

## **Registered Organisation inspection panel member training**

### **Unit 2 – *Practical Aspects of Registration and Inspections***

#### **Introduction**

This module introduces the practical responsibilities you will take on as a panel member. It explains the registration process, the structure of an inspection day, and your role before, during, and after the visit. By the end, you should feel confident in preparing for an inspection, conducting fair and consistent assessments, understanding staff roles, managing documentation securely, and knowing how recommendations and conditions are applied.

#### **The Registration Process**

When a new organisation applies for registration, CifA staff first check that all required information has been provided. Once satisfied that the application is complete, they contact the organisation to discuss potential panel members, suitable workplaces or project sites to visit, and possible inspection dates. For organisations already registered, the process differs slightly: they submit their updated application only after being notified of their next inspection arrangements.

Applicants must submit their documentation at least six weeks before the inspection. This gives the panel time to read, analyse, and reflect on the material. You will receive access to a secure folder containing the application form, supporting evidence, work examples, and the previous inspection report and registration letter, including any earlier recommendations or outcomes.

CifA staff will also provide key documents to support your work: the benchmarking form, a confirmation letter with logistical information, a site-visit form when required, an expenses form, and a link to the current RO Regulations.

#### **Planning for the Inspection**

A few days before the visit, the panel meets to plan the assessment. This meeting is your opportunity to clarify the areas that need further exploration, agree your priorities, and prepare any specific questions. To participate fully, it is essential that you have already read all documentation and made notes on points you wish to discuss.

#### **How Inspections Are Structured**

Every inspection follows a standard format. The day begins with an introductory meeting in which the panel meets the Responsible Post Holder and any other relevant staff. The organisation provides a short overview and highlights significant developments since the last inspection.

The core of the visit is the project talk through. Using a recent project as a case study, the organisation demonstrates how its Quality Management System operates in practice. This discussion covers the entire project lifecycle, from initial engagement and project design through fieldwork, post-excavation work, reporting, archiving, and continuous improvement. Panel members listen for

evidence of consistent processes, clear communication, risk management, stakeholder involvement, and adherence to CIfA Standards and guidance.

The panel will then be shown around the organisation. This tour typically includes offices, archives, stores, labs, processing areas, and other relevant spaces. Seeing these environments first-hand helps you understand how the organisation operates day to day and how its procedures translate into real practice.

After lunch, the panel has informal discussions with staff. These conversations provide insight into working culture, internal communication, training, supervision, and how quality processes are used in everyday work. You may choose which staff to speak to and you should note any observations relevant to the inspection.

Later in the afternoon, the panel meets privately—usually around 3:30pm—to agree its provisional findings. It is important to have made notes throughout the day, as your observations will form the basis of the panel’s collective judgement.

The day concludes with a meeting with the Responsible Post Holder. The panel presents its provisional findings and the RPH is invited to add comments or clarify any points. This is also an opportunity for the organisation to provide feedback on the inspection process itself.

### **Site Visits**

If the organisation undertakes fieldwork or recording of the historic environment, a site visit is required. This may take place on the inspection day or at another appropriate time during the inspection year. The visit may be carried out by a panel member, a local authority archaeologist, or another suitably qualified CIfA member.

### **Roles of CIfA Staff**

CIfA staff provide essential support throughout the process. They chair the inspection day (or appoint a panel chair), supply briefing materials, confirm required documents, coordinate timelines, draft the panel’s findings, and manage the reporting process.

### **Recommendations, Conditions, and Breaches**

The inspection report submitted to the Registration Committee includes the panel’s proposed recommendations. These may take the form of suggestions—optional improvements that may benefit the organisation; recommendations—actions that should be implemented within an agreed timeframe; or conditions—required improvements, without which the organisation may risk breaching the Code of conduct or the Standards and guidance.

If the panel believes the organisation is already in breach, this must be raised immediately with the Responsible Post Holder and recorded formally in the inspection form.

### **Post-Inspection Responsibilities**

After the inspection, all panel members must treat documentation confidentially. Paper materials must be disposed of securely, and electronic files must be permanently deleted.

CifA staff then draft the inspection report and circulate it to the panel and the Responsible Post Holder for checks of factual accuracy. Once agreed, the final report is submitted to the Registration Committee, which makes the final registration decision.