

Let's chat with... an apprenticeship assessor!

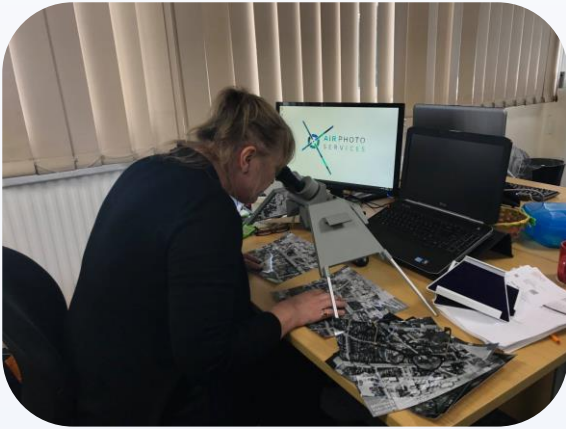


Here at CiFA Qualifications, we've been providing end-point assessment for apprentices on the level 4 historic advice apprenticeship. All apprentices in England must now have an independent organisation to deliver their assessment at the end of their training and we've been building up our team of assessors to deliver this.

Assessors come from a wide variety of backgrounds: they must be occupationally competent (and ideally hold an assessor qualification), and we deliver regular assessor training to help them get to grips with the assessment standards. But what makes someone want to become an assessor? And what do they get out of it? We asked one of our experienced assessors, Chris Cox, what attracted her to the role.

'It's actually sharing the enthusiasm of people in their early careers, at the apprenticeship stage, and being able to see how people, through these apprenticeships, have been able to develop their skills, and their confidence,' Chris says.

The level 4 apprenticeship is assessed in two ways; there's a professional discussion, supported by a portfolio of evidence and a project that apprentices carry out during their end-point assessment window. Apprentices produce a project report, which is formally assessed, along with a short Q&A about the work.



This means that assessors interact directly with the apprentices. Assessments are one-to-one so they get really close to the work that the apprentices do. Chris says:

‘I’m seeing a very developed support infrastructure for these apprentices; it’s very well thought out. Apprentices contribute an awful lot to the companies

they work in – a lot of their own time and effort, and considerable developed abilities. They are a pair of hands which are becoming more and more informed as they go along. They also contribute a different way of thinking; you have somebody who is very keen to learn and they’re fully invested in their job.’

All apprentices spend 20% of their time in formal, off-the-job training. At the moment, Strode college delivers the level 4 learning so apprentices, and employers, are supported right from the start by a professional training organisation. Strode’s business development team takes employers through the Apprenticeship Service step-by-step and they also put them in touch with the course tutor so they can find out, first-hand, what knowledge, skills and behaviours the apprentices will focus on.

Chris says:

‘I think the value for employers is that they have a professional partner delivering some of the learning and training. It’s a partnership; and you can get the kind of employee that you want by shaping an apprenticeship to what your company can offer.

And they also have somebody who is very keen to learn, and is fully invested in their job. They’ve not come to you just to earn a salary; they’ve come to develop a skill.’

Chris has been an assessor for several years now and, in that time, has seen a wide variety of apprentices achieve their qualification. Each apprenticeship is different as each apprentice carries out a distinct role, and completes a unique project. When asked about the rewards of being an assessor, Chris says:

‘It’s actually great to give something back to the profession. We have to think about what each apprentice has done and how we will go about questioning them, and discussing things, to bring out their best. These apprenticeships are open to everybody, to career changers, to people of different ages, people with different family demographics.

I like being a little part of that now – actually giving people in this wonderful structure a hand up. To be part of that is actually a lovely thing.’

CiFA Qualifications assesses three apprenticeships that are available to the heritage industry:

- Level 3 Archaeological Technician
- Level 4 Historic Environment Advice Assistant
- Level 7 Archaeological Specialist

Any employers who are interested in benefiting from taking on an apprentice can contact CiFA Qualifications and they'll put you in touch with the relevant training provider. Email: assessment@archaeologists.net

We'll end with what Chris says when asked whether apprenticeships are a good thing for the heritage sector:

'Definitely! They target the skills that people need in their chosen part of the heritage sector, be it research, commercial or curatorial, they focus the mind on a training plan that is really meaningful. And you get a trained and competent person at the end of it!'

