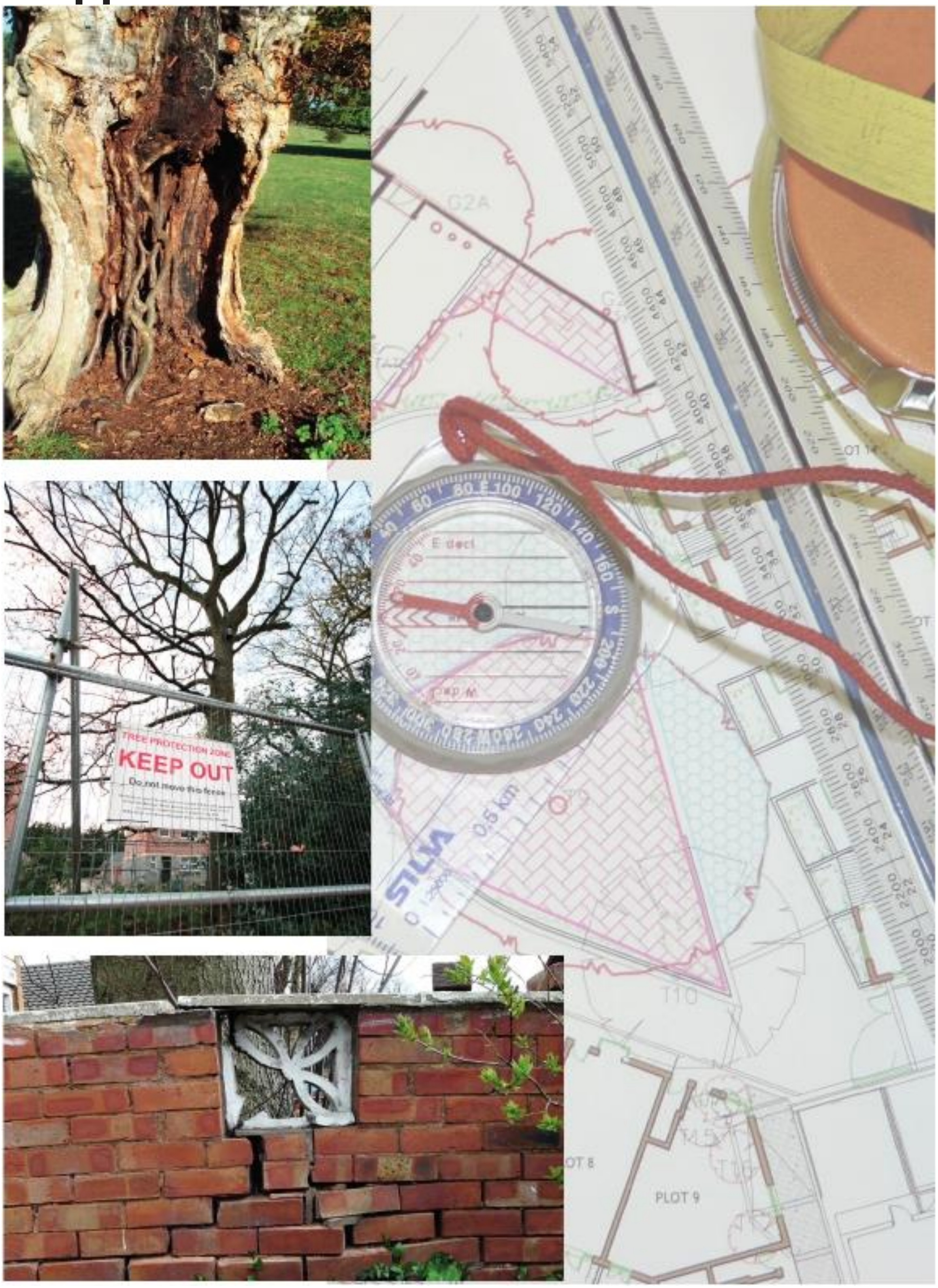
Arboricultural Association

www.trees.org.uk

Application Pack



Registered Consultant Scheme

Contents

Arboricultural Association,
The Malthouse, Stroud Green, Standish, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 3DL
Tel: +44 (0)1242 522152
Website: www.trees.org.uk

1: The Scheme

The Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant (AARC) scheme has been running since the mid-1970s and operates on a nationwide basis. Members of the scheme have demonstrated attainment of a recognised standard of knowledge, experience and the ability to practice as an arboricultural consultant in the most complex and demanding situations.

The aim of the scheme is to advance excellence in the field of arboricultural consultancy, and is promoted by the Arboricultural Association as establishing the highest level of attainment available within the UK. The award of AARC status (which applies to an individual, not an organisation or company) is made following a rigorous assessment process. Once accepted, all recipients are required to meet prescribed business and professional standards (see Section 8).

Table 1: The benefits of the scheme to the consultant

Professional achievement and reputation	The highest level of professional status in UK arboriculture.
Marketing	Entry onto a directory held and actively promoted by the Arboricultural Association via their website and at events such as shows, exhibitions, seminars and conferences. Use of the unique AARC collective mark.
Business opportunity	Access to clients who use AARC status as a criteria for the preparation of tender lists or when locating a consultant remote to their normal area of operation.
Continued development	Incentive to maintain an appropriate level of CPD, supported by attendance at an annual Standards and Development Day.

The benefits of the scheme to the client include:

- access to a network of experienced practitioners who have been assessed and accredited by the nation's
- leading representative organisation, and
- confidence in receiving expert and objective advice.

2: Joining the Scheme

Eligibility

Applicants will need to have a fully rounded knowledge of arboriculture and be able to demonstrate clear and logical thought processes, with the ability to impart their knowledge and opinions in a dispassionate and objective manner.

Prerequisites

i) **AA Membership:** Applicants must be paid up Professional or Fellow Members of the Association.

ii) **Qualifications:** Applicants must hold a qualification at NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) level 5 or above. A non-exhaustive list of examples is included in the table below. Other relevant qualifications (including those from allied professions or other countries) may be considered if applicants can supply evidence of their arboricultural competence through these qualifications and their experience. If an applicant has any doubts as to the eligibility of their qualifications, they should seek clarification from the Association's Chief Executive.

Table 2: Non-exhaustive list of examples of eligible qualifications

Dip Arb (RFS)	Professional Diploma in Arboriculture
ABC Awards level 6	ABC Awards level 6 Diploma in Arboriculture
BSc or MSc	Degree or Masters in arboriculture, urban forestry or Middlesex University's Arboriculture & Community Forestry Management or Resource Management (Arboriculture)
FdSc	Foundation degree in arboriculture
MICFor/FICFor	Member or Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Foresters attained by an arboricultural route / Chartered Arboriculturist

iii) **Experience:** Applicants must have at least five years relevant experience at an advisory level (this must cover the assessment core subject areas and may include experience as a local government officer).

iv) **Insurance:** Applicants must be covered by Professional Indemnity insurance to a level appropriate to the liabilities that their work may generate, and in all cases to a minimum of £1 million cover. Applicants are advised to discuss their specific insurance requirements with their insurance company or broker.

v) **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** Applicants will be required to submit records showing they have undertaken a minimum of 25 hours CPD annually over the preceding two years, in accordance with the requirements detailed in the guidance document at Appendix D.

Evidence to be presented

Applicants will be required to submit a portfolio of six reports; one report for each of the five core subjects listed below and one additional report from another area of arboriculture which they feel demonstrates their particular strengths.

Table 3: Portfolio elements

Report	Core subject reports	Notes/Advice
1	**Tree risk assessment**	This should be a detailed appraisal, covering a single tree or small number of trees, including management recommendations.
2	**Investigation of actual or alleged damage to a structure**	This should relate to either direct or indirect damage associated with the rooting activity of a tree or trees.
3	**Tree protection legislation**	This should be a report or opinion relating to the operation, interpretation and/or application of a tree preservation order or other form of relevant statutory protection of trees.
4	**Trees and development**	In addition to an initial standard development site survey as recommended by BS5837, this should include associated documentation relating to the project, including an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, a Tree Protection Plan and an Arboricultural Method Statement.
5	**Statement to a primary decision maker**	This will typically be an appeal statement or proof of evidence but an expert witness report would be equally acceptable.
	Additional report	
6		There are no set parameters for this report but it must be relevant to the field of arboriculture. The following is a non-exhaustive list of potential examples which may guide the applicant's choice: An expert witness report (if not included as a core subject report) A tree planting scheme A tree strategy A woodland management plan A tree work accident investigation Analysis/appraisal of the work of another professional A research project

3: The Application

The application will comprise:

i) **the application form (**Appendix A. It can also be downloaded from the Association's website: http://www.trees.org.uk) duly completed and signed,

ii) **the fee for the assessment of the portfolio** as specified in Appendix B,

iii) **certificate of insurance** or other evidence of current insurance cover,

iv) **continuing professional development (CPD) records** showing that a minimum of 25 hours of relevant CPD has been undertaken annually over the preceding two years, in accordance with the requirements detailed in the guidance at Appendix D, and

v) **portfolio of reports.** For ease of copying and circulation between the assessors and Lead Assessor, the reports should be submitted as pdfs on a CD, but one report shall also be submitted as a hard copy. Advice on the composition and presentation of the portfolio is given in Section 4 below.

Submission: The application should be submitted by post, addressed to the Chief Executive of the Association, Arboricultural Association, The Malthouse, Stroud Green, Standish, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 3DL. The envelope should be marked 'Confidential'**.**

Confidentiality: The Registered Consultant application and assessment process is completely confidential. Only the active assessors, Chief Executive of the Association and technical and administration staff as required, will have access to the portfolio, assessment documentation or other records. All assessors are required to sign a declaration agreeing to maintain absolute confidentiality in perpetuity, whether or not an applicant is successful. Any material retained will be subject to the provisions of the GDPR 2018.

Special circumstances: If an applicant has special needs they think should be taken into account during the assessment process, the relevant details should be submitted in a separate letter accompanying the application, addressed to the Chief Executive of the Association. The Chief Executive will consider any reasonable adjustments required to address the issues raised, if necessary in consultation with the applicant.

4: Presentation of the Portfolio

The reports submitted should demonstrate the applicant's competence, confidence and authority, and show that they are capable of achieving the exacting standards required of a Registered Consultant.

As stated above, one report must be submitted covering each of the core subjects, along with one additional report from another area of arboriculture selected by the applicant. The reports should have been produced within the three years prior to the application date. The Lead Assessor has the discretion to relax this requirement if it allows a more comprehensive portfolio to be presented.

Each report should be submitted as a pdf file (including plans, appendices etc) as they would have been submitted to the client. PowerPoint presentations must include the narrative. To demonstrate the quality of the printing, clarity of graphics, type of binding etc. one of the reports (of the applicant's choice) should also be submitted as a hard copy.

The reports should be numbered and an index submitted listing the reports by number, title and core subject, along with the details of any supporting documentation. A covering letter should also be submitted containing an introductory paragraph on each of the reports. This should include any relevant background information that is not covered in the report but would assist the assessors in understanding its context or how the instructions were developed for example. Where applicable, it is expected that decision letters will be included or details of the outcome of a project should be given if this is not included with the supporting documentation.

The format and layout of reports will vary depending on their nature and target audience. However, in all cases the reports must demonstrate the relevant competencies and meet the associated assessment criteria against which they will be assessed *(*see Appendix C*)*. For example, there are occasions when a letter may be submitted rather than a formal report. This is perfectly acceptable and whilst there is not the same requirement for formatting and including details as for a report, the fundamental principles remain the same. The expected convention is that reports will be written in the first person and generally in the active voice.

The importance of thorough proof reading cannot be over-emphasised, as a document containing grammatical and typographical errors will indicate a poor professional standard even if it is technically sound. It is perfectly acceptable, having selected a report for inclusion in the portfolio, for the applicant to go through it again to correct errors and otherwise improve it prior to submission.

The identity of the applicant and details of all materials submitted for assessment will be held in strict confidence by the Association and the assessors, with the applicant's identity only being divulged on successful completion of the entire process. Accordingly, even where submitted reports may be commercially sensitive, there is no need to redact information of a confidential nature unless absolutely necessary.

5: The Assessment Process

This is a three-stage process with the initial validation and subsequent assessment of reports and CPD record determining whether the applicant will progress to the interview stage. Appendix E outlines the sequence of events and timescales involved in the process.

The procedure will be as follows:

Stage 1: Validation

i) An initial appraisal of the portfolio will be undertaken as part of the validation process to ensure that it covers the core subject areas and the reports are presented in a format suitable for assessment (e.g. appropriate pagination and paragraph numbering).

ii) The applicant's individual or company's insurance details will then be assessed to ensure that they provide the minimum required cover and do not include any unreasonable exclusion clauses. Any inadequacies will need to be corrected before the application can be progressed.

iii) The applicant's CPD record will be checked and verified against the requirements detailed in the guidance document at Appendix D.

iv) Subject to confirmation that the application is complete and meets the requirements of Sections 2, 3 and 4, it will be validated and the initial payment processed within four weeks of receipt. The Association will then appoint two assessors for the initial stage of the assessment, having first checked that the assessors foresee no conflict of interest.

v) An acknowledgment letter and receipted invoice, will be sent to the applicant.

Stage 2: Assessment of the portfolio

i) Within 10 weeks of validation the reports will be scrutinised independently by both assessors against the competencies and assessment criteria (see Appendix C).

ii) Both assessors will complete individual assessment forms for each of the reports and a portfolio summary report giving an overall recommendation as to whether or not the applicant should be invited to interview. The individual assessment forms will record whether the assessment criteria relevant to the particular report have been met on a simple *yes* or *no* basis but with feedback given to justify the decision and inform the Lead Assessor as to the basis upon which the decision regarding the overall acceptability of the report has been made.

iii) Each form will also include the assessor's suggested questions and the reason(s) for asking them, should the applicant be invited to interview. Even if the applicant is not ultimately invited to interview, the indicated questions will provide useful feedback to them.

iv) The Lead Assessor will review the individual and summary forms from both assessors, along with the portfolio, and complete the Lead Assessor assessment form, which will confirm whether or not the applicant is to be invited for interview. The Lead Assessor will be the arbiter and have the final decision in all instances where an individual assessor is undecided or two assessors disagree.

v) The Lead Assessor will have the discretion to ask the applicant for written clarification of specific points or to submit extra examples of work to help inform his decision. This is unlikely to be a common occurrence.

vi) An applicant whose portfolio does not meet the required standard will receive a letter explaining the result and enclosing copies of all the assessment forms. It is important that the applicant understands, and is able to see, the basis of the determination and they should be sufficiently well guided by the letter to know what they have to do to achieve success with a future application.

vii) Successful applicants will be notified in writing but will not receive copies of the assessment forms as they will contain suggested interview questions. A date for the interview will then be arranged.

viii) If successful, the applicant will submit the remaining assessment fee (as specified in Appendix B) and this will be processed prior to the interview.

Stage 3: Interview

i) The interview will be conducted by two assessors, one of whom may be the Lead Assessor, and will be approximately 2 hours in duration. The Association's Chief Executive, Technical Officer or third assessor acting as an observer or moderator may also attend the interview. Interviews will normally be held at the Association's Head Office in Gloucestershire.

ii) At the outset of the interview, the procedure and confirmation of its confidentiality will be explained to the applicant. The applicant should approach the interview as they would a job interview, maintaining an appropriate degree of formality throughout.

iii) The interview will typically concentrate on areas that were either not covered in the submitted reports or which caused the assessors to question the applicant's knowledge or its application. The ability to consider alternative points of view and contrary opinions will also be explored. The interview will also challenge the candidate's assumptions, knowledge and opinions (whether or not expressed in their portfolio) and give them the opportunity to discuss and defend their professional views.

iv) The assessors may question the applicant on their knowledge of the AARC scheme and its procedures, together with the Association's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Example competencies and assessment criteria specifically relevant to the interview process are included in items 7-9 of Appendix C.

v) Whilst some elements of the interview will be in the form of a discussion, others will require a considered response from the applicant. Although applicants will be allowed a reasonable amount of time to consider the points raised they will be expected to give a definite response, as they might at an appeal hearing.

vi) At the end of the interview, the applicant will be asked if there is anything they wish to add, for instance any unusual or particular projects with which they have been involved, possibly since they submitted the reports, or if they wish to expand on any of the points covered during the interview.

vii) Assessors will not indicate the outcome of the interview on the day.

viii) Both assessors will independently complete separate interview assessment forms, giving an overall recommendation as to whether or not the applicant meets the criteria required to become a Registered Consultant.

ix) Where the Lead Assessor was not involved, he will review the interview forms from both assessors and complete the Lead Assessor assessment form, which will confirm whether or not the applicant has been successful. If the Lead Assessor was involved with the interview, he will complete the Lead Assessor assessment form on the basis of the recommendations arising from his own assessment form and that of the second assess

6: Results of the Assessment

The applicant will be informed of the summary outcome by telephone within 24 hours of the interview and in writing within one week of the interview whether:

i) they have been successful, at which point they become a Registered Consultant. The applicant will be provided with copies of all of the assessment forms from both stages. The letter will also include advice on how to improve on any weaker areas identified during the assessment process; or

ii) they have been unsuccessful, in which case the letter will identify the areas in which the applicant was found to be deficient and the circumstances under which a further application would be appropriate. The applicant will be provided with copies of all the assessment forms from both stages (following the expiry of the time limit for the submission of an appeal).

Unsuccessful applicants will be encouraged to re-apply once they are satisfied that they have addressed the issues raised by the assessors.

7: Right of Appeal

Applicants who are unsuccessful in either Stage 2 or 3 of the assessment have a right of appeal to the Association's Professional Committee, who are responsible for the management of the Registered Consultant scheme. Any appeal must be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive of the Association within four weeks of the date of the decision letter.

8: Conditions for the Maintenance of Registered Consultant Status

Registered Consultants must:

i) pay the annual scheme management fee within the prescribed timescale,

ii) maintain the appropriate level of Professional or Fellow Membership of the Association,

iii) ensure that insurance cover is maintained as specified in item (iv) of the Prerequisites listed in Section 2,

iv) undertake and record CPD as specified in Appendix D, submitting their CPD record on request,

v) attend the annual Standards and Development Day, unless there are overriding reasons why this is not possible,

vi) submit to the 5 yearly QA system, supplying four reports, of which one will be chosen for assessment, and

vii) abide by and uphold the Association's Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct (available on the Association's website: *http://www.trees.org.uk).*

Failure to comply with any of the above conditions could lead to the removal of Registered Consultant status.

9: Use of the Registered Consultant Logo (Collective Mark)

A recognised benefit of the scheme is that Registered Consultants are permitted to use the Association's RC logo (collective mark) with the words 'Registered Consultant' beneath for promotional purposes, for example in advertisements and on stationery. The use of the logo is a benefit attributable to the individuals only and its use is conditional on making that clear where the individual is part of a company.

The Arboricultural Association has rights under the Trade Marks Act (1994) and in common law to protect its registered and unregistered collective mark(s) from infringement by anyone using it/them without the Association's express permission.

10: Complaints against Registered Consultants

The Association takes allegations of breaches of its Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct extremely seriously and has a complaints procedure to investigate any alleged breaches (available on the Association's website: *http://www.trees.org.uk).*

Appendix A

Application Form

Applicant details

Name:____

Address:____

____

____

____

County: ____

Postcode:___________________________

Email: ____

Company Tel: ______________________________________

Mobile: ____

Company Fax: ____

Qualifications

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

Experience in arboriculture

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

Contractual/business connections

I have a salaried or close business connection with the following firm(s):	Description of their business	Nature of connection

Declaration

I apply to become an AA Registered Consultant and confirm:

i) I have read, understood and agree to abide by the requirements of the scheme as outlined in this document,

ii) I have read, understood and agree to abide by the Association's Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct,

iii) I am at present covered by, and while in practice, shall continue to be covered by Professional Indemnity insurance to a level appropriate to the liabilities that my work may generate and not less than £1 million or such sum as the Arboricultural Association shall specify from time to time, and

iv) the reports submitted are my own original work, unless otherwise stated.

I enclose with this application:

the appropriate assessment fee (see Appendix B),

certificate, or other evidence, of Professional Indemnity insurance cover,

CPD records for the last two years (see Appendix D), and

the portfolio of reports (Section 4).

To the best of my knowledge the information on this application form is true and correct.

Signed: ....

Applicant (Block capitals): .... **Date:** ....

Return completed application form to:
Arboricultural Association, The Malthouse, Stroud Green, Standish, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 3DL

Appendix B

Fee Structure

Assessment fees

Assessment fees are £840.00 (£700.00 plus VAT) in total and are payable in two stages:

i) £420.00 (£350.00 plus VAT) with submission of the application, and

ii) £420.00 (£350.00 plus VAT) upon receipt of invitation to interview.

Scheme management fee

A scheme management fee is due on an annual basis (1st January – 31st December). This is currently £840.00 (£700.00 plus VAT) and is payable within four weeks of receipt of invoice from the Association.

Appendix C

Competencies and Assessment Criteria

Registered Consultants are expected to behave in a professional manner in a range of situations. In doing so they should have full awareness of all the factors that apply in terms of responsibilities, duties and courtesies. They should also act in the interests of public trust – honouring the public trust in professionals and serving the public interest.

Candidates are expected to achieve these objectives by acting with:

i) competence – working to a measured standard of knowledge and ability,

ii) due care – working at performance levels necessary to fulfil specified requirements measured against a standard of care,

iii) impartiality – where required, working as an unbiased third party,

iv) independence – free from influence, control or domination,

v) integrity – being candid, fair, honest and of sound moral principle, and

vi) objectivity – free from personal influences, emotions or prejudices.

These attributes should be evident both in the portfolio and during the interview.

A table of competencies and assessment criteria is shown overleaf.

Arboricultural Association

Registered Consultant Scheme

The following table identifies the competencies required of a candidate who is seeking to achieve the status of an Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant. These competencies form the basis of the assessment for admission to the AARC scheme.

COMPETENCIES **The candidate can demonstrate:**	**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA** **The candidate is able to:**
PORTFOLIO AND INTERVIEW	
1. a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the subject areas encountered by an arboricultural consultant	1.1 display current and accurate knowledge, 1.2 show an understanding of relevant legislation, 1.3 interpret reference material, other professional reports, laboratory results and other information appropriately, 1.4 recognise the limits of their own experience and expertise, 1.5 recognise when other specialist help is required and advise the client appropriately.
2. that analysis of information has taken place	2.1 collect and verify data, 2.2 employ critical analysis in a logical manner.
3. the development of reasoned opinions	3.1 show a logical progression from analysis, 3.2 set out opinions in a clear and unambiguous manner.
4. the formation of robust conclusions and recommendations	4.1 show a logical progression from opinions, 4.2 set out conclusions and recommendations in a clear and unambiguous manner.
5. the ability to produce written output which is fit for purpose	5.1 produce work that has a clear structure encompassing the requirements of: i) terms of reference/instructions and summary, ii) methods of data collection, iii) constraints, iv) distinct separation of facts from assumptions, v) distinct separation of opinions from conclusions and recommendations, vi) clear and relevant graphics with orientation, annotations and identification, vii) headers/footers, page and paragraph numbering, accurate cross-referencing, viii) appropriate inclusion of appendices, references, footnotes and extracts, ix) use of a good standard of English, x) reliability, clarity, accuracy and defensibility.
6. the ability to communicate effectively with parties of all abilities	6.1 explain technical matters to those not familiar with the subject, 6.2 discuss the formulation of opinions and defend their professional views in formal situations.
INTERVIEW	
7. a comprehensive knowledge of the AARC scheme and its procedures	7.1 explain the procedural and operational requirements of maintaining AARC status, 7.2 identify events that may give rise to a complaint, 7.3 outline the AA's complaints procedure.
8. an understanding of the AA's Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct	8.1 explain why adherence to the AA's codes is essential, 8.2 explain how compliance with the codes can be achieved.
9. a working knowledge of the role of an expert witness	9.1 outline planning/tree preservation order appeal procedures, 9.2 outline how compliance with Part 35 of the *Civil Procedure Rules* (CPR35) and the *Protocol for the Instruction of Experts to give Evidence in Civil Claims* can be achieved, 9.3 outline how compliance with Rule 33 of the *Criminal Procedure Rules* (CrimPR33) can be achieved.

Appendix D

CPD Guidance

Registered Consultants are required to complete a minimum 25 hours per year, which must include at least two of the following:

Home-based learning (H)

Private study or structured reading on particular themes or topics. Use of audio, video or multi-media resources and other distance-learning material

Action-based learning (A)

A systematic, structured approach to the solving of problems in the workplace

Preparation of material (M)

For course, technical meetings or publication in the technical press

Research (R)

Supervised research

Work-based development (W)

Background reading, research or preparation required to tackle a new area of work

Arboricultural Association activities (P)

Of a technical or professional nature

Conferences (C)

Conferences, seminars, workshops or other technical and professional events and meetings, including in-house training

Qualification (Q)

Courses leading to a qualification

If asked to verify their CPD record a Registered Consultant may need to show evidence of the CPD undertaken such as conference programmes etc. This is not meant to be an onerous task and members should realise that the Association will provide help, support and encouragement if required.

Arboricultural Association

Registered Consultant Scheme

Appendix E