Frequently Asked Questions relating to the RSC accreditation criteria

- Does a student have to pass all practical components even if they are standalone modules or embedded into a theoretical module? *Yes, all practical components must be passed regardless of whether the practicals are standalone modules or embedded into a theoretical module.*

- What is the RSC's opinion on exit degrees? i.e. when students don't meet the requirements for the accredited degree? We don't usually accredit degrees that aren't recruited to. If the exit award does not meet our accreditation requirements it will not be possible to accredit this.

- Can labs in the "with" part of a degree e.g. Chemistry with Medicinal Chemistry count towards the 300 practical hours? If so, do these practicals have to be passed? *Yes, labs in the 'with' part of the degree can be included in the 300 practical hours and they do have to be passed.*

- Does the RSC have any guidance on how to effectively manage the use of Artificial Intelligence? How should this be managed for coursework assessments? *Artificial intelligence is a fast emerging topic and the RSC are aware of the impact this is having on degree programmes. The RSC will continue to understand this impact and provide guidance where appropriate. The Quality Assurance Agency based in the UK have issued some guidance on this -* [Generative Artificial Intelligence (qaa.ac.uk)](qaa.ac.uk)*. The RSC accreditation criteria ask for all assessments to be robust to maintain academic integrity.*

- What is the timeline in terms of forms and evidence submission for the departments that are up for renewal of their accreditation? *For UK, Irish and international universities, the paperwork submission typically happens between 8-12 weeks before the visit is due to take place. For UK and Ireland accreditations we plan 6-12 months ahead, you will be contacted 6-12 months before your re-accreditation is due to explain the timelines. Our UK and Irish visits usually start in October each year and run until April/May as we must meet with students. If you are unsure of when your next accreditation is due or are would like a new submission in the next 12 months contact the team. For International accreditations, we plan around 18 months ahead for reaccreditations.*

- What types of placements does the distance learning requirement apply to? *It only applies to placements that are credit bearing and embedded within the degree. These placements would typically be year-long. Standalone placements that do not contribute towards the degree do not have to meet the 25% distance learning requirement.*

- What are the RSC's expectations around distance learning? What would usually be classed as distance learning and what would be assessed as part of the placement? What counts towards the distance learning component of a placement? *Any topic modules that are not related to the placement itself are classed as distance learning. Any activities related specifically to the placement such as a log, report or presentation are not included in the distance learning component.*

- Do the RSC have a steer on forms of assessment used and how the rigidity and fairness is assessed? *Universities should provide the forms of assessment that have been set and the assessors will review the process to ensure it is rigorous. Departments should*

have processes in place to ensure that assessments outcomes are authentic and not the result of collusion. KR12 now states that assessment should be varied, appropriate and rigorous, and require students to apply their knowledge and solve problems. All assessment methods should be inclusive and accessible. We expect to see a variety of assessment methods used, however the choice of assessment method should be a reasoned, appropriate choice made by subject experts within the discipline.

- Should RSC accreditation consider the behaviours and understanding of broader regulations that employers value? *As part of the accreditation review, the RSC did consult with industry, and this was not raised as part of our discussions.*

- Can virtual labs such as computational labs and simulations be included in the 300 practical hour requirement? *If these practicals are assessed then they can probably count towards the practical hour requirement. Computational practical can count towards the 300 practical hours. Simulations could be used as part of pre-lab. We have seen examples of this.*

- Does the 300 hour practical requirement include the final year project? *No, the final year project for either BSc or integrated masters cannot be included in the 300 hours.*

- What does the RSC mean by digital skills? *We don't currently have a complete definition for this but generally speaking digital skills or digital capability are broader than just information technology (hard or technical skills often used in operating and manipulating technology) and could include newer technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, digital confidence and communication plus coding skills. Digital skills should allow a graduate to acquire the IT skills any employer/research group will require of that individual. The RSC will provide examples of digital skills where possible and share best practice as the new criteria are introduced.*

- What does the map of distance learning mean in relation to KR11? *This relates to placements where there is a module or assessments that students carry out during their placement. The map of distance learning will contain information about when a student on placement would be expected to submit an assessment or complete a module. This should be shared with the employer and the student. This gives the employer and student an understanding of what the workload of the student will be like during their placement and help them manage their time accordingly.*

- What are the differences between practical exams and mini practical tests? *Practical exams would likely be formal exams at the end of a practical module whereas mini practical tests will likely be more informal and be shorter in length. They may also only test certain skills whereas the practical exam may test many skills and be longer.*

- Are replacement practical sessions for those students absent due to reasons such as medical leave and other extenuating circumstances? *Yes they are. There should be a mechanism in place for students to catch up missed practical sessions due to medical leave or other extenuating circumstances. KR6 also states that students could undertake writing up pre-collected data as suitable catch-up.*

- When are the new accreditation criteria applicable from? *The new accreditation criteria will come into effect from September 2024 for UK and Ireland based universities and from January 2025 for international universities. This means that when your university is due for reaccreditation it will be assessed against the new criteria. If you have questions or would like to speak to us, please contact the team.*

- Can there be more than 300 practical hours in a BSc programme? *Yes, there must be at least 300 hours which does not include the final year project.*

- Is there any prescribed length for the duration of the external placement? *There is no prescribed length for these. Typically in the UK and Ireland placements last 1 year but at international universities the length of placements vary and the RSC Accreditation Team see placements of varying lengths. Ideally the length of the placement should allow the student to have a valuable experience. We have an industrial best practice guide available if you would like to read [more](#) about this.*

- Is it compulsory to have industry placements within degree programmes? *It is not compulsory from an accreditation point of view however industry placements do enhance the student learning experience. Many universities offer them to support the development of their students.*

- Do students have to demonstrate competency in practical's as well as complete at least 300 practical hours in the lab? *Yes, both of these are a requirement for accreditation under KR6. Universities should ensure that there are at least 300 practical hours in the programme(s) and should also have a mechanism in place to test student's competency which may or may not contribute to the 300 practical hours.*

- To what extent can a disabled person be admitted onto a chemistry programme? *Accreditation includes inclusion and diversity criteria and all aspects of the degree programme should be accessible. Accreditation is not a barrier to disabled students being able to achieve a chemistry degree. A disabled person can be admitted depending on the admissions criteria of the department. We encourage accredited programmes to offer opportunities for disabled chemists and make the necessary requirements to accommodate all students.*

- Should the policies on inclusion, diversity and wellbeing focus on students and staff? *Yes both should be covered.*

- In the new application form, what does it mean by do you "*plan to incorporate accessibility considerations and learnings into the design of your course moving forward*"? *This means that if you have had experience of implementing adjustments for disabled students on your programme previously, you can take learnings from this when you conduct curriculum reviews or are potentially redesigning labs in the future.*