

Supplementary Membership Application Guidance

While the membership team assists applicants with the most regular queries, the real experts in evidencing competence well (and increasing the chances of producing a successful application) are our volunteer membership application assessors. Every year these volunteer assessors diligently work their way through hundreds of applications for professional membership grades – the vast majority of which are successful.

So, if you are considering applying for or upgrading membership, or are kindly supporting a colleague to do so, who better to advise you than the very members that assess the applications? We asked our volunteer assessors for their 'top tips' for completing an application and evidencing competence well, and here is what they told us.



Plan ahead

- Applications are accepted year-round, so apply when you feel prepared.
- Be mindful of potential delays during peak periods or summer months.

We accept applications for membership throughout the year, so you can apply at any point when you feel ready.

All applications for membership grades awarded through an assessment of competence are reviewed by assessors who are members themselves, acting entirely as volunteers. Though they work to deadlines to ensure applications are processed as quickly as possible, given the volume of applications we receive it can take around four months for the whole process to be completed. Bear in mind that assessors have limited availability over the summer months due to increased work commitments, so do plan well ahead when preparing your application, particularly if you are needing it for work or a particular project. You can help by ensuring your application is completed fully in the first instance and responding promptly to any requests for additional information.



Get your sponsors involved early

- Choose sponsors who are knowledgeable about your work and can validate your evidence.
- Discuss your application with potential sponsors to refine your examples and ensure their support.

Your sponsors need to be people best placed to endorse the evidence in your application and to help you to present it well. We strongly recommend you discuss your application with the sponsors you have in mind to support you. This gives you the opportunity to talk through suitable examples and projects you may have worked on together. Getting your sponsors engaged at an early stage will help ensure you have their full support for the evidence you intend to supply.

Ideally sponsors supporting membership applications should also be CIEEM members but we understand this is not always possible. We therefore do accept non-member sponsors, but we will require you to send in a copy of their CV so that we can verify their suitability to endorse your evidence at that level of competence you are claiming. A sponsor could be an academic tutor, your line manager or a colleague you work alongside.

We understand that the people who know you and your work best are often the colleagues you work alongside each day, and if you have only ever worked for one company, or the same company for a long time, the pool of potential sponsors could be small. Consider the evidence you are providing within your application and approach those who are best placed to endorse your claims. Consider also when the best time of year might be to approach them and provide as much notice as you can so that they do not feel under pressure. As long as each of your competency statements is endorsed by at least one of your sponsors, that is ok. We even allow you to select a third sponsor for individual competencies if necessary.



Make the Competency Framework your friend

- Understand both 'Technical' and 'Transferable' Competencies, and the different levels of competence.
- Regularly refer back to the framework throughout the application process to ensure your evidence aligns with the competency requirements.

Spend some time getting familiar with the Competency Framework. It is divided into two main sections

- Technical Competencies – Relating specifically to the application of ecological and environmental knowledge and understanding.
- Transferable Competencies – Professional competencies that can be carried over from one activity or role to another.

You will need to choose a combination of competencies from both of these sections as part of your application. Make sure to look at both the general competency description as well as the more detailed descriptor linked to the level of competence you are applying for.

As you start to compile your evidence you may find that your examples are in fact better suited to a different competency. Make sure you regularly refer to the Competency Framework to ensure your evidence addresses both the general competency descriptor as well as the requirements of the specific level of competence you are applying for.



Clearly demonstrate your commitment to Professional Standards

- Demonstrate an understanding of ethical dilemmas in ecology and environmental management.
- Show how you mentor and support less experienced colleagues.

It should be no surprise that for membership of a professional body, Professional Standards is a mandatory competency. Whether applying for Associate or Full membership, or Chartered status, you must be able to demonstrate an understanding of the ethical dilemmas that an ecologist or environmental manager may encounter, how to conduct oneself to avoid behaving inappropriately, and how to help those less experienced.



Provide Comprehensive Evidence

- Offer a clear overview of the range of your career and achievements.
- Be specific about your roles, projects, and contributions to help assessors evaluate your competence effectively.

It is important that you take the opportunity to give the assessors an overview of your career and achievements to date. Assessors can only reach a decision on your application based on the information you provide, so if you refer to a specific role, project, qualification or licence in your evidence of competence, make sure you provide sufficient detail.

Our volunteer assessors are all experienced members of the Institute but, like you, they have particular specialisms and will not have an in-depth knowledge of all areas of our Competency Framework. If you refer to any less common acronyms, be sure to explain them in full to begin with. In addition, our assessors are based all over the UK and Ireland so will not necessarily have knowledge of acronyms, systems or projects specific to your locality or area of specialism. Be sure to provide information on the scale and complexity of projects rather than assuming the assessors will know about them already.

Don't waste your word count making sweeping statements or generalisation: the assessors expect to see details of specific examples within your evidence, and the specific role you played in those examples.

- Within the word limit, for each competency try to provide a couple of specific examples of your competence along with other less detailed evidence of how you have routinely demonstrated this level of competence. Perhaps think of this as: specific examples demonstrating 'depth' of competence; and routineness demonstrating 'weight' of competence. A detailed example of something done well may not be sufficient if it is not obvious that you have done it more than once.
- Use a range of examples, rather than using the same project or thesis for every competency, in order to show a wide range of skills and experiences.
- Provide sound evidence covering a good

proportion what is stated in the competency framework guidance for that competency, demonstrating work at the level that would be expected for the grade being applied for.

- Lists or a series of declarations does not tell our assessors how well you do something or how it was regarded by others. Do not leave room for doubt. If you have done an activity for the last 20 years, explain why you are good at it.
- Demonstrate your communication skills by making the evidence clear and easy reading for assessors from different backgrounds. Avoid presenting your competency evidence as a single paragraph or using undefined acronyms and technical terms, especially if these are confined mainly to your organisation.



Use a structured approach to presenting evidence

- Apply the 'STARE' (Situation-Task-Action-Result-Evaluation) method to articulate your examples effectively.
- Ensure that your evaluation clearly showcases the impact of your actions.

We recommend using the STARE approach to structure your evidence regarding specific examples because it works well. Assessors need to see examples in your evidence and the STARE structure gives you the framework to provide the information they are looking for. Ensure you do not miss the 'E' for evaluation as this is a really crucial point for our assessors. Many applicants that are not successful on their first attempt find that this is because they have not evaluated the effectiveness or outcomes of their actions in their evidence.



Take Your Time

- Carefully draft your application, ensuring clarity and completeness to avoid delays.
- Revisit and revise your submissions for quality assurance, and ask others to read it too.

Take the time to consider the impression that the overall standard of your application gives. We encourage you to read your application again to satisfy yourself that it represents you well. You may wish to complete a draft of your form on a separate document so that you can use tools such as spellcheck. Incomplete or incorrectly completed application forms will be returned to you and will delay the assessment process. Please help yourself by taking the time to get it right first time.

- Before even starting an application, make sure you have the latest version of the application form.
- Don't rush to get the form filled in. Make sure that competencies are addressed clearly with all the relevant information presented in a logical manner.
- Make sure that you are applying your experience to the correct competency!
- Think carefully about your choice of sponsor. Ideally you are looking for someone who can mentor you through the process although we appreciate that this is not always possible.

And finally, make use of the CIEEM team. The process is not designed to trip you up and everyone wants you to succeed. Contact the Membership team for any clarification you need. In addition, if any part of the process itself proves challenging for you and you would like to discuss reasonable adjustments to the process, please do get in touch.

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