

## **ACCREDITATION VISIT MAIN FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Name of Provider:** Marine Biological Association of the UK

**Date of visit:** 27 – 28 October 2009

**Number of students enrolled on date of visit:**

Masters in Research: 15

PhD: 10

### **The provision in context**

The Marine Biological Association (MBA) was founded in 1884, and incorporated in 1885. It is a charity and company limited by guarantee. Responsibility for governance lies with the Council, who are the trustees. The mission of the MBA is to promote marine biology through research, education and communication. The MBA is reliant on research funding for most of its income with some core science funding from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

The courses run by the MBA are unique academic research programmes, using sophisticated equipment, supported by an extensive tradition of renowned research including Nobel Prize winners. The specialist advanced, post-doctoral, training courses of 1-3 week duration attract students from universities worldwide with selection by academic achievement prior to attendance. PhD students are affiliated to universities in the UK and abroad, with the MBA providing resources and facilities to support their research. Students studying for Masters in Research (MRes) are enrolled as students of the University of Plymouth. The University of Plymouth is therefore responsible for their selection and admission. The MBA also has well developed links with other established universities including Oxford and Cambridge.

Students attend Masters in Research, MRes and PhD courses and workshops. All students have high levels of English language skills prior to attending courses at MBA. Additional student support in the form of the university student services is available through the University of Plymouth. All students are aged 22 year and above. Over the last year approximately 30 students have joined long term research programmes. Up to 25 students have been enrolled on advanced short courses. All students are at or above PhD level and often specialist researchers in marine biology.

### **Overall judgement**

Provision meets the standards required for accreditation and is recommended for approval by the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) for a Sponsors' Licence in accordance with UKBA guidance and the Tier 4 points-based system.

## **Feedback**

This feedback contains the findings from the accreditation visit brought together under the three main aspects of the *Common Inspection Framework*. The findings focus on the requirements of the student entry points-based system operated by the UKBA for private education providers and the five key questions of the *Common Inspection Framework*.

## **Achievement and standards**

Achievement for PhD and MRes students is largely measured by success in writing peer reviewed published articles. The number of published articles has increased from 42 in 2007 to 75 in 2008. The short course programmes enable students to gain skills and experience to enhance their own pre and post-doctorial research.

## **Quality of education and training**

Training and research programmes operated by the MBA meet the requirements of a higher education establishment providing training and research to UK and non-EU students. Most tutors are renowned world class experts in specific fields of marine biology, or research techniques. Participation on courses is highly valued by students and places are obtained through merit and research. Training is at doctoral and post-doctorial level and meets the research and development needs of students.

The MBA has been in existence for 125 years and provide purpose built accommodation, resources and faculties to support marine research. Library facilities are outstanding, providing resources that are not available in other libraries, including some original works by Darwin and complete catalogues of important journals. The facility has the ability through pumped and managed sea water to operate a wide variety of research projects that support post-graduate, doctoral and post –doctorial research. Teaching, training and research facilities are very good with world leading technology.

Initial assessment is satisfactory. Students are allocated places on the MRes by the University of Plymouth, on PhD programmes by their own university or on short courses through a selection process based on academic suitability and achievement. A satisfactory student handbook is available to all students and identifies how they can gain student services support from the University of Plymouth. Students do not require support to develop their English language skills, as all are expected to be able to converse and write technical papers in English, however, support is available through the University of Plymouth should this be required. Students receive appropriate pastoral and academic support from tutors and peers. However, during student induction there is insufficient information made available to non-EU students about cultural differences and expectations, relevant to living and studying in the UK and specifically in the Plymouth area.

## **Leadership and management**

MBA is well managed and has a clear management structure with a mission and vision to promote world class research and development to provide international post-graduate training and research. Publicity material is accurate and reflects the facilities available to students.

Quality assurance is satisfactory. It comprises of student evaluation and monitoring of tutor performance. Satisfactory processes are in place to monitor student feedback from training sessions. Observations of taught sessions are undertaken by external examiners and MBA tutors.

Satisfactory health and safety processes are in place and fire evacuation procedures and practices are adequately recorded. Classrooms, laboratories and external fieldwork are health and safety compliant. MBA is independently inspected by other government departments and official bodies. Satisfactory checks are made of student living accommodation this includes local bed and breakfast accommodation and University halls of residence.

Satisfactory processes are in place to monitor attendance of all students. However, procedures to inform UKBA of student non arrival and poor attendance are not clearly established.

The MBA's policies and procedures to support equality and diversity are insufficiently developed. Policies relating to equality and diversity is focussed on staff and does not make sufficient references to current legislation.

Safeguarding is satisfactory and meets the requirements of employees and adults in higher education.

<b>1. Name of UKBA approved Accrediting Body</b>	OFSTED
<b>2. Name of Provider</b>	Marine Biological Association of the UK
<b>3. Statement of accreditation (accredited)</b>	Accredited
<b>4. Date of this accreditation visit</b>	27 October 2009
<b>5. Date Provider Established</b>	1884
<b>6. Name of Owner (Company name if appropriate)</b>	Marine Biological Association of the UK
<b>7. Number of provider sites</b>	1
<b>8. Location(s) (all)</b>	The Laboratory Citadel Hill Plymouth, PL1 2PB
<b>9. Name of current principal or chief executive</b>	Professor Colin Brownlee - Director
<b>10. Publication date of current report</b>	
<b>11. Date of initial accreditation visit and where appropriate, the dates of preliminary stages of approval</b>	27 October 2009
<b>12. SLU Reference number (where appropriate) and status</b>	
<b>13. Number of FT international students requiring visa approval enrolled at time of most recent accreditation visit</b>	1
<b>14. Total number of students enrolled FT/PT (at time of accreditation visit)</b>	35
<b>15. Estimated range of FT student capacity of provider at time of visit based on the providers accommodation and resources</b>	50
<b>16. Age range of all students included at time of accreditation</b>	25-60
<b>17. Minimum age of students accepted</b>	Probably 22 – once students have completed a undergraduate course of study for MRes and on completion of

	post-graduate qualification for PhD.	
<b>18. Number of teachers</b>	Under 10 hours	10
	10-20 hours	6
	20 hours and over	3
<b>19. Number of additional support or ancillary staff</b>	10	
<b>20. Student accommodation included/not included in inspection</b>	Not included	
<b>21. Names of Courses included in accreditation process:</b> All these courses are of 1-3 week duration aimed at research scientists at a post-doctorial level. Applications for courses are scrutinised by leading scientists or run for specific universities. Course fees are large and usually paid by other universities or scientific foundations.	Course	Awarding Body
	Optical techniques for cell physiology and development	MBAUK
	From organism to ecosystem	MBAUK
	Phytoplankton identification & culture	MBAUK
	Zooplankton identification	MBAUK
	Hydrozoan identification and ecology	MBAUK
	Marine Biology	Newcastle University
	Marine Biology	Liverpool University
	Highly protected marine reserves	English Nature
	<b>22. Approved examination centre status held with national awarding bodies:</b>	Course
MRes		University of Plymouth
PhD		Various UK Universities
<b>23. Formal progression, franchise or articulation agreements held by provider</b>	University of Plymouth for MRes Other UK universities for PhD	

<b>directly with recognised Higher Education Institutions:</b>	
<b>24. Number of students progressing to these institutions in last year</b>	No – the students progress from the universities to the MBA – it is a world class research facility for Marine Biology
<b>25. Overall attendance rate in last full year (for students covered by this accreditation)</b>	100%
<b>26. Overall success rate in last full year. (% Number of achievers/number of starters, as a total and where possible by course)</b>	Everyone who attended short courses completed. Records show only 2 students have not completed PhD in past 5 years

---

© Crown copyright 2009. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced verbatim without adaptation, and the source and date of publication are stated.  
Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).