

[Detailed guide: Apply for a scientific research dispensation](#)

Updated: Text added

Please complete the dispensation request form and submit it to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). We aim to make a decision on most applications within 20 working days, however, each application is different and some applications will take longer than this if we are required to consult with other regulatory bodies.



[Dispensation request form](#)

PDF, 152KB, 4 pages

You must notify the MMO if your research is not being carried out on a licensed fishing vessel. An email stating the vessel name, dates of the survey, type of survey and equipment used should be sent to dispensationrequests@marinemanagement.org.uk

Examples of activities that require a dispensation include:

- using undersized nets or modified trawls
- catching and keeping on board undersized fish species
- fishing beyond set [effort management limits \(days at sea\)](#)
- catching and landing fish over a vessel's catch limits – MMO may be able to provide extra quota to licensed fishing vessels involved in research
- catching and landing fish stocks for which a vessel has no quota allocation

2% of quota allocated to England is in principle available for scientific dispensations. For any quota requests made by applicants for dispensations the MMO will determine whether the quota can be granted based on the context of the application and the availability of the specific quotas.

Licensing and consenting requirements

You may require additional licenses and consents to carry out your proposed research. This is relevant regardless of which type of vessel you are using, and whether you require a fisheries dispensation.

Protected species

A [marine wildlife licence](#) is required by anyone who wishes to carry out an activity in the English marine area or the Welsh offshore area that is

prohibited under nature conservation legislation where the activity cannot be sufficiently mitigated against.

Marine licensing requirements

Work within the dispensation application may also require a marine licence or application for an exemption. It is the applicants responsibility to ensure that they have all relevant licences in place before they start any survey. Information on the [application process](#) and list of licensable activities is available.

Marine Protected Areas (MPA)

The MMO is responsible for making byelaws in English inshore waters to protect European Marine Sites (EMS) and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) from activities that may harm them; these may be commercial and/or recreational. [MMO byelaws](#) must help to further the conservation objectives of the site.

You may be required to comply with these [byelaws](#) and, unless stated, the derogation does not allow you to operate where it is not permitted within the sites.

Your dispensation application will ask you to provide details of any marine protected area you may be operating in. A [map](#) and details of all marine protected areas can be found on the [Joint Nature Conservation Committee \(JNCC\)](#) website.

Foreign vessels engaged in research or UK vessels which do not complete a dispensation application are encouraged to complete a voluntary notification form if the survey will take place within or close to an MPA.

MPA activity – [Voluntary notification form](#)

Other authority consents

You may also require consent or approval from other bodies before you are able to carry out the work that the dispensation applies to.

Local byelaws are the responsibility of the local Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA). You should familiarise yourself with the IFCA byelaws in your research area and [contact your local IFCA](#) if necessary.

If your research involves salmon, eels, elvers, lamprey, sea trout, smelt or crayfish the [Environment Agency](#) should also be contacted to discuss your research.

If your research involves work within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Natural England should be contacted to discuss the research application.

Further information

For research in other UK waters, dispensations will be issued by:

- [Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)
- [Marine Scotland](#)
- [Welsh Government](#)

Under international law, all states have the right to conduct marine science research subject to the rights and duties of other States. The [Marine Science Research \(MSR\)](#) webpage contains application forms and guidance.

The UK Government has a target to protect habitats and species in our seas. Foreign vessels engaged in research are encouraged to complete a voluntary notification form.



[Voluntary notification form](#)

PDF, 69.9KB, 3 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

[Request an accessible format.](#)

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email communications@marinemanagement.org.uk.

Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

Contact information

Marine Conservation Team

To discuss fisheries dispensations, wildlife licensing and Marine Protected Areas.

Telephone: 0300 123 1032

dispensationrequests@marinemanagement.org.uk

Fisheries Management Team

Telephone: 0300 123 1032

fmc@marinemanagement.org.uk

Marine Licensing Team

To discuss sampling and sediment analysis.

Telephone: 0300 123 1032

marine.consents@marinemanagement.org.uk

Marine Conservation and Enforcement Team

To discuss wildlife licensing and Marine Protected Areas.

Telephone: 0300 123 1032

conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk