

AC·CREDIT·ATION:

the action or process of officially recognising someone as having a particular status or being qualified to perform a particular activity

Lianne Birney MClfA (7472), Membership Manager, ClfA

Professional accreditation: what it means

ClfA accreditation is how archaeologists demonstrate to their clients, their employers, peers and the public that they have the knowledge, skills and integrity to meet professional standards and to deliver value to society. 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 ClfA *Code of conduct: professional ethics in archaeology* and the standards for technical competence form the basis of the competence matrix which all applications for accreditation are benchmarked against.

Being awarded professional accreditation by ClfA is a significant achievement for any individual. It is a recognisable indication to other professional archaeologists, clients and the public of your skills and your commitment to maintain and enhance these skills through continuing professional development. If you are ClfA-accredited, make sure you promote the letters you can use after your name to show that you have demonstrated your professional and ethical competence (PClfa, ACIfA, MClfA).

Professional accreditation application process

Previously the competence matrix did not include specific reference to the need to work in accordance with the *Code of conduct* and this is something we have sought to address. Following discussions with Advisory Council, the Board of

Directors agreed to amend the competence matrix to include consideration of professional ethics for accredited applications.

On 1 May 2022 we launched the new guidance for applicants, including changes to the criteria we assess applications against for PClfa, ACIfA and MClfA accredited grades. They now require applicants to demonstrate that they understand and work in accordance with the ClfA *Code of conduct: professional ethics in archaeology* and relevant ClfA Standards and guidance. The competence matrix outlines these areas and has been broken down into performance criteria to try to assist applicants in what to include in their applications to demonstrate the criteria.

At PClfa and ACIfA grades, applicants need to include these requirements in their statements of competence, supported by specific examples about their work, and for ACIfA to include evidence of this in the examples of work they provide, in their CPD records (where applicable) and by their references. Colleagues who write supporting references will also need to comment on this.

For applicants at MClfA grade, a professional review interview has been introduced, recognising the greater level of personal accountability required at this grade. This involves two panel members assessing ethical competence through a series of questions based on an applicant's statement of competence and examples of work. They report to the Validation committee, who continue to assess technical competence, and include the result of the review interview to help them reach a decision.



PCIfA

- good working knowledge within area of practice
- some responsibility for work using own judgement
- carries out some complex work under supervision
- perceives the importance of each role in the team
- understands the ethical *Code of conduct* and able to apply to own work
- upholds the values of the Institute to work in the public interest

Assessment through application:
statement of competence + two references

ACIfA

- high level of working knowledge within area of practice
- considerable responsibility for work in a variety of situations using own judgement
- carries out complex work within an established framework
- perceives the importance of their role within the team and the work
- understands the ethical requirements of *Code of conduct* and uses to guide and review own practice
- upholds and promotes the values of the institute to work in the public interest

Assessment through application:
statement of competence + two references + examples of work

MCIfA

- substantial knowledge within area of practice or specialism
- substantial responsibility for own work in a variety of situations
- significant accountability for others and/or allocation of resources, where applicable
- deals with and/or carries out complex work and decision-making in a broad range of complex, technical or professional activities or in highly skilled, specialist work
- perceives the importance of their role and the work within the team and within the sector
- demonstrates professional judgement and ethical behaviour across a wide variety of complex situations, supporting and encouraging others to do the same
- promotes the values of the Institute to work in the public interest with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders

Assessment through application:
statement of competence + two references + examples of work + professional review interview

We already have some useful resources to support ethical practice on our website (www.archaeologists.net/membership/ethics) and these are supplemented and supported with training where needed. We recommend signing up to the Professional pathways bulletins (www.archaeologists.net/join/pathway); the scheme provides structured resources to support members throughout their careers and to help them understand and meet the competence requirements for professional accreditation at the appropriate grade. We also run ethics workshops throughout the year and continue our free application workshops to help with applying.

After the new guidance was introduced we saw an initial drop off in the number of applications, but we have received a positive response to the changes in the process as more applicants successfully complete the process and become accredited or upgrade their accreditation. ClfA continually reviews its accreditation processes to keep up to date with any changes to the *Code of conduct* and Standards and guidance and continues work around barriers to accreditation to be more inclusive. The membership team are always happy to help applicants with the process and you can ask them anything. You can contact Lianne and Ellen at membership@archaeologists.net.

Part of the work around this development of the process helps to support the areas we want to improve in ClfA's strategic plan (www.archaeologists.net/mission). The introduction of ethical competence criteria and the professional review interview for Member applicants responds to feedback from members following the 2019 Chartered Archaeologist vote, highlighting the need for all grades of accreditation to be seen as ethically competent. The professional review process, in particular, brings us into line with professional competence assessment in allied sectors, ensuring that we can promote Members of ClfA as meeting professional criteria equivalent to those achieved by the chartered professionals they work alongside.

Therefore, by being able to demonstrate that professional archaeologists are **skilled, competent and comply** with professional standards, the Institute and the archaeological profession can assure clients that the work we carry out will meet their needs and the needs of the public. This inspires confidence in professional archaeology and in turn improves careers and attracts new people into the profession.