

## Information and Guidance on applying for the Accreditation of Programmes

The Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES), through its education committee, the Community for Environmental Disciplines in Higher Education (CEDHE), offers professional accreditation to CEDHE members for Masters, Honours and Foundation Programmes. The scheme also covers HE provision within FE institutions.

Only CEDHE members may apply for accreditation. Programmes should fall within the remit of the [Benchmark Statement](#) for Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies, and Masters Programmes should clearly align with this benchmark.

### Application and re-accreditation process

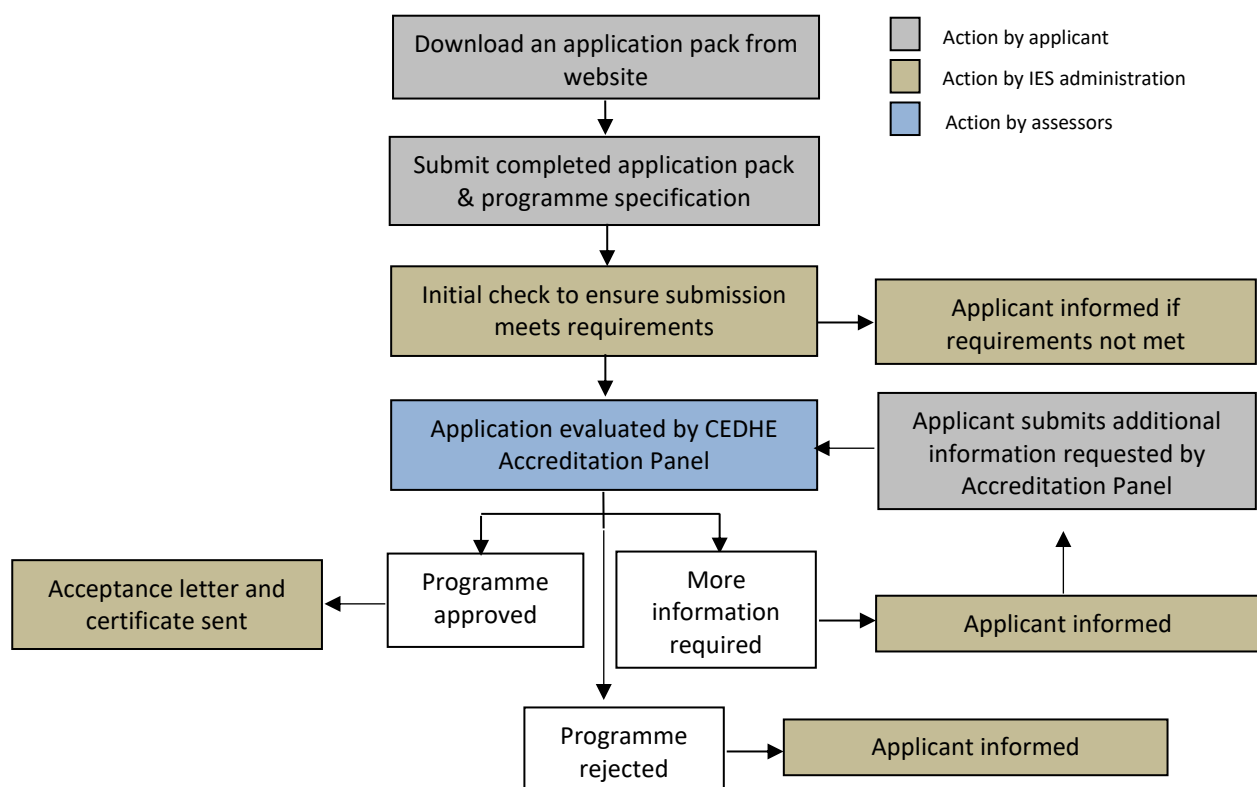
Your accreditation application needs to include:

- ✓ Completed application form
- ✓ ES3 Benchmark Statement mapping table
- ✓ Relevant current Programme Specification or equivalent
- ✓ Most recent programme report and or examiners report (for new programmes, include the validation report instead)

**No additional documentation is required; any other materials submitted will not be considered.**

A separate application form is required for each individual programme however additional year variants should be included in the parent programme application, for example Environmental Science BSc (Hons) and Environmental Science with placement year BSc (Hons). Programmes with an integrated master’s variant (MEnv, MEnvSci, MSci, MASocSci) can be included on the same application however applications must stipulate the differences between the parent programme and variants to illustrate the progression of the programme and value in the additional year of study. Separate applications are required for standalone masters programmes (MSc, MA).

**Information in the application form must not duplicate the Programme Specification;** ‘cut-and-paste’ from programme specifications must be avoided, but reference to relevant sections if the programme specification is required. The application should refer to specific modules (utilise specific names and/or codes), to provide a detailed narrative of how and when the programme meets the specific accreditation requirements.



Our scheme avoids duplication of quality management and enhancement processes and standards (i.e. Benchmark Statements, Programme Specifications and Codes of Practice). The application form consists of two sections: Section A *The Programme*; and Section B *Environmental Professional Practice*. A word limit of **2000 words for each section** applies.

An application that does not meet the requirements specified above will be returned without a full evaluation. For example, application forms that duplicate the programme specification or submissions exceeding the word limit.

Applications are reviewed by an IES and CEDHE Accreditation Panel which meets four times a year.

## ES3 Benchmark Statement

The latest version of the [ES3 Benchmark Statement](#) (published in March 2022) has strengthened the focus on Sustainability, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), along with ways to promote Employability and Entrepreneurship in Higher Education. The new Benchmark Statement has triggered a review of the IES accreditation application documentation and associated guidance. The CEDHE committee decided that Sustainability and EDI should be considered distinctly in the two sections of the application, ensuring applicants detail how these two themes are addressed in both programme design and in preparing students for professional practice. The Employability and Entrepreneurship is a theme that runs through several sub-sections, therefore applicants should ensure they consider how these elements are embedded into both the programme design and in preparing students for professional practice.

Further guidance on embedding Employability and Entrepreneurship can be found on [QAA website](#).

In addition to ensuring that the ES3 Benchmark Statement has been referenced clearly within the application responses, a [Benchmark Mapping table](#) is included in the application paperwork to enable applicants to demonstrate clearly where ES3 Benchmark learning outcomes are included throughout the delivery of the programme. The ES3 Benchmark is typically utilised in undergraduate programme design, however applications for postgraduate and international programmes should also complete the mapping table to show how the programme aligns with the ES3 learning outcomes. If the programme does not meet one of the learning outcomes, a contextual narrative can be included within the application.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

We are committed to accrediting environmental science programmes that strive to be inclusive and accessible for all learners, that reflect the diversity that exists within society, and provide equal opportunities. This is vital for the achievement of the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals included in the 2030 Agenda.

In recognition of the diversity challenges the sector faces, awarding gaps that exist within institutions among diverse groups, and the impacts of these on employability, all applications are required to provide information about how EDI is addressed within the programme, and in relation to professional environmental practice. Departments delivering accredited degrees are expected to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in line with applicable national regulatory frameworks, as well as embedding inclusive design within the curriculum where relevant.

While respecting local laws, assessors will seek evidence of the measures that applicant institutions take to ensure that their processes treat all candidates, students and staff fairly and without discrimination. Note, inclusion is characterised as the environment in which diverse groups are valued.

In the UK diverse groups include, but are not restricted to, gender, race and ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and socio-economic background. For more information about [protected characteristics](#) in the UK refer to [Equality Act 2010](#) guidance.

There are two competencies in the accreditation form that refer to EDI.

**A2: Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in programme design and delivery: Outline how these are addressed with respect to**

- i) **programme design and delivery and**
- ii) **pedagogic practice.**

This section encourages applicants to consider both their departmental and programme-specific practices. We recognise that different aspects of diversity may be of higher priority to some institutions at any given time; for example, an institution with a high proportion of students with disabilities but a low number of ethnically diverse students, may place greater onus on enhancing inclusivity regarding disability whilst maintaining good practice in ethnicity. It is therefore expected that focus may vary across institutions. Some examples to consider may include:

- Reference to an inclusive teaching and learning policy (level may vary, i.e. institution, faculty, school);
- Details of specific awards or endorsement (e.g. in a UK context Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter);
- Specific examples of anticipatory approaches to making reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities and other protected characteristics; and
- Evidence for inclusive practice or Widening Participation (WP) initiatives.

Greater consideration should be given to programme-specific and departmental activities as opposed to institution-wide initiatives. Responses which only make reference to the latter may be rejected.

**B1: Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in professional practice: With specific examples from named modules outline how EDI are addressed with respect to**

- i) **developing EDI-specific graduate attributes / outcomes**
- ii) **examples of how diverse student groups are supported to succeed in professional practice. State any known awarding gaps and what is being done to address these.**

This relates to awarding gaps that exist among diverse groups, subsequent impacts on employability and what institutions are doing to explicitly address these. Examples may include:

- Engaging with employers that recognise and value diversity;
- Ensuring that students are properly supported on work placements;
- Ensuring diversity is reflected in invited speakers;
- Signposting students to professional associations that can further support them in employment.

It is important to note that responses will be used to identify barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion within environmental science education and will help CEDHE collate case studies for best practice. In the future, the IES and CEDHE intend to produce formal best practice guidance on EDI for higher education and further education providers, which will be used to provide formal, tailored feedback during the accreditation process.

Further guidance on EDI can be found on [QAA website](#).

## Sustainability and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

ES3 disciplines naturally align with themes of sustainability however, it is essential that these disciplines consider interactions between the social, economic and environmental components of sustainable development in order to effectively prepare students to be able to tackle future cross disciplinary challenges. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is the process of creating curriculum structures and subject-relevant content to support and enact sustainable development, which is strongly rooted in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As with EDI, there are two competencies in the accreditation application that refer to Sustainability.

**A9: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in programme design and delivery: Provide a succinct commentary on how ESD is embedded in teaching, learning and assessment in the programme, including examples of how and in which modules.**

This relates to how ESD is embedded into the curriculum content. Examples of application may include:

- Programme design in relation to ESD
- Specific elements of the course content that support student knowledge and understanding of SDGs
- Authentic assessment that uses multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary approaches and that are underpinned by SDGs.

**B7: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) preparation for professional practice: With specific examples from named modules outline how ESD is addressed with respect to developing ESD-specific graduate attributes / outcomes.**

This section relates to how your programme prepares graduates for complex challenges through the development of specific attributes, outlined by UNESCO as '[cross-cutting key competencies](#)'. These competencies include

- **Ways of Thinking:** Systems thinking, Anticipatory and Critical thinking
- **Ways of Practicing:** Strategic, Collaboration and Integrated problem- solving
- **Ways of Being:** Normative and Self-awareness

Examples of application may include:

- Enquiry-based projects or action research with a sustainability focus
- Students being encouraged to find alternatives or solutions to unsustainable practices

Further guidance on ESD can be found on [QAA website](#).

## Cost

The initial cost of accrediting a single programme is £550, with a charge of £250 for each additional programme. In cases where referral and a visit are necessary, there may be additional charges. After approval for accreditation, there will be a recurring Accredited Membership fee of £500 per annum to cover CEDHE membership and the administration costs for the production and supply of graduate certificates. This is a flat fee regardless of how many programmes you have accredited. Only members of CEDHE may apply for or hold accreditation. Accreditation will be withdrawn if CEDHE membership lapses.

## Programmes with additional year variants

There is strong evidence that sandwich placements and general work experience enhance employability. Therefore, departments are encouraged to accredit additional year derivatives, along with their parent programmes, by providing respective course specifications. Accreditation of these variants is free of charge, with the accreditation fee covering all approved derivatives of the course.

This applies to all Year in Industry, Professional Placement Year, Year Abroad and Foundation Year courses.

Programmes with an integrated master's variant (MEnv, MEnvSci, MSci, MASocSci) can be included on the same application however applications must stipulate the differences between the parent programme and variants to illustrate the progression of the programme and value in the additional year of study. Separate applications are required for standalone masters programmes (MSc, MA). Integrated masters, joint honours, and pathways resulting in different degree titles must be accredited separately.

## After Accreditation

After approval, accreditation will normally last for five years. Post-accreditation, any significant programme changes need to be reported to CEDHE in a timely manner. Changes which require reaccreditation include, but are not limited to:

- the removal/reduction of field or laboratory work;
- changes to course content which exceed 25%;
- the reduction of science content to less than 50% of the syllabus;
- changes to assessment in core modules;
- changes that affect the mapping of the programme against the ES3 Subject Benchmark Statement; or
- any other changes that would trigger an institutional review of the programme.

The impacts of the changes will then be considered by the Accreditation Panel in relation to the requirements of accreditation and a decision made regarding continuation of the accreditation for the remainder of the five-year period. If a resubmission is required and the programme accepted for accreditation, the accreditation will last for five years after approval of the resubmission.

Every five years, or sooner if there are significant changes, the course will need to be reaccredited. This is to ensure the programme still meets the requirements necessary for accreditation. Reaccreditation is charged at £250 per course.

## Further information

Any further clarification required may be obtained from [info@the-ies.org](mailto:info@the-ies.org) or ++44 (0)20 3862 7484.