



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Icon Accreditation

Guide for assessment preparation

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Introduction

Icon Accreditation is based on a robust peer-assessment process, through which two Icon Accredited conservators assess a candidate's skills and underpinning knowledge of conservation. The Icon Professional Standards are then used to confirm whether a candidate is working at the 'proficient' level.

The assessment typically takes place face to face over the course one day and is primarily based on a professional discussion supported by a combination of physical and documentary evidence of the candidate's work. In doing so, assessors are looking to assess a candidate's skills and underpinning knowledge of conservation across each of the criteria which make up the Icon Professional Standards and Judgement & Ethics.

From time to time, it may be more appropriate that an assessment take place online. Any online assessment will be as rigorous as a face-to-face assessment. This means that the evidence base remains the same, so both assessments can be respected and recognised as meeting the high professional standards expected from Icon Accreditation.

Through this guide we have outlined the steps you should take in preparing for your assessment.

Principles of assessment

The following principles underpin the Icon Accreditation assessment process.

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| Valid | Assessment decisions must be based on the professional standards and criteria, not for instance on the assessors' personal standards or preferences, or the applicant's background, length of experience or qualifications. Assessment should concentrate on central issues of professional competence, understanding and judgement rather than trivial detail. |
| Fair | Assessment must not discriminate against applicants on grounds other than that they do not meet the professional standards and criteria. |
| Consistent | The process is designed to ensure that the same standards are applied to different applicants and by different assessors. |
| Open | The assessment process should be as open as possible, involving the applicant in discussion throughout. If you think an area of the standards is not being met, discuss the issues with the applicant and give him or her an opportunity to explain further. |
| Justifiable | The assessment findings should withstand external scrutiny and be backed by sufficient information and comment to show why you arrived at your decisions. |

Step One - Reviewing your feedback

Once your application has been reviewed by the Icon Accreditation Committee, you will receive detailed written feedback to support you in preparing for your assessment. The AC reviews applications as a guide to understand what evidence will be presented at assessment. This should demonstrate that someone is working at the 'proficient level' across all Professional Standards and Judgement & Ethics criteria – evidence needed in order for someone to become an Accredited Member of Icon.

Remember that the AC will not know your practice – their assessment is based purely on their understanding of the information you have presented in your application form.

Understanding your feedback

Their feedback is divided into four main areas:

1) Overall review

To give an initial indication as to its understanding of your practice (as written) against the criteria which make up the 'Novice to Expert Scale'.

2) Comments

General comments on your application form highlighting areas of concern or whether it felt further detail would be useful.

3) Recommendation

On the balance of evidence the AC will make a recommendation as to whether it feels you are ready for assessment. If the AC has areas for concerns it will make specific recommendations to help you make the decision as to how you go forward.

4) Assessor selection

The AC will indicate who your specialist assessor should be (Icon will identify your other assessor). The specialist assessor will be from the same specialist field of conservation, while the other will normally be from a different specialism. At least one assessor will have experience in a similar setting (private/commercial or public/institutional) to your current work context.

You may choose to discuss this with your Icon Mentor to help you understand the feedback. If upon reviewing your feedback you have any questions or comments please contact the Training & Development Manager to discuss this further.

Next Steps

Once you have taken the time to review the feedback you should:

1) Confirm how you wish to proceed

Remember the AC are not making a decision; they are simply providing feedback based on how they have interpreted your application. It is up to you how you choose to proceed. If the

AC has raised any comments you can choose to proceed ensuring you address any issues highlighted at the review stage. Alternatively, you may prefer to take the time to reflect on their feedback and resubmit your application at a later stage.

Once you have decided how you wish you proceed you should email the Training & Development Manager to confirm.

2) Confirm Assessor Selection

If you choose to proceed to assessment you must also confirm you are happy with your assessor selection. You may object to either of the assessors if you have reason to think they will not assess you fairly, or if there is a conflict (including one relating to commercial confidentiality). The assessors will also be asked to confirm that they have no prior knowledge which might impact their judgement.

Please note that we will not contact the assessors until you have confirmed you are happy.

Step Two - Arranging the Assessment Visit

Once your assessors have confirmed that they are able to undertake your assessment, they will be sent a copy of your application form along with any additional comments that the AC have asked them to consider.

Please note that in most cases they will receive no additional comments regardless of your feedback. This is to ensure that your assessors can be completely impartial in undertaking your assessment.

Your assessors will contact you to introduce themselves and to start arranging your assessment visit.

1) **Setting an assessment date**

The assessment round typically runs for three months. Between you and your assessors you will need to first set a date for your assessment to take place. When agreeing the date please ensure you allow sufficient time for you to prepare and gather your evidence.

2) **Confirm location for your assessment**

For most candidates this is likely to be your usual place of work, however for some it might be necessary to hold the assessment elsewhere, provided you can show all the additional evidence at assessment. If you need to travel between sites please ensure that the travel time is minimal to avoid a loss of time on your assessment day. Your assessors will discuss this with you.

You must have a private space for your assessment to take place – for example, it is not appropriate for your assessment to take place in an open studio, café or public gallery unless it can be guaranteed that no others will be present.

You should also ensure that you have access to the appropriate IT equipment for you to show your assessors at your assessment.

3) **Set timetable for the assessment day**

Typically your assessors will ask you to suggest a timetable for your assessment day outlining how you propose to show your projects at assessment. The day will usually last for between five and six hours – do ensure you plan plenty of breaks during the day so you can get away and gather your thoughts. This is important for the assessors too, as it allows them time to confer privately.

If you are planning on walking round public areas of your workspace, consider when it is likely to be quietest.

Step Three - Preparing for your assessment

This is a crucial stage; you must ensure you allow sufficient time to prepare for your assessment to ensure you have the best chance of a successful day. Thorough preparation will make the day run much more smoothly for you as well as your assessors.

1) Review your application and the Accreditation Handbook

Your application will be the basis of your assessment day. It may well be some time since you last read your application, so please do take the time to review it. Please pay particular attention to which criteria you have assigned to each of the projects.

2) Review the Professional Standards, Judgement & Ethics, and Novice to Expert Scale

As well as reviewing your application, you should also take the time to reread the Icon Professional Standards and Judgement & Ethics to ensure you have a solid understanding of what each of the criteria are asking for.

At the same time please ensure you feel confident in explaining the complexity of each standard in relation to your role, drawing out your autonomy in the projects presented.

Gathering your evidence

This is possibly the most important part of getting ready for your assessment – ensuring you have evidence in place to demonstrate how you are working at the ‘proficient’ level across the Icon Professional Standards and Judgement & Ethics criteria.

Overview of evidence types

The evidence required is the same no matter how an assessment takes place. Evidence used to support Icon Accreditation includes:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| Professional discussion | Discussion with a candidate demonstrating their underpinning knowledge and understanding of a topic. This is typically the primary assessment method. |
| Product evidence | Actual evidence of a candidate’s own work – reports, objects, communications, or video evidence. |
| Reflective accounts | An overview of work provided by a candidate of their work – within accreditation this is typically the application form and has been used in the past as the basis of evidence towards the standard. |
| Witness testimony | A formal written statement from a colleague, manager or client which can be verified. |

To be used, evidence should meet VARCS (Valid, Authentic, Reliable, Current, Sufficient) – as is general assessment practice.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Valid | The work is relevant to what has been assessed and is at the right level. |
| Authentic | The work has been produced by the candidate |
| Reliable | The work is consistent over time. |
| Current | The work is still relevant at the time of assessment. |
| Sufficient | The work covers all the requirements at the time. |

Selecting documentary evidence

As a rule, every time you have ticked a box in the project matrix on your application form you should have evidence available. If on reviewing your application you can no longer access the evidence, please discuss this with your assessors as you prepare for your assessment.

Please note that you do not need to have more than three pieces of evidence for each criterion. Equally, one piece of evidence is likely to be able to be used to evidence more than one of the criteria.

Physical evidence

Remember you must show at least one physical project as part of your assessment. This is required whether your assessment takes place face to face or remotely. This would typically be one of the projects you have included in your application. If you have any issues this can be discussed directly with your assessors.

If for whatever reason a project is no longer available, you should discuss this with your assessors as soon as possible. It is likely that they will ask you to consider what will be available on the day, and if it is a new project, they will ask you to provide a short summary of the project to help you get ready for your assessment.

Witness statements

It may be necessary to obtain more specific comments and endorsements from people familiar with your work, to verify the evidence or add weight to the application. These 'witnesses' may be a mentor, other conservators, colleagues such as curators, archivists or architects, clients, staff, or members of the public.

The witness statement should be generally be written on an official letterhead (and include personal contact details and qualifications etc. as appropriate).

In general, a witness statement should be:

- Used only when it adds to the credibility of your evidence, typically, when your other evidence could be stronger, or you want to back up what you have said about a particular skill or ability.
- From an appropriate individual (e.g., an accredited conservator-restorer).
- Relevant and to-the-point; it is your responsibility to ensure that the statement does not simply state that the witness thinks your work is good.

Sharing and presenting evidence

Once you have taken the time to collate your evidence, you will now need to consider what is going to be the best way to share your evidence with your assessors.

Portfolio of documentary evidence

You must ensure you have prepared a portfolio of your documentary evidence to share with your assessors at your assessment day. This could either be in a physical folder, or on the computer (if you choose to do the latter, it must be easily viewed by your assessors).

For example, if you are preparing for a face-to-face assessment and choose to present your evidence on the computer, the assessors must easily be able to review the evidence - as such you may want to connect your computer to a larger screen.

Referencing your evidence

Regardless of how you share your evidence, you should prepare a list of your evidence which you can easily refer to during your assessment. To do this, you should ensure each piece of evidence is listed and given a reference number.

We suggest you have a summary sheet, and then individual project sheets detailing the type of evidence, a short explanation of what it is, and then highlighting the standards it meets. You may choose to use the templates provided on the Icon website to do this.

Please ensure you name your files in a clear way – these should include the reference number in the title so that they can be easily referred to.

| Ref. | Status | Standards | Type | Detail |
|------|----------|----------------------|--------|--|
| A.1 | Attached | 1a, 1b, 2c, 4a | Report | Assessment report of XYZ |
| A.2 | Attached | 3b,3c | Video | Walkthrough of project A |
| A.3 | Attached | 1c, JE XI, XII, XIII | Email | Email with client discussing X, Y and Z. |
| A.4 | On Day | 4a,4c | Video | Live studio tour. |

If it is only possible to show the evidence on the day itself, please ensure you still include it as part of your evidence sheets. This ensures that assessors can effectively plan for the assessment day.

Use of Presentations during the assessment

You may choose to have a presentation for each project ready for your assessment - this can be a very useful tool, helping you introduce a project and share images of your work on the screen. Please do take note of the following points:

- Presentations should not last more than 15 or so minutes – leave plenty of time for your assessors to ask questions and discuss the projects with you.
- Use it as an opportunity to reference the individual Icon Professional Standards criteria and your physical evidence. This will make it easy for your assessors to understand your skills and knowledge.

Notes for remote assessments

In some cases, it may be appropriate for all or part of your assessment to take place remotely. This may be due to your location, or any reason which makes a face-to-face assessment impractical. If your assessment is to take place remotely, this must be agreed with the Training & Development Manager at the point of organising your assessment.

Before an online assessment can be agreed, all parties need to consider whether it is practically possible to undertake the assessment online. As a candidate you should ensure you undertake your assessment in whichever way you feel most comfortable.

In most cases this comes down to access to technology for both the candidates and the assessors involved in the assessment. However, it is also important to consider the nature of your practice as to whether this is appropriate as well.

Essential requirements

The following criteria are essential for all online assessments.

A reliable internet connection

This is a must; all parties need to – as far as possible – feel comfortable that their internet connection is reliable to ensure good quality audio and video connection throughout the assessment.

An online meeting tool that suits all parties

Most of us have become more and more familiar with online meetings. It is up to candidates and assessors to agree on the platform that works best for all involved. Please consider that if someone is using workplace equipment, sometimes access to some systems such as Zoom may be restricted.

Please note that Icon has a Zoom account that can be shared with candidates.

For the 'live inspection' element of the assessment, you may find you can still use the same system – for example on Zoom you can connect a phone to share the camera. However, you might also switch to another platform that works for all parties.

Access to a good quality camera

At a face-to-face assessment, your assessors would need to physically inspect your work, and your working environment and use this as evidence. Candidate's will need to have access to a good quality camera to undertake real time virtual inspection of work.

In most cases this simply means access to a good quality phone camera – the level of detail which can be seen is quite impressive.

The right lighting

Ensuring the lighting is right when you are showing your objects is crucial – if the light levels are too low the image will become grainy, and the assessors will not be able to see the detail in your work.

Private space for assessment

Candidates still need to ensure they have a private space in which to undertake their assessment. This is to ensure that they can be free to talk openly, and there is no background noise which can be distracting during the assessment.

Practice

Make sure you practice everything well in advance to ensure that on the day you can run everything as smoothly as possible. Do not worry though, things might not always work out as planned on the day, but relax, take a short break, and you will get it working again!

Useful but not essential

Depending on your set up and how you are going to show your evidence, there are a few other pieces of equipment you might find useful:

Gimbal

This keeps your camera smooth and stops it jumping as you walk around. This will make it much easier for you to focus in on the work and objects as you run through them at assessment.

Tripod

You might find it useful to have your camera set up on a tripod, and then manipulate your objects as necessary. Many gimbals also do this.

Headphones

Headphones are good to use when you are walking around, that way your assessors can ask you questions or to focus on detail without disturbing other people. It also ensures your assessors can understand you clearly.

Showing evidence remotely

As with a face-to-face assessment, you must ensure you are able to share your evidence with your assessors.

Documentary evidence

If your assessment is taking place remotely, you must share a portfolio of evidence with your assessors that has been clearly referenced in advance of your assessment. This should be shared via Dropbox, Google Drive, or similar programs. You should also confirm that your assessors have received, and can access the information easily.

Remember to consider the security or privacy of documentation you share online. If using Google Drive, you can prevent viewers from downloading documents. This can be useful as it means you can retain control and delete files after the assessment. You might also need to consider redacting personal information which may relate to client confidentiality.

Physical evidence

To clearly demonstrate that you are working to the 'proficient' level across the Icon Professional Standards, 'real time' evidence is as crucial as it would be in a normal face-to-face assessment.

This is one of the most challenging aspects to get right, however, with practice, you should be able to do this effectively. Ensuring you have the right technology in place beforehand is key.

You need to be prepared to:

- **Undertake a live tour of your working environment:** Assessors need to be able to see all aspects of your normal working environment to properly assess all aspects of your working practice. Ensure that you can carry this out at your assessment and be prepared to take direction to focus on specific details they might want to look at.
- **Show physical work:** Your assessors will need to be able to look at the same level of detail as they would do in a face-to-face assessment. This is where lighting and a good camera become important. For example, during an in-person assessment day you might look through the raking light at an object, you will need to be able to do this at assessment. Similarly, if assessors would take a step back and look at the overall impression of a treatment, then you need to be able to replicate this.

You may choose to pre-record some of this evidence in advance of your assessment. This will allow you time to ensure you are able to show projects at the right level of detail. However, you must still have the project / object available and be prepared to show it at assessment. This is key to help your assessors verify the evidence and will support additional questioning about your work.

Post-assessment

Following your assessment, the assessors will take the time to prepare a detailed assessment report of their visit. Through this report they will detail the evidence they have seen and outline how this shows whether you are operating at the 'proficient' level against each of the Icon Professional Standards and Judgement & Ethics criteria.

Summary report

Within two weeks of your assessment, you will receive a summary of your assessment.

Please note that this is not the final outcome.

Please remember that to become an Accredited member of Icon, you will need to be assessed as 'proficient' across each of the criteria. If for whatever reason your assessors are unable to assess you as proficient then they will provide clear detail which underpins their decision making. This will be made clear in the summary. If this applies to you, you will have the opportunity to provide feedback and submit additional evidence. This should be sent to the Training & Development Manager who will share it with the Accreditation Committee.

Accreditation Committee Moderation

The final stage is for the Accreditation Committee to moderate your assessment report. They do this to:

- Ensure a common standard is applied across the profession. This is regardless of how the candidate has reached a professional level of capability, the specialism of the conservator-restorer, or the context in which they practice.
- Verify the proficiency of practicing conservators.
- Provide a mechanism through which professional status can be maintained, and to support the professional development of Accredited members of Icon.

You will be notified of the outcome within two weeks of the Accreditation Committee meeting.