Chartered Ecologist: Guidance for Applicants
Stage 2: The Professional Review Interview
The Chartered Ecologist Register

CIEEM’s Register of Chartered Ecologists, created under powers conferred by the granting of a Royal Charter on 1st April 2013, recognises the effective application of knowledge and understanding of the science of ecology to a consistently high standard.

Chartered Ecologists are active professionals who use their knowledge, experience and influence to promote and advance ecology as an applied discipline. They may work or have worked in local or national government, consultancy, the voluntary sector, statutory agencies, industry or academia but they are united by three common characteristics:

1. their advice and practice is based on a fundamental understanding of ecology and the critical evaluation of scientific evidence;
2. they work in accordance with high standards of professional conduct; and
3. they can communicate complex ecological concepts and ideas confidently and effectively to a wide range of audiences.

In order to be registered as a Chartered Ecologist you must meet the minimum competence requirements as defined by CIEEM’s Competency Framework, demonstrating a minimum number of competencies at the Accomplished or Authoritative competence levels. The differences between these levels focus on the extent of your knowledge and an increasing ability to provide authoritative guidance to others and solve increasingly complex problems, leading to the provision of industry-wide guidance. You should examine the definitions for both the Accomplished and Authoritative levels of competence in the Competency Framework as well as those for specific competencies. You can find a useful summary of the overarching differences between these levels of competence on page 6 of this document.

Chartered Ecologists also need to show a commitment to maintaining and enhancing their level of competence so that they can demonstrate at least an accomplished level of competence in a wide range of competencies. In fact, Chartered Ecologists are periodically required to demonstrate how they have done this in order to retain their registration.

But it is more than just being a competent ecologist that we are looking for. Chartered Ecologists are expected to act consistently as an effective ambassador for the profession and champion of the natural environment. They should be engaged in different situations and in different ways or activities to promote and advance ecology as an applied discipline. This could be demonstrated in either or both professional work and voluntary commitment, via a range of audiences, and through different activities or media.

The Professional Review Interview (PRI)

If you are reading this guidance document there is a good chance that you are seriously considering submitting, or may have already submitted, an application for Chartered Ecologist status. You might even have already received an invitation to attend a Professional Review Interview (PRI) in the next few weeks. If that is the case, very well done for getting this far. This guidance document has been produced to give you an idea of what is coming next and what to expect when you attend your PRI. Many applicants for Chartered Ecologist status express some nervousness at this stage, often because they have not needed to attend an interview themselves for some time. Being nervous is understandable, but it may be helpful at this stage to consider the following key things:
i. **There are no trick questions in the PRI.** The interview is designed to find out more about you, what you think, what you do, what you know and how you apply these in your work and voluntary commitments.

ii. **Everybody wants you to do well.** The assessors who will be conducting your PRI are volunteers. They are giving up their own time to listen to you and assess whether you should be added to the Register. They are not actively looking for reasons to exclude you from it.

iii. **This is your chance to shine.** The PRI is your opportunity to demonstrate clearly not only how good you are on paper, but also why you would be an asset to the CEcol Register.

What should you expect on the day?

**The format of the PRI**

Chartered Ecologist PRIs are conducted by videoconference. It is likely that you are familiar with conducting meetings in this way, but it is possible to request a test session with a member of the Secretariat team if you would like to be more familiar with the specific software used and/or to test your own hardware (particularly if you plan to be somewhere other than your usual place of work for the PRI itself). If for any reason you feel that being interviewed by videoconference would put you at a disadvantage please promptly contact the person processing your application so that other options can be discussed. Please note that it is unlikely that we can make alternative arrangements simply because of a personal preference.

Prior to the PRI taking place you should have returned to the Secretariat a simple declaration confirming that you will be the person attending the PRI and will be alone throughout the process. At the start of the PRI your assessors should ask you to show them a form of photographic ID to verify that you are indeed the applicant.

Your interviewers will normally be two of the Chartered Ecologists that assessed your initial application. You will be notified prior to the interview if we need to use someone else to conduct the PRI and if you have any concerns regarding a possible conflict of interest you should make this known as soon as possible.

Chartered Ecologist PRIs are recorded in both audio and video format. Recordings are used to a) assist the Registration Authority in adjudicating any appeal you might submit if unsuccessful and b) audit our existing assessors and train new assessors as part of our ongoing programme of quality assurance. Recordings are stored in accordance with data protection legislation and for a maximum of 12 months. It is possible for you to request that the recording is deleted before this period has elapsed, but only after the period within which you may submit an appeal has also passed.

On some occasions, the interview may be observed as part of a training exercise. Observers will not be seen or heard and should in no way influence the outcome of your application. You will be notified if observation is planned for your PRI and have the right to refuse.

**The PRI itself**

The format of the interview is a series of open questions designed to allow you to demonstrate your understanding of ecological principles and your competence in their application, including through transferable skills. You will have the opportunity to demonstrate that you are practising at or above the required standard by drawing on your relevant experience as an ecologist. The interview is not designed to trick or unnerve you, but to allow you to develop the material you have given at Stage One. You should have your application and the competency framework to hand and may take notes into the interview.

When your PRI date is confirmed you should also be given notice of the first question in the PRI. This requires you to take a maximum of five minutes to present a response that you have prepared in advance. This first question is not a memory test and you may refer to notes when delivering it. You should not, however,
prepare any sort of online presentation or handouts for this purpose. The assessors will listen to your response and may ask some questions or seek clarification. It is important that you keep within the time limit so do practice and time your response in advance and allow a small buffer for questions.

The remaining questions have been structured:

a) To explore further the evidence you submitted on paper. These questions may seek clarification on aspects of your evidence that were unclear to your assessors, or to gain further examples of the types of activity outlined within your submission. These questions can address any of the competencies within your application, whether you provided written evidence for them or nominated the competency as one previously evidenced. You should have received feedback on all of your evidenced competencies at the end of the first stage of the process.

b) To find out more about you, your experience, and in particular to learn how you act, both within and outside of your work, as an effective ambassador for the profession and champion of the natural environment. This is an important part of the process and a key reason for conducting the PRI.

At the end of the PRI the assessors will discuss their individual assessment of your performance and make a recommendation to the Secretariat regarding your suitability to be added to the register of Chartered Ecologists. To pass this stage you need to have provided sufficient evidence, in the opinion of both assessors, that you reach the required standard on every question.

Making the best impression

We are aware that undertaking the PRI by videoconference is a different experience than you may be used to. However, it is the environmentally responsible thing to do, as well as being a method we can organise with much less delay and considerably lower costs to you. It is therefore important that you take a few simple steps to make the best impression during your PRI, taking into account the peculiarities of this method.

• Treat the PRI just as you would if it were happening face to face. Think about:
  o What you wear.
  o Your demeanour – you may need to work a little harder to make it obvious that you are engaged and have heard and understood the question posed.
  o Your body language – if you typically express yourself with hand gestures, consider the position of your webcam so that you can continue to do so. You need to feel comfortable.
  o Eye contact – remember to occasionally look at the camera rather than the screen so that you make eye contact with your assessors.

• Prepare well. Consider:
  o Your location – take a look at what is visible around you on the camera. Is there something private (if you are at home), or commercially sensitive behind you for example? Is the lighting sufficient to allow you to be seen clearly, or is there a window behind you? If in an office, have you got it booked out in your name for at least the duration of the PRI? If at home, have you turned off and unplugged phones, asked someone to walk the dog and cancelled deliveries?
  o Reference materials – take a copy of your written application, the competency framework and your interview and question one notes with you and use them when needed or prompted.
  o More examples – make sure you have taken the feedback provided into account and that you are prepared to provide additional evidence and examples for any and every competency.

• Your interview technique. This is your PRI, so make sure that you:
  o Listen carefully to the question and ask for it to be repeated or clarified if you are unsure.
  o Do not leave room for doubt – it is good practice to check that you have given a sufficient response, so ask ‘Have you heard all you need?’ or ‘Has that answered your question?’ if you are
not sure, and make a note to go back to a specific question at the end of the PRI if you remember something that you ought to have said.

- If in any doubt, check periodically that the assessors can hear and see you sufficiently well. Sometimes when people are listening intently they keep very still, so do not let this be off-putting!

**What happens if something goes wrong?**

It is possible that an unexpected technical problem may occur during your PRI, though this happens very infrequently. At the start of your PRI the assessors will be making a judgement as to whether the quality of the internet connection and the audio and video aspects of the meeting are adequate for you to be fairly assessed. If they are in any doubt about this they will discuss this with you and make a judgement as to whether to continue, end and restart the PRI again straight away, or to propose that the PRI is rebooked altogether. In the latter circumstance we will endeavour to identify what has caused the issue, resolve it where we are able (for example by suggesting that a different location is used), and to rebook the PRI with as little delay as possible. In the unlikely event that there is a catastrophic failure during the PRI, we will contact you to discuss whether you need to undergo the entire process again, or to restart it from the point that the failure occurred. As you would expect, our first principle will always be to choose the option that is fairest to you as the applicant.

**The outcome**

Once the assessors have returned their recommendation to the Secretariat, we will verify that there have been no errors in the process and then endeavour to inform you of the outcome as promptly as we can. If you have been successful you will be sent written confirmation of this, along with your certificate, and will be added to the Register of Chartered Ecologists on the CIEEM website. Please note that you are not allowed to call yourself a Chartered Ecologist or use the post-nominal ‘CEcol’ until you have received this written confirmation from CIEEM. False representation of your status would be a breach of the Chartered Ecologist code of conduct.

If you have been unsuccessful you will receive feedback explaining why this is the case and will usually be encouraged, where appropriate, to consider applying again in the future.

There is an appeals process available to all applicants. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 30 days of the outcome of your PRI being sent to you. Appeals must be based on a failure of process, not a difference of opinion, and will be reviewed by the Chair of the Registration Authority. There is an admin fee associated with processing an appeal. This is refunded should the appeal be upheld.

**And finally**

This is your opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned, developed, experienced and achieved in your career to date. The awarding of Chartered Ecologist status is not easily won – you would not want it any other way – so prepare, prepare and prepare again.

Good luck.
The Accomplished and Authoritative Competence Levels.

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<tr>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Has the knowledge and experience of this activity to carry out complex, specialist or non-standard activities confidently and consistently. Is aware of alternative options and approaches and can provide guidance, instruction and advice to others on this activity.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• You are knowledgeable on this activity and are capable of explaining it to a range of different audiences.</td>
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<td>• You have extensive experience of this activity in both straightforward and complex situations.</td>
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<td>• You can deal effectively with difficult or complex issues relating to this activity and both propose and evaluate alternate solutions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• You can make decisions confidently regarding this activity.</td>
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<td>• You can provide guidance, instruction and advice to others and may provide mentoring and/or coaching about this activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Is widely recognised as an authority, both by others within the organisation and/or by external peers, for the knowledge and experience they demonstrate on the activity.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• You have a detailed level of knowledge relating to the activity and its application in many and varied circumstances.</td>
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<td>• You are able to share your knowledge with others and have done so on many occasions with a wide range of audiences.</td>
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<td>• You are routinely consulted on this activity by others in the profession.</td>
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<td>• You can solve highly complex problems independently relating to this activity and may have set new related standards and industry benchmarks.</td>
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<td>• You routinely provide authoritative guidance, instruction and advice to others.</td>
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<td>• You may contribute to the development of industry policy, standards and guidelines relating to this activity.</td>
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<td>• You may be called upon as an expert witness on this activity.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• You may deliver training and education to others on this activity at all levels of competence.</td>
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NB: At this level you might demonstrate only two or three of the descriptor statements.