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Reflecting on your current working practice, describe your working routine for a day, showing how you prioritise, delegate, and deliver tasks, and how you ensure that they meet the required standards within the time available. How do you manage the need to communicate effectively with different audiences? (20%, 2000 words or equivalent).

My employment started with Canterbury Archaeology Trust (CAT) in November 2022. I am a field archaeologist within the trust, equating to Grade 3 on the British Archaeological Jobs and Resources (BAJR) website (BAJR, 2023). My responsibility level is therefore categorised as an experienced field archaeologist, but not a senior archaeologist within the CAT field unit. My current CIFA membership level is student, but I am updating to the practitioner level as this best reflects my current working practice. My current speciality is therefore defined as fieldwork, and CIFA provides a functional specialist competency matrix to guide the requisite levels of knowledge, autonomy, coping with complexity and perception of professional context required to fulfil my role (Appendix A).

My working routine is divided between work that I do in the field, which currently amounts to approximately 98% of my employment time and very occasional post-excavation work that I do back at the CAT office in Canterbury, Kent, which amounts to 2% of my time. This is usually between projects to fulfil my contracted work hours.

My fieldwork practice routine for any given day falls into two main categories of evaluations (including geological test-pitting) and map-stripped excavations.

Evaluations and Geological Test Pits:

Currently, 35% of my fieldwork time is spent on evaluations. Guidelines produced by CIFA provide a good practice framework which allows units to develop workflows and procedures from initial briefs, fieldwork, reporting, monitoring, and archiving (CIFA, 2014). CAT uses this framework to conduct field evaluations; my specific role in field evaluations involves manually excavating machine-stripped trenches.

Planning and communication between team members is an essential requirement when organising the work routine. The site is often in a rural location, sometimes requiring over a hundred 30 x 2-meter trenches to be completed in a short thirty-day window, over an area that can be hundreds of hectares in size. On average, each field archaeologist is allocated a trench to be recorded as either positive (containing archaeology) or negative (not containing archaeology).

It is essential to understand the site area well, as the evaluation trenches can appear similar in large fields. This often involves me taking copies of the site map to locate the trenches that need to be manually excavated and then communicating directly with the GPS supervisor to ensure that my location matches the GPS location and the allocated trench

number before recording can begin. My priority is always to record negative trenches first. The workflow process is less time-consuming, and the trenches can be backfilled quickly to reduce the health and safety risks for the general public and field teams. This also allows me to concentrate my time management towards the evaluation's end and record the substantive archaeology.

The structure of the workflow for an evaluation should be iterative. This is because the process is deliberately methodical to get a good representative sample from the designated area, with the expectation that the final report should be able to explain the difference between background geology and archaeology. Essentially, I am recording evaluation trenches as units of information that a county archaeologist can then use to inform a decision about future mitigation requirements for the development of the land. My work process needs to be fast, but the end product of the recording should always be accurate and detailed because the audience is a senior archaeologist that requires this information to discharge statutory duties in the UK planning system.

The process can be approximately broken down into the following sequential tasks to maximise efficiency:

- Record and map the outside length, width, and orientation of the trench onto the context recording sheet, noting features that are apparent on the stripped interface.
- Photograph using 1-meter scales at each end of the trench to show absolute dimensions.
- Map two representative one-meter sections at either end of the trench.
- Clear spoil from sections to show stratigraphy of the topsoil, subsoil, and natural sediments. Photograph the representative sections.
- Excavate features such as postholes, ditches, and pits, recording the intersections of cuts and associated fills into the trench stratigraphic matrix.
- Plan sections onto scaled permatrace and request trench dimensions and features to be GPS recorded by the supervisor.
- Describe soil and sediments onto context recording sheets and label/bag finds for post-ex-evaluation.
- Add completed context recording sheets and permatrace to the site archive.

Each task has an equally weighted priority, but fundamentals within each task need to be correct to meet the required standards. The photographic record is extremely important; it is the primary benchmark that a curator uses to check the accuracy and professionalism of the recording, so time must be taken to ensure that pictures are clear and accurate using the correct scales. Time and care also need to be taken with numbers; the number allocated to the trench and subsequent layers, cuts, and fills need to follow a sequence from the trench identification number and be described accurately; otherwise, this can be highly problematic in the post-ex project stage.

As the pace is rapid in an evaluation, it is an important priority to communicate effectively with team members, especially the GPS supervisor. Over a wide physical area, I use a combination of mobile communications, verbal and nonverbal, to convey essential information. It is important to use a shared vocabulary when communicating with team members; slippage in unspecific language or colloquial terms can be problematic; for

example, shared understanding between the difference of a TBM, backsight or foresight measurement can make a significant difference. It is essential to think beforehand about how I encode meaning into communication and what I expect the receiver to understand and reciprocate. If a machine-stripped trench reveals a significant amount of archaeology to be recorded in a short time allocation. In that case, I will communicate with a senior member of my field team to request additional help with recording the feature. Suppose the feature is extensive and deep. In that case, I will pair up with another archaeologist and delegate physical excavation tasks between myself and the other archaeologist to get the feature recorded quickly, accurately, and efficiently.

Geological test pitting involves working directly with a geoarchaeologist; the test pit is often dug into the evaluation trench to reach the deeper deposits, identifying possible palaeolithic evidence and building up deposit models of local geology. As an operative, my role involves sampling the deposits from different contexts and dry sieving to find anthropogenic evidence. Historic England provides up-to-date guidelines on sampling methodologies (HE, 2023) to inform best practices for the workflow. I also use online resources to help me identify lithics from the BAJR guide series: *Lithic Assemblages, BAJR Guide 49* (BAJR, 2017) and the free open-access *Journal of Lithic Studies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023) for more detailed information.

The team usually consists of three people: the geoarchaeologist who records the test pit stratigraphy; the sampling operative, and a machine plant operative. Health and safety is an essential element of the workflow. The test pit can be very deep and liable to collapse, the machine in near proximity and the sample buckets of sediment is being dumped towards my active work area, and the sifting frames can also be cumbersome to lift and manoeuvre. The workflow priority is always to ensure that I am on the visible side of the plant operator and direct him to the location on the trench edge where I need the different deposits to be placed near the sampling equipment.

Frequently, a language and expertise barrier must be negotiated with the plant operator before the test pit can be excavated. They tend to be contracted agency drivers that use the plant only on construction sites. Therefore, the operation and the objectives of test pitting can be understandably unfamiliar. I have found that plant operators are interested and receptive to understanding the process. However, for my health and safety, I always discuss beforehand where I will be doing the sampling and the hand signals I will use to stop the bucket and direct it to where it should be deposited for sampling. It is also an opportunity to communicate with the plant driver about their procedures, actively listen to how they work and proactively address any health and safety concerns they might have when I am conducting my work tasks.

Excavation:

The remaining 65% of my fieldwork is spent on land-stripped excavations. There is a plethora of guidance on field practice procedures adapted to varying degrees by UK archaeology field units from the original *MOLA Archaeological Site Manual* (MOLA, 1994). The guidance, although dated, still provides a bedrock for professional standards, and I always keep a PDF version on my mobile device for quick reference. CIFA guidance on

The Code of Conduct: Professional Ethics in Archaeology (CIFA, 2022) is also an essential guarantee that my team members and I are bound to professional commitments of conduct and behaviour with a responsibility to protect, record and conserve the historic environment.

Excavation is, to a certain degree, a subjective interpretation based on the individual field archaeologist's knowledge, skills, observations, and experience. The person who knows the most about a feature is the actual person that is excavating the feature. Another and more experienced member of the team might have an opinion. However, it is an opinion based upon the intervening moment that they are reviewing my feature. They are not the person that has cleaned the feature, noticed the change of colour in texture and moisture of the sediment or removed the inclusions. However, an excavator's subjectivity does need to be tempered against the objectivity of the collective field team to find a middle ground. For example, this is also the process used in the post-excavation stages to find the median when phasing a site based on the objectified empirical dating evidence.

As an archaeologist working in a field team, it is therefore essential for bi-directional communication with other archaeologists excavating in my near proximity on a strip-map excavation. This is to exchange ideas and information on what constitutes the natural geology, how they interpret the features they are excavating in depth and profile, and what type of ceramics or lithics have been extracted. The process of verbal communication is a type of meta-excavation where team members' knowledge, skills and experience are used collectively to interpret the evidence and find the most plausible interpretation for the site's formation, occupation, abandonment and destruction processes.

Recording on an excavation can be nuanced on the requirements of the individual project officer's site strategy. For this reason, it is essential to have a conversation during the site induction process from the start. Asking some of the following open questions may sometimes seem inexperienced. However, in the longer term, honesty and openness can save time and energy, ensuring the work output meets the required standard.

- What is the sampling strategy required for the site?
- How are photographic records to be recorded?
- What context numbers are used for topsoil, subsoil, and natural sediment?
- What area or which features are the primary concern?
- Should features be drawn and planned in a single context on a grid system or just in a section with GPS coordinates?

A particular challenge for me in the recording process is written communication. I have been assessed and diagnosed by an educational psychologist with dyslexia. For most of my adult life, I have been able to negotiate these impairments with technology, but archaeological fieldwork is still a paper-based profession. Having a straightforward conversation from the start with the site management team to explain that I have a problem is the best way forward. For example, explaining that I am not playing with my phone whilst filling out context sheets but checking with a spell checker that my written communication is understandable for the intended audience.

Another strategy I use to negotiate my written communication impairments is to double-check the sequential numbering system when filling out shared context, sections, plans, small finds, and photographic and environmental sample registers. Part of my cognitive problem is that my brain processes information faster than my hand can write. So, I must take my time, focus, and double-check my work for accuracy. As an emitter of information in the communication process, it is, therefore, essential for me to use premeditated strategies to be an effective communicator in the absence of assisted technology.

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Appendices:

A: Field Archaeologist Specialist Competence Matrix



Specialist competence matrix – to support applicants who work in field archaeology roles

PLEASE NOTE: All applications will be assessed against the main competence matrix (P6 Applicant's Guide) with the specialist matrix as an advisory document only.

	Knowledge	Autonomy	Coping with complexity	Perception of professional context
Practitioner (PCIFA)	- Good technical knowledge of archaeological best practice: consistently defines and excavates low-complexity archaeological features and deposits - Produces clear and concise primary paper and/or digital records (context sheets, plans, elevations and photographs) - Understands the requirements for, and can take, environmental samples - Differentiates between commonly encountered artefact types - Good awareness of relevant professional standards, guidelines, ethics and health and safety - Understands the benefit of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (e.g. background reading and attending archaeological events)	- Liaises with site supervisors, Project Manager, or other senior staff as required, within their organisation - Works under supervision, with frequent direction, as part of a team, has an awareness of deadlines, and can manage their own time - Follows site methodology and appropriate professional guidance, including health and safety procedures - Able to demonstrate principles of interpretation, but may require instruction or mentoring from senior staff	- Understands the principles of excavation and stratigraphic recording - Ability to interpret low-complexity stratigraphic sequences under supervision - Ability to cope with changes to the planned strategy due to external constraints - Recognises professional limitations and can identify when and where it is necessary to ask for guidance	- Understanding of individual role within team/site - Understands the need for quality recording required during their part of the process - Aware of the aims of the project and the rationale for specific methods and techniques - Appreciates how each person within a project team has specific tasks that lead to a single outcome from fieldwork to archiving - Demonstrates understanding of the ethical requirements of the Code of conduct and is able to apply to own work. Upholds the values of the Institute to work in the public interest

	Knowledge	Autonomy	Coping with complexity	Perception of professional context
Associate (ACIFA)	- High level of technical knowledge of archaeological best practice; consistently defines, excavates and records a variety of archaeological features and deposits, and understands detailed site chronologies - Understands a variety of environmental and dating sample strategies and able to judge when different methods should be applied - Recognises numerous artefact types and understands where discussions about recovery methodologies and retention strategies could begin - Able to link data with respect to identified project outcomes and add to project research aims - Knowledge of relevant professional standards, guidelines, ethics and health and safety policy - Demonstrates sustained commitment to the undertaking of relevant training and CPD	- Able to undertake sole/independent working - Works on a variety of projects from small to medium scale, with occasional supervision of others, in a non-supervisory role - Undertakes, where appropriate, supervision of small teams in an assistant role - Ability to enforce safe systems of working, recognising potential hazards and taking appropriate action - Ability to initiate tasks and implement new approaches - Able to provide informal and formal mentoring and support to other members of staff	- Broad knowledge of excavation and post-excavation processes - Consistently demonstrates the ability to interpret complex stratigraphic sequences and compile plan/stratigraphic matrices demonstrating this - Knowledge of stratigraphic grouping (phases etc.) - Able to review the primary records of archaeologists under their supervision - Able to handle changing external factors requiring flexible strategy - Recognises professional limitations and can identify when and where it is necessary to ask for guidance	- Understands how their work contributes to a project beyond a site, such as the wider development - Interprets and assesses archaeological features within a wider site context - Demonstrates a firm understanding of site formation processes - Understands requirements for and use of other specialists - Able to identify own CPD requirements to better meet the wider goals of the organisation and, where appropriate, plan to meet those requirements - Ability to use lessons learned from past projects to inform project decision making - Understands the ethical requirements of the Code of conduct and uses them to guide and review own practice and, where applicable, that of others. Can recognise and resolve potential conflicts of interest within an established framework. Upholds and promotes the values of the Institute to work in the public interest

	Knowledge	Autonomy	Coping with complexity	Perception of professional context
Member (MCIFA)	• Authoritative knowledge of archaeological practice and consistently demonstrates ability to understand and manage a variety of complex archaeological situations • Authoritative knowledge, understanding and application of professional standards, guidelines, ethics and health and safety • Knows when to use other specialists • Thoroughly analyses data with respect to identified project outcomes and add to project research aims. • Recognises situations in which standard approaches may not be appropriate and ability to propose alternatives, which still fulfil professional standards • Demonstrates sustained commitment to the undertaking of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) • Knowledge of how to mentor others	• Responsible for the safe running of the site and the safety and supervision of the site staff, where appropriate • Works with full autonomy, with little direction from immediate colleagues outside of the necessary everyday project contact • Able to supervise site staff in recording procedures • Contribute to project team discussions • Liaises with specialists contributing at excavation, post-excavation and publication phases • Able to contribute and work towards agreed schedules with project team within agreed budgets • Provides encouragement and mentoring/training/support to other members of staff	• Extensive knowledge of excavation, post-excavation and publication processes • Confidence to recommend and justify alternative approaches that might best fulfil a project brief rather than the proposed methodology • Appreciates strengths and limitations of techniques used, may adapt methodology to project • Work fully to integrate the subject within its immediate context and with broader significance	• Undertakes supervision of a variety of archaeological sites, encouraging staff to work effectively towards agreed goals • Through depth of knowledge will contribute significantly to post-excavation and publication processes • Where appropriate, will liaise with internal and external specialists to determine environmental, artefactual scientific dating and chronological strategies for site(s) in line with regional research agendas and national guidance on best practice • Able to identify and use other specialists and when this may be required • Ability to consider features and sites within the wider landscape context and to assess the significance of archaeological deposits • Able to identify CPD requirements of a team to better meet the wider goals of the organisation and, where appropriate, plan to meet those requirements

				• Recognise the importance to the industry of promoting and demonstrating best practice in every aspect of their work and instilling this amongst colleagues • Demonstrates professional judgement and ethical behaviour across a wide variety of complex situations, supporting and encouraging others to do the same. Can anticipate, recognise, and resolve potential conflicts of interest. Promotes the values of the Institute to work in the public interest with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders
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Source: CIFA Diggers Forum 2023