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## NSCG Newsletter

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Title: Reply from Bob Entwistle and Simon Moore (on behalf of NSCG committee) to Julian Carter's letter on Accreditation:

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is somewhat more voluminous! To read it all would mean cancelling your life for a while...

As an actual practising museum conservator, specialising in zoological collections, I have a number of serious queries over this accreditation process.

- Existing qualification: It has been stated that only conservation based qualification will be taken into consideration for 'fast track' accreditation. This means that my existing degree in Environmental Biology will not count towards my training when in reality it should. A conservator can only practise their work to a competent level if they understand their subject. My training in a biological degree provides this, along with a strong background in chemistry. This is of far more value in work conserving zoological collections than a standard conservation degree.
- Assessment: There are few dedicated natural science conservators and I am one of them. It would be difficult to find suitably qualified referees to carry out the assessment. There currently appears to be no provision in dealing with the more specialist groups in the conservation field.
- UKIC membership: This is a body that has already let natural science conservation down in the past with its 'professional' reforms in its constitution. I cannot see UKIC adopting a flexibility that would be beneficial to a small and specialist section such as the natural sciences, especially as it is a section with little 'political' clout.
- Cost £60 to join UKIC plus a further £200 to become accredited is all very well. However, I am certain that a professional qualification will not provide a professional wage! It is also becoming apparent that in order to remain accredited you will have to stay a member of the UKIC – no membership, no accreditation – so much for freedom of qualification.....

Where a specialist and outlying section of the conservation profession such as the natural sciences fits into the accreditation process is still unclear, especially in view of the very limited amount of subject related training that

is available. However, it does appear that the Natural Science Training Scheme, that is currently run between the University of Cambridge, the Natural History Museum and the National Museum of Wales, is going to be endorsed by the MTI and will be an acceptable part of a conservators training programme. However, I teach on this course so where does that put me?

One cannot condone the effort that is being made to provide training and acceptable qualification, but with all this effort in trying to develop training are we losing sight of our actual roles in a sea of paperwork, certificates and bureaucracy?

*Julian Carter  
Zoological Conservation Officer  
National Museum and Galleries of Wales*

This article has also been submitted to the *Biology Curator*, the newsletter of the Biology Curators Group.

### **Reply from Bob Entwistle and Simon Moore (on behalf of NSCG committee) to Julian Carter's letter on Accreditation:**

Simon Moore recently attended an accreditation meeting in London, where he put Julian Carter's points directly to UKIC/IPC, and argued the case for Natural Sciences.

- 1) The Accreditation committee have agreed that Julian's degree is acceptable to put towards training time for accreditation.

This is an important turn around by UKIC. It means that your training/qualifications will be taken into account as long as you can argue the case. Memo UKIC and talk to Simon Moore, our representative on the committee, before you apply for the second stage of fast

track accreditation. In this way you will not lose your fee and may very well be successful.

The present paucity of conservation qualifications in Natural Sciences means that other qualifications especially if they are concerned with material science should be acceptable towards Fast Track accreditation training and work experience.

- 2) Julian is concerned that there are few dedicated natural science conservators qualified to assess candidates. This is true but I suspect others have misunderstood the position. To apply for fast track accreditation you can be sponsored by any conservator who knows and understands your work. You DO NOT have to be sponsored by a specialist natural science conservator. Only one of your sponsors has to be a conservator and the conservator does NOT have to be a member of UKIC to apply for Fast Track accreditation.
- 3) UKIC membership. The NSCG broke away from UKIC because it changed its constitution which meant that members had to join in 'full' and could not simply join a section. To remain would have meant our demise as a specialist group. UKIC know that it was not our wish to break away from them and they fully understand our position. The situation is unfortunate, but it is beyond our control.

UKIC still look very favourably on our group, and together with other specialist non-aligned conservation groups we are members of the Conservation Forum, (ABC). UKIC are anxious to promote natural sciences conservation and have asked us many times to supply papers for publication. The last copy of "The Conservator" had two articles on natural science conservation, one written by Julian himself.

- 4) Cost I agree £200 to be accredited and a further £60 + to join UKIC and remain accredited is steep. However bear in mind that because this is the case now does not mean it will always be the case. Some employers may pay UKIC subs, and others may be willing to assist candidates with the £200 fee. If you haven't already asked your employer for help, ask now. Your institution may have a training or

similar, budget which could bear part of the cost. Private conservators are less fortunate and will have to bear the cost themselves. Bear in mind that there are tax allowances for subs.

UKIC/IPC spent a lot of money and a lot of their members time in setting up their accreditation system. If we wish to set up our own system we must be willing to put the time, effort and funding into doing it. At present we have 100 members. Our subs are low and our coffers are healthy but not overflowing. Members who wish to be involved in organising an accreditation scheme of our own must be willing to put in a lot of their own time. Since we are a small group we do not think that at present our own accreditation system, if we had one, would be a viable alternative. This could change in the future.

Natural sciences conservation is still young and looking for recognition. Also working with what some people think of as low value objects can create professional snobbery. Turning our backs on what is happening in the rest of the conservation world will not help us to overcome these prejudices. We need to be involved and play our part.

Accreditation should create recognition for freelance conservators.

UKIC want to get as many conservators accredited as possible. We want to get as many natural science conservators accredited as possible. Don't be put off if you feel your qualifications etc are not appropriate. If you have problems contact Simon Moore your accreditation rep and he will bring them up at committee meetings.

*Simon Moore and Bob Entwistle.*

*Since writing this letter both Bob and Simon have spoken to Julian about his concerns and he has agreed to his letter being published.*