



Professional Pathways September 2024 bulletin Move on to Member



Welcome to the latest Professional Pathways bulletin for people who are working towards [Member \(MCIfA\) applications](#). [Professional Pathways](#) aims to support members through CIfA accreditation by signposting to useful advice, resources and training that will help you build on your existing knowledge and skills and reach the next stage in your professional career.

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Preparing for a professional review interview

The professional review interview is designed to test applicants' ethical competence in more detail via a discussion with a panel of peers.

Like any interview, sitting a professional review interview can seem a bit daunting but it's not there to trip you up. It's an opportunity to talk in more detail about your work and how you approach it, to demonstrate that you are up to date with current policy and thinking in your area of practice. It also helps to demonstrate that you understand, and have the tools to approach any ethical issues you may face in the course of your work, in line with the CIfA *Code of conduct*.



As always, preparation is the key to success. The interview should not be intimidating but it should be taken seriously – this is an important step in your professional development and some time spent preparing for the interview will ensure that you are able to do yourself justice on the day. So here are our top [tips...](#)

Number one – understand the criteria you're expected to demonstrate competence against.



These are set out in the [MCIfA competence matrix](#).

The competence matrix includes guidance questions which will help you relate the requirements to your own role. The [additional guidance](#) we provide is there to help you.

There are also supporting specialist matrices for different areas of practice.

If you need any further help or support preparing your application email membership@archaeologists.net.

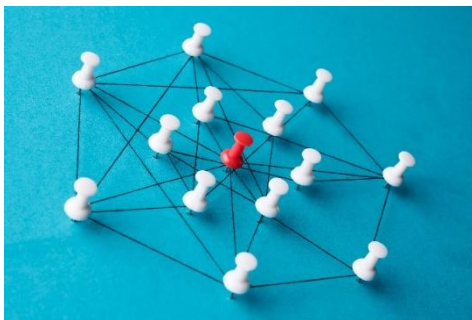
Number two – understand the ethical framework that you work within.

Start with the Code of conduct and the relevant [Standards and guidance](#) but don't stop there!

Familiarise yourself with the [ethics resources](#) on the ClfA website; discuss them with colleagues and identify the areas that are particularly relevant to you and your work. If you haven't already done so, you may wish to work through the [ethics elearning module](#) and/or attend one of our regular ethics workshops.



Number three – understand your own competence



As obvious as it might sound, be clear about how what *you* do and how *you* apply your skills and knowledge to your work demonstrates competence against the criteria.

Map your evidence (your statement of competence, examples of work etc) to the criteria and decide on the best examples to use to show that you meet them.

Question each example – why is it relevant? What does it demonstrate?

Think STAR: **S**ituation *or* **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult (and **R**eflection)

S/T – What was the situation? Describe the issues or challenges you faced. Who were the stakeholders and what were there needs? Were they compatible or did they need to be balanced?

A – Action: what did you do? What sources of information were available to guide you? What were the rules/policies you needed to work within? What steps did you take to achieve a good outcome and how did you define what good would look like? What skills did you need, and did you have them all at the beginning?

R – Results and reflection. What worked and what didn't? Was the outcome what you expected and what might you have done differently? Who benefitted and how? Were there any disbenefits, unintended consequences or unforeseen results? How did you reflect, capture and share the lessons learned?

Number four – practice!

Not all of us enjoy talking about ourselves and talking about your competence can feel a bit too like blowing your own trumpet for comfort! Ask a line manager or colleague – ideally someone who has some experience of interviewing – if you can talk through your examples with them in advance. Encourage them to ask you questions about your work but remember, the interview is focussing on your ethical approach and not the finer archaeological detail of what you did.



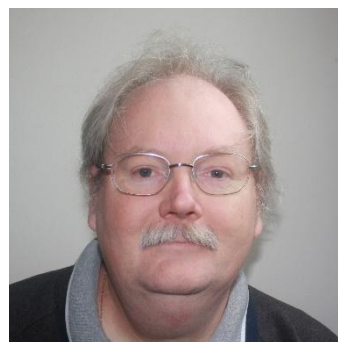
Number five – try to enjoy it!



Or, at the very least, don't panic! Write notes to prompt yourself about key points you want to make and have the examples you want to draw on to hand. The interview isn't a memory test so have copies of any reference material or relevant sections of the *Code of conduct*, Standards and guidance or good practice guidance with you. And remember, it's not a test of your public speaking ability either – the review panel's job is to provide you with the opportunities you need to demonstrate your competence. All you need to do is take them!

A personal journey through an MCIfA application: Thomas Cromwell (702)

I was a PlfA decades ago before the internet, emails, or Chartered status! But I lapsed moving around the country from dig to dig, and only recently re-joined. At this late stage in my career I knew I could go straight back in at MCIfA, but in the intervening years the process changed considerably, and the effort needed for application at MCIfA grade looked daunting.



I found the key to success is to address each of the Competencies as a separate essay, stringing it out over a week or so to preserve sanity. I asked colleagues who were already in ClfA to write references, although you can provide contact details for your referees and ClfA will get the references if you prefer – just make sure the referees have already agreed. The secret is to be open about the extent of your skills, knowledge, experience, and accomplishments, and to support it with examples of how you dealt with issues.

Then came the Ethics interview video call. I was part of the first bunch to have these, and of course Fate dictated it happened while I was out on site, sat in the open tailgate of a car next to where the Heras fence panels were being stacked, so every few minutes we had to pause as the noise got too deafening! If anything, I suspect these comic interruptions actually helped to make it less stressful for all involved. I prepared by looking over my written statement, the Competencies, and the Code to make sure I knew how I'd address any question about them, as well as any parts I didn't cover due to limits in my experience. I rehearsed examples from my own career of the various scenarios each Competency might throw up – this meant I was able to explain that some issues were not in my role, and then address how I'd approach them if they ever did come up. In my case (not working in the commercial sector) there were some issues about competition that I just hadn't encountered, but I took the two-way nature of the interview as a positive opportunity to expand on my thoughts. The ClfA Code and the various legislation and guidance are important, so do mention them.

Having attained MCIfA I volunteered to be on the other side of the Professional review interview table. There's a whole support system of guidance, examples, and sample questions for the interviewers that underpin the process so it has a degree of standardisation. The interviewers get to read the applications in advance and can tailor their questions accordingly, so the interview should reflect your experiences and be relatively stress-free. Remember the interviewers are looking to explore your evidence rather than pick holes, so it really should be more of a friendly conversation than an interrogation – just relax and try to enjoy it!



Any questions? Please ask

If you've got a question about ClfA or careers, please send it to anna.welch@archaeologists.net or for application enquiries contact membership@archaeologists.net. You'll get a confidential answer but if the information could help others, it will be included in an anonymised FAQs section.