

Associate Membership Information Guide

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Associate Membership of the Institute of Chartered Foresters is available to those who have completed their initial professional education and are planning to work towards chartered status.

1.2 The most common route to Associate membership is through completion of an accredited course¹. Alternatively, those who have a degree, relevant experience and/or a postgraduate qualification in an area related to forestry or arboriculture may also apply for Associate membership.

1.3 Others may have decided on a change of career and are already working in the sector with unrelated degree-level qualifications and wish to gain a professional qualification in forestry or arboriculture.

1.4 Associate membership can be held for a maximum of 10 years. This can be continuous or cumulative membership but all Associates are expected to submit for PME within this timeframe.

1.5 This document contains:

- details of the entry points system
- Summary of the Professional Membership Entry
- fees
- case studies (Appendix 1)

2.0 Associate Level Entry Points

2.1 New entrants to Associate membership must achieve eight points before enrolling for the Institute's Professional Membership Entry (PME). In addition to the points allocated to a qualification, one point may be awarded for each year of relevant supervisory or management experience² up to a maximum of four points.

2.2 Associates members will then need to gain a further two qualifying points accrued by virtue of working at an appropriate level within the arboricultural and/or forestry professions, in order to submit for the assessment stage of the PME. These final two years of professional work experience must be a documented self-assessment that requires verification and supported by a professional diary.

2.3 It is not essential, although it would normally be expected, that an individual has been an Associate member for a minimum of two years prior to submitting for the final stage of the Institute's PME. The two year work record *can* be completed retrospectively if the applicant has the required 10 points through qualifications and experience.

2.4 The following system has been designed to help Associates determine the relevance of their qualifications in meeting the Institute's requirements for membership at Associate level. In common with other chartered professional bodies and as bound by its

Regulations, the ICF requires that the educational attainment of an Associate embarking on PME is at degree level or equivalent.

2.5 In drawing up this system the Institute recognises and welcomes the wide range of qualifications available, and the importance of vocational and applied education, training and experience. In addition it

¹ A full list of accredited courses is shown on our website www.charteredforesters.org

² At a maximum rate of one point per full year in a supervisory or management position.

does not distinguish between the modes of delivery (full-time, part-time, distance learning etc.) of the qualification but is based upon the final award.

2.6 Points awarded on the basis of academic qualifications are given in Table 1. Associates must have a minimum of 4 points gained from educational qualifications to undertake the PME. The Institute will be proactive in accrediting new courses with a significant arboricultural and/or forestry content. For qualifications not accredited applicants must carry out a self assessment.

Table 1: Routes to PME

Educational qualification	Points from qualification	Minimum points from relevant professional experience
Accredited ³ BSc (Hons)	8	2
Accredited BSc (ordinary) degree	7	3
Accredited MSc	5/6 ⁴	5/4
Accredited FdSc, HND & PG Diploma	5	5
Other BSc (Hons)/BA (Hons) or MSc/MA awarded by a recognised HEI	4	6

2.7 The Institute's Professional & Educational Standards Committee reviews new qualifications each year. All accredited courses are listed on the Institute's website (charteredforesters.org). If an applicant has a qualification not listed, this must be self-assessed on an individual basis (please contact the Membership Manager for a self-assessment accreditation form).

2.8 Comparable qualifications from educational institutions of member states of the European Union will be accepted on the points system above, subject to the provision of supporting documentation.

2.9 The **case studies**, shown in Appendix 1, are provided as examples of the possible combination of qualifications and experience. These should be used as a guide only and each application will be assessed on its merits.

3.0 Relevant Professional Experience

3.1 One point will be awarded for each year of relevant supervisory/management experience in the arboricultural and/or forestry professions, up to a maximum of six points. It is up to the individual to show that they are working at a level commensurate with their highest qualification. The final two years (two points) of professional experience is an intrinsic part of the PME process whereby chosen competencies must be recorded and verified. This should be carried out using the Institute's on-line recording system.

4.0 Professional Membership Entry fee

4.1 The fee for PME completion is paid in two parts:

- First instalment by 1st June in the year the applicant intends to complete the PME process. No fee is required before this point.
- Second instalment by 1st August of the same year.

4.2 For current fees please contact is at icf@charteredforesters.org or on 0131 240 1425

³ By Higher Education Institutes that have met ICF's accreditation criteria listed at charteredforesters.org

⁴ Score depends on modules chosen.

4.3 Interviews are usually held in Edinburgh in November.

5.0 Professional Membership Entry Summary

5.1 The Professional Membership Entry (PME) is a four-step examination process. The following is a summary:

5.2 Step 1 – Competency Record

Over a minimum two year period the applicant must demonstrate that s/he has acquired a range of experience at a professional level. This is done by documented self-assessment that requires verification and supported, if requested, by a professional diary.

5.3 Step 2 – Career Profile

The applicant must produce a document that shows their qualifications, employment history, evidence of competency (from Step 1) and continuing professional development.

5.4 Step 3 – Critical Analysis

The critical analysis is a written account of some work-based task or situation in which the applicant has been involved, in which the applicant will appraise the various opportunities and constraints which were recognised, and from which the applicant can illustrate how they feel they have developed as a professional. This should be approximately 3500 words.

5.5 The critical analysis is the final step of assessment and if it is considered that the applicant has achieved the necessary competency levels and has demonstrated professional understanding through the critical analysis the applicant will be invited to a fourth step – the professional interview.

5.6 Step 4 – Professional Interview

The interview may explore any or all of the steps above and is the Institute's final check on the level and currency of the applicant's professional knowledge, both general and according to specialism and declared competencies.

Appendix 1: Case Studies

The following case studies have been drawn up as a guide to help applicants assess their qualifications and experience. They are indicative and not exhaustive.

1. **Alan B** is an arboricultural contractor running his own business. He completed an HND in Arboriculture, and has since carried out a range of work, all in the UK.

- Qualifications: HND Arboriculture – 5 points
- Work Experience:
 - 3 years team supervision, including pricing and customer liaison, training, recruitment, management reports – 3 points

Total 8 points – Alan can start the PME process by recording an additional 2 years (giving 2 points) of verified work-based competencies.

2. **Becky C** is a local authority Tree Officer, working with a multi-disciplinary team within the Planning office.

- Qualifications: BSc (Hons) Environmental Management (not accredited but worth 4 points)
- Work Experience:
 - 4 years on woodland/arboricultural management plans, assessment of public applications, tender preparation, contract supervision, financial management and reporting to council committees.

Total 8 points – Becky can start the PME process by recording an additional 2 years (giving 2 points) of verified work-based competencies.

3. **Chris D** works as a Forester with a large private estate. This includes 5500 ha. of productive woodland, a small estate sawmill and areas of semi-natural woodland managed for conservation. He recently completed a part-time HND in Forestry with employer support.

- Qualifications: HND Forestry 5 points
- Work Experience:
 - 12 years in total, of which the last 5 years spent managing the forestry operations and workforce, budgeting, cash-flow, grant applications etc. Recently involved in preparation for group certification application. - 5 points (as 5 years in management position)

Total 10 points – Chris has the necessary points to complete the PME but needs to have 2 years of verified work records showing competencies. He can record this retrospectively if he wishes to proceed to the next stage immediately.

4. **Dawn E** is a university lecturer, teaching woodland ecology and silviculture to BSc and MSc students. She has a first degree in geography, an MSc in Agroforestry and worked with VSO for 2 years in Lesotho on wood-fuel strategies and capacity building.

- Qualifications: MSc in Agroforestry (with dissertation on Forest Design Applications) - 5 points
- Work Experience:
 - 2 years VSO on project planning, technical report production and organising technical workshops. 2 points
 - 2 years teaching including funding applications, applied research and course management. 2 points

Total 9 points – Dawn needs one further year of verified work records showing competencies before proceeding to the next stage of the PME process.

5. **John G** has an honours degree in Rural Resource Management. He did his sandwich year working for a forestry management company as a general forestry worker. In his final year, he took forestry options and did his dissertation on silviculture. – 4 points

- Work Experience:
 - After graduating he works for 18 months as site foreman supervising Rail Track vegetation clearance. – 1 point
 - He is promoted to Manager, with responsibility for pricing and supervising Utilities Contracts for one year. –1 point
 - He takes on additional responsibility as Contracts Manager for peri-urban planting schemes, which he has done for 2 years. –2 points.

Total 8 points - John can start the PME process by recording an additional 2 years (giving 2 points) of verified work-based competencies.

7. **Janet H** has an ordinary degree in Geology. – 0 points, but completed an Post Graduate Diploma in Forestry from Aberdeen University giving her 5 points.

- After graduating, she works for a year for a forest management company as a graduate trainee – submitting WGS's under supervision; providing holiday cover for contract managers; collecting and collating data for management reports. – 1 point
- She moves jobs to another management company. She has a small portfolio of retained woodland management clients and is responsible for winning and running additional forestry contracts (Planting, harvesting, vegetation management etc) She has done this for 4 years. – 4 points

Total 10 points - Janet has the necessary points to complete the PME but needs to have 2 years of verified work records showing competencies. She can record this retrospectively if she wishes to proceed to the next stage immediately.

8. **Simon J** is self-employed and runs his own arboricultural business, employing three staff. He is responsible for all aspects of the business including training staff, health and safety and finance. He also carries out training and assessment services for clients.

- Qualifications: Arboriculture Association's Technicians Certificate in Arboriculture, RFS Certificate in Arboriculture. – 0 points
- Experience: 18 years of managing arboricultural contracting and consulting businesses giving him the maximum of 6 points from experience.

Total 6 points - Simon does not have the necessary qualifications to undertake the PME process and must either gain further qualifications at the required level or apply to gain chartered status through the Assessed Professional Competence (APC) route (see website for APC Guidance). This requires Simon to be able to demonstrate that he has achieved a position of leadership in the sector, that he is an acknowledged authority or an established name in his sector and that his professional influence extends beyond his normal day to day work environment. *NB. This route is only for senior and respected professionals.*