

Ethics and standards in international practice

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Even though most of us spend our time working in British archaeology, ClfA members may find themselves working anywhere in the world. While it should be obvious that familiarity with the relevant legal, policy and ethical standards of the country and context where the work is taking place is an absolute necessity, identifying and understanding them is not always straightforward. This short summary aims to introduce some of these standards and provide a brief overview of what might be required to achieve compliance.



All of our work takes place within the requirements of the different standards we are held to and which we hold ourselves to. We have our own personal ethics and values; the professional codes of conduct, ethics and practice we have signed up to such as the ClfA *Code of conduct and Standards*; the specific local legal frameworks of the country or region we are working in; the standards of international organisations such as ICOMOS and UNESCO; and the requirements of those funding the work, whether they are our direct client or not.

International standards and guidance can be primarily divided into two categories; those developed by international organisations and those developed by institutions supporting international development, which include financial lenders, governmental development and aid funds.

'Cultural heritage' for the purposes of this article is defined as

'artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance. It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile and underwater), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural and natural heritage artefacts, sites or monuments.'
(UNESCO)

The principles enshrined in UNESCO and ICOMOS charters underly much of our modern thinking on international conservation, heritage protection, standards and guidance. Alongside wider frameworks such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, these are essential reading, even if you do not agree with all of what they say.

If working in the EU and/or on EU-funded projects, then make sure to also consult relevant adopted EU charters and policies, such as the EU Policy for cultural heritage. When working in Council of Europe member states, Council of Europe culture and cultural heritage standards and conventions should be referred to.

Perhaps less familiar, however, are the additional standards which may be required by a client or lender. These can apply in the UK as well as when working in other countries, such as when the application of baseline and risk-management standards, such as the Equator Principles (2020), triggers the need for an assessment of environmental and social risk and the application of 'applicable standards'. On investor-funded infrastructure projects, the most commonly used are those developed by lender organisations to provide a multidisciplinary framework by which they are able to assess the impacts, effects and quality of work being undertaken, providing assurance to investors and addressing corporate social responsibility

considerations. These standards tend to cover a broad range of social and environmental disciplines, with cultural heritage forming only a small part of the overall assessment.

The best known and most widely referenced are the standards developed by the International Finance Corporation (IFC, part of the World Bank Group). The IFC Performance Standards (PS) on Environmental and Social Sustainability (2012) cover eight areas, with PS8 focusing on Cultural Heritage. The key points of IFC PS8 set out the need for the project to

- adhere to any applicable national legislation in addition to the project's specified standards
- demonstrate proactive identification of potential cultural heritage sites using a variety of appropriate methods
- retain competent professionals to advise the project, where applicable
- put in place appropriate mitigation and management plans for *known* and *unknown* cultural heritage
- ensure proper stakeholder identification, consultation with project-affected communities, and retention of access to local cultural heritage sites
- ensure ethical use of any project data

Projects directly funded by the World Bank may also use the World Bank Group Environmental and Social Standards (WBG

ESS, 2017). Other financial institutions with their own specific standards include the European Investment Bank (2022), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2019 & 2023), the Inter American Development Bank (2015), the Asian Development Bank (2023) and the African Development Bank.

Some standards require particular consideration of project effects on, for example, intangible heritage, economic outcomes and cultural justice. Organisations such as the UN Development Programme have published cultural heritage requirements (2021). The UN World Tourism Organisation and the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA) have produced a range of recommendations and good practice case studies.

Whilst many of the standards that you may be required to use will repeat boiler plate text from the IFC PS or the World Bank, there are always subtle differences between frameworks, and it is important to carefully check the standards you are

being asked to work towards or audit work against. Be aware that cultural heritage may not be limited to one standard (e.g. PS7 – Indigenous Peoples also references cultural heritage impacts) and it is crucial that specialists across different disciplines identify where their work may overlap. Most importantly, be open and transparent about the limitations of the information you have been able to gather, been provided with or have been asked to review.

ClfA has been undertaking a review of the structure and contents of the ClfA Standards and guidance. In December 2023, ClfA launched the newly updated fieldwork documents on archaeological excavation, archaeological field evaluation and archaeological monitoring and recording (formerly 'watching brief'). These documents follow a new structure where the Standard and guidance appear separately, with the focus being the delivery of universal information that can be applied by practitioners wherever they are working, alongside jurisdiction/ country-specific guidance like the examples in this article.



The UN World Tourism Organisation and the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA) recommendations booklet



Ruth Humphreys

Ruth has over 15 years' experience in the heritage sector, with a background in the archaeology of North and East Africa, and the Middle East. She has prepared a wide range of impact assessments for sites in the UK and abroad, as well as undertaking due diligence and compliance review on projects across Europe and Africa. She currently sits on the on the committee of ClfA's International Cultural Heritage Practice Group.

Coralie Acheson

Coralie Acheson is a principal heritage consultant at Arup, working on projects across the UK and internationally. She has worked on a range of projects, including Development Consent Orders, Environmental Impact Assessments, Heritage Impact Assessments, heritage strategies, feasibility studies and desk-based assessments, as well as working as a field archaeologist. Her academic research focused on the values of World Heritage Sites, specifically industrial World Heritage Sites, and their communication to tourists. Her specialist area relates to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and the concept of outstanding universal value.



Leonora O'Brien

Leo has worked on projects in over 30 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia. She has prepared archaeology and cultural heritage elements of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) studies, advising on the integration of heritage and tourism into masterplans and preparing design guidelines and heritage and tourism strategies. She has also led formal Heritage Impact Assessments for World Heritage properties. She carries out independent project evaluation to international financial institutions' standards and has reviewed heritage guidelines for the World Bank, EBRD and various state agencies. She co-founded ClfA's International Cultural Heritage Practice Group (IPSIG) in 2013 and is serving as chair 2021–2024.