

IFST degree accreditation scheme – information for applicants

The accreditation process assesses applications for Bachelors degrees against the QAA Benchmark Statement for Typical Subject-Specific Knowledge and Understanding in Food Science and Technology and for taught Masters degrees against the “Descriptor for higher education qualifications at level 7: Master’s degrees” in the QAA document “The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland” (August 2008). With respect to Scotland, in the absence of any other formal statement, the QAA Benchmark Statements and descriptors for Masters degrees will be used for reference.

Key requirements

The IFST accreditation process examines evidence for specific key requirements including:

Entry requirements. Do students joining the programme/course have sound underpinning knowledge in subjects directly pertinent to the degree programme?

Breadth and depth of study. Does the programme/course provide graduates with a sufficient breadth of topics to enable them to competently evaluate the safety and quality of food and sufficient depth to enable them to identify appropriate strategies for its implementation, maintenance and/or improvement?

Development of practical skills. Does the programme/course provide opportunities for the development of a range of current and appropriate practical skills linked, in particular, to food science and food technology?

Development of research skills. Does the programme/course contain a significant research project in which the student undertakes detailed study of a topic requiring critical investigation of an issue?

Individual study and the development of transferable skills. Does the programme/course progressively develop a student’s ability to work as an individual, as part of a team and effectively use a range of transferable skills?

Work-based experience. Where the programme/course includes a work-based placement, does this complement the theory and practical elements of the programme/course and the point above?

Internal and external quality assurance. Is the programme/course subject to effective review by established procedures at both departmental and institutional level and is it subject to external review whether routinely or at periodic intervals?

Infrastructure to support effective teaching and learning. Do the students have access to appropriate physical resources (e.g. laboratories, pilot plant facilities, sensory evaluation units, library and other information facilities, IT facilities)?

Through the submission of written evidence applicants should be able to demonstrate how their degree programme(s)/course(s) meet these key requirements. This are judged through the peer-review accreditation assessment process. The requirements are subject to periodic review and open to change from time to time.

Bachelor’s degrees

To be considered, food-related BSc degree programmes should contain a minimum of 50% course module contact time in food-related subjects. These should be compulsory modules if optional modules are not in food-related subjects. Where the options are a choice between two or more food-related modules these clearly can be taken into account. Food-related modules may include topics such as:

Primary food production

Food composition

Food chemistry

Food engineering

Food processing

HACCP

Food biochemistry	Food product development
Food microbiology	Food quality assurance, standards and legislation
Food safety	Rheology of foods
Science of food commodities	Food packaging
Food preservation	Functional foods
Food biotechnology	Food analysis
Human nutrition	Food economics and marketing
Sensory evaluation of foods	Food research project
Unit operations	

The above are indicative titles because in individual degree programmes these topics may be assembled differently under different module titles but the same material is covered. The remainder of the overall programme content should normally include underpinning science subjects such as chemistry (including thermodynamics), biochemistry, microbiology, physiology, mathematics, statistical analysis & IT; these would normally be taught in the early part of the overall course. Personal development and transferable skills should also be included in the degree programme/course.

Taught Masters' degrees

Many taught Masters degrees are conversion courses and entry requirements for these courses would normally be an Honours degree in a science or engineering degree related to the underpinning sciences for a food-related degree. In some cases a taught Masters course may be a significant extension beyond the material included in an Honours food-related degree; in these cases entry may also include an Honours degree in a food-related subject. In the event of doubt universities should contact IFST in advance of submitting an application to clarify the position relating to their specific degree(s).

A taught Masters programme/course typically comprises 2 semesters of taught modules plus a research project. At least 80% of the taught course content should be in food-related topics such as those outlined above.

Course Structure (section A on evidence form)

Much of this information may be available in the Course Handbook.

1. Attach a diagram/award map showing the programme/course structure, the titles of the compulsory and optional modules that comprise the programme/course along with their credit points and level of study within the programme/course.
2. Is a Course Handbook available? If so please provide an electronic copy.
3. Provide full module descriptions for all the compulsory and optional modules including descriptions of any practical elements and the weighting of theory and practical in the module assessment. What are the learning outcomes for individual modules?
4. Are work-based placements compulsory or optional and are they short or 1 year placements? Is the duration optional? How are placements initiated, monitored and assessed?
5. Do external speakers contribute to the course? Similarly, do external links contribute to the course? If so what is their value and how do these contribute to the programme/course?
6. Are any additional qualifications attainable during the programme/course? Indicate what these are and how they are attained.

Entry Requirements for Bachelors Degrees (section B on evidence form)

Course entry requirements should indicate sound underpinning knowledge in subjects directly pertinent to the degree programme.

For Bachelors degrees it is expected that this will normally include 2 science subjects at "A" level, SQA Highers, Irish Leaving Certificate or equivalent with passes at GCSE, or equivalent, in English, Maths and 2 science subjects drawn from chemistry, biology, physics or double award science.

Information/evidence required

1. What are the normal entry level qualifications?
2. What levels of attainment at "A" level are accepted for entry? Do exceptional circumstances apply whereby applicants with substantial food industry/sector experience, but without formal qualifications, can be accepted for entry?
3. What alternative entry level requirements do you accept?
4. Are there any special arrangements for mature student entrance? Are Access qualifications included in the range of entry criteria? What are the arrangements/requirements for students to enter using Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) into each level of the programme/course?
5. Do you permit advanced entry/direct entry into year 2 or year 3? If so indicate the basis for entry to years 2 or 3.
6. Do you interview students before offering a place? All applicants? Some applicants? How does this contribute to the decision to accept a student or not?
7. Do you accept students from outside the UK? If so what transition arrangements do you have for these students entering the course/programme.
8. Indicate the numbers of new students entering the course per annum over the last three academic years.
9. Provide information on the entry qualifications of students to these courses from outside the UK.

Entry Requirements for Master's Degrees (Section C on Evidence Form)

Course entry requirements should indicate sound underpinning knowledge in subjects directly pertinent to the degree programme.

Many taught Master's degrees are conversion courses and entry requirements for these courses would normally be an Honours degree in a science or engineering degree related to the underpinning sciences for a food-related degree. In some cases a taught Masters course may be a significant extension beyond the material included in an Honours food-related degree; in these cases entry may also include an Honours degree in a food-related subject.

Information/evidence required

1. What are the normal entry level qualifications?
2. What alternative entry level requirements do you accept?
3. Can applicants without degree-level qualifications but with substantial food sector/industry experience be accepted? If so indicate the basis for their acceptance.
4. Do you interview students before offering a place? All applicants? Some applicants? How does this contribute to the decision to accept a student or not?
5. Do you accept students from outside the UK? If so what transition arrangements do you have for these students entering the course/programme.
6. Indicate the numbers of new students entering the course per annum over the last three academic years.

7. Provide information on the entry qualifications of students to these courses from outside the UK.
8. Departmental/School/University Infrastructure (section D on evidence form)
9. This section of the application form centres on the physical resources required to support teaching and learning, and information is required on library, IT and other specialist teaching facilities. Photographs may be submitted if considered appropriate.
10. Give information on the library and computer/IT facilities available (including specialist textbooks and scientific journals). Where relevant indicate facilities available in relation to class size.
11. Are Pilot Plant facilities available to support this degree course? If relevant please describe what is available and how these are used within particular modules.
12. Describe any Sensory Evaluation facilities available, if relevant to the degree course, and how these are used to facilitate teaching and learning.
13. Are any other specialist teaching facilities available?
14. Please provide copies of the minutes (anonymised) of any Staff Student Consultative Committee meetings, or equivalent, for the last two academic years.
15. What are the student views, as expressed in the National Student Surveys? Please provide the last two available reports.

Course Assessment (section E on evidence form)

Information/evidence required (both for individual modules and the overall course)

1. Please provide copies of the last set of examination papers and outline answers
2. How are distance-learning students assessed? What special arrangements are put in place?
3. Please submit the last two years' external examiners reports, anonymised
4. How is the overall degree course assessment determined (examinations and coursework)?
5. What were the employment, or other destinations, of course graduates over the last 3 years?