

Early Career - Fieldwork Archaeologists: a Guide to PCIfA Membership

Guide 47



BAJR Guide Series
updated - 2021

CIfA

Chartered
Institute for
Archaeologists

1 Introduction

This document represents a basic summary guide to joining the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) at Practitioner Grade (PCIfA), aimed particularly at all archaeologists and early career graduates who wish to join the professional body representing archaeologists in the UK.

It covers the requirements for your application, the materials you should gather together to make a successful and easy application, as well as a guide to what you should fill in on the online application form.

Remember that you are an individual, with different pathways to where you are now, and so although this guide can be used as a template, your application will reflect your specific circumstances.

This guide draws on several current resources relating to the subject, which provide further detailed information, thus the reader is advised to refer to the full list of CIfA resources in **Further References** section at the end.

[Subscription information can be found here](#). If you do not earn much over a year (<http://www.archaeologists.net/practices/salary>) you can apply for the concessionary rate. In some cases your employer may offer to pay all or part of your fees, so it is worth asking first.

2 Preparing your application

Being awarded professionally accredited membership is a significant achievement for any individual. 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 supporting evidence (e.g. [references](#), [Statement of competence](#), [examples of work](#)). This section will guide you through how to prepare the application.

The Practitioner level of professionally accredited membership is open to those who have undertaken skilled tasks within the relevant historic environment sector under the guidance of others, have carried out some complex work under general supervision, and perceives and understands the importance of their role and each role within the team. They agree to be bound by CIfA's ethical Code of conduct and wish to reflect their knowledge and skills through professional accreditation.

First read the [Application guidance webpage](#) and **download** the following documents

- [Competence statement template and examples](#)
- [Field archaeology specialist competence matrix](#)

Print out the Statement of competence template so you can write notes into the boxes as a trial run. Now let's gather everything you will need.

3 Gathering the Information

3.1 References

Start by finding **two referees** who would be willing to support your application:

They don't have to be CIfA members but should understand what it means to be a PCIfA, and they should be aware of the roles you are using as evidence of your competence. They can't be related to you! And ensure they are happy to be contacted and know you are applying, as the most common reason for the deferral of applications is a late or missing reference. You can include your references with your application if they agree. Use a current or recent employer as your first reference. 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, someone who directed a training excavation you attended, or a lecturer at University.

3.2 Competence

Applicants must provide evidence of their **competence** as laid out in the [competence matrix](#) in order to demonstrate a level of capability at the level of PCIfA membership. Your statement of competence is one of the most important documents used to assess your eligibility for the level of membership you are applying for, so take time to write it carefully.

Please note that incomplete new applications online cannot be saved and returned to.

Areas that you should provide information on can include

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education: Please list your degree qualification, title, University and date of completion and a brief outline of the areas covered and gather and make copies of any relevant certificates. If you don't have any don't worry you can still apply. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment or Voluntary work experience: for each post or major project write down the <u>job title</u>, the <u>name of the organisation</u>, <u>dates</u>, and a brief <u>description of the role</u> and <u>responsibilities</u> held. Start with your most recent role. 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. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For your current and most recent roles over the last two years (where relevant), please give detailed information about your main responsibilities, focusing on what you do as the main part of your role, and cover how you demonstrate the four areas of the competence matrix - knowledge, autonomy, coping with complexity and perception of context. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Passport: Copy and collate the Skills Passport data, to show how you have progressed your practical and technical competence. (this will also contain a list of your Projects) |

3.3 Examples of Work

PCIfA grade applicants are encouraged to do so where possible – though it is NOT required. Your examples can include any type of work which you have **produced** OR which you have **contributed** to the production of (where you indicate which parts). This might be written work (such as published material and grey literature reports), but can also comprise graphics, survey data, project designs - essentially any form of work which you contributed to (see the list below for some examples), not just reports specifically.

If you are unsure of how to approach your application at any point - contact ClfA : membership@archaeologists.net.

4 Filling in your Competence Matrix

General Matrix

Knowledge	Autonomy	Coping with complexity	Perception of context
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

Specialist competence matrix – to support applicants who are fieldworkers on site

Knowledge	Autonomy	Coping with complexity	Perception of context
<p>Good technical knowledge of archaeological best practice: consistently defines and excavates low-complexity archaeological features and deposits</p> <p>Produces clear and concise primary paper and/or digital records (context sheets, plans, elevations and photographs)</p> <p>Understands the requirements for, and can take, environmental samples</p> <p>Differentiates between commonly encountered artefact types</p> <p>Good awareness of relevant professional standards, guidelines, ethics and health and safety</p> <p>Understands the benefit of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (e.g. background reading and attending archaeological events)</p>	<p>Liaises with site supervisors, Project Manager, or other senior staff as required, within their organisation</p> <p>Works under supervision, with frequent direction, as part of a team, has an awareness of deadlines, and can manage their own time</p> <p>Follows site methodology and appropriate professional guidance, including health and safety procedures</p> <p>Able to demonstrate principles of interpretation, but may require instruction or mentoring from senior staff</p>	<p>Understands the principles of excavation and stratigraphic recording</p> <p>Ability to interpret low-complexity stratigraphic sequences under supervision</p> <p>Ability to cope with changes to the planned strategy due to external constraints</p> <p>Recognises professional limitations and can identify when and where it is necessary to ask for guidance</p>	<p>Understanding of individual role within team/site</p> <p>Understands the need for quality recording required during their part of the process</p> <p>Aware of the aims of the project and the rationale for specific methods and techniques</p> <p>Appreciates how each person within a project team has specific tasks that lead to a single outcome from fieldwork to archiving</p>

It looks more complicated than it actually is, and remember that at any moment during the process, **help is on hand from CIfA** - just **email them** or **phone** in a query – remember they are there to help you become an accredited member, not prevent you!

membership@archaeologists.net OR phone **0118 966 2841**

There follows a short example to get you started using the 4 areas that you should expand on:

- **Knowledge** – good working knowledge in the area you are working in and applying this
- **Autonomy** – some responsibility for own work while under supervision and collaboration with others
- **Complexity** – can see complex situations within your work and carry out some resolution alone
- **Context** – can see actions as a series of steps and processes, recognising each role in the team

Your referees will also be asked to comment on these areas.

List your experience starting with your **most recent post** first and describe how your current or most recent role relates to the four areas of the competence matrix described above.

The boxes in the hard copy Statement template will expand as you type, and you can copy and paste the form boxes to list **ALL** of your roles and qualifications as required. If you have worked on several short-term projects, they need not be individually itemised, but indicate the **total time** you spent in that role.

Areas that you should provide information on include

- **education**: outline the areas covered in your undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree(s)
- **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 the responsibilities held, and for your current or most recent role describe how you show the competence you have using the matrix (particularly specific skills, training and qualifications).

Education

Qualification & date obtained: *BA Archaeology 13/09/1986 Edinburgh*

Competence demonstrated: *I learned THIS, and I learned this by doing THIS and THIS (Knowledge) I took part in lectures and collaborated in study of XXX (Autonomy) and writing essays involving study of XXX and compilation of XXX with XXX (Complexity) as part of my overall course (Context).*

I took part in the university field school at XXXXX with Prof X, and became a supervisor in season 2 where I took responsibility for THIS and THIS while reporting to Prof X and the site officer as part of the team. (Autonomy) I undertook the tasks of XXX, XX and XXX (Complexity) assisting with the investigation of area 2, as part of the whole site, and provided weekly Area reports to Prof X as the season progressed... (Autonomy) (Complexity) Here I learned about writing context record sheets and photography as well as XXX and XXX (Knowledge) etc..... During this time I began my Skills Passport. etc.....

NOTE: you see how the areas of the matrix are covered (highlighted with green markers), to show you are explaining **What** you know, **How** you know it, **Who** Supports you in this, **Why** you did it that way and **your understanding** of your position in the process. – continue with your practical experience (OR if you have another qualification, copy and paste in another box, and write more).

Employed or voluntary work experience

Position held: *Site Assistant*

Organisation name: *LANCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGY TRUST*

Dates position held: *June 1982 – March 1984*

Length of time in role: *5 Months total (with breaks)*

Description of role, responsibilities, experience and competence demonstrated: *My role as Site Assistant involved recording with written records, drawn records and photographic records the features I was assigned by the Site Supervisor on the High Street urban site, with Roman and significant Saxon Archaeology and on a rural site with an Iron Age roundhouse and field system.*

I was advised to carry out specific tasks, and act within the requirements of the LAT methodology, This required the reading of the inhouse Site Manual, where I gained knowledge in etc...

Choose a way that **YOU** feel comfortable to explain how you use your **KNOWLEDGE** to carry out your role, who you refer to if needed to show **AUTONOMY**, how you dealt with a **COMPLEX** piece of work or feature, and how you see your role fits into the **CONTEXT** of the project overall..

You can find further examples of what is expected in your statement on the [application guidance webpage](#) alongside some example statements.

5 Application form online

There is an online application form to apply as a new applicant and to upgrade (link at the bottom of the guidance page). This is where you enter your personal details, referee contact details or upload references, upload qualification certificates and statement of competence template or write into the boxes and upload anything else that is relevant to your application.

Get in touch with CIfA if you would like to discuss accessibility options for applying at membership@archaeologists.net

Here are some screen shot examples from the online form.

Example 1 – personal details

The screenshot shows the CIfA website's 'Applications' section. The 'Personal' tab is selected in the progress bar. The form fields are as follows:

- Title:
- First Name:
- Surname:
- Preferred Name:

A sidebar on the right shows tweets from @InstituteArch, including one about an evening chat on 22 July.

Example 2 – references

The screenshot shows the CIfA website's 'References' section. The 'References' tab is selected in the progress bar. The form fields are as follows:

- First Name:
- Last Name:
- Job Title:

A sidebar on the right shows tweets from @InstituteArch, including one about a statement on the decision to close the Department of Archaeology at Sheffield University.

Example 3 – Statement – education

[About Cifa](#) [Join Cifa](#) [Contact Cifa](#)

[Access Cifa members area](#) [f](#) [t](#) [in](#)

Cifa Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

[OUR WORK](#) [GROUPS](#) [CAREERS](#) [PROFESSIONAL REGISTER](#) [EVENTS](#) [PUBLICATIONS](#)

– Education –

****Please outline your qualifications (where relevant) and upload certificates.** When you complete this box another will be available to complete if required. Please note you do not require a qualification to apply.**

Qualification name and post nominal

Date Obtained

Day Month Year

Qualification Certificate

Choose File

No file chosen

Files must be less than 2 MB.
Allowed file types: gif jpg jpeg png pdf doc docx.

Please give a brief outline of the areas covered. If you work in academia, please provide a more detailed outline.



21h

Cifa
@InstituteArch

Cifa has published a short statement about the decision to close the Department of Archaeology at Sheffield University
[@UniShefArch.archaeologists.net/news/cifa-stat...](#)

Example 4 – Statement – employed or voluntary work

[About Cifa](#) [Join Cifa](#) [Contact Cifa](#)

[Access Cifa members area](#) [f](#) [t](#) [in](#)

Cifa Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

[OUR WORK](#) [GROUPS](#) [CAREERS](#) [PROFESSIONAL REGISTER](#) [EVENTS](#) [PUBLICATIONS](#)

– Employed or Voluntary work –

****Please attach your Statement of Competence and list of publications (where relevant) OR write into the boxes.****

Statement template
Please attach your Statement of competence document here.
Files must be less than 10 MB.
Allowed file types: pdf doc docx.

Choose File

No file chosen

Job Title

Organisation name

Start Date

End date

Day Month Year

Day Month Year

6 Checklist

When you are happy with your application, make sure you have a thorough look over all the different aspects of it and check you have included the following (Those marked in **Green** are **REQUIRED**)

1. **Personal information for the [online application form](#)** (with two appropriate referees)
2. **Statement of competence** linked to competence matrix (using the template) or information to copy into the online form if you prefer.
3. **Certificates** etc (relevant to application)
4. **CPD log** and PDP (ie: *Copies of Skills Passport entries - Optional for PCIfA grade*)
5. **Bibliography** of grey literature or publications (*Optional for PCIfA grade*)
6. **Examples** of work (*If you have material to support your application – Optional for PCIfA grade*)
7. **Application fee** for new members at Practitioner grade (PCIfA) – 2021 – is **£15** and for upgrading members is **£10** (no upgrade fee in 2021).

Submit your application on the online form, if you pay by PayPal you will not receive an automatic response, but ClfA will confirm by email within a week. To claim the free upgrade fee please select the payment type as invoice.

The Validation Committee review Practitioner applications at the end of each month, so you can apply at any time. Please allow a maximum 8 weeks for an application to go through.

You will receive an email from ClfA to confirm your application has been processed and requesting any additional information, if required. If you have not heard from them within one week of submitting your application, **call the office to check**.

If you are successful, complete the subscription forms and declaration (sign up to the *Code of conduct* and 50 hours of CPD every two years). That will be sent to you and send payment or set up a direct debit to complete the membership process. You will then get a welcome pack with your digital membership card and a realisation that you are now part of a professional and recognised Chartered Institute. Think about what you could do to shape the future of archaeology, [from joining committees](#) to helping provide better [guidance and standards](#) for us all. Professionally accredited membership is not just joining a club, it is a commitment to making archaeology a respected profession. Don't forget to read the *Code of conduct* that underpins your new status.

www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/Code%20of%20conduct.pdf

Remember that payment of membership subscription fees is not required until your application has been accepted and [concessionary rates](#) are available.

Concessionary rates are for those earning less than the PCIfA recommended minimum salary per annum, you can apply for a reduction to the PCIfA rate – you must provide proof of earnings. There is also a subscription rate for those who are not currently in employment or earn less than £10,000.

7 Further References

[CIfA Professional pathways](#)

Scheme that provides structured resources to support members to upgrade their accreditation and to support others in gaining accreditation. There is a Pro-pathways bulletin you can sign up for to receive useful information about CPD and training, networking and other ways to advance your career and grade of accreditation.

CIfA's [elearning modules](#) including introduction to professionalism, planning your career and everyday ethics.

[Application Guidance](#) and statement examples can be found here too

[FAQs about applying](#)

[The Skills Passport](#)

The complete training *passport* for students and early career archaeologists. Created to log what you need to know for a professional career in archaeology and part of the preparation you can use for joining the CIfA.