

Statement of competence template

Name of applicant:

Grade applied for: PCIfA ☐ ACIfA ☒ MCIfA ☐

Employed or voluntary work

Position held:	Senior project archaeologist
Organisation name:	An Organisation
Dates position held:	October 2022 - Present
Length of time in role:	2 year 7 months

Description of role and responsibilities:

For my current role I have worked on a range of projects and duties. These have included directing walkover surveys, desk based assessments, archaeological evaluations, archaeological clerk of works on large infrastructure projects, post excavation processing and small scale excavations. I have also written data structure reports on the results of these fieldwork projects (see below). I have also recently started writing Written Schemes of Investigations/Method Statements, Risk Assessment Method Statements for fieldwork projects and writing publications on the post-excavation results of fieldwork projects. The fieldwork projects I have been involved include a mix of solo, two person and small teamwork. All work is undertaken and performed under the guidance of CIfA Code of Conduct (2022), CIfA Standard and guidance for archaeological fieldwork (2020). Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording (2023); Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording (2023); Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (2020); and Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (2020) in addition to National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023). When working on projects I am responsible for the professional execution of the project for both myself, the company and any assisting member of staff. I have also written for publications, one being a digital article, and two reports called A. Report and A. Report and I am currently contributing to publications on A. Site and the report for a publication for Another Site.

Knowledge

Through my knowledge of prehistoric archaeology gained from both studies and experience in the field I successfully identified a number of negative features on an evaluation at A. Site in 2023. As I was continuing the strip I asked my site assistant to excavate and record the features, I explained in detail what the process was and they carried out the task successfully. This was in line with CIfA's Code of Conduct Rule 1.5 which states "A member shall not undertake archaeological work for which they are not adequately qualified. A member shall have regard to their skills, proficiencies and capabilities and to the maintenance and enhancement of these through appropriate training and learning experiences."

On the subsequent excavation of the site I identified a number of possible prehistoric features and through my knowledge of archaeological process I managed a small team working across 5 areas, overseeing the excavation, recording and surveying of the site and its many complex features. This was conducted in line with CIfA's Universal Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (2023) by understanding the project design and then implementing this with project execution.

On another site I was asked to visit and use my knowledge of dating procedures to attempt to help in dating a specific feature. As no material culture was found and the soil samples appeared sterile it was decided that the best course of action was to take samples for optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dating. It was very stoney and the tubes employed for OSL dating were unsuccessful. I decided that a Kubiena tin might be more useful and managed after many attempts to get a secure sample. When processed this returned an early medieval date subsequently enhancing the understanding of the site. This is in line with CIfA's Code of Conduct 3.1 "The member shall keep themselves informed about developments in their field

or fields of specialisation.”

On the Archaeological Clerk of Works job one of the trial pits revealed a specific feature. I cleaned this and determined by the appearance of the fill, shape and its proximity to known prehistoric domestic structures that this could possibly be archaeological. As the WSI stated that no features would be excavated I recorded the feature and moved this to the side. This is a good example of the principles outlined in Universal Guidance for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording (2023) showing identification and interpretation of features, exhibiting professional judgement and then communicating this to the other contractors on site.

Autonomy

On any well-run project there is always someone to ask for advice and direction including the project manager. That said autonomy is important and allows practitioners to use their knowledge and judgement for the benefit of the site. On A. Site excavation I had a team of between four and six archaeologists. We excavated each area, which included two roundhouses, methodically across the site. Staff were briefed and allocated features according to experience and as questions arose regarding the features I gave advice based on my interpretation and experience. An example of this in practice was when a colleague over cut a posthole and excavated into the natural subsoil, I explained what had happened and where the posthole ended and why due to the conditions and similarity of fill and subsoil it was an understandable mistake to make, and it was recorded appropriately.

Further examples include an evaluation at A. Site, I located services with the CAT scanner within the pathway of the trench. I decided to implement a buffer either side of the service and extended the trench to accommodate and ensure that we still managed to examine the necessary percentage of the proposed development.

On an Archaeological Clerk of Works job I suspected that one of the opened trial pits possibly contained archaeology. I cleaned the features and as the method statement dictated that we microsite before excavating I moved the trial pit thus ensuring that the possible features were protected for future evaluation and the trial pitting project could continue.

On all of these examples it's important to be able to reflect upon the decisions made and how I can improve. It is crucial to discuss the decisions and how the job is progressing with the project manager, site team and specialists involved in the project. On A. Site we would have an official meeting every Monday and discuss the site progression, there was a weekly site visit with the Project Manager and email correspondence in this case with the pottery specialist.

Again at this site, when it was established that we had post ring and ring groove structures I read various reports regarding the optimal way to excavate, record and sample these features in particular I found two books (named) were particularly helpful and excerpts of both became our toolbox talks.

When we were excavating Another Site we had a visit from a Fellow from the local University who was conducting OSL samples. I asked the site director if I could help and learned best practice which I have used on numerous occasions since.

Coping with complexity

I directed the project at A. Site. I allocated jobs, ensured drawings, context sheets and photographs were all correct and up to standard. I liaised with the illustration and survey staff to ensure that all the survey data was correct. On one occasion there had been data corruption with the GPS equipment and the data had been lost. I asked one of the experienced members of staff to assist me in locating the missing features through examining site drawings, context sheets and speaking with site staff we located and re-surveyed all features.

Another example from this project pertained to two intercutting ring groove structures. In plan it appeared that structure 1 was earlier and was cut by structure 2. To prove this we excavated a slot where both structures intersected. The ring ditches were quite shallow and the weather was exceptionally bright so I postponed this slot until later in the week when the weather was overcast as this slot was our only way to test the theory. The stratigraphy showed that structure 2 intersected structure 1.

I was assigned the task of analysing and recording the human disarticulated skeletons from A. Site. This is a particularly complex process as you don't have the full skeleton for reference. I methodically examined each fragment, noted to which bone it belonged, age and sex diagnoses, any non-metric traits and pathologies thereby adding important information to the understanding of the people of the site.

There can be time pressures in all aspects of archaeological work and I am aware that if not correctly managed could lead to a conflict of interest. For example on some projects there are often delays due to a

number of factors such as land access, changes to health and safety arrangements and on the ground logistics. This can result in time pressures when conducting trial pits and the role of an archaeologist can seem abstract to some other contractors. If we have to move a pit due to possible archaeological features then this slows down the pace of the overall trial pitting job and sometimes in these situations you have to explain that this is an important part of the project, why it's important and if necessary refer all parties to the agreed Method Statement or Written Scheme of Investigation which have been informed by ClfA's Code of Conduct (2022). Good communication skills are therefore paramount and includes not only with other archaeological staff, but also other on-site contractors including construction staff and clients, who may often visit the site. An example is at A. Site where the client regularly visited the site for progress reports.

Perception of professional context

Professionalism and an adherence to ethics is a guiding factor in archaeology. It is ultimately a destructive discipline and we need to be aware of stakeholders, clients, environment, public as well as to the archaeological evidence itself. Fortunately, there is a wealth of documentation and guidance to ensure best practice is adhered to.

All work is undertaken and performed under the guidance of ClfA Code of Conduct (2022), ClfA Standard and guidance for archaeological fieldwork (2020). Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording (2023); Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording (2023); Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (2020); and Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (2020). In addition to the ClfA documentation there is a specific guidance and legal framework issued by agencies and government in Scotland. These include the Scottish Government 2014 Scottish Planning Policy, National Planning Framework 4 2023 and Historic Environment Scotland 2019 Historic Environment Policy for Scotland.

On one excavation the client was questioning the existence of the features we were excavating, I downloaded the site aerial photographs and explained how the shapes they could see represented structures and that the various pits and postholes contributed to the structure. I brought in a couple of books with artist impressions of what the dwelling could have looked like and this helped contextualise things for them. On another occasion I explained to the client that not all of the flags on site represented a definite feature. I invited them to accompany me whilst I investigated a possible posthole which on this occasion turned out to be a heavily degraded piece of sandstone with a rough sub-circular shape. This helped the client understand that we were methodically working our way across the site and critically assessing every feature.

It is important to continually critically evaluate my work in relation to the Code of Conduct and as such I regularly reflect on my field decisions and team management, particularly Principle 1, which requires high standards of ethical and responsible behavior. For example, during a project, I ensured that tasks delegated to my assistants were within their capabilities and provided clear instruction and supervision, in line with Rule 1.5 on competence and training.

I evaluate my work by considering whether my actions have contributed to the conservation and understanding of the historic environment, as required by Principle 2. At A. Site, when conventional dating methods failed, I adapted the sampling strategy to obtain a viable OSL sample, ensuring the site's significance could be properly assessed and recorded.

I also reflect on how effectively I communicate and disseminate results, in line with Principle 4. On a project, I recorded a potentially significant feature though excavation was not permitted, ensuring that the information was preserved for future reference.

I maintain a CPD log and seek feedback from peers and supervisors to identify areas for improvement, ensuring I meet the expectations of Rule 1.5 regarding continual professional development and self-awareness of limitations.

I work closely with relevant stakeholders and these range from clients such as house builders, quarriers to public bodies such as councils and the sharing of the results from excavations through publications available to the general public.

Position held:	Project assistant
Organisation name:	An Organisation
Dates position held:	Feb 2020 – October 2022
Length of time in role:	2 years 8 months

One of my first jobs at this company was the excavation of the medieval graveyard at A. Site. I had focussed on osteoarchaeology as part of my degree and used my knowledge of human anatomy to assist with the human remains recovered. On one occasion a grave cut was being excavated with a skeleton within. My colleague asked my opinion and I noticed that there was a leg bone (fibula) in close proximity to the ulna and radius thereby indicating disturbance of the grave.

On an excavation I was one of two archaeologists monitoring the stripping of topsoil prior to its excavation. This was carried out using two diggers. My supervisor confirmed on my arrival at site that he was ill and could not make site that day. I spoke to both machine operators and had one strip topsoil, while the other banded the soil. I continued this for the day and the new supervisor arrived the next day.

Again on this site I was excavating a slot on one of the ditches. I noticed that the stratigraphy wasn't straight forward and was suggestive of possible recuts. I cleaned the section again and asked the advice of the site director who agreed with my interpretation and I then recorded the section.

An excavation was a public facing site which was interesting as it was largely human remains. This highlighted the CIFA code of conduct:

Principle 1 Rule 1.1
A member shall conduct themselves in a manner which does not and is not likely to bring archaeology and the institute into disrepute.

It was important to keep in mind that we were excavating human remains and that the public were present and we remained professional and respectful at all times. We also spent some time every day speaking with members of the public who had questions about the site and again it was important to be informative, accurate and courteous.

Qualifications

Please list any relevant qualifications, including title, University and date of completion and a brief outline of the areas covered. The boxes will expand as you type.

Qualification title, University & date completed	Brief outline
BSc. Hons Archaeology 1995	My course provided a wide range of both theoretical and practical classes. Courses such as An. Example. In addition I spent 6 months abroad at a museum where I worked on the collection creating public information on items from within the museum. I spent 2 months away from the museum excavating. I also spent 6 months with A. Company where I worked on a variety of excavations and field walks.

Additional Relevant Information

From 1995 to 2020 – I worked in another industry.

First Aid certificate, CSCS, full driving license.

List of projects/publications/grey literature

A. List