

1. Why join SCONUL?

SCONUL is the professional association for academic and research libraries in the UK and Ireland, irrespective of size and mission. We provide leadership and support to our community through advocacy, policy development, sharing knowledge and good practice and direct services to members.

SCONUL advocates effectively for our diverse membership, speaking with a single voice on the strategic issues facing the sector and arguing for the value and needs of libraries with government, regulators, service providers and many others.

We provide support and leadership for the sector, bringing members together with external and international thinkers to support active consideration of service and wider sector developments. We share intelligence through events, case studies and briefing papers driven by our Board and strategy groups.

We provide a set of important services which support our members, including our Access Scheme, benchmarking statistics and technology survey. Our strategy groups and community of interest groups are available to staff at member institutions to join and are a great way of contributing to debate about the future of the sector and widening your networks.

We offer staff a range of services and resources to help them progress in their career, engage with the wider library community and understand the library landscape more fully. We help our members stay fully briefed on the latest developments, for example of AI.

More information is available on our [website](#).

2. Is my institution eligible to join SCONUL?

Full membership of SCONUL is open to institutions which meet the following criteria. For those who don't meet these criteria, we also offer associate membership.

Institutions eligible for full membership of SCONUL will:

- be a national library of one of the nations of the UK or Ireland, designated under the appropriate national legislation

and / or

- hold a collection of national significance within the UK or Ireland which is made available as a resource for academic study.

and / or

- be a centre of research excellence in the UK or Ireland with a professionally managed library service of appropriate scale and type for the institution

and / or

- be a member of CONUL, the consortium of Ireland's main research libraries

or

- be an institution wholly or largely devoted to the provision of Higher Education in the UK which
 - a. holds UK taught degree awarding powers
 - b. can demonstrate that it provides a professionally managed library service of an appropriate scale and type for the institution
 - c. has a five-year track record of research
 - d. is a UK registered charity.

Institutions which don't meet the above criteria may be eligible for associate membership of SCONUL if they are an institution which provides Higher Education in the UK which:

- a. can demonstrate that it provides a professionally managed library service of an appropriate scale and type for the institution and
- b. holds UK taught degree awarding powers at above foundation level.

Associate membership includes many benefits but excludes involvement in some services including the SCONUL Access Scheme. More information about the benefits is available here: <https://www.sconul.ac.uk/about-us/benefits-of-membership/associate-membership/>

3. How do I apply for membership?

To apply for membership, please send an email to SitMui Ng, SCONUL Coordinator, at sitmui.ng@sconul.ac.uk. We will ask you:

- a. Which category of membership you feel applies to your institution.
- b. For a brief description of your institution.
- c. Whether or not your institution has a Jisc band <https://subscriptionsmanager.jisc.ac.uk/about/jisc-banding> and what this is. If you don't have a Jisc band, we will ask what the library budget was for the last financial year (including for staff, buildings and collections).
- d. If your institution is an HE body, whether it has charitable status or equivalent; roughly how many students you have and what schools or faculties the institution holds.
- e. for a brief description of your library, including for example, the library as a space; the library collection and what it covers, and what library services you provide (e.g. induction, information literacy training; digital skills development; support for sourcing research etc.)
- f. If you believe your collection is one of national significance, we will ask you about unique or rare items you hold and about the particular academic, historical or social significance of the collections. We will also ask about access to the collection for academic study.

4. What happens next?

If we believe that your application may meet the criteria for full membership, we will put your application forward for consideration by the SCONUL Executive Board which meets four times a year in March, May, September and December.

Decisions on membership ultimately lie with the SCONUL Board and their judgement will be final. The Board reserves the right to refuse membership to otherwise eligible institutions should there be perceived to be a conflict of interest between the applying organisation and our charitable objectives.

5. Joining the SCONUL Access Scheme

Membership of SCONUL doesn't automatically involve membership of the SCONUL Access Scheme. Involvement in the scheme is based on a principle of reciprocity – so being willing to allow users from other institutions to use your resources on the same basis as they use theirs.

If you are interested in your institution joining the Access Scheme, we will also ask you:

- How many users your library supports, and
- whether your institution could offer access to study spaces and/or walk-in access to digital resources. Details of the Access scheme are available from https://access.sconul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-12/SCONUL_Access_membership_criteria-August_2024.pdf

6. How much does SCONUL membership cost?

SCONUL has twelve bands of membership tiered according to ability to pay. Our smallest institutional members pay £331 while our largest members pay £4952. We use Jisc bands as a proxy for size of institution. If you don't have a Jisc band, we look at library income and map this against the standard bands.

For Associate members, we have three bands with the lowest at £ 1109 and the highest at £4438.