

# SPOTLIGHT

## ON STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE

Where have we come from, where are we going and how can you help?

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In the previous issue of *The Archaeologist* (105) a new project focused on Standards and guidance was introduced as part of the feature entitled The Registered Organisation scheme: managing compliance and collaborating to maintain and improve standards. This project (Supporting the sector: professional pathways and standards) forms part of the Historic England National Capacity Building Programme and has two parts to it. The first part focuses on sector capacity and building professional pathways and is being implemented by Anna Welch (Professional Development & Practice Coordinator, ClfA). The second part focuses on professional standards and guidance and falls into my work remit. The primary objective of part two of the project is to develop existing professional standards and good practice guidance enabling a more skilled workforce that consistently works to professional standards. These standards will be embedded in modern professional practice and supported by guidance, case studies and training.

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### Where have we come from?

In order to look ahead to where we are going, it is important to look back and appreciate how far we have already come. The Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) was officially established in 1982. In the early 1990s the first five Standard and guidance documents were published and primarily focused on fieldwork. This reflected the implementation of PPG 16 in 1990 and the dramatic increase in developer-funded excavations. Over the course of the next 20 or so years the Institute evolved along with the profession; it changed its name to better reflect the wide variety of roles undertaken by archaeologists across the historic environment, published a more expansive suite of Standard and guidance documents and Professional Practice Papers (Table 1) and was awarded chartered status in 2014. ClfA has achieved a lot in 36 years, and it continues to develop, support, promote and advocate for a rapidly expanding and changing profession on behalf of its members, registered organisations and wider society. Archaeology in 2019 is a completely different prospect to archaeology in 1982, and as techniques and approaches to research and practice continue to develop apace, it is essential that the current Standard and guidance documents are future-proofed, remain up to date, fit for purpose and relevant to the work being undertaken.

### Where are we going?

There have been several projects undertaken over the last five years that have focused on aspects of archaeological practice or explored specific research themes. These include *What about Southport?* (Nixon 2017), *The World after PPG 16: 21st-century Challenges for Archaeology* (Wills 2018), *Paper 9: Discussion note on options for addressing the methodological issues raised by the Roman Rural Settlement Project* (Bryant 2016) and the *Review of the Standard of Reporting on Archaeological Artefacts in England* (Cattermole 2017). The results of these projects highlighted issues (both directly and indirectly) that relate to Standards and guidance, resulting in recommendations for their review/amendment. When viewed collectively these recommendations point towards four wider areas of action for ClfA to undertake to aid in the improvement of the Standard and guidance content, usability and recognition across the sector:

- 1 consistent rolling review/update
- 2 the continued promotion of accreditation and working to professional standards
- 3 training opportunities and communication
- 4 cross-sector collaboration

These actions align with the *Pointers for the next 25 years* for professional Standards and guidance as presented in the Southport review (Nixon 2017, 14):

- 1 individual chartership representing, among other things, a pledge and commitment to quality work based on agreed standards and guidance
- 2 growing sectoral leadership skills
- 3 managing the tension between demands for more tightly defined process standards than the ClfA outcome-based model, and the need to encourage innovation and creativity
- 4 responding to the challenges arising from the synthesis of information from developer-funded archaeological work for professional practice in the field and beyond

Table 1

The collective actions and pointers identified are presented in Figure 1 and illustrate the key areas that form the wider focus for this project beyond just ensuring the Standards and guidance are up to date and fit for purpose. These show where we are going and in order to make inroads, we need your help.

### How can you help?

Short answer – get involved – whether it is by answering a survey, joining a Special Interest Group or committee, attending an event or just emailing your feedback. The recent member survey contained several questions related to Standards and guidance yet just 20 per cent of the membership responded. We take the feedback seriously and must assume it is representative of the wider membership, but if you're not seeing the changes

## Standards and guidance

- Standard and guidance for archaeological advice by historic environment services
- Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives
- Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures
- Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials
- Standard and guidance for commissioning work on, or providing consultancy advice on, archaeology and the historic environment
- Standard and guidance for desk-based assessment
- Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation
- Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation
- Standard and guidance for forensic archaeologists
- Standard and guidance for geophysical survey
- Standard and guidance for nautical archaeological recording and reconstruction
- Standard and guidance for stewardship for the historic environment
- Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief

## Professional practice papers

- Updated guidelines to the standards for recording human remains – Piers D Mitchell and Megan Brickley, 2017
- An introduction to professional ethics – Gerry Wait, 2017
- Professional archaeology: a guide for clients – ClfA 2015
- An introduction to providing career entry training in your organisation – ClfA, 2014
- An introduction to drawing archaeological pottery, revised edition – Lesley Collett, 2017
- Employing people with disabilities: good practice guidance for archaeologists – Tim Phillips and John Creighton, 2010
- Disaster management planning for archaeological archives – Kenneth Aitchison, 2004
- Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains – Megan Brickley and Jacqueline I McKinley, 2004
- Archaeological reconstruction: illustrating the past – John Hodgson 2001
- Crypt archaeology: an approach – Margaret Cox, 2001
- Technical paper: Excavation and post excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed human remains – Jacqueline I McKinley and Charlotte Roberts, 1993

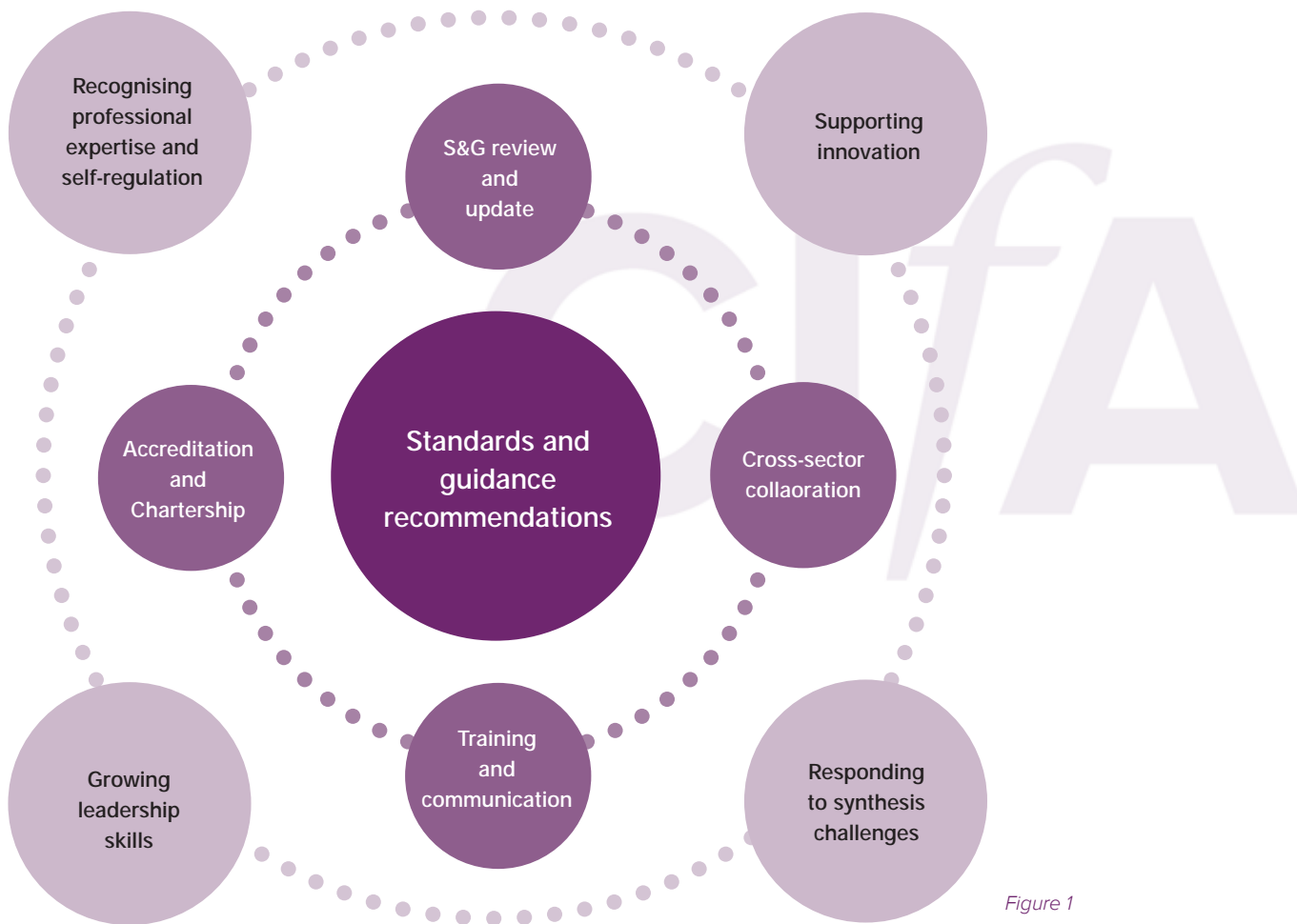


Figure 1

you desire implemented then please get involved somehow and let us know. Not all feedback can be actioned, but we will listen, and we will try our best to accommodate it, where feedback reveals a need for changes to be made. That’s our pledge to you. The Standards and guidance exist to support you as professionals, and to ensure that work is undertaken to high ethical and professional standards. In the Southport review, Nixon concluded that ‘the Standards and guidance now in place represent the most robust infrastructure we have yet had’ (Nixon 2017, 13). Despite this, the survey results demonstrate that there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of their consistent use and application: less than half of the members who completed our member survey said they referred to Standards and guidance frequently, with 13 per cent either referring to them just once, never or not sure what they were. Free text comments varied but the general themes focused on concerns regarding the policing of below-standard practice, enforcement, terminology confusion and out-of-date documents. This feedback will be addressed as part of the actions highlighted in Figure 1.

**What are we doing?**

2019 is going to be a busy year! In line with the actions highlighted in Figure 1, there will a mixture of updates, CPD training opportunities, and communication/promotion on the agenda. A full review of the Standards and guidance documents is currently underway, in addition to

several projects involving the ClfA Special Interest Groups and Historic England. We will also be working and consulting closely with ALGAO and FAME. Collectively this work will result in a raft of changes to the content and format of the Standards and guidance over the course of the year. Digital versions of the Standards and guidance (using a format similar to the online version of *The Archaeologist*) will be launched to sit alongside the traditional pdf versions. The aim is to increase usability, improve document navigation and ensure information can be accessed and viewed more easily using a variety of devices. The *Spotlight on Standards* feature that has been appearing in recent issues of *The Archaeologist* will continue to provide brief recaps of specific Standards, as well as case studies related to their implementation across the sector. CPD training workshops (like the recent DBA workshop – see page 16), seminars and consultations will be taking place in 2019 and beyond. This includes a special workshop on Standards and guidance at the 2019 ClfA annual conference in Leeds. These events provide a way for members and non-members to get involved and gain some valuable CPD – keep an eye on your inboxes for further information. In terms of communication and to keep members informed of updates and project progress, a new Standards and guidance bulletin will be launched.

In the meantime, if you have any comments or feedback you can contact me by email at [jen.parkerwooding@archaeologists.net](mailto:jen.parkerwooding@archaeologists.net)