

**COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION**

# Accredited Membership Application

# Guidance Notes





# Accredited Membership Application Guidance Notes

## General guidance and background to CMA Accreditation

### What is accreditation?

Accreditation is the process of officially recognising someone as having a particular status or being qualified to perform a particular activity.

### Why does the Countryside Management Association (CMA) offer accredited membership?

The CMA strongly believes that those who work, or volunteer, in the countryside, parks and greenspace sector should have their professional competency assessed, confirmed, recognised and valued, both within and outside the industry.

One of CMA's principal ambitions is to raise the profile and recognition of the countryside and greenspace profession. In support of this, the accreditation system offers members the opportunity to demonstrate their competence at different levels. Members reaching the relevant standards will then be entitled to describe themselves as either an Associate Member, a Practitioner Member, a Principal Member or a Fellow of the CMA.

Whilst some positions within the sector can be specialised, the majority of roles encompass broad ranging responsibilities requiring multi-disciplinary knowledge and a whole suite of different skills. It is possible to gain accreditation for competence in some specific knowledge and skills sets, for example ecology, interpretation or Public Rights of Way management but the CMA offers the unique opportunity to become accredited for competence in the inherently wide variety of disciplines that, together and interwoven, are at the very heart of the countryside and greenspace management profession.

### Why apply for Accredited membership?

CMA accredited membership can play an important role in your Curriculum Vitae. The sector is unique in its requirement for wide ranging knowledge, multiple skill sets and the flexibility to adapt that expertise to different situations, sites and communities. The benefit of accredited membership is that it provides assurance to employers that an individual has been independently assessed to be competent at the level of membership held and will be proficient and fully capable of undertaking the work at that level of competence. Accredited members should become valued and sought after by employers, helping to raise the overall profile of the countryside and greenspace management profession.

Accredited membership could assist in your promotion prospects, increase your self-confidence & self-esteem. By studying the competency details at different levels and considering if you could provide robust evidence in an application, the Competency Framework can help you determine if you require further targeted training or would benefit from particular elements of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

If self employed, accredited membership offers a mark of competence and excellence in your work, benchmarked against standards accepted and promoted nationally.

### Who can apply for Accredited membership?

Anyone working, or volunteering, in the countryside and greenspace management profession can apply for accredited membership.

Current CMA members can apply to upgrade their membership to an accredited category or, if already CMA accredited, you may wish to advance to the next level.

If you are new to CMA, you can apply to join in one of the accredited membership categories (there are also non-accredited categories, [see website](#))

## Completed an Apprenticeship?

If you have successfully completed one of the apprenticeships listed on our [website](#), you qualify to join CMA in the relevant accredited member category, without needing to go through the application process.

The CMA's competencies have been developed to align with the apprenticeship standards, hence if one of the apprenticeships listed on our [website](#) has been successfully completed, you will be accepted directly into the relevant accredited membership category (see 'Completed an Apprenticeship?').

## Principles of CMA Accreditation

The CMA's view is that qualifications (e.g. HND or university degree) and/or length of time in the profession do not, in themselves, evidence competency. Qualifications and experience in the job are of course incredibly important and valuable. They form part of your 'toolkit' to build your profile and help explain what you can offer to prospective employers; they should be seen as additional to your CMA accreditation which is based entirely on demonstrated evidence of competency.

Vocational certificates obtained in recent years, for example covering use of a chainsaw or pesticides, will however be relevant.

Applicants are required to provide evidence of their knowledge, skills and behaviours for ten competencies at the relevant level. Applicants need to provide evidence of their knowledge and skills for their chosen competencies and referees are required to give evidence of behaviours at the level of accreditation applied for.

## The CMA's Competency Framework

Details of the competencies which have been identified as being relevant to CMA members are presented in the CMA Accreditation and Competency Framework.

The Competency Framework:

- Provides members with an overview of the scope of the profession's activities at different levels
- Allows accreditation candidates to identify the competencies for which they need to gather evidence, and identify how they might best demonstrate their abilities
- Provides a means whereby applicants can recognise areas of work where they might wish or need to gain additional knowledge and develop new skills

There are twenty two competencies in total. Seven of the competencies are 'transferable' (knowledge, skills and behaviours that are useful across a range of different jobs or roles in the sector, or in other sectors); fifteen of the competencies are 'technical' (knowledge, skills and behaviours required for specific tasks).

## Summary:

### Transferable competencies:

1. Health and Safety (mandatory)
2. Collaborative working
3. Environmental sustainability
4. Project planning and management
5. Financial management
6. Communications
7. People management

## Technical competencies:

8. Countryside and Environmental Legislation / Regulations
9. Estate Skills
10. Horticultural Skills and Practices
11. Ecology and Environmental Land Management
12. Threatened Species Conservation
13. Survey, Monitoring and Evaluation
14. Ecological and / or Environmental Assessments
15. Agricultural, Forestry, and Game Management Systems
16. Landscape Scale Conservation and Management
17. Historic and Cultural Environment
18. Information and Interpretation
19. Environmental Education
20. Volunteer Management
21. Recreation and Visitor Management
22. Rights of Way and Access

The first transferable competency is Health and Safety and is mandatory for all applicants.

## How do I choose which level of accreditation to apply for?

There remains a multitude of different job titles in the sector, however a job title does not determine the accredited membership category that can be applied for; that is a decision for the individual applicant dependent on the knowledge, skills and behaviours they believe they can provide evidence for.

There are four levels of accredited membership to consider:

**Associate Member (ACMA)** – you will be expected to provide evidence of knowledge and skills at the Entry level; your referee is asked to provide evidence of your behaviours at Entry level. You are likely to be at an early stage of your career, in the early years of volunteering or possibly you have recently had a career change and have started out in the countryside/greenspace sector. Your job or volunteer title (if applicable) should not influence the level of accredited membership you apply for. (If you have successfully completed a relevant Apprenticeship, see the ‘Completed an Apprenticeship?’ section on the CMA )

Associate applicants are required to provide evidence for a total of **eight** competencies:

- The first transferable competency is Health and Safety and is mandatory for all applicants
- Associate applicants need to choose seven further competencies from either the transferable or technical lists.

**Practitioner Member (PrCMA)** – you will be expected to provide evidence of knowledge and skills at the Skilled level; your referee is asked to provide evidence of your behaviours at the Skilled level. You may have been working in the countryside or greenspace sector for a while. Your job title should not influence the level of accredited membership you apply for. (If you have successfully completed a relevant Apprenticeship, see the ‘Completed an Apprenticeship?’ section on the [CMA website](#))

Practitioner applicants are required to provide evidence for a total of **ten** competencies:

- The first transferable competency is Health and Safety and is mandatory for all applicants
- You will need to choose two more competencies from the ‘Transferable’ list, six from the ‘Technical’ list, and the tenth competency can be chosen from either set.

**Principal Member (PCMA)** – you will be expected to provide evidence of knowledge and skills at the Accomplished level; your referee is asked to provide evidence of your behaviours at the Accomplished level. You may have been working in the countryside and greenspace sector for a considerable number of years. Your job title should not influence the level of accredited membership you apply for.

Principal applicants are required to provide evidence for a total of **ten** competencies:

- The first transferable competency is Health and Safety and is mandatory for all applicants
- You will need to choose two more competencies from the 'Transferable' list, six from the 'Technical' list, and the tenth competency can be chosen from either set.

**Fellow (FCMA)** – you will be expected to provide evidence of knowledge and skills at the Accomplished level, together with a 1,500-2,000 word submission setting out your contribution to the industry over time. CMA would normally expect a Fellow applicant to have worked in the industry for a minimum of 10 years. If you wish to apply to become a Fellow of the CMA please refer to the Fellow application form ([see website](#))

You should carefully read through the levels of competence expected for Entry, Skilled and Accomplished applications set out in the CMA Competency Framework ([see website](#)). Decide for yourself at which level you feel you can provide varied and robust evidence of your knowledge and skills for the required number of competencies. Do not be swayed or constrained by your job title; it is evidence of your competence that is the key factor.

Fellow applicants are required to provide evidence for a total of **ten** competencies:

- The first transferable competency is Health and Safety and is mandatory for all applicants
- You will need to choose two more competencies from the 'Transferable' list, six from the 'Technical' list, and the tenth competency can be chosen from either set.
- You also need to submit a written submission (1500-2000 words) outlining your contribution to the industry

You cannot give evidence of competency at different levels in one application. For example, if you think you could provide evidence at the Skilled level for five competencies and evidence at the Accomplished level for five further competencies your application will not proceed if submitted. You should either provide evidence for ten competencies at Skilled level or ten competencies at Accomplished level. If you consider you are 'between' competency levels this should enable you to gauge where you may benefit from additional knowledge and skills training, to attain the higher level of competency.

## Guidance

If you feel you'd like some guidance or might benefit from an informal chat about the competencies, compiling your evidence or the accreditation process in general, please contact [admin@countrysidemanagement.org.uk](mailto:admin@countrysidemanagement.org.uk). We will arrange for someone to call you.

## Your steps to applying for Accredited Membership

- 1 Read the CMA Competency Framework ([see website](#)) and consider carefully which competencies you may be able to give appropriate evidence for, and at which level;
- 2 Carefully read this Guidance document throughout to ensure you understand what is expected of you;
- 3 Download the relevant Application form;
- 4 Examine the 'Completing Your Competency Evidence' guidance carefully to become familiar with how to compose your evidence;
- 5 Study the CMA Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics ([see website](#)) and decide if you are willing to abide by the Code
- 6 Payment information

### Current CMA members applying to upgrade membership:

If you are a current CMA member, you can either:

- go to the Join section of the [website](#), scroll to the WebCollect area where subscriptions are renewed and click on the 'Application Fee' box and relevant Accreditation Application fee.

**OR** - transfer the relevant Accreditation Application fee to CMA using:

Account name: Countryside Management Association

Address if required: 87 Chapel Farm Cottage, Gussage St Andrew, Blandford, Dorset, DT11 8DL

Sort code: 08-92-99 Account number: 65275744

**Please remember to add your name and the word Accreditation as the reference.**

Please email [admin@countrysideassociation.org.uk](mailto:admin@countrysideassociation.org.uk) to let CMA know that you have transferred the fee.

**OR** - send a cheque made out to **Countryside Management Association** (or CMA) for the relevant Accreditation Application fee and send to Accreditation, CMA, 87 Chapel Farm Cottage, Gussage St Andrew, Blandford, Dorset, DT11 8DL

**OR** - If you require an invoice to be sent for payment, please request from [admin@countrysideassociation.org.uk](mailto:admin@countrysideassociation.org.uk) **stating who to make the invoice out to and where to send it / who to email it to. Please also include a Purchase Order number if one is required.**

Payment confirmation will be emailed to you on clearance of the fee.

Please note your application will not be processed until your application fee payment has cleared.

Current members applying for accreditation should note that if your application is successful, the increased membership fee for your new level of membership will be due **at the time of your next membership renewal.**

### New to CMA?

If you are new to CMA and wishing to join as an accredited member, the CMA uses WebCollect for membership fees. You will need to visit the CMA [website](#), go to the 'Join CMA' page, scroll down to the Subscriptions section and join as a Member (non-accredited £35.00). You also need to 'Add to your basket' the relevant Accreditation Application fee. Once you have made the dual payment you will receive a confirmation email and your membership number. Complete and submit your Accredited Membership Application. Any queries contact [admin@countrysideassociation.org.uk](mailto:admin@countrysideassociation.org.uk)

Should you be successful, the CMA will then ask you to top up your membership subscription to the relevant level (an additional £10 for successful Associate members; an additional £25 for successful Practitioner members; an additional £40 for Principal members and an additional £65 for Fellow members).

Your subscription will renew at the date you originally joined CMA (at £35).

Should you be unsuccessful, you can continue as a Member of CMA (non-accredited). You will of course have the option of applying for accreditation again at a future date if you so wish.

You will receive an email notification when your subscription and accreditation fee has been received. An application will not be assessed until the Accredited Membership Application fee has cleared.

- 7 Carefully complete the relevant application form ([see website](#)). Ensure your referee completes their section and both they, and you, sign and date the form.
- 8 Send the form to [admin@countysidemangement.org.uk](mailto:admin@countysidemangement.org.uk)
- 9 On receipt, CMA administration will check everything has been completed as required and log your application. It will given a reference number.
- 10 Your application will be allocated and sent to an assessor.
- 11 Your application will be assessed and a decision made within 8-12 weeks. The CMA will endeavour to complete the assessment within 8 weeks.
- 12 If you joined CMA as a new member to undertake accreditation and are successful, your application will go to the CMA Board for endorsement, then you will be asked to 'top up' your subscription to the relevant level of accredited membership. Once the additional subscription top up payment is received, you will be sent your Accredited Membership Certificate, have your new status highlighted in the next edition of the Ranger magazine, be added to the Accredited Members Directory and can begin to use the relevant post-nominals after your name.  
All existing CMA members deciding to upgrade to accredited membership will only pay the higher level of subscription, if successful, at the time of your next renewal.
- 13 If initially unsuccessful, you are able to submit revised evidence and/or further information as required, within six months of the first assessment. If remaining unsuccessful, you would need to pay the Accredited Membership Application Fee again should you wish to re-apply. The CMA would be available to discuss with you the way forward.

# Application Form Guidance

## Introduction

Please ensure you read and use this part of the guidance to help you complete the form. You are strongly advised to also read and use 'Completing Your Competency Evidence' download available from the [website](#). This offers examples of how to present appropriate competency evidence compared to examples of evidence that would not be acceptable.

Should you feel that offering competency evidence in a written format is not appropriate for you, please do not hesitate to contact us. Alternative means of demonstrating your competency will be discussed and agreed, for example, you may be able to find someone to act as a scribe for you and/or it may be helpful to agree to an extended discussion via phone or an online platform.

If you are unsure about who you might approach as a referee, do contact the CMA. We can explore with you the options available to you.

If you are unsure, or undecided, about the level of accredited membership to apply for, do contact the CMA for an informal discussion.

In the first instance, contact [admin@countrysidemanagement.org.uk](mailto:admin@countrysidemanagement.org.uk)

## Application Form Part A

### 1. Personal details and current employment or volunteer activity

These details are necessary for CMA administration purposes.

This section allows your assessor to gain a picture of your current work or volunteering role, duties and responsibilities to help put your competency evidence into context. If the assessor knows you as an individual in either a personal or work context, they will inform CMA administration and your application will be passed to another assessor, to avoid any bias.

### 2. Vocational licences / certificates

You should refer to particular licences or certificates (sometimes referred to as 'tickets') in your application, as your assessor will need to know that you are in possession of the relevant up to date paperwork. At number 2 please add the date awarded, the title of the licence or certificate, awarding body and a very brief description of what that licence or certificate allows you to do or which equipment you are able to operate or use. Please add the date the licence or certificate must be reviewed or renewed, if known.

### 3. Competency Evidence

Ensure you read and carefully consider the twenty two competencies. All accreditation applicants must provide evidence for the mandatory competence TR1 - Health and Safety.

After careful consideration of the evidence you are able to give, decide at which level of competence you will apply eg Entry, Skilled or Accomplished level. Once you are sure of the accredited membership level you wish to apply for:

- Click the first drop down menu to confirm which level of accredited membership you are applying for
- From the second drop down menu confirm your current membership category

### 4. Choosing your competencies

**For Associate/Entry accredited membership applications, you must provide evidence of competence for a total of eight competencies.** The TR1 Health and Safety competence is mandatory and you should provide evidence of your competency, followed by evidence for a further seven competencies chosen from either the Transferable OR Technical lists.

**For Practitioner/Skilled or Principal/Accomplished accredited membership applications you must provide evidence of competence for a total of ten competencies.**



You will need to provide evidence of your competency for:

- a minimum of three competencies from the Transferable list (Health and Safety -TR1 is mandatory)
- six competencies from the Technical list
- the final competency can be chosen from either the Transferable or Technical list

**For accredited Fellow membership applications you must provide evidence of competence for a total of ten competencies.**

You will need to provide evidence of your competency for:

- a minimum of three competencies from the Transferable list (Health and Safety -TR1 is mandatory)
- six competencies from the Technical list
- the final competency can be chosen from either the Transferable or Technical list
- you also need to send a **written submission** (1,500-2,000 words) outlining your contribution to the industry

## **5. Present your evidence using the STARE method:**

**S** Situation – describe the **Situation**, provide the background; where and/or when did it take place?

**T** Task – explain the **Task** you undertook; what was the objective of the task?

**A** Action – what **Action** did you take; what did you do?

**R** Result – explain the **Result** of your action; what happened; what was the end result?

**E** Evaluation – **Evaluation** is important; what might you change or do differently another time and why; or what have you learned; how has it helped in your work?

Prepare and compose written evidence of your knowledge and skills for each of the ten competencies using the STARE method and using between 100 and 300 words. You are advised to draft your evidence; re-read and re-draft, if necessary.

Always use the first person eg. 'I undertook a butterfly transect every Monday at 11.00am....', not 'we undertook a butterfly transect every Monday at 11.00am....'

Use examples from different projects, duties or elements of your work to evidence the ten competencies. Try not to use the same situation or incident to evidence different competencies as you would do well to show the breadth of your work.

You are unlikely to cover all the knowledge and skills descriptors for each competency. **Focus on the skills elements; cover as many as possible but you are unlikely to cover them all.** As you prepare and compose your evidence, make sure you have covered all the STARE elements for each competency chosen, as this is specifically what the assessor is looking for.

The word limits are designed to allow you the opportunity to present your evidence fully whilst remaining relatively concise in covering all the necessary points. Do not feel you have to use 300 words per competency; just use however many words are required to present your STARE evidence. If you go over 300 words or offer less than 100, your application will fail.

Do not expect to be able to compose evidence for all your competencies in one attempt. It takes time to 'train your brain' to describe your knowledge and skills fully, whilst fulfilling the need to cover the STARE elements.

It may be helpful to draft evidence, leave it overnight and check over the following day. Always check your grammar and spelling before submitting your application. It may be helpful to ask someone else to proof read your evidence. You are strongly advised to read 'Completing Your Competency Evidence' ([see website](#)) to help you prepare your evidence. It includes examples of acceptable and unacceptable evidence.

## **6. Providing a Referee(s)**

Once you have completed all your competency evidence to your satisfaction, you need to save and send your application to your chosen referee(s).

If you are experiencing any problems in finding a referee or are not sure who to ask, then contact CMA on [admin@countrysidemanagement.org.uk](mailto:admin@countrysidemanagement.org.uk)

You should ensure you clearly inform your referee(s) which level of accredited membership you are applying for, hence which 'expected behaviours' they need to provide evidence for. The assessment for CMA accreditation is based entirely on evidence provided on your knowledge, skills and behaviours. You provide evidence of your knowledge and skills whilst referee(s) are asked to provide evidence that you exhibit the relevant behaviours at the level of accredited membership applied for, and sign to confirm the validity of all the evidence you have given for your competencies

- Do remember to ask your chosen referee(s) first, if they are content to provide a reference.
- Explain what the CMA Accredited Membership application is and why you wish to apply. It may help if you briefly explain which competencies you have chosen and why.
- It should be clear on the form what is expected of referee(s) but do feel free to explain that you are asking them to give evidence of a certain number of expected behaviours for the level of Accredited Membership you are applying for. Around 50 words per behaviour should be sufficient (As a guide, this bullet point is 51 words)
- Your referee(s) should preferably use real life situations when giving their evidence.
- They also need to read the evidence you have given for your competencies, as they will need to endorse the validity of your evidence.
- Your referee(s) has the opportunity to state that they are unsure of some of your evidence. That may well be because they may not have 'seen you in action' or perhaps they are unaware of all your knowledge and skills. It does not mean you will be unsuccessful; the assessor may well contact the referee and/or yourself to clarify the situation.
- Your referee(s) will also need to read the CMA Code of Conduct and Ethics to endorse the fact that, in their opinion, you will abide by it. You could either download the document and send it along with your application form OR send your referee(s) the link to it from the [CMA website](#).

## **7. Referee Declaration**

Each referee is required to complete, sign and date the Referee Declaration. An electronic signature is acceptable. Your referee(s) should then save and send the application form back to you.

### **Application Form - Part B**

## **9-13. Previous Employment / Volunteering, Education, Training, CPD, Membership of Professional Bodies / other organisations**

As stated on the form, the details within Part B of the form will only be viewed by the assessor should s/he need further information or context to properly assess your competency evidence. This information will also be anonymised and utilised by CMA when responding to consultations or surveys related to the current and future state of the countryside and greenspace sector.

## **14. Applicant Declarations**

Please ensure that you have completed the Applicant Declarations, then sign and date the form.

## **15. Application Checklist**

Tick the boxes in the Application Checklist as appropriate.

## **16. Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance**

Self employed members of the CMA may be required to show proof of the above.

## **17. Submission and Assessment Period**

As stated on the application form, the CMA will endeavour to provide a result within 8 weeks. If you are 100% sure you have completed everything on the form, save and send to [admin@countrysidemanagement.org.uk](mailto:admin@countrysidemanagement.org.uk).

## 18. Telephone / online discussion with your assessor

Your assessor will read through and evaluate the submitted competency evidence regarding your knowledge and skills at the chosen level. They will also check through the evidence given by your referee(s) regarding your behaviours at that chosen level.

Your assessor will then phone or email to arrange with you a mutually convenient time(s) for a telephone or online discussion. Feel free to arrange this discussion via Teams, Zoom, another online platform or by telephone; whichever is mutually convenient. The discussion with your assessor is certainly not intended as any kind of 'on the spot examination'. It is more an opportunity for you to chat through the evidence you have given in a relaxed way, expand on that evidence or give additional examples you may have omitted to give. Your assessor should make you feel at ease quickly and may focus on evidence you have already submitted, perhaps to clarify detail, or they may choose to offer you the opportunity to expand on how you apply your knowledge and skills within any particular competency. The discussion should take no longer than 45-60 minutes.

### **Please try and find somewhere that you will not be unduly disturbed for the telephone/online discussion.**

Please let your assessor know at least 24 hours beforehand if, for whatever reason, you need to re-arrange your discussion day or time. Our assessors will be as busy as you are, so repeat cancellations or failure to keep to an agreed time may impact on your progress through the accreditation process.

After the discussion, the assessor will either recommend to the CMA Board that you be awarded the accredited member status applied for, or provide you with specific feedback on what additional information/activity would be required for you to achieve it. If further, or amended evidence is required, you will be able to resubmit evidence within 6 months of the first assessment at no further cost. If your application remains unsuccessful and you wish to apply again, you will need to pay the accreditation application fee again.

Once your successful application has been endorsed by the CMA Board, the Administration officer will inform you of the result. You will be asked to 'top up' your subscription to the accredited membership level attained and you will then receive your certificate and begin using the relevant suffix after your name.

There is an appeals process for exceptional circumstances where a candidate is not successful and wishes to appeal the decision.

### **Queries?**

Please be aware that the CMA is here to help. If you have any questions at all relating to the two forms or to the accreditation process itself, then please do email: [admin@countysidemangement.org.uk](mailto:admin@countysidemangement.org.uk)