

ASSESSED PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE (APC) ROUTE TO CHARTERED STATUS

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

Introduction

Assessed Professional Competence (APC) is a route to Chartered status designed for senior professionals in forestry and arboriculture. It requires the demonstration of both relevant experience over a minimum of 15 years and the exercise of senior responsibility over at least five of those years. *It is not the standard route to Chartered status*, and guidance on the standard route, Professional Membership Entry (PME), should be read before applying through APC. Information on PME can be found on our website, charteredforesters.org.

In applying to become a Chartered Forester or Chartered Arboriculturist you must satisfy the Institute that you have the appropriate professional and technical experience to warrant engaging in and contributing towards the profession of forestry and arboriculture.

There can be no precise definition of what makes someone a 'senior' professional. The APC route was designed to offer a way into membership for highly respected practitioners with influence in our industry and although you must have a minimum of 15 years experience to qualify for the route, experience alone does not necessarily make you senior.

To become a Chartered member of ICF every applicant must achieve a set of competencies reflecting his/her professional discipline. But there are three extra competencies that only APC applicants have to achieve. To apply under the APC route you need to demonstrate that:

- You have achieved a position of leadership in your profession or organisation, being responsible for the strategic management of your own work and usually that of colleagues.
- Your opinions are respected by others such that you are an acknowledged authority or an established name in your field.
- Your professional influence extends beyond your normal day to day work environment.

The Process

Assessment

The Institute's Examination Board will appoint an assessment panel to make recommendations to it on each individual application for membership. Your application will be assessed by two senior panel members, and if the application meets the requirements you will be invited to attend a competency-based interview, conducted by ICF assessors.

If the assessment panel does not put you forward for an interview we will advise you which of our other routes to membership might suit you better.

The APC assessment panel's standards are high. This Guidance should be read carefully to understand exactly what we are looking for. It may be useful to see some illustrative examples of the standard we expect. These are listed in Annex A of the Guidance.

Verification

Your application must be verified by three individuals, one of whom must be a Chartered member of the Institute. Together your verifiers will be expected to corroborate the information you have provided in the application form.

Interview

During the interview, you will spend 45-50 minutes with a panel of senior ICF members experienced in assessing APC applicants. The interview will involve questioning of your career history, particularly the Responsibility Profile, discussion of your Case Study and your understanding of professional ethics. The questioning is designed to allow applicants to explain, develop and expand on their written submission and to give them the opportunity to show their wider professionalism.

Notification

Following your interview, the Exam Board will make a recommendation to the Institute's Council that you receive either a pass or a referral. If you are successful you will be awarded professional membership of the Institute and will be notified by the Membership Secretary within a few weeks of your interview.

In the event of a referral, the Exam Board Chair will write to you with more detail, giving guidance on areas of concern so that you will be better prepared for a future interview.

Your right of appeal

If you are referred, you may appeal against that decision. You will have six weeks from the date of the confirmation results letter from ICF to make an appeal. More information on the appeal procedure can be found in Annex B.

Resubmission

A total of two submissions can be made through the APC route, therefore if referred one resubmission only will be accepted. There is no time limit on resubmission to APC.

If candidates have previously attempted to gain chartered status through the Professional Membership Entry route and failed, a minimum of five years must have passed since the year of their last PME submission before they attempt to gain entry through the APC route. This is to ensure that candidates develop, mature and gain the required degree of seniority to meet the APC requirements.

Fees

The total fee for the assessment of the application is £750, payable in two parts in advance:

Assessment of the application:	£250
Interview:	£500

The completed Application Form must be sent by post and accompanied by a cheque or BACS payment for £250 in payment of the assessment fee. The remaining fee will be requested if invited to interview.

Deadline for Applications

Applications can be submitted at any time throughout the year. Those received before 1 August in any year will be assessed and, if invited, will be interviewed in November that year. If sufficient applications have been received before 1 April in any year, interviews will also take place in May/June of that year.

The Application form

ICF is a professional organisation which prides itself on high standards. Present your application in a way that will impress, such as the standard you would expect to see in a good professional report. The application is not a form-filling exercise – the assessing panel sets a high benchmark for these applications. Handwritten forms will not be accepted.

A: Personal Details

1. All communication regarding your application will be considered by the Institute as confidential to be used for the purpose of assessing your application for Professional Membership of the Institute. If your application is successful, some of the data provided will be entered in the Institute's computerised membership database which is held subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. Your membership application will be held on file during your term of membership.

2. The postal address that you provide will be used for all correspondence and, for successful applicants, will determine the Regional Group of the Institute to which you will be allocated.

B: Qualifications

3. Please list in date order all substantial post-secondary school qualifications, but do not include in this section technical training and certificates of competence.
4. This part should also include any Institute of Chartered Foresters or other professional body examinations undertaken and passed.
5. If you are in any doubt as to the relevance of the qualification please include them.
6. Include all qualifications whether from a UK or an overseas institution.
7. Please attach initialled copies of any certificates. Do **not** send originals. The Institute reserves the right to ask for original certificates if deemed necessary. The Institute will take due care of all documentation submitted and received with your application, but takes no responsibility for loss of any certificates or other documentation once they have been dispatched to you.

C: Professional Membership

8. If you are a member of any professional institution please state the institute's name and indicate your membership class with dates of joining. If you have held any posts or received awards please note them here.

D: Additional Vocational Activities

9. Please include membership of associations and any bodies which you consider relevant in support of your application. Please note that this should include both UK and overseas experience and membership of appropriate organisations.

E: Professional Activities

10. Please include any involvement outside your employment which you feel will support your application. For example, you might include involvement in other organisations or articles you have had published. List here any public or other appointments held, with the length of service and role/s held.

F: Learning and Development

11. Describe how you have used your Continuing Professional Development activities to improve your career and increase professionalism, knowledge and/or commercial opportunities, giving examples of recent courses or events attended. A CPD record is **not** required.

G: Career History

12. You should include employment details for the last **fifteen years** and account for any significant gaps in continuity of employment. You should also describe in a summary format, the key activities and responsibilities relevant to your job together with any key projects undertaken which you consider to be of relevance to your application. You should also indicate at what level and to what depth the work was carried out.
13. The experience you can claim is the time you have spent in management positions in relevant forestry, arboriculture or related disciplines. This can include any employment before college/university or placement years provided you can show that you were acting in a supervisory or management role. Some portion of the total experience may be in disciplines related to forestry/arboriculture but not covered by the Competency Areas by which the Institute defines forestry and arboriculture (see para 17). All the claimed experience at senior level, however, must be in these areas.

14. Experience may be gained in any part of the world. In addition, applications from professionals other than forestry and arboriculture professionals whose experience is wide-ranging and relevant will be considered on their individual merits.
15. This work must be corroborated by your Verifiers as explained in paragraph 20 of these Guidance Notes, and the Institute reserves the right to ask your corroborators for further supporting evidence.

H: Responsibility Profile

16. In this section, you are asked to describe, in up to 300 words each, how you match each of the three criteria for seniority. You should provide sufficient information to enable the assessment panel to judge the quality and level of your work and demonstrate that you have been carrying out work at this level for at least five years.

The three criteria for seniority are:

- that you have achieved a position of leadership in your profession or organisation, being responsible for the strategic management of your own work and usually that of colleagues.
- that your opinions are respected by others such that you are an acknowledged authority or an established name in your field.
- that your professional influence extends beyond your normal day to day work environment.

I: Competency Areas

17. Although senior professionals may be concentrating on management in their work, ICF needs to be assured that applicants have an appropriate level of technical and professional competence. To ensure correct assessment and examination you will need to define your range of expertise by nominating one or more of the Competency Areas set out below:

- Business and Management Skills
- Forestry and Woodland Management
- Arboriculture and/or Urban Woodland Management
- Environment, Biodiversity and Wildlife Management
- Recreation Management and Planning
- Public Consultation and Participation
- Tree Nursery Management
- Harvesting, Marketing and Utilisation
- Forest Engineering
- Timber Conversion
- Policy Development and Strategic Planning
- Forestry and/or Arboricultural Research
- Forestry and/or Arboricultural Teaching

18. It is mandatory for all applicants, both senior and those applying through the Professional Membership Entry, to be proficient in Competency Area 'Business and Management Skills'. It will be assumed by the assessment panel that you have skills in Business and Management and you will be asked to demonstrate this at interview.

J: Case Study

19. Here you are asked to write a case study to demonstrate your competence and experience. You are recommended to select a project in which you have played a leading role in terms of strategy, management decision making, problem-solving, and, if appropriate, client relationship management. You must then describe in 500-700 words:

- a brief overview of the key issues
- your role/personal involvement
- an outline of some of the problems faced and the experience used to resolve these problems
- a note of the outcome and successful delivery with emphasis on the role you played

K: Verification

20. Your application must be verified by three individuals who have personal knowledge of the work you have described. Your verifiers should be in senior positions.
21. One of your verifiers must be a Professional Member or Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Foresters (a full members list is available on our website www.charteredforesters.org). The persons providing the verification should be in a position to give the Institute any additional information in support of your professional achievements if asked. Each verifier will not be expected to corroborate all details of your professional life but together should provide full verification of your career and other professional activities.

L: Applicant's Declaration

22. You must complete and sign this part of the application form. If elected to become a member, you agree to be bound by the Institute's Charter, Bylaws and Regulations, which includes the Institute's Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct. These can be found on www.charteredforesters.org

M: Other Information

23. The form should be completed in digital format, printed, signed and verified, then posted to:

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL - APC
 Institute of Chartered Foresters
 59 George Street
 Edinburgh
 EH2 2JG

together with copies of any relevant certificates and a cheque or BACS payment for £250 made out to 'Institute of Chartered Foresters'. Your application will be assessed more quickly if you can also submit an electronic copy to membership@charteredforesters.org

Electronic copies on their own will not be accepted.

24. If you have any queries please contact a member of the ICF team:

T: 0131 240 1425

E: icf@charteredforesters.org

Or visit the ICF website at charteredforesters.org

Please note that the staff of the Institute cannot offer help or guidance as to what constitutes suitable qualifications or professional experience.

Annex A Illustrative Examples

1. **Keith J** works for a forest management company. After a period acting as deputy to a senior manager, he took over the responsibility for a number of clients and seven years ago was promoted to oversee the work of two colleagues. He has established a reputation within his company for resolving complex issues with difficult clients and has developed an in-house training course on this issue. He sits on a number of the Company's management committees and is secretary of the local branch of the Forestry Society.
2. **Linda K** is the senior arboricultural officer with staff responsibilities in an inner-city borough. She set out to introduce a new tree record system and to bring the training and expertise of the team she inherited up to an acceptable level. She has written about the new tree record system in a professional journal and, as a result, was invited to give a presentation at an Arboricultural Association meeting. In her own Council, she was asked to take the lead in developing a greenspace strategy and has chaired a committee on open space within the borough.
3. **Michael L** worked as a manager with a forestry company before setting up his own consultancy and management company. The company has grown and he now employs another qualified manager. His clients range from farmers to one significant investment company. He has a particular interest in wildlife and sits on the management committee of a Local Nature Reserve.
4. **Nora M** started as an arboricultural officer for a rural authority and then worked for eight years in a large tree management company. For the past five years, she has been working alone as an arboricultural consultant. Her clients include a number of small local authorities and she has taken on the management of the parkland trees around a large stately home. She has been invited to lead gardening societies and a recent ICF study tour around the estate. She sits on one of the Arboricultural Association committees and is active in the Garden History Society.
5. **Malcolm O** worked for VSO for a number of years and then was a teaching assistant in a university for three years. Ten years ago he joined an agricultural college as lecturer in surveying and biometrics for foresters in which role he had to develop courses in both subjects and an advanced level statistics course. Recently the college decided to introduce a new degree in arboriculture and he sat on the curriculum development committee and chaired an important sub-committee. He also took the lead in establishing a student forestry and arboricultural association. Last year he was invited to join the Trees and Timber Industry Group of LANTRA.
6. **Olive P** was a volunteer with an NGO in India and then was recruited by a company specialising in aid projects overseas. Over the past twelve years, she has worked in a number of other countries and was project leader on a farm-forestry scheme in Zambia. Her company regards her expertise on social issues as an important factor in landing contracts. She has been invited to speak to a number of conferences and attended the last World Forestry Congress.
7. **Paul Q** obtained a PhD in forestry and was first a research assistant and then lecturer in a university with a reputation for work on forest ecology. Initially, he worked as part of an established team but eventually was successful with a grant application that enabled him to start a research team of his own. He has managed to keep this team funded over the past eight years. His name has been included on a number of papers in peer-reviewed journals, the last five of which he was lead author. He has made presentations at two international conferences and a number of meetings in the UK. For the past three years, he has sat on the department's research committee.

Annex B Appeals procedure

1 Principle

An Applicant who is denied professional membership may appeal against that decision if he or she believes one of the following applies:

- That the assessors have given insufficient weight to extenuating circumstances
- That the Applicant's performance was adversely affected by extenuating circumstances which the Applicant, for good reason, was unable to make known to the assessors
- That there was, in the view of the Applicant, a material administrative error at a stage in the assessment process, or that some material irregularities occurred
- That the assessment procedure was not conducted in accordance with the Guidance given

2 The Appeal Board

The Appeal Board will comprise (i) the Chairman of the Examination Board, (ii) another senior Chartered Member with experience of acting as an assessor, but who has not previously assessed the Applicant and (iii) a Chartered Member of the Institute who, at the time of the assessment under appeal had no direct involvement in the Institute's entry procedures. No member of the Appeal Board will have a direct interest in the appellant's case.

The powers of the Appeal Board are:

- To determine the validity of the grounds for the appeal. The appeal will not proceed if the Board does not deem the grounds of appeal to be valid.
- To uphold the appeal based on the evidence presented and to refer the matter back to the Examination Board.
- To turn down the appeal and to uphold the original decision of the Assessors.

The Appeal Board may seek a report on any aspect of the administrative arrangements for the Assessed Professional Competence process from the Secretary of the Institute and on the conduct of the interview.

The Appeal Board will meet to determine the appeal before them. Their determination of the Appeal will be based on the evidence before them.

In the event that the Appeal Board upholds an appeal, the Chairman of the Appeal Board will take immediate action to reconsider the appellant's Assessed Professional Competence result. The appellant will be advised of the form of this reconsideration within 14 days of the Appeal Board hearing.

The decision of the Appeal Board will be final.

Appeals should be lodged with the Secretary, Institute of Chartered Foresters at 59 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2JG within six weeks of notification of their results.