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Middlesex University  
Doctor of Professional Studies  
Project narrative - DPS 5140  
Candidate no 9839528

The development of the  
**Professional Accreditation of Conservator-  
Restorers:**

a form of professional systems architecture

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# The development of the Professional Accreditation of Conservator- Restorers: a form of professional systems architecture

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## Summary

The Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR) is a practice-based professional qualifying framework developed by three United Kingdom associations representing practitioners in the conservation of cultural heritage. The author acted as project consultant for the development and implementation of PACR.

To date, the PACR project has consisted of three cycles. The first established the basic principles of the framework through background research and consultation, and produced and trialled a provisional scheme. The second put the scheme into operation, gathered feedback, and made operational improvements. The third gathered further feedback from implementation, and included a small-scale evaluation to gauge initial impact and identify strategic issues.

PACR represents a successful initiative by a small occupation to establish a robust and potentially respected credential, reinforcing its claim to be a credible profession. It has prompted a need for greater clarity about the nature and boundaries of the profession and routes into it, and is being followed up by work with the aim of creating a single conservation institute. Beyond conservation, it raises issues of access, qualification and continuing development that are relevant to other professions and professionalising occupations. As a practice-based assessment system it also offers some learning points relevant to the design and operation of UK National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications.

The PACR project illustrates a form of systems architecture in which a structure is developed to set the parameters for future action. It has provided a vehicle for the author's development as a systems architect in the educational field, and contributed to his commitment to a particular style of consultancy, based on realisation systems and on development work as a source of knowledge and authority. This approach is well suited to a wide range of applications, ranging from learner support systems through to areas such as national qualification frameworks and lifelong learning policy.

## Acknowledgements

The PACR framework has emerged through the collective work of numerous individuals in the conservation / restoration profession and connected with it, many of whom I have worked with closely in my role as project consultant. Others have commented on and discussed drafts of the reports and articles included in the annex. Particular thanks are due to:

Carol Brown, Historic Scotland Scottish Conservation Bureau; Alan Buchanan, Joint Accreditation Group; Kate Colleran, Joint Accreditation Group / NCCR Professional Standards Board / chair, IPC; Judith Compton, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority; Janey Cronyn, consultant to the FULCO project; Kate Foley, consultant to the FULCO project; Carla Harrison, Cultural Heritage NTO; Jane Henderson, Joint Accreditation Group / Collections Care Consultancy; Adrian Heritage, UKIC Accreditation Committee / English Heritage; Velson Horie, chair, Joint Accreditation Group / Manchester Museum; Dr David Leigh, director, UKIC; Carole Milner, chair, NCCR; Lizzie Neville, chair / co-ordinator, PACR Co-ordination Committee; Ylva Player-Dahnsjö, chair, SSCR / secretary, ECCO / Dundee University; Liz Pye, University College London Institute of Archaeology; Alison Richmond, Victoria & Albert Museum / Royal College of Arts; Claire Timings, PACR assessor / Claire Timings Gilding; Chris Woods, chair / treasurer, NCCR Professional Standards Board / chair, UKIC / Dorset County Council; Dr Peter Wright, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

At Middlesex University, I would like to thank the DProf team and in particular my adviser Jonathan Garnett and academic consultants Professor Peter Newby and Dr Peter Critten for their comments and time spent reading papers and drafts.

## **Authorship and copyright**

The materials reproduced in annexes B and C were produced under contract to the Conservation Forum and to NCCR, and copyright rests with these bodies. Documents C1-C5 and C7 were written by me through the processes described in section 1 of this document, in consultation with the Joint Accreditation Group and NCCR. Document C4 also draws on materials produced by the former Museum Training Institute and an EU-funded project, FULCO.

Copyright of the published papers in annex A rests with the publishers.

The views and interpretations expressed in this document and in the papers in annexes A and B are mine, and do not necessarily reflect the views of NCCR or its committees or constituent bodies.

## Introduction

This narrative underpins my submission for the project component of the Doctor of Professional Studies (DProf), having previously made a successful prior learning claim in respect of work on professional and vocational development and accreditation, much of which directly informs this project. The project is based on the development and implementation of the Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR) framework and the issues which it raises.

PACR is a practice-based professional qualifying framework managed by the National Council for Conservation-Restoration (NCCR), a consortium of professional associations in the cultural heritage field. During the period referred to in the narrative, October 1998 to May 2002, I was engaged as a consultant first to the Joint Accreditation Group of the Conservation Forum, then to its successor the Professional Standards Board of NCCR. The background to PACR, its evolution through three cycles of development and implementation, and a short exploratory project to examine the feasibility of a wider accreditation framework, are described in the first part of the narrative. Two concluding chapters outline current issues for the refinement of PACR and development of the conservation profession, and learning points relevant to accrediting professions and practice-based qualifications more generally.

The PACR project can be understood as a form of systems architecture that is acting as a lever for wider changes leading to the formation of a more recognisable and coherent profession. As such, it illustrates how what is at one level a focused project requiring attention to operational details can be at the same time a vehicle for strategic change, requiring integration of issues across a range of contexts as well as clarity and constancy of purpose. As a consultancy project, it demonstrates the need for a partnership or 'realisation' approach, where rather than being involved in delivering pre-specified outputs or acting as a detached expert, the consultant works with the client to create an evolving system, and in the process takes on a variety of different roles as the project progresses.

The second part of the narrative reflects on my role in PACR and its impact on my professional understanding and practice. It also discusses the idea of systems architecture and realisation systems through drawing on my work on PACR and other recent projects, and concludes with three further examples from the education and training field that are eminently suited to this approach.

The narrative is supported by three annexes: (A) a collection of published and pending papers that draw on the PACR project, (B) reports and papers prepared for the client organisations and included with their permission, and (C) the PACR scheme documents. The papers in annexes A and B were written at different points during the development of PACR. As a result they do not form a continuous narrative, and in places there are slight inconsistencies between some of them as new developments took place and my thinking evolved. There are inevitable overlaps between the journal papers (and the papers and this narrative), particularly given the need to explain the background and context of the project to different readerships.

In the disk version of this document, clicking on a reference to an annex paper (e.g. [B2](#)) opens the paper as a Word document.

# Part 1

## The development and implementation of the PACR framework

### 1.1 Background and context

Conserving and restoring artefacts that can be considered part of our cultural heritage occupies an estimated three to four thousand practitioners in the UK and Ireland (Museums & Galleries Commission 1998), split roughly evenly between private practices and institutional employment. There are professional associations for conservators and restorers worldwide, an international association (the International Institute for Conservation, IIC) and an active European confederation of conservation-restoration organisations (ECCO). In the UK and Ireland there are eleven conservation and restoration associations which variously perform the functions of professional body, trade association and learned society, most split by specialism with two pan-Irish bodies and one Scottish body; these bodies account for an estimated 2000 members. In addition there are a number of informal practitioner groupings that hold meetings and organise seminars, an Institute of Conservation Science, and bodies such as the British Horological Institute some of whose members are involved in conservation.

Entry routes into most specialisms of conservation or restoration are now principally through higher education or higher technical qualifications, although a significant minority of practitioners have entered via practical training or informal means, particularly in the more craft-based disciplines such as stone conservation, furniture restoration and the conservation of stained glass. There has been interest in developing a common professional accreditation (qualification) framework since at least the 1970s, associated with parallel aims of on the one hand raising the profile and status of the profession against a background of fragmentation and to some extent perception as a craft or technician occupation, and on the other identifying qualified practitioners to clients and the public.

The first UK accreditation scheme was set up in 1979 by the British Antique Furniture Restorers' Association (BAFRA), more to register competent firms than as a means of denoting individual practitioners as professionally qualified. An abortive attempt at developing a joint UK framework was made in 1986, and several developments over the next decade then laid the ground for a second attempt at a joint scheme. The International Council of Museums Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) had published a widely agreed definition of the profession (ICOM-CC 1984), and this was followed in 1993-4 by ECCO's code of ethics and their recommendation for a minimum of three years' full-time higher education (ECCO 1994). In 1993 the UK and Irish professional associations formed an umbrella body called the Conservation Forum, later the National Council for Conservation-Restoration (NCCR). In Ireland a new organisation, the Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works in Ireland (ICHAWI), was set up in 1995 alongside the established Irish Professional Conservators' and Restorers' Association (IPCRA) specifically as an accrediting body. Finally, the UK's Museum Training Institute (MTI) published its occupational standards for conservation in 1996,

and conservation became one of the first areas after management to have National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (here abbreviated to NVQs) approved at level 5 (MTI 1996).

NVQs and the associated occupational standards and 'outcome-based' systems of assessment have been hailed as an educational revolution and a model for workforce development (e.g. Jessup 1989, Mansfield & Mitchell 1996), but beyond the inevitable operational problems associated with a developing system (see for instance Beaumont 1996, Lester *et al* 2000) they have also attracted criticism as undermining educational standards, creating inflexible and mechanistic interpretations of work, and failing to acknowledge the importance of situational factors in determining standards of competence (e.g. Smithers 1993, Hyland 1994, Elliott 1991, Issitt 1999). On balance they have accelerated innovation particularly through separating assessment from training and focusing on workplace competence, and inhibited it by promulgating an inflexible model based on a reductionist view of practice. To date, only 3.3% of the three million NVQs awarded have been at the upper levels, 4 and 5, and of these 84% were in management and business services (QCA 2000a). The conservation NVQs at levels 4 and 5 have attracted comparatively little interest and proved difficult to implement, with only one candidate achieving a full award by the end of 2001.

Soon after the publication of the MTI standards, a report (Barron 1997) was commissioned to identify whether and how they could be used in accreditation. It concluded that there was an opportunity "to use the standards as a tool in an accreditation scheme even if the (associated) NVQ... was not to be achieved in its entirety" (*ibid* p11), and recommended that a joint committee of professional associations should be set up to explore putting this into practice. The conservation community's response was positive but with reservations, in that there was both scepticism about the NVQ model and criticism of the MTI standards as over-detailed and failing to capture the essence of practical professionalism. This viewpoint was closer to that of Eraut (1994) in his discussion of professional competence, where he concludes that professional standards "need not be as detailed as those currently favoured by the NVQ/SVQ system, and new ways of representing standards need to be developed which show their interconnectedness and make it easier for people to comprehend them" (*ibid*, p161). The conservation associations concluded that there were enough merits in the basic principles of NVQs for them to be worthy of further exploration: not quite in the way envisaged by Barron, but more to inform the development of a more appropriate model. Relationships between PACR and NVQs are discussed briefly in paper [A1](#), and in more detail in paper [A4](#).

Parallel with these developments a European Raphael bid was prepared by ICOM-CC to describe the work of the European conservator in assessable terms (see Cronyn & Foley 1996b). The result was a framework that included functional work descriptions roughly parallel with the MTI standards, plus general professional criteria covering areas such as values, understanding and intelligent practice (Foley & Scholten 1998). As well as drawing on the MTI standards this project employed some of the principles established in the widely-documented ASSET model developed by Anglia Polytechnic University and Essex Social Services (Winter & Maisch 1991, 1996).

In 1998 three of the larger UK conservation bodies, the UK Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (UKIC), Institute of Paper Conservation (IPC) and Society of Archivists (SoA), set up a joint accreditation group (JAG) which came under the umbrella of the Conservation Forum. As a parallel activity the UKIC and IPC also instituted short-life accreditation schemes, to enable practitioners with ten years' experience or more to qualify through a detailed application and

assessment of prior achievement; these became collectively known as the fast-track schemes (the Society of Archivists was already offering a certificate in archive conservation, leading to registration as an archive conservator). With additional support from the Museums and Galleries Commission and Historic Scotland, a project was initiated during 1998 to develop a credible, high-quality accreditation framework to replace fast-track accreditation. It was also hoped that this would extend to other bodies within the Conservation Forum. The 'JAG project,' with the aim of developing the new accreditation framework, commenced in October 1998 with my appointment as project consultant; it was chaired by Velson Horie, Keeper of Conservation at Manchester Museum. In the event it did not prove possible to persuade the four bodies with existing accreditation schemes to join the project.

The JAG project came to a conclusion in July 1999, when the accreditation framework was put to the subscribing bodies for approval, and matters of governance and implementation worked out. The Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR), as the framework became known, was launched early in 2000 under the umbrella of NCCR. A review of the factors leading up to the development of PACR has also been published by Alan Buchanan, one of the IPC representatives on the JAG committee (Buchanan 2001).

Following establishment of PACR at an operational level, the wider profession as represented by NCCR has again raised the possibility of a single accreditation framework for conservation, possibly associated with a single professional institute. Work in this direction is ongoing during 2002.

### **The organisational context of PACR and the JAG project**

The organisational context of the project was, and continues to be, relatively complex. As described previously the Joint Accreditation Group was formed as an initiative of three of the major conservation bodies. Although the Group was placed under the overall umbrella of the Conservation Forum, it involved the Forum's other eight members only in a consultative capacity\*. In addition to its primary constituents, outside interests were represented on JAG by Historic Scotland and the (then) Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC). The National Council for Conservation-Restoration succeeded the Conservation Forum in 1999 initially with the same group of members and a broadly similar remit, strengthened to include oversight of PACR.

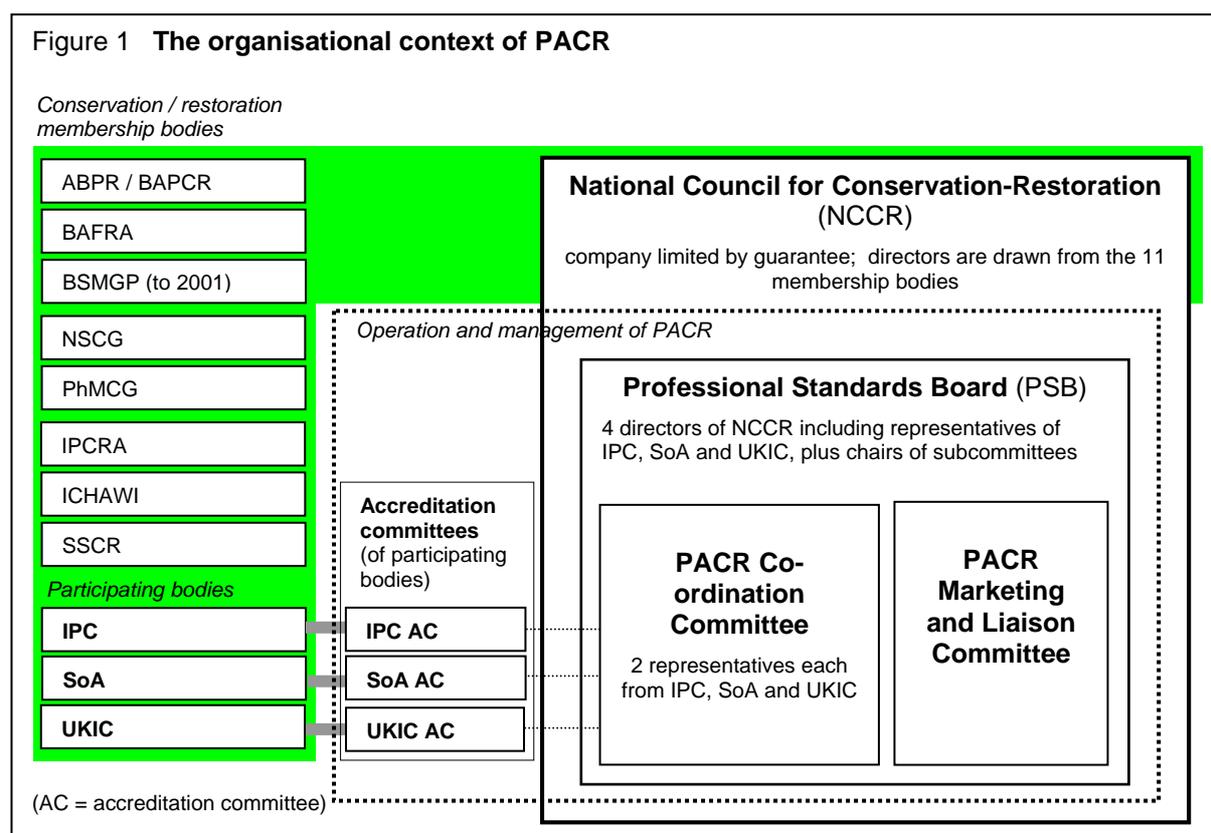
As a voluntary association of free-standing professional bodies, NCCR does not have direct connections with government or other public agencies, and therefore sets its own policies within the constraints imposed by its members and the wider cultural heritage context. The organisational structure for managing and operating PACR grew out of the original JAG structure, moderated by the participating bodies' desire to retain individual responsibility for accreditation (the initial view within JAG, consistent with my advice, was for the scheme to be operated by a joint board or similar organisation). In the structure that was adopted (see figure 1) the individual bodies operate the scheme through their accreditation committees, with standards and common practices being

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\* Members of the Conservation Forum, and subsequently NCCR, comprise: the Association of British Picture Restorers (ABPR), later British Association of Picture Conservator-Restorers (BAPCR); British Antique Furniture Restorers' Association (BAFRA); British Horological Institute (BHI, joined NCCR in 2002); British Society of Master Glass Painters (BSMGP), until 2001; Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works in Ireland (ICHAWI); Institute of Paper Conservation (IPC); Irish Professional Conservators and Restorers Association (IPCRA); Natural Sciences Conservation Group (NSCG); Photographic Materials Conservation Group (PhMCG); Scottish Society for Conservation and Restoration (SSCR); Society of Archivists (SoA); and the United Kingdom Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (UKIC). There are other conservation associations outside of NCCR, such as the Care of Collections Forum, Preventive Conservation Forum and Institute of Conservation Science.

overseen by the NCCR Professional Standards Board, at an operational level through the PACR Co-ordination Committee.

During the JAG project, project responsibilities were relatively straightforward in that the three member bodies delegated authority to JAG to develop the framework for their approval, and funding bodies' concerns were generally limited to a watching brief and ensuring accountability for their contributions. As the framework moved towards implementation it became subject to a wider range of influences and interests, primarily from the participating bodies but also from other members of NCCR, either because of potential interest in joining (particularly SSCR) or through comparison with their existing schemes (ABPR, BAFRA, BSMGP and ICHAWI).



While the development and implementation of PACR was relatively unhindered by organisational politics, it needs to be understood in the context of several factors that were operating during 1998-2002. Of these the most influential were:

- Overlaps in function and coverage between the various bodies, with many of the specialist bodies being mirrored by sections in UKIC (e.g. paintings, furniture, stained glass and more recently photographic materials); some of the smaller bodies had previously split from UKIC and were moving back towards informal alliances with it.
- Differences in ethos between conservation, with an ethic of minimum intervention, and restoration, with its aim of taking back to a defined period, appearance or working condition.

- Differences in ethos between bodies which operated in part as trade associations (e.g. ABPR, BAFRA and BSMGP) and those based more on the model of learned society, traditional professional body or semi-informal association.
- The presence of existing accreditation schemes in the above bodies and in ICHAWI, some of which were closer to registers of practices than personal professional accreditation.
- The presence of a register of studios and workshops (the Conservation Register) operated by the Museums and Galleries Commission and Historic Scotland (with MGC's role subsequently being transferred to NCCR, and delegated to UKIC).
- Conditions of entry into the scheme for Conservation Forum / NCCR members other than the three bodies that had formed JAG. During the period 1998-2002 this principally concerned SSCR, with negotiations ongoing about the 'joining fee.' The effect on SSCR to date has been detrimental, with some members leaving to join one of the accrediting bodies.

In addition there were, at least at the beginning of the project period, some misunderstandings and differences between some UK proponents of accreditation and European developments represented through ECCO and the FULCO project. These hinged partly on historic factors regarding membership of ECCO, but extended to differences in culture and approach between different countries and misunderstanding about the paths towards professionalisation that were appropriate in different contexts: Jagger & Aston for instance comment, not entirely correctly but reflecting the argument that was current in the late 1990s, that "the existing UK model of accredited conservator status is derived from a craft skill time-served basis," whereas "the European model is derived from an academic time-served basis" (Jagger & Aston 1999, p59).

#### *PACR: communities of practice*

The idea of a 'community of practice' as discussed by Wenger (1998) denotes an essentially informal grouping of people that has among other things shared ways of doing things, a shared discourse and common understanding, and sustained mutual relationships. It is distinct from a formal association such as an organisation or committee, although it may coincide with one. The conservation community as a whole is too large and disparate to be thought of as a community of practice in Wenger's terms, and is more akin to what he terms a constellation of interconnected practices.

The first community of practice that began to form around the PACR project was centred on the JAG committee, where an inner core of committee members were joined on an ad-hoc basis by other leading conservators who had an interest in professional development and accreditation, for instance from the viewpoint of their own professional bodies, as educators, or through involvement in other projects such as FULCO or the MTI standards development. This group formed my initial set of colleagues and point of reference within the overall conservation community, providing a group within which an open exchange of knowledge and ideas could take place.

As the JAG project progressed I came into contact with other existing groupings such as conservation educators and a small group who were involved in conservation NVQs, as well as with conservators in Scotland where there was a strong sense of a practitioner community that also extended outside of

the strict conservation profession. This latter group included some leading members of the UK and European conservation community who were not involved in JAG, but who provided a second reference point that reflected slightly different perspectives and also provided a contrast to the London hub of the JAG and NCCR groups. Although the group of practitioners involved in the trials formed a strong network for exchanging ideas and gathering feedback, their involvement was too short for them to develop as more than an occasional forum.

After the end of the JAG project, there was widespread change in committee memberships that effectively dispersed the community of practice that had formed around the project, and meant that a practitioner group needed to develop around PACR implementation. This meant that my role became central in acting as a focus for this process, and put me into the position of being an interpreter of meaning for PACR until common understandings began to emerge. In practice, what might be termed the PACR core community came to comprise most of the co-ordination committee, the director of UKIC, a few members of the accreditation committees, plus initially myself. This basic grouping developed into a genuine community of practice able to withstand changes to committees and my easing out, and appears to be sustainable at an informal level as well as through the formal committee processes. It has also developed to the point where members identify as members of a PACR community rather than as representatives of their individual bodies' interests, and appears to have developed an open and constructively critical ethos. The broadening of this community to include assessors, accreditation committees, and PACR-accredited conservators has taken longer than expected, but there has been gradual development of common understandings and ways of working are beginning to create cohesion around this wider group.

A current challenge beyond the PACR project is to build a community of practice in relation to professional development and accreditation that spans the breadth of the conservation profession. The ethos that has emerged in the PACR 'core' has overcome differences between the member bodies and their respective traditions, and creating a project around which a similar core community can emerge will be one of the factors needed to develop a common accreditation framework, particularly if this is to be done in the absence of a single professional body.

## 1.2 Methodology

Methodologically, the PACR project can be considered in two ways. From the viewpoint of the outcomes sought by the client, it fits the model of an action research or cyclic development project in which, as an external consultant, I was engaged to assist the conservation community to make changes within and to the profession. From my viewpoint as a consultant and developer (and DProf candidate), it also presents a case-study from which learning-points can emerge: both in the sense of information and interpretations that are relevant to other occupations, professions and qualifications agencies and that can be published or used in other projects, and in the sense of providing a vehicle for the development of my own practice.

### PACR as action research

Action research in its original form is associated with the seminal work of Kurt Lewin (1946), where it is regarded as a means of assisting people to move forward through enquiry into issues present in their own lives. This conception has been developed and modified in several directions, including for use by practitioners making small-scale interventions in professional contexts (particularly in teaching, health and other public service professions, for instance Stenhouse 1975, McNiff 1988), for collaborative enquiry (e.g. Reason & Rowan 1981, Weil *et al* 1997), and for manufacturing and organisational processes (e.g. the 'plan-do-study-act' or Shewhart cycle, Deming 1950). Soft systems methodology, a development of systems engineering designed for interventions in organisational or social systems (see Checkland 1981, Wilson 1990) can also be considered as a form of action research.

Different approaches to action research emphasise different agendas and scopes for action. For instance, Elliott's definition of action research as "study(ing) a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (Elliott 1991, p69) suggests a strong research focus, but one which is limited to changing only the quality of the action, not its nature or the nature of the social situation itself. Conversely, Checkland's systems approach is more pragmatic in intent, but allows exploration of systems issues beyond quality of action; it is capable of addressing issues of fitness of purpose as well as fitness for purpose. A more critical approach to practitioner action research is expounded by Carr & Kemmis (1986), while conceptions of action research based on the notion of praxis emphasise the gaining of understanding for the purpose of critical and creative action, or to "change the world as well as study it" (Stanley 1990).

Stemming from the work of Lewin (*op cit*), action research is commonly represented as a cycle of four steps, normally repeated either on an ongoing basis or until an acceptable result is produced. These consist of planning (identifying the issue to be tackled and associated options), acting (implementing one of the options), observing (gathering data or feedback), and reflecting (on the results and possible next steps). Comparing this with soft systems methodology, in its first iteration the latter approximates to the planning and acting stages, while in subsequent iterations it can be equated to the whole cycle starting from the observing stage. The seven steps in Checkland's soft systems methodology are:

1. identifying the problematic situation that it is desired to intervene in

2. researching the situation and building a 'rich picture' (interpretive representation) of it
3. selecting perspectives and building 'root definitions' (key processes that need to take place within the desired system)
4. developing a conceptual model of the overall system
5. comparing the model with the real-world situation
6. defining the changes to be implemented
7. taking action.

Both of these approaches aim to achieve practical goals, and see research as an integral part of the action cycle. PACR, as a development project taking place in a complex context, can be considered as an action research project in its overall methodology; it also draws on a modified form of soft systems methodology. The three phases of the PACR project that have taken place to date (2002) each suggest a slightly different construction of the action research cycle, and illustrate the difficulty of expecting a single model of action research to apply throughout the development process.

#### *The PACR cycles*

The first cycle comprised the JAG project, from October 1998 to July 1999. This developed, consulted on and trialled the basic format of PACR, and resulted in the processes, documentation and guidance used in the first 'live' accreditations in 2000. Following the JAG project, a short period ensued when negotiations were held with the participating professional bodies and the scheme's governance and regulations were agreed.

This cycle has critical and praxis-oriented elements geared to changing the operating context of the profession and developing a new system (rather than making incremental improvements to an existing one). It might best be represented by a modified version of the soft systems model, based on the following stages:

1. defining the issues to be tackled (professional credibility, quality of practice, ongoing improvement)
2. assembling a 'rich picture' (the state and context of the profession, stakeholder needs, receptiveness, history, other models of accreditation)
3. envisaging the main elements of a solution (accreditation and continuing professional development)
4. building a conceptual model (principles for an accreditation and CPD framework)
5. comparing the model with reality (checking practicalities against the 'rich picture', consultation, trialling)
6. developing the solution in detail (assembling the detailed framework)
7. acting (gaining acceptance and implementing the framework).

The second cycle comprised the first round of accreditation after the scheme went live, covering the 12 months from March 2000. The main concerns of this cycle were to test out the system and make operational improvements, for instance to procedures, documents, guidance and assessor training. This cycle is essentially a pragmatic one concerned with making incremental improvements within the system. It fits more closely with a basic action research cycle of acting (implementing the framework),

observing (results and feedback), reflecting (implications and options) and planning (changes for the next round).

The third cycle comprised the second round of accreditation, effectively spanning January 2001 to May 2002. In addition to operational review, this cycle also set out to gather early feedback on the impact of accreditation within and beyond the profession. This cycle again fits the basic action research model, but it also looks outside the system to begin to consider wider impact and developments in new directions.

Parallel with the second and third cycles, I carried out some additional investigation to explore wider issues associated with PACR, in some cases associated with other consultancy projects such as work on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's national qualifications framework. The focus of this work was essentially practical, but it also engaged to an extent with the wider context in which PACR operates, moving more into the realm of critical action research and praxis. Some of this investigation was fed into the third cycle evaluation as part of the revised 'rich picture', although it is likely to have greater significance outside of the PACR project - such as the common accreditation framework described below, dialogue between the profession and educational institutions, and the promotion of professional practice assessment in Europe.

Immediately following the third cycle I was also involved in a short project to identify the feasibility of a common accreditation framework across the profession, associated with a potential merger of all the UK and Irish conservation bodies to form a single institute. This is included as a postscript to the main PACR project, and contributes to the overall conclusions and learning points.

The three cycles are summarised in chapters 1.3 - 1.5, and the common accreditation project in chapter 1.6. Chapter 1.7 discusses the resultant issues and implications for the conservation profession.

### *The consultant's role*

Both action research and soft systems methodology are commonly described as approaches that are taken by an individual, organisation or community to effect change from within, in contrast with expert solutions that are developed through outsider research and external recommendations or prescriptions. The role of the consultant in an action research project therefore needs to be different from that which would apply in developing an expert solution, most obviously in the sense that the relationship becomes more one of partnership than of contractor-client or researcher-subject.

In PACR, the consultancy role was initially expected to provide expertise on qualifications, accreditation and professional development to complement the JAG committee's knowledge of the profession, provide an external and 'objective' view of the undertaking (e.g. not unduly influenced by the history and politics outlined in the previous chapter), and lead the project in partnership with the committee as a methodologist and systems developer. Given the fact that the committee was composed of volunteers, there was also a tacit expectation that I would take some of the responsibility and initiative for holding the process together and driving it forward.

This type of relationship creates a number of issues and potential dilemmas for the consultant. In general terms, there is always present a need to maintain a balance between the detachment needed to be a neutral and apolitical mentor and adviser, and the involvement needed to work successfully in a shared venture. To some extent this is less of a problem if there are obvious differences between the consultant and the client community (for instance, I do not have any conservation expertise), and the consultant is also involved with other projects. Associated with this are two additional issues: the need to ensure that ownership of the project remains with the client, and the consultant does not take on an executive capacity or bias agendas to suit his or her own ends (these are discussed further in chapter 2.1 and in the next section of this chapter respectively). A further issue concerns getting the balance right between taking the lead or being directive, offering options, and acting purely as a process facilitator; too much emphasis on the former moves the relationship towards that of providing expert solutions, while too much towards the latter may make the project inefficient and undermine the psychological contract with the client. Finally, in this type of relationship client expectations can lead to role conflicts if not managed carefully; for instance, becoming involved in the accreditation process itself could undermine the neutrality needed to advise on problematic situations.

Finally, a project located in as complex an organisational context as a fragmented and developing profession inevitably involves working with different communities or sub-communities of practice, each of which can have a different set of perspectives and agendas. The 'official' client as represented by the JAG and NCCR committees formed one of these communities, but as the project progressed it also involved engaging with other groups including potential candidates, assessors, practitioner groups such as the Scottish conservation community, conservation academics and external groupings such as standards and qualifications developers in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and Cultural Heritage National Training Organisation. This necessitates being able to develop good working relationships with these groups and represent a balanced view of the profession and its stakeholders within the bounds of the client partnership.

Further reflection on my role in the project is included in chapter 2.1, and in chapter 2.2 I explore the ideas of systems architecture and realisation systems in relation to the kind of consultancy role described above.

### **PACR as case-study**

A case-study is essentially an account that describes a phenomenon or group of phenomena in a particular real-life context with which they are bound up, typically using multiple sources of evidence (cf Yin 1989). The purpose of the case-study approach is to illustrate the particular and make it intelligible in a way that normally has purpose beyond its internal value, for instance to draw out points that have potential for wider application or to illustrate problems in policy or practice. The argument as to whether this knowledge can be regarded as generalisable (see for instance Golby 1994) is less important than whether it is useful: I prefer to regard the knowing emerging from case-studies as learning-points rather than conclusions (which imply closure and finality), and recognise that there are different ways of framing cases that generate different learning-points. To use PACR as an example, while this document and the associated published papers draw out various points from the project, it is likely that previously unthought-of ideas will emerge on revisiting it to see what it has to contribute in the context of a different project, such as the development of another emergent profession or changes to the principles governing NVQs. The value of the project as case-study is

realised rather more in its framing in relation to potential applications than in treating it as a source of generalisable theory.

Linking PACR to the DProf, to the intention to disseminate through publication, and to the expectation that it will be used to inform future practice, automatically implies a case-study dimension to the project. It has value as a case-study in that it explores issues that are of potential use to other professional and professionalising groups, and to those involved in designing and working with practice-based qualifications and assessment systems. It also has personal professional value, both in the sense of adding to my knowledge in the substantive areas of the project, and through providing an sustained and involved example of a consultancy relationship that can be reflected upon to develop my practice and practical wisdom.

At a general level, PACR demonstrates how a small and diverse occupational group pursued its project of professionalisation, specifically by setting up a qualifying process and continuing professional development scheme, as well as illustrating an example of a practice-based assessment system that offers an alternative to the NVQ model. There is therefore potential merit in disseminating a simple untheorised account of PACR and leaving interested parties to draw their own conclusions. More specifically, PACR suggests learning-points and raises issues in these areas, with potential to contribute to changes in practice in professional development and the development of qualifications. I have taken this forward through a series of published and pending papers (A1-A8), the positive response these have received from academic journals bearing out the potential value of PACR as a case-study. In addition to these papers, there is a discussion of some of the wider implications of PACR and the issues it raises in chapter 1.8.

From a personal professional perspective, these learning points have added to my expertise in the professional development and qualifications field; this is already becoming recognised in approaches from other potential clients, and employed in relation to other, related applications as outlined in chapter 2.1. In addition, the PACR project has provided me with material to reflect on in relation to consultancy practice, as described in the section above on the consultant's role, which is leading to changed conceptions of practice (see chapter 2.2) that are generalisable into other projects and areas of work (such as the example given in chapter 2.3).

This treatment of PACR as a case-study poses some potential ethical issues for my role as a consultant. From the client's perspective, there is little direct value in having their project disseminated through publication, and there may be some disadvantages particularly if weaknesses or problems are exposed. In this kind of internal project (as opposed for instance to a publicly-funded research contract intended for dissemination) there is at least a moral obligation to gain permission from the client to publish, and a dilemma is created if this becomes conditional on altering the account to present an unacceptably sanitised version of events. In the one project where this has arisen my response has been not to publish, a relatively easy if disappointing decision because I have no external pressure to produce published work.

A second issue involves the use of client resources - particularly the consultant's time, client time and goodwill - towards objectives that do not provide tangible benefits to the client. This was potentially an issue in using the PACR project towards the DProf, but it was largely overcome by negotiating client approval both at a general level through approval from the key committees, and

more specifically for activities that were either done in the client's name or required an input from the profession (such as the practitioner survey described in paper B7). In practice it was fairly straightforward to gain client support in return for benefits that came out of unpaid work associated with developing published papers and this narrative; papers B6 and B7 are both examples of work that would not otherwise have been carried out.

Finally, there is an intellectual copyright issue in drawing on one project to inform others. While informal exchange of ideas between projects is inevitable, the re-use of specific models and materials may amount to a breach of trust even if not of contract. My policy is not to pass on any unpublished or unreleased materials without permission (in PACR this extends to the materials in annexes B and C), and in practice I find the nature of my work means that there is rarely anything to be gained from attempting to transfer a solution directly from one context to another.

### **Guiding philosophies**

The PACR development process was guided by a fairly consistent underlying philosophy, principally rooted in the profession's dominant ethos of care for heritage, but also influenced by the JAG committee and its successors, as well as by my own perspectives on professional development, practice and assessment. The JAG committee inherited a commitment to the ideal of professionalism and guardianship of cultural heritage, combined with a desire to raise the profile of the profession and status of practitioners. These aims were viewed as complementary, the profession's ability to play a leading role in conservation policy and strategy being regarded as in part dependent on its acceptance as of equal status by museum directors, archivists, architects, funding bodies and others able to influence the treatment of cultural artefacts. The project was also strongly informed by commitment to continuous development and to the ideal of a community of practice reflected through professional networks and strong links between the academic and practitioner communities.

The project itself was based in a view that the framework needed to be developed by the profession rather than on its behalf, interpreted as requiring the involvement and agreement of practitioners at every stage. This extended both to the composition of JAG and subsequent committees, which were dominated by practising conservators, and the need to consult extensively before agreeing a finalised framework. There was also a generally shared belief that the scheme needed to be practical and reflect the profession's circumstances and needs, rather than copy existing approaches used by other occupations. Balancing this egalitarian and participatory approach was a view that PACR needed to move the profession forward, together with a pragmatic recognition that there would be both 'laggards' (Rogers & Shoemaker 1971) and 'dynamic conservatives' (cf Schön 1971) among the practitioner community whose concerns needed to be listened and responded to without allowing them to undermine developments.

During the project, I was concerned to ensure that developments were based in values that were consistent with the ethos of the profession, including those of fairness and openness, and ensure that these became intrinsic to the operation and management of PACR. While this ideal occasionally lapsed as will be described in later chapters, it was generally successful. This stance implied a need to look at the longer-term effect of any decisions, particularly on things such as access to the profession and boundary issues, and make positive statements where appropriate to clarify the position of practitioners who may be affected. It also pointed to a need to balance different concerns

carefully and attempt to distinguish between issues likely to resolve themselves over time and therefore not requiring strategic attention, and those that represented for instance genuine differences in practice or ethos that would cause ongoing problems for practitioners or for the project if not resolved.

## 1.3 Cycle 1: the JAG project 1998-99

As previously described, the JAG (Joint Accreditation Group) project consisted of the initial development and trialling of PACR between October 1998 and July 1999.

### Aims and questions

The overall purpose of the JAG project was to produce a robust and workable professional accreditation framework acceptable to the three constituent bodies, ready for implementation from 2000 onwards.

The primary aims were:

- To establish an overall format and approach for the framework which would be acceptable to the professional bodies and individual practitioners, and be effective in raising the profile of the profession, providing a means for clients to identify qualified and proficient practitioners, and ultimately improving the care of cultural heritage.
- To establish and agree the detailed standards, systems of assessment and quality assurance to be used in the framework, and develop associated guidance materials for candidates and assessors.
- To establish a system for reviewing and monitoring continuing professional development (CPD).

It was also intended to gain answers to a number of practical questions about implementing PACR, including how easy it would be to recruit assessors, the back-up needed in terms of training, monitoring and central support, and the levels of fees and costs that would need to be involved.

### Process

The process consisted of four main phases.

The first, short phase took place during November 2000 and involved me in discussions with the JAG committee, representatives of the associations making up the Conservation Forum, and a small number of external organisations with an interest in the project (including English Heritage, the National Trust, Historic Scotland, the Museums and Galleries Commission and the Cultural Heritage National Training Organisation). These discussions aimed to identify what stakeholders wanted from the framework, along with problems and issues needing attention. Concurrent with this I also undertook desk research and had telephone discussions to get an overview of qualifying and CPD-related processes in a selection of other professions and occupations: accountancy, architecture, architectural conservation, architectural technicians, environmental management, forestry, landscape architecture, leisure management, marketing, museums, nursing, personnel and development, surveying, and waste management.

Following the first phase, I drew up a discussion paper for the JAG committee, subsequently reworked into a consultation document (paper [B1](#)). An initial consultation meeting was held in London in December 1998, attended principally by conservation practitioners; following this meeting, I revised the document, and circulated it to practitioners via the IPC, UKIC and SoA. Nineteen written responses were received by the end of January 1999.

The third and largest phase of the JAG project, trialling and specialist consultation, took place between January and June 1999. This comprised:

- The development of a set of framework documents, including an introduction to the scheme, guides for assessors and candidates, a set of professional standards, application and assessment documents, and guidance and proformas for planning and reviewing CPD.
- Trial assessments. Thirteen 'candidates' were assessed from an initial 20 volunteers over a three-month period. The assessments were carried out through a full-day visit to the candidate's place of work by two assessors. Fourteen experienced practitioners took part in the trials as assessors; they attended a one-day training session, and I shadowed two assessments. I subsequently reviewed the resulting assessor reports with the JAG committee.
- CPD trialling. Initially 40 practitioners volunteered to trial the CPD proformas by producing a reflective account of previous learning and planning ahead for the following year. In the event, only 11 sets of documents were completed and returned.
- Focus meetings. I held five meetings in March and April to gather feedback from practitioners and other interested parties on the scheme as developed for trialling. These focused on practitioner issues (London and Edinburgh), assessment and accreditation (Birmingham), the professional standards (London), and professional credibility and service to clients (Liverpool). At the request of Historic Scotland a further four general meetings were held in Edinburgh and Dundee. In all 80 conservators and related professionals attended these meetings.
- Additional consultation. The framework documents were circulated to stakeholders in the cultural heritage field, resulting in seven written responses, and posted on the UKIC web site where they were accessed on 1429 occasions. A discussion on accreditation also took place on the international Conservation DistList (internet discussion list).

The final phase gathered further feedback from the trial, both by telephone and through a conference at the Institute of Archaeology in June which was attended by 33 participants. Following this I revised the documentation to reflect findings from the trial and consultations. The final stage of the JAG project involved approval by the participating professional bodies, necessitating some further minor changes to reflect agreed procedures and administrative requirements.

The process is described in more detail in papers [B3](#) and [A1](#).

## Findings and issues raised

Findings at each of the main stages of the JAG project are outlined below. There is further discussion of some of the points raised in my post-trialling report (paper [B3](#)) and in paper [A1](#). Some of the issues relating to continuing professional development are also discussed in paper [A2](#).

### *Stakeholder discussions and desk research*

Initial discussions within the profession indicated broad support for the concept of accreditation, and for a practice-based scheme, rather than one based on specified entry routes or written examinations. There was however a minority view that was sceptical about practice-based accreditation, principally stemming from experiences with the MTI NVQs and the fast-track schemes, with a few consultees also suspicious that it would work against the desire to promote graduate or postgraduate entry. This latter point was a particular concern where consultees were interested in promoting compatibility across Europe.

Emphasis was placed on the need to take account of the diversity of the profession, including different practice contexts (e.g. private practice and work in historic buildings, as well as museums and galleries), the different traditions, specialisms and disciplinary leanings within the profession, as well as different entry routes (which could range from postgraduate qualifications to informal apprenticeships). Differences in approach were highlighted between areas with a craft leaning and those with a more academic approach; differences in ethos were also discernable between practitioners primarily concerned with restoration, and those whose main aim was conservation.

There was some scepticism from bodies that already had accreditation schemes that a common system would be too general, and fail to capture the particular requirements for being, for instance, a proficient stained glass conservator or furniture restorer. There was also confusion between the idea of accreditation (i.e. individual qualification) and the objective of registering conservation firms, whether by the individual conservation bodies or through the Conservation Register (a studio registration scheme at that time operated by the Museums and Galleries Commission and Historic Scotland).

The desk research and associated discussions indicated that a form of practice-based accreditation could complement graduate entry, in a similar way to the professional practice examination in architecture, but it was not widely used as the sole means of qualifying other than in waste management and as what might be considered an exceptional entry route in the personnel and leisure fields. In several professions including architecture and accountancy there was a degree of support for this approach to qualifying, but also scepticism fuelled (as in conservation) by doubts about robustness and validity based on experiences of the NVQ model. While it was not particularly conclusive, this investigation did not suggest any reasons not to proceed with a practice-based model, or offer any particularly suitable alternatives.

### *The practitioner consultations*

The consultations indicated broad support for the outline framework, and most of the issues raised concerned detail and implementation. The format proposed for professional standards found more

favour than had the MTI (NVQ) standards, and widespread support was expressed for greater flexibility and clearer examples of interpretation. The incorporation of general professional criteria (along the lines of FULCO, see Foley & Scholten 1998) was welcomed as expressing an important part of professionalism which the NVQs were thought to omit, although one respondent commented perhaps perversely that they were not 'measurable' and therefore not assessable.

Several respondents raised the issue of conservators who were no longer involved in hands-on treatment, for instance because they now act as managers, tutors, trainers or advisers. There was a call to include these within the scope of PACR, without undermining its function of representing the ability to practise proficiently. On the other hand there was also concern that the framework should be rigorous and not become a club for senior members of the profession, regardless of their competence. This issue had not been sufficiently resolved during the fast-track processes, with negative consequences for PACR that were not fully overcome even at the end of the third cycle.

The area of continuing professional development appeared to cause the greatest confusion; despite description in the consultation document as "an annual or more frequent (self-)review, consisting of reflection...", and "what (the practitioner) aims to learn during the next year," several respondents viewed CPD as essentially attending courses and responded in this vein. As with the accreditation process in general there was a call to minimise any bureaucracy required in relation to CPD.

#### *The focus meetings*

The focus meetings and additional consultations indicated overwhelming support for practice-based accreditation and recognition of its value to the profession and to clients; the main reservations centred around the possibility of creating a semi-closed profession, along with some misunderstandings that being 'a professional' implied university education. The majority view including that of key client organisations was that accreditation would never become compulsory, but a desirable target would be for clients to look for studios to have lead practitioners who were accredited. Clarification of the relationship between PACR and the Conservation Register was requested, with some support for registered practices to have a partner, proprietor or director who was accredited.

The level at which accreditation was pitched was also debated, with a general desire to see the scheme as representing a high level of understanding and competence (including a 'post-graduate' depth of knowledge), while being open to non-graduates. There was a desire for the scheme to be seen as credible in Europe (ECCO's desideratum for conservation training is "university level or recognised equivalent"), although some difficulties were predicted given an ambivalent reception accorded to the FULCO work.

The framework details and assessment process were generally approved, with some detailed comments aimed at increasing clarity and making the process more straightforward and rigorous. There was agreement that PACR should look for "maturity of competence" and the ability to handle complex issues and appreciate complexity "without complicating it unnecessarily." Some debate ensued about the coverage of the scheme, but the general consensus was for a single framework at present, accessible to managers, tutors and consultants who were previously conservation practitioners, but emphasising the ability to practise proficiently. Discussion also took place around

the different approach and ethos between conservation and restoration, with opinions varying between emphasising the differences or looking for common ground. This issue was not resolved sufficiently at this stage, and reappeared as a cause of confusion when PACR went live.

Discussion of costs and pricing indicated that practitioners would be willing to pay around £300 for accreditation, with £500 as an absolute ceiling. Potential assessors varied between being prepared to offer their services free of charge, to wanting a fee able to provide reasonable compensation for a basic professional salary or private practice earnings. The majority of potential candidates were in favour of paid assessors who had a contractual obligation to their professional bodies.

Finally, there was some concern that the accreditation system would kill off NVQs, particularly from practitioners who had been involved in NVQ development; there were also requests for exemptions for holders of NVQs at levels 4 or 5 (a largely theoretical issue as this numbered just one person). On the other hand NVQs did not appear to be highly regarded by many delegates, and there were concerns that they lacked international credibility.

### *The trials*

The assessment trials were generally successful in that they indicated that the proposed framework was workable, given acceptance of what could be an "exhausting" assessment day; assessments lasted between five hours and nine hours. The trials indicated a need for minor modifications to standards, documentation and procedures to reduce repetition, increase relevance and make the process run more smoothly. They also highlighted difficulties associated with asking the assessors to make an assessment decision on the day (in the interests of openness, the process was designed to be fully 'visible' to the candidate); this was felt to have created unnecessary pressure, and be capable of causing problems if the moderation panel later reversed the decision.

The trials indicated that the form of assessment was acceptably fair and thorough, and despite the intense nature of the day it was thought to be preferable to indirect or portfolio-based assessment on grounds of validity, rigour and efficiency. Assessors reported that the general professional standards were not difficult to judge, and it would be difficult for a candidate to bluff through these areas over the duration of the assessment. However, the moderation meeting indicated a wide discrepancy in the quality of assessors' reporting, suggesting a need to give more attention to this area in future assessor training.

The CPD trials supported the non-prescriptive approach to CPD which had been proposed, although even this was misunderstood by some practitioners. The majority view was that the approach taken to CPD should enable practitioners to control what and how they learn, ensure that recording requirements prompt learning and reflection (rather than "listing and justifying") while creating a minimal administrative burden, and focus on significant learning and development rather than learning events and activities. Some practitioners, particularly in the private sector, commented that the action planning element of the CPD document needed to be flexible because they could not predict the work they would be taking on during any coming year.

## **Decisions**

Between myself and the JAG committee it was concluded that the consultations and trials showed that PACR as developed was sufficiently practicable and well-supported to take forward to implementation, subject to a number of amendments of detail, issues to be worked out in practice, and longer-term issues for further exploration as the scheme developed. There was agreement that the framework should be an evolving entity, subject to continuous review and modification while having sufficient stability to avoid confusion.

Key decisions made after the feedback conference were:

- To operate a single framework, with no exemptions for qualifications or experience and no separate routes for conservation managers, scientists, tutors etc.; all candidates would have to demonstrate that they had (or had had and could still draw on) practical conservation competence. In practice, this decision became a source of ambiguity and needed amendment after the second cycle.
- To retain the format of the professional standards, subject to modifications of detail and an improved format for the accreditation documents. Initially it had been hoped to match the standards more closely with the revised CHNTO occupational standards, but the changes indicated as needed by the trial diverged from the emerging CHNTO proposals.
- To retain the assessment format with minor modifications. In particular, assessors would only report their findings and make decisions on individual standards; the accreditation committee (as the moderating group became designated) would recommend accreditation or otherwise, subject to an appeals procedure.
- To improve support for candidates, e.g. via briefings and in the longer term a mentoring scheme.
- To set the accreditation fee at £400, calculated to raise just enough surplus to cover office administration, assessor training and indemnity insurance, and pay a fee of £100 plus expenses to each assessor per assessment, similar to the rates being paid to NVQ assessors.

Negotiations between the newly-formed National Council for Conservation-Restoration and the professional bodies resulted in the three subscribing bodies operating the scheme individually, but co-ordinated by the NCCR's Professional Standards Board, along with common candidate briefings, assessor training and committee briefings. The committee structure used in the first operational cycles is depicted in figure 1 in chapter 1.1.

## **Outstanding issues**

The JAG committee was concerned to develop a viable professional accreditation framework which would be capable of being put into operation by January 2000. A number of issues were therefore left for further attention in subsequent cycles of operation.

Two of the main questions internal to the framework concerned the fitness of the professional standards, and how they would be interpreted into the various specialisms of conservation. The project had not budgeted for developing standards through primary research, and some concerns remained about how well the existing standards would both reflect the complex role of the conservator and be accessible to practitioners without imposing a requirement for excessive breadth of experience. It was assumed that interpretation into context would be done in the field by assessors, although the difficulties of achieving common standards were acknowledged.

The position of NCCR member bodies which had not participated in JAG required further clarification. Accreditation would initially only be available through IPC, SoA and UKIC, and it was unclear whether other bodies would subscribe to PACR, continue with their own schemes where they had them, or develop formal or informal links with one of the accrediting bodies. Indications suggested that the two smallest bodies, NSCG and PhMCG, would develop links with UKIC, but the position of the Scottish body, SSCR, was unclear; although in principle its non-participation would limit access to accreditation in Scotland, many members were also members of UKIC or IPC.

The relationship between PACR and qualifications and training routes needed further working out, and while some clear principles had been established there were still questions in areas such as relationships with NVQs, how internships could be aligned with PACR, and whether and how links should be established between PACR and academic frameworks. The NVQ issue had a degree of urgency in that if conservation NVQs 'failed,' it was likely that development funding would be withdrawn from CHNTO unless a case could be argued that the occupational standards were being used elsewhere. Exploration of collaboration between NCCR and CHNTO was identified as a priority once PACR was established, although in the event it was later overtaken by other priorities.

Finally, in a European context PACR represented a different direction of development from that being pursued by ECCO, i.e. to encourage university training and where possible a licence-to-practice approach. Views had been expressed both that PACR was complementary to ECCO's approach, and that it represented an alternative direction and a potential threat. In parallel, there were some concerns from UK practitioners that the expressed aims of full-time university education for all conservators and a fully (self-)regulated profession were restrictive and unrealistic. This pointed to further investigation around the themes of encouraging graduate entry as a 'preferred' route, and promoting PACR as a to post-experience, post-graduate professional practice assessment.

## **1.4 Cycle 2: PACR implementation 2000-01**

The first round of applications and assessments took place during 2000 and early 2001, with briefings from May, applications due by the end of August, and all but one of the assessments completed by the end of January. A review conference took place in mid-March 2001.

### **Aims and questions**

Compared with the JAG project, the second cycle had a more limited set of aims concerned with improving the detail and quality of PACR and highlighting areas for later development. The primary aims were:

- To assess the likely level of applications and identify any reasons for non-application.
- To identify any problems and areas for improvement in implementation.
- To gather feedback on the standards and other issues for later action.

Cycle 2 applied specifically to accreditation; the CPD review and planning process was excluded, although it was expected that some feedback would result because of the requirement in area C of the professional standards for candidates to address their continuing development.

### **Process**

The process focused on implementing the framework and gathering associated feedback and information. The main components were:

- Briefing sessions for potential candidates, which also enabled initial feedback to be gathered on PACR, scheme documents and guidance materials. Briefings were held in London and Somerset, attracting 71 participants.
- Assessor training, carried out in three groups in London, Bristol and Birmingham, with a total of 24 assessors; an initial briefing day was followed four to eight weeks later by a workshop to discuss issues raised by individual applications. Most accreditation committee members also attended an equivalent pair of sessions. These sessions also provided a large amount of feedback on the framework and associated issues.
- The application and assessment process. Eighteen applications were made by the deadline, with one withdrawing reluctantly after advice from the accreditation committee, and another failing to respond to a request to complete the form fully. With one exception assessments were conducted between November 2000 and January 2001, and reviewed by the accreditation committees in February and March. Thirteen candidates were successful and three referred for various reasons (two of these were subsequently successfully reassessed in the following cycle).

- A review, consisting of telephone discussions with candidates, a questionnaire sent to people who had attended briefings but not applied, a review meeting of assessors and accreditation committee representatives, and email discussion with assessors and accreditation committee members. A final review and planning meeting was held by the PACR Co-ordination Committee in May 2001. I was unable to attend this meeting but tabled a report (paper [B4](#)).

## **Findings and issues raised**

The key findings and issues raised are outlined below, and discussed in more depth in paper [B4](#). Further discussion is also provided in paper [A3](#).

Feedback on PACR and on the first full cycle of implementation was on balance positive from all its constituencies. There were some concerns about specific matters of implementation and to a lesser extent design, and some strategic issues were raised concerning the future focus of the framework. The main issues raised are outlined below.

### *General issues*

A significant issue was raised in respect of what some candidates described as conflicting messages and inconsistent advice. Part of this concerned relatively minor issues such as details of payment or arrangement of visits, but there were also more serious cases relating to the need for their work to demonstrate a conservation ethic (rather than being purely restoration); the emphasis placed on practical conservation work; and confusion between resubmission and referral. Two further issues can be seen to relate to this. First, there was very limited continuity in terms of personnel between the JAG project and the first round of PACR, requiring a large number of people to develop their understanding of the framework quickly. Not unexpectedly, conflicting interpretations arose and some of these escaped into the public domain. Secondly, the PACR-related committee structure - involving overall seven committees, one in each professional body and four in NCCR - appeared to make for slow decision-making and a reluctance to clarify issues quickly.

Candidate support, at least through formal means (workshops, mentors etc), was acknowledged to have been insufficient during the first round. However, in practice most candidates had obtained support via colleagues in the profession, including people who had participated in the trials or were other candidates' assessors. Some candidates commented that the time from submitting their applications (end August) to getting results (February or March) was unjustifiably long.

The position of CPD in relation to PACR applications was seen as unclear, with some candidates submitting CPD reviews (in the requested format) with their applications, while others had CPD-related evidence available at the assessment. The contextual information and narrative provided by the reviews was seen as useful by some accreditation committee members, who requested that reviews were included with all future applications.

Finally, it was clear that many potential candidates were adopting a 'wait and see' policy. The process was seen by some as involved and time-consuming, and the fees of £400 expensive; this suggested that the nature of the credential involved was not fully appreciated. There were also concerns about the value of ACR status, and the limited promotion of PACR that had taken place.

### *Assessment and assessors*

Some assessors had initially been concerned about interpreting the professional standards into different disciplines, as well as the level at which the standards were to be applied. Interpretation was found to be much less of an issue in practice, while the standard of application also became clearer with additional guidance (including use of the Dreyfus novice-to-expert model, as appended to paper [C3](#)) and improved understanding of the idea of a practitioner able to take responsibility for his or her practice.

The standard of assessment was generally reported as good. Some issues were raised by the accreditation committees in respect of assessors' comments that were too vague or unsupported by evidence, or where assessors had apparently failed to identify insufficiencies in the evidence put forward. A more significant problem had arisen where differences between a primary assessor and a candidate in terms of personal style and interpretation appeared to have prevented a fair and balanced assessment from being carried out; in the event, the candidate was offered a second assessment at no additional cost, which was taken up (with a successful result) during the following accreditation cycle.

Some concerns were also expressed by assessors and candidates about the role of the accreditation committees. There was no accreditation committee guidance document, and contrary to intentions a significant minority of committee members had had no briefing on PACR. Greater clarity and further training for committee members were felt to be needed.

### *Documentation and standards*

Some improvements were felt to be needed to the scheme documents to clarify, update and where possible simplify the process. The main concerns involved giving clearer guidance to candidates and assessors, and making the application form clearer to understand and complete.

Specific feedback was received on some areas of the professional standards (see document [C4](#) for details of the standards). In particular:

- There was a debate concerning the emphasis that should be placed on practical conservation, with the majority view being that this should be strengthened and the demonstration of practical proficiency made compulsory. A minority view was that proficiency should be achieved either in conservation treatments or preventive conservation, with a working knowledge of the other.
- The standards for preventive conservation were widely viewed as difficult to apply to the work of the majority of conservators. An accepted interpretation during implementation was that the candidate should be able to give advice in the areas concerned, but did not have to show proficiency in for instance setting up environmental protection. Given this interpretation, no difficulties were caused for any of the candidates applying in 2000.
- The general professional criteria were initially felt by some assessors to be difficult to apply. In practice (i.e. as evidenced by assessors' reports and feedback) they appeared to cause few difficulties although some candidates found them hard to interpret and write statements against.

### *Issues of purpose and coverage*

During the year some pressure was noted for PACR to represent proficiency in the conservation of specific classes of objects, a function it was not designed for. Further confusion was caused by the use of accreditation as an informal register, so that professional bodies were giving out names of accredited conservators according to specialism; this was seen as confusing the function of accreditation with the Conservation Register.

As a related point, one professional body had released a disclaimer expressly stating that it could not guarantee the proficiency of accredited members. This had arisen from confusion about the function of accreditation, and a possibly over-cautious approach to professional indemnity prompted by its solicitor. This statement was eventually withdrawn after it was challenged by members as negating the value of accreditation.

Some debate ensued on the distinction between conservation and restoration, and what was actually meant in PACR. In the UK there is a broadly agreed distinction between conservation, which aims to preserve the integrity of the object while arresting deterioration and in some cases aiding interpretation and display, and restoration, which seeks to take an object back to something approaching its original state, period or functional condition (whether for display or use). Conversely, in some other European countries the function of the *restaurateur* (using the French word) is to undertake conservation treatment, while the *conservateur* acts as a curator or collections care manager. The term 'conservator-restorer,' used by ICOM and ECCO, embodies a conservation ethic rather than a restoration one. This has resulted in an anomaly in NCCR where 'restoration' as used in PACR refers to the work of the *restaurateur*, or at least to restoration being carried out within a conservation ethic, while NCCR itself includes organisations that work at least partly from a restoration ethic. Debate on the coverage of PACR was resolved in favour of conservation rather than restoration alone, agreeing that this needed to be clarified in the documentation.

Finally, concerns from conservation scientists and advisers, along with views from practising conservators that PACR should insist on proficiency in practical conservation, prompted interest in creating a stream for interventive conservation and one or more for preventive specialists, advisers, scientists and conservation managers. This was seen as enabling the practical requirements of the current route to be strengthened, while providing more appropriate pathways for conservation professionals who did not undertake practical conservation treatments.

### *Committee and administrative structures*

Concerns arose during the first year of operation that the PACR organisational structure and administrative arrangements (see figure 1 in chapter 1.1) were inefficient. The lack of a central office to handle administrative functions meant that administration was being taken on by the professional bodies' offices and voluntarily by individual committee members, resulting in duplication of effort and inconsistent messages; parallel with this, lack of clarity about the different responsibilities of NCCR, the PSB and the PACR co-ordination committee was causing communication problems, with the chair of the latter commenting that "decision-making is slow and contentious issues can be bounced between committees and misunderstandings easily arise" (Neville 2001, p6). In particular it was thought that committees could make greater use of email, and there was some support for an employed co-ordinator and to a lesser extent (and more contentiously) a centralised office.

## **Decisions**

My recommendations at the end of the second cycle are presented in paper [B4](#).

One of the first actions that was taken was to revise the documents to improve clarity and consistency, and provide additional guidance on the need to demonstrate current or past proficiency in practical conservation. The CPD review document was also included as part of the application form to ensure that candidates completed it when applying. A new guidance document for accreditation committee members was also produced; as with all PACR documents this was made publicly available, and assessors and candidates encouraged to read it. The revised documents (as included in annex C) were made available in May 2001 for the new round of applications.

It was agreed to look into the possibility of establishing a route for conservation advisers, scientists, managers and others not involved directly in the treatment of objects, and incorporate the findings into the standards review. The review itself was postponed to 2002, although in areas where misunderstandings had occurred further guidance was provided for candidates and assessors.

No changes were made to committee structures, but the former chair of the PACR co-ordination committee was appointed as a part-time co-ordinator for PACR, and funding sought for a training officer to take over and increase the briefings and training sessions that were being carried out by me and by some of the committee members.

## **Outstanding issues**

A number of operational issues were left unresolved at the end of the second cycle, including means of providing individual feedback to assessors, particularly where problems had occurred with assessments, improving scheme administration, and the composition of the accreditation committees.

The UKIC's accreditation committee structure, which for the second cycle comprised a member and a deputy from each of 12 specialist sections, was generally agreed to suffer from difficulties in reaching consensus and problems with non-accredited conservators being included in its membership. A need was also apparent for better communication between committee and assessors.

As noted at the end of the trial, support for would-be candidates was still limited, and although briefings had been held these were limited and partly reliant on external funding. Mentoring and arrangement of contacts with successful candidates was identified as needed for future application rounds.

No progress had been achieved towards convergence between the professional standards and the CHNTO occupational standards, although a number of factors including an impending review of National Training Organisations, new developments within the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and delays to reviewing the PACR standards made this difficult in the short term. It was now generally accepted (including within CHNTO) that the conservation NVQs at levels 4 and 5 had been unsuccessful, and therefore thought likely that continued QCA development funding for conservation standards would rely on a case being made that they were being used in PACR.

Little further work had been done to relate PACR either to qualifications and entry routes in the UK, or to European developments. This was not seen as an immediate priority, other than where individual universities or providers of internships used PACR standards to shape training, although it was identified as an area needing further investigation. I produced a discussion paper relating to this area that was distributed to key people in the conservation community, and later adapted to become paper [A7](#).

## **1.5 Cycle 3: PACR implementation and review 2001-2**

The second round of applications and assessments took place in 2001, with briefings held from January, applications in by 30th June, and assessments complete by the end of December. The third cycle also included preparation for implementing the continuing professional development scheme for accredited conservators.

### **Aims and questions**

The emphasis of the third cycle moved from improving the operation of PACR to getting feedback on initial impact and highlighting areas for future (and more immediate) development. This also fitted with my intention to focus on strategic developments rather than the operation of the scheme. At the end of the cycle, renewed impetus within NCCR led to discussions about the formation of a single conservation institute, as part of which initial moves were put in place to determine the feasibility of a common accreditation framework; this is discussed in chapter 1.6.

The primary aims of the third cycle were:

- To identify any ongoing problems in implementation, and gather incidental feedback on the standards and other issues for later action.
- To make a provisional assessment of the impact of PACR within the profession and on clients, employers and funding bodies.
- ♦ To make recommendations for the future development of PACR.

### **Process**

The main components were:

- Briefing sessions and workshops for potential candidates and on CPD, held in Edinburgh in and Bristol; the candidate sessions attracted 65 potential candidates and the CPD sessions 31 conservators. As previously, these also acted as a source of feedback.
- Assessor training, which I carried out in Edinburgh for a further seven assessors. I also ran a workshop and discussion meeting in London initially intended for new accreditation committee members, but attended by a mix of members from different committees. Again as previously, these meetings were an important source of feedback.
- The application and assessment process. Twenty-two applications were made by the deadline of 30th June, of which 17 progressed to assessment (plus two who were reassessed from the 2000 cycle). Assessments were conducted between September and December, with the accreditation committees sitting in January and February. Fifteen candidates were successful (including the two who were reassessed), one referred, and three applications were rejected.

- A review of the process and its management, consisting of telephone discussions with 14 assessors, and a review meeting of assessors and accreditation committee members held by the PACR Co-ordination Committee in April 2002.
- A survey based on a questionnaire sent to 777 UK and Irish conservators, using contacts from the CoOL (Conservation OnLine) web site, to gauge (a) an indication of the value and benefits of accreditation as perceived by practitioners, (b) non-accredited practitioners' views on applying, and (c) problems and issues that practitioners perceived with PACR.
- A small-scale study in which I contacted 24 key employers and commissioning bodies to gauge their awareness of and level of support for conservation accreditation.

## **Findings and issues raised**

Feedback on PACR and its implementation remained on balance positive, both from within the profession and from external stakeholders. The operation of the framework appeared to progress more smoothly than in the previous round, with fewer misunderstandings and better co-ordination between the different parts of the system. As previously there were some concerns about specific matters of implementation, and issues were also raised about the coverage, positioning and promotion of PACR. The main issues raised are outlined below, and discussed in more detail in papers B5-B8.

### *Operational issues*

Candidate support, at least through formal means (workshops, mentors etc), was still relatively limited, and a minority of candidates did not seem to have understood key messages about preparing for the assessment visit. In two or perhaps three cases misleading advice from sponsors or colleagues who had gone through Fast Track accreditation had contributed to candidates being unprepared for the more rigorous assessment process of PACR. Some candidates had not provided enough evidence of practical proficiency, and as in the previous cycle there was one case of insufficient understanding of the difference in ethos between conservation and restoration.

The standard of assessment was generally reported as good, although weaknesses were still apparent in a minority of assessors' approaches to questioning and recording. On the whole, assessors were more confident about interpreting the professional standards than in the previous year, and the standards being applied in the field appeared more consistent. The demanding nature of the assessment visits was again noted. More negatively, there was evidence that some assessors were tempering their comments because they were visible to the candidate, leading to some being phrased in hints and inferences rather than in a more direct manner.

Weaknesses were noted in the routes for providing feedback, both to assessors on their assessments, and to candidates on reasons for referral or rejection. Some candidates also felt that they should have a means of providing feedback on assessments to a person or body that was independent of the assessment process, rather than being asked to send comments to the accreditation committee.

The working relationship and communications between the accreditation committees and assessors appeared to have improved from the previous cycle. However, a clearer process was requested for giving initial feedback on 'weak' applications, and giving assessors enough time to read applications and discuss points needing further evidence before making their visits. Some support was expressed for a more formal initial assessment, with the possibility of early rejection for weak applications, before proceeding to the assessment visit.

#### *The professional standards*

More detailed feedback was received on the standards in this cycle, and noted for use in the review. In particular, ideas were put forward on how the standards could be adapted to meet the needs of preventive conservators, and more generally how they could be made clearer and areas of overlap eliminated. There was also a suggestion for including an option for commissioning or delegating, managing and evaluating conservation work.

#### *Continuing professional development*

An 'uninformed' view among practitioners was still apparent, i.e. that CPD involved attending conferences and training events, and some effort appeared needed to persuade people that it was broader in scope. As in the trials there was a strong feeling against prescriptive approaches to CPD, and some hostility was encountered from practitioners who saw CPD as intrusive or a form of monitoring. On the other hand, a minority disliked the more open and self-managed approach that was advocated through PACR because it required reflection rather than simply recording. Overall, the balance of opinion was strongly in favour of a flexible, self-managed approach, and practitioners wanted a supportive approach to implementation; it was thought far too early in the development of the profession to consider sanctions, other than perhaps in the case of practitioners who persistently failed to complete reviews (see short paper [B5](#)).

#### *Issues of purpose and coverage*

Subject to minor changes to the standards, PACR as it was being applied was generally agreed to fit the role of the interventive conservator, but exclude preventive / collections care specialists, conservation managers and advisers who did not undertake work directly on objects, and conservation scientists. The requirement in PACR to undertake conservation according to the ECCO ethic, rather than purely restoration, was agreed; however, there was some uneasiness about how the ECCO guidelines applied to areas such as technology conservation, where an ethic was frequently followed of repair to working standard using period materials and techniques.

Reflecting comments in the previous cycle, the lack of a route for preventive conservators and collections care managers was criticised by several practitioners and stakeholders, including major national organisations whose employed conservators generally do not work directly on objects. This was seen as preventing PACR from representing the profession as a whole, and affecting its credibility particularly in not reflecting the emerging occupation of collections care management. Discussions indicated that the bulk of the professional standards were applicable across the profession, but some adjustments were needed in the areas of conservation treatment and preventive conservation to provide options appropriate for preventive and collections care roles.

The purpose and positioning of accreditation was not entirely clear to all stakeholders. There was still some confusion between accreditation and the Conservation Register, though probably to a lesser extent than had been the case a year previously, and other inaccurate perceptions were apparent ranging from expectations that accreditation would state specifically what kind of objects a conservator was qualified to work on, through to a view that accreditation was an alternative to an academic qualification. The positioning of PACR in relation to professional training and academic qualifications was also not always well understood either by potential candidates or by external stakeholders, and appeared in need of clarification.

Finally, the issue of a conservation technician qualification was raised by some stakeholders. In outline, their argument was that not all practitioners in conservation would be working at the level represented by PACR, or would aspire to becoming professional conservators; acknowledgement of a technician grade (as for instance in engineering and architecture) would open the route to recognising an appropriate qualification, perhaps at or equivalent to N/SVQ level 3, for people who undertook routine conservation tasks in support of professional conservators or to maintain the basic condition of objects.

#### *Practitioners' views of PACR*

The practitioner survey (see paper [B7](#)) suggested a fairly high level of support for accreditation from practitioners, with a majority of respondents seeing it as beneficial at least at a general level (e.g. in raising the profile and status of the profession) even if not as yet in more specific terms. There was a minority view that was critical or at best ambivalent, with doubts about the benefits or credibility of accreditation particularly in relation to the cost and effort required to become accredited. In some cases negative perceptions and criticisms stemmed from perceptions about the way the fast-track routes had been administered. While the practitioner survey yielded a variety of views from the highly positive to the highly negative, it needs to be treated with caution due to the problem of selective non-response - e.g. the possibility of the non-respondents including a disproportionate number of ambivalent or negative conservators.

#### *External stakeholders*

Contact with employers, commissioners and funders of conservators (see paper [B6](#)) indicated a reasonable level of awareness of accreditation, particularly among larger organisations and institutions, though also a moderate level of confusion about what it represents. Limited use was apparent in recruitment as a 'desirable but not essential' attribute for senior staff, and slightly more use in selecting conservators for contract work, awarding grants and directing enquiries. Some influential organisations, such as the National Trust, English Heritage and Historic Scotland, were highly supportive and their positive approach appeared likely to be a significant factor in increasing both support for accreditation from employers and demand from within the profession.

There appeared to be a good level of support from employers for staff to gain accreditation, although this translated into paying all the costs in under a third of the organisations contacted. There were some reports of employers paying for established professional qualifications in other fields, but not funding conservation accreditation.

Overall, it was apparent that the promotion of PACR outside the profession had been largely left to word of mouth, principally relying on accredited conservators and other 'champions' to convey the message. Coupled with lack of clarity about positioning as discussed above, this appeared to be resulting in patchy levels of knowledge and support, and a degree of confusion.

### **Decisions and outstanding issues**

Some minor operational changes were planned for the 2002 cycle. These principally consisted of providing additional candidate and CPD 'clinics', and improving the briefing of new accreditation committee members through a period of shadowing. It was also intended to improve assessor training and updating through additional training materials. However, the issue of individual feedback to assessors was unresolved beyond a decision to use the secondary assessor role and appropriate pairings more deliberately to assist new assessors and those who had experienced problems. Further discussion of operational issues is included in sections 5-7 of paper [B8](#).

Improvements to feedback to and from candidates were agreed as being needed, with a tentative decision to look at ways of improving feedback about assessment decisions, and a firmer one to provide a route for candidates to comment on the process that was independent of people involved in assessment. It was intended to notify a more formal route to candidates in the future, probably using the PACR co-ordinator or future training officer.

Finally in terms of agreed developments, a review of the professional standards was agreed for 2002-3, to include urgent attention to the need for a route for preventive conservators and collections care specialists. In practice this is likely to run parallel with the development of a common standards framework as discussed in the next chapter and paper [B9](#).

The positioning and promotion of PACR were also acknowledged as needing attention, but no decisions were made by the end of the third cycle, again partly because of the developments described in the next chapter.

## 1.6 Towards a common accreditation framework

As described in chapters 1.1 and 1.3 there was some disappointment that the development of PACR, backed by the Conservation Forum and later NCCR, did not result in a common accreditation framework across the whole of the conservation profession. The Joint Accreditation Group was partly a response to the failure of the Conservation Forum bodies as a whole to reach agreement on accreditation, and its approach was necessarily to drive ahead and develop a scheme acceptable to its three members, arguably the three most influential UK conservation associations. Nevertheless, there was some anticipation that other organisations would become PACR accrediting bodies once the scheme was established; so far, there has been ongoing but unrequited interest from SSCR, and BSMGP closed its accreditation scheme in 2000 in favour of members gaining access to PACR via UKIC. Some features of PACR were also incorporated into the BAPCR (formerly ABPR) accreditation system during its revision in 2001, and less formally into ICHAWI accreditation.

During 2002 NCCR was given new impetus by the desire among member bodies for a more coherent conservation profession, and the appointment of a new chair (Carole Milner, formerly of the Museums & Galleries Commission and previously a paintings conservator and restorer in private practice). A meeting was held in March 2002 to discuss ways forward, and one of its main outcomes was a commitment to exploring the possibility of setting up a new unitary conservation institute. One of the areas identified for early attention was the feasibility of a common accreditation system.

### Process and objectives

Following discussion with the chair of NCCR, I agreed to take on a short exploratory assignment initially in a voluntary capacity to act as a co-ordinator and 'honest broker' to identify issues and propose an action plan to work towards a common system. In brief this involved discussion with representatives of the 'non-PACR' accrediting bodies within NCCR (BAFRA, BAPCR and ICHAWI, and later the British Horological Institute, BHI); assembling comparative information on the five accreditation systems; leading a focus meeting on 22nd May 2002; and producing a short report outlining a way forward (paper [B9](#)).

Previous discussions had indicated two or possibly three key areas that had led to PACR being an unacceptable substitute particularly for the BAFRA and BAPCR systems, and potentially also for BHI. These were:

- (a) The use of the BAFRA system in particular to serve the purpose of a trade register as well as a professional qualification. BAFRA accreditation was only open to business principals, and included assessment of business practice and studio facilities as well as practical proficiency and professionalism of approach.
- (b) The discipline-specific nature of the BAFRA and BAPCR systems, lending themselves to more detailed assessment criteria, versus the necessarily generic criteria needed in PACR to cover a wide range of conservation specialisms.

- (c) Potentially at least, differences in approach between restoration and conservation (although in theory all three bodies accepted the principle of restoration being carried out within a conservation ethic).

Given the potential for disagreement around the operational detail and assessment standards of current systems, the focus of discussion needed to concentrate on common ground between different associations, and seeking higher-level principles where there were major differences. My specific objectives for the exploratory phase were to:

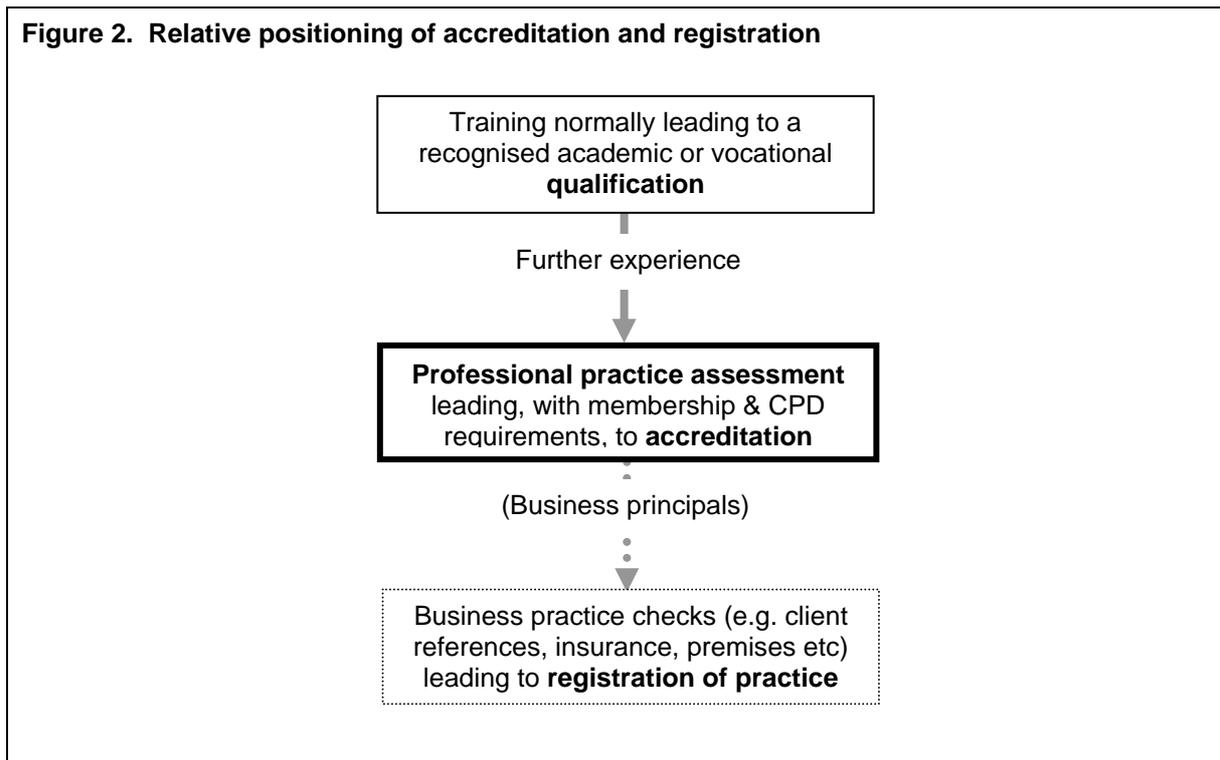
- Reach agreement on an accurate representation of the current accreditation systems.
- Identify the main things that the conservation / restoration community needs to achieve through its accreditation framework (including any requirements specific to particular parts of the community).
- Develop the basis of a specification for meeting these needs, along with an action plan for achieving it within a timescale acceptable to NCCR and the member bodies.

### **Discussion points**

The exploratory meeting and associated work was able to agree on key points of difference between current systems, and reach agreement on requirements for a common framework and actions to meet them (see paper [B9](#)). A framework rather than a system was emphasised partly to enable the individual bodies to retain control of their schemes pending the results of discussions on a single institute, and partly because it was recognised that seeking commonality of operational detail would be a step too far too soon. A common framework was seen as being able to support a single public-facing designation such as 'accredited conservator-restorer' with broadly comparable standards across the different conservation specialisms, while allowing the accrediting bodies to gain confidence in each other's schemes and grow towards a unified system. It was particularly positive given the profession's history of fragmentation that this was embraced regardless of whether or not a single institute should be formed.

Key areas of discussion included the relative functions of accreditation and registration; the coverage of the framework; professional standards; assessment systems; and cost structures. The distinction between accreditation and registration was not made in all of the participating bodies, and as previously noted in BAFRA a single system performed both functions. Agreement was reached to make a distinction between personal professional qualification and registration as a practice or a business principal, even if some schemes would provide an assessment for both where it was relevant; figure 2 summarises the relationship. Similarly, there was prompt agreement on coverage spanning collections care managers and preventive advisers to 'hands-on' restorers, provided the latter worked from a conservation ethic. While this has been surprisingly straightforward to agree, it has not provided a great deal of practical help on where the boundary falls between a professional conservator-restorer and a craft repairer-restorer.

**Figure 2. Relative positioning of accreditation and registration**



The main tension relating to the professional standards concerned the stronger emphasis given to practical skills in the BAFRA and BAPCR schemes, compared with a fairly general statement in PACR. Discussion suggested that this did not mean that less stringent practical standards were being applied in PACR, but they were not made explicit and more was left to the interpretation of assessors. A debate in PACR whether to develop discipline-specific checklists was recalled. This issue was eventually resolved in favour of enabling specialisms to retain detailed criteria if they wished, without making them a requirement across the profession. This solution appears pragmatically sensible in that it enables a common standard to be agreed while also meeting specialist needs and retaining the confidence of communities who wish to retain detailed criteria.

It was agreed as being too early to bring together the different assessment systems, although some common principles and practices were identified that could be applied to all. Common assessment standards and ideally practices were seen as a fairly high priority to achieve initially through benchmarking and guidance, with later extension into common assessor training and a single pool of assessors. The next stage would logically be a common approach to assessment, bringing the framework schemes much closer to a single accreditation system.

Finally, a wide discrepancy in fees and to a lesser extent membership costs was noted, partly due to the fact that in PACR assessors were paid while in the other schemes they were voluntary (the situation in PACR was largely at the request of potential candidates, who wanted assessment to be done on a professional basis with assessors contracted to their professional body). The specialist schemes and PACR would be in competition probably until a common system was agreed, as candidates would continue to make judgements in terms of cost, perceived ease of achievement, and likely benefits; this would be unlikely to be resolved within a common framework until cost structures and assessment processes had been harmonised.

## **The common framework**

The exploratory discussions resulted in a basic specification for a common framework, and a proposal to put it into operation by spring 2003. In association with this I was asked to produce a proposal for facilitating the development of the framework. The framework specification can be thought of in two parts, a relatively straightforward statement of principles and more detailed work on standards and practices. An initial framework document, with a target date of September 2002, will cover:

- A common designation (such as ACR) in addition to membership designations, with recognition of previous accreditation by the participating bodies
- Confirmation that the framework is concerned with personal accreditation (professional proficiency and basic professional management), while allowing participating bodies to add on an assessment of business practice and studio examination where it is desired to cover registration at the same time
- A statement of coverage, i.e. the conservation-restoration profession as defined by the conservation ethic and possibly a statement about level of practice
- Possibly entry recommendations or minimum standards in terms of length and level of experience
- Essential requirements for codes of practice and ethics, and continuing professional development
- Principles of assessment - such as fairness, transparency, validity, robustness and the presence of systems and practices to ensure that these are adhered to in practice.

The work on standards and practices aims to produce two main operating documents. One is a professional standards framework, expressing at an outline level what needs to be achieved by all accreditation candidates (with the possibility of different emphases, or a 'core-and-options' structure, to accommodate for instance the difference between interventive and preventive conservation, for instance as illustrated in table 1 at the end of chapter 1.7). The other is a joint accord on assessment, setting out agreed means of working towards common standards and practices.

Alongside these developments I recommended a change to the accreditation committee structure within NCCR, so that what is currently the Professional Standards Board (see figure 1 in chapter 1.1) becomes a standards council for the common accreditation framework, and its specific responsibilities for PACR are transferred to the PACR co-ordination committee. This change will also streamline the management of PACR and go some way to meeting earlier criticisms about the duplication of committees.

## **The current situation**

At present there is a strong nucleus of support for a common accreditation framework, and potentially for a common institute, from within the PACR bodies, BAPCR, SSCR and the two Irish associations. These organisations share a similar conservation ethos, and any differences about common working are likely to be at an operational level. A common institute, or closer working between the present bodies, is also likely to be supported in principle by the photographic materials and natural science conservation groups, as well as the preventive and collections care fora. Whether BAFRA and BHI will maintain wholehearted support for movements in this direction remains to be seen, as they

operate to some extent as trade organisations and may find that they lie partly outside the emerging definition of the conservation-restoration profession; of the groups involved in the 22nd May meeting they expressed the greatest reservations about moving towards a PACR-type accreditation system. A major issue for both these organisations is access to the Conservation Register for their members, and this could be resolved without a need to join the common accreditation framework.

While there are no organisational barriers to a common accreditation framework, a single institute would present problems for BHI and SoA because only part of their membership work in conservation, and potentially for ICHAWI and IPCRA because they span both Eire (where the majority of the membership is located) and Northern Ireland. The SoA has a Preservation and Conservation Group as distinct from the main body of archivist members, while within BHI a proportion - thought to be a minority - of members undertake conservation or restoration work, but are not distinguished by belonging to any particular group. Both cases suggest either an affiliate arrangement, or risk a situation where archive and clock conservators may feel obliged to join (or choose between) two organisations.

Regarding the Irish dimension, in principle there is no reason why the posited single institute could not be a British and Irish body. While only a minority of professional bodies cross the border, the reasons for not doing so are generally historic or administrative (e.g. different legislation and practices affecting accountants, lawyers, surveyors and so forth) rather than political. An essential criterion for a British and Irish institute would be the maintenance of national identities within the new body, something that is also an issue with Scottish members. A favoured model that would meet this need involves members being able to choose national or regional, specialism-based and other special interest groupings within the single body, so that for instance one member might elect to join the Scottish, paintings and private practice groups, and another the Southern England, ethnographic, and collections care groups and the group for prospective accreditation candidates.

## 1.7 Implications and issues for conservation

The development of PACR has accelerated the need to come to a clearer definition of conservation as a profession, and improve its coherence in the eyes of the public. It has also brought to the fore a number of further issues concerning both the wider profession and matters of implementation. This chapter summarises issues current for the profession and for PACR as at the end of May 2002, outlining key conclusions, learning points and questions that can be drawn from experiences up to this point.

Further discussion of some of the issues outlined is provided in the articles in annex A, particularly in papers [A2](#), [A5](#), [A7](#) and [A8](#), and in my final report on PACR, paper [B8](#).

### The nature of the profession

The conservation profession can currently be described as not particularly well-defined, in that there are significant grey areas both in terms of level-related roles (e.g. the conservation technicians issue) and boundaries with related activities (e.g. restoration, conservation-related craft work, conservation-related science, and the work of conservation architects and other buildings professionals). Within the core of the profession itself it appears that practitioners' understanding of conservation roles and specialisms different from their own is not always good, as illustrated for example by the lack of attention given to preventive specialists during the development of PACR. Though conservation is frequently described as a naturally conservative profession, it is nevertheless undergoing change particularly in the way that roles are organised and the care of historic and artistic works funded, and new roles - such as that of the collections care manager - are emerging. This dynamic is not always appreciated across the profession, and there can be a tendency on the one hand for academically well-qualified or managerially-oriented conservators to fail to recognise the significance of craft skills and artistry in other parts of the profession, and on the other for more practical conservators and restorers to be critical of preventive specialists who do not have 'hands-on' experience.

Particularly given recent moves to work towards a more coherent conservation community and potentially a single professional body, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed if the profession is on the one hand to be sufficiently inclusive, and on the other to be clear enough about its boundaries to enable associated professions or communities to emerge as distinct. Issues currently facing the conservation community in terms of definition and positioning include the following:

Providing adequate recognition for the growing community of preventive conservators, preservation specialists and collections care managers. This includes recognition that preventive conservation or collections care will form the academic training and primary career of many conservators who enter the profession in the future. As a consequence the assumption that all conservators work in an object-based specialism (cf the UKIC specialist sections) and achieve proficiency in restoration or interventive conservation before moving on to advisory or managerial work is not tenable. Recently, NCCR has accepted that preventive and collections care specialists are an integral part of the

profession, and future developments are likely to see them included on an equal basis in new membership and accreditation structures.

Differentiating professional conservation, as defined for instance by the PACR standards or ICOM-CC, from conservation work that is too limited in scope to qualify as being of full professional level. This principally concerns the issue of conservation technicians, who have in many respects been ignored in a dominant view that sees all conservators as full professionals, or potential professionals. While the technician status and salaries afforded to professional conservators by some (particularly smaller) institutions is rightly being challenged, this should not prevent recognition that there are practitioners in conservation who perform necessary functions at what might be considered technician level. While some of these may wish to progress to becoming professional conservators, this cannot be used as a reason to hide the presence of conservation technicians or craft restorers.

Clarifying the relationship between conservation and restoration. Both the revised ECCO definition of restoration (ECCO 2002) and emerging agreement in NCCR indicate that the conservation-restoration profession includes restorers who are knowledgeable about conservation principles and adopt a conservation ethic in their work. However, this may not be enough to clarify the boundary between craft repairers and restorers and conservator-restorers, and it is unclear whether the ECCO definition encompasses accepted approaches to restoration in the engineering and technology sectors. It is likely that the boundaries of the profession in this area need to be worked out in practice as much as through professional standards and definitions.

Finally, there is a question of other professions and crafts where some practitioners specialise in conservation-based work. This includes a wide range of craft occupations from metalwork and carving to thatching and stonemasonry, as well as professions such as architecture, surveying and the sciences. A clearer notion of the boundaries of the conservation profession may assist in locating these people as conservation specialists within their own crafts and professions, rather than as quasi-conservators. In this respect a distinction may usefully be made between the conservation *profession* and the wider conservation *community*.

### **The role of professional practice assessment**

Both the development of PACR and the initial comparison of accreditation systems used within NCCR indicate that professional practice assessment in conservation is being expected to fulfil a number of roles. On the one hand ACR status is being regarded as a stand-alone professional membership qualification, particularly by otherwise unqualified practitioners. On the other, a more widely-held view appears to be that it is a confirmation of practical and professional ability that is taken some time after initial training, serving as what in a fully regulated profession would be final assessment before registration or licence to practise; while there are some differences in function between PACR and the professional practice examination in architecture or surveying, the analogy is a useful one in this context.

As described in chapter 1.6, BAFRA and BHI accreditation also involve approval of the practitioner's studio or business, and in the other schemes the distinction is not universally understood between practice registration and personal accreditation (or qualification). The view among the PACR validating bodies has moved towards seeing accreditation as a professional practice qualification, with the trade registration function being operated separately but requiring accreditation as a

prerequisite (both in the form of the Conservation Register, and IPC's registration scheme where ACRs who undertake private work can have their details passed to enquirers). This lack of clarity about purpose has undoubtedly hampered the promotion of professional accreditation, although it appears to be moving towards resolution in the development of the common accreditation framework.

In the longer term, the possibility of conservation becoming a more formal, possibly chartered, profession needs to be considered. Both in putting forward a case for external recognition and in establishing parity with professions such as architecture and museums management, it will be helpful for conservators to clarify any necessary academic foundation to their profession, as well as maintaining a robust and explicit gateway operated by the professional association(s). Allied to the increasing tendency for conservation to be a graduate profession, this supports the view of accreditation (possibly with another name such as professional practice assessment) as a post-graduate, post-experience final entry-gate to being regarded as a professional conservator. This doesn't rule out non-graduate 'exceptional' entry routes, but it does provide a benchmark for the academic standards expected in the profession, in agreement with current directions across Europe.

Alongside this, as discussed in paper [A8](#) it is likely that the professional organisation(s) will need to have greater involvement with educational institutions and influence in the development of courses. It may be feasible to develop course validation procedures, but the experiences of other professions in this area suggests that while universities are generally happy to collaborate with the practitioner community, this does not always extend to accepting an approvals procedure even in well-established professions such as architecture and surveying; less formal arrangements including the presence of practitioners on course committees may be more constructive. Part of this role will also need to extend to encouraging the provision of appropriate routes for experienced practitioners and mature entrants, for instance based on accreditation of prior learning, work-based learning and part-time provision.

### **Professional standards and criteria**

The professional standards used in PACR were not well-researched, and were adapted from pre-existing sources with my input from a qualifications and assessment perspective, and the input of the JAG committee from a conservation perspective. In some respects they have been the least satisfactory component of PACR, although ways have been found to work around the problems that have been encountered. As outlined previously some flaws came to light during the second and third cycles of the project, both in terms of detail but more critically in the assumptions that the standards make about practitioner roles.

Further standards development - whether within PACR as at present or in a common framework - could take one of perhaps two approaches. The more costly but thorough option, arguably what was needed at the outset, is to carry out primary research into what conservators actually do and the things that are critical to professionalism and quality - both from practitioners' perspectives and those of other informed stakeholders in the conservation process. This inductive approach has the advantage of enabling the standards to match better with real conservation roles, and focus on critical aspects of practice rather than factors that are assumed to be important at focus meetings. If existing standards are put aside during this exercise it also enables practice and roles to be looked at anew, without research participants being steered by current representations as would happen in a

consultation exercise. On the other hand, it can be argued that much of the intelligence needed has already been gathered from the accreditation cycles, and coupled with input from practitioners familiar with PACR and the other accreditation systems (and from volunteers from the preventive and collections care fields) this will enable a much more acceptable and usable set of standards to be produced. In effect this parallels what has taken place with many occupational (NVQ) standards: while early examples of development sometimes appeared to pay little heed to the realities of practice, subsequent reviews have been able to draw on implementation experience and create more usable sets of criteria. The downside of this second approach is that it can be less easy to break free of the structure set by the existing framework.

The discussions around a common accreditation framework have suggested a need, initially at least, for a common standards framework that can be fleshed out by the accrediting bodies (or practitioner communities, in a single institute) to meet their specific needs. This is likely to provide an opportunity to step back from the level of detail currently used in PACR, and separate out general standards from detailed assessment criteria. It should also lead to a more practical discussion around the level of comparability that is actually needed, and where this is best achieved through specifications and where best through developing common understandings among assessors and more widely in the professional community. A summary of a possible standards framework is given in table 1 at the end of this chapter.

### **Assessment strategies**

The approach to assessment taken in PACR has several positive features, including the relatively small amount of unproductive work it places on candidates, its validity for assessing products of work, and its potential robustness particularly in the sense that it would be extremely difficult for a candidate who is not proficient to bluff his or her way past the assessors. As described in paper [A4](#) there are advantages over the portfolio-based approach that is widely used for NVQs, particularly in terms of speed, validity and effectiveness. Nevertheless, the three sets of PACR assessments that have taken place to date indicate that there is room for improvement, particularly in simplifying the process; the imminent extension of the accreditation framework to preventive and managerial conservators also suggests that there may be merit in using a wider range of assessment methodologies. In particular, there are likely to be benefits from altering the emphasis in the application document so that candidates are asked to focus on work activities and projects, and see the professional standards simply as assessment criteria rather than using them to shape the application.

Robustness is particularly important in practice-based assessment. A robust assessment decision makes a confident and trustworthy statement about what the candidate knows or can do. This requires clarity about what is being assessed, validity of assessment criteria and methods, and consistency of application. PACR appears reasonably strong in all these areas, although there have been some queries about consistency particularly in the early assessments. In a one-off site-based assessment the quality of the assessors' judgement is more critical compared with portfolio-based systems where the primary assessor makes several judgements over a period, and the candidate has time to present new evidence and make up for deficiencies. Effective assessment in the situation represented by PACR requires assessors to be highly competent and professional under pressure; it also requires an effective quality assurance and moderation system.

In practice, one of the main keys to consistent and fair assessment is that assessors apply common standards and interpretations, and these are communicated clearly to candidates. Experience to date suggests that standards are emerging in practice through discussion and agreement between the assessors, and as they gain more experience they feel less need for additional criteria or written information to guide their judgement. This broadly agrees with experience in other work-based assessment contexts (see for instance Wolf 1993 and Winter & Maisch 1996), and points to the importance of means for enabling assessors to share experiences and reflections as a community of common practice. Given the national organisation of conservation assessment, this creates more challenges than in most educational institutions or NVQ centres, but it may be overcome by various means such as electronic discussion groups, an annual review as at present, and specific benchmarking exercises to compare assessment standards within and between conservation disciplines.

This issue of practical consistency also applies to accreditation committees. In PACR, the role of the committee evolved from the need to separate out accreditation decisions from the assessment process, and provide a moderation function. As has been described this critical role was not handled as well as it could have been in the initial stages of implementation, and dialogue and exchange between assessors and accreditors will be critical to ensuring that the system operates smoothly and does not contain surprises for candidates.

There is no facility for physically monitoring assessments in PACR, and assessors are not themselves assessed as they would be in the NVQ system. In Ireland, ICHAWI accreditation includes three assessors as a matter of course, one being an 'external' from outside ICHAWI (usually from mainland UK). While the costs of additional personnel need to be considered carefully, a monitoring system is likely to have benefits both in inducting new assessors and maintaining an occasional check on established assessors, particularly if problems are reported. As the framework becomes more established it may be appropriate to revisit the question of assessor qualifications and agree a common standard similar to the 'D-units' taken by NVQ assessors, possibly with external validation.

## **Candidate support**

At present, PACR (along with the other conservation accreditation systems) stands separate from the initial education and training of conservators, added to which some candidates are long out of their initial development. Along with the potentially unfamiliar nature of the scheme this means that appropriate induction and support are proving critical in helping candidates prepare for assessment. Recent experience suggests this is hindered by the relatively small number of conservators who have qualified through PACR, took part in the trial, or are assessors, compared with a much larger number who experienced the fast-track procedures and may have limited or inaccurate knowledge of how accreditation now works.

At least three factors point to a mentoring system as being the most suitable way forward to improve candidate support. The geographical spread of PACR and relatively small number of candidates makes it difficult for all potential applicants to get to workshops, and in any case these can only be expected to answer initial queries or explain the scheme; more practical queries are likely to arise as the application is completed or assessment visit approaches. Candidates may also have little or no contact with other potential or recent candidates, although this might be improved through a voluntary

distance network. Finally, the one-off nature of the assessment means that the assessor cannot also act as the candidate's adviser, as happens in higher education and often also with NVQs. As the number of practitioners accredited through PACR increases, it will become more feasible to introduce formal mentoring. Similarly, a wider pool of assessors will enable some assessors to act as mentors with less risk that a critical assessor becomes unavailable to take on an assessment because he or she has been guiding the candidate.

In the longer term and as professional accreditation exerts more influence on conservation students and early-career interns, preparation for PACR might usefully be seen as starting with practical training within conservation courses and extending through a more structured way in internships and through a continuing mentoring relationship into the early stages of more independent practice. As in many established professions, in this scenario the professional standards will form a benchmark that would-be practitioners will become aware of through university or college, and view as the standard for achievement at the end of the initial development period. While this ambition is frustrated by the shortage of good internships and training posts, echoing to an extent Jagger & Aston (1999), it is likely to be profitable if pursued through persuading employers and funders of training to agree to a basic set of standards for interns and other conservators at the start of their careers.

Returning to practical concerns, more effective ways might be sought of assisting candidates to self-assess relative to the professional standards. Simply providing would-be applicants with a set of PACR criteria does not appear particularly effective, both because of the problem of the standard that actually applies in practice, and the somewhat abstract language used. The Dreyfus novice-to-expert model (Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1984) has been well-received by potential candidates as it moves attention from 'yes / no' decisions to considering levels of practical ability. More work might usefully be directed towards developing a tool to help candidates self-assess against the standards, and to get unbiased feedback from colleagues.

## **Continuing professional development**

As previously described and outlined in paper [A2](#) and document [C5](#), the profession has taken an approach to CPD where practitioners manage their own development and may be asked for a review at intervals. It has also taken a brave and perhaps questionable decision in asking all accredited members to submit CPD reviews in a single year; although events about CPD have been held for at least the last four years, evidence suggests that the idea of self-managed continuing development cannot really be said to have permeated through the conservation community. Informal discussions as well as the workshops in 2001 (paper [B5](#)) indicate that many think of CPD as primarily about attending courses and other 'formal' learning activities, and there is some resistance to the reviews as impositional. In the light of this, the CPD recall may be effective in getting the message across to members and enable appropriate advice and support to be given, although it also runs the risk of creating alienation.

While the conservation associations' CPD policy is clear in not being course- or event-based, courses, seminars and other events nevertheless do play an important part in the ongoing development of many conservators. New practical techniques may be difficult to acquire other than through practical demonstration and training, and many practitioners value the exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas that occurs at physical gatherings. While there are fairly frequent

events in large communities of practice such as London and Edinburgh, as well as at some teaching institutions, the small size and fragmented nature of the profession makes regional events difficult to organise. A single institute or more collaborative approach between the various conservation and restoration bodies may improve this situation to an extent, although the number of specialisms in conservation make it less easy to tackle than in similar-sized but less diverse professions.

The issue of continuing development supported by qualifications is raised in paper [A7](#). At present, few conservators appear to be taking further qualifications beyond their initial training, although there is a small enrolment on research degrees in the major institutions and a small amount of activity based around awards in fields related to career progression, such as heritage or general management. Opportunities for future developments appear to be in two main areas: providing non-graduate practitioners with a means of gaining a degree-level or postgraduate qualification in conservation, either based largely on existing knowledge and skills or as a means of further development (e.g. from studio-based training or awards such as HNDs), and providing experienced conservators with a flexible vehicle to assist development in an area of interest or career progression. The first requires more innovative approaches on behalf of the universities involved in conservation, possibly in partnership with practitioners and employers, to develop ways of accrediting existing knowledge and competence and offer development routes alongside work. The latter is arguably already available in the form of negotiated work-based learning awards, but it will require the involvement of conservators (and others such as art historians and conservation scientists) as tutors or mentors to support projects in specialist conservation fields.

## **The future**

Conservation is currently at a critical stage of development in that it has progressed some way along the route of establishing itself as a profession, but still has some essential and in some places heart-searching work to do in order to achieve the kind of credibility and coherence that is being sought. The present state of fragmentation is hardly tenable, and while there may be good reasons for a minority of conservation and restoration bodies to remain independent, the need either for a single conservation institute or at the minimum for a single public-facing organisation is paramount.

In defining itself as a profession that is understandable to its stakeholders, conservation will face some difficult choices about where to draw its boundaries. At present the groups with potentially the most to lose are not the larger conservation bodies, but small specialist organisations such as BAFRA and possibly BAPCR that have established a strong niche presence in their particular markets. The solution that is adopted needs to avoid undermining these relationships, while not allowing them to hold back developments or detract from the good of the profession as a whole. In resolving this issue, the profession needs to avoid setting its boundaries so tight that it excludes good practitioners for instance because they don't have academic credentials, but at the same time avoid attempting to accommodate without distinction a loose coalition of technicians, craftspeople, scientists, restorers, conservators and managers in such a way that it loses any chance of being regarded as a credible profession. Whatever definition is chosen, some groups will find themselves on the outside, and this should be acknowledged and stated publicly so that they can retain or find appropriate groupings for their specialisms; this distinction between *community* and *profession* is positive and should allow different groups to emerge on equal terms and in ways that are intelligible to laypeople.

While the current consensus on a common accreditation framework is highly positive, this must evolve into a common system if the vision of a coherent profession is to emerge. This does not mean a 'one size fits all' set of criteria and assessment processes, but a single entry-point and set of administrative procedures and governing practices within which there may be different options (such as conservation-restoration treatment, preventive conservation and collections care) and possibly different levels (such as technician and full professional).

As previously discussed the profession will also need to take a more active role in courses and entry-routes now that the majority of new conservators are entering through higher education. A clearer pattern of qualifications and means of gaining early-career experience needs to emerge, and while resourcing suggests this may only happen slowly, there is room to develop preferred or recommended models and use them to influence the employment market. The danger of narrowing entry-routes needs to be addressed, and parallel or integrated routes (see paper [A7](#)) developed alongside the more conventional sequential routes. While it is gradually becoming accepted that the conservator qualifying in the 21st century will need to be both a graduate and professionally accredited, a diversity of routes are needed for attaining both qualifications.

In terms of practitioners' ongoing development, the profession needs to move to a situation where ongoing development is endemic across the great majority of practitioners, rather than seen as a separate activity called 'CPD.' This suggests a more facilitative approach to development that provides added value to practitioners, rather than merely monitoring self-managed processes. The profession will need to retain a right of monitoring, but it should become a fall-back position rather than the main driving-force for development activity. It is likely that regional and specialist networks, mentors, courses and conferences, electronic resources and award-bearing programmes will all have a part to play in this process.

Finally, while current moves towards a single institute are welcome, the profession will need to continue its development beyond this into playing a more open and active role in the wider conservation and cultural heritage communities. Future developments that need to be explored include an alliance of professions across the heritage sector, and a standing conference of heritage organisations, including the major public and voluntary agencies in addition to the professional associations. The infrastructure for an international conservation community is already fairly well-developed, and assuming the single institute does come into being it will need to take an active role in the development of this community. The conservation profession in the UK and Ireland has made some quite significant advances in the last five years, and once it has agreed a more coherent mode of organising it will be in a strong position to enter into a constructive dialogue with the relevant communities nationally, in Europe and internationally.

**Table 1. Possible common framework for professional standards in conservation-restoration.**

Assessment of objects and collections	Conservation plans and strategies	Conservation-restoration treatments	Preventive measures	Organisation and management	CPD and learning from practice	Professional judgement	Ethics and values	Communication
<i>CCM</i> report on collection / groups of objects (condition, needs, priorities)	<i>CCM</i> strategy and plan for collection	<i>CCM</i> evaluate work	<i>CCM</i> overall monitoring of collection	<i>All</i> manage workflow, time, projects; manage health & safety	<i>All</i> self-managed CPD to ensure good practice; investigation prior to new treatments or projects; reflection and learning from work; disseminating knowledge	<i>All</i> general conservation principles; depth of understanding of areas of own practice; critical thinking, analysis, solutions; limits of own abilities	<i>All</i> common C-R ethics; legal obligations; responsibility to objects; responsibility to employer / clients / colleagues; respect for cultural & historic context; handling value-conflicts	<i>All</i> written records and reports; communicating conservation principles to lay & expert audiences
<i>PC</i> report on object (condition, environmental requirements, essential treatment)	<i>PC</i> plan for object or collection	<i>PC</i> none	<i>PC</i> recommend / set up and monitor; advise on care; advise on access, handling and transport	<i>Plus either</i> organisational or contracting procedures  <i>Or</i> commissioning procedures				
<i>C-R</i> report on object (condition and options for treatments)	<i>C-R</i> plan for object	<i>C-R</i> practical treatment, records and reporting (skills as required by specialism, observation of conservation ethic)	<i>C-R</i> advise on aftercare; advise on or prepare for handling & transport					

CCM = collections care manager, PC = preventive conservator, C-R = conservator-restorer

## 1.8 Learning points: professions and qualifications

The PACR project and associated professionalisation process has raised some issues that are relevant to other occupations that are in the process of professionalising or setting up (or reviewing) qualifying frameworks, as well as to the design of competence- or practice-based qualifications. This chapter briefly examines some of the points emerging from the PACR project in the areas of professionalisation and professional accreditation, continuing professional development, and qualifications. Relevant issues are also discussed in papers [A5](#) and [A8](#) (professionalisation and accreditation), [A2](#) (CPD), and [A4](#), [A6](#) and [A7](#) (qualifications).

### Becoming a qualifying profession

Although the context of conservation and its accreditation and professionalisation project are idiosyncratic in some respects, most obviously in the number of specialisms and associations present in the field, there are several areas where PACR and the wider professionalisation process offer learning points relevant to other occupational groups.

#### *Accreditation*

The PACR project is an example of a small and relatively poorly resourced profession establishing a credible qualifying process that is expected to have a significant impact as it gains momentum. It has been able to do this relatively quickly and efficiently because of several factors, few or none of which are peculiar to conservation:

- The method of accreditation chosen sits at a point of leverage where a qualifying process can be operated relatively simply by practitioner associations without recourse to external bodies or institutions, and without the expense or resources required to set up educational programmes. As a professional practice assessment, it is not in competition with established university or college qualifications.
- There is no relevant external regulatory framework in the cultural heritage field - as would apply for instance in healthcare or education - that limits the range of options available to practitioner bodies.
- The practitioner community has on the whole been fairly quick to see the benefits of a professional designation that is separate from and complementary to academic qualifications or practical training.
- There has been backing from external stakeholders and major client bodies, principally in expressing support for professional accreditation and to a lesser extent backing this with practical actions relating to funding, contracting and supporting staff.
- Accreditation has been developed, and is owned, by practitioner bodies alone - it is not subject to the policy dictates, funding or timescales of other organisations such as occupational standards-setting or awarding bodies, or universities.

- Sufficient resources were available to develop and operate the accreditation scheme, principally in terms of volunteer time and office facilities but also sufficient funding to cover expenses and engage expertise from outside the profession.

The appropriateness of professional standards and practice-based assessment also relates to how the profession wishes, and is able, to define itself. The development of PACR is having a significant impact on conservation because, among other things, in asking the question 'who is accreditable' it is requiring a more explicit understanding of what constitutes conservation as a *profession or occupation*, as opposed to a work function. This in turn is requiring boundary issues to be examined, and it is forcing the conservation community to address tensions such as those between craft and academic traditions, technical and strategic approaches to practice, different guiding ethics, and different conceptions of level or accomplishment that arise from them.

The use of standards-based accreditation as a qualifying process may not be suitable for professions where there is more than limited diversity in what practitioners actually do. A standards framework only 'works' if it is sufficiently close to what goes on in practice, as illustrated by the difficulty treatment-oriented and preventive conservators had meeting the preventive and interventive PACR standards respectively. Because meeting the requirements of a standards framework depends on candidates being engaged in the appropriate functions, more diverse professions are likely to find a PACR-type framework difficult to construct or implement; for a discussion of this in training and development, see Paton & Midgley (1993). In these areas it is undoubtedly easier to base qualifying on diploma-type awards that assess a programme of learning, rather than on assessing practice; this fairly traditional approach has recently been adopted, for example, by the Institute of Training and Occupational Learning (ITOL) and the Institute of Horticulture (IoH) in their first ventures into becoming qualifying associations. However, this is not the only alternative available and a more innovative approach has recently been adopted in the area of communications distribution design, where CableNet Training Services and Anglia Polytechnic University have set up a negotiated, work-based degree that provides flexibility while retaining a focus on practice.

Where a standards-based approach is appropriate, the PACR project offers some learning points that are likely to be useful to would-be accrediting associations. The need to develop appropriate and manageable standards (as yet only partly achieved in PACR) has been discussed in the previous chapter and in paper [A1](#), and PACR also provides an example of direct or workplace-based assessment, as opposed to the portfolio-based approach common in most higher-level NVQs (see papers [A3](#) and [A4](#)). Beyond this, the profession might look critically at the kind of standards that are appropriate to its context, particularly in relation to what they need to capture and how they relate to professionalism, capability and the development of expertise and extended professionalism (there is further discussion of this in the final part of this chapter).

Finally in considering the relevance of the PACR model, accrediting associations might examine whether it is more appropriate to assess practice in a single 'snapshot' as is done in conservation, or over time perhaps as the candidate progresses through a structured training scheme or experience with an approved firm. The one-off approach has the advantage of being open to candidates largely regardless of their workplace or training, and compared with schemes that are operated over time it is likely to be more impartial and perhaps more searching; it can also be applied some time after the candidate has moved on from supervised experience, and therefore require a higher standard of

proficiency and professional capability. However, where there are less barriers to assessing over time, there is more opportunity to build up an ongoing picture of strengths and areas for further development until a satisfactory profile emerges, and guard against the selection of good but one-off work for assessment.

### *Entry routes and diversity*

An issue concerning professional induction and qualification as a whole, relevant to the majority of professions, is how development and qualification routes affect the base from which practitioners are drawn, the diversity of the profession, and its ability to respond to change. This issue has been discussed to an extent in paper [A7](#), but is worth further comment here. At an explicit level, the way the profession defines itself - including through any required entry routes and professional standards, as well as codes of practice and ethics - immediately influences its nature and diversity, so that at a simplistic level it might have an ethos that is for instance craft-based, technical, managerial, research-oriented, or reflective. The tensions between the more academic end of conservation and craft-based restoration, and between 'practical' conservation and collections care management, are part of this.

Less obviously, entry-routes can also restrict the practitioner-base according to criteria other than ability and vocation. For instance, requiring a long period of full-time higher education is likely to mitigate against poorer school-leavers, mature entrants and those who wish to progress from technician or similar jobs. While this is visible in conservation because of the current diversity of entry-routes, it is also an issue in professions that have well-established entry-routes; as an example, there are significant barriers to progressing from HND-qualified architectural technician to becoming a graduate architect, or for that matter to moving from nurse to medical practitioner. As well as issues of access and fairness, the kind of 'homosocial reproduction' (Kanter 1977) that can result from limited entry-routes may result in a convergence of perspectives that blunts the profession's ability to evolve and respond to change.

Proposals in Europe for entry to conservation to require four or five years' full-time higher education fail, as do many professions, to recognise the diversity of modes of study now available in higher education (at least in the UK), or to separate the required qualification from the route taken to achieving it. While there are logistical and resource problems associated with setting up part-time or work-based programmes particularly when they need to cover practical skills, these developments open the way for professions to diversify their entry routes without compromising their entry standards. Given the potential for flexibility that is now available, there is little excuse for even the more traditional professions not to widen access to qualifying.

### *Professionalisation: principles and limits*

A number of general principles emerge from the conservation experience that appear relevant to any process of professionalisation. First, it needs to be asked what the purpose of the profession is - what functions it fulfils and what its vision is for the area of responsibility it is claiming - and from there ask what attributes it needs to take on to be eminently fit for this purpose. This will also suggest how the profession might seek to engage with its socio-economic, legislative, political, environmental and other wider contexts, as well as with its immediate operating context represented by employers,

clients, related occupational groupings and other external stakeholders. If it is to have meaning beyond providing a service to members, the professionalising occupation also needs a sense of identity based on a requisite definition of things such as scope, level and coverage of practice. This needs to strike a working balance between coherence and flexibility, so that it is clear enough to an outside stakeholder what the profession is, but the boundaries are not drawn so rigidly that they work against appropriate diversity and evolution. Related to this, the profession needs capacity to evolve in an uncertain future, so that it can accommodate emergence and growth including in the form of new perspectives, directions and specialisms. Finally, there is evidence that to achieve these things the profession needs to accommodate diversity in terms of the backgrounds and perspectives of practitioners - which in turn points to entry-routes and entry-gates that match the profession's purpose.

The conservation experience also points to some limits to professionalisation that appear to have fairly general application. Professions and occupations are evolving systems, and therefore professionalisation is not something that can be brought to a state of finality. This has implications for some of the sub-projects of professionalisation, particularly those associated with codification such as the development of bodies of knowledge, competence frameworks and codes of practice or ethics: these can never be regarded as more than temporary or approximate maps for practitioners, and therefore have only limited validity as defining parameters or guides for practice (this will be discussed further in respect of competence frameworks in the final section of this chapter). As a result, it is likely that at least some of the efforts that professional bodies put into codification are at best misplaced, at worst detrimental. Finally, a formally-defined profession, not unlike a work organisation, is not the same thing as a community or constellation of practice (cf Wenger 1998), and professionalisation projects do not necessarily correlate with the development of active, knowledge-sharing networks of practitioners.

At the beginning of the 21st century the professionalisation project therefore appears to be facing something of a dilemma, in that while practitioner groupings continue seeking to define themselves as professions, the notions of 'profession' that are being called upon are not always adequate to current and emerging contexts. Further, while some areas of work retain fairly distinct identities, there are others, particularly in creative, management and consultancy fields, where practitioners are more likely to draw their notion of being a professional from a personal envelope of capability, expertise and principles rather than from a grounding in any particular professional discipline. Overcoming this dilemma while maintaining the capacity to respond to public expectations of professionals suggests that professional associations need to evolve in perhaps two ways. First, they might take on more of the characteristics of an emergent form of organisation that is closer to a community or cluster of knowledge-workers than to a trade guild or a bureaucracy. Secondly, they might move from attempting to define themselves through mapping a territory and its boundaries and seeking to codify everything within, to identifying an essential core as well as a larger hinterland that is less formalised and more open to adaptation and evolution. Along with this latter, there will be increasing need for professional associations to enter into closer dialogue with each other and recognise their complementarity rather than points of difference (cf Watkins & Drury 1999); rather than necessarily entailing mergers to create larger versions of the same kinds of body, this suggests a more open and outward-facing approach where they occupy more the position of nodes in a network rather than organisations kept apart by boundaries.

## **Continuing professional development**

The limited state of development of CPD in conservation means that there are fewer learning points that can be offered with any confidence to other professions, although some issues arising from the background research and initial experiences of implementation are likely to have wider application (see also papers [A2](#) and [B5](#)).

Both the background research (paper [A2](#)) and consultations with practitioners emphasised the importance of practitioner-led CPD and informal learning, and the negative effects of bureaucratic systems. They cast serious doubts on the validity of approaches to CPD that are based on hours, points or recording formal learning events, beyond in some circumstances recommending a number of days per year for learning away from the immediate workplace. However, the approach used in PACR does not offer as complete an alternative as hoped for a number of reasons. The initials 'CPD' have become associated by many with formal learning activities, and it can be difficult to convey the larger concept of practitioner-directed learning while using the established terminology (incidentally some occupations are abandoning it for this reason; nursing, for example, uses PREP, or post-registration education and practice). Secondly, a reflective approach designed to capture informal and intuitive learning appears to be seen by some as intrusive and requiring them to make 'public' (i.e. for an unknown reviewer) personal or commercially sensitive information. Finally, there is a sensitivity to be observed in calling in reviews if it is not to be seen as impositional.

The PACR experience suggests that there is little that professional bodies can do little to compel members to keep up-to-date. The only point at which an effective policing role is realistically possible is therefore after a problem has occurred that is due to the practitioner's failure to keep up-to-date or appreciate the limitations of his or her competence. If professional associations are able to accept this, it opens the way to a more enabling approach to CPD and to the removal of unnecessary procedures and documentation.

Given this, professional associations might aim to move from current concerns with CPD schemes and systems, to a point where ongoing development is an endemic part of professional practice. One of the PACR workshop participants summarised this as "something that most responsible practitioners did anyway;" the aim should be integrating learning and development with practice, rather than separating out learning as a set of activities called 'CPD' that can be interpreted as having an agenda of its own. In practice, this could translate into a basic requirement for necessary updating being incorporated into the profession's code of practice or ethics, along with the association providing or facilitating means by which practitioners can be assisted to fulfil this requirement (and, where problems occur, be required to do so through a vehicle such as a learning contract). Beyond that, the association might be expected to provide assistance relevant to further development, to encourage practitioners for instance to develop their careers, extend their capability, develop as 'extended professionals' and practitioner-researchers, and contribute more generally to the profession and its wider field of operation.

## **Competence standards and qualifications**

PACR has much in common with qualifications based on national occupational standards, such as NVQs and SVQs, but was developed outside of the NVQ framework and therefore not restricted by

NVQ and occupational standards design principles. It might therefore be expected to yield some learning points that can be transferred back to NVQs, occupational standards and other competence-based awards. Practical issues relating to the design of standards and approaches to assessment have been discussed in paper A4 and, in relation to assessment, A3; the discussion here focuses on three wider issues relating to the function and perception of competence-based awards, the way that professionalism and capability are conceived of and expressed, and the extent to which competence standards can be used as guidelines in development programmes. It then concludes with an approach that could be used generally to move NVQs and similar qualifications forward.

### *Function and perception*

PACR has similarities with NVQs and other free-standing competence-based awards in that it attests to the ability to work to a proficient standard, and differences first in that it is bound up with professional membership (in QCA's terms [QCA 2000b] it is a qualifying membership rather than an independent qualification), and secondly it is purely an assessment of practice, without an accompanying development or candidate support programme.

Despite the lack of any certification separate to membership, the ownership of PACR by the profession appears to have given it greater credibility than would be the case for an NVQ or other externally-awarded qualification. With a small number of exceptions higher-level NVQs have not had great success in gaining acceptance in professional fields, and exploration is needed as to whether it would be preferable to divert some of the resources currently allocated for NVQs to the occupational standards bodies into supporting more innovative and accessible professional qualifications. Current work by the UK qualifications regulatory authorities towards a national qualifications framework is likely to offer an opportunity, if not to do this, then at least to fund the development of a wider variety of higher-level awards that are not restricted by current NVQ design principles and can carry titles more likely to be acceptable at the higher levels.

The other point where PACR is perceived to be clearer in purpose than most NVQs is that it is explicitly a professional practice assessment, not linked to a development programme. Officially NVQs are specifications for assessment that do not prescribe a particular development route, and some individual pathways to NVQ achievement are similar to those taken by PACR candidates; however, there is a fairly common perception that NVQs are programmes as much as qualifications, leading to confusion about what the award represents and the standard of assessment involved (see Lester 1999a for a discussion of this in the land-based sector). Related to this have been pressures to 'educationalise' NVQs through means such as separate statements of knowledge and understanding, externally-set assessment tasks, credit ratings and minimum times for completion. As QCA admits, NVQs have not brought coherence to UK work-related awards but added a "further much needed framework of competence based qualifications" (Allen 2001). The emerging qualifications framework presents an opportunity to position them more explicitly as practitioner certification, possibly with a title such as 'certificate of competence' or 'certificate of practice' rather than the confusing 'vocational' epithet.

### *Professionalism and capability*

The functionalist approach on which NVQs are based has been fairly widely criticised as perhaps capable of reflecting technical aspects of work, but inadequate to capture intelligent practice, professionalism, the negotiated nature of competence or the need for practitioners to go beyond standard approaches and become authors of their practice (see for instance Hodkinson 1995, Elliott 1991 and Lester 1999b). The apparent success of PACR in reflecting a more ethical and intelligent kind of professionalism, rather than purely functional competence, stems from three factors. First, general professional criteria are used to complement the NVQ-type functional standards that describe the technical aspects of conservation work. These are regarded, and interpreted in practice, as running through the functional aspects of the practitioner's work, so that they should emerge naturally from evidence and discussion rather than be treated as supplementary aspects. Secondly, the evidencing and assessment process is designed to be holistic and start from the practitioner's work activities, rather than from the individual standards (or units in NVQ terms). Finally, the assessors and accreditors already have a well-developed sense of the profession's ethos and the kind of understanding and judgement needed to operate effectively, and have been able to interpret the standards and criteria through this lens.

While each of these factors can be found individually in some NVQs and examples of NVQ implementation, overall the NVQ model still promotes a technician view of competence and a fragmented approach to assessment, that while not preventing the qualifications being applied in a way that reflects professionalism and capability, does not particularly encourage it. The individual features of PACR are not necessarily superior to the better examples of NVQ development and implementation, but the way PACR is designed and operated as a *system* does appear to enable it to reflect a more holistic, empowering and realistic notion of professional capability and practice. While the particular approach used to standards and assessment will need to vary according to the kind of practice being considered<sup>\*</sup>, it can be concluded with some confidence that PACR offers some lessons that could be taken up and further developed by the occupational standards bodies and QCA to improve NVQs and other competence-based qualifications, both at a practical level and in terms of developing a more balanced model of occupational or professional competence.

### *The use of competence standards in academic qualifications*

While PACR had no more than a minimal impact on conservation degrees by the end of the project period, it raises a more widely relevant issue - relevant to current guidance from QCA that vocationally-related programmes should be linked to occupational standards - about the extent to which competence standards should influence higher and professional education.

The purpose of PACR is essentially to act as an entry-gate that determines whether a conservator is sufficiently proficient and professional in approach to be endorsed as able to operate in a fully independent capacity. It also assesses, through the general professional criteria, some of the characteristics that are relevant to being able to maintain proficiency and professionalism. Despite this, it is not geared to assessing the abilities associated with extended professionalism (Stenhouse

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<sup>\*</sup> For instance, initial exploration with the National Vocational Rehabilitation Association on the specification of a professional accreditation scheme suggested that an approach based on case-histories, expert witnesses and candidate interviews would be more appropriate than a one-off workplace assessment.

1975), mature capability (Lester & Chapman 2002) or, more than at a very basic level, practitioner research. As in any professional field, the purpose of degree and postgraduate programmes is partly to develop the skills and knowledge that will be required for immediate practice (see for instance Cummings 1996), but, leaving aside any concerns relating to the more general purposes of higher education, it also needs to be concerned with giving practitioners a base that they can build on to develop the more advanced aspects of professionalism. In this sense the programmes need also to be concerned with enabling students to develop abilities of, among other things, enquiry, critical insight and creative thinking, as well as an appreciation of the historic and developing context in which the profession operates.

While competence standards can act as broad guidelines for the practical aspects of a degree or initial professional development programme, there are other important factors that are beyond the scope of the kind of standards employed in NVQs or for that matter PACR. This does not rule out developing a broader competency or capability framework for guidance for the programme (see for instance Brown 1994, Winter & Maisch 1996, and Boyatzis 2001 for examples of this), but it does suggest recognising the limitations of occupational or professional standards frameworks for guiding higher education and other developmental programmes.

#### *Competence frameworks: beyond current approaches*

As described above and in paper [A4](#) the limitations of the NVQ and occupational standards model are now quite widely appreciated, but there has been little movement towards improving on the principles underlying it, beyond a gradual move away from some of the more fundamentalist claims made about occupational standards and so-called outcome-based approaches to assessment. Given that the NVQ system has had well over a decade in operation and its limitations cannot now be attributed to its newness (see for instance Young 2002), the need for greater flexibility in approach is well overdue.

In a previous paper on competence and syllabus structures (Lester 1999b) I argued that the key to using these frameworks effectively was to regard them as doing two things: offering a map to guide the novice or developing practitioner, and providing what I termed a 'safety-net', i.e. a set of standards to define acceptable practice *where it is essential to do so*. To build on this in the context of competence frameworks, four points need to be recognised. The first is that maps are maps, and not the territory they represent (cf Korzybski 1971): they can contain inaccuracies, get out-of-date, and be of little help in uncharted territory. Further, the territory that competence maps depict can have more of the characteristics of a shifting sea-bed than an easily-charted street layout. Secondly, different types of mapping and levels of detail are appropriate to different purposes: there is no one right way to describe competence, and no method is complete. Thirdly, interpreting and using maps is a skill in itself and may need to be developed before the maps can be used effectively. Finally, returning to the main theme of my paper, as practitioners develop and gain confidence they will start becoming map-makers - at least in the sense of making mental maps for their own practice - rather than accepting the maps of others at face-value.

This analogy implies first moving beyond the technical-rational dogmas associated with competence frameworks, and accepting a wider range of ways of describing practice and competence; it also means abandoning the notion that competence is measurable (it is assessable, but assessment is based on comparison, inference and judgement rather than measurability). Secondly, it means

separating out those things that are essential to practice, and expressing them clearly and in a way that reflects necessities rather than for instance accepted ways of doing things; comparing this with a typical occupational standards specification, this means a much more concise set of essential standards. Finally, it means presenting the overall set of standards in a way that encourages development and redefinition, rather than as a rigid framework where everything has to be achieved to the same level regardless of its relative importance.

Putting these principles into practice might suggest a framework that includes some generic criteria, for instance along the lines of the levels indicators used in some work-based higher education frameworks (e.g. Ufi Ltd 2001), essential standards that are critical to practice (the 'safety-net'), and guidance to assist understanding and development across the area of work concerned. This kind of framework is unlikely to lend itself to a 'competent / not yet competent' assessment decision, but to progression along the lines of the Dreyfus model, with where necessary a well-defined point of critical competence or safety-to-practise. Importantly, development beyond this point would start to involve the practitioner in beginning to define his or her practice and taking personal responsibility for agreeing and setting appropriate standards.

While this approach reflected up to a point in some competence-oriented higher education programmes, it is also eminently suitable for use in NVQ-type qualifications that are not linked to an education or training programme. It represents a substantial improvement over current NVQ practice for three reasons. First, it reframes basic competence as meeting essential requirements, rather than describing it in a way that while it may require a theoretically more advanced spread of practice, does not distinguish the core of practice from the more trivial. Secondly, while starting from a core of essential practice it enables practitioners to develop to building their own envelope of capability as appropriate to context, aptitude and aspiration. Finally, while being independent of education and training processes, it provides a flexible framework that supports development across the range from gaining initial competence through to self-managed proficiency, expert practice (in the Dreyfus sense) and extended professionalism.

## Part 2

# Developing consultancy practice and the role of the systems architect

## 2.1 Context, capability and personal professional development

This chapter gives a personal account of my role in the development of PACR, and the professional and business development that took place during the period from October 1998 to May 2002. It is followed by a chapter explaining the ideas of systems architecture and realisation systems that have become central to my practice, and a final chapter briefly outlining other areas where these approaches are applicable.

### Stan Lester Developments

My consultancy and research practice, trading under the name of Stan Lester Developments, began in late 1992 (full-time from April 1993) initially as an exploratory measure linked to the deletion of my then job as a training manager and internal consultant with Bristol City Council. Much of my early work was carried out on a sole-practitioner basis, and focused on occupational standards, National Vocational Qualifications and associated projects principally for bodies associated with developing and implementing these initiatives (a small and active 'industry' had grown up around standards and NVQs, largely supported by public funding). I was also involved in management and assessor training for the National Trust, and had a small amount of curriculum development and teaching work from the University of the West of England, where I was completing an MEd dissertation.

By 1995 I felt my decision to set up independently had been successful, and I was taking on larger projects and engaging associates, still principally in the ITO-Lead Body field but also expanding into rural training and business support strategy, a secondary area of interest. One of my projects from this time, the National Rural Education and Training Strategy Group report into rural business advice and training (Lester & Zoob 1995), was featured in the Rural White Paper and launched by the then Minister for Rural Affairs, Tim Boswell. Despite this, much of my work was not particularly exciting, with some challenges at a practical level (e.g. how to improve farmers' involvement in assessing land-based NVQs) but rarely providing exposure to leading-edge issues or opportunities for more than incremental professional development. I was interested in taking a more proactive role in the professional development field, building on some of the issues I had been working with at Bristol and exploring in my MEd, but also conscious of maintaining the main sources of my income. There was a degree of frustration present in being able to contribute to debates at a theoretical level (e.g. Lester 1995a, 1995b), but not be involved in developments in a practical way.

While for the time being I wanted to capitalise on the growing stream of work from NVQ-related sources, improving finances meant that I was able to move in 1997 to a house with dedicated office space (and therefore the opportunity to employ staff if the need arose), and think more seriously about moving forward in terms of the type of work I was doing. During the year following the move I

spent more time on networking and speculative projects, generating one stream of activity in research related to farming and rural business support, as well as some eventually abortive leads in organisational and professional development. I also took a closer interest in Higher Education for Capability, including co-editing a book (O'Reilly *et al* 1999), which led indirectly to involvement in the University for Industry negotiated work-based learning project.

My involvement with what was to become the PACR project began with a small advertisement in the Guardian for an 'accreditation consultant,' initially for a nine-month project, brought to my attention by a colleague who had assumed that the 'conservation' referred to was environmental conservation (and therefore appropriate to my land-based experience). I had a sketchy awareness of the field through work with the National Trust, but assumed my knowledge of NVQs and university course accreditation would also be relevant. In the event it was apparent from my initial discussion with the client that the project would involve substantial learning for all involved.

### **Capability and roles within JAG and PACR**

The credentials that secured my contract with the Conservation Forum were principally an extensive knowledge of work-based assessment, including experience in designing systems to support NVQ implementation, and a working knowledge of work-based and modular higher education. I also had practical experience and a reasonably good theoretical grasp of professional development in a variety of contexts, as well as some experience of working with public and voluntary sector heritage bodies, and an understanding of the particular challenges of private practice.

In practice, this background was a major asset in the project, and allowed me to plan and develop a reasonably robust system within the initial nine-month timescale, while also giving me the experience and insight to understand potential problems and appreciate the concerns and viewpoints of practitioners. In particular, eight years of exposure to the NVQ system in a variety of roles had provided me with a practical and critical perspective on work-based assessment, as well as direct experience of candidates' and assessors' experiences and frustrations in diverse circumstances.

The skills I had built up as a consultant, researcher and systems developer, and previously as a teacher, trainer and change agent, played a critical role in enabling me to work effectively on the project. Particularly in the early stages it was critical that I listened to different points of view, questioned carefully, and built up a rich picture from them around which the framework could be developed. I like to adopt a gentle and discursive approach at this stage of a project; although on one occasion this was interpreted as hesitancy I find that in a consultancy role it is the best way of engendering the trust and respect of the various stakeholders. Having listened, I can begin to identify the principles I need to work with, develop the rationale, and mould the framework in the context of the overall picture. This gives the flexibility needed to enable modification in subsequent dialogues, while also building a constancy of purpose that holds the development on a consistent course. This combination of empathy with others' perspectives and the principled development of a system stems on the one hand from my research experience and commitment to a phenomenological perspective, and on the other from my experience as a designer of both living systems (I have a horticultural degree and designed landscapes for a couple of years earlier in my career) and curricular and organisational frameworks.

Initially, my main role was that of systems developer, involving consultation, liaison, investigating, development, trialling and recommending. While there were periods of individual work, such as consulting with professional bodies and other interested groups, investigating practices elsewhere, writing consultation and scheme documents, and running focus and training meetings, the project itself involved working with the client, rather than providing a service at arm's length to an agreed specification. As described in the discussion of my role in action research in chapter 1.2, my input consisted both of expertise and of process support, drawing on my experience and knowledge of accreditation and professional development, but also assisting the JAG committee to make decisions take forward the framework. It would have made little sense for the JAG project to be other than a partnership drawing on the participants' varied and complementary skills, expertise and perspectives, with the aim to realise a development to be taken forward by the committee and its successors rather than delivering a product for a pre-agreed handover date.

During the implementation phases, I took on a number of roles within the project. The simplest of these was the one where the client had the most urgent need, running training sessions and workshops and providing advice on implementation. However, this had additional facets of gathering and organising feedback on the scheme, and identifying areas for future improvement and further development. It also involved acting as the interpreter of meaning, the other leading participants in JAG no longer being involved actively with the scheme. In some instances this latter role had parallels with that of a constitutional lawyer, part of my function in respect of assessors and accreditation committees being to define the parameters within which decisions could be made so that they would be consistent with the scheme documents and the principles underlying them.

A further, unofficial role connected with this last was advising on problem situations, which could require particular attention and sensitivity. For example, a potentially acrimonious situation arose when a poorly completed application was passed between an accreditation committee, primary assessor and back to the committee over a period of months before the candidate was given appropriate advice, a situation caused by the committee's inexperience and (ironically) concern to play by the rules and be scrupulously fair. By taking a diplomatic and principled approach I was able to defuse the situation and persuade the candidate to amend her application, while recommending some changes to procedure to ensure an impartial assessment. Other issues that I became involved in defusing included the case of two conservators who had been refused accreditation through one of the Fast-Track schemes and appeared to have no route of appeal, and a specialism where several practitioners were dissatisfied with the way accreditation had been handled by their own association.

In terms of the political aspects of the project, I found it necessary to maintain a good awareness of different interests, while taking an independent line that respected diverging viewpoints but was also firm in maintaining the integrity and consistency of the scheme. It was important to have sensitivity to different viewpoints and ensure that concerns were attended to, while at the same time being sufficiently detached to put counterarguments and maintain a coherent direction; this became particularly important in the follow-up work for NCCR, where it was critical to look beyond compromises, so that different and sometimes opposing needs could be met within a consistent framework. Fortunately, some of the more difficult organisational politics were often easy to deflect as being committee issues, often with a note about the implications of a particular policy or an issue that needed to be addressed: my stance here was to point out what needed to be resolved and where necessary suggest options, sometimes involving other stakeholders (e.g. through email) to

encourage an open discussion on the issue. On the other hand, it was at times frustrating to witness the limitations being placed on the scheme by the fragmented nature of the profession, and at times its unwillingness to deal with strategic or contentious issues; however, while it was not appropriate given my role to push for the merger or similar structural solution that I saw as being needed, I was able to use both my acknowledged independence and access to different committees to promote cohesion and convergence.

One of the potential problems that emerged during the implementation phases concerned my prominence within PACR. In the early stages of moving from the JAG project to PACR proper, taking a central role was important to maintaining impetus and continuity. However, it was not intended (least of all by me) that I should have an executive role in PACR, and once a community of practice had begun to emerge around PACR implementation, it would have been counterproductive for me to maintain a visible presence. It also meant that the relatively small amount of my time that the profession could afford was being diverted to operational issues rather than on strategic development where it would have the greatest impact. During the second cycle I suggested that plans were made for the profession to take over the training and briefing roles, and ideally establish a staff member to operate across the participating professional bodies. In the event I was able to phase out most my involvement in implementation over the third cycle.

A comment I received from NCCR during the course of my involvement concerned the value of my independent judgement and 'quiet authority,' and ability to look strategically across the profession without being influenced by organisational politics and histories. During the project I learned much about the practicalities and context of conservation work, and came to know many practitioners as colleagues and in some cases friends. However, I felt that part of the value I brought to the project was to be able to see the profession in close-up but from the outside and in the wider contexts of professionalisation and accreditation more generally, and to provide advice from this simultaneously involved and detached position. This was underlined when I was asked to chair a meeting of the accrediting bodies within NCCR to consider the feasibility of a common accreditation framework; despite being the architect of PACR I was also perceived as sufficiently impartial to work for the good of the conservation community as a whole.

From the viewpoint of the client, the decision to involve an external consultant in the PACR project appears to have been beneficial and perhaps essential. While the other conservation accreditation schemes are generally successful, the comparison referred to in chapter 1.6 suggests that PACR is more robust, fairer, and is capable of gaining credibility externally as a primary professional qualification as opposed to a trade registration scheme. Perhaps more critically, I have been able to work across boundaries in the profession and provide a focus and point of authority for common development, something that is continuing into the NCCR joint accreditation project. This has not impeded the client bodies from retaining ownership of PACR, so that for instance I am now being consulted on issues such as the standards review, where the client lacks experience, rather than operational matters where there is no longer any need for my involvement. While there is arguably benefit in involving an external facilitator or expert in some aspects of review and development, a successful outcome is that there are increasingly fewer aspects on which my advice is being sought.

## Development through and beyond PACR

The period I have been engaged in PACR has seen a gradual but firm shift in the way that I perceive and operate my practice and the view I have of my future career. It has also contributed to a maturing philosophy of practice that draws on a combination of phenomenological and systems perspectives, and sees practical development work as a legitimate source of authority and knowledge worthy of dissemination.

### *Resolving a dilemma of direction*

Over the last five or six years I have generally been satisfied with the level of turnover and income generated by my practice, but have experienced something of a dilemma in terms of taking it forward to be more enjoyable, influential and challenging. The two main options that appeared open to me were to develop a larger business employing staff and taking on more and larger projects (and giving me some flexibility to develop agendas of my own), or taking a more personal route as a leading consultant and practitioner in a specific field. By early 1998 I had mapped out the beginnings of the latter through an academic venture (setting up an innovative master's degree) subsequently linked to my proposed doctoral project, while seeing the former as complementary in generating the bread-and-butter work that would provide the financial security to develop my other interests. I had secured two short-term but substantial research contracts during 1998, and a successful bid for another during mid-1999 prompted me to take on a research assistant.

In the event, the master's degree proved too ambitious a venture to implement (at least in the way that I and my principal colleague had envisaged), and while the research contracts were financially rewarding I did not feel they were taking me in a direction that I wanted to pursue. At the same time my portfolio of what might be called expertise-based work was increasing, most significantly through work with QCA and Ufi Ltd (the 'University for Industry') as well as PACR. These latter projects were linked through a focus on accreditation and qualifications and their relationship to practice and learning, and therefore involved attention to systems and frameworks: all three built on an area of expertise I had been building up over the previous eight or nine years, and involved work on systems underpinning education, training and assessment practice.

The PACR project, reinforced by my work with QCA and Ufi, has provided a vehicle for further developing my expertise and subjecting it to testing and feedback, and developing my skills as a systems architect in the sense I will describe in the next chapter. It has also exposed my thinking to practical critique and the need to consider contextual issues peculiar to specific circumstances, and helped me develop an extended and more mature perception of how I can draw on my particular skills and strengths to facilitate change effectively. In terms of direction, this has moved me away from the idea of expansion around research contracts, and towards a more individual career based partly on my expertise in accreditation, qualification frameworks and professional development, but more importantly on working with systems issues and in 'realisation' relationships as described in the next chapter. The success of my work on PACR led directly to the follow-up work described in chapter 1.6 and paper [B9](#), and has also produced several approaches from other bodies. These have included the National Vocational Rehabilitation Association, regarding an accreditation scheme for its members; University College London, in relation to a graduate apprenticeship in archaeology conservation; Historic Scotland, exploring the accreditation of historic buildings practitioners; and an

invitation to become the development and accreditation consultant for the development of an international qualification for corporate ethics and compliance practitioners (the IMCPD project).

### *Towards a philosophy of practice*

In more conceptual terms, linking PACR with the DProf has assisted me to develop a philosophy of practice that emphasises the legitimacy of development work as a source of authority and publishable material, and to identify myself more clearly as a developer rather than a researcher. If I have claims to being an academic (I am a visiting academic with Middlesex University) they are based on knowing through doing and the investigation and reflection associated with it, rather than on more traditional forms of research and scholarship.

The philosophy of practice I have come to adopt has as its foundation an essentially phenomenological perspective, particularly in the sense of approaching situations as 'a stranger' (Schutz 1971) and attempting to see them for what they are, while like Stanley & Wise (1993) acknowledging the impossibility of bracketing all the assumptions present in a situation and recognising that I will have personal and sometimes unconscious perspectives that I bring to it. Alongside this it also embodies a systemic philosophy that sees the world as a dynamic, self-organising system, and contains a responsibility to do the best we can in terms of gaining a grasp of how this system is working in any given situation in order to make interventions that have both adequacy and wisdom. Epistemologically, this way of seeing things avoids the trap of relativism that endangers a purely phenomenological perspective, while also rejecting grand theory and reified notions of knowledge; I seek, and aim to make, maps that work and have a good fit for the task in hand, not maps that claim to be territories. At a practical level, this suggests going beyond notions of knowledge as either unique or alternatively generalisable, to recognition that knowing that arises from one context has value in another, where it is necessarily reformulated through interaction with new or different understandings. This perspective is reflected in my interpretation of case-study method on pages 15-16.

In terms my own development I recognise parallels with Kitchener & King's seven-stage model of epistemic cognition (Kitchener & King 1981), which in summary involves moving from simple acceptance of knowledge 'as is,' through viewing it as absolute, to a position where knowledge is seen as entirely contextual and subjective, and finally (stage 7) to a position of making best approximations - i.e. the interpretations which are most complete or compelling (cf my notion of maps that work). At this stage of development there is a balance between knowing and doubting, an openness to discovery and reframing but also capacity for knowing in the face of uncertainty without the narrowness of dogma or formula. A similar conception is provided by Kramer's notion of post-formal operational thought (Kramer 1983), which is "at once more practical and concrete, and more detached and abstract" than formal thought. These integrating perspectives embody a kind of practical wisdom that is eminently matched to the kind of practice situation represented by Schön's 'swampy lowland' (Schön 1987), Ackoff's 'mess' (Ackoff 1974), or Rittel & Webber's 'wicked problems' (Rittel & Webber 1984).

As an aside (and an area for my future investigation and development) I believe this philosophy of practice is relevant to universities, and particularly to their interface with the practical and the professional. Drawing on my experience in various capacities I am not convinced that the higher

education community as a whole has moved beyond the intermediate stages of Kitchener & King's model, as witnessed most obviously both by debates between nomothetic and interpretive perspectives, and by the ongoing difficulties associated with integrating practical and situational knowing and doing within notions of academic validity, knowledge-generation and accreditation. A post-formal philosophy points to development work and the practical wisdom it generates as a way forward which offers an alternative to research or knowledge-transfer as a legitimate mission within higher education. A first essay along these lines is in the form of a paper drawing on my DProf experience and the idea of practitioner doctorates, entitled "A doctorate in development, not research," which I intend to present at an international conference on professional doctorates in Brisbane in November 2002.

### *Future development*

At the end of the project period represented by the DProf submission, my immediate intention is to seek and develop further projects that can draw on and extend the kinds of work I have been doing on PACR and with clients such as Ufi Ltd and QCA. In part this will involve looking beyond the UK; for instance, I have an tour of south-east Australia planned for later in the year to meet key people in the qualifications and professional education field. A secondary intention involves devoting some time to publication, where I have two projects in mind. One is to develop some of the themes discussed in this narrative and the associated articles into a book discussing issues of professionalisation, qualification and their limits. The other concerns initiating a journal for professional development and the development of professions, with a catchment that includes professional associations as well as the usual academic audience; a constant source of frustration in my recent career has been finding appropriate outlets for articles, for although I can normally publish in educational journals, the readership is not always the most appropriate to the content or to the audience I want to reach.

A further issue that I have struggled with to an extent is finding a community of practice that reflects my area of work at a general level, additional to the communities associated with individual projects or clients. At present I have a network of colleagues, principally other consultants and academics as well as people from client and related organisations with whom I have kept in touch, rather than being part of a cohesive professional community in the sense described by Wenger. While this network allows me to discuss and share ideas and (along with reading, email, the occasional conference and other methods of continuing development) keep in touch with developments in my field, it is difficult to use as a forum for taking forward ideas and new developments outside of paid projects. In the past I have been actively involved with the Institute of Training and Development and its successor Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development as well as Higher Education for Capability, and though I still have colleagues from these fora, in themselves they have become less relevant to my area of work. Currently I am an associate of the International Centre for Learner Managed Learning at Middlesex, but my intention over the next year is to take a more active role in developing involvement in a relevant and active community of practice, possibly associated with the above-mentioned journal.

More strategically, I am coming to view the end of the main PACR project and the DProf as the close of a phase in my development, from which I can move on to new projects and possibly new roles and alliances. While I am likely to remain self-employed in the near future, I am now less firmly committed

to private practice as the sole means of developing my career. Instead I see a wider range of possible options that use and build on my capability envelope and areas of interest, and that might provide me with opportunities to achieve goals I can be committed to. Having said this, there are three primary conditions that need to be part of my psychological contract. One is the freedom to operate with a degree of autonomy: I am not a natural 'organisation man' and sit better with the role of principal rather than agent, pointing to roles in which I can provide practical or intellectual leadership without being directly embroiled in bureaucracy, operational management or organisational politics. The second is the need to move forward, as a developer rather than a manager or overseer, or indeed a researcher: while I have skills that lend themselves to these activities, and I can enjoy them in limited bursts, they do not provide me with any great sense of achievement. The last is flexibility. I have never had much tolerance for arbitrary organisational procedures or rules, and suspect nearly a decade in private practice has taught me to be even less accepting of them; on the other hand it has also helped me develop some of the skills and means to bypass and change them.

## 2.2 The idea of the systems architect

If I have to choose a single term to describe my role in PACR, and in other recent activities such as the Ufi Learning through Work and SEGELL projects and the QCA work on higher level qualifications, it is that of systems architect. While I had used this term and had it applied to me previously, it was largely through working on PACR that I came to realise its meaning in terms of developing and working with a system in a complex context.

### Systems and systems architecture

A system in its basic form can be described as a "network of interdependent components which work together to achieve the goal of the system" (Lepore & Cohen 1997, p17). Critically, systems exhibit behaviours that depend on systems structure rather than the nature of individual parts, and they have emergent properties that become apparent only when the system is working.

The idea of systems structure is discussed extensively by Senge (1990) and Fritz (1994) in the context of organisations. The deep structure or architecture of a system depends on recurrent or persistent patterns of interaction between significant components of the system, such that over time they define the parameters for its behaviour, and up to a point that of those working within it. In organisations and other systems - such as the educational (policy) system - this can be seen most clearly where efforts to introduce change repeatedly falter and revert to ways of operating that are not substantially different to those used previously. Typically, these efforts engage with the system at too superficial a level, and push against the underlying architecture without being able to change it. As Senge points out, systems structures are not unchangeable, but they need to be perceived and understood, and effort applied to the points of leverage that enable them to be altered.

A structuralist perspective on systems sees them as more-or-less static entities where structure determines action, with little feedback from action to structure. A more dynamic or interactionist perspective suggests that systems are shaped by both the environments in which they operate and the actors within them, so that while the idea of a system still applies, its structure becomes modified and evolves over time. This is perhaps easier to see in the early stages of systems development, where the system results from a mixture of deliberate action and contextual influences, and takes some time before it becomes embedded into ways of thinking. This is illustrated by PACR, as a developing system where at least some of the deep structure is clearly visible and the effect of feedback is apparent; a slightly later stage of development is illustrated by the NVQ and occupational standards system, where structures are beginning to become embedded and more difficult to bring to the surface and alter. In higher education on the other hand the deep structure of the qualifications system is fairly firmly embedded, and evolutionary forces tend to be gradual and hidden; even overt efforts such as the Quality Assurance Agency's framework (QAA 2001) and the inter-consortium credit project (InCCA 1998) work largely within the established architecture.

Soft systems that are designed without an assumption that they will evolve tend to be fragile: they either fail when the pressure for change becomes too great, or are bypassed and gradually become redundant. The NVQ system is an example where there has been barely enough flexibility, and its survival will depend on being able to cope with evolutionary pressures. The idea of architecture as

applied to soft or human systems may therefore be a slight misnomer, and (drawing on an earlier part of my career) landscape architecture might provide a better analogy. The landscape architect designs an entity that evolves in a way that is influenced by the environment it is in and the way it is used and managed, and his or her role often continues into advising on the development and management of the evolving system over time.

## **The systems architect**

The work of the systems architect is concerned with creating, redesigning and modifying systems, and frequently also overseeing their development so that changes that become needed are dealt with in a systemic manner rather than through piecemeal modification or 'tinkering.' Through my work on PACR and other recent projects, there are a small number of basic principles that are required for effective systems architecture.

The most important factor is to be able to see, or think, systemically. This does not simply mean being able to apply systems thinking in a mechanical sense, but to grasp an overview of the whole system and the context or contexts it is positioned in, and to be able to see it as a dynamic rather than static picture, as a map that works and makes sense. The latter point is critical, because while being able to see the 'big picture' and key processes and points of leverage within it is necessary, that in itself does not imply systemic thinking: it is important also to have awareness of the detail, movement and patterns of movement (and the chaos) within the picture. Ignoring them can result in the kind of grand-design thinking where the system takes on a life of its own and loses touch with what it was created to achieve, and with its practical implications. Systemic thinking implies not only achieving fitness for purpose, but also working at the level of fitness of purpose, considering the congruence or (to use the term in a broad sense) ecological soundness of the system's aims and their goodness of fit with the practical realities present in the surrounding context. It therefore requires a good appreciation of the implications of the system, both internally and in the immediate term, and in wider contexts and the future. It also requires at least a small degree of systemic wisdom (Bateson 1971, Pór 1995) in which there is a deep and intuitive understanding of interconnected wholes.

Linked to this is an appreciation of what the system is likely to mean from the viewpoint of the people involved in it, and what its implications are for them: the point of developing systems is that they serve people and do not become hindrances to beneficial change. This requires an appreciation of others' perspectives and interests; it includes awareness of how organisational politics and dynamics are likely to interact with the system, but it also requires going beyond that to an empathic, phenomenological perspective that cuts through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and existing interests. The skills of seeking and listening to others' views, and entering as far as possible into their perspectives and models of the world, are central to this.

In the development and implementation of a system one of the vital ingredients is a sense of coherence and constancy of purpose, not rigid so as to prevent new directions and ideas emerging and being taken up, but sufficiently stable so that the project unfolds and evolves rather than veers around with each new idea, discovery or criticism. In PACR, part of doing this involved setting out and agreeing broad principles before beginning to work with the detail of the system. This was critical in ensuring that what ensued had clarity and consistency, and to establish a fairly stable reference-point from which to interpret discussions, consultations and proposed changes.

A further point relating to the previous discussion of living systems is that the systems architect needs to see how the system might grow, adapt and evolve, and build in ways for it to do this without destroying its consistency. This can mean balancing the 'constitutional lawyer' role I discussed earlier with that of innovator and developer, and occasionally heretic. Extending the evolutionary principle, there is also a need to be able to see when the system might have outlived its context and need to be abandoned or replaced with something different.

A point that I find is frequently not well understood is to be able to distinguish detail and abstractions that have a systems implication from matters of content and argument that are relatively unimportant to the way the overall system works. Sometimes seemingly trivial matters, such as a critical word, a principle or a relationship, have a potentially large influence on how the system is perceived or interpreted, and therefore on how it operates. In my experience effort put into getting these system levers and substrates right prevents costly reworking or dysfunction later on.

Finally, and particularly in relation to the political and perspective-based aspects of systems, there is a need to be able to find solutions that are 'beyond compromise' - they integrate different and sometimes opposing demands without compromising the integrity of the system. Achieving this typically means being able to identify the assumptions present in requirements, reframe them and communicate the results in a way that enables the interested parties to gain ownership for them. A simple example is provided by the desire of some conservation accrediting bodies wanting the common accreditation framework to have detailed, discipline-specific criteria for assessment, while others were opposed to these on the grounds that they were an unnecessary complication and would make it difficult to reflect emerging needs; the solution that was accepted was to adopt a less detailed framework but allow supplementary criteria and guidance to be added in those areas where the relevant practitioner communities regarded them as useful.

Before continuing, my experience is that one would be very fortunate to be able to achieve all these desiderata to a high degree at the outset of a project. In particular, seeing the context of a project systemically is something that unfolds over the lifetime of the undertaking, and new realisations may require adjustments or markers for later revision. In PACR, while the JAG project provided an opportunity to explore the field in moderate depth, I was perhaps fortunate that some of the areas I was unable to engage with sufficiently at the time - such as the European dimension - did not suggest great changes later on. Less fortuitously it was not immediately apparent to me that trying to accommodate the needs of interventive and preventive conservation in one set of professional standards was too much of a compromise. Similarly, all the pivotal issues may not be apparent at an early stage; in PACR, one example was its apparently trivial renaming from the Professional Accreditation of Conservators to ... Conservator-Restorers, the full implications of which only became apparent well into implementation.

### **The project relationship: towards a 'realisation system'**

S K Schiff, in his essay on professional development (Schiff 1970), discusses the notion of professional practice needing to move from "delivery systems," where a practitioner works to produce an expert solution and 'deliver' it to his or her client, to "realisation systems" where the relationship is more one of a partnership where practitioner and client work collaboratively to develop a way forward. In the delivery system discussed by Schiff, power rests with the professional or expert, who is able to

make decisions on the client's behalf and 'deliver' solutions according to his or her perceptions of need. As I have discussed in the context of work-based higher education (Lester 2001), a modified version of the delivery system is applicable to business relationships where a specified service or product is contracted for.

While I have been aware of and used these notions of professional practice for some time, the 'delivery-realisation' distinction has become personally relevant through PACR and my work with Ufi and QCA. Many of the other projects I have worked on have been 'delivery' projects, usually involving tendering for a specific piece of work, producing it without client involvement beyond the inevitable steering committee, and ceasing involvement after the hand-over date. As my experience has increased I have become more sceptical of the 'delivery' approach, particularly for projects that explore more than surface issues or have a broad enough remit for the focus to need to change as the project progresses.

In terms of systems development, the delivery approach suggests that the practitioner is commissioned to develop a system, present it, and go away. I have been commissioned in this way to develop a work-based system for implementing NVQs in an industry sector, which resulted in a useful-looking resource publication that was used by less than half a dozen centres, and as a training manager and internal consultant I have naively inflicted a delivery approach in building a system for staff development. Contrasting these with the success of a realisation approach - working in a dialogue with the client, building their ownership, sharing and accommodating different perspectives and needs, trialling, building in improvements, and establishing an evolving framework - suggests that the role of systems architect must be approached from the perspective of realisation rather than delivery. The realisation approach is typically more 'messy' in terms of client relationships, project planning and contractual details, but it is also more rewarding in drawing on a wider range of skills and abilities, enabling a much stronger sense of engagement with the project, and providing greater opportunities for personal professional development. It has also led to a greater sense of achievement for me and better results for my clients.

There is also a degree of correlation between the delivery approach and static systems, and the realisation approach and soft or human systems. A delivery model limits the amount of time available for the project to be handed over, mitigating against the client developing sufficient ownership and understanding of the system to be able to manage its evolution in a way that maintains consistency. My experience has been that 'delivered' systems projects, such as the ones referred to above, are not particularly successful unless either they relate to relatively simple, short-life systems, or they are taken up and championed by someone in the client organisation who is prepared to put effort into understanding and possibly reworking them (for the NVQ project referred to above, this occurred in one centre I was aware of that adopted the system, while the staff development framework was taken up and adapted by another department to the one I had developed it for).

In a realisation relationship on the other hand, the client is intimately involved from the outset - it is 'their' project - and rather than a specific hand-over date the consultant or systems architect can ease out of the project over a period of time. Like the landscape architect, the systems architect works with a client to design an evolving entity, is normally involved in the process that brings it into reality, and may continue to advise on its management and evolution until the client is confident in taking it over. Having said that, the consultant becomes more closely involved with the project in a

realisation system, and it is more prone to creating a dilemma of ownership versus detachment. Too strong an ownership on the part of the consultant can lead to a reluctance to consider others' ideas, let the client take the lead, or let go when changes need to occur, all operating against systems evolution. On the other hand, ownership and commitment can be necessary to building the system and maintaining momentum, and depending on circumstances the consultant may need to play a leading role in this sense, as I did in the early stages of PACR implementation. My view formed largely by PACR (probably of all my work over the last ten years, the project with which I have the closest identification) is that it is necessary to have a certain amount of ownership and commitment to be effective, but at the same time to avoid 'going native' and be clear about negotiating a timescale to reduce and conclude involvement with the project.

## 2.3 Applications of systems architecture

The ideas of systems architecture and realisation systems present a challenge and an opportunity to me as a consultant and educational developer, both in terms of using them as defining features of what I offer to clients, and in terms of applying them to improve the nature and quality of action in my area of practice. This chapter briefly outlines three areas relating to consultancy work in the educational field where a systemic approach is applicable. Two are areas I am currently working in: one is an ICT-based learning support system which illustrates systems architecture at the more technical end of the spectrum, and the second the development of national qualifications frameworks, representing consideration of rather broader systems issues. The third refers to lifelong learning, as this is an area which, while I am not involved directly with it at a policy level, relates closely to much of my work. These are followed by a summary of principles applicable across this type of work, both from the viewpoint of the system and that of the consultant.

### ICT-based learning support systems

Since 1998 I have been involved in the design and realisation of two developments for Ufi Ltd (the 'University for Industry'), both of which involve support structures for learning based that use web-based information and communications technology (ICT). Although these are partly specification-building projects and represent the more technical end of my work, my role in them as an educational systems architect is concerned with the learning and user needs and implications rather than with the ICT solutions. The particular skill I have brought to this work is being able to conceptualise a system around sometimes fairly vague user needs, and translate it into a flexible structure that can be used in a specification for ICT development.

Learning through Work (LtW: see [www.learndirect-ltw.co.uk](http://www.learndirect-ltw.co.uk)) provides an ICT gateway and a standard set of design principles and protocols to give remote learners on-line access and support for university work-based learning programmes. Initially conceived and led by John Stephenson, professor of learner-managed learning at Middlesex University and former director of Higher Education for Capability, it provides access to higher education awards from certificates of credit to doctorates currently through seven institutions. Briefly, the system assists learners to understand the commitment involved in a work-based learning programme, draw up and submit an application, negotiate an individual programme (which can be fully project-based or include courses and modules) through agreeing a learning contract, and track their progress through their programme and prepare and submit materials for assessment. It caters for both individual learners and employer-based and similar groups, and work is currently under way to extend it to suitable awards outside of higher education.

The Learndirect Organiser or SEGELL (second-generation learning log) is a set of web-based tools to help learners manage and keep track of their learning, whether from course-based or independent activities. It interfaces with Learndirect (Ufi) courses and with Learning through Work, so that the features of the Organiser will be automatically available to people enrolling on these programmes. The Organiser, which is based loosely on a learning cycle model (see for instance Honey & Mumford 1989), is designed to encourage reflection and further learning, and encourage users to put their learning in the context of their aims and careers. It is currently being tested for use by people who

have registered with Ufi, but it has been developed with the possibility of use independently, for instance by organisations for staff development and professional bodies for CPD; the systems issues in its development are largely identical to those that would apply in developing a comparable system for a profession or organisation.

The systems architecture of both projects can broadly be divided into two parts: first the design of the system in its broader sense (its purpose, principles and general requirements and parameters), and secondly the translation of this into a specification that can be used by ICT developers. In the LtW project the first part was critical in drawing on the ideas that had been developed by a large project group and smaller working teams, and moulding them into a coherent picture of what LtW was and how it could work in practice. The LtW design principles (Ufi Ltd 2001) for which I was largely responsible documented the conceptual basis of LtW and its operating principles, allowing these to be discussed and refined before developing them into a specification for the software solutions. In the SEGELL project, the two parts were more concurrent in that in pulling together the various ideas and requirements for the Organiser, the result was also a draft specification for ICT development.

In general, the main concerns in a system of this type are to ensure that it is coherent and facilitates the processes that it is intended to; effectively, that the system is driven by the needs of the users, and provides them with the flexibility to work in the ways they find most useful rather than those that are easiest to construct. ICT-based systems have major drawbacks in that they operate on rules rather than principles, and lack the flexibility of human interaction. As a result, it is easy to turn what on paper is an adequately flexible system into an unintentionally over-prescriptive set of procedures when it is translated into software.

Part of the work involved in this kind of development is fairly straightforward systems design, but it also requires considering the implications of the system and the guidance within it for the kinds of learning that are supported. A simple example of this kind of issue is given by the extension of Learning through Work outside of higher education. The current LtW learning contract protocol requires learners to negotiate programme components, such as work-based projects; these are assessed by reference to the objectives set by the learner, and agreed level indicators from a 'bank' for the level of award or credit the learner is registered for. Extending this approach to NVQs, if the most obvious option is followed of equating NVQ units with programme components, this points learners in the direction of working on their programme unit-by-unit; whereas a more appropriate approach may be to identify relevant work activities or projects as their components, and map them across to the NVQ criteria for assessment.

### **National qualification frameworks**

Over the last five years there has been a movement in the UK to create national frameworks for qualifications and credit, both within higher education by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA 2001) and the credit consortia (e.g. InCCA 1998, Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales Project *et al* 2001), and outside of higher education by the qualifications regulatory authorities (e.g. QCA 2001a, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework 2001). I have been involved since 1999 in work to extend the QCA's framework to cover higher-level qualifications outside of higher education (see QCA *et al* 2000a), and in reviews of issues relating to qualification levels for QCA and Ufi Ltd.

Qualifications and qualification frameworks potentially represent a form of systems architecture *par excellence* for publicly funded education and training, both because of the concentration of public funding on award-bearing programmes and because of the popular association of formal learning with awards. It follows therefore that the rules and design principles applied to qualifications by the organisations that award and regulate them exert a powerful influence on what and how people learn through their formal education and training. Getting this architecture right, in the sense of meeting the wide range of needs and expectations associated with the education and training system as well as anticipating the consequences of particular approaches, is therefore critical to operating an educational infrastructure that meets individual and societal needs and aspirations.

Some of the issues associated with qualification frameworks are explored in paper [A6](#), using the Ufi, QCA and PACR projects as a starting-point. At present, the systems structure underlying UK qualifications is inadequate and conflicting, first in that it is fragmented (there is no particular coherence across school-based awards and those applying to further and higher education and vocational education, or across higher education and non-university awards), secondly because the various parts of it are based on limiting assumptions about the context and nature of learning and the nature of learners, and finally because it is frequently undermined by misunderstandings about the measures needed to ensure that awards are robust and relevant. It has also suffered from initiatives which while they may be worthy in isolation, do not contribute to coherence or always to meeting real needs; the introduction of NVQs as a major initiative yet based on inflexible and largely untested design principles, introduction, modification and later rebranding of GNVQs, introduction of foundation degrees at sub-degree level (contrary to the emerging European consensus), and current work to reinvent vocationally-oriented awards as so-called technical certificates are all cases in point.

My work with QCA on the 'higher levels' has attempted to reflect some consistent principles to promote a more coherent and effective systems architecture. Perhaps the most important of these is to recognise the wide range of learners - contexts, levels of experience, approaches, kinds of ability and so on - who engage with qualifications and award-bearing programmes, and the equally wide range of reasons they have for doing so. This points to frameworks that support a requisite variety of qualification programmes with levels of flexibility that relate to their purposes.\* A second point is the principle of coherence coupled with fitness for purpose - that awards need to be understood in a way that makes sense, but that they should not be subjected to requirements that lessen their appropriateness in context. There is also a need in what is in a sense a market with many different established products to ensure that any changes actually increase understanding. For instance an option I recently put forward as an alternative to 'rationalising' qualification titles is to use an overarching terminology to supplement awarding body titles (e.g. an Edexcel HND and a City & Guilds advanced craft award could both be examples of a national higher diploma, meeting certain basic design principles), allowing it to gain currency or die out according to whether or not it proved useful. Finally, a central principle is to maintain enough leeway in the framework to allow it evolve as needs change, and ensure that concepts such as level and credit volume are treated with scepticism as artificial rules of thumb, rather than assumed to be endemic or measurable.

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\* Following Eraut (2002) a basic distinction can be made between initial and mid-career qualifications (and the latter further divided into those related to upgrading or progression and to continuing learning or extension), but there is a need to look beyond this at how individual learners regard and use qualifications and award-bearing programmes.

## Lifelong learning policy

The concept of 'lifelong learning' - in theory embodying the holistic idea of learning throughout life - has been promoted quite widely in UK education and training policy (or 'learning policy', see Ainley 1999), and has become a familiar plank for both local and national initiatives. However, the now widespread use of the term as little more than a synonym for continuing education and training (see for instance Eraut [1997] and Edwards *et al* [1998] for discussions of this) suggests that it has become more a label of convenience rather than representing a systemic vision of learning. It has been devalued in two ways, first by being interpreted to refer to education, training and other formalised activities (such as workplace learning leading to qualifications) rather than learning as a whole, and secondly by being restricted to life after full-time or early-career education and training (or 'foundation learning'). Some of the recent language that has accompanied lifelong learning policy, such as 'returning to learn' and classing people as 'non-learners,' is, however well-intentioned, both unhelpful and potentially demeaning; for instance, in my own work with farmers I have come across people who are extremely good at learning on their feet but keep well away from colleges, NVQs and initiatives such as Investors in People, and would be regarded as non-learners for any official purposes.

While it makes little sense to talk of a lifelong learning systems architecture *per se*, it is highly relevant to consider lifelong learning systemically such that strategies and interventions to promote it fit together in a coherent and mutually supportive way. Central to this are two rather obvious points:

- Lifelong learning is lifelong - that means it starts at birth and continues throughout life. It makes little sense to consider lifelong learning other than as encompassing the whole of this period, including for reason of the influence of early experiences for learning later on.
- Lifelong learning is primarily about learning (and by extension, development) - it is much broader than the learning acquired through education and training, or that leads to formal recognition.

When applied to policy, at one level this definition can suggest either an impossible task or alternatively some kind of Orwellian state machine for manipulating learning throughout life; but more sensibly and pragmatically it points to a way in which strategies and interventions connected with education, training, or learning more generally can be located in relation to a holistic vision, rather than being seen as responding piecemeal to particular needs or deficiencies. This more systemic view suggests, for instance, that while it is proper for degree-level education to be concerned with professional and vocational formation, it must extend beyond concern with developing vocational expertise and job-relevant skills to laying a foundation for future capability and growth; similarly, it points to placing rather more emphasis on helping people to develop the capabilities needed for flexibility and reskilling, rather than relying on reskilling initiatives at the point of need. Equally, this view of lifelong learning makes it very obvious that schooling needs to be driven by emerging needs rather than past traditions, and suggests some radical rethinking of the compulsory education system.

Actually realising these kinds of changes is another matter, and it is perhaps too easy either to fall into the trap of expecting all the systems levers for the educational field to sit within the field itself, or conversely as a practitioner or specialist to see major change as beyond one's ability to influence.

Clearly, in the educational field the way the governmental and electoral system works exerts a large influence on how some kinds of change can be introduced; for example, the ongoing failure to overcome the so-called 'academic-vocational divide' in 14-19 education and training provides a good example where a complex of factors, including the desire to avoid such politically sensitive actions as suggesting the abolition of A-levels, play an important part. More positively, a systemic view of lifelong learning provides a framework that will help the various pieces that it is possible to influence to sit with each other in a way that makes sense and increases the overall coherence and connectivity of the system.

### **Systems projects: a summary of requirements**

Along with my work in conservation, these three areas of work share some common requirements necessary to effective systems interventions. The main ones can be summarised as:

- Clarity about the purpose of the system - what it exists for or has been set up to do, and its primary goals.
- Clarity about its principles and parameters, including its operating principles and philosophy and its boundaries (or instances that illustrate what is and isn't within its scope).
- An extensive systemic understanding (or 'rich picture') of its context, including alternative and minority conceptions.
- An extensive appreciation of the needs and perspectives of the different parties involved and whom it affects.
- Understanding of its potential impacts - including desired, immediate, wider and longer-term effects, and potential unintended consequences.
- Appreciation of ethical issues raised by the system and the specific intervention, or that may arise in their operation and effects.
- Detailed understanding of the operational aspects, including resource implications, implementation details, maintenance and management, and further development.
- Understanding of how requisite flexibility and systems evolution can be built in and managed.

From the viewpoint of a consultant or developer called in to work in partnership with a client or consortium on a systems project of this type, many of the things that need to be included in the overall capability envelope have been discussed in the preceding chapter. However, beyond the general skills of the systems architect, my experience is that systems projects of the type described require the following specific issues relating to the consultant's role to be understood and managed:

- The client's expectations in relation to the consultant's role, compared with the roles it is practical and ethical for the consultant to adopt and how the dynamic between the consultant and client, and consultant and overall project context, may develop over time.

- The gaps in client capability and capacity where the consultant needs to act - both acknowledged (requiring a partnership or provider role) and unacknowledged (initially requiring an education or extension role).
- Related to this, the balance of work within the client-consultant partnership, and how this may need to alter as the project progresses.
- The capacity of the relationship to facilitate client ownership of the project and eventual independence from the consultant across the whole project or particular aspects of it; and related to this, the objectives and exit strategy for the project.
- The interests, politics and sensitivities affecting the project.
- The client's perspective and philosophy in relation to the project, including in comparison with other relevant conceptions and needs.
- The power and resource issues relevant to the project, particularly in relation to enabling and preventing results being achieved.

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## Initials and abbreviations

ABC	Associated Bodies of Conservators (operated as TCF, now NCCR)
ABPR	Association of British Picture Restorers (now BAPCR)
AC	Accreditation Committee (of professional body participating in PACR)
ACR	Accredited Conservator-Restorer
APEL	Accrediting prior experiential learning
ASC	Appeals Sub-Committee (of NCCR Professional Standards Board)
BAFRA	British Antique Furniture Restorers' Association
BAPCR	British Association of Picture Conservator-Restorers (formerly ABPR)
BHI	British Horological Institute
BSMGP	British Society of Master Glass Painters
CCF	Care of Collections Forum
CHNTO	Cultural Heritage National Training Organisation
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CNAA	Council for National Academic Awards (now disbanded)
CoOL	Conservation On Line
ConsDir	Conservation Directory, part of Conservation On Line
CPD	Continuing / continuous professional development
C-R	Conservator-restorer
DipHE	Diploma of higher education
DistList	Distribution List, international conservation email newsletter
DProf	Doctor of Professional Studies
ECCO	European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations
ENCoRE	European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education
EU	European Union
FULCO	Framework of universal levels of competence (EU-funded project)
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
HS	Historic Scotland
ICHAWI	Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works in Ireland
ICOM-CC	International Council for Museums - Committee for Conservation
ICT	Information and communications technology
IIC	International Institute for Conservation
IMCPD	Integrity Management and Compliance Practice Diploma
InCCA	Inter-consortium Credit Agreement
IPC	Institute of Paper Conservation
IPCRA	Irish Professional Conservators and Restorers Association
JAG	Joint Accreditation Group
LtW	Learning through Work (a Ufi programme)
MA	Master of Arts; Museums Association
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MEd	Master of Education
MEng	Master of Engineering
METO	Management and Enterprise Training Organisation (now disbanded)
MGC	Museums and Galleries Commission (now Resource)
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
MProf	Master of Professional Studies

MSc	Master of Science
MTI	Museum Training Institute (now CHNTO)
NCCR	National Council for Conservation-Restoration
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications (now QCA)
NICATS	Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
NSCG	Natural Sciences Conservation Group
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NWBL	Negotiated work-based learning
PACR	Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers
PB	Professional Body (participating in PACR)
PCF	Preventive Conservation Forum
PGDip	Postgraduate Diploma
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PhMCG	Photographic Materials Conservation Group
PSB	Professional Standards Board (of NCCR)
QA	Quality assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RCA	Royal College of Arts
SCB	Scottish Conservation Bureau
SEEC	Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer
SEGELL	Second-Generation Learning Log (a Ufi project)
SoA	Society of Archivists
SoA-PCG	Society of Archivists Preservation and Conservation Group
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSCR	Scottish Society for Conservation and Restoration
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
TCF	The Conservation Forum (now NCCR)
Ufi	Ufi Ltd, the 'University for Industry' / Learndirect
UKIC	United Kingdom Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
V&A	Victoria & Albert Museum
WBL	Work-based learning

## Appendix: Meeting the doctoral criteria

<i>Area</i>	<i>Project demonstrates...</i>
<b>COGNITIVE</b>	
Knowledge	Depth of knowledge in the project area which draws on interdisciplinary theory and experience relating to education, assessment, professionalisation and development and research methodologies. Uses synthesis of ideas from these fields to take forward a field of action through practical systems development, and to develop critical, practical theory. Use of knowledge to challenge thinking and move the client bodies forward and contribute to furthering ideas in the field of practice.
Analysis	Critical analysis of current thinking and practice (e.g. CPD, NVQs, professionalisation, professional qualifications) including identifying contradictions and incompatibilities between purposes and practices in areas such as CPD, professionalisation and qualifications frameworks, and proposing means of overcoming them; analysis and interpretation of information and feedback from diverse sources in assessing the context and impact of the project.
Synthesis	Drawing together and developing ideas leading to changed conceptions and practices in relation to professionalisation, accreditation and CPD; development of ideas relating to for instance qualification frameworks and the limits of professionalisation; synthesis of diverse information to in developing the conceptual basis and practical details of the project.
Evaluation	Evaluation of ideas and practices of accreditation, qualification and CPD; evaluation of project cycles, initial and potential impact of the project and the associated professionalisation process; evaluation of learning points for wider application.
<b>TRANSFERABLE SKILLS</b>	
Reflection	Reflection on current (e.g. CPD and practice-based assessment) and proposed (as represented in PACR) practices and associated theories; engagement in critical dialogue with the conservation practitioner and academic communities; development of new ideas and associated approaches to practice; reflection on own roles, practice and development through the project.
Planning and management	Project planning and management in development and implementation phases; a self-directed approach to the project, client relationships and to own practice development; awareness of political and contextual issues relating to professional relationships, management of change and interests of the client bodies and other stakeholders in PACR and the broader professionalisation process.

Problem solving	Problem-setting and problem-solving / outcome generation at practical and conceptual levels, including problematising situations (e.g. the impact of professionalisation) and generating new ways forward; overcoming differences and dilemmas between different perspectives and demands in the development of a common accreditation framework.
Communication and presentation	Communication including one-to-one, through client liaison and committee meetings, workshops, briefings and conferences, academic and client papers; sensitivity to individual and political issues.
Research capability	Development of methodologies for development projects to produce practical outcomes (action research / systems methods) and learning points relevant to wider application (case-study approach); balancing of ideal approaches with practicalities available in the situation (e.g. time, costs and willingness of client groups to participate); development of personal practice based on a combination of phenomenological and systemic principles.
<b>OPERATIONAL CONTEXT</b>	
Context	Development and implementation consultancy in a complex and evolving professional environment, in a national and to a lesser extent international context; engaging with issues relating both to the positioning of the client profession in its context, and the wider context of qualifications, professionalisation and professional development; working with client and associated communities of practice in formal and informal relationships.
Responsibility	Responsibility for design, professional advice and project development as an autonomous consultant working in a realisation relationship with a professional community; responsibility for own consultancy and development business; developing practical intellectual leadership in an area of expertise and taking forward an area of practice.
Ethical understanding	Awareness of ethical dilemmas arising in the development of the project (e.g. professional boundaries and potential exclusion), and proposing means of moving beyond them; management of the roles of the consultant / developer / researcher including problematic issues in the consultant-client relationship; understanding of ethical issues within the client profession and within the cultural heritage sector; understanding and management of potential role-conflicts.

## Annex A.

### Published and pending journal articles

Ref	Title	Publication details	Date written
A1	<a href="#">The Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers: developing a competence-based professional assessment system</a>	<i>Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education</i> , vol 25 no 4 (2000), pp 411-423	7/1999
A2	<a href="#">Professional bodies, CPD and informal learning: the case of conservation</a>	<i>Continuing Professional Development</i> , vol 2 no 4 (1999), pp 110-121	8/1999
A3	<a href="#">Assessing professional practice 'in the field': experiences from the Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers</a>	<i>Research in Post-Compulsory Education</i> , vol 6 no 2 (2001), pp 173-183	4/2001
A4	<a href="#">Professional accreditation and NVQs: an exchange of experience</a>	<i>Journal of Vocational Education and Training</i> , vol 53 no 4 (2001), pp 577-593	5/2001
A5	<a href="#">Becoming a profession: conservation in the United Kingdom</a>	<i>Journal of the Society of Archivists</i> , vol 23 no 1 (2002), pp 87-94	8/2001
A6	<a href="#">The construction of qualification levels and frameworks: issues from three UK projects</a>	<i>Higher Education Quarterly</i> , vol 55 no 4 (2001), pp 396-415	9/2001
A7	<a href="#">Qualifications in professional development: a discussion with reference to conservators in the UK and Ireland</a>	<i>Studies in Continuing Education</i> , refereed and pending publication	1/2002
A8	<a href="#">Becoming a qualifying profession: a case-study from the heritage sector</a>	In discussion with Professional Development Foundation for journal special edition	5/2002

Papers A1-A7 can be found at [www.devmts.co.uk](http://www.devmts.co.uk) > publications. Paper A8 was not published but it was adapted for the background to a paper entitled "Putting conservation's professional qualification in context," *The Conservator* 31 (2008), pp5-18, which also summarises more recent developments.

## Annex B.

### **Papers prepared for the Joint Accreditation Group and the National Council for Conservation-Restoration**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Pages</b>
<a href="#">B1</a>	Professional Accreditation of Conservators: Discussion paper for an open meeting	S Lester	11/1998	10
<a href="#">B2</a>	Professional Accreditation of Conservators: Relationships between accreditation and qualifications	S Lester	5/1999	4
<a href="#">B3</a>	Report on development and trialling	S Lester	6/1999	14
<a href="#">B4</a>	Report on the first round of accreditation and issues raised	S Lester	4/2001	18
<a href="#">B5</a>	Feedback from the Continuing Professional Development workshops	S Lester	6/2001	3
<a href="#">B6</a>	Feedback from employing, commissioning and funding organisations	S Lester	3/2002	6
<a href="#">B7</a>	Practitioner survey 2002	S Lester	3/2002	7
<a href="#">B8</a>	PACR: issues post-Round 2	S Lester	4/2002	8
<a href="#">B9</a>	Towards a common accreditation framework?	S Lester	5/2002	14

**These papers are not available electronically but are included in the bound thesis in the Middlesex University library.**

## Annex C.

### The PACR documents

The following documents and supplementary guidance are the versions which were used in cycle 3. As described in the main narrative, documents 1-5 were initially finalised for June 1999, with some details being revised after cycle 2. Documents 6 and 7 were first produced in 2001.

Ref	Title	Principal author	Date	Pages
C1	Introduction to the PACR scheme	S Lester	April 2001	20
C2	Candidate guide	S Lester	April 2001	18
C3	Assessor guide	S Lester	April 2001	16
C4	Application and assessment record (including the professional standards)	S Lester	April 2001	49
C5	Continuing professional development	S Lester	April 2001	11
C6	Implementation regulations	C Woods	August 2001	
C7	Accreditation Committee guide	S Lester	March 2001	16

These papers are not available electronically but are included in the bound thesis in the Middlesex University library. Current details of PACR / professional practice assessment can be found on the Institute of Conservation web site, [www.icon.org.uk](http://www.icon.org.uk), under 'accreditation' or 'ACR status.'