

Professional qualifications: a CILIP perspective

MARGARET WATSON

Certificazione delle competenze: il punto di vista del CILIP

CILIP [Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals] è la più grande associazione britannica di bibliotecari e professionisti dell'informazione. Un nuovo sistema di abilitazioni alla professione è stato lanciato nell'aprile 2005. Alla base di esso sta il Body of Professional Knowledge che è usato per l'accREDITAMENTO dei corsi di istruzione superiore e per la programmazione dello sviluppo della professionalità (CPD). La struttura si compone di 4 elementi: Certification per i livelli para-professionali; Chartered membership per professionisti all'inizio della carriera; Revalidation per professionisti già accreditati; Fellowship, che è la qualificazione più elevata. Importanti caratteristiche di tutte le certificazioni sono il legame con l'esercizio della professione, l'esame delle competenze e il tutoraggio. Gli scopi generali del sistema di certificazione sono di aumentare le opportunità e il raggiungimento dei risultati sperati per i membri dell'associazione, e di assicurare i più alti livelli di qualità professionale.

Parole chiave: Certificazione delle competenze dei professionisti I&D in Gran Bretagna - CILIP [Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals] - Associazioni professionali in Gran Bretagna

Introduction

CILIP: The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals is the major professional body for those working in library and information services in the United Kingdom. It was formed in April 2002 through the unification of the Library Association (founded in 1877) and the Institute of Information Scientists (formed in 1957). CILIP has over 22,000 members, in the UK and overseas, who work in a wide range of organisations. All aspects of CILIP's work are governed by its Council, supported by Committees, Panels, and Boards, drawn from the Members of CILIP. CILIP has 12 regional branches, including the Home Nations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), and 27 specialist interest groups; as part of their subscription Members join a regional branch and two special interest groups. Under the terms of its Royal Charter CILIP has a duty to promote the

knowledge skills and qualifications of its 22,000 members.

One element of CILIP's mission is to:

«Enable its members to achieve and maintain the highest professional standards in all aspects of delivering an information service, both for the professional and public good».

CILIP recognises the importance of initial education and training and also of continuing professional development. CILIP's policy, therefore, is to improve all aspects of professional practice through its work in education, maintaining a framework of universally recognised qualifications and providing a wide range of opportunities for CPD. In 2002 CILIP undertook a review of its qualifications framework to ensure it was 'fit for purpose' in the 21st century. The new framework was launched in April 2005.

CILIP framework of qualifications

The aims of the framework are to enhance opportunities and reward achievement for all of our members. The framework offers a matrix of pathways towards professional qualification. A matrix is necessary to enable members of CILIP to access the qualifications at the most appropriate level for them and their employers. We have found that our members are working in a very diverse range of employment and are now entering the profession with a wide range of educational qualifications and work experience.

There are four elements to the framework: Certification, Chartered Membership, Revalidation and Fellowship. Before discussing each element in more detail, it is important to consider the Body of Professional Knowledge (BPK), which underpins the framework. Every professional association requires a knowledge base, which describes the specialist subject knowledge that practitioners are, expected to acquire for current and future professional practice. CILIP has worked with library and information science educators in the Universities on revising the BPK. The BPK sets out the broad framework of areas of knowledge and practice that characterise information and library work. It is designed to be flexible and adaptable, as the areas will evolve and develop over time to accommodate changing needs. It is appropriate to library and information professionals across the sector as a whole. It also has a degree of overlap with the knowledge bases of other professions, such as the British Computer Society, UK Council for Health Information Professionals and the Records Management Society, whose activities are also concerned with those carried out in the library and information environments.

Body of Professional Knowledge

The BPK has three elements:

- A core schema which outlines the very specific knowledge and skills required by information professionals
- The applications environment which contextualises the knowledge and skills
- The generic and transferable skills that complement the specialist knowledge .¹

The BPK will be used both for CILIP accreditation of university courses in the UK and for individual members to assist them in planning their professional development. In the near future a matrix of skills and competences, based on the concepts of the BPK, for para-professional staff and new professionals will also be available on the website.

CILIP is usually closely involved with the planning of new courses and already accredits library and information science courses, at both undergraduate and masters levels, at eighteen universities in the UK. Each university submits documentation in a required format to CILIP and the decision to approve courses is made by members of the Accreditation Board. Where necessary, as in the case of a new course, visits are made to the university. In the UK the subject review of all higher education programmes is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). CILIP asks for all QAA reviews to form part of the accreditation documentation.

From late 2005 CILIP will also award a 'seal of recognition' to training providers who offer an approved professional development activity. This 'seal of recognition' will mean that CILIP believes that a particular training activity will benefit members and help them to build their portfolio of continuing professional development.

The framework of qualifications

The new framework was launched in April 2005. From January 2005 CILIP ran pilots in two English regions. Information gained from the pilots informed the process and documentation. CILIP hopes to award its first certification awards at the CILIP Umbrella Conference in Manchester in June 2005.

¹ Cf. <www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/bpk>.

Important features of the framework

At each level of the framework the emphasis is on evidence-based practice. CILIP expects applicants to present evidence of their professional expertise and development. The focus is on learned outcomes from experience and training. CILIP wishes to develop reflective practitioners who take personal responsibility for updating, enhancing and implementing their knowledge and skills. A wide range of work-based learning, training activities, research, and scholarly contribution will be accepted as evidence of continuing professional development. All applicants will submit a portfolio, which will include a CV, a personal development plan, a personal reflective statement, which addresses the criteria for each award, and evidence of the experience and training undertaken. Increasingly all handbooks, forms for application, and supporting CPD tools will be available through the website: <www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/FrameworkofQualifications>.

The framework has been closely mapped to the new National Qualifications Framework in the UK and to the new CPD Framework for the Health Service. CILIP is now working with other European partners to ensure that there is equivalence between the British model and the European CERTIDoc.

CILIP acknowledges the importance of working with employers, other associations and training providers to avoid duplication. Partnerships and collaboration across the different sectors is seen as an important element in the delivery of the CILIP CPD programme. There are many examples of successful collaboration at both regional and national level. The next stage will be to collaborate with European partners to ensure mobility for information professionals and recognition for equivalent qualifications.

One of the most important features of CILIP framework is the Mentor Scheme. It will be compulsory for all Chartership candidates, advisory for Certification candidates and voluntary for other members. Many employers already operate successful mentor schemes, and CILIP will encourage the continuance of those schemes. CILIP's own register of mentors will be to support members who do not have access to a mentor scheme, or who wish to seek a mentor outside their own organisation. CILIP will maintain a register of mentors. We are currently starting to recruit mentors and training will be provided free of charge within the regions and Home Nations. Support for mentors and mentees will also be provided locally through the Career Development Group and the Personnel, Training and Education Group (two of CILIP's specialist groups). Overseas members will be allocated virtual mentors to support them in preparing for each element of the framework.

CILIP has also decided to decentralise some of the assessment for its professional

qualifications. The Chartership Board, which is CILIP's equivalent of a university examination board, is responsible for examining applications for Chartership and Fellowship. Assessment for Certification and Revalidation will be the responsibility of CILIP Assessment Panels in the regions and Home Nations. We are recruiting for assessors to join these panels. Training will be provided free of charge to members. Members of the Chartership Board will act as moderators and review the work of the panels. The Chartership Board will also assess any applications from overseas members.

The four elements of the framework

Certification scheme

This new award, which will confer the post-nominal ACLIP on successful completion, is for para-professionals and support workers in libraries and information services, for example, library assistants, information technicians, or learning resource technicians. There are two categories of applicants: firstly, those para-professionals who have been working in libraries and information services for more than five years (full-time equivalent) and secondly, those who have been working for two years and have evidence of training. The second category will eventually become the standard form of entry. The application is by portfolio. The portfolio includes a personal statement reflecting on learning outcomes from experience and training, a personal development plan, a Curriculum Vitae, and evidence of training and/or development activities undertaken. There is now a recognised pathway to Chartered membership for members who have been awarded ACLIP.²

Chartership

Chartered membership of CILIP is the 'Gold standard' for the profession. It is not an academic qualification but a recognition of the highest standards of professional practice and a commitment by the individual to undertake continuing professional development. It is accredited by the Open University and recognised globally. Normally applicants will have completed a degree in Library and Information Science and have been working for at least one year. Members who have obtained ACLIP can now also register for Chartership. Applicants use the BPK to plan their professional development and submit that to CILIP. They then undertake the

² Cf. <www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/FrameworkofQualifications/certification>.

necessary development and training activities and submit their portfolio to meet the criteria for the award .³

Revalidation scheme

This is the other new element in the framework. As already mentioned all Chartered Members have a commitment to improving and enhancing professional practice. This is increasingly important in the rapidly changing library and information sector. With many regulatory professional bodies now requiring formal revalidation it is important that CILIP offers that formal recognition to their members. The scheme, which is voluntary, is based on best practice both in the library and information sector and in other relevant sectors. There are clearly benefits for both individuals and employers; individuals have recognition of their CPD and employers can structure their own workforce development programmes within an externally recognised framework. The revalidation period is three years and members are expected to make use of a wide range of training and development activities during that period. A logbook is kept and submitted annually and then, at the end of the three years, a portfolio is submitted. The portfolio is assessed by the regional assessment panels. As with the other elements of the framework, the focus is on reflective practice and applicants must give evidence that they meet the criteria for the award .⁴

Fellowship

Fewest changes have been made to Fellowship, which is the highest level of professional qualification awarded by CILIP, and recognises a high level of personal commitment and achievement. Fellowship is open to any member who has been chartered for six years or more and who has made a significant contribution to the profession. There is new pathway for those members who have gone through two successful cycles of revalidation .⁵

Conclusion

With the new framework CILIP hopes to have provided a robust and rigorous

³ Cf. <www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/FrameworkofQualifications/charteredmem>.

⁴ Cf. <www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/FrameworkofQualifications/revalidation>.

⁵ Cf. <www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/FrameworkofQualifications/fellowship>.

professional qualifications matrix which is 'fit for purpose' in the twenty first century. CILIP seeks both to enhance opportunities for professional development and to reward the achievement of its members. Full details of the framework are available on the CILIP website and any questions should be sent to <quals@cilip.org>.

