

On Campus Representative Day Charles Darwin House 5th September 2013

The Society of Biology relies on a network of 119 On-campus representatives who provide an important link between the Society and universities and colleges across the country.

Representatives are kept up to date with the Society's activities through regular e-bulletins and are asked to disseminate this information to staff and students at their institutions. Representatives also provide an initial contact point for students interested in joining the Society.

The On-campus representatives day offers an opportunities for representatives to get updated information from us and to ask questions. It also provides an opportunity for new representatives to meet other members and share ideas.

This report will include an overview of the information provided in each presentation from the day and the outcomes of the discussion sessions. Full slides from the day are available to download from [our website](#).

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Welcome & Introduction

Dr. Mark Downs, Chief Executive, Society of Biology

This provided an introduction to the day and the topics that were to be discussed throughout the afternoon. It highlighted the vast range of activities that the Society is involved with and the crucial role of On-Campus reps in sharing this information and encouraging interest from students. The expansion of the Bioscience hub that has been created at Charles Darwin House was also detailed and plans for future activities and development.

The role of On-campus reps and membership

Jenni Lacey, Marketing Assistant and Mark Leach, Membership Marketing Manager, Society of Biology

This session provided an overview of the role of On-campus representatives and detailed the four key aims:

- **Promote membership-** primarily to student affiliates. *As of our last election in July this year we now have 2,316 student affiliates – of which 1,174 were recruited since October 2012. This is an increase of 60% in the past year.*
- **Share information about the Societies activities:** at Freshers' fairs, Careers fairs, Lectures and Seminars, Departmental offices, via email updates, with promotional materials
- **Encourage BioSoc registration:** last year we launched free registration process for student-led societies at university. We now have over 30 registered (more than doubling last years' number of 14)
- **Feedback to the Society**

Bulk membership: We also offer a bulk membership price to universities who wish to sign up a number of students at once - £13.50 instead of £15.00 per student. The process involves the university first completing a spread sheet including student details, they will then be invoiced for the total amount and the students' memberships processed once payment has been received. If you would like to pay for bulk membership we can send you the spread sheet to fill out – contact [Jenni Lacey](#).

Degree Accreditation & recognition programme

Paul Trimmer, Accreditation Manager, Society of Biology

This provided an update on the Degree accreditation and recognition programmes; funding was secured from UKCES and the first applications were received in January 2013.

Degree Accreditation Programme

There are now 7 HEIs with accredited degrees:

- University of Bristol
- University of Birmingham
- University of Sheffield
- University of Liverpool
- University of Manchester
- University of York
- Royal Veterinary College

+ 10 HEIs have just applied

The process:

- Three-stage, peer reviewed process starting with panel review of submitted documentation, followed by site visit and discussion with team and students. The process is completed by recommendation to council for 5 year accreditation

Cost:

- During the funding period cost is subsidised
 - £2500 for a single programme
 - Society covers expenses
- When funding ends
 - £5000 for a single programme
 - HEI covers expenses (estimated £3000)

Applications for assessment of multiple programmes accreditation will be charged depending on the level of similarity between the programmes.

More details: <https://www.societyofbiology.org/education/accreditation>

Degree Recognition Programme

Recognition of degrees that deliver more than 50% biology content is an important part of our support in higher education.

- Cost is £750 per programme
- Degrees recognised by the Society of Biology will ensure that graduates automatically fulfil the educational requirements for [Associate Membership](#) (AMSB) of the Society.

Apply: <http://www.societyofbiology.org/education/hei/recognition>

Contacts: sophierobinson@societyofbiology.org or Accreditation@societyofbiology.org

Breakout discussion about membership benefits

This session gave attendees the opportunity to share their opinions of our membership benefits, how these are perceived by students and colleagues, and how we can better communicate these. Below are some of the main points raised:

- Students and colleagues sometimes favoured specialised society membership rather than general biology
- Students like the fact membership looks good on their CV
- Mixed feelings on book discounts: some people thought we should offer more discounts on books; others didn't think it was worthwhile anymore as discounts are usually matched or bettered by sites such as Amazon.
- Could we offer discounts to publications such as New Scientist and Nature?
- Could we offer something similar to the [Zite](#) app just for biology?
- Facebook and twitter are good ways to contact students.
- Visits by a member of Society of Biology team to the University once a year for both staff and students to remind existing members about benefits and to attract new members.
- Student info packs would be useful, along with posters for bulletin boards
- Template email to send to students would be useful for promotion
- Travel grant opportunities for MSBs would be valued (not just early-career)

HE projects and policy

Zoe Martin ,HE Policy Officer, Society of Biology

This session detailed our HE projects and policy work:

- [Head of University Biosciences \(HUBS\)](#)
- **External Examiners database:** a register of external examiners and their experience/expertise to be launched in Autumn 2012 through the Society of Biology website
- [Open Education Resources](#) - Funded to promote the use of OER by the bioscience community and launched at end of 2012
- [HE Bioscience Teacher of the Year](#) - recognises outstanding teaching practice
- **HE Policy Work** – Reactive and proactive - Society of Biology responded to the Institute of Public Policy Research on the future of Higher Education in England to the White Paper: Further and Higher Education (Wales) Bill
- **HE newsletter**

Contact: HE Policy Officer zoemartin@societyofbiology.org

Careers, grants and bursaries

This provided an overview of the activities we participate in to offer career guidance and support student development, these include:

- Exhibit at events
- Give talks
- Provide information and guidance
- Produce resources

An outline was provided of our involvement with the following activities and schemes that we run:

- [Biosciences Careers Group](#) which brings together a number of Learned Societies and Trade Bodies who work together to provide information and advice on careers in the biosciences.
- The Bioscience Careers Group has also co-authored a careers resource for bioscience undergraduate students and graduates, [Next steps](#): Options after a Bioscience Degree features guidance and information. Bulk order copies for all your students - **boxes of 50 available at cost price (40p per booklet)**. You can contact [Sophie Robinson](#) for more information.
- [Life Sciences Careers Conferences](#)
- [Undergraduate research bursaries](#)
- [Travel Grants](#)

Breakout discussion about careers support and advice

This session gave attendees the opportunity to share their opinions on the career support and advice that we provide. We asked:

- What else could we do to support you and your students?
- Are there any resources that you feel would be useful that we don't provide already?

Below are some of the main points raised:

- More society talks/students returning to talk about finding a job
- Could the Society organise careers advisor training days?
- Assistance with placement for students
- Notifying the On-campus reps of work placements and job vacancies
- A list of approved speakers to give career talks

- Recommended critical worksheets comparing a bad cv/cover letter/application
- A document that sits between the university course guide and Next Steps i.e. something aimed at 1st and 2nd year students to include: placements, voluntary experience, work experience, employers' top 10 'wants' and how to get those skills, the value of being enterprising, international nature of bioscience careers e.g. talk about the Society's international links, career pathways of established biologists, including example of people changing careers. Could be called "First Steps".

Training programmes

This session introduced the extended programme of training courses that the Society are offering as part of the membership benefits package – the discounted course fees offset the membership fees and provide support for on-going professional development.

The list of suggested courses include:

- Science Policy
- Biology Drawing
- Returning to Work
- Professional Body Organisation and Responsibilities
- Good Laboratory Practice
- Bird Song and Identification
- Grant/Paper Writing

You can help us by suggesting useful courses and good course providers. Please contact [Cliff Collis](#) with your suggestions.

Biology Week

An outline of the activities being carried as part of our second [Biology Week](#):

- [Flying ant survey](#)
- [House spider survey](#)
- [Food production and waste resources](#) for schools

Useful documents for recruitment

On [our website](#) we have a range of slides and information which can be used for student recruitment. These include:

- [Overview of membership benefits slides](#)
- [BioSoc benefits slide pdf](#)
- [BioSoc benefits slide Powerpoint](#)
- [On-campus representatives day presentations 2013- pdf](#)

A 20 minute presentation is also available which can be used for presenting membership benefits to students- please email [Jenni Lacey](#) if you would like a copy of this.

Feedback

Feedback forms were provided to allow attendees the opportunity to share their views of the day - 9/ 18 completed these. 98% of feedback rated the sessions and overall day as 'very useful' or 'useful'.

Suggestions for improvement included:

- More promotional materials to take away
- Sharing of the ideas from discussions sessions
- Hardcopies of the slides

All recommendations and outcomes from discussions will be considered by the appropriate departments at the Society and action taken to enhance the membership benefits we offer and the support we provide students.

Contact

If you would like to discuss anything about your role as an On Campus Representative then please get in touch with Jenni Lacey by email (jenniferlacey@societyofbiology.org) or telephone (020 7685 2564).