



american  
institute for  
conservation

**Preserving Cultural  
Heritage**

## 2021 Member Designation Proposal

### Introduction

AIC members are asked to vote on this proposal for revised member designations. It is based on MDWG's discussions with members in a variety of forums, research into professional designations used by allied organizations, surveys of members, focused conversations, and comments received throughout the process.

There are three supporting documents for this proposal, but the vote will be on this document only. The following documents can be used to help inform your decision but are considered living documents that will change over time:

- [Essential Competencies](#)
- [Rubrics](#)
- [Continuing Professional Development](#)
- For reference, you may also wish to consult the [FAQ document](#)

### Background

The AIC Board formed the Membership Designation Working Group (MDWG) in December 2016 and asked the group to generate a proposal for revisions to the current membership designations. The goals were to better reflect the training and expertise of our members, increase transparency in the application and review process, and support the organization's ability to promote our members and the conservation profession.

MDWG found that the current peer-review application review process could be erratic in the application of its review criteria and seemed to discourage applicants whose jobs don't require performing treatments on a regular basis. This proposal addresses these concerns by increasing transparency and consistency in the application and evaluation process for AIC professional membership.

MDWG also recognized that there is currently no process for ensuring ongoing professional development and engagement with the field. Many members have observed that the lack of required professional development made professional membership less meaningful. In response, this new proposal requires continuing professional development to encourage professional members to remain current and engaged with our evolving field.

### Summary of Proposed Changes

These are the most significant changes in this proposal:

- **Professional Member is the only designation.** AIC will rename Professional Associate (PA) to Professional Member (PM), making Professional Member the only peer-reviewed membership designation. This new name more clearly communicates the role of the member designation within the organization.

- **Fellow becomes an honorific.** AIC will use the term Fellow to recognize a Professional Member who has made significant contributions to the field of conservation and who promotes adherence to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice. Fellows will retain their honor in perpetuity.
- **The application process will be more transparent and equitable.** This plan will update the Professional Member application process to support increased equity and transparency, using a rubric format to ensure consistency in evaluating applications. Members will know more fully what to expect before applying.
- **Continuing Professional Development will be required for Professionals Members.**

All AIC Associates (including student and post graduate members), Professional Associates, and Fellows can vote on the proposal. If the proposal is accepted, following the current Bylaws, Professional Associates and Fellows will then vote on the requisite changes to the AIC Bylaws so they reflect the approved plan.

This proposal creates strong, clear, and meaningful professional member designations that AIC can stand behind and promote, and which members can obtain in a clear, fair, and inclusive process. All aspects of this new membership proposal are flexible; they can be adjusted, improved upon, and changed depending on member input and evaluation of the plan over time.

## 2021 Member Designation Proposal

This proposal updates AIC membership designations to reflect the range of current professional practice within the field of cultural heritage preservation. If a majority vote approves, AIC will:

- Have two primary membership categories: AIC Member and AIC Professional Member.
- Improve the application and evaluation process for professional membership, making it more transparent and easier to navigate.
- Institute a continued professional development requirement to ensure professional members remain current in our field.

### Proposal Sections

#### 1. Name change for the current Associate membership designation

**Framework:** The new category will be “AIC Member.” Any person with an interest in the purposes for which AIC is organized may be an AIC Member. Other than changing the name from “Associate” to “AIC Member,” there are no additional changes to this membership designation.

#### 2. Changes to the current Professional Associate designation

**Framework:** The new designation will be “AIC Professional Member” (PM).

An AIC Professional Member is someone who upholds professional standards by using, abiding by, and promoting the AIC Code of Ethics, Guidelines for Practice, and the Essential Competencies and undertaking continuing professional development.

##### 2.1. Summary, Benefits, and Responsibilities

Members who meet the qualifications outlined below may apply to become an AIC Professional Member.

Benefits of being a PM include:

- listing in the professional services location tool (commonly known as Find a Professional) promoting public awareness of the member’s active peer-reviewed designation;
- recognition in the member’s online profile and at the annual meeting via designation ribbon;
- permission to use AIC marks (logo); and
- priority consideration in applications for select Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC) professional development and funding opportunities, and leadership opportunities.

Responsibilities include:

- adherence to the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice, and
- continued professional development.

## 2.2. Eligibility qualifications (*applicants must have the qualifications listed below*)

Education and training: This could be demonstrated either through a formal graduate program or other education and training that demonstrates skill development at the professional level.

Work Experience: Two years of experience demonstrating the ability to use acquired knowledge to make independent decisions.

Professional Involvement: Demonstrated engagement with the field. This could include collaborating with conservators, professional outreach, participating in professional development opportunities, maintaining membership in professional organizations, and/or contributing to the body of knowledge for conservation.

## 2.3. Application

Applicants may apply in one of these pathways:

- Treatment,
- Preventive Care, or
- Scientific Principles, Analysis, and Examination.

The pathway choice is for application evaluation *only* and is not part of the designation name.

The application must include:

- Education and Training Background: Applicants must document their education and training path.
- Work Experience: Applicants must document their work experience.
- Work Examples: Applicants must outline 3-5 projects that show they fulfill board-approved [Essential Competencies](#) as demonstrated through the [rubric](#). The competencies and rubric are appendices to this proposal. We link to them in this proposal to demonstrate how they relate to the application process. Applicant work examples should be projects that:
  - Demonstrate independent thinking and a comprehensive understanding of, and strong commitment to promoting, the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.
  - Can be a mixture of training and post-training work but must include some work performed post-training.
- Narrative: A 2- to 3-page narrative describing how the submitted projects demonstrate the applicant's command of the current approved Essential Competencies, according to the current rubric.
- Ethics Statement: The applicant will sign a statement agreeing to abide by the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.
- Sponsors: Applicants need two sponsors who are Professional Members or have Fellow recognition. At least one sponsor must be in the

applicant's pathway (Treatment, Preventive Care, or Scientific Principles, Analysis, and Examination) and specialty, if the Treatment pathway is selected.

*Clarification of Sponsor Role:*

- Sponsors will read the application and support the applicant through the process, using the current rubrics based on the Essential Competencies. The sponsors serve in a mentorship role, assessing the applicant's competencies, professionalism, and independent thinking in support of decision-making.
- Sponsors do not need to be someone with whom the applicant has worked directly. Membership staff can assist an applicant with finding a Professional Member who has agreed to serve as a volunteer sponsor. Volunteer sponsors will get to know the applicant through conversations, review of the application, and other means as necessary to fully support the applicant.
- Only one sponsor may be from the applicant's current workplace and only one sponsor may be faculty/staff or professional who taught or trained the applicant.
- Sponsors will sign a statement confirming that the applicant meets the criteria for Professional Membership. Sponsors will remain anonymous to the Membership Committee. A personal letter is not required, just the signature.
- AIC staff will confirm the sponsor's Professional Member designation and inform the Membership Committee that the applicant has two valid sponsors.

## **2.4. Evaluation**

The Membership Committee will evaluate and make decisions on all applications.

The [rubrics](#) based on the [2021 AIC Essential Competencies](#) will be used for evaluating applications, upon board approval. These documents will remain flexible to adapt to current expectations within the profession and to adjust based on member feedback.

The Membership Committee may designate additional trained reviewers to ensure that every application is reviewed by Professional Members within the applicant's pathway (Treatment, Preventive Care, or Scientific Principles, Analysis, and Examination) and specialty, for those choosing the Treatment pathway.

Following the review, if an application is denied, the Membership Committee will prepare a narrative outlining the applicant's strengths, areas for growth, and process for reapplication.

## **2.5. Transition from existing membership designations**

Following acceptance of the new membership designation structure through member vote, and upon any necessary Bylaws changes, current AIC Professional Associates in good standing will become AIC Professional Members (PM).

All Professional Members will be required to comply with continuing professional development as outlined in Section 2.6 to maintain their designation. Professional Members that transition from Professional Associate will have 5 years from the passage of this proposal to meet this new requirement.

The Ethics and Standards Committee will continue to hear and assess allegations of unethical conduct by Professional Members. This may result in removal of the Professional Member designation.

## **2.6. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

AIC encourages informed decision-making in conservation through an understanding of the values and contexts of our cultural heritage. AIC is dedicated to supporting research, sharing knowledge, and fostering life-long learning to advance the fields of preservation and conservation. (AIC 2019-2021 Strategic plan, page 3)

Continuing Professional Development activities are required to maintain the Professional Member designation. The goal of CPD is to enable AIC to encourage and formally recognize professional members as they develop their skills, conduct outreach, and contributions to the field.

- All Professional Members are required to participate in CPD to maintain their PM designation.
- The proposed [CPD plan](#) requires completion of a minimum of 10 CPD activities in a five-year period. Professional Members must complete at least one activity in each of these three categories: learning and skill development; teaching and disseminating information; and service and outreach.
- The CPD document provides a list of activities. In each category, there is the option to “add your own” activity. This may be used if a PM participates in an activity that is not listed, or believes an activity belongs in a different category than the one in which it is listed.
- Each member is also required to complete a free online refresher on professional ethics once in each five-year CPD cycle.

Tracking: Professional Members log CPD activities in an electronic system, uploading a brief description to illustrate how this activity contributes to their professional development.

The five-year CPD cycle begins when the Professional Member gains their designation.

- AIC staff will periodically notify members of their progress towards meeting CPD requirements, and members will be able to view their CPD progress online at any time.
- If a member has not met their requirements by the end of a cycle, there will be a sixty-day grace period for completing CPD.
- An extension may be requested if members are experiencing extenuating circumstances which prevent completion of CPD within the sixty-day grace period.
- If a member has not met the requirements after the sixty-day grace period or an extension, their Professional Member designation will be suspended, and their name will be removed from the professional services location tool until they have completed their requirements.

The CPD plan/program will be reviewed four years into the first five-year cycle, with adjustments made at the beginning of the next five-year cycle. The board will initiate the review process, which will include member participation.

### **3. Changes to the current Fellow designation**

#### **3.1. Framework**

Fellow will no longer be a separate peer-reviewed member designation. Instead, “Fellow of AIC” will be a recognition by one’s peers of the Professional Member’s notable contributions to the methods, training, knowledge, and philosophy of the conservation profession. The goals are to encourage a sense of community among Fellows and better recognize them as an important resource to the organization and the field.

- Professional Members who are actively practicing in their fields are expected to maintain their designation and would be identified as “AIC Professional Member and Fellow.”
- If a Fellow allows their Professional Member designation to lapse, they return to being an AIC Member, but they would retain their Fellow of AIC recognition. Because they no longer hold the Professional Member designation, they would no longer be listed in AIC’s professional services location tool.

Professional Members who meet the qualifications outlined below are nominated for the Fellow recognition either by current AIC Fellows or themselves in consideration of the member’s professionalism, engagement, and ethical practice.

Unique benefits and responsibilities of being a Fellow of AIC include:

- An invitation to a special Fellows-only online community, where Fellows will be offered opportunities to contribute to position papers and to provide guidance on issues through advance notice of organizational initiatives and special surveys.
- Serving as first reviewers for AIC policy changes, mentorship opportunities, promotion of AIC Code of Ethics, and special events at the AIC Annual Meeting.
- Priority registration for select professional development programs for Fellows of AIC who continue to maintain their PM designation.

### **3.2. Eligibility Qualifications**

Professionalism: Nominees should be Professional Members for at least 5 years and have been engaging with the field for at least 12 years. Engagement may include collaborating with conservators, mentoring, participating in professional development opportunities, reviewing grants, maintaining membership in professional organizations, and contributing to the body of conservation knowledge.

Service: Nominees should have a notable record of service within AIC and the profession. This may include serving as a volunteer leader in the organization, encouraging promotion of conservation and the organization, publishing, education, and mentoring.

Ethical Practice: Nominees should be committed to advocating for the AIC Code of Ethics (CoE) and Guidelines for Practice (GfP), practicing ethical behavior, and serving as role models in our organization.

### **3.3. Process**

Each year, AIC staff will circulate a list of Professional Members who have reached (or exceeded) the experience requirements to be eligible for Fellow of AIC. This allows existing Fellows to easily sign on to nominate Professional Members.

Once eligible, there are two equal pathways to becoming a Fellow of AIC:

- An existing Fellow of AIC may nominate an eligible Professional Member for Fellow of AIC. If the individual accepts, the nomination can proceed.
- Eligible PMs may request a Fellow to support their nomination. They may either directly contact a Fellow they know, or they may contact AIC Membership staff to request consideration.

Three letters of support from Fellows are required. The nominating Fellow asks two additional Fellows to provide letters.



The nominee submits their CV reflecting their experience in achieving the qualifications (section 3.2, above). A separate portfolio of work is not required. Nominators may review this CV and/or other material with the nominee when drafting their letter of support.

The nominee signs a statement registering their intent to serve as a Fellow and their commitment to continuing to abide by the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

#### **3.4. Evaluation**

The Membership Committee will review all completed submissions.

Fellow nominations are reviewed on the Membership Committee's cycle. Following Membership Committee review, accepted submissions are sent to existing Fellows for comment, as currently outlined in AIC bylaws. Fellows receive notification of their acceptance following the regular Membership Committee cycle. In addition, a special yearly recognition of new Fellows will take place during the Annual Meeting.

#### **3.5. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

Fellows who want to be listed in AIC's professional services location tool and use the Professional Member mark need to maintain their Professional Member designation by fulfilling the Continuing Professional Development requirements (see section 2.6, above).

Fellows are not required to pursue Continuing Professional Development to maintain their recognition as a Fellow of AIC.

All Fellows will be expected to participate in the free online ethics refresher every five years.

#### **3.6. Transition from existing membership designations**

Following acceptance of the new membership designation structure through member vote, and upon any necessary Bylaws changes, current AIC Fellows who are actively practicing would be designated as AIC Professional Member and Fellow and would be expected to maintain their Professional Member designation as outlined above. Current AIC Fellows who are retired would maintain their recognition as a Fellow of AIC.