

Spotlight on the *Code of conduct*: professional ethics in archaeology

What is it?

The *Code of conduct* is the second most important document to the Royal Charter and bylaws in the suite of ClfA governance documents.

The *Code* sets out the rules that tell a professional archaeologist how to behave in accordance with our shared values. Written by archaeologists for archaeologists, the rules in the *Code* ensure that all accredited professionals meet their responsibilities to work in the public interest.

The ethical principles of the *Code of conduct*, under which the rules sit, cover

- high standards of ethical and responsible behaviour
- conservation of the historic environment
- conducting work in such a way that reliable information about the past may be acquired
- making available the results of archaeological work
- recognising the aspirations of employees, colleagues, and helpers

Why do we need a *Code of conduct*?

The Institute was established in 1982 because of a rapid increase in the number of employed archaeologists. Archaeologists agreed there was a need for a body to be responsible for the establishment and maintenance of professional standards in archaeology.

Approaches to the regulation of archaeology varies around the world. There are different laws and government policies depending on where you are. For example, in much of the world, archaeology can only be undertaken under a licence – though the scope of the licence and the criteria for obtaining it vary widely – but in England, Scotland and Wales archaeology is essentially unregulated by law.

The *Code of conduct* provides archaeologists with higher ethical standards than the law, and our Standards and guidance set out higher technical requirements and expectations. They apply universally and we use these to regulate ourselves and how archaeology is delivered.

What does this mean for ClfA members?

Although we hope that any archaeologist would look to follow the rules in the *Code of conduct*, only ClfA-accredited archaeologists (Members, Associates and Practitioners) have made a professional commitment to comply with the *Code*. They have voluntarily entered into a contract with the Institute (ie with all of their professional peers) to apply the rules in the *Code* wherever they work and to use them to guide ethical decision making.

The recent changes to our accreditation assessment procedures have introduced a stronger emphasis on professional ethics. All applicants now need to demonstrate they understand their ethical responsibilities, and the rules set out in the *Code*. This is provided through the information they submit with their application, and through a professional interview at Member (MClfA) level.

As well as agreeing to work in accordance with the *Code*, accredited archaeologists are also accountable for their actions if it is believed they have not complied with the *Code*. This process is set out in our Professional Conduct Regulations.



The logo for ClfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) is displayed in a large, light purple font. The letters 'C', 'I', and 'A' are in a bold, sans-serif typeface, while the 'f' is in a more elegant, cursive script.

How does the **Code** relate to the Standards and guidance?

The rules in the *Code* purposely lack detail so that they can be applied wherever a professionally accredited archaeologist is working. They focus on how we might behave in different circumstances, for example:

A member shall ensure that the record resulting from their work is prepared in a comprehensible, readily usable and durable form.

A member shall not offer advice, make a public statement, or give legal testimony involving archaeological matters, without being as thoroughly informed on the matters concerned as might reasonably be expected.

To support archaeologists in meeting the ethical requirements in the *Code*, ClfA has produced a range of Standards documents with accompanying guidance. These start to provide much more detail on how archaeology should be delivered, including for field evaluation, archiving or archaeological advice by historic environment services, and bring in the technical detail which supports ethical practice.

Alongside the Standards and guidance, ClfA also provides policy statements and good practice guidance for specific areas of work, for example in delivering public benefit, working with students and volunteers, or managing digital data.

Archaeologists use these Standards, guidance, policy and good practice guidance to help them comply with the rules set out in the *Code*.

As ClfA accreditation is adopted more widely around the world, we need to update and develop these documents to ensure they are applicable and appropriate in countries seeking ClfA's influence and experience, and where we can make a difference.

Find out more

Find out more about professional ethics and applying the ethical principles contained in the *Code of conduct* on our resources for professional ethics web page (<https://www.archaeologists.net/membership/ethics>)

Find our Standards and guidance documents and policy statements on the website at www.archaeologists.net/codes/cifa. This page includes further spotlight articles on some of our Standards and guidance, and on the professional conduct process.



Code of conduct: professional ethics in archaeology

- defines the **rules** that tell a professional archaeologist how to behave in accordance with our shared values
- application of the **ethical requirements** in the *Code* is supported by Standards, guidance, policy and good practice guidance



Standard

- the Standard sets out the **required** outcome of the archaeological 'product' and/or activity eg field evaluation or archaeological advice
- supported by **guidance** demonstrating how to deliver the Standard



Policy statements

- provide additional **advice** to support adherence to the *Code* and/or standard(s)



Practice papers

- provide good practice **advice** to support the delivery of the standard(s) and/or *Code*