



Plant Health Professional Registration Guide

OUR VISION

Our vision is of a world that values biology's contribution to improving life for all.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to be a unifying voice for biology for the public benefit; to provide impartial evidence-based advice; to raise professional standards; to support biologists throughout their careers; to engage the public with our work; to support the bioscience community and to provide events and other fora for information exchange in the biosciences.

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What is the Plant Health Professional Register?

The Plant Health Professional Register provides independent recognition and validation of your plant health competencies, professional standing and achievements. It is suitable for people working in a wide range of plant health and biosecurity roles, and sectors including government, the horticulture and crop industries, forestry, the natural environment and research.

The register was set up in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and is based on a competency framework that aligns with the current Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain, as well as industry-led standards and assurance schemes. This ensures that the competencies are evidence based and fit for purpose across the breadth of the UK's plant health sectors.

There are three levels within the register – Associate, Registered and Senior Plant Health Professional – providing a clear pathway for competency development and career progression.

The benefits of Plant Health Professional registration

Holding professional registration shows that you:

- possess a recognised award and demonstrate your professional standing.
- are committed to continuing professional development (CPD).
- have excellent on-the-job experience and are committed to integrity and working towards the public interest.

Appearing on the public Plant Health Professional Register boosts your career opportunities by highlighting your experience to employers and the wider community. You will also receive tailored invitations to free plant health events and talks, joining a network of like-minded professionals to share knowledge, expertise, best practice and up-to-date information. These events all contribute to your CPD.

“As I do outreach work and stakeholder engagement, I find it very helpful to show that I have a professional qualification based on competency in biosecurity. It shows I have current knowledge and keep it up-to-date.”

Charles Lane, Consultant Plant Pathologist

“Registration has given me a confidence boost as proof of achievement in my career in plant pathology. The task of completing CPD has encouraged me to volunteer to step outside my comfort zone and present more talks, attend more conferences and do more reading than I would do if I didn't have this extra incentive.”

Michael Long, Mycology Diagnostician

Who can apply?

The Plant Health Professional Register is open to members of the RSB working in the plant health sector in industry, government departments, NGOs or academia. Applicants will be asked to provide examples from their career and training to demonstrate the competencies, which are based on the Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain.

In terms of experience, the expectation is that you will have roughly one to two years' experience in a relevant role if you are applying for Associate-level registration, three years' experience for Registered level and five-plus years' experience for Senior Plant Health Professional level.

To join the register, you need to be an RSB member at the associate grade or above.

What are the costs?

There are two costs associated with joining the Plant Health Professional Register. First is RSB membership, which starts from £33.50 per year* dependent on grade. The second is the Plant Health Professional Register application and renewal fee, which is approximately £25-£35 per year.

** There are a range of membership discounts available, including those for staff/members of RSB Member Organisations, PhD students, recent graduates or those on a career break. If you think you may be eligible for discounted membership, please email membership@rsb.org.uk.*

For full, up-to-date costing information, please visit the RSB website: www.rsb.org.uk



Competencies and evidence

To complete your application for the register, you will be asked to submit a competency report. This competency report is your chance to demonstrate examples of how you meet the criteria to become registered. This is your opportunity to shine and talk about all the excellent work you've been doing, both in employment and volunteer roles. There are four sections to the competency report:

- plant health principles and governance
- harmful organisms and risk management
- good biosecurity practices
- preparedness and communicating impacts on plant health

If you do not have direct experience in all of these areas from your role, you may draw on experience gained through training courses, shadowing colleagues or conferences.

For detailed information on these competencies, please view our guidance for applicants.

The application process

Applications are accepted online through the RSB's member portal, mySociety, at my.rsb.org.uk. Once submitted, applications are reviewed by two independent assessors who will use your answers to determine how well you have demonstrated how you meet each of the professional competencies for the specific register level. There is a one-off application fee, which is followed by an annual retention fee.

The RSB has developed a new online training course to support applicants to the Plant Health Professional Register. This four-module course covers topics from plant health principles and governance, to identifying and controlling pests and pathogens, good biosecurity practices, and raising awareness in the community. The first video introduces the register and is free to everybody, and the remaining modules are free to RSB members at any level.

View the course on myLearning: learn.rsb.org.uk.



Continuing professional development (CPD)

Once successful, your registration must be maintained by completion of an annual CPD record. Your CPD record is found in mySociety and you can add to it throughout the year via your account. You will be required to achieve at least 50 points per year from activities in at least three of five key areas:

- work-based learning
- professional activity
- formal education or training
- self-directed learning
- other e.g. skills obtained outside the workplace

Any activity that has resulted in new learning and advances your skills as a biologist will qualify as CPD under our scheme.

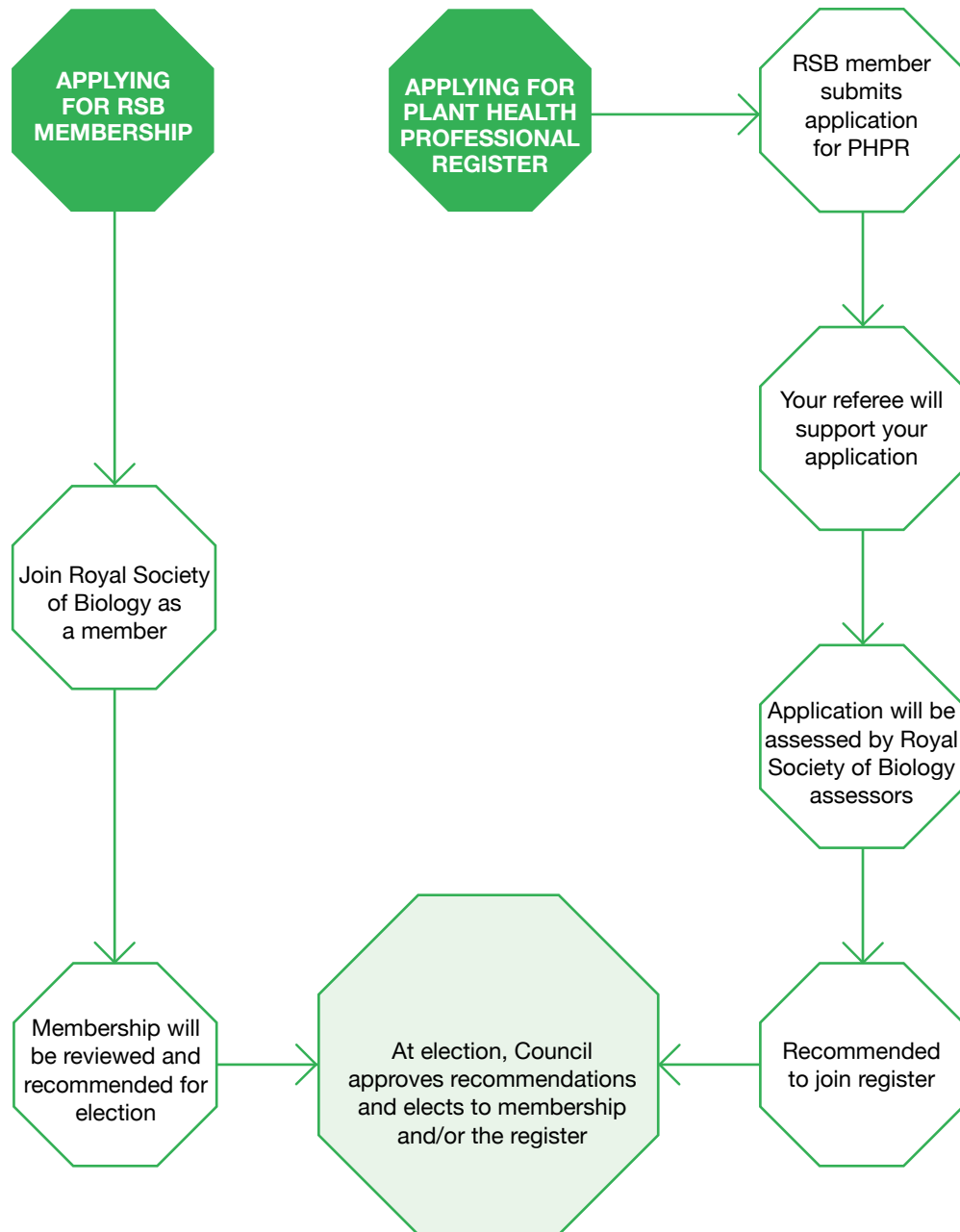
Your CPD record will serve as a useful portfolio of your career development to date and can be used to demonstrate this to others. To find out more about CPD, email cpd@rsb.org.uk

RSB training courses and events

One way to increase your CPD points is by attending any of the RSB's range of online and face-to-face training courses or our plant health event series. These events are heavily discounted and occasionally free for register members and cover a range of specialisms and training needs.

We also approve external events and training courses for CPD points to provide assurance of their high quality and expand your professional development opportunities. To find out more email training@rsb.org.uk

Application stages



Frequently asked questions

1. Are there deadlines throughout the year for the register or membership applications?

There are no set deadlines and applications are open throughout the year. The RSB elects members and registrants at the start of each quarter: January, April, July and October.

2. I am not sure which RSB membership grade to apply for. Who should I contact?

You can take our 'Which grade is for me?' online quiz. If you still have questions, please send a copy of your CV to membership@rsb.org.uk who will be able to advise you.

3. How long will it take me to complete the application?

This varies from person to person. We advise that you prepare your competency answers offline first, and then when you are ready to apply you can simply copy and paste everything into the online application.

4. How much should I write for each competency answer? Is there a word count?

For most of the competencies you are advised to provide one to three paragraphs of text – this varies depending on whether you are applying for Associate, Registered or Senior level.

5. How long will it take for my application to be reviewed?

Usually applications are reviewed in four to six weeks. If the RSB is receiving a high volume of applications at once, this can be longer.

6. I submitted my application a long time ago and have not heard anything. What should I do?

First, check whether your referees have responded to the reference request. This commonly causes delays in application processing as, without a reference, your application can't go to reviewers. If your referee has not received the email, ask them to check their junk or spam folders or get in contact with the RSB team at registers@rsb.org.uk.

7. Who assesses my application?

Applications are assessed by the register panel of assessors. Each assessor will be a member of the register themselves and will hold registration at the level that you are applying to, or higher. You will not be assessed by an assessor who works at the same organisation as you or who has identified that they know you personally. All applications are kept anonymous and personal details are removed prior to sending applications to assessors.

8. I have received feedback requiring more information to be provided. Is there a deadline to submit this further information?

There is no set deadline to submit. However, you should aim to do this within one to two months so that the remainder of your application is still up to date. If you do not resubmit in six months, then you may be asked to update the rest of your application as well.

9. If my application is not accepted to the register, what happens next?

If your application requires minor revision, you will be provided with feedback by email, and information about how to resubmit your application for a second review.

If the assessors feel that you need to gain significantly more experience, your application may be rejected initially, and you will be informed of how to address gaps in your skills and competences, and the time frame to reapply. For example, you may need to gain some further professional experience, or seek experience or training in a particular competency area.

10. I am already on the register. How can I achieve 50 continuing professional development (CPD) points per year?

The CPD scheme is broad and there are many different activities that can count as CPD. A list of CPD-approved events and courses is on the Plant Health Register webpage and the register members are frequently invited to relevant events, all of which can contribute to your CPD. Other internal training, conferences or updating your knowledge will also count towards the CPD scheme. Most activities you record are worth two CPD points per hour, so 50 points is roughly the equivalent of 25 hours. Full CPD guidance can be found on our website.

11. I am taking a work interruption this year and won't be able to make 50 CPD points. Will I be removed from the register?

If you have a specific reason why you will be unable to make 50 CPD points in a year, please contact the register team at registers@rsb.org.uk as soon as possible and explain your situation. Usually the team can allow a CPD exemption for one year, or longer if required.

12. I would like to hear more about RSB events and training. How can I get more information?

A selection of upcoming events are showcased in our members' newsletter, which is sent at the start of each month. For more on training please email training@rsb.org.uk, who will subscribe you to the monthly training newsletter.

13. How can I get in touch with the team about my registration or CPD?

Please email registers@rsb.org.uk.

rsb.org.uk



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