



Professional pathways November 2024 bulletin Pathway to Practitioner



Welcome to the latest edition of Professional pathways for people who are working towards Practitioner (PCIfA) 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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CIfA is the professional body for archaeology – what does that mean?

If you're looking for (or about to start) a job in archaeological fieldwork, you might find this article from the Digger's forum special interest group helpful - [Ten things Diggers wished they'd known as new starters](#). One of the things suggested is joining a union, and people often ask what the difference is between different types of organisations. Professional bodies, trade unions and trade associations all have members but their remits and what they offer are quite different. This infographic sets out the key differences:

CIfA is your professional home for archaeology - for members and driven by members, representing your interests and connecting you to professional communities. It promotes your profession and professionalism across the heritage, construction, developer, architectural and planning sectors.

[Click here to watch a short video introduction to CIfA](#)



A professional body

- Protects the public
- Regulates the profession
- Publishes ethical codes and standards
- Accredits individuals and organisations
- Supports professional development



A trade union

- Represents employees
- Negotiates pay and conditions
- Offers advice to individuals
- Provides representation on contractual issues



A trade association

- Represents employers and businesses
- Provides advice and support to its organisational members
- Encourages collaboration between companies within the sector

What do we mean when we talk about being a professional archaeologist?



Credit: E Gardner

Professional accreditation with CIfA is a recognition of your skills, competence and expertise. It demonstrates to employers and clients that you have committed to working to professional standards and support the development of these to improve how archaeology is done.

Working to professional standards requires professional competence: archaeologists need to be technically skilled, and they need to understand and apply ethical principles to their work. These ethical principles are set out in the [Code of conduct](#). The standards for technical and ethical competence form the basis of the competence matrix which all applications for accreditation are measured against.

A good starting point before you dive into professional ethics is to take the e-learning module 'Professionalism in historic environment practice, an introduction' which [you can find here](#). This will give you an introduction to working as a professional and provide a good basis for thinking about ethical practice.

How soon is too soon to apply at PCIfA?

Have you recently changed your job role or got a promotion?



Although the Validation committee don't assess applications on length of time in a role, they will need to see a track record of your skills and experience to see the four areas of the criteria demonstrated.

We have found that if an applicant has recently changed job roles to work in a different kind of role (eg from fieldwork into consultancy or a specialism) or they have been recently promoted, it can be harder to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate PCIfA in your application.

In this situation, the committee advises to wait until you can show a reasonable track record working in your new role. This will help you to write your statement of competence based on specific examples to support the four areas of the competence matrix criteria, for example:

Knowledge - working with a 'good working knowledge...and competence in its application' within your area of practice.

Autonomy – showing your judgement and responsibility under supervision where 'collaboration with others is expected'

Coping with complexity – working on some complex activities and able to 'achieve partial resolution alone'

Perception of professional context – understanding the 'ethical requirements of the Code of conduct' to apply it to your work and be able to 'recognises the importance of each role in the team'

It will also help your referees, as a new employer, line manager or supervisor might not know you well enough in a short time to be able to provide a really useful and supportive reference for PCIfA.

If you apply when you have just started a new role, the Validation committee might also ask you for more information than another PCIfA applicant. For example, they would need a reference from your previous company and to see that the examples in your statement from your previous role also demonstrate the criteria. If you haven't got the track record of examples yet in your new role this can cause delays to your application.

If you are not sure when to apply for PCIfA you can have a look at the Professional pathways page about what the committee are looking for at each grade. You can also get in touch with Ellen with a draft statement or to check if you are ready to apply at membership@archaeologists.net and she will be happy to help.

Although applying for accreditation has to be a rigorous process, the membership team (Ellen and Lianne) are there to help you through the process. It is not cheating to ask them a question or voice any concerns you may have, no matter how small you think they are. Please do get in touch.

Professional Profile: Rachel Glaves PCIfA (12427)



I have been working in the archaeology industry since August 2022, securing my first training contract whilst still writing my dissertation for my MA in Field Archaeology at the University of York, which I completed whilst working as a commercial archaeologist. I found it difficult to adjust to archaeological fieldwork and, on completion of my 6 months training contract, I took a little time out to explore other heritage avenues, which brought me back to commercial field archaeology 8 months later.

In this time away from commercial, I worked in an archaeology museum within York and for York Archaeology's community team on their Archaeology on Prescription programme, which inspired me to move back into the field. In August 2023, I began working for York Archaeology's commercial unit and in my first non-trainee contract, gaining experience on urban archaeological excavations.

Unfortunately, as is often the way with archaeology, this contract was only short term and I left the unit in December 2023. In February 2024, I began to work for MAP Archaeological Practice and was lucky enough to secure a permanent contract. I have developed my experience in this position, working on largescale Roman British/Iron Age rural excavations, doing machine watching, writing DBA's and building on core skills which will help me progress in my career.

In August 2023 and 2024, I have been given the opportunity by my units to take a short sabbatical to excavate on the Ness of Brodgar in Orkney, gaining experience of digging Neolithic British archaeological sites and research excavations.

I joined ClfA as I wanted to be a recognised member of the archaeological industry and to be recognised for the experience I have gained throughout my career thus far. In my application, I drew upon my varied experience, looking at my career as a whole rather than just my commercial archaeology experience. I followed the guidance given by ClfA which proved invaluable, as well as advice provided by colleagues who have previously been through the application process themselves.

My advice for those applying, don't overthink your statement of confidence, break down what you have done throughout your career and apply it to the criteria. Ask for advice from ClfA's application team and colleagues who have been through the process if you are unsure!

What can you do next?

If you are searching for some CPD, why not take a look at the [recorded events on the ClfA website](#)? You can find workshops, webinars and previous ClfA Conference sessions with different topics.

We review Practitioner applications at the end of each month and details of how to apply, application costs and deadlines are available via the link below. If you have any questions about the application process, please contact [Ellen McNamara](#).

[Click here for application information](#)



Upcoming events

- [Buildings Archaeology Group tea break](#) – Open to all ClfA members. Join the ClfA Buildings Archaeology Group on Monday 25 November from 12:30 until 13:15 for an informal chat about the fascinating world of buildings archaeology.
- [Equality, diversity and inclusion lunchtime chat](#) - an invitation to anyone interested in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and an opportunity to reconnect, chat, and share your thoughts about EDI within ClfA and/or the wider profession. Session being held on Wednesday 27 November.
- [Landscape SIG tea break lecture](#) – Open to all ClfA members. The Landscape SIG invites you to join them for a series of online tea break lectures from 12:05 until 12:55, where you will explore the fascinating world of landscape archaeology. Session being held on Wednesday 15 January.



Any questions? Please ask

For questions about ClfA or careers please email anna.welch@archaeologists.net or for membership enquiries contact membership@archaeologists.net.

The membership team (Lianne and Ellen) are there to assist you through the process, so it is not cheating to ask them a question or voice any concerns you may have, no matter how small you think they are.

You'll get a confidential answer but if the information could help others it will be included in an anonymised FAQs section.



Anna Welch ACIfA, Professional Development & Practice Coordinator

Ellen McNamara PCIfA, Membership Services Coordinator