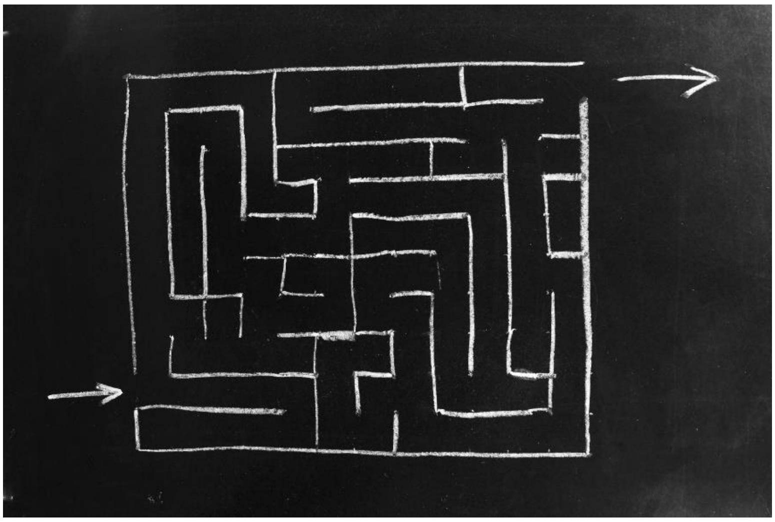
Professional Pathways May 2022 Bulletin

Aim for Associate

Ethics part 2

Welcome to the May 2022 Professional Pathways edition for people who are working towards Associate applications. This edition continues to explore the theme of professional ethics. Previous bulletins can be found on the Professional Pathways page.

Professional Pathways aims to support members through the CIfA accreditation process by signposting to useful advice, resources and training that will help members to build on their existing knowledge and skills and reach the next stage in their professional career.



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Everyday ethical dilemmas

How would you use the Code of conduct to answer this dilemma? What else could you use to arrive at an ethical solution?

A PhD student you supervised in the summer, has been asked to give a public lecture to an archaeology society. They have asked you if they can include images of high status objects excavated at the as yet unpublished local site, in order to illustrate their research. The images are their own and there is no non-disclosure agreement, but there are active looters known to be working in the area so information has not been publicly released. They are keen for your advice. How can the Code help you to explain how they can balance protecting the site with sharing the results of their research and disseminating knowledge to the community?

In the last bulletin we set you some ethical dilemmas to think about. What solutions did you find to the following?

1.Should a field archaeological investigation include the careful trowelling or hoeing of the base of archaeological trenches dug to inform a planning application?

Principles 2 and 3 of the Code of conduct may be useful in thinking about this and cover offsetting destruction of the archaeological resource with the creation of new knowledge and working in a way that ensures reliable information about the past is acquired. The overarching principles are:

Principle 2: *The member has a responsibility for the conservation of the historic environment.*

Principle 3: *The member shall conduct their work in such a way that reliable information about the past may be acquired, and shall ensure that the results be properly recorded.*

The Standard and guidance for field evaluation describes the purpose of an evaluation:

The purpose of field evaluation is to gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context.

The Standard defines the outcome required so the question is whether the outcome could be achieved without trowelling/hoeing the base of the trench. 3.2.12 of the guidance says that there should be 'a reasonable degree of flexibility to apply professional judgement during the course of the investigation'.

The guidance is clear that 'an archaeologist should only undertake a field evaluation which is governed by a written scheme of investigation or project design and agreed by all relevant parties'. A WSI should set out the research objectives of the project (3.2.9) and the requirements for recording (3.2.13). All excavation is destructive and the guidance says that full and proper records should be made for all work. The detailed methodology, including hand cleaning trench bases/sides, should be set out in the WSI

If there is an occasion where a member is not comfortable that the Code of conduct is being met by a WSI, or its implementation, then this should be queried. Remember that acting ethically is a negotiation between delivering job requirements within the rules, and your own satisfaction that you have delivered a professional outcome according to the Code of conduct.

2. Should an archaeological post-excavation analysis programme include detailed analysis of Roman pottery when the primary research interest is on prehistoric remains?

The preamble to the Code of conduct says that archaeology is done in the 'pursuit of the study and care of the physical evidence of the human past' for the benefit of the public and that 'the historic environment [is] a vulnerable and diminishing resource'. Because it is irreplaceable it should be used economically. Rule 1.2 of the Code says that members should be mindful of 'those that could benefit from their work' so, regardless of the primary research interest in this project, the information on the Roman pottery might inform the research of others. Does that mean that it needs detailed analysis as part of *this* post-excavation programme when interested researchers could look at the archived Roman assemblage themselves?

Even though the current interest is in the prehistoric assemblage it would be worth setting out in advance of the project how non-prehistoric material will be recorded which may lead to innovative ways of processing this data to make it available for further research, as suggested in 1.15 of the Code.

Principle 2 of the Code of conduct tackles this dilemma directly stating ‘consideration shall be given to the legitimate interests of other archaeologists; for example, the upper levels of a site should be conscientiously excavated and recorded, within the exigencies of the project, even if the main focus is on the underlying levels’. It does not say that all materials should receive specialist analysis but underlines the need for recording to be fit for purpose. 3.6 of the Code says that members should assess if their ‘work is likely detrimentally to affect research work or projects of other archaeologists’ and to minimise those effects. This would include sufficiently detailed recording and archiving of material that is not the focus of the project whilst recognising that the Roman pottery assemblage will be retained. Principle 4 talks about making the results of work available to other researchers which, in this case, would be sharing information about the Roman pottery assemblage so that others could more fully analyse its importance to their own research.

It is important to be aware of the field sampling strategy for the project when deciding the level of detail to use for different assemblages during post-excavation analysis. For more guidance see the information in the Toolkit for selecting archaeological archives. Think about your own values as well as the project design.

Now check in the *Introduction to ethics professional practise paper* for alternative ways to approach these and other dilemmas.

Recognising and dealing with conflicts of interest.

We all find ourselves having to balance competing interests from time to time. As a professional you need to be able to weigh up the pros and cons of different courses of action, know when you have enough information to support robust decisions, and reflect on and critically evaluate the approaches you have used. Being able to identify potential conflicts of interest, and knowing how to deal with them, is equally important. Amendments to the criteria for CIfA accreditation recognise this: at Associate grade, you are expected to be able to use established frameworks to recognise and resolve the conflicts of interest you encounter.

A conflict of interest may arise when there is a risk that your judgement or actions are, or could be, influenced or impaired by another interest. It is not unethical to have a conflict of interest, providing you manage it appropriately. Identifying and communicating the existence of a potential conflict of interest is usually the first step.

So what might constitute a conflict of interest? An obvious example would be where Person A is responsible for supervising or training Person B whom they have a personal relationship with. Conflicts of interest may be actual, potential or perceived – Person A may show Person B no favouritism, but others may assume or perceive that the conflict exists and this may impair Person A’s ability to do an effective job.

Conflicts of interest are often linked to financial interests. Financial incentives to complete work ahead of a deadline could affect decisions about the nature and amount of work required. Specialists might find themselves being asked to advise on the potential for further work on an assemblage which they may then tender to undertake.

Potential conflicts can also arise out of competing loyalties. You might be working for an organisation advising a developer on a development near where you live that is unpopular (for reasons unconnected with the archaeological significance of the site) and wish to get involved in a residents' campaign to oppose it. Depending on your role and level of responsibility within the organisation, you may have little or no influence over the advice your organisation gives, but the developer may feel that the impartiality of that advice is compromised and challenge it as a result.

In all cases, the CIfA Code of conduct sets out a high-level framework to support archaeologists dealing with potential conflicts of interest. Depending on the nature of the potential conflict, the next port of call may be the relevant CIfA Standard, organisational policies and procedures, contractual documents or specialist good practice guidance. It won't be possible (or necessary) to avoid all potential conflicts of interest, but transparency is vital. If you identify a potential conflict and you tell the relevant people about it, applying the Codes of conduct and the other frameworks mentioned above (along with some common sense) will help you manage it professionally. If you don't recognise or think about the issues, it could lead to problems and even an allegation of professional misconduct.

You can find tools and resources for dealing with conflicts of interest, and other ethical issues, on our website at https://www.archaeologists.net/membership/ethics

Any questions? Please ask

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

What can you do next?

The next 'Practicing ethical competence in archaeological practice' workshop is running on 25 May and registration is now open.

We’re continuing our monthly Zoom digital breaks in rotating morning, lunchtime and evening time slots. Look out for details of time and topics on our website and Twitter.

We are repeating some of the more popular themes so please let us know if there’s something you missed that you’d like to see again, or if you have an idea for a topic. E-mail us at membership@archaeologists.net

If you have any questions or suggestions for the next bulletin please send them in.

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