

Criteria for the accreditation of higher education programmes

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Introduction

This document details the five criteria used by the Landscape Institute in the accreditation of higher education programmes. It should be read in conjunction with the following LI publications:

- *Landscape Architecture: elements and areas of practice – an educational framework January 2012* describing the typical work of the profession in their first years of chartership.
- *Procedures and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes, January 2012*, describing the LI's accreditation processes in detail.

Both documents are available on the LI website. http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/education/accredited_courses.php

The criteria

The five criteria describe the minimum requirements which must be met for:

- Full accreditation to be awarded to a programme¹
- Accreditation of programmes to be reaffirmed as part of the annual process described in *Procedures and Guidelines*

The criteria are equally weighted for the purposes of accreditation.

Indicators

Indicators, showing the ways in which these criteria should normally be demonstrated, are provided for each of the criteria. These indicators are intended to provide a framework for discussion and for assessment. While the LI's expectation is that all indicators should be satisfied by a school, the LI is willing to discuss alternative evidence which demonstrates that the accreditation criteria are fully met.

¹ Candidate programmes will not be expected to meet all criteria in full, but demonstrate a commitment to working towards doing so in accordance with the arrangements described in *Procedures and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Programmes*.

The Landscape Institute's five accreditation criteria

- A. Schools must demonstrate that they have the staffing, expertise, resources and quality assurance mechanisms to deliver and maintain a high quality programme of learning**

- B. Programmes must:**
 - focus on a clear and defined area of professional landscape skills and expertise**
 - deliver appropriate underpinning skills, knowledge and understanding to provide a foundation for entering the profession**

- C. Programmes must deliver the key generic skills which underpin professional life and lifelong learning**

- D. Programmes must provide a foundation for progression to the workplace and professional practice**

- E. Schools must demonstrate a commitment to working in partnership with the Landscape Institute and the profession**

Accreditation Criterion A

Schools must demonstrate that they have the staffing, expertise, resources and quality assurance mechanisms to deliver and maintain a high quality programme of learning

Schools seeking accreditation will be expected to demonstrate their commitment to delivering and sustaining a high quality programme of learning.

In particular, they will be expected to show that

- The department and/or staff have a strong track record in the delivery of high quality programmes focusing on the built and/or natural environment.
- The programme and the application for accreditation has high level support within the department and institution.
- There are rigorous and appropriate systems in place to ensure quality in delivery and assessment, and that standards on the programme are maintained.
- There is sufficient and appropriate staffing, expertise and resources to deliver the programme.
- The school is committed to developing and sustaining the programme to keep it fresh, stimulating and relevant.

Once a programme is accredited, the LI's expectation is that standard of output, resources and support will be maintained by the school throughout the period of accreditation. Where there are significant changes to staffing and expertise or the resources allocated to a programme, the school will be expected to demonstrate that standards are not compromised.

Indicators (evidence demonstrating that this criterion is being met):

Indicators for programmes applying for full accreditation for the first time

Indicators for annual reaffirmation of accreditation

A1	There is support for the application for accreditation and commitment to sustaining the programme at both Head of Faculty and Department level		
A2	The department demonstrates an existing strong track record in delivering programmes focusing on the built and/or natural environment		
A3	Appropriate procedures are in place to assure the quality of provision and standards of assessment; standards, effectiveness and relevance of the programme are subject to periodic review	A3R	Appropriate procedures are in place, and acted upon, to assure the quality of provision and standards of assessment; standards, effectiveness and relevance of the programme are subject to periodic review
A4	<p>a) Internal/external validation and external examiner reports indicate that appropriate subject, institutional and national quality benchmarks are being met, and identify no significant points of concern.</p> <p>b) External examiners are qualified in a discipline relevant to the subject matter of the course</p>	A4R	<p>a) Internal reviews, validation documents, external examiner reports and graduation results indicate that standards are being maintained and that appropriate subject, institutional and national quality benchmarks are being met. No significant points of concern are identified</p> <p>b) External examiners are qualified in a discipline relevant to the subject matter of the course</p>
A5	<p>The expertise of teaching staff and staff: student ratios demonstrate the programme is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriately supported and • led, taught and assessed by individuals with the relevant qualifications and experience 	A5R	<p>The expertise of teaching staff and staff: student ratios are maintained and demonstrate the programme continues to be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriately supported and • led, taught and assessed by individuals with the relevant qualifications and experience
A6	A minimum of 50% of directed learning and teaching hours in the programme is carried out by permanent or long term contracted academic staff to ensure programme stability, continuity and coherence.	A6R	A minimum of 50% of directed learning and teaching hours

<p>A7</p> <p>A8</p> <p>A9</p>	<p>Staff development policies are in place, and acted upon, to ensure staff remain up to date on developments in education and practice</p> <p>Studio space, workshop, and laboratory facilities are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sufficient to meet teaching and study needs, and • equipped with the technical equipment and support appropriate to the academic and professional requirements of the programme <p>Information technology (hardware and software) facilities are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sufficient to meet teaching and study needs, and equipped with the technical equipment and support appropriate to the academic and professional requirements of the programme 	<p>A7R</p> <p>A8R</p> <p>A9R</p>	<p>in the programme is carried out by permanent or long term contracted academic staff to ensure programme stability, continuity and coherence.</p> <p>Staff development policies are in place, and acted upon, to ensure staff remain up to date on developments in education and practice</p> <p>Studio space, workshop and laboratory facilities are being maintained and are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sufficient to meet teaching and study needs, and • equipped with the technical equipment and support appropriate to the academic and professional requirements of the programme <p>Information technology (hardware and software) facilities are being maintained and are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sufficient to meet teaching and study needs, and • equipped with the technical equipment and support appropriate to the academic and professional requirements of the programme
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Accreditation Criterion B

Programmes must

- **focus on a clear and defined area of professional landscape skills and expertise**
- **deliver appropriate underpinning skills, knowledge and understanding to provide a foundation for entering the profession**

The LI publication *Landscape Architecture: elements and areas of practice – an educational framework* gives a broad description of the typical work activities and main areas of practice undertaken by chartered members with a particular emphasis on the early years of practice.

The diversity of landscape as a profession and as a discipline means that no two accredited programmes will be exactly alike; each will have its own clear identity and emphasis. However, all schools applying for accreditation of their programmes must demonstrate that they deliver appropriate foundation knowledge, skills and understanding to enable graduates to take up first employment in the profession, and, in the fullness of time, meet the LI's requirements to achieve chartered status.

All schools will be required to

- Identify the career path being targeted and the areas of professional practice which will be the focus of the programme
- Demonstrate the way in which programmes develop individual's foundation knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to
 - the area of practice identified
 - the typical broad work activities described in *Landscape Architecture: elements and areas of practice – an educational framework*.

All programmes will be expected to focus on developing students' abilities to think critically and holistically about the landscape as a basis for action or intervention. The emphasis should be on enabling students to put theory into practice, interrelating knowledge and applying skills to a range of practical tasks. Coursework work should include opportunities for students to demonstrate competency in taking a project from inception to delivery.

Indicators (evidence demonstrating that this criterion is being met):			
Indicators for programmes applying for accreditation for the first time		Indicators for annual reaffirmation of accreditation	
B1	Programme is comprised of a core of landscape and environmental modules		
B2	Programme development and content is based on an understanding and research of current and anticipated sector requirements (including reference to the document Landscape architecture <i>elements and areas of practice – an educational framework</i>), and includes input from and consultation with practitioners from relevant fields.	B2R	Programme development and evolution continues to be based on an understanding and research of current and anticipated sector requirements (including reference to the document Landscape architecture <i>elements and areas of practice – an educational framework</i>), and includes input from and consultation with the PRG and practitioners from relevant fields.
B3	<p>The application, programme documentation and supporting materials clearly explain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme’s mission, aims, objectives, and ethos • The career path and area of practice the programme is addressing and the reasons for this focus <p>The way in which the programme develops foundation knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the area of practice identified ○ the typical broad work activities undertaken by the profession and described in <i>Landscape Architecture: elements and areas of practice – an educational framework</i>. ○ The rationale for the inclusion (or exclusion) of particular topics and modules and how this relates to programme objectives 	B3R	<p>Programme documentation and publicity material clearly explains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme’s mission, aims, objectives, and ethos • The career path and area of practice the course is addressing and the reasons for this focus • The way in which foundation skills knowledge and understanding for the profession are developed through the programme • The outcomes which will be achieved by graduates from the programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The outcomes which will be achieved by graduates from the programme 		
B4	The focus of the programmes, the career paths and areas of practice being targeted and that the professional skills delivered are clearly understood by staff and students	B4R	The focus of the programme, the career paths and areas of practice being targeted and the professional skills that it is seeking to deliver are clearly understood by staff and students
B5	The school demonstrates a commitment to involving practising professionals with appropriate expertise in the programme	B5R	The school ensures there is a contribution to the programme from practising professionals with appropriate expertise
B6	The work of graduating students demonstrates the competency required for entry level positions in the profession of landscape architecture as appropriate to the areas of practice upon which the course focuses	B6R	The work of graduating students demonstrates the competency required for entry level positions in the profession of landscape architecture as appropriate to the areas of practice upon which the course focuses

Accreditation Criterion C

Programmes must deliver the key generic skills which underpin professional life and lifelong learning

The nature and pace of modern working life means that those entering the profession must be flexible, adaptable and open to change. In particular they must have the skills and habits to be able to maintain and develop their professional knowledge and expertise throughout their career.

Schools applying for accreditation must demonstrate that the programmes support students in developing the key transferable skills underpinning professional practice and working life in general. These will include

- **Problem solving skills** - the ability to define and analyse problems and issues, think independently, exercise judgement and develop creative and innovative solutions;
- **Critical thinking and reflection**– the ability to understand and employ, criticise and evaluate new ideas, and consider and articulate valid methods and alternative approaches.
- **Team and independent working** – ability to work effectively both independently and collaboratively with others to achieve outcomes
- **Communication** – the ability to communicate ideas clearly and effectively in a variety of professional contexts and to a range of different audiences, using appropriate media and techniques (including the use of graphic tools, and the ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing); the ability to take on board and build on the ideas of others, and to provide constructive feedback
- **Research and analysis** – the ability to locate, review, assimilate, synthesise and apply information appropriately and from a variety of sources.
- **Self/career management skills** – the ability to plan, reflect and review own learning and achievements identify opportunities for development; set personal and professional goals; ability to prioritise and manage own time.
- **Information technology** – awareness of and ability to use IT packages and tools commonly encountered in the professional workplaces relevant to the focus of the programme.

Additionally, programmes will be expected to support students in developing an appreciation of:

- The impact of policy
- Industry awareness – an appreciation of the evolving contexts and requirements of professional practice.
- How projects are brought together through visioning and strategy building, project management and finance, planning and assessment, leadership, community engagement and partnership working.

Indicators (evidence demonstrating that this criterion is being met):

Indicators for programmes applying for accreditation for the first time		Indicators for annual reaffirmation of accreditation	
C1	Programme documentation clearly explains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way in which generic skills are developed and assessed through the programme. • The outcomes which will be achieved by graduates from the programme 	C1R	Generic skills are demonstrated in student work

Accreditation Criterion D

Programmes must provide a foundation for progression to the workplace and professional practice

Accredited programmes are expected to provide students with an introduction to professional life and a foundation for progression, in due course, to chartered status.

Schools must demonstrate that programmes develop students' employability. In particular this will include evidence of:

- Strategies and learning opportunities to develop students' understanding of professional practice and awareness of the ways in which it is evolving, including;
 - relevant legal, institutional and ethical frameworks (e.g. the LI's Code of Conduct)
 - management and business procedures
 - the work of related professions
 - professional career paths, and the requirements for becoming fully qualified, in particular an introduction to the syllabus areas in the Pathway to Chartership
 - the work of related professions
- Input from practitioners, including opportunities for students to present their work in a professional context and receive feedback from practitioners.
- Strategies to expose students to real life problems and issues, and familiarise students with the complexities and expectations of professional working life.

Indicators (evidence demonstrating that this criterion is being met):

Indicators for programmes applying for accreditation for the first time	Indicators for annual reaffirmation of accreditation
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D1	Strategies are in place to develop students' employability	D1R	Strategies are in place to develop students' employability
D2	Programmes incorporate specific modules or integrated learning focusing on professional practice issues and topics	D2R	Programmes incorporate specific modules or integrated learning focusing on professional practice issues and topics
D3	Programmes incorporate a significant element of assessed learning in work based or real life contexts	D3R	Programmes incorporate a significant element of assessed learning in work based or real life contexts
D4	Programmes include opportunities for students to present their work in a professional environment and receive feedback from practitioners	D4R	Programmes include opportunities for students to present their work in a professional environment and receive feedback from practitioners
D5	Students have the opportunity to engage in multidisciplinary or cross disciplinary studies and projects	D5R	Students have the opportunity to engage in multidisciplinary or cross disciplinary studies and projects
D6	Students are provided with advice about their career choices and the next stages in their professional development	D6R	Students are aware of professional opportunities, career paths, and next steps to qualification (including the Pathway to Chartership) and are provided with advice about their career choices and professional development

Accreditation Criterion E

Schools must demonstrate a commitment to working in partnership with the Landscape Institute and the profession

LI accreditation is intended to be a mutually beneficial relationship. Schools applying for accreditation are accordingly expected to be genuinely concerned about and involved in the profession, and committed working in partnership with the LI.

Indicators (evidence demonstrating that this criterion is being met):

Indicators for programmes applying for accreditation for the first time		Indicators for annual reaffirmation of accreditation	
E2	School provides a designated representative who will be responsible for coordinating the relationship between the LI and the school.	E1R	<p>Administration and reporting</p> <p>Annual reports, pass lists and statistical information (programme applicants, joiners, graduates, graduate destinations) are provided by the school in a complete and timely manner, in accordance with deadlines.</p>
		E2R	School provides a designated representative who will be responsible for coordinating the relationship between the LI and the school.
		E3R	<p>Working with the Professional Review Groups (RPG)</p> <p>Schools provide all information required within the LI's accreditation guidelines to PRG members in a timely</p>

E7	Key staff hold or are willing to take up membership of the LI.	E4R	<p>manner.</p> <p>Schools provide PRGs with appropriate access to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cross section of coursework reflecting the range of abilities across current and graduating students • A cross section of students to discuss their coursework and experiences on the programme • staff to discuss the development, delivery and outcomes of the programmes
		E5R	Schools ensure that PRGs have the required number of members to remain quorate throughout the academic year, nominating new members were required to maintain quoracy and continuity.
		E6R	Schools provide a full and considered response to feedback provided by the PRG and ASC
			Involvement in the LI and the professional community
		E7R	Key staff hold LI membership ²
		E8R	Students are actively encouraged to take up membership of the LI
		E9R	The school builds links with relevant LI branches
		E10R	Students and staff participate in professional and community activities, including branches, SLIC, committees and the LI's various fora and networks.

² e.g. chartered member, academic member or other appropriate membership grade

		E11R	<p>Schools take advantage of the LI’s facilities and publications to raise awareness of their research activities, and play an active role in developing knowledge and promoting learned debate within the profession.</p> <p>Representation of accredited status</p>
		E12R	<p>Programme and programme publicity material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes information about the Landscape Institute • clearly and unambiguously states; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ which programmes are accredited by the LI ○ which courses must be undertaken (in instances where the accredited programme is a composite made up of more than one award eg degree + diploma, or graduate diploma + MA) ○ The exit award which must be achieved for individuals to be eligible for Licentiate membership of the LI. <p>Marketing</p>
		E13R	<p>Schools actively support and participate in initiatives to promote landscape architecture as a profession and promote accredited programmes.</p>