

**Procedures and guidelines for the
accreditation of higher education
programmes**

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About the procedures and guidelines

The LI's *Procedures and Guidelines for Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes* reflects the rapid pace of change in higher education and the profession in recent years, and emphasise the partnership between Schools and the LI.

This document, together with the documents;

- ***Criteria for the Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes*** and
- ***Landscape Architecture: elements and areas of practice - an educational framework***

provide a framework for the assessment of all LI accredited programmes in higher education institutions.

High standards remain paramount within the guidelines and procedures described in this document. We rely on our accredited Schools not only to deliver the landscape professionals of the future – designers, managers, planners, scientists/ecologists and urban designers of vision, who will lead the profession in the 21st century – but to contribute to the research, critical thinking and intellectual life of the profession.

While these guidelines contain specific requirements for accredited programmes, it should be stressed they are not intended to be a straightjacket, or limit change or stifle creativity.

The LI has long recognised and celebrated the fact that, while sharing a commonality in terms of professional core and outcomes, landscape architecture is a diverse and constantly evolving profession and no two programmes are likely to be, or indeed should be, the same.



Steve Plumb CMLI
Chair LI Accreditation Committee

Section A: The Landscape Institute and LI accreditation

1. Introduction

The Landscape Institute is the Chartered Institute for Landscape Architects and Landscape professionals, incorporating designers, managers, planners, ecologists and urban designers.

Under its Royal Charter the LI has a remit which covers *'all aspects of the science, planning, design, implementation and management of landscapes and their environment in urban and rural areas and the assessment, conservation, development, creation and sustainability of landscapes.'*¹ This is with the objective of promoting landscapes which are aesthetically pleasing, functional and ecologically and biologically healthy and which, when required, are able to accommodate the built environment in all its forms.

LI membership encompasses the full spectrum of professionals concerned with the design, care and maintenance of the landscape. This includes landscape, urban and garden designers, planners, ecologists, specialists in management and conservation of urban and rural environments, researchers, academics and many more.

The LI operates a partnership model of accreditation, working closely with its accredited Schools to ensure that the initial education and training provided for the landscape

professionals of the future remains academically challenging, exciting in its own right, and relevant to the needs of the workplace. This partnership model should ensure that there is an ongoing dialogue between the LI and accredited schools which allows both parties to deal with change incrementally.

The LI welcomes applications from higher education institutions who wish to seek accreditation for their programmes, and from existing institutions who wish to extend the scope of their accreditation into new areas of their provision.

2. The benefits of LI accreditation

LI accreditation enables graduates from accredited programmes to proceed directly to Licentiate membership of the LI, the first step towards qualification for chartered status².

The award of accreditation indicates that a programme provides a suitable foundation for a career in the profession. Professional endorsement of a programme adds considerable value to academic programmes, making them more desirable to students from both the UK and overseas.

Programmes benefit from professional membership support and links to local LI branches and networks. Accreditation also provides a career path for students in a growing profession and is a valuable marketing tool in promoting courses.

Accredited programmes are promoted extensively as part of the LI's careers strategy, which includes school engagement, UCAS fairs and the [Be A Landscape Architect website](#).

It is expected that Schools will become involved in the LI and the profession, and will encourage their students to do so. The emphasis is in terms of a partnership between the two institutions.

¹http://www.landscapeinstitute.org.uk/PDF/Contribute/Landscape_Institute_Royal_Charter_Revised_Version_July_2008.pdf

² For information on chartered status visit <http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/membership/cmli.php>

3. Full accreditation and candidate accreditation

The LI offers two modes of accreditation: **full accreditation** and **candidate** accreditation. Each is reviewed in respect of individual programmes on an annual basis.

In order to be eligible to be considered for **full accreditation**, one complete cohort of students must have successfully progressed through the programme to graduation.

Where the first cohort has not yet progressed through to graduation, it is open to schools to apply for recognition as a '**candidate**' programme. Candidate status indicates that the school is working towards achieving full accreditation after the first cohort of students have successfully graduated (see section B15 for more information).

Programmes must have completed all internal approval procedures within the School and wider institution and those required by any relevant external validating bodies *before* an application for accreditation can be considered by the LI.

4. Accreditation requirements

4.1 Programme content and outcomes

4.1.1 Introduction

The LI's key concern in accrediting programmes is to ensure that;

- Graduates possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and understanding to take up entry level positions in the profession and apply for Licentiate³ membership.
- Programmes provide the foundation for graduates to enter onto the LI's Pathway to Chartership and ultimately meet the requirements for chartered membership

The work of the profession is described in the document *Landscape Architecture: elements and areas of practice, an educational framework*. As part of the application process, schools will be required to demonstrate that the programmes they are submitting for accreditation will provide a sound foundation for a career in landscape architecture, including progression to chartered status.

4.1.2 General requirements

The outcomes delivered by accredited programmes will differ depending on the programme's primary orientation with regard to the career paths and areas of practice encompassed within the profession of landscape architecture. However, all accredited programmes will be expected to satisfy the requirements laid out in the LI's document 'Criteria for the Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes' which should be viewed in conjunction with this document.

The structure of the core within a programme and its academic interpretation are matters on which schools will decide⁴.

³ The LI membership grade which allows entry onto the Pathway to Chartership, see www.landscapeinstitute.org

⁴ Schools may also find it useful to refer to subject benchmark statements for landscape architecture, available on the QAA website <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/>.

As part of an application for accreditation, Schools will be asked to provide a rationale for the content and structure of the programmes they wish to put forward, including a full and clear statement as to how the programme meets these requirements, and those detailed in the LI's Criteria.

4.2 Programme duration and credits

The LI is willing to consider any programme which meets the requirements described in these guidelines and accompanying Criteria. However, the LI's expectation is that the following will be required to attain the necessary standards for Licentiate entry to the LI.

Undergraduate entry programmes	
Landscape Design, (including programmes incorporating Urban Design or Landscape Planning)	Minimum 4 years full time or equivalent study totalling 480 UK credits, usually consisting of an honours degree plus a further year.
Landscape Science, Landscape Management	Minimum 3 years full time or equivalent study, totalling 360 UK credits, leading to the award of an honours degree.
Postgraduate entry programmes	
Landscape Design, (including programmes incorporating Urban Design or Landscape Planning)	For those with non cognate degrees, a minimum 2 years or 6 terms study full time or equivalent, or 240 UK credits, usually consisting of a conversion year and a master's degree.
Landscape Science, Landscape Management	Minimum of 1 year or 3 years full time or equivalent study, or 180 UK credits leading to a Masters degree

4.3 Teaching and assessment strategies and programme admissions

The LI believes that Schools should be free to draw on their own expertise when deciding upon the appropriate teaching-learning strategies and the choice of specific teaching, learning and assessment methods for achieving the level of knowledge and skill expected of students graduating from accredited programmes.

However, the LI will expect schools to demonstrate that:

- Methods are appropriate and robust
- Programmes are led, delivered and assessed by individuals with appropriate expertise
- There is proper integration of teaching and assessment strategies.

The LI will also look for evidence of:

- Active learning and the use of integrated case studies
- Practical project experience
- Input from practitioners
- Clear strategies to develop students' employability

Decisions about the admission of students at appropriate stages within a programme also lie with the accredited Schools. Schools must ensure that all students graduating from an accredited programme receive a comparable breadth and depth of education and outcomes whatever their path through the programmes.

4.4 Partnership - the memorandum of understanding

The LI sees its relationship with accredited Schools as one of partnership. Schools are accordingly expected to be interested in and concerned about the profession, and be active participants in the institute. As such, Schools are expected to:

- Encourage membership of the LI
- Support students in becoming involved in the wider landscape community
- Play an active role in the LI's work to boost student recruitment, spread awareness of landscape architecture, and generate intelligence to inform careers work
- Engage with the branches
- Encourage staff and students to take up LI membership become involved in the local and professional landscape community
- Contribute to the intellectual development of the profession, not only through provision of accredited programmes, but where possible looking for opportunities for knowledge transfer to the wider profession

This document together with LI *'Criteria for the Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes'*, constitute a memorandum of understanding between the LI and Schools, describing what each will bring to the partnership. Making an application for accreditation constitutes an undertaking on the part of the School to abide by these guidelines and the accreditation criteria, as a condition of accreditation.

4.5 Learning in work related contexts and work experience

Programmes accredited by the LI are expected to include a significant element of learning in work-based and/or real life contexts, with the aim of developing an understanding of professional practice and enhancing student employability. Schools have the flexibility to decide whether this should be achieved through a 'year out', by integrating work experience into the programme structure or through other methods which bring students into contact with real life contexts and issues.

The LI is particularly keen to encourage innovative approaches to work based learning and will look for evidence of relationships with local practitioners and groups to ensure that programmes include opportunities for the exploration of real life contexts and scenarios.

Where offered work based experience must be seen as a constituent part of the comprehensive programme structure, and assessed accordingly, with a measured outcome.

4.6 Access and equal opportunities

The LI aims to encourage people from all sections of the community to take up places on accredited programmes and to go on to build successful careers in the profession. Schools are required to show that their programmes are free from unnecessary barriers to access and open to all who meet the required standards for entry.

As part of the application for accreditation, Schools will be asked to submit a statement on equal opportunities and comment on how this is being actively pursued within the School.

4.7 Staffing

The quality of education delivered ultimately depends on the quality of teaching. In considering programmes for accreditation, the LI will wish to satisfy itself that:

- Programmes are led, taught and assessed by staff appropriately qualified and experienced in relevant fields.
- Staff student ratios are sufficient to ensure the professional standard of the course will be maintained throughout the period of accreditation.

All Schools are expected to adopt a staff development policy which ensures that teaching staff are able to keep abreast of innovations in education and practice.

It is particularly important that staff are encouraged to engage in activities such as research and consultancy, professional practice, writing and travel, to ensure that teaching remains in touch with new ideas and techniques, current trends and the needs of the workplace and the wider profession. The LI publishes academic work in a variety of media and encourages staff in landscape schools to take advantage of these to promote their work and foster links between research and practice⁵, and to have been actively involved in the Institute through taking up membership.

To this end, academic membership of the LI provides, via its online and print media, a forum for the dissemination of academic research to the wider professional community and a network for those involved in relevant areas of teaching and research.

4.8 Facilities

Schools will need to demonstrate that studios, lecture and seminar rooms, workshops and laboratories are sufficient and appropriate to meet all teaching and study needs. Technical equipment must be appropriate to the academic and professional needs and requirements of the programme. This level of provision must be maintained throughout the period of accreditation. Where the accredited programme is design based the LI expects the programme to be provided with dedicated studio space for students.

Information technology (hardware and software) should be up to date in all areas relevant to the course's emphasis and sufficient for the needs of the programme and the number of students attending.

Schools are expected to have good library and information facilities, covering relevant topics and stocking appropriate journals, with study facilities which are readily accessible to students.

Technical and administrative staff must be suitably qualified and in sufficient number to support the School's activities.

⁵Course staff should contact the LI staff team for more information.

4.9 Reporting requirements

The LI makes a number of basic requirements in relation to administration of the accreditation partnership. The LI staff team will send a timetable of key dates to Schools at the beginning of each academic year.

4.9.1 Annual School Report

Schools are required to report to the LI on an annual basis as part of the reaccreditation process explained further in Section C. The annual report covers aspects such as activities within the School, developments to the programme and facilities during the year and anticipated changes for the future. This report must be prepared in advance of the end of year visit by the School's Professional Review Group (PRG), and should also be copied to the LI staff team.

4.9.2 Programme Statistics

As a condition of accreditation, Schools are required to provide the LI, in a timely manner, with statistical information related to their programmes, usually in an annual return. This will cover aspects such as the number of applications received, the number of students accepted onto programmes (including, where applicable, its constituent courses), the profile of qualifications held by students gaining admission, staff-student ratios, and the number of students in each year group and the destination of graduates. From time to time the LI may also request other updates to assist in its work to monitor and promote landscape education – for example, number of students who have so far applied for places for the coming academic year.

This information is gathered to give an overall picture of landscape education for the benefit of both the LI and the accredited Schools; all information submitted by Schools is treated in confidence and will not be provided in disaggregated form to other parties. Aggregated statistics will, however, be made more widely available.

4.9.3 Pass lists

Schools are required to submit pass lists of students graduating from their accredited programmes without delay. This enables the LI to upgrade to Licentiate membership those Student Members of the LI who have satisfactorily completed an accredited programme. Students should be aware that late notification may delay graduates' progress to chartered membership.

4.10 Accreditation Fees

The LI charges a fee for all applications for accreditation. An annual accreditation fee is also payable for renewal of accreditation. The fees contribute to the cost of support the professional support and engagement provided by PRGs, and careers promotional work undertaken by the LI.

4.10.1 Applications for accreditation

An application fee is charged in respect of all applications for accreditation of programmes, including direct applications for full or candidate accreditation, and applications to move from candidate to full accreditation. A one off institutional fee is also payable by institutions which have not previously offered accredited programmes. It is also levied in instances where there has been an interruption of accreditation for a period exceeding two academic years.

4.10.2 Annual renewal of accreditation

All currently accredited institutions are required to pay an annual renewal fee which is levied at the beginning of each academic year. The fee is calculated on the basis the number of students studying on the school's LI accredited programmes in the previous academic year.

5. Programme evolution

Just as the LI acknowledges that no two programmes will be the same, it is also expected that programmes will develop and evolve over time in response to the changes in the workplace, in higher education and in society.

The LI's prime concern is that programmes continue to provide a sound foundation for a career in landscape architecture (see also section 4.1.1). The LI positively encourages course evolution and innovation and expects Schools to ensure that their programmes remain fresh, stimulating and relevant.

Where it is clear that developments are evolutionary (natural progression), not revolutionary (such that a substantially different programme results), developments can often be encompassed within the existing accreditation arrangements.

Where changes are proposed, schools are expected to involve Professional Review Groups in the review process (further information about the role of Professional Review Groups is given in section C). The LI's Accreditation Committee will also be happy to give feedback and advice where the changes proposed are more substantial.

Where changes are significant, such as a change of title, award or major change in programme structure, or involve substantial changes in staffing levels and expertise the School is required notify their PRG and LI staff team of the changes in writing. The School should outline the proposed changes, indicate the likely impact of the change and the rationale for the change. In some cases, it may be necessary to arrange a new visit to the School by an Accreditation Panel.

6. Overseas programmes

The LI has reciprocal agreements for recognition of qualifications with a number of countries and welcomes approaches from overseas institutions interested in exploring the possibilities of accreditation, mutual recognition of qualifications, or adoption of some or the entire UK model for qualification.

7. Dual accreditation, joint awards and shared units with other programmes

The boundaries between the professions are becoming increasingly permeable and working as part of an interdisciplinary team on projects is now common practice. The LI accordingly believes that interdisciplinary learning with students training in related professions and disciplines is an important part of the learning experience and of preparation for working life, and schools are encouraged to look for opportunities for joint project work where possible.

The LI also welcomes applications for accreditation of dual awards and those which may also lead to qualifications accredited by other professional bodies. In cases where a dual arrangement is proposed the university will be expected to provide a rationale for the dual award or linked routes as part of their explanation of the ethos of the programme and the graduates it is seeking to produce.

Where two subjects are linked in one award, the LI will expect to see evidence that they are fully integrated rather than two disparate areas bolted together. Students will be expected to show awareness that they are studying on an integrated programme, discuss links between the two and exhibit joined up thinking.

Universities must demonstrate that landscape elements are maintained throughout any such programme.

Section B: Applying for candidate and full accreditation

8. Introduction

The LI's accreditation processes are overseen and managed by the LI's Accreditation Committee. On policy issues, the Accreditation Committee works in consultation with SCHOLA, the Standing Committee of Heads of Schools of Landscape Architecture.

The Accreditation Committee reports directly to the LI's Education and Membership Committee and the Accreditation Committee's recommendations with regard to the accreditation of new courses are also subject to ratification by the LI's Education and Membership Committee.

9. First steps

Schools wishing to apply for candidate or full accreditation should, in the first instance, provide the LI with information about the School and outline programme documentation.

The LI will then normally arrange a time for representatives of the Accreditation Committee to visit the School for initial, informal discussions. These meetings provide the opportunity for the school and the LI, without commitment, to explore how the programme content, ethos and structure and other aspects might relate to the LI's accreditation criteria, and how the relationship between the LI and the school might be taken forward. The visit in no way pre-empts the LI's ultimate decision as to whether a programme will be accredited.

As part of these discussions, the Accreditation Committee may indicate areas in which further development may be required. Where no major issues are identified, discussions may culminate in an invitation to the school to submit a formal application for accreditation.

10. The application form and paper assessment

The LI's application form explains what information should be submitted by Schools who wish to apply for full or candidate accreditation. Sample copies are available on request from the LI staff team (please check for updates before you complete the application). A non-refundable application fee is payable with the application, as outlined in section 4.10 of this document.

In completing the application form, answers should clearly indicate how programmes and administrative or other arrangements will meet the LI's accreditation guidelines and criteria. All supporting documentation should be clearly labelled.

Documentation the institution will need to supply in support of the application for accreditation includes:

- Details of area of professional skill the programme will take as its focus

- The programme's relationship to the professional standards and any other benchmarks set by the LI
- Programme specifications, including full details of its structure, modules taught and the specific content of these modules
- Copies of all external examiner reports for the last three years
- Reports on all validations and reviews conducted in the last three years
- Details of staffing and staff CVs
- Statistics on the staff student ratio
- Reports and details of processes for enhancing access, diversity and inclusion

Once the application has been received, it will be checked for completeness by the LI's staff team. It will then be referred to the Accreditation Committee who will conduct an initial paper assessment.

Where no major concerns arise from the initial paper assessment, the application will proceed to the second stage of assessment, an accreditation visit by a specially convened Accreditation Panel. The LI will liaise with the institution to agree a suitable time for this visit to take place.

11. The accreditation visit

11.1 Panel composition

Accreditation Panels will be convened by the Accreditation Committee and will consist of six members which will normally include:

- A chair, who will be an CMLI or FLI and will be a member of the Accreditation Committee
- An additional CMLI and Licentiate with relevant professional specialisations
- An academic member from another institution

Three other members who may be practitioners, educationalists (to a maximum of two on any panel including the mandatory academic member), students from another institution (not more than one member on any panel)

Where possible, the LI will aim to include members drawn from relevant or adjacent LI branches. A member of the staff team will act as Secretary to the Panel.

11.2 Format of the visit

Accreditation visits will normally be of one day in duration.

The timetable and length of the visit will normally depend on the number and breadth of programmes submitted for accreditation and whether particular issues have been identified which need to be explored as part of the visit. The detailed programme for the visit and a draft timetable will be discussed with the university as part of the arrangements to convene the visit.

11.3 Preparation for the visit

It is essential that the university make arrangements to enable a proper assessment to be conducted by the LI. Universities must:

- Ensure that the panel is able to meet with key staff, including the Head of Department, Head of Faculty and, depending on the scale of the proposed programme, the Vice Chancellor

- Provide a representative cross section of graduate (i.e. final year) work covering the full spectrum of ability and achievement, the main elements of the programme, the way in which students' knowledge, skills and understanding are developed, and the programme outcomes
- Arrange for the panel to meet in a closed session with a fully representative group of
 - current students
 - graduates drawn from the last three years of the programme (if applicable)
- Where universities are applying for full accreditation, graduates must be well represented in the group met in closed session

In order that the Panel may speak freely to staff about student work and any issues identified during the course of the visit, students should not be invited to participate in other sections of the programme, except by prior agreement with the LI.

Institutions must ensure that they keep any presentations to allocated times in the programme, so that time available for questions from the panel is not compromised.

Where these conditions are not met, it will be within the power of the chair of the panel to either declare the visit invalid or incomplete. No refund will be given in respect of the accreditation fee for a visit which is declared void or incomplete. A further visit may be convened at the expense of the university.

Schools are asked to provide the Accreditation Panel with a lockable base room which can be used for panel discussions during the visit, and refreshments.

12. After the accreditation visit

Informal feedback on the outcome of the visit will normally be provided on the day of the visit.

The LI will then write to the school to formally notify them of the Accreditation Panel's recommendations with regard to the course. In the case of an entirely new programme the Panel's recommendations will be subject to final ratification by LI's Education and Membership Committee.

Where the recommendation is that a programme cannot be accredited at the present time, further information will be provided on the reasons for this decision and the steps which the Panel recommends should be taken by the School should they wish to reapply.

13. Formalising accreditation

Schools making a successful application for full or candidate accreditation will receive a certificate confirming accreditation.

Schools should advise the LI if they wish the certificate to be given in a formal presentation at the School.

Once accreditation has been granted the programme will be added to the list of LI accredited programmes on the LI's careers website www.bealandscapearchitect.com and will be promoted as part of the LI's ongoing recruitment activity.

The school will also be sent details of, and invited to join, SCHOLA, the representative body for LI accredited institutions.

14. Promotional material and the LI logo

Schools are expected to update relevant literature as soon as possible to indicate that programmes have LI accreditation. Current accreditation status must be clearly and accurately indicated. In particular:

- Where a programme has candidate status rather than full accreditation, this must be clearly stated
- Where accreditation has been granted to a programme which consists of a 'package' of two courses (for example BA (hons) Landscape Architecture + Dip Landscape Architecture) the requirement to take both must also be made clear
- A link to www.beandscapearchitect.com must be provided on the course homepage

The http for the relevant page of the school website should be provided to the LI for listing on www.beandscapearchitect.com.

Schools are also encouraged to use the LI Logo in promotional material, on their web sites or in other suitable locations. The Logo should appear with the words "An accredited programme of the Landscape Institute". The LI staff team can provide logotypes in a variety of formats. However copies of publications, and hyperlinks to web pages featuring the logos must be provided to the LI staff team for approval.

15. Moving from candidate to full accreditation

Where a programme is seeking to move from candidate to full accreditation the following criteria must be met. As with all applications for full accreditation:

- The programme must have had at least one graduating cohort.
- Cohorts graduating from the programme seeking accreditation must be of a sufficient size for a reasonable assessment of the programme to be conducted.
- The institution must clearly demonstrate that the programme meets the LI's accreditation criteria in full.

In addition:

- Any conditions stipulated at the time that candidates status was granted (or specified by accreditation committee during the period of candidate accreditation) must have been met
- A move to full accreditation must be recommended and/or supported by the PRG.

Candidate programmes must apply for full accreditation within 3 years of their first cohort graduating.

If an institution does not apply for full accreditation within this period or fails to meet the above conditions in full its candidate status will lapse. The LI also reserves the right to decline reaffirmation of candidate accreditation where the accreditation relationship is not developing satisfactorily or insufficient progress is being made towards fully accredited status. Should the programme wish to regain candidate status it will be required to make a new application for accreditation. This application will incur any associated accreditation fees.

Section C: The annual reaffirmation of accreditation

16. Introduction

The LI operates an annual accreditation cycle and LI accreditation, whether for full or candidate status, is reaffirmed each academic year.

Decisions regarding the reaffirmation of accreditation for the coming academic year are determined by the Accreditation Committee following review of reports submitted by the School and the School's Professional Review Group.

16.1 The wider context

The LI recognises that its accreditation procedures sit alongside a range of other assessments of aspects of teaching and learning within educational institutions (e.g. Quality Assurance Agency assessments, external examining etc). The LI seeks, as far as possible, to recognise the particular and distinct functions of these assessments and to minimise duplication between them. Its overarching concern is to maintain professional standards amongst new graduates.

17. The Professional Review Group (PRG)

Once full or candidate accreditation is confirmed at a school, the LI will write to Schools inviting them to nominate a panel of at least three members who will form their Professional Review Group. If the new course is run at a currently accredited school, the LI will recommend whether the School's PRG requires additional members. As a condition of accreditation schools must ensure they maintain a quorate PRG.

17.1 PRG composition

PRGs must contain a minimum of 3 members to be quorate and meet the LI's accreditation requirements. PRGs must:

- Include at least two fully qualified Chartered Members of the LI.
- Reflect the professional focus of the programme.
- Have at least 1 member or 1/3 of members drawn from those working or practicing in the region wherever possible.
- Include at least one member of the panel nominated by the local LI branch (the school should liaise with the branch with regard to nomination).
- Remain quorate throughout the year.

Where a school offers a range of accredited programmes the PRG's size and composition should reflect this, especially if the accredited portfolio has differing areas of emphasis (e.g. an MA in Landscape Architecture and BA in Landscape Management). This would normally entail an additional PRG member with a background relevant to each additional accredited course.

Although the PRG is a professional panel, the LI welcomes involvement of academics in PRGs, to a total not exceeding one third of the members of the panel. Where possible, it is helpful if the PRG also includes practitioners or academics with experience of lecturing or external examining. Current external examiners may serve on PRGs. Practitioners participating in the course as guest lecturers may also serve on PRGs provided that they are not contracted to the school as staff members and the school demonstrate that the relationship is such that there is no conflict of interest.

PRG members are asked to serve in the group for a minimum of 3 and no more than 6 years, unless they have dispensation from LI. Schools must ensure that there is continuity between panels for successive years; a situation should not arise where all members of the panel are new in any given year.

17.2 Approval of PRG members

Schools must forward CVs of the proposed panel, and any new members proposed during the period of accreditation to the LI for approval. Schools will also be asked to comment on any current or previous links with proposed PRG members, where applicable, and, in particular, where there may be potential issues with regard to conflict of interest.

17.3 Information provided by the LI to PRG members

Once a nomination of a new PRG member has been received from the school and approved by the LI, the staff team will send new members an introductory pack which will include this document, the LI Criteria, copies of PRG reports for the previous two years, and any additional current guidance.

All PRG members are expected to ensure that they have a working knowledge of the LI's accreditation guidelines and reporting requirements. The LI staff team will be pleased to assist with any questions.

The LI runs training events for PRG members. Any new PRG members will be expected to attend this event unless they have substantial previous experience on an LI PRG.

17.4 Information provided by the School to PRG members

Schools are expected to furnish new PRG members with full information about the programme. For new members, this should include:

- Up to date copies of the School's handbook and Course handbook, details of the programme structure and content and any other relevant information.
- Up to date information on staffing levels and areas of expertise.
- School assessment criteria for modules or units.
- The last three internal verification reports or equivalent.
- The last three years' external examiners reports.
- A statement of funding available for student trips, expenses, etc.
- Confirmation of their tuition fees.

Schools must ensure that established members are provided with any new updated documentation as it becomes available including: any recent internal verification and external examiners' reports, programme statistics and any other relevant information.

18. The role of the PRG

The PRG is a professional panel, the key functions of which are to:

- Work with the school during the year as a critical friend and sounding board.
- Provide advice on current developments in practice.
- Submit an annual report to the LI on whether in their view;

- A programme continues to meet the LI's accreditation criteria
- Accreditation should be accordingly be reaffirmed for the coming academic year
- Flag up any emerging issues or points of concern.

In carrying out their role, a key consideration for the PRG will be whether, as practitioners, they consider that graduates from a programme have received initial professional education such that they have the foundation knowledge and understanding to take up their first employment in an area of the profession relevant to the focus of the programme.

Although members of PRGs will often have experience in higher education, through lecturing or acting as an external examiner, the role of the PRG is not to conduct an academic assessment of the programme (although they may want to comment on these areas) but to take a view of the performance of the programme as a recipient of the skills the course delivers, that is, as a professional practitioner and potential future employer and mentor of graduates from the programme.

Accredited schools will already have a wide range of links with the profession and practices but the LI also asks PRGs to use their regular and formal contact with the schools wherever possible to help develop and support a meaningful and mutually beneficial partnership between schools, the profession and the LI. PRGs can contribute by:

- Using their own connections in the profession to help support the school in developing links with practice, local branches and other networks
- Encouraging schools to make the most of LI facilities and support, and helping them identify new opportunities.

The aim of both schools and PRGs should be to develop and foster a positive, open and honest relationship. The LI staff team is on hand to provide advice and support to PRGs and schools.

18.1 Candidate programmes

In the case of candidate programme, the PRG has a particular role in mentoring and advising the School, helping to steer the programme such that it will, on successful completion by the first cohort, meet the LI's guidelines for full accreditation.

18.2 Scope of authority

Accredited schools will be expected to involve PRGs in discussions about changes to programme content, balance and format which may substantially affect the content, quality, assessment or delivery of the programme.

While PRGs are expected to discuss, advise and make suggestions to Schools on the full range of issues relevant to their role, only the Accreditation Committee has the authority to award, vary or stipulate conditions for accreditation.

In the event of major concerns arising during the academic year, such that bring into question the schools ability to continue to meet the LI's accreditation criteria, the chair of the PRG should formally voice its concerns to the School in the first instance and to the Accreditation Committee. If necessary, a special meeting will be then be convened between the Accreditation Committee, the PRG and the school to consider what steps should be taken.

19. The PRG chair

The PRG should elect a Chair to act as the main contact with the School. While the PRG should work as a team, the Chair has particular responsibility for coordinating its activities of the PRG, welcoming new members and ensuring that the annual report of the PRG is submitted in a timely manner. The chair should be a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute.

The PRG is ultimately responsible to the LI's Accreditation Committee. The Chair of the PRG is expected to remain in contact with the Chair of Accreditation Committee to discuss any points of interest or concern which develop during the year. In particular they should contact the Chair immediately if any major concerns arise which they feel may potentially threaten the programmes accredited status.

PRGs for those programmes with candidate status will normally be chaired by the panel member drawn from the LI's Accreditation Committee (see section 16 with regard to membership of the panel).

20. Visits by the PRG

20.1 PRG Requirements

The PRG is expected to maintain contact with the school such that it can fulfil the role described in section 18 and develop an understanding of the accredited programmes offered by the school and how they are operating.

It is therefore expected that the PRG undertakes a minimum of two full board visits to the school each academic year. The first visit should include a review of the feedback provided by the LI and the PRG and any issues they wish to monitor during the year. The second will normally be towards the end of the final term of the year, in preparation for the submission of the PRG's annual report.

This should be supplemented by contact by individual PRG members during the course of the year. Not all visits need to be full and formal – contact can involve a variety of activities such as attending lectures and end of year shows, sitting in on seminars, 'crits' or liaison seminars, depending on the nature of the course and what issues need to be discussed.

20.2 School requirements

The school must provide the PRG with an events programme indicating suitable visit dates for the PRG throughout the coming academic year. This should include

- A timetable of crits and seminars or programme of events.
- Suggestions of areas where PRG members could get involved (e.g. tutorials, lectures etc).
- An event programme/diary.

The school must ensure that it provides opportunities during the year to:

- Meet with students
- View student work
- Discuss the course with key staff, including the Head of School if requested by the PRG

21. The annual school and PRG reports

At the end of the academic year, the school is required to submit an annual report on accredited programmes at the school. Following this the PRG will conduct its final visit, before delivering its own report and recommendations. The staff team will write to PRG chairs and heads of school advising them of the deadlines for submission.

21.1 The school report

The annual school report covers aspects such as;

- Actions taken in response to previous recommendations.
- Developments to the programme and facilities.
- Anticipated changes for the future.

This report must be prepared in advance of the end of year visit by the School's PRG, in accordance with the advised deadlines for submission, and copied to the LI staff team.

Schools are asked to take particular note of the deadlines for submission: the annual report constitutes the school's application for reaffirmation of accreditation of their programme. Late submission or failure to submit the annual report may result in suspension or withdrawal of accreditation.

21.2 The end of year meeting and PRG report

The PRG report presents the PRG's assessment of the programme and is completed following the end of year visit.

As part of the report, the PRG will comment on developments during the year and whether, in the PRG's view, the programme continues to meet the LI's accreditation criteria. The report is produced by the Chair of the PRG in discussion with members of the PRG and the Head of School and is, in effect, a summative report based on the findings of the PRG in their work with the School each year.

It is the responsibility of Chairs, working with accredited schools, to ensure that the end of year visit takes place and that the annual report is submitted in good time. Late submission of the report may lead to delays in reaffirmation of accreditation of a course.

The working relationship between PRGs and the School should be such that the end of year visit should be an organic part of the academic year and a continuation of previous discussions. Many of the considerations at the end of year meeting will be similar to those during other visits by the panel or individual members.

However, the end of year visit is a more formal opportunity to assess developments in the course, and, in particular, how effectively the School has addressed any concerns expressed in previous reports in greater detail. If it has not been possible earlier in the year, schools must ensure that the PRG is able to do all of the following:

- Meet current students and discuss their experiences without school staff present
- View the most recent external examiner reports
- Meet with course staff
- Be provided with any other material they feel is relevant to the PRG assessment (e.g. student work)

PRGs should give feedback to Schools as part of the visit and take the opportunity to explore any concerns.

In the spirit of open and honest discussion, there should be no issues highlighted in the PRG's annual report which have not been raised and discussed with the School at the end of year visit or other visits during the year.

22. Reaffirmation of Accreditation

The Accreditation Committee meets annually in late July or early August to review the reports submitted by accredited Schools and consider recommendations from PRGs.

Following the meeting, the Accreditation Committee will write to Schools and PRGs to give feedback on reports and detail any specific actions required or recommended.

It will also confirm the recommendations it will be making to EMC on the reaffirmation of accreditation. These recommendations will be subject to ratification by the Education and Membership Committee (EMC). Schools will be notified of the EMC's decision in writing. All correspondence will be copied to the relevant Heads of Department.

23. Feedback from the Accreditation Committee and required actions

In addition to general comments and specific feedback from the Accreditation Committee, the annual feedback letter may include:

- Areas in which action is recommended or requested
- Areas in which action is required

Recommended or requested actions may include:

- General comments on the direction and operation of the course
- Comments on suggested areas for development
- Requests for clarification, or information to help support or develop the accreditation relationship

Specific actions may be required by the LI where the accreditation criteria or guidelines (or the spirit of the accreditation criteria or guidelines) are not being met, followed, or there are other areas of serious concern to the LI. The Accreditation Committee may require the School to provide more information or a formal response to an issue or take specific remedial action. A deadline by which the required actions are expected to be taken may be specified.

24. Serious and recurring concerns

Where there are concerns of a serious or recurring nature, the LI may:

- Place a course on notice for a specified period during which time the LI will expect to see significant progress towards the solution of problems.
- Suspend or delay reaffirmation of accreditation pending specific actions being taken by the school.

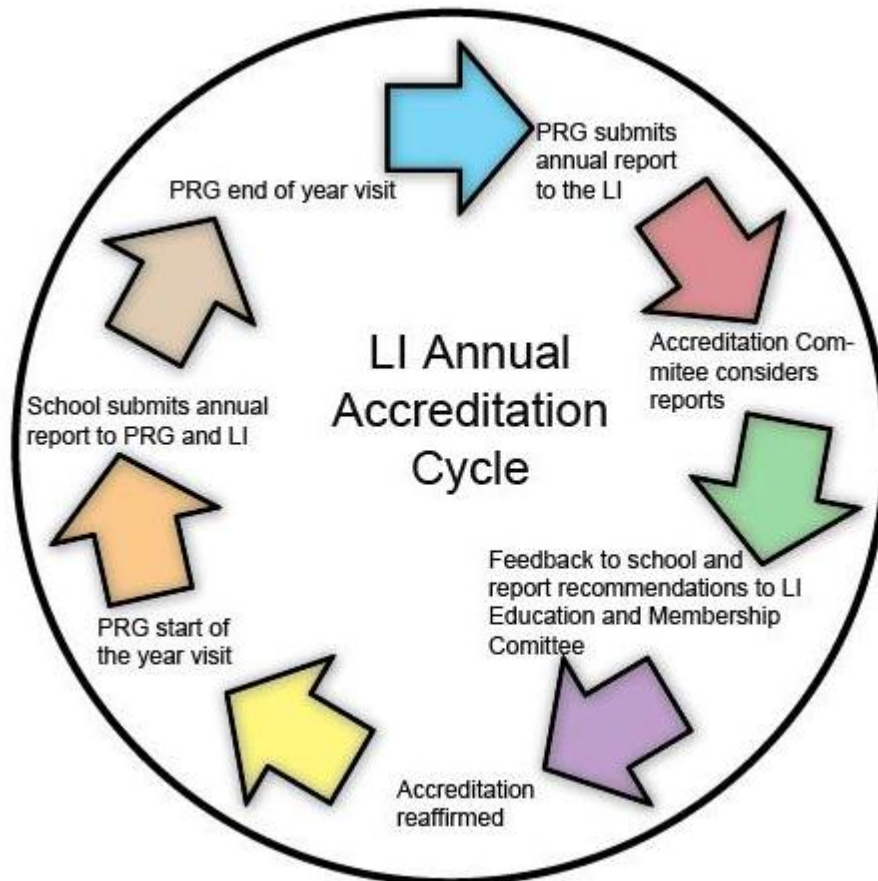


Fig 1 The annual accreditation cycle

Where issues cannot be resolved by the school the LI may choose to formally withdraw accreditation. Accreditation will normally only be restored following a new application for accreditation being made by the school.

If the School has been put on notice, a member of the Accreditation Committee will work closely with the PRG, taking part in visits during the following academic year until such time as all concerns have been satisfactorily addressed.

Decisions to suspend or withdraw accreditation will normally not be taken without extended discussion between the LI and the School.

It is open to the LI or the School to call for a full accreditation visit in the event of there being cause for concern.

25. Expenses

The LI will pay all reasonable expenses incurred by PRG members in the course of their role, including visits to accredited Schools and attendance at meetings and training events convened by the LI. Expense forms and guidelines are available from the LI staff team. Schools will be expected to meet the costs of providing information to PRGs and the LI, and for providing appropriate refreshments during accreditation and PRG visits.

Glossary

Accreditation Committee: The LI committee which oversees accreditation activity.

Accreditation Criteria: The LI's criteria for accredited programmes, available on the LI website.

Accreditation Guidelines: This document, the Procedures and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes.

EMC: Education and Membership Committee. The LI Committee responsible for professional education and training, and final decisions concerning course accreditation.

P2C: The LI's Pathway to Chartership, the programme of professional development undertaken by LI members to gain chartered professional status.

PRG: Professional Review Group. A group of professional nominated by the school who act as critical friends of the school, and submit annual reports on the accredited programme. See section C.

Programme: A single course or specified combination of courses accredited by the LI as providing initial professional education and leading to Licentiate membership of the LI.

SCHOLA: The Standing Committee of Heads of Schools of Landscape Architecture which comprises of Heads of School from all fully accredited LI programmes.

School: A Higher Education institution, faculty, or department offering a programme accredited by the LI, or in the process of discussing or seeking accreditation.

The Landscape Institute

Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London, WC1N 2JU

www.landscapeinstitute.org

Procedures and guidelines for the accreditation of higher education programmes

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