A Guide to Qualifications and Careers in Arboriculture

(Arboricultural Association
January 2011)

Arboriculture - the production and management of trees and woody plants where amenity is a primary objective. Examples of arboricultural activities include tree planting, surgery, inspection, strategic planning, management and the provision of tree related advice.

Arboricultural careers - starting

There are a number of ways of starting a career:

**Practical** - undertaking tree planting, pruning, felling and other maintenance tasks (people commonly called arborists or tree surgeons). Because tree climbing and the use of arboricultural machinery is potentially dangerous there is a need for adequate training and certification before commencement.

Most employers will help employees gain certification whilst working but basic chainsaw certification is a legal requirement and is likely to be necessary before gaining employment (see Competence-Based Craft-Level Awards following).

**Training** - there is a growing range of qualifications at various levels available to people wanting to start (and progress) a career in arboriculture. The most appropriate qualification will depend on the person's age, experience, existing qualifications and aspirations. The main arboricultural qualifications are shown below.

**A combination of the two** - e.g. day release, block release or distance learning whilst undertaking a practical job.

**Apprenticeships** - an Apprenticeship is a government funded work-based training programme aimed primarily at young people.

Apprenticeships offer people the opportunity to "earn and learn", to learn the skills they need through a combination of work-based and off the job training, whilst being employed.

Apprentices undertake Level 2 work based Qualifications (formally NVQ’s) in arboriculture and tree work, certificates of competence in the safe use of chainsaws and pesticides, first aid training and functional skills such as English, mathematics and information technology.

See the Lantra website for more details: [http://www.lantra.co.uk/apprenticeships](http://www.lantra.co.uk/apprenticeships) or e-mail apprenticeships@lantra.co.uk or telephone 02476 858424.

**Career Progression**

A practical, academic or combined background can be a sound footing for moving into a managerial role:

**Local Government** - the 'Tree Officer' has considerable influence over prominent amenity trees and is usually either
- Planning based - administering tree protection law and having most influence over privately owned trees, or
- Parks based - managing a council's own tree stock and advising the council on tree health and safety management issues.

**Arboricultural Consultant** - an arboricultural consultant provides advice to tree owners and managers.

**Arboricultural Contractor** - a successful practical arboriculture ('tree surgery') company will require effective management and control, often by a person who has worked their way up through the company. Depending on the size of the company they may still undertake some practical tasks or may be devoted solely to its management.

**Professional Accreditation**

Various industry bodies provide accreditation schemes covering these two main areas of arboriculture:

**For Consultants**
The AA offers the Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant (AARC) scheme - a status that is conferred upon consultants who can demonstrate that they are competent in the wide field of arboricultural consultancy and communicate information to a range of client types from small domestic clients to planning inspectors, magistrates etc.

The Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) also offers accreditation by awarding Chartered status to arboriculturists who meet similar criteria.

**For Contractors**

For individual arborists the EAC and the ISA offer accreditation that demonstrates practical competence with underpinning knowledge.

For arboricultural contracting companies the AA offers the Arboricultural Association Approved Contractor (AAAC) scheme - a status that can be achieved by a company of any size, demonstrating that it is competent in the field of arboricultural contracting tasks within a culture of health and safety and customer care.
The framework, levels and features of the main arboricultural qualifications and career opportunities

Please note: The structure of the current range of UK accredited qualifications, ‘The National Qualifications Framework’, is being replaced by a new, modularised system called ‘The Qualifications and Credit Framework’ (QCF). This work is being carried out from 2010 to 2012. The details below are therefore subject to changes being introduced during this period and reflect a mixture of the existing and new qualification titles and levels. Levels are related to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) unless otherwise stated. When annotated by the letters QCF the qualification has been updated to the new Qualification and Credit Framework. Where an existing NQF qualification has been confirmed to be phased out in favour of a new QCF qualification, this is shown as ‘to be replaced by’. Qualification levels for some qualifications are "notional only", i.e. have not been formally accredited within the framework. The type, location and duration of study and assessment methods are a guide only and may vary between centres.

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**Craft level**

**QCF Level 2 Awards or Diplomas**
- Arboriculture: Work place, own pace assessed
- QCF Level 3 Awards or Diplomas: Work place, own pace, assessed

**Craft/foremen level**

**Supervisory level**

**QCF Level 3 Awards or Diplomas**
- Arboriculture and Diplomas both at level 4: Centre based, DR, PT or DL, examinations
- AA Technician’s Certificate to be replaced by RFS Professional Diploma level 6: Centre based, DR or PT, examinations

**QCF Level 3 Certificate, Subsidiary Diploma, Diploma or Extended Diploma**
- QCF Level 3 Certificate, Subsidiary Diploma: Centre based, 1 yr FT, internal assessment
- QCF Level 3 Certificate, Extended Certificate or Diploma: Centre based, 1 yr FT, internal assessment
- Higher National Diploma level 5: College FT or PT, 2-3 yrs, exam and assessment

**Vocational Qualifications**

**QCF Competence Awards e.g. chainsaw assessments**

**Professional Qualifications**

**DR = Day release PT = Part time FT = Full time DL = Distance learning OnL = On line**

**QCF Certificate Centre based, DR or PT, 1 yr, Internal assessment**
- AA Technician’s Certificate to be replaced by RFS Professional Diploma level 6: Centre based, DR, PT or DL, examinations

**QCF Level 2 Certificate, Extended Certificate or Diploma Centre based, 1 yr FT, Internal assessment**
- QCF Level 3 Certificate, Subsidiary Diploma, Diploma or Extended Diploma: Centre based, DR or PT, examinations

**Academic Qualifications**

**City & Guilds Tree Surgery. College, 8-10 wk FT**
- Higher National Certificate level 4: Course FT or PT, 2 yrs, exam and assessment

**Foundation Degree(FD Sc) level 5**
- College, 2-3 yrs, FT or PT, exam and assessment (may not exist beyond 2010)

**Honours Degree, BSc (Hons) level 6**
- College, FD Sc plus 1 yr, exam and assessment

**Masters Degree (MSc) level 7**
- BSc + 1 yr or more FT, PT or OnL, research, exam and assessment

**Doctorate (PhD) level 8**
- BSc + MSc + 1 yr or more, FT or PT research, exam and assessment

**Career Opportunities**

**Arborist’s assistant**
- Climber
- Self-employed contractor

**Owner/manager of tree work company**
- Arboricultural contracts manager
- Tree officer (arboriculture/woodland)
Background Information

Arboricultural Qualifications

Qualifications can be:

• **Vocational** (e.g. chainsaw certification (see below), work based qualifications and apprenticeships). These are competence based awards achieved by the assessment of work-based skills often at the workplace. Assessment may be continuous and arranged to suit the candidate. The AA's accreditation schemes for Consultants (AARC) and Contractors (AAAC) also fit into this category of qualification.

• **Professional** (e.g. level 2, 4 and 6 Certificates and Diplomas in Arboriculture). Organised by industry bodies and studied at home or on day/block release, candidates enjoy being able to work (and earn) whilst learning and apply learning immediately to the workplace. It requires personal discipline, out-of-hours study, expenditure on books and usually concludes with an examination.

• **Academic** (e.g., Level 2 and 3 Certificates and Diplomas in Arboriculture, University Degrees etc) Studied full or part time through a college or university. Candidates enjoy a structured and well resourced college learning environment; some may receive grants and may benefit from distance learning opportunities and continuous assessment. This type of study can take 1-3 years.

Competence-Based Awards

Chainsaw units range from on ground chainsaw use and felling to aerial use of a chainsaw in dismantling operations. There are specialised units for work near electricity services. Units also exist for other arboricultural machinery operation (e.g. wood chippers, stump grinders, mobile elevating work platforms) and skills (e.g. planting, cable bracing, hand tool pruning etc.).

Further details can be obtained by contacting your local college, independent trainer or from City&Guilds Land Based Services or Lantra Awards. The possession of relevant certificates of competence will be extremely helpful in gaining work with arboricultural contracting firms.

Continuing Professional Development

Career progression will usually be matched to the arboriculturist's personal development or 'continuing professional development' (CPD). It is important to keep a record of CPD.

CPD can take a variety of forms:

• Formal training resulting in an academic or vocational qualification (see diagram above). Arboriculturists should consult with the training provider regarding the suitability of the qualification for their intended career progression and regarding pre-entry qualifications (if any)

• Specialist training e.g. conferences, seminars and workshops arranged by trade and professional organisations.

• Reading trade magazines and Journals, committee or project work as part of a trade or professional organisation and networking.

Professional Memberships

Membership of a professional organisation helps you keep up to date with industry developments, training events and sometimes employment opportunities.

The Arboricultural Association has a well-defined membership structure. Progression to and through the professional membership grades is dependent on qualifications attained (currently level 3 for entry at Technician membership level and level 4 for professional level) and in the case of Fellowship additional criteria including a satisfactory CPD record.

Membership of other organisations may be beneficial and in some cases prerequisite to sitting their examinations.

Further Information

The Arboricultural Association's web site contains useful information with links to colleges and other organisations offering arboricultural training and qualifications. The Association's own academic qualification (Certificate and Diploma at level 4 in Arboriculture) and its two accreditation schemes AARC and AAAC are shown. Job adverts may also be shown.

Arboricultural Association
www.trees.org.uk
Institute of Chartered Foresters
www.charteredforesters.org
International Society of Arboriculture
www.isa-uki.org
Lantra Awards
www.lantra-awards.co.uk
NPTC / City&Guilds Land Based Services
www.nptc.org.uk
Royal Forestry Society
www.rfs.org.uk
European Arboricultural Council (EAC)
http://www.eac-arboriculture.com
ABC Awards
http://www.abcawards.co.uk
Edexcel
http://www.edexcel.org.uk