

Applicants' Guide For Full Member Grade MAHI

April 2017

What is interpretation?

Interpretation is primarily a communication process that helps people make sense of, and understand more about, heritage. It can:

- Bring meaning to your natural or cultural heritage, enhancing visitor appreciation and promoting better learning and understanding. As a result your visitors are more likely to care for what they identify as a precious resource.
- Enhance the visitor experience, resulting in longer stays and repeat visits. This can lead to increased income and create employment opportunities.
- Enable communities to come together and better understand their heritage, and to express their own ideas and feelings about their heritage.

What is AHI?

Heritage interpreters come from all walks of life. They are teachers, storytellers, performers, writers, artists, curators, designers and scientists. They are often creative and usually passionate about nature, history or art. Above all, they are skilled communicators in one way or another.

Heritage interpreters are professionals with their own professional body – the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI).

AHI aims to promote excellence in the practice and provision of interpretation and to gain wider recognition of interpretation as a professional activity.

The Association for Heritage Interpretation works to:

- Encourage excellence in interpretation
- Promote professionalism in interpretation

- Facilitate discussion and exchange of ideas
- Support a wide range of organisations in their service to visitors
- Develop and recognise best practice

AHI's activities

AHI offers a focus for ideas, debate and networking. We bring together people actively involved or concerned with interpretation of natural and cultural heritage. Some work as interpretation or heritage officers, rangers or countryside managers, others as designers or illustrators, performers, planners, teachers, curators, consultants, academics or in many other professions with an interest in our heritage.

Members work for government agencies, local authorities, museums and galleries, charitable trusts, colleges and universities or tourism organisations, or they run their own businesses. Many university and college libraries are also members. If you're working, training or just keenly interested in heritage interpretation, then AHI is for you.

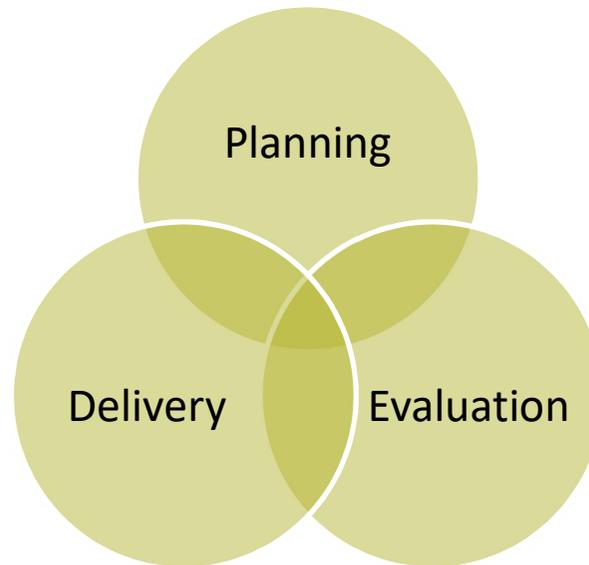
Why should I become a Full Member?

Ultimately AHI wants all heritage interpreters to be recognised as professionals and for their professionalism. Full Member status helps raise the profile of heritage interpreters and interpretation as a profession. We want you to be recognised for the great work that you do.

OK, so how do I actually become a Full Member?

In order to become a Full Member, and to use the letters 'MAHI' after your name, we need you to fill in a form that clearly highlights your **work-place experience**. Typically you will have spent a **minimum of three years working in a heritage interpretation role**. This role can be a specialist interpretation role, for example a designer, writer, guide, live interpreter. You don't need to have written a 100 page interpretation masterplan nor managed a multi-million pound museum

interpretation development, you just need to have worked in heritage interpretation in your field and be able to demonstrate three core competencies¹:



Interpretation planning here is understood as: a process to help guide delivery and evaluation of interpretation. Planning should include consideration of relevant factors such as objectives, resources, audiences, messages and suitable media.

¹The core competencies have been mapped to the European Qualification Framework (EQF)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Qualifications_Framework. Interpretation planning and delivery competencies equate to EQF level 5 and interpretation evaluation to EQF level 4.

Specialists in particular media can choose to show their planning competence with respect to that discipline only, for example an experienced guide can demonstrate their planning competencies in relation to planning their guided tours or walks.

Interpretation delivery here is understood as: employing suitable media to deliver the planned interpretation. Delivery can relate to the design or development of content for a range of media including face to face such as guided experiences and live interpretation, displays, exhibits, interactives and virtual media.

Interpretation evaluation here is understood as: formal or informal, qualitative or quantitative evaluation techniques that are used to inform and improve interpretation development and delivery. It can include watching visitors, talking to visitors after interpretation has taken place, questionnaires, online feedback, peer observation and many other methods. Again if a specialist in one form of media e.g. design, writing, live interpretation, then evaluation competencies can be demonstrated in that form.

Choose your words carefully... and don't forget your supporting evidence!

Whatever you write in the form must clearly demonstrate your understanding of the three core competencies. We require:

A minimum of **four pieces of evidence** and a maximum of six to support your application. Each piece of evidence should be referred to throughout the form and must clearly state the role **you** played in its delivery. The same piece of evidence (e.g. a plan or example of media) can be used to illustrate different competencies.

The above pieces of evidence can be supplied in a variety of formats – written document, photograph, audio or film. Please don't worry about trying to stun us with your creativity or submit 'War and Peace'. Your evidence can be as varied as a short video of you delivering a guided walk, an interpretation plan, a photograph of an exhibition you worked on with a description, or a brief you have produced for a designer. What is important is that you tell us how this piece of evidence demonstrates that you are competent.

Other than your evidence-based workplace experience **other factors** that can be taken into consideration are:

- Academic qualifications achieved
- Professional training/vocational courses undertaken
- Contributions made to the profession (papers/publications etc.)

If you refer to these **other factors** then you must be able to demonstrate how they contribute to your knowledge and understanding of the interpretive competencies.

and finally... tell us who can vouch for your work

We'll need you to provide the name of a referee that can vouch for your work as a heritage interpreter. The AHI Office, on behalf of the Membership Panel, will make contact with your named referee to obtain a short reference. We will expect this reference to outline:

- The referee's relationship to you
- Confirmation that the referee can vouch for your work as a heritage interpreter
- A brief outline of the referee's understanding of the work experience you have

What happens after I've filled in the form?

Send your completed form and your evidence to the AHI Office admin@ahi.org.uk who will pass it on to the Membership Panel. The Membership Panel is an experienced and trained team of volunteers working on behalf of AHI to appraise all of the Full Member applications.

The decision made by the Membership Panel will either be:

- Pass – you are awarded MAHI status
- Pending – you are advised to provide more evidence before MAHI status is awarded. The Membership Panel will offer guidance and suggestions on where the gaps in evidence or experience and make suggestions to help you achieve the MAHI.

Good luck!