Application Guide

For professional accreditation

Practitioner, Associate and Member

PCIfA, ACIfA, MCIfA

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@Aerial-Cam Ltd

Contents

If you have any queries regarding this guide or the application process please contact the CIfA office and speak to the membership team

Phone: 0118 378 6446

Email: membership@archaeologists.net

All the relevant documentation can be found online at

www.archaeologists.net/join/individual

1 Joining CIfA

1.1 Who can join?

To join CIfA as an accredited member, you need to be involved in the study and care of the historic environment, support CIfA's aims and agree to abide by CIfA's rules. The *Code of conduct,* other regulations and standards and guidance are binding on all accredited members, and emphasise the duty to adhere to the professional and ethical standards.

Our members represent the full diversity of the discipline, from field archaeologists to object conservators, University lecturers to heritage managers and including those specialising in public engagement. Our membership also includes people who regularly volunteer in archaeology or people whose work is undertaken on a voluntary basis. You do not have to be based in the UK or have had training within the UK to join, but you do need to be able to **demonstrate** your knowledge and experience to our Validation committee.

This *Applicants Guide* will help you through your application and address some of the questions you may have. If you find anything unclear or have a question we have not addressed in this guide, please get in touch with a member of our team. There is a Q&A section on our website www.archaeologists.net/QAaccredited to assist.

Students and those who do not yet meet the criteria may join as non-accredited members at www.archaeologists.net/join/individual/onlineapp.

1.2 How is my application assessed?

Being awarded a grade of professional accreditation is a significant achievement. Every application is assessed on its own merits and on **demonstrated** technical and ethical competence. The Validation Committee assesses applications using a scoring system based on the CIfA competence matrix and informed by the supporting evidence you provide (eg references, Statement of competence, examples of work).

The Validation committee consists of a group of at least five peers, who are accredited members of the Institute and consider all accredited applications to ensure consistency throughout. The process is designed to be transparent, if you provide evidence to **demonstrate** the grade you will be granted it.

@M Parker Wooding

2 Putting together your application

This section begins with how you define which grade to apply for and will guide you through how to compile and submit supporting evidence.

2.1 CIfA grades of accredited membership

There are three accredited grades - Practitioner, Associate and Member. You can determine which grade you should apply for using the CIfA competence matrix (see Section 2.2) and deciding which grade you can **demonstrate** you meet through your whole application and is most appropriate to your role and responsibilities. The information below is for guidance but if you are still unsure which grade to apply for please contact us at membership@archaeologists.net.

Practitioner (PCIfA)

Practitioner level of professional accreditation is open to those who have undertaken skilled tasks within the historic environment sector under the guidance of others, have carried out some complex work under a level of supervision, and perceives the context of their role. This is usually the grade to apply for if you are upgrading your membership from our non-accredited grades (Student or Affiliate) and are in the early stages of your career in the historic environment. You do not need to have any examples of work yet.

Associate (ACIfA)

Associate level of professional accreditation is open to those who have carried out, delegated or brought to conclusion pieces of work within the historic environment sector, with some autonomy but without holding ultimate responsibility. You will have some examples of work which include some complex work and can be co-authored.

Member (MCIfA)

Member level of professional accreditation is open to those with the highest level of responsibility within the historic environment sector with sole responsibility to initiate, negotiate, carry out and/or delegate, and bring to conclusion pieces of work. Members are in charge of organising and running large, complex projects from beginning to end, or in highly skilled, specialist work. You will have various examples of complex work that you are the sole author of.

2.2 Understanding the competence matrix

The competence matrix, below, provides a framework which helps the Validation committee understand your role and experience. We recommend that you show how your skills and experience **demonstrate** the four different areas and use these as headings in your statement of competence (see Section 2.3). This helps to make it very clear to the Validation Committee how your experience fits within the criteria of the matrix. We also suggest you highlight within the statement the examples of work you have provided which **demonstrate** your competency at that level.

Special cases

Please note if you have a specialism and have moved to another area of work, specialism, taken a career break, or recently started your own business you will need to **demonstrate** the grade applied for across **all** areas in order to be granted membership at that grade. This may mean that you will need

to wait until you have gained further experience in order to do this. Please contact us if you are not sure.

Specialist matrices

Many of our Special Interest Groups have developed supporting matrices to specifically assist applicants who work in these areas and this can be used in conjunction with the main competence matrix below. You will find the specialist competency matrices online at www.archaeologists.net/matrices.

CIfA competence matrix

	Knowledge	Autonomy	Coping with complexity	Perception of context
Practitioner (PCIfA)	Good working knowledge of key aspects relevant to area of historic environment practice and competence used to support the 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 (ACIfA)	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 (MCIfA)	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 re-sources, 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 under-standing 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.

2.3   **Statement of competence**

Applicants must provide evidence of their competence as laid out in the matrix above in order to **demonstrate** the grade applied for. Your statement of competence is the most important document used to assess how you meet the requirements the grade you are applying for.

Using the competency matrix above as a guide please write about how your skills and experience for each role you have held **demonstrate** your knowledge, autonomy, ability to cope with complexity and perception of context at the grade you are applying for.

You may want to approach it in a similar way to a job application, demonstrating how you meet a person specification in a job description or you may find it easier to give an example of a project you have done from beginning to end. Ensure you start with your **most recent** role.

There is a template to complete at www.archaeologists.net/join/individual. The committee members do not know you or the experience you have, so please take time to write it carefully.

If you are unsure of how to approach your application please contact the office on membership@archaeologists.net. Please note that CVs are not accepted as substitutes for the statement of competence.

Areas that you should provide information on are

- education: explain how your academic qualifications **demonstrate** the four areas of the competence matrix relevant to your application. If you do not hold any qualifications you are still eligible to apply. (Please provide a copy of your certificates with the application).

- employment or voluntary work experience: for each post give the job title, the name of the organisation, start and end dates , and a description of the role and the responsibilities held. Give detailed information about your current and most recent roles using each heading of the matrix as a guide, and ensure it includes your entire career and experience. This should cover how you **demonstrate** the four headings - knowledge, autonomy, coping with complexity and perception of context (www.archaeologists.net/Matrices).

- additional relevant information: please include any further information that may be useful for the Validation committee to take into consideration when assessing your application. A job description can be useful to include if you work in a more specialist area as your role may need clarification.

- list of publications/grey literature: please list all relevant publications and/or grey literature and your contribution to these, for example if you wrote or collaborated on a specific section please indicate the page numbers.
  Remember you do not have to provide specific reports but examples of work that support what you have written in your statement.

Overseas applicants
CIfA welcomes applications from archaeologists anywhere in the world. If your experience has been gained outside the UK it would be very helpful, especially at ACIfA and MCIfA level, if you can include some background information on how the profession operates in that country and how your role fits within the profession.

At present we are not able to translate examples of work for assessment so please include any examples of work written in English and we are developing a way round this for the future.

2.4 **Examples of work**

Applicants are required to submit examples of work to support their application and help **demonstrate** the areas of the competence matrix. If you have mentioned specific examples in your statement it is useful to the committee to include those. Ideally these should be the best, most complex work examples.

PCIfA applicants are not required to provide any examples of work but are encouraged to do so where possible.

ACIfA applicants should provide **a minimum** of three examples of work

MCIfA applicants should provide **a minimum** of five examples of work or, if you do not undertake much written work in your current role, explain why you have not been able to do this.

Your examples can include any type of work which you have produced or which you have contributed to the production of (indicating which parts with page numbers or highlighted sections). This might be written work, such as published material and grey literature reports, but can also comprise illustrations, survey data, and project designs - essentially any form of work which you have contributed to.

If you are finding it difficult to decide on the best examples to **demonstrate** your knowledge and skills, please get in touch with us. The list below gives some examples of the different kinds of evidence which can be used - but it is not exhaustive as the list would be extensive to cover the whole of the historic environment sector.

- project briefs and specifications
- HER audits
- environmental assessments
- condition surveys, management plans
- portfolios of graphics based work
- survey data
- finds/environmental strategies or reports
- post-excavation assessments
- project designs or funding applications
- outlines of archaeological or other relevant courses which you have taught
- fieldwork reports (geophysics, landscape survey, building/survey recording, excavation, evaluation, characterisation)
- examples of edited work
- published works or journals
- presentations you have compiled and delivered
- displays created and the research behind it
- emails with advice to clients or members of the public

All material will be treated as confidential and with the strictest discretion under the Data Protection Act (1998).

The Validation committee accepts hard copies or digital files of your supporting documents. Please send digital information via email or, if they are too large, on a disc (not returned) or via a file sharing link (eg Google Docs or We Transfer) to membership@archaeologists.net.

Please **do not** list all your examples in one large document as it is much more difficult for the committee to review them in full.

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.

2.5   Choosing your referees

An important part of becoming an accredited professional is your ability to **demonstrate** both technical and ethical competence. In order to help our Validation committee know more about your professionalism, your understanding of the *Code of conduct* and your determination and ability to comply with it (See Code of conduct www.archaeologists.net/codes/cifa), we ask for two references to support you application.

Think carefully about the referees you are using, to ensure they can provide the Validation Committee with specific examples to support your application. They are asked to comment on the four areas of the competence matrix which you base your statement on.

Your referees

- although individual members or those working for Registered Organisations are preferable, referees do not have to be CIfA accredited, but it helps if they understand our work and grades of membership

- do need to be familiar with your work and the roles you are using as evidence of your competence

- be able to comment on the quality of your current work, and on your professionalism

- you can use referees who work within the same organisation, for example if you have only worked for one organisation and cannot nominate anyone else, although we do encourage you to try and link referees to different areas of your current work in order to show the committee your level of competence

- for MCIfA applications, we would expect to see at least one referee from someone who can provide a perspective on the quality of your work (see below)

Missing or late references are the most common reason for the deferral of applications - please contact your referees in advance of your application being submitted, to ensure that they are willing and able to provide you with a reference.

We also accept references sent in directly with the application as this helps to speed up the process and allows time to request additional referees if needed.

It is the **applicant's responsibility** to ensure the references are returned in time, however we will try to inform you as soon as possible if we haven't received them.

To help you decide who to provide as a referee we suggest:

PCIfA applicants should

- use your current or most recent employer. For an employer to be able to comment on your archaeological work you need to have undertaken enough work for sufficient comment.

- a second reference may be provided by someone who is aware of your knowledge and skills eg a recent supervisor or someone who directed a training excavation you attended

- you may also decide to use both your current and most recent employer if you have only worked in one organisation you can provide two references from the same workplace.

ACIfA applicants should

- use your current or most recent employer

- a second reference can be provided from someone you have had the opportunity to work more closely with who can comment on your current work and is external to your employer eg a local planning archaeologist, a funding body such as HLF, someone in a volunteer capacity, such as a community group or a CIfA special interest group.

MCIfA applicants are expected to

- use your current employer. If you are in the senior role, you can choose someone who works alongside you and can comment on your work. If you are self-employed this can be a senior colleague from another company you have worked with.

- a second reference from someone who can comment on your work who is external to your employer and quality assures your work in an independent capacity. Eg a curator, local authority/planning archaeologist, funding provider, Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland or Cadw etc.

The Validation committee reserves the right to request additional references, if required, to reach a decision about your application. This is usually in cases where a reference is not current or does not include enough information to assist the committee in making a decision in full.

References are treated as confidential and it is up to the referee if they wish to share this with the applicant.

If you have any problems deciding who to choose as a referee please contact us and we will be happy to help.

2.6 CPD log and PDP – Upgrading members only

All professionally accredited upgrading applicants need to submit their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) log and Personal Development Plan (PDP) from at least the last two years with their application. Non-accredited upgrading applicants are asked to submit a CPD log and PDP where possible.

Professionally accredited members sign up to undertaking 50 hours of CPD over two years. By making a commitment to undertaking CPD, you are demonstrating to your peers, colleagues and the others you work alongside, that you are a professional who takes your work seriously. To find out more about our mandatory CPD scheme, how you can meet these requirements and for templates and examples to use, you can go to our website www.archaeologists.net/development/cpd.

3   Once you have completed your application

3.1   Application checklist

When you are happy with your application, make sure you have a thorough look over all the sections and check you have included the following

☐   Application form (with two appropriate referees)

☐   Application fee

☐   Statement of competence linked to competence matrix (using template)

☐   Bibliography of grey literature or publications (where relevant)

☐   Examples of work (a minimum of three examples at ACIfA and five MCIfA)

☐   CPD log and PDP (compulsory for upgrades)

☐   Certificates (relevant to application)

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

3.2   Submitting your application

Our Validation committee meetings take place approximately every eight weeks, so please check the dates of the meetings and the cycle of application deadlines (which fall three weeks in advance of the meeting date). You can find the meeting dates online at www.archaeologists.net/join/individual.

You will receive a letter via email from CIfA to confirm your application has been processed and requesting any additional information, if required. If you have not heard from us within one week of the application deadline, please call the office to check as applications can go missing.

3.3   Application fees

Unless applying as a re-joiner, an application fee is required to process an application. This can be paid by yourself or your employer by cheque, invoice or PayPal request, just tick the box at the end of the application form.
Please see our website for more details www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/2015-fees-and-subscriptions.pdf

Payment of subscription fees is not required until your application has been accepted and concessionary rates are available.

4   Validation and assessment outcomes

Once an application is complete and references received, accredited grades will be assessed by the Validation committee at meetings that take place approximately every eight weeks (see website for dates).

CIfA's Validation committee can make a number of different decisions about an application

- to grant professional accreditation at the level applied for

- to grant professional accreditation pending an additional reference/information

- to offer a grade of professional accreditation or non-accreditation other than that applied for (this is because the application has not **demonstrated** the grade applied for)

- to defer (normally for further references, information, or to allow a relevant specialist to assess the examples of work in the application)

- to refuse professional accreditation (this is because the application has not **demonstrated** the grade applied for)

CIfA's Validation committee reserves the right to make its own enquiries and take up other references and may choose to invite an applicant to interview.

Once your application has been considered you should receive a letter via email within two weeks; this will confirm if your application has been accepted, rejected, deferred, or has offered a different grade to that applied for.

If your application has been delayed due to not receiving two references or full information you should be informed prior to the committee meeting date in order to chase them. However, due to the volume of applications, we may not be able to inform you that any references are missing until after the committee meeting. Therefore, it is up to the applicant to ensure they can provide these within three weeks of the application deadline, otherwise your application may be delayed.

If your application has been successful we will send you the relevant subscription form and Declaration to return to us as soon as possible. Once payment is received we will send out your Welcome pack with membership card.

The answers to common questions about applying can be found on our website www.archaeologists.net/QAaccredited and you can always contact us and we will be happy to help.

We look forward to receiving your application!
CIfA Membership Team