**Universal guidance for archaeological excavation**

**Clause definitions**

There are three colour coded clauses to be aware of that appear throughout the guidance, these mean different things when it comes to adherence to the Standard and applying the guidance. They are defined as follows

***Must*** – obligatory  
To ensure attainment of the Standard and adherence to the Code of conduct it will almost always be necessary to comply with a ‘must’ clause.

***Should*** - strongly advised (with deviations documented)  
Departures from ’should’ clauses require caution, and it is advisable to document the reasons.

***May***– suggested  
It is acknowledged that roles/processes/approaches may vary, so a ‘may’ clause is a suggestion for good practice.

1. **Compliance with the Standard for archaeological excavation**
   1. When undertaking an archaeological excavation, the *Standard for archaeological excavation* ***must*** be complied with. Failure to meet the Standard may be judged to conflict with the regulations by the Institute’s professional conduct procedure.
   2. This guidance describes universally applicable good practice for archaeological excavation, setting out how the profession currently anticipates that the *Standard for archaeological excavation* may be met, and the *Code of conduct* complied with. If the work undertaken fails to meet the *Standard for archaeological excavation* because of the way in which it was conducted, the Standard has not been met and the work undertaken is ‘sub-standard’.
   3. This guidance outlines how outcomes or products required by the Standard can be attained and against which performance can be monitored. The archaeologist is left free to make a considered selection of appropriate established techniques and to develop new methods. However, it is strongly recommended that the universal guidance outlined in this document for archaeological excavation is followed to ensure compliance with the Standard.
   4. Due regard ***should***also be given to detailed guidance on archaeological excavation to ensure the work undertaken is in accordance with the legislation and policy of the country or jurisdiction of the place of work.
   5. Departures from the universally applicable or jurisdiction-specific guidance ***should*** be undertaken with caution. It is advisable to document the reasons for doing so and how the different approach will meet the Standard.
   6. Archaeological excavations take place for many reasons and in many circumstances: the Standard and this guidance apply to all of them.
   7. Professional practice is changing. New methods are being developed, and the circumstances in which archaeological work is commissioned and conducted are subject to changing legal, administrative, and ideological perspectives. Comments and recommendations on this document are welcome at any time.
2. **Project design**
   1. An archaeologist ***should***only undertake an archaeological excavation which is governed by a project design, as this is the tool against which performance, fitness for purpose, and achievement of the *Standard for archaeological excavation* can be measured.
   2. The project design author and/or project manager ***should***be a Member (MCIfA) of CIfA.
   3. A project design***may*** be produced in response to a brief, a document that outlines the circumstances to be addressed, with some indication of the scope of works that will be required.
   4. The project design***should*** set out the proposed scheme of investigation in enough detail that all *relevant parties* can understand what will be done, assess whether it is fit for purpose and check that it complies with any conditions or obligations. It ***should*** provide a benchmark against which the results of the work can be measured.
   5. The project design author ***should*** consider all available practicable methods of investigation and decide upon the most appropriate to meet the purpose of the work, seeking specialist advice where necessary.
   6. The project design ***should***outline the research aims and the author ***should***examine all appropriate resources.
   7. The research aims of the project as outlined in the project design ***may*** require revision following the post-excavation assessment. Even if the research aims remain unchanged, the identification of material which would merit further study will require the project design to be updated.
   8. In updating the project design, archaeologists ***should*** be aware of future research and/or resource management needs, together with requirements for the effective short- and long-term curation of the project archive (including retention/disposal considerations). The archaeologist ***should*** ensure that these are addressed and raised with the archaeological advisor or other relevant authorities.
   9. The project design ***should*** set out where and how the answers to the project’s research questions will be disseminated to different audiences, during and after implementation. The approach to dissemination and the level of detail reported ***should*** be proportionate to the significance of the asset: dissemination proposals ***should*** include a process for review.
   10. Health and safety issues, public liability, and commercial confidentiality, while important considerations, ***should*** not be used as a barrier to public engagement without clear justification.
   11. A project design ***should*** normally contain or cover the following, subject to country/jurisdiction specific requirements
3. non-technical summary
4. site location (including map) and descriptions
5. context of the project
6. geological and topographical background
7. archaeological and historical background
8. a statement on the relevant technical, research and ethical competences of the organisation undertaking the work
9. research aims of the project, including where appropriate explicit reference to existing research frameworks and objectives
10. methods of investigation, including sampling
11. arrangements for immediate conservation of artefacts
12. post-fieldwork assessment and analysis of project data
13. archiving strategy including reference to data management plans - strategy ***must***meet the *Standard for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* and ***should***conform to the universal guidance for archaeological archives
14. publication and dissemination proposals, detailing how the needs of relevant audiences will be met, including how the results may be usable for subsequent research
15. copyright
16. staffing, resources (excluding financial) and consideration of timescale
17. a statement on compliance with relevant professional ethical and technical standards (including data standards), legislation and appropriate guidance
18. a tailored statement on how public benefit will be delivered, including consideration of the potential for engagement and participation
19. health and safety considerations
20. reference to the environmental protection policy (including carbon reduction plan) applying to the project
21. monitoring procedures
22. contingency arrangements
    1. All those engaged in the project, including monitors and those commissioning work, ***should*** have read and understood the project design.
    2. The proposed project team ***should*** have access to suitable expertise to assess the significance of remains and any materials recovered and to undertake further analysis, if recommended during the post excavation assessment phase of the project. This assessment ***should*** include reference to relevant research frameworks.
    3. It is advisable for archaeological excavation projects to be governed by a written contract or agreement to which the project design ***may*** be attached.
    4. It is advisable to include statements on ownership of the paper and digital archive and copyright in a written contract or agreement.
23. **Project execution**
    1. Work ***should*** be undertaken in accordance with the project design. Any variations ***should*** be circulated and understood within the project team and agreed in writing by all relevant parties.
    2. Following (or where suitable during) fieldwork, the findings ***should*** be assessed against the project design to determine the extent to which the research aims have been met or could be met and to identify any new research questions to be incorporated in a post-excavation project design.
    3. It is the role of the archaeologist undertaking the work to define appropriate staff levels. Sufficient and appropriate resources (staff, equipment, accommodation etc) ***should***be used to enable the successful completion of the project in accordance with the project design. Any contingency elements ***should***be clearly identified and justified.
    4. Commissioning bodies and monitors ***should*** be advised that a reasonable degree of flexibility and professional judgement may be necessary to meet project objectives. It ***should*** be clear that the nature and scale of post-investigation analyses, publications and the archive will be tailored to the significance and research potential of the assets.
    5. A stable, ordered, accessible archive***must*** be prepared in accordance with the selection and deposition strategy, where applicable. See the *Standard for collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* and the corresponding guidance.
24. **Post excavation assessment**
    1. A post-excavation assessment report***should*** be produced and form part of the project archive. The level of detail required will depend on the quantity and complexity of data and the extent to which those factors have required additional study of the material to form a reliable assessment. The report***should*** include a statement of the quantity and perceived quality of the data in the site archive, a statement of the archaeological potential of the data to answer the project research aims, and recommendations on the analysis and data storage and curation requirements. See clause 4.5 for recommended report contents.
    2. Post excavation assessment and analysis ***should***be undertaken in accordance with the project design/post excavation project design. Any variations ***should*** be circulated and understood within the project team and agreed in writing by all relevant parties.
    3. Post-excavation assessment work ***must***be carried out by competent specialists, who have read and understood the project design. The level of assessment of artefacts and ecofacts ***should***be in accordance with the *CIfA Standard for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* and the corresponding guidance. The level of recording and analysis ***should***be appropriate to the research aims and purpose of the project. The post excavation manager***should*** be a member of CIfA (MCIfA).
    4. Data generated from post excavation assessment and/or analysis ***should*** be included in the project archive.
    5. A post excavation assessment report ***should*** normally include
25. Introduction
26. scope of the project (e.g. sites involved)
27. circumstances and dates of fieldwork and previous work
28. comments on the organisation of the report
29. Original research aims
30. Summary of the documented history of the site(s)
31. Interim statement on the results of fieldwork
32. Summary of the site archive and work carried out for assessment
33. site records: quantity, work done on records during post-excavation assessment
34. finds: factual summary of material and records, quantity, range, variety, preservation, work done during post-excavation assessment
35. environmental material: factual summary of human and animal bone, shell and each type of sample (e.g. bulk organic, dendrochronological, monolith), quantity, range, variety, preservation, work done on the material during post-excavation assessment
36. documentary records: list of relevant sources discovered, quantity, variety, intensity of study of sources during post-excavation assessment

Additional information will normally include:

1. supporting illustrations at appropriate scales
2. sufficient supporting data, tabulated or in appendices, and/or details of the contents of the project archive, to permit the interrogation of the stated conclusions
3. Potential of the data
4. a discursive appraisal of the extent to which the site archive might enable the data to meet the research aims of the project. Different classes of data ***should*** be discussed in an integrated fashion, sub-divided according to the research aims of the project
5. a statement of the potential of the data in developing new research aims, to contribute to other projects and to advance methodologies
6. A summary of the potential of the data in terms of local, regional, national and international importance
7. Updated project design/post-excavation project design
8. **Analysis, publication, and dissemination**
   1. Analysis, publication, and dissemination***should*** be undertaken in accordance with the post-excavation project design.
   2. Subject to the post-excavation project design, the publication report ***should***normally contain sufficient data and references to the project archive to permit interpretations to be challenged. Similarly, reports ***should*** normally integrate the results of specialist analysis with the site sequence, to ensure that important data are not overlooked, and an informative, interesting account is produced. The assistance of independent advisers ***may*** be sought to enhance academic quality.
   3. The archaeologist undertaking the work ***should*** respect the requirements of the client or commissioning body concerning confidentiality, but the archaeologist ***must*** emphasise their professional obligation to make the results of archaeological work available to the wider archaeological community within a reasonable time.
   4. Consideration***should*** be given to publicising the results of the project through a range of outlets, from conventional archaeological publications to, for example, site viewing platforms, interpretation panels and lectures, open days and school visits, radio and television programmes, videos and popular publications and the Internet. If following post-excavation assessment, it is agreed that this is not warranted, consideration ***should*** be given to the availability of the digital report to ensure that the results of the project are readily available to support future research and/or decisions about the site or asset.
   5. Subject to any reasonable contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the report ***should*** be submitted to an appropriate national or local record a reasonable timeframe.
   6. As stated in clause 3.5, a stable, ordered, accessible archive***must***be prepared in accordance with the selection and deposition strategy, where applicable. See the *Standard for collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* and the corresponding guidance.