

The Applicants' Handbook



Revised December 2009

If you have any queries regarding this handbook or the application process please contact the IfA membership team
0118 3786446, admin@archaeologists.net.

All the relevant documentation can be found online at
www.archaeologists.net

1. What is the IfA?

The Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) is a professional body for all those who are engaged with the study and care of the historic environment.

2. Am I eligible to join?

Anyone who is prepared to subscribe to our *Code of conduct* and meets the relevant criteria may apply. Section 1 describes the application process, section 2.2 explains the different grades, page 5 has information for Student and Affiliate applicants, section 3 for corporate grades (PIfA, AlfA and MIfA) and section 4 on abiding by the *Code*.

3. What does membership mean and what are its benefits?

Membership of the IfA gives you formal recognition as someone who subscribes to high standards of professionalism and at corporate grades that your technical competence has been validated. See page 7 for some of the other benefits of membership.

4. What does it cost?

Corporate grade applicants pay a subscription determined by income. Students and Affiliates pay a flat rate fee. There is an application fee for all grades except Student level and for rejoiners. See the enclosed rates sheet and section 5.

5. At what level should I apply to join?

There are grades suitable for those competent at any level or responsibility. See section 2.2 for a breakdown of all the different grades.

6. How do I apply?

All applicants need to fill out the appropriate application form and nominate referees. Corporate grade applicants also need to send in supporting documentation, unless they have the Qualification in Archaeological Practice. Section 1 explains the process, section 2 the forms and different grades, and page 9 the Qualification in Archaeological Practice.

7. What happens to my application?

Corporate grade applications are assessed by the Validation committee. Student and Affiliate applications are validated by the membership team once satisfactory references have been received. See section 1 for more information.

8. What happens if I am unhappy with the decision?

An appeals process exists. See page 6 for more information.

9. Can I subsequently upgrade my membership status?

Members can apply for a higher grade by sending in an application the same way as a new applicant. Student grade members are automatically transferred to Affiliate grade a year after they have graduated from an eligible course. See section 2.1 on upgrading and page 5 on Students.

10. If my membership has lapsed can I rejoin?

Yes. See page 10 for more information.

WHAT IS THE INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS?

The IfA was founded in 1982 as the professional organisation for archaeologists. We now welcome applications from all involved with the study and care of the historic environment, including heritage management, further and higher education and the voluntary sector, regardless of academic background. It is not exclusively for archaeologists who work in the field, despite its title.

The enclosed *Code of conduct* and other by-laws and standards and guidance (also at www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?Page=15) are binding on all members, and emphasise the duty to adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards.

The IfA is a company limited by guarantee, and elected members of the Council are its directors. They set policy and decide on strategic matters. 'Institute for Archaeologists' is a trading name of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

If you support the IfA's aims and agree to abide by its rules, we would welcome an application for membership from you.



Photo: Wessex Archaeology Ltd

1. JOINING THE IfA

Membership of the Institute is open to everyone who is engaged in the study and care of the historic environment, providing they can demonstrate sufficient technical and ethical competence.

The IfA has different entry procedures for corporate grades (Practitioner, Associate, Member) and non-corporate grades (Affiliate, Student). The IfA's procedure for corporate grades is designed to allow formal assessment of educational attainment and competence, but without an exam. Applicants for corporate grades are required to prepare a submission supported by a 'statement of competence', a portfolio of work, a CPD log and PDP where applicable, and referees, unless they have the Qualification in Archaeological Practice.

Election to corporate grades involves assessment by the Validation committee (for dates see www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?Page=31). The relevant *Articles of*



Association, guidelines and by-laws which govern these procedures are on the 'Codes, guidelines & standards' page of the IfA website (www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?Page=15). Hard copies can be purchased from the IfA office and are sent to all successful applicants.

The grade of membership awarded (section 2.2 and 3.1) is not a judgment of an applicant's *potential* abilities, but of an applicant's skills and competence as demonstrated by their application at the time of applying.

The IfA can make a number of different decisions about an application

- to grant membership at the level applied for
- to offer a class of membership other than that applied for
- to defer a decision (for references, information, or to allow a relevant specialist to assess the application for example)
- to refuse admission

The IfA also reserves the right to make its own enquiries and take up other references. In rare cases it may invite an applicant to interview. Where possible applications for the higher grades may be viewed by a small panel of assessors who will make validation recommendations to the committee.

An alternative 'fast-track' procedure exists for those applying for a corporate grade who hold the Qualification in Archaeological Practice, which demonstrates that they have the relevant technical competence needed (see page 9).

WHAT DOES THE IfA DO?

Our mission statement is

We advance the practice of archaeology and allied disciplines by promoting professional standards and ethics for conserving, managing, understanding and promoting enjoyment of heritage.

The Institute

- develops standards and guidance for professional practice and encourages their use
- represents the interests of the historic environment and disseminates authoritative views on professional matters
- promotes high standards of vocational training, teaching and learning
- facilitates the exchange of information and ideas about professional practice
- provides a wide range of services for members
- promotes a unique quality assurance 'kite mark' through our Registered Organisations (RO) scheme

2. THE APPLICATION FORMS

Joining a professional institute is an important step in your career, so it is worth spending the time and effort required to complete the form and to demonstrate to the best of your ability that you meet the criteria set. However, if you have any queries, please contact the IfA membership team.

2.1 UPGRADING MEMBERSHIP STATUS

If you are already a member of the IfA you can apply to upgrade to a higher level. The process is very similar to your initial application. Unless you have the Qualification in Archaeological Practice you will need to include information to demonstrate competence meeting the criteria of the grade you are now applying for

- your statement of competence (section 3.2) should cover your entire career and experience
- your portfolio of work (section 3.3) should reflect the level of competence required of the grade you are applying for
- your CPD log and PDP (section 3.4) should cover the period from at least 2009.

Other information sent with your original application (for example qualification certificates) need not be resubmitted.

2.2 GRADE OF MEMBERSHIP

Which class of membership should I apply for?

There are five classes of membership you may apply for: Student, Affiliate, Practitioner (PIfA), Associate (AlfA) and Member (MIfA). The title of Honorary MIfA is awarded in a general meeting to people of distinction who have given signal service to the profession and the IfA.

STUDENT (yellow form) (see page 5)

This grade is for those following a course which is

- full- or part-time constituting at least half the working week ('half-time') or the equivalent
- in archaeology, heritage/historic environment or a closely-related subject studied in greater or equal weight to another subject
- at undergraduate or postgraduate level

Those studying courses by distance learning, for HNDs or accredited certificates may also apply if they match these requirements.

Those whose course does not meet these requirements can still apply for Affiliate grade.

Those employed within the historic environment at the same time as they study will be expected to join at the appropriate corporate grade.

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND AFFILIATES

The IfA gives you formal recognition as someone who is committed to a high standard of conduct within the historic environment whether it is in an academic capacity, casual involvement or as someone who is not yet eligible for a corporate grade.

The services available to Student and Affiliate members are the same as for corporate grades, except that corporate members have post-nominal letters, the right to vote at meetings and the AGM and to stand for Council. Unlike the corporate grades you do not need to have worked in the historic environment if you wish to be a Student or Affiliate member.

Students

Student membership may be obtained during a period of relevant study. It is important to make sure that your graduation date is included in section 8 of the application form as you will automatically be transferred to Affiliate grade 12 months after graduation, unless you are still eligible for Student grade or you choose to upgrade to a corporate level of membership.

We welcome applications from those who have already recently graduated or whose courses do not meet these requirements (for example A Level students, or those on part-time courses that involve studying less than half the working week) at Affiliate level instead. Once you are confident that you can demonstrate sufficient competence you can apply to upgrade your membership level.

Referees and portfolio of work

No examples of work need to be submitted with your application, but we will need the details of at least one referee who has knowledge relevant to your application, although two are preferred.

Affiliate grade applicants must nominate a referee who is familiar with their interest in heritage and with their character. Your current employer may be suitable. If you are a Student grade applicant, **at least one of your referees must be a tutor of your current course**. Referees do not have to be IfA members, but it helps if they understand our work and grading system. You should avoid using your spouse or partner as a referee, or someone for whom you are directly managerially responsible.

Please contact your referees in advance to be sure that they are both willing and able to provide references.

Declaration and fees

See section 4 on the IfA *Code of conduct* and section 5 for information on application and subscription fees.

[AFFILIATE \(green form\) \(see above\)](#)

This grade is for those with an interest in archaeology and the historic environment, or those active in the sector who may not yet qualify for a corporate grade. Those in the voluntary sector (such as members of archaeological societies) may wish to apply at this grade, although they are encouraged to apply for corporate grades of membership if they fulfil the criteria.

[PRACTITIONER \(blue form\) \(see section 3\)](#)

This is our first level of corporate grade membership, open to those who have undertaken skilled tasks within the historic environment sector under the guidance of others, and have carried out responsible work under a level of supervision.

Practitioners (PlfAs) also

- have a good working knowledge of key aspects of historic environment practice
- are able to achieve tasks using their own judgment, whilst working under general supervision
- appreciate complex situations and are able to achieve a partial resolution alone
- see actions as a series of steps and recognise the importance of each role in the team

[ASSOCIATE \(blue form\) \(see section 3\)](#)

This is our second level of corporate grade membership, open to those who have carried out, delegated or brought pieces of work to conclusion within the historic environment sector, with some autonomy but without holding ultimate responsibility.

Associates (AlfAs) also

- have a high level of working and background knowledge relevant to their area of historic environment practice
- have considerable responsibility for their own work using their own judgment, but within an established framework
- cope with complex situations through deliberate analysis and planning
- see actions at least partly in terms of longer-term or wider goals

[MEMBER \(blue form\) \(see section 3\)](#)

This is our highest level of corporate grade membership, open to those of the greatest level of responsibility and competence within the historic environment sector with sole responsibility to initiate, negotiate, carry out and/or delegate, and bring pieces of work to a conclusion. Members are in charge of organising and running large, complex projects from beginning to end, or in highly skilled, specialist work.

Members (MlfAs) also

- have authoritative knowledge and depth of understanding of the sector and their area of historic environment practice
- take full responsibility for their own work and that of others where applicable
- deal with complex situations holistically and demonstrate confident decision-making
- have a high level of understanding of the overall 'picture' and see alternative approaches and how they might be tackled

THE MEMBERSHIP APPEALS COMMITTEE

An applicant may appeal against a decision by writing to the IfA's registered office within 30 days of receipt of the decision.

WHAT DOES THE IfA GIVE ME?

The IfA gives you formal recognition as a competent historic environment professional, and offers you the opportunity to help shape the profession, either financially through your annual subscription fee, or more directly by becoming involved with its committees and Area and Special Interest Groups. Belonging to the IfA shows that you subscribe to a high standard of conduct, and that your competence has been validated by detailed peer scrutiny.

By joining your fellow professionals you increase the membership, strengthen the profession and so ensure that our voice is more representative and more clearly heard.

Please see www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?Page=37 and the enclosed sheet of recent initiatives for the most up to date information, but current benefits to members include

- free weekly Jobs Information Service (JIS) bulletin by e-mail
- free publications
 - *The Archaeologist* magazine (four times a year)
 - *Yearbook and directory of members* (annually)
 - IfA professional papers
 - IfA standards and guidance
- free fortnightly e-newsletter, the *Heritage Link Update*
- discounted entry to the annual conference, the premier archaeological conference in the UK, and other events
- opportunities to participate in Council and on committees
- free membership of Area and Special Interest Groups
- discounts on a range of services and products, including insurance, legal advice, arbitration, health insurance, aerial photography, Vodafone and Cotswold Outdoor
- use of the Society of Antiquaries of London library
- a membership card and certificate

All corporate members (see section 3) have the right to use their respective postnominals, to vote at general meetings, to stand for Council and be involved with our committees. Non-corporate members can serve on most of our committees (for subject areas, see www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?Page=17).

Increasingly IfA membership is cited in job advertisements.

3. INFORMATION FOR CORPORATE GRADES

3.1 DEFINING GRADE AND COMPETENCE

Being awarded any grade of corporate membership should be considered a significant achievement.

Every application is assessed on its own merits and on demonstrated technical and ethical competence.

We use an adapted competence matrix (below) which has been aligned with the National Occupational Standards in Archaeological Practice (NOS). The NOS were developed in 2002 in collaboration with the Cultural Heritage National Training Organisation (CHNTO) and a cross-section of the sector on behalf of the Archaeology Training Forum (ATF). For a detailed breakdown of the NOS, please visit the Training Online Resource Centre for Archaeology (TORC) website:

www.torc.org.uk/nos.index.asp.

Please try to match your skills and experience with what is listed under the different headings. If you need to get IfA membership quickly, we recommend that you apply for the grade of which you are confident. If you are not sure, then you should apply for the higher grade and the IfA will consider whether to accept it or offer a lower one.

	Knowledge	Autonomy	Coping with complexity	Perception of context
Practitioner	Good working knowledge of key aspects relevant to area of historic environment practice, and competence in its application	Some responsibility for achieving tasks using own judgement and autonomy, whilst working under general supervision. Collaboration with others is expected	Appreciates complex situations within the role held and able to achieve partial resolution alone. Some activities are complex and non-routine*	Sees actions as a series of steps and recognises the importance of each role in the team
Associate	High level of working and background knowledge relevant to area of historic environment practice and a broad range of activities within that area	Considerable responsibility for own work using own judgement and autonomy, in a wide variety of contexts, but within an established framework. Control or guidance of others may often be required	Copes with complex situations through deliberate analysis and planning. Most activities are complex and non-routine*	Sees actions at least partly in terms of longer-term or wider goals
Member	Authoritative knowledge and depth of understanding of sector and a broad range of historic environment practices	Substantial autonomy, takes full responsibility for own work. Where applicable, will also have significant personal accountability for others and/or the allocation of resources, in a wide variety of contexts	Deals with complex situations holistically, demonstrates confident decision-making in a broad range of complex, technical or professional activities	High level of understanding of overall 'picture', sees alternative approaches and how they might be tackled

* We recognise that evaluations, desk-based assessments, watching briefs, conservation plans, environmental assessments, etc. can be complex pieces of work.

Your statement of competence, portfolio of work, CPD log and PDP where applicable (sections 3.2 - 3.4), and the information provided by your referees (section 3.6) will be used to assess your competence in these areas.

Whatever their level of responsibility all our members are expected to work to a standard appropriate to their role and not to take on work beyond their present competence without appropriate support.

3.2 STATEMENT OF COMPETENCE

All corporate grade applicants, other than those with the Qualification in Archaeological Practice, must provide evidence of their competence as laid out in the matrix in section 3.1. Your statement of competence is one of the most important documents used to judge your eligibility for the level of membership you are applying for, so please take time to write it carefully.

Please study the table in section 3.1 and demonstrate how you fulfil the level of knowledge, autonomy, ability to cope with complexity and perception of context for the grade applied for. You may want to approach it in a similar way to a job application and how you would demonstrate meeting the person specification in the job description, for example. There is a template at www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/inPages/docs/join/template_statement.doc. Please note that CVs are not usually accepted as substitutes and members applying for an upgrade must still ensure their statement of competence covers their entire career and experience (section 2.1).

QUALIFICATION IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE

The IfA launched its Qualification in Archaeological Practice in April 2007. This qualification demonstrates on-the-job learning, and competence following the NOS (see section 3.1 above), therefore holding this qualification acts as a 'fast-track' to our corporate membership grades.

The table below shows these 'fast track' routes to corporate membership

NVQ level	Fast-track IfA grade
3	PIfA
4	AIfA
5	MIfA

Applicants for corporate grades of IfA membership who hold this qualification must supply us with an application form with the details of two referees (see section 3.6) and a copy of their certificate, but need not submit the portfolio of work required in sections 3.3 and 3.4.

Applicants who have the qualification at level 3 or 4, but who would like to apply for a higher grade of IfA membership, must still submit the same portfolio of work as applicants who do not have the qualification, and provide sufficient evidence of their competence at this higher level.

For information on how to enrol for the Qualification, please see www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?Page=199 or contact us.

Areas that you may want to provide information on could include

- education: applicants must explain how academic qualifications demonstrate competence relevant to their application and include any relevant certificates
- employed or voluntary work experience: for each post or major project give the job title, the name of the organisation, dates of commencement and completion, a description of the role and responsibilities held (bearing in mind sections 2.2 and 3.1) and the competence they have given you (particularly specific skills, training and qualifications). If you have worked in several short-term projects they need not be individually itemised, but please indicate the total time you spent in that role. Copies of your job description(s) may also be submitted
- societies or other professional institutes you are a member of: describe your involvement in their activities and how this contributes to your technical competence and the development of your skills

If your experience has been gained outside of the UK it can be very helpful, especially at AlfA and MIfA level, if you can include some background information on how the profession operates in that country and how your work fits into this.

3.3 PORTFOLIO OF WORK

All corporate grade applicants, other than those with the Qualification in Archaeological Practice, are required to submit evidence to demonstrate their competence. AlfA and MIfA applicants are expected to provide examples of their work, while PIfA grade applicants are encouraged to do so. If you have written or contributed to publications or grey literature (e.g. reports, papers, articles, volumes, interim statements, annual reports, briefs, project designs for conservation plans), please provide us with a list, including the details of other authors and the date. Where a piece of work is jointly authored or the authors not defined, please indicate which part(s) you were responsible for.

At least **three** examples of appropriate work should normally be submitted, although the Validation committee welcomes more from MIfA grade applicants. Examples should demonstrate the most significant activities or complex work that you are involved with and what sort of job you do. The list overleaf gives some examples of the kinds of documents that are sought, but is not exhaustive.

REJOINING THE IfA

If, for any reason, your membership of the IfA has lapsed, you can apply to rejoin by requesting one of our 'rejoinder packs', which can also be downloaded from www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?page=31. Provided that you were validated by the IfA after 1986 and that the length of time since your membership lapsed does not require more detailed scrutiny, you can automatically be reinstated at the grade you left at.

You must provide us with your contact details, an up-to-date CV, a CPD log and PDP if you have one (see section 3.4), any new qualification certificates and a list of publications, where applicable. There is no application fee to rejoin.

Those who originally joined before 1986, whose membership requires further validation, or who have been expelled from the Institute, will need to apply as if they were a new applicant.

- briefs and specifications
- HER audit
- environmental assessments
- condition surveys, management plans
- conservation plan/statement
- input to local/structure/UDP policies
- finds/environmental strategies, post-excavation assessments
- finds reports
- service plans
- project design, HLF bid
- outlines of archaeological or other relevant courses which you have taught
- illustrations or other graphics work
- fieldwork reports (geophysics, landscape survey, excavation, evaluation, characterisation)
- PhD thesis (or extracts of), where applicable to your level of competence

We recognise that some roles do not generate substantial pieces of written work. Please let us know if this is so, in which case comprehensive accounts in your statement of competence, your referees' reports, job descriptions and other documents will be critical.

All confidential material will be treated with the strictest discretion. **Please do not send irreplaceable documentation in support of your application as this will only be returned by ordinary post once your membership has been confirmed.**

3.4 CPD LOG AND PDP

Ideally all corporate grade applicants, other than those with the Qualification in Archaeological Practice, will submit their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) log and Personal Development Plan (PDP) with their application.

CPD is the process by which individuals can develop their skills throughout their working lives. Most professional institutions operate a CPD scheme. The IfA membership voted to make IfA's CPD scheme compulsory at the Institute's AGM in October 2009. The scheme recommends undertaking at least 50 hours of CPD over a two-year period and will be trialled throughout 2010. It is based on a Personal Development Plan (PDP) and a CPD log.

New applicants are asked to submit a CPD log and PDP where possible, but existing corporate grade members applying to upgrade their membership must submit them from at least the period since October 2009.

For more information and templates for both the CPD log and PDP, see www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?Page=20.

3.5 REFEREES

Corporate grade applicants must provide the details of two referees. Referees do not have to be IfA members, but it helps if they understand our work and grading system.

Please

- **contact them in advance** to ensure that they are willing and able to provide references. Missing ones are the most common reason for the deferral of applications
- **select referees familiar with the role(s) you are using as evidence of your competence.** Your university lecturers are unlikely to be able to comment on the experience you are using in your application, so please nominate someone who you have worked with outside of the requirement of your degree(s)
- **nominate your current or most recent employer** as one referee
- **do not nominate two referees from the same organisation** unless you have only worked for one organisation and cannot nominate anyone else, especially at PIfA grade
- **nominate an appropriate curatorial authority** where relevant, if you are a senior consultant or contractor
- **do not** nominate your spouse or partner as a referee, someone for whom you are directly managerially responsible, or who you employ as a sub-contractor

If you are not employed in the historic environment sector, please try to nominate someone with knowledge of the IfA's validation process and the wider profession (e.g. a local authority archaeologist).

4. DECLARATION: THE CODE OF CONDUCT

On being granted membership you must undertake to abide by the enclosed *Code of conduct*, and other by-laws and standards and guidance (www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?Page=15). Breaches may result in disciplinary action. We must therefore feel confident that you are capable of understanding and abiding by its regulations. Your referee(s) will be asked to comment on this.

The provision of false information in relation to an application may lead to rejection, rescission of membership and/or disciplinary action.

5. FEES

Please see the enclosed rates sheet (also at www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/inPages/docs/join/rates.pdf). Unless applying for Student grade or as a rejoinder, an administration fee is required to process an application. If your application fee is to be paid by your employer, please ensure the cheque or purchase order has been enclosed. Payment of membership fees is not required until your application has been accepted.

Students and Affiliates pay a flat rate subscription fee; corporate grade (PIfA, AlfA, MIfA) subscription fees are based on annual income. If you are a UK tax payer you may be able to claim tax relief on your subscription. Affiliates and corporate grade members who are unemployed or have an income of less than £5000 may also apply for a 50% reduction on their subscription fee.