



Chartered
Institute for
Archaeologists

Professional pathways March 2023 bulletin Aim for Associate

Welcome to the latest edition of Professional pathways for people who are working towards [Associate applications](#). This edition will look at how you can provide examples of your own skills and map them to those required by the competence matrix. 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. Accredited professionals agree to work towards the [CifA Code of conduct](#) which promotes and supports working in an ethical and professional way. CifA is in the process of reviewing its Code of conduct and would like you to take part in the consultation [which you can find here](#). Your views will help to decide what the Code looks like and how, as professional archaeologists, we want to work.

In this bulletin:

- Competence matrices and ‘perception of professional context’
- Making a statement for success
- What can you do next?

Competence matrices and ‘perception of professional context’.

All applications for professional accreditation are assessed against the [main competence matrix](#) so you will need to match your skills and knowledge to that. You can find out more about the difference between Practitioner and Associate grades on the [Professional Pathways webpage](#). In addition, there are a number of [specialist matrices](#) that might help to guide you if you work in one of these areas. These have been developed by the [CifA special interest groups](#). It will help the committee if you mention that you’ve used a specialist matrix to understand where your skills and competence can be mapped to the main matrix.



Understanding how your job role and career planning fits in with the sector as a whole contributes to your ‘perception of professional context’ and using the matrices illustrates how you can show evidence of this. One way to understand how your work relates to the wider historic environment sector is to be aware of the latest work that is going on. You can step outside your immediate skillset and knowledge base, as well as boosting your CPD, by taking a look at the [recorded content on the CifA website](#). You can find workshops, webinars and five years-worth of CifA Conference sessions

Making a statement for success

Here Lisa Brown and Simon Woodiwiss, both members of the Validation committee, give pointers on how to show your skills and competence to best advantage in your application.

The Statement of Competence is a key part of any application to join ClfA. It is the first thing that the validation committee will read, our first introduction to you. It allows us to gain an insight into your experience in the archaeology sector, the roles that you have undertaken, and the skills that you have gained as a result of this work. The most important thing with this statement, is to demonstrate that you have of the skills and experience for Associate (ACIfA) accreditation. Don't just tell us; show us through examples!



The competence matrix is your best friend here. The validation committee will compare what you have told us, together with the evidence that you send, against the correct level of accreditation. Use this to your advantage and make sure that your examples show us how you meet each of the criteria within the matrix.

Remember, as it states on the ClfA website, all applications are assessed against the main competence matrix, with the specialist matrices being advisory only. If you do use a specialist matrix, (and we encourage you to do so where it is appropriate because they can help to frame your specialist skills in the right way), don't forget the main matrix! Make sure that you also compare your statement against the main matrix before you submit your application and make any necessary tweaks or additions to ensure that you meet the criteria in both. This shouldn't be a lengthy task as the specialist matrices are written with the main one in mind, it is just a final check before submitting your application and, are a useful pointer for the sorts of items to include.

To get the most out of your examples, you can use the STAR approach to their description: situation, task, action and result.

- First, give a brief description of your chosen example (situation), to set the scene and help the validation committee to understand why this example has been chosen to demonstrate a particular competence.
- Then move on the task; what are the aims of the project and describe the tasks that need to be undertaken.
- You should then move on to describing your specific role in delivering these objectives. This is especially useful when you are working as part of a large team, it gives you the opportunity to pull out your specific actions within that team, and how you contributed to the outcome. Don't fall into the trap of describing what the team did, we want to know what you did.
- Finally, you round off by telling us the results of the project, and how your actions contributed to this.

You can find more about the [STAR system here](#).



The easiest applications to read, understand and assess, are those that have a clear structure and link directly to the matrix. Detailed statements (this doesn't necessarily mean long!) can also avoid having to come back to you for more information, or indeed, can help us to know what additional information to ask for, if we just need a little more before we can say yes. The last thing to remember is that your discussion must cover your activity for the last two years and sometimes this can be more than one job.

Before you start to discuss your job/education in relation to the matrix, give us a bullet point list of your roles and responsibilities, this gives context to the competencies that you will discuss. Job descriptions can be different between companies and in different countries, so it is good for us to know exactly what you do. A bullet point list is perfectly acceptable. You may be able to cut and paste from your job description but, make sure it still makes sense.

For the body of the statement itself, there are a couple of different but effective structures that we see:

- The first is to separate out the competencies into headings under your job description: knowledge, autonomy, coping with complexity and perception of professional context. Then discuss how the work that you undertake demonstrates that you meet each of these competencies. Use specific examples as part of this, choose and describe a project which clearly shows that you meet the criteria – even better if this corresponds to one of the pieces of work that you have submitted in support of your application. The guidance on specialist competencies relevant to your fields of expertise also contains useful examples.

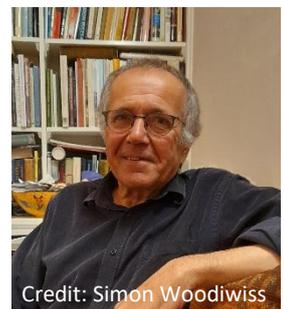
A second is to have a single statement that incorporates all of your work and which is written more as a narrative. This has worked well for applicants that have had quite a few recent jobs as it allows us to focus on the work which is most current. The thing to keep in mind is that you continue to make it clear which competencies (drawing on the main and specialist competence guidance) you are meeting (some applicants put it is bold) and continue to use examples to show us that you have the skills you are claiming.

Dr Lisa Brown MCI^fA is Archaeological Science Manager at Historic Environment Scotland and Simon Woodiwiss MCI^fA is now retired.

For more information about how to use examples of your work see [the competence matrix performance criteria](#). There is also a [short YouTube recording](#) (8.32 minutes) to help you with your application.



Credit: Lisa Brown



Credit: Simon Woodiwiss

What can you do next?

If you feel ready to put in your application you can find all the resources you need on [our Join pages](#).

The next application deadline for Associate (ACI^fA) applications is 19 June, to be reviewed at the committee meeting on 11 July. Find out how to apply here <http://archaeologists.net/join/acifa>.

ACIfA accreditation: a step-by-step guide is a short digital workshop starting at 5pm on 14 June. It is aimed at anyone currently working on an application or upgrade for ACIfA accreditation with CIfA. This session is geared towards those who have questions about the application process and there are [more details and information about how to book here](#) (spaces are limited).

We're continuing our Zoom digital breaks in rotating morning, lunchtime and evening time slots. Look out for the registration link on the website and in your e-mail. 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

You can build on your knowledge and skills by looking out for training opportunities and two that you can book now are

23 May Practising ethical competence in archaeology

Using case studies developed from real-life experiences in archaeological practice, the scenarios in this interactive workshop will allow participants to explore what happens when different roles in commercial fieldwork have conflicting motivations, and the ethical dimensions of going beyond the contract when that happens. There are [more details here](#).



27 June & 5 July Where do you start with Standards? Introducing the building blocks for your career in professional archaeology

This CPD workshop will introduce the suite of CIfA Standard and guidance documents, highlighting their importance to the profession and providing an opportunity to discuss example scenarios. The latter will help to demonstrate how the Standards and guidance should be incorporated into the work you are already undertaking or will be undertaking as you pursue a career in archaeology. You can find more details about the workshops and other training opportunities [on our events page](#).

Any questions or suggestions?



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. If you suggestions for the next bulletin please send them in.

Handwritten signatures of Anna Welch and Lianne Birney.

Anna Welch BA MA ACIfA, Professional Development & Practice Coordinator

Lianne Birney BA MCIfA, Membership Manager