 

**CIfA/UAUK Joint Accreditation- Frequently Asked Questions**

***What is CiFA?***

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, or CIfA, is the leading professional body representing archaeologists working in the UK and overseas. CIfA champions professionalism in archaeology by setting standards, improving careers and promoting best practice. For more information see the CiFA website: http://www.archaeologists.net/

***What is UAUK?***

### Universities Archaeology UK, or UAUK, represents the departments of Archaeology in UK universities. Its members include most of the institutions offering single or joint honours Higher Education courses in archaeology in the UK. For more information see the UAUK website: http://www.universityarchaeology.co.uk/

***What is accreditation?***

Before embarking on this process, it is important to understand the role of accreditation outside the world of archaeology. Professional accreditation in the UK is normally provided by the lead professional body within the discipline, e.g. Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)[[1]](#footnote-1), Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences (CSFS)[[2]](#footnote-2), Royal Institute of British Architects[[3]](#footnote-3), or the Royal Society of Chemistry[[4]](#footnote-4). These bodies are collectively referred to as ‘professional, statutory and regulatory bodies’ or PSRBs. In designing and approving the process of professional accreditation these PSRBs must work *alongside* the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Effectively, the QAA recognises professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), and then works in collaboration with them ‘to share information and experience, with a view to rationalising regulation’[[5]](#footnote-5). The QAA runs the *PSRB forum* to share good practice, and this is aimed at those involved in the accreditation of higher education programmes and the maintenance of academic and professional standards[[6]](#footnote-6).

For further background you may wish to look at the QAA ‘good practice’ document published in 2008[[7]](#footnote-7), and the Higher Education Better Regulation Group statement on the positive impact of the involvement of professional bodies in higher education which emerged in 2011[[8]](#footnote-8). For UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) accreditation information is recorded by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), and provided as part of the Unistats Key Information Sets (KIS) data. PSRBs have to apply for inclusion within this data set, with a cut off of the 1st of December each year[[9]](#footnote-9). A link to the 2014/15 data[[10]](#footnote-10) is given on the Unistats website[[11]](#footnote-11).

Inclusion of PSRB accreditation in the KIS is subject to a range of assessment criteria. The emphasis is always on the benefit to the student, and accreditation must meet one of the following conditions[[12]](#footnote-12):

1. *Graduates are able to practise as a professional in a specific field (for example, they receive a license to practise that is required by law), or completion of the accredited programme allows them to apply to practise.*
2. *Graduates are granted chartered status or the completion of the accredited course forms part of a recognised pathway to professional recognition.*
3. *Graduates are granted exemption from all or some professional exams.*
4. *Graduates are eligible for entry to membership of a professional association or learned society.*
5. *The programme has been assessed as meeting externally designated standards and quality thresholds that are recognised by the sector’s industry and employers.*

Needless to say, there is a requirement to establish a clear process of review (ie. formal decision-making process) that must include an assessment conducted by experts in the field. These panels may include both academics and professionals. The regular monitoring of accredited courses is also mandatory.

***What are National Occupational Standards (NOS) and why are they used in accreditation?***

CIfA membership levels are assessed through what is known as a ‘competency matrix’, which is aligned with the National Occupation Standards in Archaeological Practice (NOS). These NOS were developed by the Archaeological Training Forum (of which CIfA is a member), and cover a wide range of areas. Archaeologists in employment can already achieve a ‘fast track’ to the Practitioner member grade of CiFA (or PCiFA) by successfully attaining the Level 3 NVQ - Qualification in Archaeological Practice[[13]](#footnote-13) that is made up of a range of NOS[[14]](#footnote-14). For those not familiar with CiFA terminology, ‘Practitioner’ is one of their three [**professionally accredited member grades**](http://www.archaeologists.net/accreditedgrades) – the others being Associate (ACIfA) and Member (MCIfA). You can find out more information on the CiFA website.

NOS are designed to be flexible, and therefore a good way of encompassing the great variety of subjects covered in UK degrees, whether those be practical, period/place, thematic, or science based units/modules. In all, there are 238 NOS that underpin PCIfA accreditation. These NOS have been grouped into units, as outlined in the Archaeology Functional Map in Appendix 2[[15]](#footnote-15). To examine the potential for NOS to be used in accreditation criteria for university pathways, a mapping exercise has been undertaken to relate many of the relevant NOS to the QAA benchmark statement for archaeology[[16]](#footnote-16). What is required to gain accreditation is to be able to demonstrate that the core relevant NOS are covered by a degree/pathway. As university departments will discover for themselves, many of the key NOS are already successfully covered by the QAA benchmark, although in some cases the emphasis may be slightly different.

***Who governs the accreditation process?***

The ethos of joint UAUK/CIfA governance necessitates a process that represents both organisations equally and befits their operating procedures. CIfA has recommended that accreditation applications and awards should be noted at a *UAUK* meeting on a yearly basis, and that CIfA would send a representative to attend for this agenda item. The main contact for accreditation is the person in post as Standards Development Manager at CIfA.

***Do accreditation costs include VAT?***

No – CifA is not a VAT registered organisation.

***My institution is not a member of UAUK can our degrees still be accredited?***

CIfA/UAUK accreditation is only open to UAUK members. Please contact Mike Heyworth to find out more about how to apply to join UAUK.

***My degrees have been refused accreditation can I appeal against this decision?***

Full details on the governance and appeals process is set out on the CIfA and UAUK websites.

1. IHBC - <http://www.ihbc.org.uk/learning/page35/index.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CSFS - <http://www.forensic-science-society.org.uk/Accreditation/AccreditedUniversityCourses> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. RIBA -http://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Becomeanarchitect/Qualifications/Qualifications.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. RSC - http://www.rsc.org/Education/courses-and-careers/accredited-courses/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/partners/professional-bodies> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. An example of the range of topics (such as TEF, changes to HESA data collection) that are addressed by this forum can be seen at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/newsroom/events/psrb-forum-higher-education-policy-update-and-current-thinking#.Vsx411IT9Hg> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit-Second-series-Institutions-work-with-employers-and-professional--statutory-and-regulator.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2011/HEBRG\_ProfessionalBodies.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. HESA guidance on professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and accreditation in the Key Information Set, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and professional accreditation of undergraduate programmes. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&task=show_file&mnl=15061&href=accreditation_guidance.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The full list of current accreditations returned by UK HEIs to the 2015/16 KIS: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&task=show_file&mnl=15061&href=accreditation_list.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Source, see section ‘Course accreditation’ - <https://unistats.direct.gov.uk/find-out-more/about-the-data/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Application and criteria for inclusion of new accreditation in the KIS - https://www.hesa.ac.uk/includes/C15061\_resources/download/Guidance\_for\_inclusion.pdf?v=1.0 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/1114\_CIfA\_Applicant's\_Guide\_accredited\_FinalV2.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. http://nos.ukces.org.uk/Pages/index.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. As such these also form the NVQ level 3 in Archaeological Practice [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2876#.Vsyj8FIT9Hg [↑](#footnote-ref-16)