Biodiversity & Taxonomy of Plants MSc – request to register a 2-year option

Biodiversity & Taxonomy of Plants (BTP) is currently offered only as a 12-month programme, with taught courses from September to April followed by a ~4 month research project.

A proportion of BTP students are already employed in conservation or plant systematics and take the programme as continuing professional development on 12 months leave from their employers. Several potential applicants have enquired about the possibility of taking the course over two years, because their employers are less willing to grant 12 months continuous leave rather than two shorter blocks, or because they have other commitments that prevent full-time study (e.g., child-care) or because they are self-funding and do not have the capital to take 12 months out of employment.

We are particularly anxious to attract as many qualified students as possible to the Edinburgh programme because Royal Botanic Gardens Kew have launched a direct competitor, jointly with QMUL, backed by an attractive package of bursaries and fees discounts.

We propose offering a two-year option for the BTP programme for September 2016 entry that could be taken by one of two pathways.

- Year 1: take 60 or 120 credits (not including the 60-credit dissertation)
- Year 2: take 60 or 120 credits (including the 60-credit dissertation)

A total of 180 credits must be taken in total.

The pathway would be agreed with the student in advance. However a switch between pathways would be allowed, while this remained possible. For the 2-year programme, students would be charged 50% of the full-time fee in each year, so switching to the other pathway would not affect fees.

The 2-year programme would not require any change to existing assessments. Progression to the dissertation would be decided after completion of 120 credits of taught courses, whether in Year 1 or Year 2.

The two pathways cater to students who want to study either part-time or full-time for only part of the year. We do not propose to offer the option of a part-time research dissertation for academic reasons, and because the dissertation already provides greater scope for flexible working than timetabled taught components.

The option of studying part-time over 24 months would not be available to Tier 4 visa holders.

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