the purposes of accreditation. Examples of this include programmes that have: a foundation year, a study abroad year, or a sandwich/industry placement year, or subject specialisms that are dependent on optional rather than compulsory module pathways. Please contact accreditation@rgs.org for advice before starting a bundled application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example programme structure</th>
<th>Application approach</th>
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| Common first year across breadth of geography, then an option to stay general or specialise (usually split by human or physical geography, but other options may be available).  
*For example – Enrol in BSc Geography, with option to progress via BSc Geography, BA Human Geography or BSc Physical Geography.* | If compulsory modules are largely common across programmes, single application.  
If compulsory modules split into specialisms by programme, separate applications required. |
| Specialisation or mostly separated pathways from first year with few or no shared modules  
*For example – BA Geography (Human) or BSc Geography (Physical)* | Separate applications |
| Joint programmes, e.g. BSc Geography with/and… (see note below) | Separate applications |

**Integrated Masters**

Integrated Masters programmes that share compulsory modules with an undergraduate programme (i.e. same pathways, with the exception of the specialist fourth year) may be included in the same application form as the related undergraduate programme.

Where an Integrated Masters programme follows a different module pathway to that of other undergraduate programmes offered, it must be submitted as a separate application.
Joint or combined programmes (major/minor; geography and/with…)

Given the expectation that geography must form at least 60% of the qualification, it is likely that only single honours geography or geography-major programmes will qualify for accreditation.

In some cases, applications may be received for joint programmes where the geography content is lower than 60%, but the balance of content may be argued as geography-under-another-code (e.g. earth sciences) or a subject whose content or teaching is highly complementary (e.g. transport studies, planning). The application must specifically address these issues, and adequately demonstrate that the overall qualification has sufficient geographical content at each level to qualify for accreditation as a geography degree. It must also still meet the subject coverage requirement described in the section on Eligibility.

If you are unsure about how many programmes/applications you are submitting, please contact accreditation@rgs.org for advice.

Application process

Applications for programme accreditation are administered by the Society’s Research and Higher Education Division (RHED), working with an Accreditation Review Panel (‘the Panel’) made up of academics and practitioners. The Panel will assess all applications and make recommendations for acceptance to the Society’s Council, which meets in June and December each year. All correspondence regarding the accreditation programme should be sent via RHED at accreditation@rgs.org.

Information about the scheme will be published on the Society’s website at www.rgs.org/accreditation.

Applications for RGS-IBG accreditation must conform to any relevant individual institutional procedures regarding accreditation. The Society aims for the assessment process to complement other measures of quality already in place in departments/institutions, such as institutional processes for the development and review of programmes and their specifications.

A completed application for programme accreditation includes:

- A completed Application Form, which will contain a written reflection on the programme’s content and aims, and the development of professional practice with reference to graduate attributes (in total 2000 to 4000 words for both sections)²

Please submit one application form per programme (see section on Definition of a programme). Mandatory and supporting evidence, especially module specifications may be submitted in a shared folder structure if files are appropriately labelled and referenced within the application form.

- Mandatory supporting evidence, to include:
  o Programme specification
  o Module specifications (with module code and name in the title)
  o A module map or diagram showing the compulsory and optional modules within the programme and any relevant pathways (examples available – contact accreditation@rgs.org for advice if your Department does not have one). To the

² If accreditation is sought for multiple programmes, it may be possible to combine them into a single form/application in certain circumstances. Please contact accreditation@rgs.org for advice before starting a combined application.
extent possible, indicate where modules contribute to programme learning outcomes.

- Student handbook (or any other documents that regulate student progression through this programme and its modules)
- External examiner reports for the past three years (or for as long as the course has been delivered if shorter), and the Department’s responses to each of those
- Most recent Periodic Review Report (or evidence of programme approval if it has not yet been through Periodic Review)

- Any additional supporting evidence, at the discretion of the applicant.

The completed application form and supporting evidence should demonstrate the department’s commitment to excellence in teaching and learning, and a commitment to continuous improvement in the same, through:

- the programme’s aims and delivery, in terms of breadth and depth of geographical knowledge, understanding, skills and approaches developed, and the supporting infrastructure and resources; and
- the development of professional and personal attributes of geography graduates, laying a foundation for the use of geographical skills and knowledge post-graduation.

Further guidance for completing the application form can be found later in this handbook in the section Guidance on application form and evidence.

Applications should be sent to accreditation@rgs.org before the next deadline. Deadlines will be published on the Society’s website at www.rgs.org/accreditation.

The next deadlines are:

- Friday 29 September 2017
- Friday 30 March 2018
- Friday 28 September 2018
- Friday 29 March 2019

Applications will be checked for eligibility and completeness before being prepared for assessment by the Accreditation Review Panel. Applicants will be kept informed of progress.

The Chair of the Accreditation Review Panel may request that the Department sends a representative (at the cost of the Department) to meet with the Panel during their review meeting. A site visit to the institution will not normally be required, but the Society reserves the right to request one at the discretion of the Panel. If a visit is required, an additional fee will be due to cover costs.

Accreditation is valid for six years. Departments must apply for re-accreditation to one of the two Panel meetings taking place in the year prior to the end of their accreditation (i.e. after five years and before six years of accreditation). If a programme is being offered for the first time or is in the first year of delivery, the Panel may recommend a shorter period for initial accreditation. Applications for accreditation are welcomed at any stage of a programme’s life-cycle, but departments are recommended to seek (re-)accreditation in the year after the programme’s Periodic Review as this will provide the strongest supporting evidence for the application. The Society reserves the right to make spot checks of accredited programmes within the period of accreditation.

Departments must also accept and follow the terms and conditions of accreditation in order to maintain their programme’s accredited status; see Conditions of accreditation.
Application process flowchart

Department submits application for programme accreditation

RHED reviews application for completeness and relevance. Fees invoiced/paid.

Suitable applications are passed to Panel for bi-annual meetings (Mar and Oct each year).

Panel assesses applications. (Department may be asked to send representative to meeting.)

Is accreditation recommended?

No

RHED reports outcome. If resubmission invited by Panel, RHED advises: modifications required, process and timeline for re-submission.

Yes

Department submits modified application to RHED.

Revised submission is reviewed in line with Panel request.

Ratification by Council.
Programme is accredited and Department is informed. Panel may provide feedback and suggestions for changes to programme.
Register of accredited programmes is updated.

Is accreditation recommended?

Yes

No

Accreditation is not awarded. Panel will provide explanatory comments. A new application may be made after 12 months has elapsed, to include a statement explaining how comments were addressed.
Fees

Application fee

The one-off application fee for accreditation is £500 + VAT (totalling £600) per programme to be accredited. When a bundle of programmes is submitted in a single application form, this attracts a single application fee. Please see the section on Definition of ‘a programme’ for more information.

This fee is non-refundable. The accreditation application fee will be invoiced at the point of submission and must be paid in full before accreditation can be formally awarded by Council. Invoice details should be included in your application form.

Annual registration fee

An annual registration fee of £150 + VAT (totalling £180) per Department will be levied to maintain accreditation. This is a flat fee regardless of the number of programmes accredited within a department. The annual registration fee will be invoiced on the anniversary of accreditation (approximately May or December each year). If Departments wish to be invoiced for the application fee and annual registration fees in a single up-front invoice, this can be arranged.

At the end of the accreditation period (normally after five years and before six years) a new application for accreditation must be made. An application for re-accreditation may be made sooner in order to align accreditation with the programme’s Periodic Review timetable.

The Society reserves the right to review and change the application and annual registration fees from time to time.
Guidance on application form and evidence

There is no maximum word count for the application. However, we would normally expect to receive between 2000 and 4000 words in total for Parts 1 and 2 of the form. There is no maximum word count for supporting evidence, but please be respectful of the Panel’s time when considering what to include; non-written evidence (e.g. video, web) may also be submitted.

We will not count module titles or references to the titles of evidence within your word count. Please include the full names of these in your application text to help the Panel. Please do not use embedded links to files. Please check that links to websites work outside your institution.

**Part 1: Programme**

This section should demonstrate:

- the aims of the programme (both in terms of alignment with the subject benchmark statement for geography, and what makes it a distinctive programme)
- subject coverage and integration, with specific reference to the requirements set out in Section 3 of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Geography, and how the compulsory elements of the programme address these
- the learning and teaching approaches
- the assessment strategies (both formative and summative)
- how excellence is being developed and maintained, including: responses to issues raised in External Examiners’ reports and/or Periodic Review reports, and a description of any other processes or opportunities for critical reflection in the Department that offer a chance to make changes with input from staff, students and/or external practitioners.

Reference is expected to:

- tutor-led (taught module) and student-led learning opportunities
- individual research projects
- opportunities for practical, field and laboratory based activities, and training and other development to support these
- staff, infrastructure and other resources that support the delivery of teaching and how these are developed/enhanced to support and improve the delivery of geography teaching
- student and external practitioner involvement in curriculum design and/or quality assurance for the programme.

Please include specific geographical examples that demonstrate how your activities have been delivered in the context of this programme – what you do, why you do it, what effect it has. For example, *Module 123* develops core skill *abc* by *xyz* for the benefit of…

When using examples please also make it clear whether it applies to some or all students on the programme (compulsory vs optional).

**Part 2: Professional practice**

This section should describe how your programme develops the professional geographical skills and practice of students, including details of:

- how the development of employability and graduate attributes is embedded within the programme, either through specific experiences and/or across modules
- opportunities for placements and work experience
- project planning and management at individual or team levels
- career and professional planning

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3 You may find it a useful exercise to undertake a mapping of your modules against the Subject Benchmark Statement for Geography Section 3. This can be included in your evidence.
• inputs from professions and employers using geographical skills and knowledge.

Please make clear the extent of involvement and inputs from outside the department, and outside the institution, and whether these opportunities are available to all or some students.

You should describe the attributes of your geography graduates, and the nature and scale of resources deployed to support the acquisition of their skills and attributes.

In each section, reference should be made to the mandatory and other supporting evidence, but any application that duplicates these without explanatory comment will be returned to the applicant.

**Part 3: Supporting evidence**

The following evidence must be submitted with your application form, as individual files, and preferably in a text-searchable PDF format:

- Programme specification
- Module specifications (please name these using the module code and name)
- A module map or diagram showing the compulsory and optional modules within the programme and any relevant pathways (examples available – contact accreditation@rgs.org for advice if your Department does not have one). To the extent possible, indicate where modules contribute to programme learning outcomes
- Student handbook (or any other documents that regulate student progression through this programme and its modules)
- External examiner reports for the past three years (or for as long as the course has been delivered if shorter) and your Department’s responses to these
- Most recent Periodic Review Report (or evidence of programme approval if it has not yet had a Periodic Review)

You may submit up to five further pieces of evidence to support any aspect of your application. These may be submitted in any format. Please be respectful of the Panel’s time when considering what else to include with your application. Examples might include:

- benchmark compliance statement (mapping programme/modules against SBS Section 3);
- assessment strategy or matrix (mapping modules against assessment types);
- learning outcome mapping (mapping module learning outcomes against programme learning outcomes);
- employability and attribute mapping (mapping module learning outcomes against graduate attribute and employability outcomes);
- staff data and information about continuing professional development or recognition in the area of teaching and learning;
- student summary feedback, KIS / NSS data relevant to the programme;
- destination statistics for graduates (DLHE or departmental) for this programme.

All supporting evidence must be submitted electronically (as a zipped folder by email or secure file transfer) preferably using a folder structure to sort files. Electronic file names should include the institution name and nature of evidence, which should be cross-referenced with the list in Section 3 of your application form.

RHED will review applications for completeness and relevance. In cases where the Panel would like more information, the Chair of the Accreditation Review Panel reserves the right to request that the Department sends a representative (at their own cost) to speak with the Panel during their review meeting. A site visit to the institution by Panel members will not normally be required for the assessment process, but the Society reserves the right to request one.
Assessment criteria

An application should aim to demonstrate:

- Clear and unambiguous subject integration (please see the section on Eligibility)
- That the scope of the course content is appropriate
- That a full range of delivery and assessment methods are in use, which are appropriately challenging and rigorous
- Detailed course materials which include clearly defined course objectives, explaining how the course will meet its objectives
- The full range of benefits a student can expect to derive from completing the course
- A clear understanding of the attributes (knowledge, understanding, skills, approaches, personal/professional attributes) gained by graduates of the programme in terms of the current and future opportunities and breadth of outcomes
- Appropriateness of module pathways (especially where multiple pathways are offered as specialisms)
- Involvement in the course by external practitioners (from outside the institution)
- Internal and external validation and moderation of assessments of learners' work
- Clearly documented quality assurance arrangements, which include adequate opportunity for students / external examiners / industry / employers / etc to influence the ongoing quality and future development of the programme

Notification of outcomes

Once an application has completed the peer review process, the applicant will be advised of the outcome in one of the following categories:

- Application for accreditation successful – recommended for acceptance by Council;
- A request for further information or clarification, which may require re-submission; or
- Application for accreditation unsuccessful.

Formal notification of programme accreditation will be made once the recommendation for accreditation has been accepted by the Society's Council. Formal notification will comprise:

- A letter to the department/institution confirming accreditation, with permission to use the Society’s name and logo in relation to the accredited course/s; and
- Publication of the institution, department and course information in the register of accredited courses.

In the event that accreditation is unsuccessful, the Panel will provide feedback to the applicant. A new application for accreditation may be made after one year has elapsed (from the date of last application), with a covering letter that explains how the Panel’s feedback has been addressed.

Process for appeals

All applications receive careful scrutiny by the Accreditation Review Panel. Their recommendation is confirmed by the Society’s Council. Appeals may therefore not be made against the professional judgement of the Panel or Council.

The sole ground on which an appeal may be made is one based on procedure. Anyone wishing to make an appeal against a decision should write to the Society no later than two months after the result of the application is announced, citing the specific decision and setting out clearly the substantive basis of the appeal. The Society will respond in writing within 30 days.
Conditions of accreditation

Accreditation will be awarded, and maintained each year, subject to the following terms and conditions:

1) Payment of the one-off application fee in full, currently set at £500 + VAT per programme
2) Payment of an annual registration fee, currently set at £150 + VAT per department
3) Following the guidance for the use of the RGS-IBG accreditation logo mark and statement
4) Notification of any changes to programmes.

Changes to accredited programmes

The Society accepts that programmes of study evolve to reflect the latest developments in the subject and to meet the needs of students and employers. Providers offering degree programmes in geography are free to decide upon, and are responsible for, the details of content and organisation of their programmes.

If the content or delivery method of a programme will change substantially during the period of accreditation, departments are asked to send a summary of changes to the Society (accreditation@rgs.org) each year at the time of re-registration, and/or at the point in their institutional review process where input from an accreditation provider is normally expected.

The Panel expects to review any changes to accredited programmes that fall into the following categories:

- Any changes to credit weighting, content or assessment methods in core modules;
- Changes that affect the mapping of the programme against the Geography Subject Benchmark Statement, especially the balance of human/physical geography across the programme (bearing in mind the expectation that an accredited programme adequately demonstrates Sections 3.2, 3.8 and 3.9 of the Subject Benchmark Statement); and/or
- Any other changes that would trigger an institutional review, or which would require feedback from an accreditation provider before institutional sign-off may occur.

Changes to programmes accredited by RGS-IBG must conform to any relevant individual institutional policies and procedures regarding accreditation.

How to notify changes to accredited programmes

Institutions that are making changes to accredited programmes are asked to send the following information to the Panel (accreditation@rgs.org):

1. A short covering letter that clearly describes the nature and scope of the changes, with reference to supporting evidence, and clearly setting out:
   - What has/will be changed;
   - What impact this will have on: the programme content and aims (with reference to subject coverage and integration as per the Subject Benchmark Statement for Geography); the development of professional practice in graduates of the programme.

2. Supporting evidence related to the changes, e.g. updated and/or new programme or module specifications (with inline tracked changes or comments highlighting changes where possible).
Timetable for reviewing changes to accredited programmes

The Society expects that most institutions will notify changes to accredited programmes at one of the two deadlines for applications, normally the end of March and September, each year. The changes will be considered at the next Panel meeting, and an outcome notified following ratification by Council.

Where an institution requires a more immediate response or feedback, to inform an internal review process, it may be possible to arrange Panel feedback outside of the two review cycles. This will depend on the scope of changes.

The Society may ask a sub-set of the Panel, which would ordinarily comprise three panellists (which will normally include at least one Panel member who looked at the last full application for the programme and the Panel Chair), to review and provide feedback on changes to accredited programmes outside of the two annual review cycles in the following circumstances:

1) Where the department requires a decision or feedback before the next Panel meeting in order to allow institutional review processes to proceed; AND
2) Where the changes do not affect more than 50% of core/compulsory credits in a single year.

Any decision or feedback provided by the Panel sub-set will then be ratified at the next Panel meeting.

If the circumstances for an out-of-cycle review are not met, the proposed changes will be assessed as part of the normal review cycle by the full Panel.
Accreditation Review Panel

Appointments

The Society will appoint an expert Accreditation Review Panel to assess and make recommendations on all applications for programme accreditation.

The Accreditation Review Panel will normally have a minimum of four and maximum of six members, invited from:

- Geographers who hold teaching and learning leadership positions at a senior level in Higher Education
- Geographers working in industry, at least one of whom will be a Chartered Geographer;
- Others with recognised expertise in teaching and learning in higher education geography, at the invitation of Vice President for Research and Higher Education.

The Panel may draw upon the expertise of the Society’s Research and Higher Education Committee.

All members will have experience of approvals and quality assurance and be expected to be up to date with current practice in higher education. The Research and Higher Education Division will maintain a list of suitable persons to contribute to the Panel each year. The Society is committed to equal opportunities and endeavours to appoint a Panel representative of the community.

Panel membership will be for a period of three years, with the opportunity to renew for an additional three year term. Terms of appointment will be staggered to ensure continuity. All appointments will be approved by the RGS-IBG’s Council.

The Panel will meet at least twice per year, usually in March and November, to review applications and make recommendations to Council. An additional meeting may be added if the volume of applications requires it. Application deadlines will usually be 4-6 weeks before each meeting, and will be advertised on the Society’s website (www.rgs.org/accreditation).

In cases where the Panel would like more information, the Chair of the Accreditation Review Panel reserves the right to request that the Department sends a representative (at their own cost) to speak with the Panel during their review meeting. A site visit to the institution by Panel members will not normally be required for the assessment process, but the Society reserves the right to request one.

Guidelines for Panel members

Conflicts of interest: Members of the Panel may not have worked for, acted as an external examiner for, or have had any other personal connection to, the institution/department being assessed in the last five years. Members of the Panel will be given the opportunity to, and must declare, prior to the start of any accreditation assessment cycle, any potential conflicts of interest with the applications under consideration.

Confidentiality: In the course of assessing accreditation applications, members of the Panel may come into 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 Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) 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.

Conduct: In order that institutions and departments, the geography community and the wider public may have confidence in the accreditation scheme’s impartiality and effectiveness, members of the Panel must:
• Inform the RGS-IBG of any conflicts of interest as soon as practically possible
• Respect the confidentiality of the information they come into contact with in the course of acting as a Panel member
• Not use their position on the panel to advance or promote their personal, professional or business interests
• Attend all meetings at which their presence is required
• Prepare for meetings by reading all papers requested beforehand
• Be fair, open-minded, unbiased and non-prejudicial on the grounds of gender, race, disability, lifestyle, culture, beliefs, sexuality, age 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 institution/department being assessment or from any other interested person.

Abiding by these guidelines is the minimum expectation of all members of the Panel. Members of the Panel who are Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) are also expected to abide by the Society’s Code of Conduct for Fellows.
Guidance for publicity following accreditation

Programmes that are successful in securing accreditation will be entitled to:
- Receive formal confirmation of accreditation from the RGS-IBG (by letter)
- Promote the accredited programme(s) in marketing materials using approved wording and/or logos (see below).

**Acceptable uses of the Society's name and logo**

The Society’s name and/or logo may be used to indicate programme accreditation in the following ways:
- On institution-authored/approved marketing materials for the accredited programme;
- On an institution’s website, on the webpage for the accredited programme;
- On the UCAS website, where the HEI’s name appears in relation to the accredited programme;
- On other departmental materials (electronic or print) relating to geography programmes for public distribution, subject to permission from the Society.

The following statements may be used:

This programme has been accredited by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

or

This programme has been accredited by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). Accreditation recognises programmes that deliver the geographical knowledge, understanding, skills, approaches and professional attributes expected of high quality geography graduates, as recorded in the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Geography.

The following logo may be used:

[logo will be made available to departments with accredited programmes]

**IMPORTANT:** Departments offering programmes accredited by the Society must not imply that other departments or institutions who are yet to achieve accreditation are not offering relevant and high-quality programmes when making reference to their accreditation in external literature.

The Society maintains the right to request the removal of its name and its logo from printed or electronic material or publications at any time.
Records

The Research and Higher Education Division is responsible for maintaining the following records:

1. A list of departments and programmes that made an application for accreditation;
2. A list of departments and programmes that were awarded accreditation (which will be published on the Society’s website);
3. A list of those who are willing to act as Accreditation Review Panel members for programme accreditation; and
4. A copy of each application and supporting evidence, to be placed in the Society’s archives.

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Contact for further information

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