

Plant Health Professional Register Guidance for applicants

This document provides guidance on the competency framework used for assessing candidates' applications for inclusion on the Plant Health Professional Register together with information on the application process.

The Plant Health Professional Register has been created in response to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Government Office of Science reports^{1,2} recommending development of plant health skills and creating opportunities for a wider community of trained plant health professionals.

The Department is working with professional bodies to embed greater awareness of plant health as a key competency and component of continuous professional development. The register was created in 2016 for government inspectors and related officials, enhancing their official training programme to provide a better and more professional service. In 2018, a pilot exercise engaged with the Horticulture sector to extend the register to all relevant horticulturalists. We are now working with the HTA and their plant health assurance scheme to develop training and competency recognition for all who need it. Work with all other relevant sectors is also ongoing.

Inclusion on the Plant Health Professional Register is about having an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how your role fits with and supports 'Protecting Plant Health – A Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain'.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307355/pb14168-plant-health-strategy.pdf

You will recognise that plants and trees are an essential economic, environmental and social asset making a vital contribution to our food and timber supply, rural economy and provide important ecosystem services.

For all applicants, it is about focusing your contribution on the activities which will help in protecting agriculture, forestry and the natural environment both nationally and internationally whilst recognising the need and importance of international trade in plants and plant products. You will understand that threats to plant biosecurity have increased with the globalisation of trade and travel and that predicted climate change effects may influence the impact of damaging pests not yet present in the UK, but also ones that are present and have associated management practices. The level of your involvement and influence will range from local, regional, national to international and short term to long-term with increasing responsibility and competency level from associate, to registered, to senior plant health professional.

Assessors will be looking for evidence for the following areas in tree health and plant biosecurity:

Understand:

- What plant biosecurity is, the principles of good practice and why it is important

¹ [Defra/GoS \(Dec 2014\) Animal and Plant Health in the UK: Building our science capability](#)
[Defra \(April 2014\) Protecting Plant Health-a Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain A Vision and high-level Strategy for UK Animal and Plant Health Research To 2020 and Beyond \(2016\)](#)

- The range of plant pests and diseases that can cause damage, how they may be introduced and/or spread
- The value of the accurate identification of both hosts and pests and the approaches used to achieve this
- Impacts of pests and diseases on agriculture, forestry and horticulture throughout the entire supply chain and the impact on landscape, amenity and the wider environment
- Principles of protecting plant health through risk based decision making and the appropriate use of international Phytosanitary legislation
- Factors that can influence risk such as globalisation of trade and predicted climate change
- Responsibility for reducing risk sits with those who benefit from the reduction of those risks (where appropriate)
- Diversity of organisations affected by plant health
- Impact of pests and diseases on health and safety particularly in relation to trees e.g. Oak Processionary Moth or Tree /limb falls due to cankers etc.
- Principles, implementation and impact of control strategies and measures

The level of knowledge and evidence will increase with the competency level from associate, to registered to senior plant health professional.

Competency framework

The application for inclusion on the Plant Health Professional Register is based on a competency framework. The assessors will therefore be looking for examples of how your knowledge and expertise is applied to each of the required areas.

Applications should be written in the first person. If you are applying for registered level, you should address competencies listed for associate and registered levels, similarly senior level applicants should address competencies listed for all levels.

Applicants may wish to use a STAR approach in providing evidence for each competency as this may help you to focus on your specific role/knowledge rather than a more general knowledge. The STAR approach is described below, but it is not essential to use this approach:

Situation: A brief explanation of the context in which the problem/challenge is defined. **Task:** A description of what the applicant needed to achieve within the given situation to include the desired outcome.

Action: A description of what the applicant did and the reasons why

Result: A description of the outcomes of the applicant's action.

The table below provides an overview of the type of evidence that the assessors will be looking for in relation to each competency. This is followed by more detailed examples of the type of evidence that could be provided at each of the three levels – Associate, Registered and Senior.

Competency	Assessment
1. Understand how Plant Health Services operate in the UK	Assessors will need to see how your specialist practical knowledge contributes to the operation of UK Plant Health Services
2. Understand the key set of guidelines and regulations that must be followed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) International Plant Health Standards, e.g. International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), WTO-SPS, ISPM b) European and National Plant Health Standards e.g. EPPO standards and EU Plant Health regimes, Plant Health and Plant Health (Forestry) Orders and associated powers 	Assessors will need to see an explanation of your understanding of the significance of standards and regulations connected to UK plant health in relation to your role
3. Understand the plant Biosecurity Continuum	Assessors will need to see an explanation of your understanding of surveillance and inspection regimes and the use of different surveillance, detection and identification approaches in relation to your role
4. Demonstrate communication of risks and plant health policy	Assessors will need to see examples of how you communicate your specialist practical knowledge to support Plant Health Services in the UK

<p>5. Understand the roles and responsibilities that are required:</p> <p>a) within your organisation</p> <p>b) outside your organisation with stakeholders and officials</p>	<p>Assessors need to see that you understand the roles and responsibilities of all parties that support the National Legal Plant Health framework and examples of how you utilise this knowledge</p>
<p>6. Understand risk-based decision making and the use of the UK Risk Register</p>	<p>Assessors will need to see examples of your knowledge of the risks posed by pests and the reasons why they are a risk</p>
<p>7. Understand:</p> <p>a) the range of notifiable pests and pathogens that threaten the UK</p> <p>b) which pests and pathogens are high risk within your area of work</p> <p>c) Sampling strategies for surveillance of plant pests and pathogens</p>	<p>Assessors will need to see examples of your knowledge of the breadth of species that are of concern to UK plant health and how and why sampling strategies contribute to UK plant health</p>
<p>8. Understand how trade provides pathways of introduction for pests and pathogens and the control measures that can reduce risk</p>	<p>Assessors will need to see examples of your understanding of how trade affects introduction and spread of pests and the measures that can be taken to reduce this risk</p>
<p>9. Demonstrate knowledge of good biosecurity practice within your work area</p>	<p>Assessors will need to see examples of how you implement biosecurity practices in your work area</p>

10. Understand contingency planning and outbreak management	Assessors will need to see examples of your knowledge of contingency planning in your work area and how this is implemented
11. Understand the impact and consequences of control strategies and measures on: a) economic losses b) social and environmental impact c) health and safety	Assessors will need to see examples of your knowledge of control strategies and measures in relation to your work area

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Once on the register, individuals are expected to demonstrate 50 CPD points per year and to enter their CPD on the MySociety page. RSB guidelines on CPD points are provided [here](#). The Plant Health Professional Register is intended to complement and not duplicate any work-based CPD programme.

The application process

Applications are made via the MySociety page of the Royal Society of Biology website (www.rsb.org.uk). Persons applying for the Plant Health Professional Register must have membership of the Royal Society of Biology of at least the Affiliate grade. You must first apply for affiliate membership, once you have submitted your membership application you can then apply to join the register. Your affiliate membership application to the Royal Society of Biology will then permit your application to the Plant Health Professionals register on the website in My Society.

There are two routes to applying depending on your circumstances:

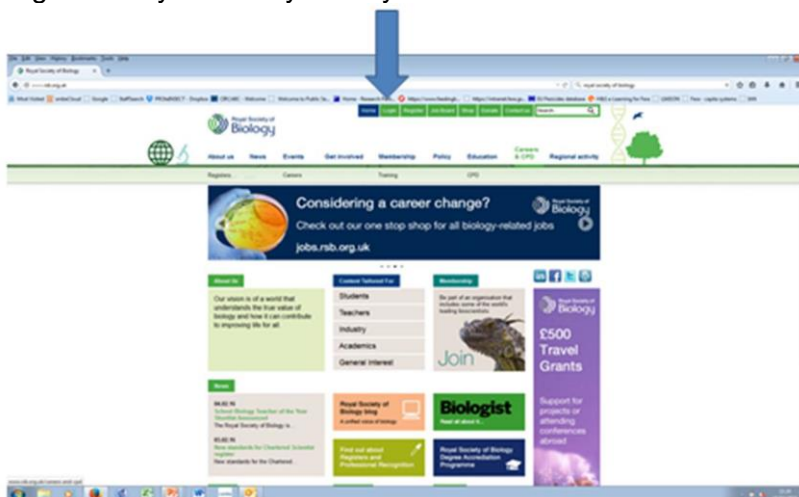
1. If applying individually, please apply to join in MySociety at the affiliate level where payment will be requested. You may wish to join the RSB at a higher level (Associate, Member or Fellow) according to your circumstances. Contact the RSB for further information at membership@rsb.org.uk.
2. You may be invited to join affiliate membership if part of a group within your institution. If this is the case, please liaise with your nominated mentor who can organize a group application and payment for membership.

Once your application for affiliate membership has been completed and submitted, you can proceed with your application to the register.

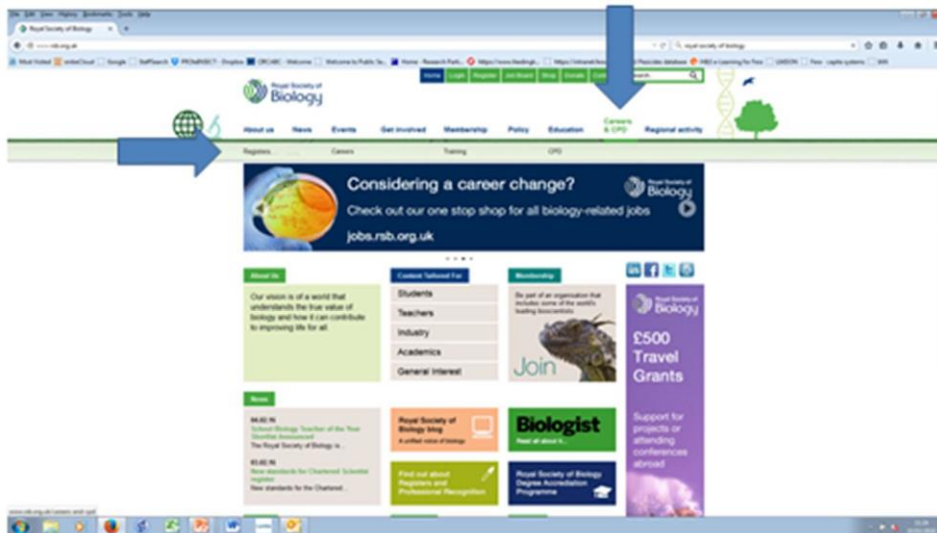
The location of the Plant Health Register application page is shown below.

Either:

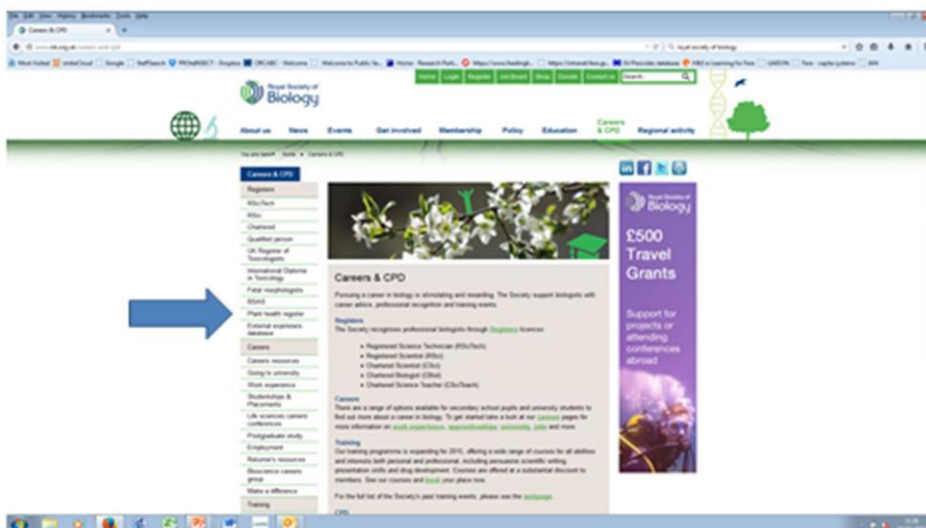
Login directly to the MySociety area



Alternatively go to Careers and CPD and then Register



Go to Plant Health Register



Towards the bottom of the page click on MySociety



Login to the MySociety page, then go to Professional Registers on the drop down menu

Applications to the Plant Health Professionals register should be completed in full in all sections and submitted electronically in MySociety to be considered by assessors.

The diagram below shows an overview of the application and assessment process. The tasks in green boxes are for completion by the Register applicant. The tasks in blue boxes indicate the assessment procedure.



If you are already on the Plant Health Professionals register but wish to increase your registration level, please contact php@rsb.org.uk.

Appendix: Guidelines for MySociety application of the register

1. Applications are made through MySociety. Check all sections are complete and correct, and submit the application. Ensure payment is made in **MyTransactions** if paying individually.
2. Submitting an application, on submission:
 - a. An automatic confirmation email is sent to say the application is received
 - b. An automated referee request is sent to two referees (if two are included on the form)
3. Applications to join the register are considered quarterly. The deadline for receipt of applications is on 1st April, 1st July, 1st October and 1st January. Applications received after the deadline will be considered at the next meeting
4. Applications are sent to assessors the following week (to allow 1 week grace for any references to be returned)
5. Primary assessors receive application by auto email. Primary assessor has 4 weeks to complete application review using shared review template.
6. Primary assessor sends application to secondary assessor with their review form. Second assessor has 2 weeks to review.
7. Secondary assessor sends the completed review with primary and secondary assessor comments to RSB who follow up on any discrepancies between assessors.
8. Teleconference is organized by RSB to discuss applications
9. Successful applicants are put on register at next election
10. Non-successful applicants are given individual feedback on what they need to go do get on the register
 - a. Resubmission of evidence may be requested – applicant is advised to resubmit this via the RSB who will pass it on to the assessors
11. All successful registrants will receive an automatic welcome email confirming acceptance onto the register and enrollment in the CPD programme.

Checklist for applying: Common Pitfalls

1. Applying without submitting the application – RSB cannot process until the application is fully clicked through to submit. You will receive confirmation via email if your application is successfully submitted.
2. Check junk mail - Ensure all information provided is correct and check your junk folder for the automated emails.
3. Payment – applications can't be registered without payment – ensure that payment has been made. If your organization is being invoiced, payment request can be ignored.
4. Referees – RSB requires at least one reference to process an application. Ask your referees to check their inbox for requests.