

## Professional registration: quick guide

**Invest in your career. Become ARA qualified. Get the recognition you deserve.**

ARA professional registration is a key milestone in your career. It is available to everyone working or volunteering in archives, archive conservation and records management, regardless of academic qualification.

Professional registration demonstrates to employers, clients, peers, other professions and the public that you have met the highest standards of knowledge and competence set by the ARA. It shows you are committed to maintaining that competence through continuing professional development and reflective practice.

To be eligible to apply you must be an [Individual Member of ARA](#). Members start their application by enrolling onto our online application and assessment platform, known as the [professional registration programme](#). This is where you develop your application and submit it for assessment. Most candidates take around 12-18 months to develop their application. However, there are no time constraints in place, so you may develop your application at your own pace. Please refer to the full [programme guide](#) for more detail.

We offer three levels of registration; Foundation, Registered and Fellow;

**Foundation** is for all those at the early stages of their career. Anyone working or volunteering in the sector, including administrative staff, volunteers, apprentices, graduates and existing professionals may apply. Foundation Members may use the post nominal letters FMARA.

**How soon can I start?** We recommend you gain a minimum one years' work experience, which can include volunteering, before enrolling onto the Foundation Membership programme.

### What will my application consist of?

- Six competency forms, each with a maximum of 1000 words, at a minimum of competency levels 1-2. A maximum of three competencies may demonstrate level 1, the remaining competencies must demonstrate level 2 or higher. You must choose at least one competency from each of the three competency framework areas.
- A mentor reference
- A current CV

**Registered** is the established level of excellence in the profession available to all those at the early to mid-career stage and beyond. It communicates to employers, clients and the public that they can expect high standards of professional knowledge, competency and integrity. Registered Members may use the post nominal letters RMARA.

**How soon can I start?** We recommend you gain a minimum of three years' work experience before enrolling onto the Registered Membership programme.

#### **What will my application consist of?**

- Eight competency forms, each with a maximum of 1000 words, at a minimum of competency levels 2-3. A maximum of three competencies may demonstrate level 2, the remaining five competencies must demonstrate level 3 or higher. You must choose at least two competencies from each of the three competency framework areas.
- At least two competencies from each of the three competency areas
- A mentor reference
- A current CV

Individual Members of ARA are welcome to apply for Registered Membership direct or, if preferred, qualify as a Foundation Member first before progressing to Registered Membership.

**Fellow** is the highest level of professional registration. It recognises significant professional experience and achievement. It is only available to Registered Members who have completed at least one CPD Review. Fellows may use the post nominal letters FARA.

**How soon can I start?** We recommend you gain a minimum of nine years work experience following your admission to Registered Membership of the ARA. You must also complete at least one CPD Review before enrolling onto the Fellow programme.

#### **What will my application consist of?**

- Six completed competency forms, with a maximum of three competencies at level 4 and a minimum of three competencies at level 5. Each form has a 1500 word limit. Competencies must be selected from a minimum of two competency areas
- A contribution to the profession statement (a maximum of 750 words)
- A professional development statement (a maximum of 750 words)
- Optional proposer statement
- Optional mentor reference
- A current CV

## **Getting started**

### **Step 1: Join ARA**

You must join ARA as an Individual Member before you can enrol onto the programme. You may apply online via the [ARA's website](#).

### **Step 2: Self-assessment. Choose your competencies and levels**

Use our competency framework to benchmark your career experience. There are five Levels of experience with each competency. Each Level gives brief examples of some activities undertaken at that Level. Relate your experience to these examples to help identify your strongest competencies. It will help you decide whether you have sufficient experience to apply for your chosen level of registration, or whether you need more development and/or experience before doing so.

You should also take time to think about how to develop your career and consider which competencies might help you do this. Once you have chosen the level of registration to apply for, discuss with your mentor the competency Levels you will demonstrate in your application. Their objective opinion will help you decide the best option for you.

### **Step 3: Find a mentor**

Your mentor will help guide the development of your application. They may also offer advice on any additional development or experience that you might need before developing your application. It is therefore important that you try to identify your own mentor. The more professionals you can connect with, the better for you and your career. There are no restrictions on who can be a mentor. Further advice is available from the programme guide.

### **Step 4: Enrol onto the programme**

Enrol onto the professional registration programme to create your application. You will need your ARA membership number and pay your enrolment fee to complete the process. If you have been unable to find a mentor then you can request a copy of our mentor list. We will email this to you when your enrolment is complete. You can start your application at any time. We recommend you agree a timeframe with your mentor that best suits your commitments.

### **Step 5: Preparing your application for assessment**

Applications for professional registration must contain the following;

**Competency forms:** Each competency form has a maximum word limit of 1,000 words (1,500 with Fellow applications). We allow an excess of 10%. Writing concisely is a skill that the application process encourages, so we advise you include the key words set out in the competency level descriptions table (programme guide appendix). The competency form has five headings, but the majority of your content must demonstrate the following three key areas;

- **Activity:** you must briefly describe how your professional activity meets your chosen competency level. We recommend you demonstrate no more than two of the examples given in the competency level. The examples given are a guide only and you may use other examples. To discuss this please contact [chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk](mailto:chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk). We recommend 25% of the total word count be used for this heading.
- **Progression and learning:** following on from the activity section, this is where you tell us what you have learned and how you have progressed. For example, did you receive training before you started the activity? What prior knowledge and experience did you have? Did you receive mentoring? Did you direct your own learning? How did you apply what you learned? We recommend 30% of the total word count be used for this heading.
- **Reflection:** think about the activity and your progression and learning, and reflect on the outcome. Ask yourself what went well and what didn't? Were there any unexpected challenges? If so, how did you respond? What did you learn and how can you improve? We recommend 30% of the total word count be used for this heading.

You may use experience gained over a 10-year period, with different employers, to demonstrate how you meet your chosen competency levels. You must provide supporting documentation to validate or

substantiate the experience you have used as content in your competency forms. Please only use summaries or extracts. Further advice is available from the programme guide.

**Mentor reference:** Candidates for Foundation and Registered Membership must work with a mentor who will provide the mentor reference. References must follow the template described in our mentor guide. Please refer to the programme guide and mentor guide for further information. Fellowship applications do not require a mentor reference, but candidates for Fellowship may work with a mentor if they wish.

**A current CV:** This should be up to date and relate to the experience that you have drawn upon as evidence in your competency forms.

### **Submitting your application for assessment**

Every year there are two assessment cycles for Foundation, Registered and Fellow;

- Foundation applications must be submitted by 31st January or 31st July
- Registered applications must be submitted by 31st March or 30th September
- Fellow applications must be submitted by 31st May or 30th November

You should make every effort to present your application to a professional standard. You must also make sure that each competency form is within the required word limit. Assessors will consider spelling errors and excessive word counts during the assessment process. This may have a negative impact on the assessment outcome, which becomes important with borderline applications. Candidates may also have their submitted application returned to them for editing.

When you are ready to submit your application, please pay the assessment fee and submit it online. We aim to complete all assessments within 3 months of the submission deadline.

### **Further information and support**

We offer a range of support for you and your mentor. This includes examples of competency forms, a mentor guide, webinars and a Blog. You must read the full programme guide to familiarise yourself with all aspects of the application process before enrolment. This will help you avoid mistakes during the development of your application and increase the chances of a successful assessment.

The programme guide and other advice and support are available from the professional registration website:

- Professional Registration Programme <https://archivesandrecords.smapply.io>
  - Programme guide <https://archivesandrecords.smapply.io/res/p/programme-guidance/>
  - Examples of competency forms <https://archivesandrecords.smapply.io/res/p/examples/>
  - Enrolment and assessment fees <https://archivesandrecords.smapply.io/res/p/programme-guidance/>
  - Professional registration Blog <https://arapdp.blog/>

- We offer informal video calls with candidates and their mentors to answer questions and help clarify all aspects of the application and assessment process. For more information, please contact [chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk](mailto:chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk).
- To join ARA as an Individual Membership, or change your existing ARA membership to Individual, please visit [www.archives.org.uk/membership-categories](http://www.archives.org.uk/membership-categories).