

# FARMER

*Forum for Archives and Records Management Education and Research*

## **Guidance to those wishing apply for postgraduate training in archives and records management**

### **Background and Purpose**

At the end of 2002 the Society of Archivists' Education and Training Development Committee asked the Forum for Archives and Records Management Education and Research (FARMER) to supply guidelines for graduates planning to apply for any of the accredited courses in archives and records management in the UK. These guidelines (generally known as the FARMER guidelines) have been revised in line with current requirements and now exist in two versions, one for organisations and one for applicants.<sup>1</sup>

This guidance is relevant to all applicants and all programmes, although would-be applicants should also study guidance provided by individual programmes, which may have additional requirements.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Aim**

To assist potential applicants in understanding the range of knowledge, skills and experience normally expected prior to undertaking postgraduate programmes in archives and records management.

#### **Objectives**

1. To supply broad outlines of the knowledge, skills and experience against which candidates will be assessed when applying for postgraduate programmes in archives and records management.
2. To help would be applicants to obtain the knowledge, skills and experience which will benefit them on the programmes and help them to obtain their first professional post
3. To assist applicants in assessing the value of potential 'pre-course experience' offered by record keeping organisations and to make active choices in building a portfolio of relevant experience

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<sup>1</sup> The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education subject benchmark statement for Librarianship and Information Management, which includes archives and records management, describes the required standards for the award of qualifications at undergraduate level and articulates the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should attain. <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/benchmark/librarianship.pdf>

## Requirements

### Knowledge

On application to postgraduate programmes candidates should ensure that they understand and can discuss the following:

- The importance and purpose of records management and archives management for society and individuals
- Current profile of record keeping within the public, higher education, commercial and specialist sectors
- Relationship of organisations with their users and other stakeholders
- Key archives/ records management organisations and associations
- Legislative and standards environments at a basic level
- Types of available employment in the domain
- Current professional issues and drivers

### Experience

All courses expect applicants to have some pre-course record keeping experience in an appropriate environment. Many applicants will have up to a year's such experience: however it is less the *length* of experience than its *quality*, and the use the student makes of it which is important. FARMER does not wish to be prescriptive about the time spent on pre-course placements and recognises that visits and short-term experience as well as work experience outside specifically record keeping environments can be used to great advantage by would-be applicants. However applicants might find it useful to try to acquire the following experience within a record-keeping environment:

- Experience of working (either as an employee or as a volunteer or intern), whether in archives or records management
- Observation of how a particular service fulfils its mission on an annual and daily basis
- Participation in organisational/service functions (eg acquisition, preservation, access) and activities (eg filing, surveying, storage, retrieval, description, outreach)
- Interaction with client groups (external users, internal colleagues etc)
- Awareness of how a particular service publicises its activities
- Attendance at staff and user/client meetings (eg team meetings, Friends' or user-group meetings, outreach activities)
- Attendance at professional meetings or training events

### General transferable skills

The Diploma which is the minimum professional qualification is taught as part of a Master's course and therefore applicants will be expected to have both the attributes required for Master's level education and for subsequent professional practice. These include the capacity to:

- Undertake a Master's level degree (requires an undergraduate degree, usually at 2:1 level or above)
- Use basic computing skills (word processing, e-mail, spreadsheets, internet)
- Recognise the links between theory, practice and work experience
- Reflect critically on their own learning and experience
- Communicate in a clear, systematic and concise way both orally and in writing
- Structure an argument based on appropriate evidence
- Interact effectively with colleagues, users and other stakeholders
- Work in groups or teams as team member or leader