



REGISTERED CONSULTANT SCHEME



APPLICATION GUIDE

To advance excellence in the field of arboricultural consultancy, offering the highest level of attainment in the UK



Version 3 – May 2026

The Arboricultural Association
The home of tree care

www.trees.org.uk

Foreword

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For more than six decades the Arboricultural Association (the Association) has been working with tree care professionals to establish and improve the arboricultural industry.

This guide has been developed to provide all the essential information required in preparing for application to become an Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant (AARC). It sets out the status, aims and purpose of the RC Scheme and presents the prerequisite requirements and structure for the submission of documents. The appendices include details of the range of competency areas and optional modules within them, offering valuable insight into the standard and professionalism expected, as well as a timeline for submission, assessment, interview and completion.

Version	Revision	Date	Authorised by
1	New document	January 2021	Simon Richmond
2	Change to title of RC9	July 2021	Simon Richmond
3	Change to section 7: Right of Appeal to be in line with the Association's revised Appeals Procedure	May 2026	Emma Gilmartin

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Section 1

The Scheme



1: The Scheme

The Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant (AARC) Scheme has been running since the mid-1970s and operates on a national basis. Members of the Scheme have demonstrated attainment of a recognised standard of knowledge, experience and the ability to practise 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; it 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 Scheme members 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 in an online directory held and actively promoted by the Arboricultural Association via its website and at events such as shows, exhibitions, seminars and conferences. Use of the unique AARC logo.
Business opportunity	Access to clients who use AARC status as a criterion for the preparation of tender lists or when locating a consultant remote from their normal area of operation.
Continued development	Incentive to maintain an appropriate level of CPD, supported by a rigorous Quality Assurance system and attendance at an annual Standards and Development Day.

The benefits of the Scheme to the client include:

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

Section 2

Joining the Scheme

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, both verbally and in written reports, in a dispassionate and objective manner.

Prerequisites

- i) **Association Membership:** Applicants must be current Professional or Fellow Members of the Arboricultural Association.
- ii) **Qualifications:** Applicants must hold an arboricultural qualification at RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework) 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 Diploma in Arboriculture	<i>Either ABC Awards Level 6 Certificate or Diploma</i>
BSc or MSc	Degree or Masters in arboriculture <i>or</i> urban forestry, <i>or</i> Middlesex University's Arboriculture & Community Forestry Management, <i>or</i> 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 5 years' relevant experience at an advisory level (this must cover the relevant assessment competency areas [see page 6] 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 2 years, in accordance with the requirements as detailed on the Association's website.

Section 2

Joining the Scheme

Evidence to be presented – submission portfolio

The applicant can choose from a total of 19 subject modules, which are set out in 6 competency areas. The requirement for submission will be a total of 5 subject modules, of which 1 must be the compulsory Professional Practice module, RC1.

4 subject modules must be presented from at least 3 separate competency areas, with no more than 2 from the same competency area, plus the Professional Practice module, RC1.

All submissions are required to be of sufficient detail and complexity to demonstrate the applicant's technical competence and authority and show that they are capable of achieving the exacting standards of report writing required of a Registered Consultant. All applicants must demonstrate a high level of written skills and professionalism in accordance with the Association's *Code of Conduct and Ethics*.

The competency areas and module subjects are as follows:

Table 3: Portfolio modules.

Module	Competency area and module subject
Competency Area 1 – Professional Practice (compulsory)	
RC1	Professional Practice
Competency Area 2 – Trees and Development (BS5837)	
RC2	Feasibility and planning
RC3	Planning application
RC4	Planning application critique/assessment – arboricultural elements
Competency Area 3 – Management of a Tree Population	
RC5	Tree hazard identification/risk assessment and risk management
RC6	Strategic tree management
RC7	Woodland management plan
RC8	Tree planting scheme
RC9	Ancient or Veteran tree management plan
Competency Area 4 – Trees and Structures	
RC10	Direct damage to structures caused by trees
RC11	Indirect damage to structures caused by trees
RC12	Mortgage or insurance advice
Competency Area 5 – Trees and the Law	
RC13	Tree Preservation Orders – objection to the making of a TPO
RC14	Applicant/agent TPO application and successful appeal following a refusal by the LPA
RC15	LPA TPO decision and successful appeal dismissal following an appeal by the applicant/agent
RC16	Breach of a TPO
Competency Area 6 – Critical Thinking	
RC17	Expert statement to a primary decision maker
RC18	Critical appraisal
RC19	Research project

Advice on the composition and presentation of the portfolio is given in Section 4 below and detailed guidance on content description and competency guidance is set out in Appendix A.

Section 3

The Application

3: The Application

There will be 2 application submission dates each year, on **1st March** and **1st September**.

The application is submitted online and will comprise:

- i) full applicant details completed in the online application page on the Association's website (see 'Submission' below);
- ii) the fee for the assessment of the portfolio as specified on the website;
- iii) a 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 have been undertaken annually over the preceding 2 years, in accordance with the requirements detailed in the guidance on the Association's website; *and*
- v) a portfolio of reports/submissions. The reports should be submitted electronically, uploaded through the online application page on the Association's website. Advice on the composition and presentation of the portfolio is given in Section 4 below and detailed guidance on content description and competency guidance is set out in Appendix A.

Submission: The application should be submitted via the online application page on the Association's website:

www.trees.org.uk/Accreditation/Become-an-AA-Registered-Consultant

Confidentiality: The Registered Consultant application and assessment process is completely confidential. Only the active assessors, the 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 General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

Special Circumstances: If an applicant has special needs they think should be considered during the assessment process, the relevant details should be submitted in a separate letter when making 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.

Section 4

Presentation of the Portfolio

4: Presentation of the Portfolio

The reports submitted should be of sufficient detail and complexity to demonstrate the applicant's technical competence and authority, and show that they are capable of achieving the exacting standards of report writing required of a Registered Consultant.

The reports should have been produced within the 3 years prior to the application date. The Lead Assessor has the discretion to relax this requirement in very limited circumstances if it allows a more comprehensive portfolio to be presented.

Each report should be submitted electronically as a pdf file (including plans, appendices etc.) as it was submitted to the client/recipient.

A covering letter should also be submitted containing an index listing the reports by module number and subject (as listed in Section 2) and report title; an introductory paragraph on each of the reports; and the details of any supporting documentation. This letter should also 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 (or explanation for relaxation of the 3-year rule, if applicable). Where relevant, decision letters or details of the outcome of a project should be 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 competency guidance against which they will be assessed (see Appendix A). For example, there are occasions when a letter may be submitted rather than a formal report. This can be perfectly acceptable, and whilst there may not be the same requirement for formatting as for a report, the fundamental principles of clear, logical writing and easy navigation 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 proofreading 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.

Section 5

The Assessment Process

5: The Assessment Process

Timing

There will be 2 application submission dates each year, on 1st March and 1st September. All documents and information as detailed in Section 3 above must be submitted by the due date.

The assessment process has 3 stages, with the initial validation, CPD record check (Stage 1) and subsequent assessment of reports (Stage 2) determining whether the applicant will progress to the interview stage (Stage 3). Appendix C 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 required modules and that the reports are presented in a format suitable for assessment (e.g. suitable level of detail and complexity, appropriate format, pagination and paragraph numbering, etc.).
- 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.
- iii) The applicant's CPD record will be checked and verified against the requirements detailed in the guidance on the Association's website.
- iv) Subject to confirmation that the application is complete and meets the requirements of Sections 3 and 4, it will be validated, and receipt of the initial payment will be confirmed.
- v) An acknowledgment email will be sent to the applicant.
- vi) The portfolio of reports will be sent to the Lead Assessor for scrutiny, who will then appoint 2 assessors for stage 2 of the assessment, having first checked that the assessors foresee no conflict of interest.

Stage 2: Assessment of the portfolio

- i) Within 8 weeks of validation, the reports will be scrutinised independently by both assessors against the competency guidance (see Appendix A) and the standards set out in the Association's Report Writing Guidance.
- 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 the applicant should be invited to interview. The individual assessment forms will record whether the competency guidance relevant to each report and report writing standards have been met on a simple yes or no basis, but with feedback given to justify the decision and to 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 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 2 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 their decision, if necessary.
- vi) An applicant whose portfolio does not meet the required standard will receive an email explaining the result and enclosing copies of all the assessment forms and a Lead Assessor's report. It is important that the applicant understands the basis of the determination and they should be sufficiently well guided by the content of the feedback, which is frequently followed up with a phone call from the Lead Assessor, to know what they must do to achieve success with a future application.
- vii) Successful applicants will be notified, often by phone and followed up with an email, but will not receive copies of the assessment forms as these will contain suggested interview questions. A date for the interview will then be arranged.
- viii) If successful in Stage 2, the applicant will submit the remaining assessment fee (as specified on the website) and this will be processed prior to the interview.

Sections 5 & 6

The Assessment Process and Results of the Assessment

Stage 3: Interview

- i) The interview will be conducted by 2 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 but can also be conducted using video conferencing services.
- 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 either were not covered in the submitted reports or which caused the assessors to question the applicant's knowledge, its application or aspects of the quality of written output. The ability to consider alternative points of view and contrary opinions will also be explored. The interview may challenge the candidate's assumptions, knowledge and opinions (whether or not expressed in their portfolio) and will give them the opportunity to discuss and defend their professional views.
- iv) The assessors will question the applicant on their knowledge of the AARC Scheme and its procedures, together with the Association's *Code of Conduct and Ethics*. Example competencies and assessment criteria specifically relevant to the interview process are included in items 7-9 of Appendix B.
- 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 in 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 to the applicant.
- viii) Both assessors will independently complete separate interview assessment forms, giving an overall recommendation as to whether 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 the applicant has been successful. If the Lead Assessor was involved with the interview, he will complete the Lead Assessor assessment form based on the recommendations arising from his own assessment form and that of the second assessor.

6: Results of the Assessment

The applicant will be informed by telephone, often on the same day as 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 the assessment forms from both stages. The email or letter will also include advice on any opportunities for improvement identified during the assessment process;
or
- ii) they have been unsuccessful, in which case the email or 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. Unsuccessful applicants will be encouraged to re-apply once they are satisfied that they have addressed the issues raised by the assessors.

Sections 7, 8 , 9 & 10

Right of Appeal, Conditions, Logo Usage and Complaints

7: Right of Appeal

All appeals must be made in writing and submitted within 28 days of the date when the decision being appealed against was communicated. Appeals will be processed in accordance with the Association's Appeals Procedure, which can be found [here](#).

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 item (v) of the Prerequisites listed in Section 2, 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) comply with the Scheme's Quality Assurance system, submitting examples of current reports when required; *and*
- vii) abide by and uphold the Association's *Code of Conduct and Ethics* available on the Association's website.

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

A recognised benefit of the Scheme is that Registered Consultants are permitted to use the Association's Registered Consultant logo for promotional purposes, for example in advertisements and on stationery. The use of the logo is a benefit attributable to the individual Registered Consultant 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 Conduct and Ethics* extremely seriously and has a complaints procedure to investigate any alleged breaches (available on the website: www.trees.org.uk).

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

The applicant can choose from a total of 19 subject modules, which are set out in 6 competency areas. The requirement for submission will be a total of 5 subject modules, of which 1 must be the compulsory Professional Practice module, RC1.

4 subject modules must be presented from at least 3 separate competency areas, with no more than 2 from the same competency area, plus the Professional Practice module, RC1.

All submissions are required to be of sufficient detail and complexity to demonstrate the applicant's technical competence and authority and show that they are capable of achieving the exacting standards of report writing required of a Registered Consultant. All applicants must demonstrate a high level of written skills and professionalism in accordance with the Association's *Code of Conduct and Ethics*.

The competency areas and module subjects are as follows:

Module	Competency area and module subject
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RC2	Feasibility and planning
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RC4	Planning application critique/assessment – arboricultural elements
Competency Area 3 – Management of a Tree Population	
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RC6	Strategic tree management
RC7	Woodland management plan
RC8	Tree planting scheme
RC9	Ancient or Veteran tree management plan
Competency Area 4 – Trees and Structures	
RC10	Direct damage to structures caused by trees
RC11	Indirect damage to structures caused by trees
RC12	Mortgage or insurance advice
Competency Area 5 – Trees and the Law	
RC13	Tree Preservation Orders – objection to the making of a TPO
RC14	Applicant/agent TPO application and successful appeal following a refusal by the LPA
RC15	LPA TPO decision and successful appeal dismissal following an appeal by the applicant/agent
RC16	Breach of a TPO
Competency Area 6 – Critical Thinking	
RC17	Expert statement to a primary decision maker
RC18	Critical appraisal
RC19	Research project

Please note in the following pages the 'competency guidance' section identifies what you as a candidate are required to be able to do. It is recognised that circumstances may not permit each module or competency area to be met fully and therefore, it is the responsibility of the candidate to choose those modules for which they can present sufficient information to satisfy the 'competency guidance' criteria.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 1 – Professional Practice	
Module	RC1 – (Compulsory)
Subject area	Professional Practice
Submission description	A written statement of 500–750 words, covering: ■ Data protection ■ Health and safety ■ Workplace ethics ■ Effective communication ■ Quality control ■ Environmental and sustainability statement ■ Terms and conditions of business ■ Client enquiry handling and client/public complaint handling ■ Commitment to advancing the work of the candidate's organisation NB: The statements, documents, work examples, witness statements, etc. provided can be proportionate in content to the size and nature of the candidate's organisation, either appended or provided as background documents through a recognised file hosting service (e.g. Dropbox, WeTransfer, Google Drive etc.). The list of topics above should be tailored to the type of organisation in which the applicant works.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate by explanation or examples how they are compliant with their organisation's policy/procedures relating to the following: ■ Data protection (GDPR and Data Protection Act – Article 5) ■ Health and safety, e.g. general obligations, risk assessments, requirements for lone tree inspection ■ Workplace ethics, e.g. complying with their organisation's values and behaviours ■ Effective communication with clients/members of the public* ■ Quality control (NB: Sole traders will need to demonstrate a process for ensuring that documents are reviewed. For larger organisations, the candidate will need to show how quality is controlled and maintained) ■ Environment and sustainability ■ Terms and conditions of business ■ Client care and client/public complaint handling* ■ Commitment to advancing the quality/work of their organisation * May be specific to LA officers or those acting in that capacity.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 2 – Trees and Development (BS5837)	
Module	RC2
Subject area	Feasibility and planning
Submission description	Report(s), letters, emails, plans, tables, notes of site meetings/telephone conversations containing the following: ■ Initial site assessment ■ Soil assessment (if applicable) ■ Appropriate topographical survey plan to include tree positions and any relevant neighbouring trees ■ Tree survey information and key ■ Above- and below-ground constraints identified ■ An initial Arboricultural Impact Assessment* ■ Conclusion(s) on feasibility ■ Advice for the design team ■ A Draft Tree Protection Plan* ■ Advice related to statutory controls, non-statutory designations planning policy (e.g. National or Local Planning Policy) as relevant * As applicable if a design has not yet been developed.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate by evidence that they have the skills and knowledge required to carry out the BS5837 principles (with any deviation from the BS5837 process explained and justified) following a logical sequence of events that has tree care at the heart of the process. b) Provide tree survey information for all trees relevant to the site/proposal in accordance with BS5837. c) Identify all constraints posed by the trees to developing the site, above or below ground, and effectively communicate these to client/project team through text and/or plans. d) Clearly identify potential and anticipated impacts of the proposed development on trees and vice versa and assess their significance (with general advice on how they might be addressed).* e) Provide reasoned and evidence-based conclusion(s) as to the feasibility of development proposals. f) Put forward considered and appropriate advice on design modifications, avoidance measures, mitigation or compensation for the identified impacts.* g) Advise on the relevance/significance of any statutory controls and non-statutory designations, as well as National and Local Planning Policy. * As applicable if a design has not yet been developed.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 2 – Trees and Development (BS5837)	
Module	RC3
Subject area	Planning application
Submission description	Documents (reports and plans) that are appropriate to accompany a planning application which meet the client brief/instruction and planning validation requirements, containing: ■ Tree survey information and key for all trees relevant to the site ■ An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) ■ A stand-alone Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) ■ A Tree Protection Plan (TPP) ■ Accompanying appendices as appropriate ■ A separately prepared statement to demonstrate an understanding of the practicalities of the guidance and recommendations made NB: The AMS and TPP must be detailed, site specific and appropriate for the end user, e.g. an LPA as the enforcement agency and the developer/contractor on site. NB: Some documents may be prepared in accordance with the requirements of a specific planning condition imposed by an LPA or prior to determination. However, sufficient site-specific information must be available to allow a meaningful AMS and TPP to be prepared. NB: Documents prepared in support of a Development Consent Order (DCO) relating to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) will also be considered.
Competency guidance	a) Demonstrate by evidence that they have the skills and knowledge required to apply the BS5837 principles (with any deviation from the BS5837 process explained and justified) following a logical sequence of events that has tree care at the heart of the process, by providing documents required for a planning application containing all the relevant information. b) Provide relevant tree survey information and a key in accordance with BS5837, to include a retention category and Root Protection Area (RPA) in square metres. c) Identify the impacts of the proposed development on trees and vice versa and provide an assessment of their significance. d) Assess the proposed development against the requirements of national and local planning policy. e) Provide reasoned and evidence-based conclusion(s) as to the acceptability of development proposals within the application. f) Detail considered and appropriate tree protection, avoidance measures, mitigation or compensation for the identified impacts in the form of a stand-alone AMS and TPP. g) Provide a separately prepared statement to demonstrate an understanding of the practicalities of the guidance and recommendations made, including how these address the wider context of the construction processes on a site.
The candidate will be able to:	

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 2 – Trees and Development (BS5837)	
Module	RC4
Subject area	Planning application critique/assessment – arboricultural elements
Submission description	Report-format text, annotated application/objection/representation documents, own statements in relation to one of the following: ■ A response to an internal LPA development management consultation request ■ A report for submitting to a planning committee ■ A report assessing/appraising arboricultural details and reports on behalf of a potential site purchaser/investor ■ A report assessing/analysing arboricultural details on behalf of a third party or interested person (e.g. a neighbouring landowner or a Rule 6 party at Appeal)
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate by evidence the depth of knowledge required to provide reasoned conclusions (based on the information before them) as to the acceptability or otherwise of proposed tree care processes/development needs when considered against BS5837 guidance and recommendations. b) Critique the relevant arboricultural documents in a professional and pragmatic manner, highlighting any errors, inconsistencies, strengths and weaknesses of the application. c) Provide a response for the LPA that must also be suitable to support a planning committee's decisions. d) Provide reasoned conclusions for the instructing client regarding the suitability of an application related to arboricultural matters. e) Demonstrate relevant knowledge of planning context and application/procedural processes and of national and local policy as applicable to trees, woodlands etc. f) Include their own opinion, recommendations and conclusions as appropriate.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 3 – Management of a Tree Population	
Module	RC5
Subject area	Tree hazard identification/risk assessment and risk management
Submission description	The candidate must submit a report to cover <i>either</i>: 1. An individual tree risk assessment/inspection <i>or</i> 2. A small number of trees using a survey template format The assessment may include the use of: ■ A suitable systematic approach* ■ Investigation using specialist equipment ■ A combination of the above * Appendix to show an explanation of the risk assessment outcome arrived at.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate by evidence the ability to identify hazards and assess and manage tree risk, and to effectively communicate (within a report) an appropriate course(s) of action to a client. b) Clearly set out reasoned expert opinion based on the assessment/inspection findings, analysis and conclusions, and provide realistic management recommendations. Options to be stated for the client, evaluated as applicable and a preference indicated, with reasons given. c) Demonstrate an appropriate level of technical knowledge in the context of the client's instructions. d) Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant legislation, case law and best practice guidance, in the context associated with the management of tree risk.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 3 – Management of a Tree Population	
Module	RC6
Subject area	Strategic tree management
Submission description	A document prepared at a strategic level and can be one of the following (supplemented by additional information where appropriate): ■ Tree strategy (for the management of large tree population) ■ Tree risk management strategy ■ Tree renewal programme ■ Supplementary planning document ■ Tree policy ■ Tree work contract document ■ Management of tree stock in response to a specific pest or disease NB: Primarily only the arboricultural information is required where it may form part of a wider strategy document. The candidate must identify where contributions have been made by others.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate the ability and technical knowledge required to prepare a strategic-level document for implementation of an adopted tree-related management policy. b) Demonstrate competence in preparing appropriate content to meet the brief/instructions. c) Where pertinent to a strategy or tree renewal programme, include measurable aspects (objectives [SMART] and performance indicators) that allow review and audit processes to take place. d) Show a sound understanding of arboricultural management work and the associated legislative context. e) Produce a document that is clearly written and is understandable for all potential end users.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 3 – Management of a Tree Population	
Module	RC7
Subject area	Woodland management plan
Submission description	Written woodland management plan for an established woodland and accompanying plan drawings. It may include a new planting plan that would extend the woodland's size. It may be necessary to supply supplementary information expanding on the applicant's role and input into the plan preparation. Additional documents may include or relate to: ■ Grant applications ■ Licence applications ■ Operational plans ■ Other applications or consents (e.g. for protected species or Natural England Assent for SSSIs)
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	- Demonstrate the ability and technical knowledge required to prepare an appropriate management plan document for implementation. - Demonstrate competence in preparing appropriate content to meet the brief/instructions. - Where pertinent to the management plan, include measurable aspects (objectives [SMART] and performance indicators) that allow review and audit processes to take place. - Show a broad and sound understanding of woodland management work and the associated legislative context. - Produce professional documents that are clearly written and are understandable for all potential end users.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 3 – Management of a Tree Population	
Module	RC8
Subject area	Tree planting scheme
Submission description	The candidate must submit <i>either</i>: 1. A tree planting scheme for multiple trees with an aftercare and maintenance programme (e.g. for a development site) <i>or</i> 2. A detailed planting scheme for a single tree in a complex environment (e.g. planting a large tree in an existing public realm setting) NB: For the selected planting scheme, a separately prepared statement is required to show how all the planning, constraints and planting considerations have been addressed.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate the required knowledge and ability to produce a successfully implemented tree planting scheme that meets the client's aims and objectives for a site. b) Demonstrate sound knowledge of the associated industry standards and best practice guidance as necessary, along with reasoned deviation where required. c) Provide a separate statement to show how all the planning, constraints and planting considerations have been addressed to meet the client's objectives, including, but not limited to: ■ Site assessment ■ Species selection ■ Stock procurement and transport (including import where applicable) ■ Handling and storage ■ Site preparations ■ Planting and post-planting management ■ Ongoing monitoring and maintenance

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 3 – Management of a Tree Population	
Module	RC9
Subject area	Ancient or Veteran tree management plan
Submission description	A long-term management plan (e.g. 25+ years) for a single Ancient or Veteran tree, or group of such trees. The management plan should include: ■ Site considerations ■ Historical and cultural background and considerations ■ Identification of current values ■ Site and soil assessments ■ Identification of current and potential future threats ■ Treatment/preventative measures ■ An impact evaluation for the given treatments/preventative measures ■ Specific tree species considerations ■ Details on requirements to work with other specialists ■ Advice on relevant statutory controls or habitat-based legislation
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	- Demonstrate sound knowledge of Ancient or Veteran trees and their management. - Demonstrate the ability to produce a successfully implemented management plan that meets the client's aims and objectives and promotes the appropriate attributes of the subject trees. - Demonstrate up-to-date knowledge of the associated industry standards and best practice guidance as necessary, along with reasoned deviation where required. - Demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge in relation to any relevant legislation and/or associated policy context.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 4 – Trees and Structures	
Module	RC10
Subject area	Direct damage to structures caused by trees
Submission description	A report* of an investigation addressing concerns about direct damage being caused to a built structure by the incremental growth (contact) of a tree, to include potential tree management or other options for remedial actions. * The level of complexity and detail of the report must be commensurate with the standards expected when working at the highest level of arboricultural consultancy
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate an ability to carry out an assessment of the evidence, gathered or obtained from associated professionals, and provide reasoned conclusions and recommendations based upon that evidence. b) Demonstrate that they can work within the limitations of their own technical competency. c) Show an understanding of the legal processes in the context of civil law requirements.

Competency Area 4 – Trees and Structures	
Module	RC11
Subject area	Indirect damage to structures caused by trees
Submission description	A report of an investigation of the arboricultural elements of an alleged tree-related soil shrinkage event caused by the action of tree roots (subsidence).
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate an ability to carry out an assessment of the evidence gathered or obtained from associated professionals, and provide reasoned conclusions and recommendations based upon that evidence. b) Demonstrate an understanding of the processes connected with an investigation and the mitigation processes associated with tree-related soil shrinkage. c) Demonstrate that they can work within the limitations of their own technical competency. d) Show an understanding of the legal processes in the context of civil law requirements.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 4 – Trees and Structures	
Module	RC12
Subject area	Mortgage or insurance advice
Submission description	A tree report indicating the potential risk of damage occurring to built structures from nearby trees together with any necessary management recommendations (either for mortgage or insurance purposes).
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate an ability to convey reasoned opinion, analysis and detailed recommendations, based on the gathered information and/or available guidance, so the end user can make their own informed decision. b) Communicate any limitation(s) of the opinion formed and recommendations made.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 5 – Trees and the Law	
Module	RC13
Subject area	Tree Preservation Orders – objection to the making of a TPO
Submission description	The candidate must submit <i>either</i>: 1. A report addressed to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on behalf of a client objecting to the making of a new Tree Preservation Order (TPO). The objection must comply with regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(c) of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012. - or 2. A report on behalf of the relevant Local Planning Authority (LPA) in response to an objection received from an interested party following the making of a new TPO. This report should be addressed to either the relevant delegated committee or the relevant delegated decision maker. NB: In each case the submission must relate to a Tree Preservation Order that has subsequently been confirmed, confirmed subject to modifications, or not confirmed. The outcome must be made clear within the submission.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate understanding and technical knowledge of the subject matter, legislative framework and latest government guidance as it relates to the making of Tree Preservation Orders. b) If 1): Produce information presented in an appropriate format, demonstrating sound analysis and forming reasoned conclusions/opinion to support the objection to the TPO. c) If 2): Produce information presented in the relevant LPA format, demonstrating sound analysis of the objection received and forming reasoned conclusions and recommendations for the delegated committee or relevant delegated decision maker. d) Communicate using written information at a professional level which is appropriate for the end user.

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Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 5 – Trees and the Law	
Module	RC14
Subject area	Applicant/agent TPO application and successful appeal following a refusal by the LPA
Submission description	A comprehensive suite of information relating to an appropriate TPO tree work application. The submission shall include: ■ Application documentation ■ The LPA decision notice ■ The completed appeal form (detailed grounds of appeal for Fast Track or Hearing) ■ Written evidence for TPO appeal – Statement of Case NB: The submission will primarily be assessed from the appeal stage.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise and knowledge related to tree work and the interpretation of the relevant statute law and government guidance as they relate to TPOs. b) The written work must be clear and understandable for the end user and meet the requirements of the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) as well as any organisational standards for the production of publicly available documents.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 5 – Trees and the Law	
Module	RC15
Subject area	LPA TPO decision and successful appeal dismissal following an appeal by the applicant/agent
Submission description	A comprehensive suite of information relating to an appropriate TPO tree work application. The submission shall include: ■ Application documentation ■ LPA decision notice ■ Delegated officer report or committee report ■ Completed appeal questionnaire ■ Written evidence for TPO appeal (e.g. Written Representations or Hearing Statement) ■ Supplementary information as appropriate NB: The submission will primarily be assessed from the appeal stage.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise and knowledge related to tree work and the interpretation of the relevant statute law and government guidance as they relate to TPOs. b) The written work must be clear and understandable for the end user and meet the requirements of the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) as well as any organisational standards for the production of publicly available documents.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 5 – Trees and the Law	
Module	RC16
Subject area	Breach of a TPO
Submission description	A comprehensive suite of information relating to an appropriate TPO prosecution. The submission shall include but not be limited to: ■ Relevant documents and case notes ■ Site notes and site photographs ■ Sketches, site plans/drawings ■ PACE notes ■ Interview notes ■ Internal reports to the officer with the authority to bring prosecutions ■ Relevant committee reports ■ Witness statement A separately prepared statement to demonstrate an understanding of the procedures and legal processes.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	- Demonstrate by evidence the appropriate knowledge and skills to act in conjunction with other officers within the Planning Service and Legal team (including the Head of Planning Services and the Enforcement Officers) to bring about a factual, robust and cogent case for prosecution. - Demonstrate that evidence can be collected and collated in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act section 67(9)(PACE). - Produce a professional and factual witness statement that is appropriate for submission to the courts. - Provide a separately prepared statement to demonstrate an understanding of the procedures and legal processes following a breach of a TPO.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 6 – Critical Thinking	
Module	RC17
Subject area	Expert statement to a primary decision maker
Submission description	The candidate must submit <i>either</i>: 1. Written Evidence for planning appeal (e.g. Written Representations, Hearing Statement or Proof of Evidence for a development site) <i>or</i> 2. An Expert Witness Report (Courts) NB: It may appropriate to also include supplementary reports/letters.
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Demonstrate a detailed understanding and technical knowledge of the subject matter plus adherence to legislative and mandatory guidance as applicable. b) Produce information presented in an appropriate format demonstrating sound methodology and analysis, and form reasoned conclusions/opinion. c) Demonstrate the submitted documents follow procedural requirements and guidance of the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) or the Ministry of Justice. d) Produce information that fully informs those instructing the work to enable them to make primary decisions.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 6 – Critical Thinking	
Module	RC18
Subject area	Critical appraisal
Submission description	A critical appraisal of a specific project or situation in which the candidate was professionally involved, and which posed significant challenges. The appraisal may address, but not be limited to, the following: ■ The challenges of meeting a client's instructions ■ The reliability of supporting information (valid and reliable?) ■ How any bias may have arisen and how was it addressed ■ Were the conclusions and outcome justified? ■ Conflicts of interest ■ Openness and transparency ■ The balance between fact and assumption ■ The value of information provided to the client ■ Lessons learnt
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Evidence their ability to think and critically analyse in an introspective manner that examines their own role and performance in dealing with the challenges faced. b) Demonstrate how the experience has improved their own professionalism and competence.

Appendix A

Portfolio Modules – submission description and competency guidance

Competency Area 6 – Critical Thinking	
Module	RC19
Subject area	Research project
Submission description	The candidate must submit <i>either</i>: 1. A research project to an academic standard, covering an arboricultural subject, which has not been externally assessed <i>or</i> 2. Another arboricultural project approved by the AARC Lead Assessor
Competency guidance The candidate will be able to:	a) Produce a body of work to an academic standard. b) Show responsibility for planning and developing a course of action. c) Provide an understanding of the context in which the area of study is located. d) Critically analyse, interpret and evaluate information. e) Have an understanding of different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought, and the theories that underpin them. f) Design relevant research to achieve the project objectives. g) Refine the research as applicable and develop new courses of action/ research. h) Demonstrate a level of independent thinking, technical knowledge and skills required that informs the actions/research.

Appendix B

General Competencies and Assessment Criteria

Registered Consultants are expected to behave in a professional manner in a range of situations. In doing so they should be fully aware 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. 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	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
The candidate can demonstrate:	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.
COMPETENCIES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
The candidate can demonstrate:	The candidate is able to:

Table continued overleaf.

Appendix B

General Competencies and Assessment Criteria

PORTFOLIO AND INTERVIEW	
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; <i>and</i> 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 Association's complaints procedure.
8. An understanding of the Association's Code of Conduct and Ethics.	8.1 Explain why adherence to the Association's code is essential. 8.2 Explain how compliance with the code can be achieved.
9. A working knowledge of the law in relation to trees and the role of an expert witness	9.1 Outline planning/tree preservation order appeal procedures. 9.2 Outline an understanding of the provisions of Part 35 of the Civil Procedure Rules (CPR35) and the Protocol for the Instruction of Experts to give Evidence in Civil Claims. 9.3 Outline an understanding of the provisions of Rule 33 of the Criminal Procedure Rules (CrimPR33).

Appendix C

Application Timeline

Stage	Duration	Dates		Actions	
		Spring/Autumn submission		Applicant prepares portfolio and application	
				Application received by the Association	
		1 st Mar	1 st Sept	Submission deadlines	
Validation	4 weeks			Application validated, payment processed and confirmation email sent to applicant. Assessors selected by Lead Assessor.	
	1 week	1 st Apr	1 st Oct	Portfolio sent to assessors	
Portfolio assessment	8 weeks			Portfolio examined by assessors	
				Successful	Unsuccessful
					
				Email sent to applicant inviting to interview	Email sent to applicant enclosing completed assessment forms
Interview	2 weeks	1 st Jul	1 st Jan	Interview date arranged and remainder of fee received	
	Variable	July	Jan	Interview	
	1 week			Successful	Unsuccessful
					
		Aug	Feb	Applicant notified, added to Scheme and listed in directory	Email sent to applicant enclosing completed assessment forms
Appeal	4 weeks				
	See Appeals Procedure				Association receives any appeal
					Association considers and determines the appeal
					Applicant informed



Notes

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Notes

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APPLICATION GUIDE



Arboricultural
ASSOCIATION
The home of tree care

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