

Course Accreditation

1. Introduction

The Institute's Course Accreditation scheme accredits university degree courses from which all its graduates will meet the relevant educational requirements for the Chartered Mathematician (CMath) designation. The scheme is available to approved courses validated by higher education providers in the United Kingdom to enable graduates to readily demonstrate the attainment of educational requirements for professional registration.

The CMath designation recognises individuals as professional mathematicians, whose skills, experience and professionalism are alongside that of other chartered designations. Chartered designations provide numerous benefits to both individuals and employers, which include:

- Careers options are broader for individuals;
- Members of a professional body who hold a professional qualification have a greater probability of employment and an increased salary compared to those without professional qualifications;
- Employers benefit from an assurance of expertise and competence from their employees who hold a chartered designation;
- Employees develop highly valued transferable skills whilst gaining professional recognition;
- Employers can engage with suitable STEM graduates as their degree will have been recognised by the relevant professional body.

Universities who have their degree courses(s) accredited by the Institute help make their mathematics undergraduates aware that professional recognition is available to graduates. Accreditation can provide them with their first steps towards gaining professional recognition - which will help them to progress in their careers. Accredited degree courses can be identified within Institutional course literature, HESA Key Information Sets (KIS) and on the UNISTATS website. Accreditation is only available to UK University degree awards.

For graduates with an accredited degree it is straightforward to become an Associate Member of the IMA and for applicants with additional qualifications and experience there are other levels of membership.

2. Overview

The following information is relevant to universities applying for accreditation for the first time and those wishing to renew their existing accreditation.

Accreditation is formally granted by the Chair of the Institute's Higher Education Service Area (HEdSA) committee (or other nominated person), based on the recommendations of an External Assessor, and is provided at two levels:

- i) Accredited by the Institute to meet the educational requirements of the Chartered Mathematician designation.
- ii) Accredited by the Institute to meet the educational requirements of the Chartered Mathematician designation when followed by subsequent training and experience in employment to obtain competencies equivalent to those specified by the QAA for taught master's degrees.

Accreditation at level i) normally corresponds to integrated masters (typically an MMath) degree courses. Accreditation at level ii) normally corresponds to a Bachelor degree (typically a BSc), or in some cases an MA, such as from some Scottish Universities corresponding to the award from four years of undergraduate study that incorporates a foundation year.

External assessment is a pre-requisite for the IMA Course Accreditation process for Chartered Mathematician Courses; this also provides a pre-requisite eligibility for the Chartered Scientist (CSci) designation.

The period of an IMA University Degree Course Accreditation for each institutional mathematics course is generally 5 years but can be extended to a maximum of 6 years for administrative convenience. Interim accreditation for new courses can be considered within the existing period of Accreditation. A recommendation for a full period of accreditation at an Institution must involve a meeting with representatives from the institution either online or at the institution (hereafter known as the visit) by an IMA External Assessor to assure the QA compliance for each nominated course.

The External Assessor is provided with an indicative agenda for the visit.

3. General Criteria associated with Accreditation

To be considered for accreditation, a degree course must be an honours degree, normally consisting of 360 credits for a Bachelor degree or 480 credits for an integrated Master's degree within the framework of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Code of Practice. Degree courses should satisfy the relevant version of the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the current QAA Benchmark for Mathematics, Statistics and Operational Research at the appropriate level (Bachelor, integrated Master etc). Further details can be found at www.qaa.ac.uk/.

Accreditation is associated with each individual degree course (i.e. each individual UCAS code or named degree). Any new course seeking accreditation should have been validated within the Institution prior to, or in parallel with, the application.

Mathematically-based modules must normally constitute at least two-thirds of the total content at each stage of the course. If any particular year of a course has less than this it can be compensated for in later years. Course Accreditation designation recognises the importance of including developing new and emerging areas of mathematical studies alongside existing mathematical topics within a degree course. Further details are given in an associated Appendix A document: IMA Degree Course Accreditation – Mathematical, Educational and Professional Requirements. Generic skills-based modules are not typically considered as contributing directly to the 'mathematics content' but may be assessed to provide a (specified) proportional contribution by the External Assessor and / or correspond to providing supporting mathematical competencies. Guidance on inclusion of Mathematical, Educational and Professional skills content is provided in Appendix A.

For degree courses including a preliminary or foundation year, the degree content only from relevant later years shall be considered for the decision on accreditation of the degree.

Any Placement year associated with a degree course is not included within the Degree Course Accreditation arrangement.

4. Applying / Renewing Course Accreditation

The Accreditation process for Chartered Mathematician requires an appropriate external assessment of each nominated University course. Applications should include explicit listings of all versions of degrees to be considered and appropriate supporting information provided to the IMA External Assessor.

The IMA Course Accreditation process is designed to build on the outcomes from the Institution's Course Validation, Monitoring and Review process, such as required by the QAA. Relevant QAA outcomes should be made available to the nominated IMA External Assessor - typically confirmation of internal validation / approval of each relevant degree course.

IMA Course Accreditation is generally granted for five years and may be advertised, at the appropriate accreditation level, within the relevant course literature and on the UNISTATS website. A further one-year extension can be requested if convenient to enable coincidence with an Institutional Review.

Minor course changes, such as following an internal course review that results in a redesign of a group of modules, would normally only need reconsideration at the next Course Accreditation.

The IMA does not charge a fee for the administration of the Degree Course Accreditation scheme. However, it is expected that the Institution applying for accreditation will cover the relevant expenses of the Course Accreditation External Assessor, e.g. travel expenses. This should be clarified before nomination and expenses paid directly to the External Assessor.

5. External Assessor(s)

Universities seeking accreditation must nominate an External Assessor who is acceptable to the Institute; the nominee **must normally be a Fellow of the Institute** and should have sufficient experience of the academic requirements associated with the CMath designation. External Academics who do not hold the CMath designation will be asked to supply a brief copy of their CV.

A nominated External Assessor must be suitably aware of the relevant Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education and the mathematics course content as identified within the current QAA - Subject (MSOR) Benchmark.

A current or recent (within 5 years) Course External Examiner or Advisor (appointed by the Institution) is eligible to be nominated as an External Assessor to review degree courses for accreditation.

Nominated External Assessors cannot have previously reviewed the nominating University's degree courses for accreditation.

No fee is required from the University Institution to the IMA for consideration or award of Degree Course Accreditation.

A formal date for the Accreditation visit should be agreed with the External Assessor; typically, this may be conveniently associated alongside an Institutional Course Reviews/ Degree Course Reviews / Course Examiners Meetings.

External Assessors will be issued with relevant information guidelines and assigned an IMA Course Accreditation Mentor if reviewing degree courses for the first time.

The Institute can provide the contact details of CMath FIMA academic members who would be prepared to receive an invitation to be an External Assessor.

6. How to Apply / Renew Accreditation

Applications for accreditation can be submitted for:

- i) Renewal of existing course accreditation;
- ii) Accreditation of an additional degree course (where there is currently accreditation of a similar course);
- iii) Accreditation of a degree course (where there is no current accreditation).

A Course Accreditation Check list is available to help Institutions through the accreditation process relevant to these processes.

Please provide a definitive list of nominated degree courses and give degree titles in full, e.g. BSc (Hons) Mathematics. Note that a separate application is required for each degree course (UCAS Code)/named degree. Please advise on preferred Review date(s) and details of any proposed External Assessor(s).

A Course Accreditation Application Form should be completed and submitted electronically to Vanessa Thorogood, IMA Education Manager, [vanessa.thorogood@ima.org.uk].

7. Partnerships between UK and Overseas Universities

Degree courses delivered in a parallel (or equivalent) provision at an overseas University can be accredited provided graduating students attain the quality and standards equivalent to an existing accredited course and awarded by the UK partner University.

This can mean a degree that is offered at the overseas partner university, but is not offered at the UK university. However, the Institute will need to know which accredited courses at the UK partner University the overseas University degree courses are equivalent to.

An application for accreditation must come from the UK partner University in consultation with the overseas University, as it is the UK partner University who awards the degrees.

The Head of Department/Department Head of Education at the UK partner University is required to confirm that students graduating from the overseas University attain the same quality and standards as on the degree courses awarded by the UK partner University.

8. Accreditation Process

In order to recommend accreditation by the IMA the External Assessor must be assured from the outcomes of the overall QA processes and the internal validation / revalidation process. A key requirement for each nominated degree course is to confirm that the required mathematical content threshold is met by all graduates.

Accreditation of Degree Courses for a full accreditation period, generally 5 years, must include the visit of an IMA approved External Assessor to the University. The Assessor is required to assure the proportionate mathematical content and skills associated with the level of accreditation requested. Importantly, the assessor must be assured, for each nominated course, the appropriate level and relevant mathematical content for all graduates is attained.

Interim Course Accreditation, for new degree courses or continued accreditation arising from substantial revisions to existing courses, can be considered without a visit. Applications would be considered by a

nominated External Assessor and, if approved, Accreditation granted to the date of the next full IMA Course Accreditation visit.

An External Assessor makes her/his recommendations to the Institute, via a formal feedback form giving a recommendation for each degree course the university nominates for consideration of accreditation. External Assessors are required to briefly substantiate their overall recommendation for each course (e.g. providing an overall balance of specialist mathematics / project and mathematical skills modules / other modules); this is particularly relevant to courses which incorporate a significant additional subject contribution (e.g. Physics, Computer Science) or training elements (e.g. Mathematical Education).

All summary report(s) are sent to the chair of HEdSA (or other nominated person), for course accreditation to be granted.

An Institution may appeal against a recommendation of non-approval of a course to the chair of HEdSA when based on a submission of additional information to support the appeal. An Institution has three-months after receiving the decision to submit their appeal.

Accredited degree courses may be identified within University course literature and on the UNISTATS website according to the appropriate level [as listed in 2.i) or 2.ii)] and period of accreditation.

If you have any additional questions concerning the scheme, please contact: Vanessa Thorogood, IMA Education Manager.

Associated Documents:

IMA Course Accreditation – Overview (this document)
IMA Course Accreditation - Appendix A (Graduate Requirements)
IMA Course Accreditation – External Assessor’s Feedback Form
IMA Course Accreditation - External Assessors Role
IMA Course Accreditation - Application Form

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