



## **BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT**

### **INTERIM VISIT (Short Course Provider)**

**PROVIDER:** Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

**ADDRESS:** Kew Gardens  
Richmond  
Surrey  
TW9 3AB

**HEAD OF PROVIDER:** Mr Richard Deverell

**DATE OF VISIT:** 24 January 2018

**ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:** Continued accreditation 22 March 2018

## **PART A - INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Background to the provider**

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBG, Kew/the Provider) is a scientific institution, which is concerned with plant science research and conservation. Its mission is to be the global resource for plant and fungal knowledge, building an understanding of the world's plant and fungi upon which all our lives depend.

RBG, Kew is a Non-Department Public Body with exempt charitable status. The Board of Trustees of the RBG, Kew has had responsibility for the Provider since 1984, when it was transferred from the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

RBG, Kew's base is in Kew Gardens. Kew Gardens houses the principal plant, herbarium, library and archive collection, and most of the administration and research facilities. Kew Gardens also maintains the world's largest collection of living and preserved plants.

RBG, Kew is engaged in extensive education and public engagement activities, which include programmes for one-day visits by approximately 95,000 school students each year, visits made by university undergraduates and postgraduates, one or two-day courses for the general public and professional development for teachers. This provision is not covered by BAC accreditation. The gardens and collections at RBG, Kew and Wakehurst Place, which is sister estate to Kew Gardens based in West Sussex, have a general educational role, as they contain materials and other information to educate visitors to both sites.

RBG, Kew has established a suite of professional development courses of up to three weeks in length. These provide opportunities for participants to learn from, and interact with, each other and the experts at RBG, Kew and other institutions. This enables the participants to use Kew Gardens' extensive facilities and to visit other relevant institutions within the United Kingdom (UK). The first of these specialist training programmes was offered in 1987, and additional courses have been developed since then.

The courses are organised and delivered by Kew Gardens' staff and they take place at Kew Gardens and Wakehurst Place. Participants on these courses include Kew Gardens' own staff, university researchers and those engaged in work in conservation, museums, botanic gardens and related areas in the UK and other countries.

### **2. Brief description of the current provision**

The Provider offers a range of short courses. There is a two-week Applied Plant Taxonomy, Identification and Field Survey Skills Course. This is designed for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students and early-career researchers undertaking all aspects of environmental science but particularly ecology, botany and conservation. Participants receive funding from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). RBG, Kew also offer a two-week Tropical Plant Identification Course, which gives participants an overview of the most commonly encountered tropical plant families.

There is a three-week residential Seed Conservation Techniques course, which is targeted at graduate scientists and professionals directly involved in seed conservation programmes. A week-long Wood Identification course is designed for participants working with wood such as botanists, archaeologists, conservators, furniture and picture restorers, and workers in forensic science and allied professions. There is also a Plant Nomenclature course, which is presently under development.

In addition, RBG, Kew offers a one-year taught Master of Science (MSc) programme. in Plant and Fungal Taxonomy, Diversity and Conservation. This is delivered in partnership with Queen Mary University of London.

The MSc includes a field course in Madagascar and a six-month research project. RBG, Kew also offers the Kew Diploma in Horticulture. This is a three-year programme of study and practice for Kew Gardens' employees who are engaged in plant cultivation, apprenticeships, internships and research degrees. In addition, the provider participates in three Doctoral Training Partnerships co-ordinated by Imperial College London, University College London and the University of Oxford. The MSc and Diploma courses are not covered by the BAC accreditation.

There were no courses running at the time of the inspection. In 2017 the RBG, Kew ran four courses with 55 participants, just over half of whom were male. Participants came from a wide range of countries including Poland, Germany, Spain, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Thailand, Finland, China, Namibia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines, Taiwan, Australia and the United States of America. Most of the participants were full-time students at British universities and attended courses at RBG, Kew as part of their studies. Participants on the Seed Conservation Techniques course are generally from overseas organisations who are partners in the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership. All participants were over 18 years old and were studying at postgraduate level.

### **3. Inspection visit process**

The inspection was conducted over half a day. The inspection did not include a visit to Wakehurst as, at the time of the inspection, no teaching was being undertaken at that centre. The inspector was informed that the facilities and premises there remain as described in the inspection report of May 2012. A meeting was held with the Science Administrator Education and the Senior Science Officer - Education and Communications. Teaching facilities at Kew Gardens were inspected and documentation was provided by the management team at RBG, Kew. No courses were in progress at the time of the inspection.

### **4. Inspection history**

Full Accreditation Inspection:	11-12 May 2011
Interim Inspection:	10 May 2012
Re-accreditation Inspection:	25-26 May 2016

## **PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE**

*The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the provider*

### **1. Significant changes since the last inspection**

There have been no significant changes since the last inspection.

### **2. Response to action points in last report**

*6.2 The Provider must maintain an e-based record of attendance so that immediate access to attendance records can be maintained.*

RBG, Kew has carried out a feasibility study into the cost of setting up an electronic registration system and has deemed this to be beyond its current budget. The Provider makes very little money from running its short courses which means that costs need to be kept to a minimum to ensure continued provision. It has also found that, as most of its short courses are only one or two days in length, the value of investing in such a system would be difficult to justify.

RBG, Kew will continue to create a paper register for each course, which participants will be asked to sign on their arrival each day. The records are kept in a paper format to ensure they are accessible to the trainers and course co-ordinators. If the number of courses increases or their duration lengthens and, therefore, funds increase RBG, Kew will reconsider introducing an electronic register. The current system of attendance monitoring is effective.

*19.3 Participants must be advised where appropriate of BAC's own complaints procedure.*

BAC's complaints procedure is now available on the RBG, Kew website and it is included in the welcome pack brochure given to participants at the beginning of each course.

### **3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report**

*The Provider should design and implement application forms, that request potential students to outline any known disabilities and collate this information so that it can be used effectively.*

Participants are asked to disclose any special requirements when they are sent the welcome letter offering them a place on one of RBG, Kew's courses. The Science Administrator Education collates the information and disseminates it to the course co-ordinator and trainers.

*It might be appropriate to adopt a continuing professional development (CPD) point system for completion of a course or for a graded award to be made. This is a matter which might usefully be discussed by members of the senior management team.*

The RBG, Kew has investigated the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) CPD scheme, it is possible for the RBG, Kew to apply for recognition of each of its courses at a cost of £225 per event. However, for its participants to gain from this recognition they would also have to apply to become members of the RSB paying a fee of £100 per annum. The management team will consult the participants of its 2018 courses to assess whether the RSB CPD scheme would be of value to them and whether they would be willing to become members of the RSB. Presently, participants receive a certificate of attendance at the end of their course.

#### 4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

##### 4.1 Management, Staffing and Administration (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b>  An organisational chart clearly outlines and defines the management structure. The management and staff are well experienced and qualified to undertake the tasks they have been set.  Internal communications are effective and efficient.  There is a clear policy to the effect that all participants should attend at all times.				

##### 4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b>  RBG, Kew employs one full-time and one part-time administrator, both of whom assist the short course organisers and trainers. Trainers meet to discuss and review course outcomes, enabling effective management of programmes to be implemented.  Participants complete ongoing tasks during their courses and many maintain links with their trainers after their courses have ended.				

##### 4.3 Participant Welfare (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b>  All students are well supported throughout their course of study.  The participants are all studying at postgraduate level. They are recommended to RBG, Kew by the organisations they work for. Several Kew Gardens' staff also attend the courses on the basis of their need for further specialist training in subjects such as broad plant identification and tropical plant identification.				

##### 4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b>  The premises are secure, well decorated and maintained with clear and appropriate signage throughout and are well suited to RBG, Kew's requirements.				

In the Jodrell Laboratory, there is one large training room which seats up to 40 participants, with 19 microscopes and a computer room with thirteen computers. The Herbarium also offers a second training room seating 25 people, a computer room and a kitchen with tea and coffee making facilities for participants.

The training rooms are equipped with laptops, screens and whiteboards. Lockers are also provided in the Herbarium for participant's belongings.

**PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS**

<b>STRENGTHS</b>
<p>RBG, Kew offers a range of high quality courses suited to the needs of its participants. The courses are developed by the specialist staff at Kew Gardens, many of whom are also engaged in research in areas such as seed and species conservation, tropical plants and applied plant taxonomy.</p> <p>The Provider enables the participants on its courses to access specialist learning resources of the highest quality, for example, the 7 million dried and mounted plant specimens from around the world stored in Kew Garden’s Herbarium. Participants also have access to the Millenium Seed Bank, the largest wild seed conservation project in the world.</p> <p>RBG, Kew’s courses have been developed by highly qualified specialists with worldwide reputations, ensuring that the courses are of a high quality. In addition, Kew Gardens has an extensive international network of individual partners and consortia, spanning 110 countries worldwide, all of which contribute to the sharing of information that Kew undertakes in order to achieve its scientific goals.</p>

<b>ACTIONS REQUIRED</b>	<b>Priority H/M/L</b>
None	

<b>RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</b>
It is recommended that the management team consult the participants of its 2018 courses to assess whether the RSB CPD scheme would be of value to them and whether they would be willing to become members of the RSB.

<b>COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b>	
<b>Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Further comments, if applicable</b>	
None	