

Astrobiology Society of Britain

Questionnaire on Activities

Purpose of this study

It has come to the attention of the Astrobiology Society of Britain (ASB) that there is woefully-inadequate information available on the level of research and teaching activity within Britain. Many groups are moving into the broad area of research that has come to be known as astrobiology, dedicated interdisciplinary departments are being founded, and more and more lecture courses are being organised for undergraduate and postgraduate students. Tracking this exciting growth is difficult, however, and the majority of researchers are unaware of the full extent of astrobiological investigation or teaching at other universities through England, Scotland, Wales and R.O.I. Such statistics are available for the US, but the combined British effort remains largely undocumented. The purpose of this ASB study is to collect exactly this information, helping to link all these research and teaching efforts into a robust astrobiological network in Britain.

Reasons for participating

Data of this kind will only be meaningful if they are truly representative of the whole field, and so we urge you to provide as much detail on this questionnaire as you can, pass it on to other research groups in your university and forward it to colleagues elsewhere. Collated statistics demonstrating the significance and growth of astrobiology will be useful to all of us; in grant applications, for example. We intend to compile a report for journal publication and also a piece in the popular media, and so any information you provide will help raise the profile of your research group or institution. Institutions that respond will be automatically included in the recipient list for the summary report of statistics compiled from this study.

Astrobiology

For this particular questionnaire, 'astrobiology' is taken to include all research undertaken in the interests of understanding the conditions and processes involved in the emergence of life on Earth, requirements for its persistence, and assessing the possibility of life, extant or extinct, on extraterrestrial locations within the solar system or extrasolar planetary systems; thereby including aspects of astronomy, astrophysical modelling, astrochemistry, prebiotic chemistry, extremophile microbiology, biogeochemistry, biosignatures, comparative planetology, probe mission design, and so on... This definition is left deliberately broad to allow researchers to classify their work as astrobiological if they choose to consider it so.

We are also very interested in discovering the extent of astrobiology teaching now being offered across Britain. This includes everything from a dedicated Masters programme to a few lectures embedded within a more traditional undergraduate degree course, such as geology or astronomy.

Even if your university does not currently conduct any astrobiology research or teaching, returning this questionnaire in the negative would be greatly valuable. If you feel unable to answer for all the efforts across your university, please forward this questionnaire to separate groups and we will collate the information returned on different forms. If you are pushed for time please answer whichever questions you can – it'd be much more useful to receive forms with blank spaces than no information at all. Additional questionnaires can be downloaded in .doc or .pdf formats from <http://www.astrobiologysociety.org>.

Completed questionnaires can be returned as a Word document by email to l.dartnell@ucl.ac.uk or posting a hard copy to Lewis Dartnell, CoMPLEX, University College London, Wolfson House, 4 Stevenson Way, London NW1 2HE.

Spread the word

The very issue this questionnaire aims to address – the lack of collated information on the extent of astrobiology activities in Britain – means that a complete distribution list for all relevant parties does not yet exist. Therefore, we would very much appreciate it if you could also forward this questionnaire on to any other astrobiology researchers you know so that we can achieve as

Astrobiology Society of Britain

Questionnaire on Activities

complete coverage as possible and hopefully gather some truly representative statistics. We also believe that creating a database of researchers involved in astrobiology will be enormously useful for all concerned, but we will only publish your contact details if you consent to this on the questionnaire.

If your institution does not yet run a formal teaching or research programme, but you have an interest in astrobiology and the prospects of life beyond Earth, you may like to join the Astrobiology Society of Britain to keep up to date with the latest news and our attend our biennial conference (details at end the end of this questionnaire).

Many thanks,

Lewis Dartnell

Astrobiology Society of Britain Questionnaire on Activities

General details

- ❖ University/Research Institute _____
- ❖ Your name and position _____

- ❖ Contact email address _____
(so that ASB can provide you with the collated results of this questionnaire)
- ❖ May we publish this contact information? Yes No
- ❖ Are there any formal academic positions at your institution such as 'Professor of Astrobiology'?
Please give both the full title of the position and the name of the current holder (to prevent the
risk of multiple counting of the same post).

Astrobiology Research

- ❖ Does your university conduct research within the field of astrobiology? Yes No
- ❖ If yes, how many different research groups? _____

Please provide the following information for each research group (or forward this questionnaire to each research group to fill in these details themselves).

Group A

- ❖ Who is the P.I. of the group? _____
- ❖ What is the approximate make-up in terms of number of:
 - post-docs _____
 - PhD students _____
 - Master students _____
 - undergraduate project students _____
- ❖ A sentence-length description of the focus of the group.

Astrobiology Society of Britain Questionnaire on Activities

Group B

- ❖ Who is the P.I. of the group? _____
- ❖ What is the approximate make-up in terms of number of:
 - post-docs _____
 - PhD students _____
 - Master students _____
 - undergraduate project students _____
- ❖ A sentence-length description of the focus of the group.

Group C

- ❖ Who is the P.I. of the group? _____
- ❖ What is the approximate make-up in terms of number of:
 - post-docs _____
 - PhD students _____
 - Master students _____
 - undergraduate project students _____
- ❖ A sentence-length description of the focus of the group.

Group D

- ❖ Who is the P.I. of the group? _____
- ❖ What is the approximate make-up in terms of number of:
 - post-docs _____
 - PhD students _____
 - Master students _____
 - undergraduate project students _____

A sentence-length description of the focus of the group.

If there are more than four groups, please cut&paste extra forms below or print additional copies of this page.

Astrobiology Society of Britain Questionnaire on Activities

Astrobiology Teaching

- ❖ Does your university run any astrobiology courses for students? Yes No

If yes, please answer the following set of questions for each undergraduate or postgraduate course offered (or forward this questionnaire on to each course convener).

Course A

- ❖ What is the course title and code? _____
- ❖ Is it provided for undergraduate students, postgraduates, or both? _____
- ❖ Is it a dedicated degree, or a single module? _____
- ❖ If a degree, what entrance qualifications are required? _____
- ❖ If a module, how many course credits does it constitute? _____
How many are required in total per year of study? _____
- ❖ How many years has the course been running for? _____
- ❖ How many places are there on the course? _____
- ❖ What is the total number of applicants you receive for those places? _____
- ❖ How has the number of places and applicants changed over the period of the course (if you have records, please provide annual figures)? _____

- ❖ The composition of astrobiology students: approximately what percentage of the current course students are from the following backgrounds (or please specify your own fields)?
- | | |
|--------------|-------|
| Astronomy | _____ |
| Biochemistry | _____ |
| Biology | _____ |
| Engineering | _____ |
| Geology | _____ |
| Physics | _____ |
- ❖ Do you collect feed-back from the students on the course? What is the general response to the programme? _____

- ❖ Please attach any descriptive material you have on the subject matter covered in the course – a synopsis advertising the course, the url for the course website, a syllabus, etc...

Astrobiology Society of Britain Questionnaire on Activities

Course B

- ❖ What is the course title and code? _____
- ❖ Is it provided for undergraduate students, postgraduates, or both? _____
- ❖ Is it a dedicated degree, or a single module? _____
- ❖ If a degree, what entrance qualifications are required? _____
- ❖ If a module, how many course credits does it constitute? _____
How many are required in total per year of study? _____
- ❖ How many years has the course been running for? _____
- ❖ How many places are there on the course? _____
- ❖ What is the total number of applicants you receive for those places? _____
- ❖ How has the number of places and applicants changed over the period of the course (if you have records, please provide annual figures)? _____

- ❖ The composition of astrobiology students: approximately what percentage of the current course students are from the following backgrounds (or please specify your own fields)?
 - Astronomy _____
 - Biochemistry _____
 - Biology _____
 - Engineering _____
 - Geology _____
 - Physics _____
- ❖ Do you collect feed-back from the students on the course? What is the general response to the programme? _____

Please attach any descriptive material you have on the subject matter covered in the course – a synopsis advertising the course, the url for the course website, a syllabus, etc...

If your university runs more than two relevant courses, please cut&paste extra forms below or print additional copies of this page.

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Many thanks for providing this information. Please now return your completed questionnaire through email to l.dartnell@ucl.ac.uk or posting a hard copy to:

Lewis Dartnell,
CoMPLEX,
University College London,
Wolfson House,
4 Stevenson Way,
London,
NW1 2HE

Once questionnaires have been returned, the information will be collated and a summary compiled and provided to all interested parties. A report may be published based on the information gathered here. We also believe that a database of researchers involved in astrobiology will be enormously useful for all concerned, but we will only publish your contact details if you consented to this on the questionnaire.

About the Astrobiology Society of Britain

The Astrobiology Society of Britain is a highly interdisciplinary forum for researchers addressing the link between life and its cosmic environment. The Society is open to all professional scientists and students interested in this exciting field.

Our regular email newsletter provides updates on all aspects of astrobiology, from the latest results and news to activities of our members and up-coming international conferences and meetings of an astrobiological interest. The Society holds its own conference once every two years, most recently hosted by the University of Kent in April 2006. The schedule included sessions on Mars, Raman spectroscopy, astrobiology education and outreach, exoplanets, and panspermia. Two issues of the *International Journal of Astrobiology* carried papers based on work presented at this conference (IJA, vol.5, issue 3, pp 181 – 275, and issue 4, pp 277 – 359).

Membership of the Society also brings many other benefits, including a 20% reduction on subscriptions to the *International Journal of Astrobiology*. Annual membership to the Astrobiology Society of Britain costs only £5.

You can join the Astrobiology Society of Britain with the application form available from our web site (www.astrobiologysociety.org) and returning it to the email address info@astrobiologysociety.org. The application must be endorsed by two members of the ASB or other learned or professional societies. Once your application is approved, you will be informed by the membership secretary and invited to pay your annual membership dues.