



Three Year  
Review  
2012-2015



# Three Year Review 2012-2015

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## Executive summary

The Society has gone from strength to strength since its inception in 2009. We are proud that this was recognised in May 2015 with the award of the Royal title. The title is granted by the Sovereign, acting on the advice of Ministers and is a greatly welcomed acknowledgement of the value of biology and the contribution of biologists.

The change in our title would not have been possible without the collective efforts of many individual members and Member Organisations to singly reflect and communicate priorities for the bioscience community through the Society.

The Society's political and public profile has grown considerably over the last three years with events across the UK ranging from a 2015 pre-election debate on science policy amongst six parties in the Houses of Parliament, to the results of our citizen science projects announced live on the BBC.

Over 40,000 school students now participate in our competitions annually with over 75,000 people directly engaging with the society's citizen science projects over the last three years.

Membership remains at the heart of the Society. Now with over 15,000 individual members and 100 Member Organisations we are a strong advocate for the sector representing the interests of biology and biologists. Through the Society's branch, special interest groups and other volunteer networks we are reaching an increasingly diverse, and regionally based, audience that helps ensure the Society fulfils its charitable aims and objectives for public engagement and education.

The accreditation of bioscience degrees, professional registers, careers advice, subsidised training and networking events have all played a role in advancing standards and supporting members. But it is perhaps the policy agenda across science and education that has seen most growth, drawing together the views of member organisations and, sometimes, sister societies, to create greater impact, offering balanced, evidence based advice to governments, politicians and the media.

The next three years will aim to consolidate this unifying voice, support a professional membership and ensure a broad reach for our work, underpinned by a wide ranging public engagement programme.

Royal Society of Biology  
Three Year Plan

# ACHIEVEMENTS 2012/13 TO 2014/15



> 15

Parliamentary  
events



> 50

consultation responses  
championed key  
issues to Government  
and others (3y inexact count)

Policy Fellowships provided networking and training



training courses delivered  
since the launch of the  
training programme



154  
PROGRAMMES  
ACCREDITED

via advanced accreditation route

Licence for  
**CSciTeach** achieved

Individual membership  
grew from

12,000  
to  
15,800



Pilot and launch  
of accreditation for  
Honours degrees  
in 2015, 54 programmes  
accredited

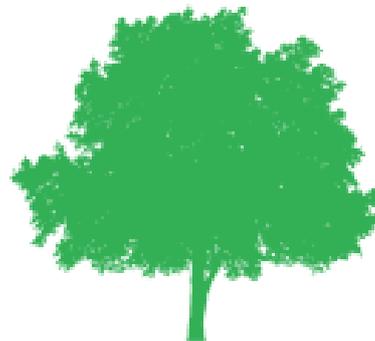
Regional grant  
launched for  
members

# 30,000

people reached through our public engagement programme

Significant input into the national curriculum review in England and curriculum for excellent reforms in Scotland

3 key newsletters with a collective distribution of >16,000



## > 1,000

discussion event places for science and policy debates

(doesn't include NCI or PE/SC events)

New special interest group for biology education research formed (2014)



## 500

events run across the UK



## 50,000

people downloaded our house spider ID app

## GRANTED THE ROYAL TITLE

## 25,000



people responded to our citizen science surveys (flying ants, house spiders and starlings)



Development of a new register for plant health inspectors – launching in 2016

## Detailed deliverables

### Membership, marketing and communications

Our vision was to establish the Society as an organisation that represents the entire spectrum of the life sciences.

By October 2015, we will have 15,000 individual members (13,000 by October 2013, and 14,000 by October 2014).	<b>Achieved.</b> Each year we hit our membership targets and by July 2015 we had over 15,500 individual members.
By October 2015, we will represent over 120 Member Organisations.	Our MO membership has remained relatively consistent over the past three years, with Schools and Colleges Affiliation Scheme growing steadily since 2012.
The Society's media profile will continue to rise, resulting in a 20% increase in media mentions and circulation figures year on year.	<b>Achieved.</b> Our media presence has increased over the years and we have been mentioned in numerous newspapers as well as on radio and television news. Exact yearly comparisons proved difficult as the media monitoring process changed.
We will establish Biology Week as a key annual event for the bioscience community.	<b>Achieved.</b> Biology Week was a great success in its first year in October 2012, with events occurring across the UK and beyond. By 2014 we had over 100 events taking place nationwide.
A new website fully integrated with the new membership database launched in May 2013.	<b>Achieved.</b> The new website was completed in the intended timeframe and has since been updated again with a new design and easier user interface for members.

### Public engagement and outreach

We aimed to reach as broad an audience as possible, and to inspire them to fully appreciate the life sciences.

Launch a new regional grants programme for individual members in 2013/14.	<b>Achieved.</b> The launch of the programme was carried out in the intended time and the grant now helps members to run regional events or activities, usually based around an annual theme.
Put in place mechanisms for measuring the qualitative elements of the impact of our public engagement work by 2013.	<b>Achieved.</b> Mechanisms for measuring the qualitative elements of public engagement impact were put in place during Big Bang Fair in 2013.
Increase the number of people we reach through public engagement by 10% year on year.	This has been difficult to measure as there were insufficient baseline figures to compare against. We had hoped to build on our activities with BBC Learning but their public engagement direction changed and those events did not take place.
Continue to focus public engagement around an engaging topic annually.	<b>Achieved.</b> Overarching topics such as Biology: Changing the World have engaged the public and we have run regional projects and awards on this theme.

## Science policy

Our vision is to be recognised as the body responsible for supporting biologists and presenting their views in both public funding and policy debates and discussions of professional, procedural and societal matters.

<p>3 new independent policy statements to be widely and strategically disseminated annually.</p>	<p><b>Achieved.</b> In 2012/13 we issued statements on <i>Animal Research, Data and Content Mining and Primary Position Statement</i>.</p> <p>In 2013/14 the topics included <i>Stem Cell Research (Wellcome) and Concordat on Openness on Animal Research</i>.</p> <p>In the 2014/15 period we issued <i>Collaborative statements and comments on climate change, immigration and research integrity</i>.</p>
<p>The number of web based briefings on policy issues in biology will grow every quarter annually.</p>	<p><b>Achieved.</b> In 2013 we updated and expanded our <i>Open Access pages</i>. In following years we refreshed the <i>Policy Issue pages</i> to improve findability. Content updated and checked across themes.</p>
<p>Expand and enhance the support of our special interest groups (SIGs) for key areas in the biosciences by increasing the areas of focus and the range of members within them by 2014.</p>	<p><b>Achieved.</b> In 2013 the UKPSF membership increased by about 10% and ASG assumed secretariat function for UKBSC.</p> <p>In the 2013/14 period we worked with partners towards the delivery of a summit meeting 'Valuing our Life Support Systems for the Natural Capital Initiative', dedicating significant staff time and focus and working with sponsors, business and policy-maker audiences.</p> <p>In 2014/15 we had a successful development of the <i>Returners to Bioscience Group</i> with broad membership and development of online resources.</p>
<p>Continue to strengthen out collaborative work with leading organisations across science, medicine and engineering disciplines on overarching issues.</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b> through the <i>Parliamentary Steering Group and Parliamentary Affairs Committee</i>, growing membership of both. We convened <i>Parliamentary Links Day and Voice of the Future</i> and arranged a joint meeting of <i>Presidents with the Science Minister</i>.</p>
<p>Establish links with European compatriot organisations and encourage co-ordinated responses to international policy and professional challenges, share knowledge and experience, and promote common objectives, holding international workshops and issuing joint position statements.</p>	<p><b>Achieved.</b> Ongoing international link with German VBIO; sharing knowledge through VBIO guest talk at 2015 AGM. Workshop on <i>International Response to Biosecurity</i></p>
<p>Increase engagement with our membership, increasing their representation in specialist groups and the use of their evidence in outputs by 2014.</p>	<p><b>Achieved.</b> The Society developed an ASG newsletter in 2013 to increase engagement with our membership.</p>

## Education and careers

Our vision is to ensure that biology education is coherent and engaging and develops scientific leaders of the future.

A discussion forum, TalkBiology, will be accessible to the public by September 2013.	<b>Achieved.</b> <i>TalkBiology is now an active forum for science teachers, with 68 topics of discussion covering all education levels.</i>
We will develop dedicated primary resources for teachers, often drawing on the excellent work of Member Organisations.	<b>Achieved.</b> <i>Gopher Labs and SciberMonkey have been taken on from the Biochemical Society and resources are expanding. A new partnership with PSTT has also been formed.</i>
Careers resources and school education resources delivered in one place	<b>Achieved</b> <i>via the formation of the new Careers Committee in April 2014.</i>
An online resource providing contact details of 75 members willing to offer careers talks to schools will be available to schools and college members and through the TalkBiology forum.	<i>This is an ongoing effort by the Society which is currently tied into the developments of the user database to enable the correct and safe precautions of the distribution of this data.</i>
The number of organisations participating in Undergraduate Research Bursaries will increase by three new organisations.	<i>The Society stopped giving Undergraduate Research Bursaries in 2014 due to lack of resources and funding for support.</i>
Submissions to the HE Teaching website to increase 10% yearly.	<i>Not achieved due to changes in staffing; a refocus of these targets has been planned for the next business plan.</i>

## Professional development and registers

Our vision is to encourage good practice and personal development by assisting professional competence through our registers and qualifications.

Four profile-raising activities will be undertaken annually for all Society registers and examinations.	<b>Achieved.</b> <i>All registers and associated events are regularly advertised in newsletters to members and featured in The Biologist. Society staff has often raised the profile of the registers at conferences and meetings with employers in the relevant industry.</i>
Increase the total membership of each register by 20% each year through increased participation and clearer benefits.	<b>Achieved.</b> <i>Each register has seen a year on year increase in membership over the last three years.</i>
Application forms, guidance and office procedures across all Society registers will be reviewed for areas of improvement and revised by December 2013.	<b>Achieved.</b> <i>Forms and guidance notes are regularly reviewed to keep them up to date and relevant.</i>

## Accreditation of bioscience degrees

Our vision is to establish the Degree Accreditation Programme as a way of highlighting degree programmes that best equip graduates with research skills for industry or academia.

By September 2015 we will have accredited 64 programmes across the UK.	<b>Achieved.</b> We surpassed our target by 210%, accrediting a total of 199 courses by July 2015 across 22 universities.
Online accreditation information will be available from July 2013 and institutions will be able to submit applications and supporting documentation.	<b>Achieved.</b> A microsite was launched in 2013 that provides full information on accreditation and supports applications for accreditation.
An annual careers event for accredited graduates, held in 2012 and 2014, will attract at least 100 attendees and five exhibitors.	<b>Achieved.</b> The event has been a yearly success, with over 100 students attending in 2014 and 10 universities exhibiting.

## Special interest groups

Special interest groups (SIGs) will continue to provide a way to bring together biologists with specific interests in an independent forum within the Society.

UKBC will develop a clear strategy to host the International Biology Olympiad in the UK in 2017.	<b>Achieved.</b> The Society succeeded in putting forward a successful application and will, in partnership with Warwick University, host the IBO in 2017.
Increase the number of schools entering both the Biology Challenge and British Biology Olympiad by 10% year on year.	<b>Achieved.</b> In 2015 over 6,000 post 16 students took part in the British Biology Olympiad and a further 35,000, 13-15 year old students took part in the Biology Challenge. Biology Challenge alone has reached well over 150,000 students since its launch in 2009.
Increase the number of Special Interest Groups.	<b>Achieved.</b> A new interest group, the Biology Education Research Group (BERG), was launched in 2014.