

THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION/THE INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION SCIENTISTS

PROCEDURES FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF COURSES

1 Joint accreditation by The Library Association and The Institute of Information Scientists

The two major professional bodies for information professionals are The Library Association (founded 1877, Royal Charter 1898) and The Institute of Information Scientists (founded 1958). The professional bodies represent overlapping constituencies. One of their shared interests is in the development and maintenance of programmes of education and training designed for entrants to the profession, and for continuing professional development. The two professional bodies decided in 1998 that they would combine their accreditation activities, both for initial consideration of new programmes and for continuing review. Both bodies maintain Professional Registers, for which an accredited award is normally an entry requirement. Further details of the two bodies and their qualifications are appended (Appendices A and B).

2 The Library Association Accreditation Board The Institute of Information Scientists Professional Standards and Development Committee

The Councils of the two professional bodies appoint, respectively, a Board and a Committee to be responsible for considering courses put forward for accreditation, and to review accredited courses on a regular basis.

Members of the committees are experienced senior members of the professional bodies, drawn from a wide range of professional practice and education. All have practical knowledge and/or experience of higher education.

3 Administration

The two professional bodies have established a joint administration of the accreditation procedures and joint record keeping of the results. This is located in the Professional Qualifications Department at The Library Association Headquarters (full contact details are on the cover and in Appendix A).

4 Courses Eligible for Accreditation

Courses submitted for accreditation may be at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Specifically designated pathways through multidisciplinary degree schemes are eligible for consideration for professional accreditation.

In assessing a course the professional bodies will be primarily concerned with its relevance to current and developing practice in librarianship and information science, rather than purely academic issues.

In view of the wide range of skills and expertise now needed for the efficient provision of information and the effective management of library and information services, the professional bodies do not seek to stipulate precise requirements for course content. Courses submitted should, however, provide students with appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to enter the profession. The Criteria for Assessment of Courses Accreditation Checklist includes the subjects which the professional bodies expect to see included in any programme put forward for accreditation. The professional bodies believe that all students should be trained in research methods, and that students must demonstrate their ability to use these methods through the successful completion of a substantial piece of individual work. All students should also have appropriate practical experience, either as a pre-requisite for admission or as an integrated component of the course.

Courses submitted may be generalist in nature, designed to provide entry to any part of the profession, or more specialised. In the case of specialised courses the professional bodies will look for an element which sets the specialism within a broader professional context.

Members of the professional bodies undertake a very wide range of activities in the management and provision of information systems and services in all sectors of the economy.

5 Application for Accreditation: information required

An initial application for course accreditation should include enough detail to allow the professional bodies to judge whether or not it is sufficiently relevant to the profession to make it likely that it could be eligible for consideration. A course outline and objectives, together with brief information about the department or faculty offering the course are required. An indication of the balance of hours between course topics, or the modular framework into which it fits, should be included.

Preliminary enquiries, before formal application, are welcomed.

Applications for accreditation should be made through clear documentation, accompanied by a completed copy of the Course Accreditation Checklist (Appendix C).

The professional bodies are not prescriptive about the format of documentation, and are generally able to use documents prepared by universities for internal validation/review. They would, however, expect the documentation provided to include the following:-

(1) course documents setting out clearly:

- the objectives of the course and its relationship to other courses offered
- the structure of the course
- syllabi, including sample reading lists/other learning tools
- teaching/learning methods employed
- assessment methods and criteria
- graduate profile

- (2) institutional support for the course
 - faculty/departmental structure and finance
 - details of the institution's internal validation and review procedures
 - arrangements for external involvement in course reviews, examinations etc.
 - staff development policy
 - evidence of commitment to the professional accreditation being sought
- (3) evidence of market research/consultation with the profession concerning the need for the course, professional employment prospects and employment market for graduates.
- (4) for existing courses statistics concerning previous student cohorts' subsequent employment
- (5) for existing courses reports of external examiners
- (6) resources available to support the course including:
 - c.vs. of teaching team including current professional body memberships/involvement, publication lists and research/consultancy activities
 - staff allocation to modules
 - course materials
 - current research activities
 - learning support facilities, e.g., libraries, information and communications infrastructure
 - access to resources for part-time and/or distance learning students
- (7) prospectus of the awarding university

6 Criteria for the Assessment of Courses

Incorporating the IIS Criteria for Information Scientists and the LA Body of Professional Knowledge

The professional bodies are concerned with the principles and management of the production, organisation, analysis and provision of information and information services.

They are concerned with the study of information from its generation to its exploitation, and its transmission in a variety of forms through a variety of channels.

There are large areas of knowledge relevant to the subject, for which a variety of programmes of study and examinations have been developed. The professional bodies, as organisations concerned with recognising the breadth and depth of this knowledge, and of the professional experience and competence to be expected of their members, have therefore agreed Criteria for the Assessment of Courses. These incorporate the IIS Criteria for Information Science and the LA Body of Core Professional Knowledge

The Criteria for the Assessment of Courses are used by the professional bodies to assist them determine the appropriateness of the course for professional recognition. In applying the Criteria the professional bodies will be concerned with the context in which the course is being offered, as well as the content and will give equal consideration to the following:-

- the relevance of the course to the library and information science profession
- the professional involvement and commitment of the teaching team, including the head of department
- the professional focus of the department in which the course is offered
- the relationship with the parent institution
- the expertise and experience of staff
- the span and quality of courses offered
- the calibre of students as evidenced by assessments and subsequent employment

The professional bodies will adopt a flexible approach when carrying out their assessments. They will expect courses offered for professional accreditation to reflect current concerns of society which should be reflected in all graduate level studies, such as the creation of an understanding of the importance of life-long learning and the importance of equal opportunities. The approach of Visiting Parties will be holistic, not mechanistic, and members will wish to engage in genuine discussion of developments in professional education and practice.

In addition to the course content identified by the professional bodies, there may be other topics which educational institutions might wish to see incorporated. There will certainly be developments in information studies which at present are unforeseen. Therefore the course content, as set out below, will be modified from time to time to reflect the professional bodies' appreciation of changes of emphasis or the widening scope of the subject. The current description is the version formulated at the commencement of the joint accreditation arrangement. The coverage of topics listed will vary, according to the overall structure of the course.

The Course Accreditation Checklist (Appendix C) is divided into five main categories:

A. Information Generation, Communication & Utilisation

Scope

The processes and techniques whereby information resources are created, analysed, evaluated, moderated and manipulated in order to meet the requirements of defined user populations

- A1 Principles of Library and Information Science
- A2 Identification & Analysis of Information Flows & Resources
- A3 Principles of Collection & Data Management
- A4 Knowledge Organisation , Recording & Retrieval
- A5 Information Evaluation
- A6 Data Restructuring & Information Presentation

B. Information Management and Organisational Context

Scope

The application of techniques for planning, implementing, evaluating, analysing and developing library and information products and services within the context of the organisation's culture, aims and objectives. The impact of information systems on the structures and procedures of organisations

- B1 Development & Provision of Information Services & Products
- B2 Strategic Tactical & Financial Planning of Information Services
- B3 Marketing & Business Development of Information Services
- B4 Quality Issues & Liability
- B5 Information Service Performance Assessment
- B6 Information System / Organisation Analysis
- B7 Analysis of User Information Needs
- B8 User Studies & Education

C. Information Systems & Information & Communication Technologies

Scope

The availability and functionality of manual and electronic information systems and information and communications technologies insofar as they apply to the principles and practices of information management. The application of techniques to identify, analyse, specify, implement and evaluate appropriate systems.

- C1 Specification, identification, analysis, implementation, valuation & utilisation of manual & electronic systems & tools

D. Information Environment & Policy

Scope

The dynamics of information flow in society, in (and between) nations, governments and the information and media industries

- D1 Legal and Regulatory Issues
- D2 Professional & Ethical Issues
- D3 International & Transborder Information transfer
- D4 Regional, National and International Information Policies & Issues

E. Management and Transferable Skills

Scope

Principles and techniques associated with business and institutional management, together with transferable skills of literacy and numeracy

- E1 Human Resource Management
- E2 Training & Development
- E3 Financial & Budgetary Management
- E4 Statistical Analysis
- E5 Research Methods
- E6 Project Management
- E7 Native and foreign language skills
- E8 Communication and other interpersonal skills

In order to be eligible for accreditation the content of a course does not have to be limited to these five areas. The professional bodies may give approval to:-

- courses at undergraduate or postgraduate level which are wholly concerned with the study of the subject areas set out above
- courses at undergraduate level which are only partially devoted to the core LIS discipline, which will be considered on their individual merits, subject to a requirement that normally 40% of the content of each year of study can be mapped onto the Course Accreditation Checklist
- individual programmes of study resulting in degrees gained by credit accumulation and transfer.

The credits/hours of study acceptable to the professional bodies should normally be obtained over the full length of the course.

Where credits of different academic levels are available the proportion studied at the higher levels should normally be the same in the professional bodies' approved content as for the award of the degree as a whole.

7 Accreditation Visits and Academic Validation/Review

Any course submitted to professional bodies for the first time will receive accreditation only after its content and professional relevance has been discussed with a Visiting Party. The professional bodies prefer that Visiting Parties should join Validation/Review Panels set up by the institution to consider the course. This reduces pressure on the institution by avoiding duplication. It also ensures that the institution is made aware of any issues which require revision to achieve accreditation before the completion of validation.

Visiting Parties are drawn from the memberships of the respective board/membership of the professional bodies. A staff member is assigned to each accreditation visit, and is responsible for liaising with the professional body members assigned to the visit and with the institution. Detailed arrangements for the visit are made in advance between the joint administration located at the Library Association and the host institution, and a timetable will be prepared and circulated to all involved.

A visit will normally include the following elements:-

- (1) meeting with senior staff of the institution, especially those responsible for academic affairs and resource allocation, and the Head of Department
- (2) meeting with staff responsible for the development and administration of the course, and student selection
- (3) meeting with teaching team
- (4) meeting with students either from the course under review or, if it is a new course, from other courses within the same portfolio
- (5) private meetings as necessary, including at the end of the visit

8 Reports on Visits

At the end of an accreditation visit the professional body representatives will normally inform the institution of the general tenor of the recommendations they will make to their respective professional bodies. Occasionally they may have to consult and convey the outcome in writing.

The Visiting Party will prepare a draft report and recommendations to the professional bodies. This draft will also be submitted to the institution to be checked for factual accuracy, before being formally adopted by either of the professional bodies. The agreed report as formally adopted is the professional bodies' official record of the visit, and will be referred to when formulating the agenda for any subsequent visit.

The official report will be submitted for information to Council/Committee of the professional bodies.

9 Conditions of Accreditation: Notification of Change

The conditions of accreditation are set out on the accreditation form and are as follows:-

- (1) any significant changes or modification to course content or structure should be notified to the professional bodies BEFORE implementation
- (2) course changes authorised by the award making body should be submitted in the form of the official documents
- (3) significant organisational or resource changes (including teaching staff) should be notified to the professional bodies as early as circumstances within the institution allow.

Subject to these conditions, accreditation is normally for a maximum period of five years. The professional bodies may decide on a shorter period of accreditation, at the end of which they will review the situation. Failure to comply with the conditions may result in withdrawal of accreditation.

9 Further information

Enquiries about these procedures should be addressed initially to:

Professional Qualifications Dept., The Library Association, 7 Ridgmount Street,
London WC1E 7AE

Full contact details of both professional bodies are in Appendices A and B, and on the
cover of this booklet.

Appendix A

The Library Association

The Library Association is the Chartered professional body for librarians and information managers. The Association was granted a Royal Charter in 1898 and Supplemental Charter in 1986.

The Professional Register

Under the terms of its Royal Charter the Association maintains a Register of Chartered Members (Associates and Fellows). This is open to graduates who have completed courses of study acceptable to the Association. In addition to their academic qualifications candidates for the professional Register are also required to have had a period of professional practice and to submit written evidence of their experiential learning and continuing development.

Assessment Criteria for the award of Associateship of The Library Association

The criteria for assessment emphasise the importance of critical appraisal, evaluation, perception and demonstration of professional judgement. Candidates are required to demonstrate these qualities in the presentation of evidence of their continuing professional development during the period of postgraduate practical experience required for professional registration.

All applications are assessed against five main criteria:

- (a) demonstration of a satisfactory level of professional competence, through identification of the objectives of the employing organisation(s), critical appraisal of services offered, and evaluation of personal professional practice.
- (b) demonstration of professional awareness, professional commitment and knowledge of professional concerns, as indicated through involvement in professional affairs and perception of personal training needs.
- (c) demonstration of the understanding of the practice and organisation of the library and information service and profession in the United Kingdom.
- (d) demonstration of an increased level of understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.
- (e) demonstration of professional judgement through selection and presentation of material in the application.

Credit Rating of The Library Association's Professional Qualifications

In 1991 the Association applied successfully to the Council for National Academic Awards for credit rating for its awards under the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS). Following the disbandment of the CNAA responsibility for this accreditation passed to the Open University Validation Service (OUVS).

OUVS has determined that the learning derived from The Library Association's Associateship and Fellowship qualifications is at postgraduate level (M level). The following are the current credit ratings:-

Associateship: 20 general credit points at M level

Fellowship: 50 general credit points at M level

(Applicable to candidates receiving these awards from July 1991 onwards)

EU Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications

The European Community Directive 89/48/EEC which came into force on 4 January 1991 requires Member States to introduce legislation to recognise the professional qualifications of migrants from other countries within the Community. This includes the designation of authorities to receive and assess applications for the recognition of qualifications covered by the Directive. The Library Association is the UK Designated Authority to consider qualifications in library and information studies gained in other member countries of the European Union.

For further information about The Library Association and its qualifications please contact:

Professional Qualifications Department
The Library Association
7 Ridgmount Street
London
WC1E 7AE

Telephone: 0171 628 3523
Fax: 0171 436 7218
e-mail: pquals@la-hq.org.uk
Web site: <http://www.la-hq.org.uk/>

Appendix B

The Institute of Information Scientists

The Institute of Information Scientists is the professional body in the United Kingdom for Information Scientists and Information Managers. Founded in 1958, it was the first of its kind in the world and currently has a membership of over 2700.

The Institute of Information Scientists sets, maintains, monitors and promotes standards of excellence in the science and management of information. Its members work in the public and private sectors, in the commercial, legal, financial, academic, scientific and technical fields, in a variety of functions ranging from information service provision, to electronic publishing, information broking, systems specification and consulting.

The IIS is the only professional body in the UK whose members' professional interest focuses specifically on techniques of information creation, acquisition, storage, retrieval, exploitation and dissemination. With a particular emphasis on the digital environment, the discipline of information science provides a unique set of tools and management techniques for exploiting information to maximum advantage.

Our members work in industry, commerce, central and local government, education, research, publishing and many other specialist sectors. Membership brings individuals into contact with other professionals in many specialist and related areas. Information work is increasingly recognised and valued at home and abroad. An internationally recognised qualification in information science may soon become a necessity.

Terms of Membership

The Institute's membership requirement is a degree and a period of practical experience. This period may be reduced by up to three years by successfully completing an approved course. Details of the both Undergraduate and Post-graduate degree and diploma courses approved for exemption are given in the IIS Brochure "Courses in Information Science approved by the Institute of Information Scientists".

On completion of a course, a Student Member is transferred to the Affiliate grade until s/he is qualified for consideration for transfer to the Member grade. Student Membership is open to any student attending a full or part-time course at a recognised university or college.

For further information about the Institute of Information Scientists and its qualifications please contact:

Director
The Institute of Information Scientists
44-45 Museum Street
London
WC1E 7AE

Telephone: 0171 831 8003/8633
Fax: 0171 430 1270
e-mail: iis@dial.pipex.com
Web site: <http://www.iis.org.uk>

Appendix C

Course Accreditation: Content Checklist

Please use the Content Checklist to indicate how core requirements are covered in your course. The assessors will use this Matrix, along with the other course documentation supplied, to help in assessing the course.

Please use a separate Checklist for each of the qualifications for which you are seeking accreditation.

Please provide the codes of the core and optional modules which cover each subject in the appropriate columns. Where several modules might be offered in evidence please list only the top 3.

A Information Generation Communication and Utilization

		Core Module Codes	Optional Module Codes
A1	Principles of information science		
A2	Identification and analysis of information flows and resources		
A3	Principles of collection and data management		
A4	Knowledge organization and information retrieval		
A5	Information evaluation		
A6	Data restructuring and information presentation		

B Information Management and Organizational Context

		Core Module Codes	Optional Module Codes
B1	Development & Provision of Information Services and Products		
B2	Strategic tactical and financial planning of information services		
B3	Information services marketing and business development		
B4	Quality issues and liability		
B5	Information service performance assessment		
B6	Information system / organization analysis		
B7	Analysis of User Education Needs		
B8	User Studies and Education		

C	Information Systems / Information and Communication Technologies	
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		Core Module Codes	Optional Module Codes
C1	Specification, identification, analysis, implementation, evaluation and utilization of manual and electronic systems and tools		

D	Information Environment and Policy	
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		Core Module Codes	Optional Module Codes
D1	Legal and regulatory issues		
D2	Professional and ethical issues		
D3	International and transborder information transfer		
D4	Regional, national and international information policies and issues		

E	Management and Transferable Skills	
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		Core Module Codes	Optional Module Codes
E1	Human resource management		
E2	Training and development		
E3	Financial and budgetary management		
E4	Statistical analysis		
E5	Research methods		
E6	Project management		
E7	Language skills		
E8	Communication/interpersonal skills		
E9	Practical experience		