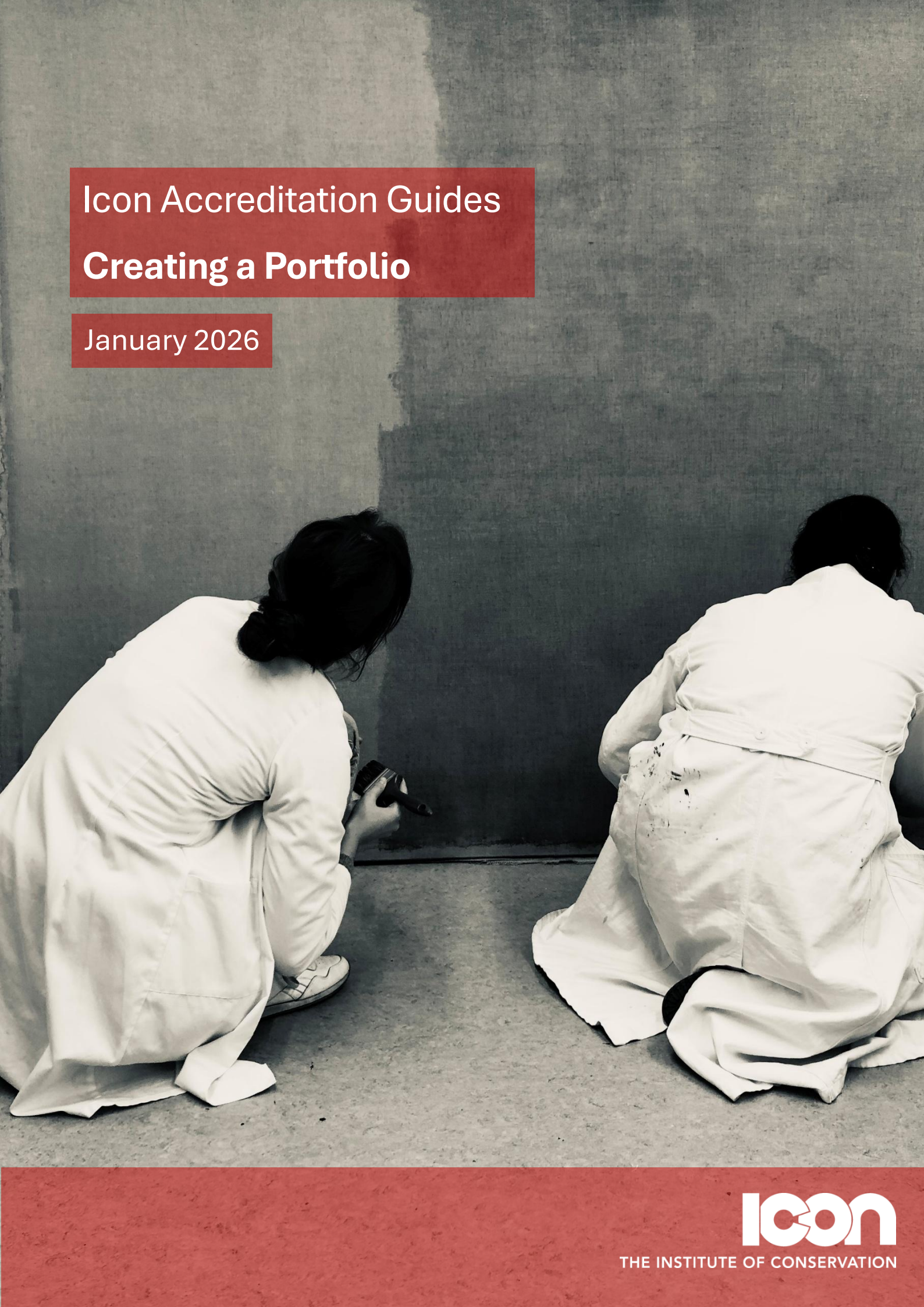




Icon Accreditation Guides

Creating a Portfolio

January 2026

Icon

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

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BEFORE YOU START

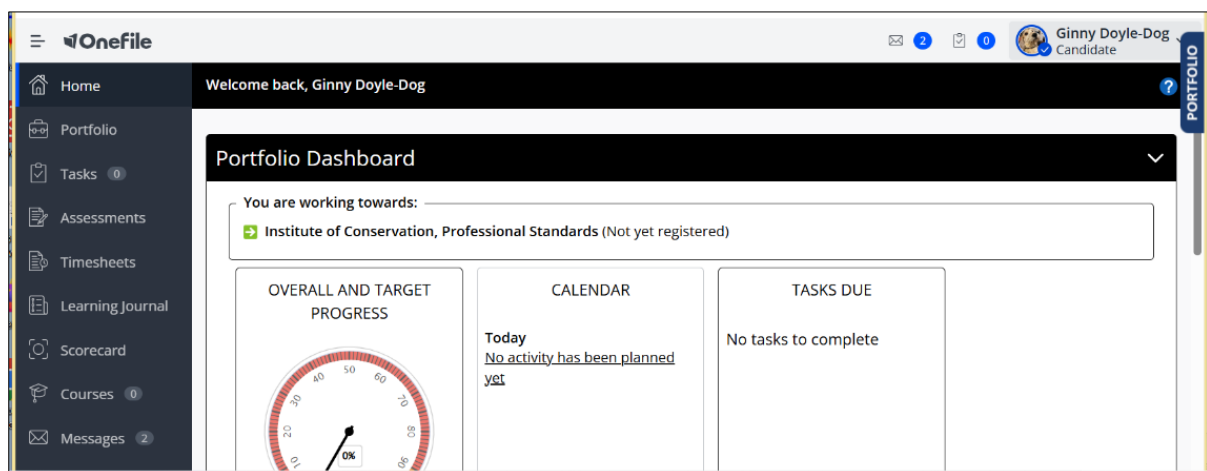
ACCESSING ONEFILE

When you have passed the application triage phase and are permitted to proceed to the e-portfolio stage, you will be invited to an onboarding workshop where we talk you through the e-portfolio requirements and the OneFile software. This workshop will be recorded for anyone who cannot attend, and Icon will keep the recording live for a minimum of 6 weeks.

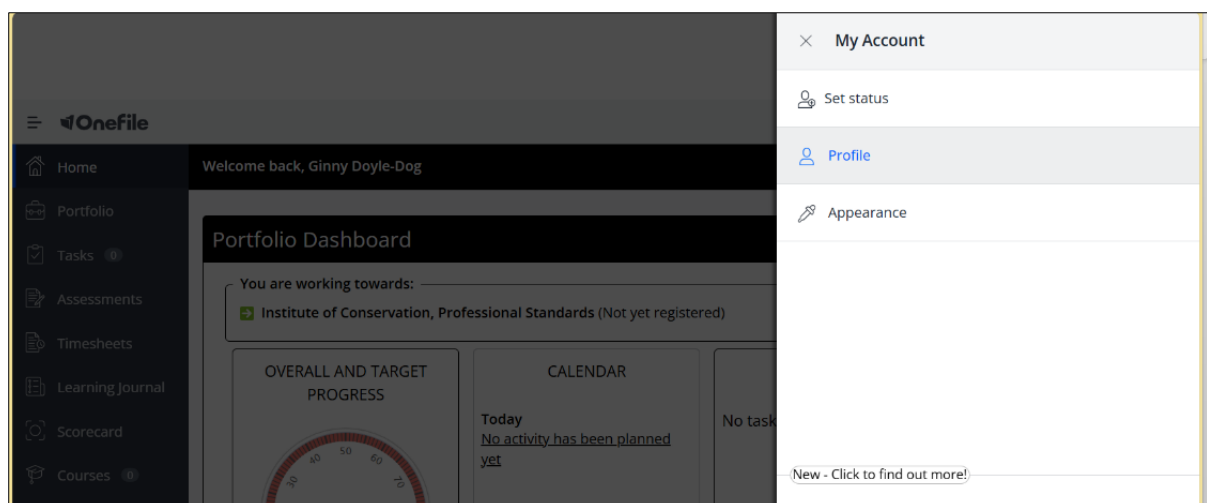
The Icon Skills Team will create a OneFile account for you, and you will receive an email with a link inviting you to set up a password. Please keep an eye on your inbox. The link will be active for 7 days and then will expire. If you need the link resetting because it has expired, please contact accreditation@icon.org.uk.

Should require any further tech support, you can contact OneFile directly at support@onefile.co.uk.

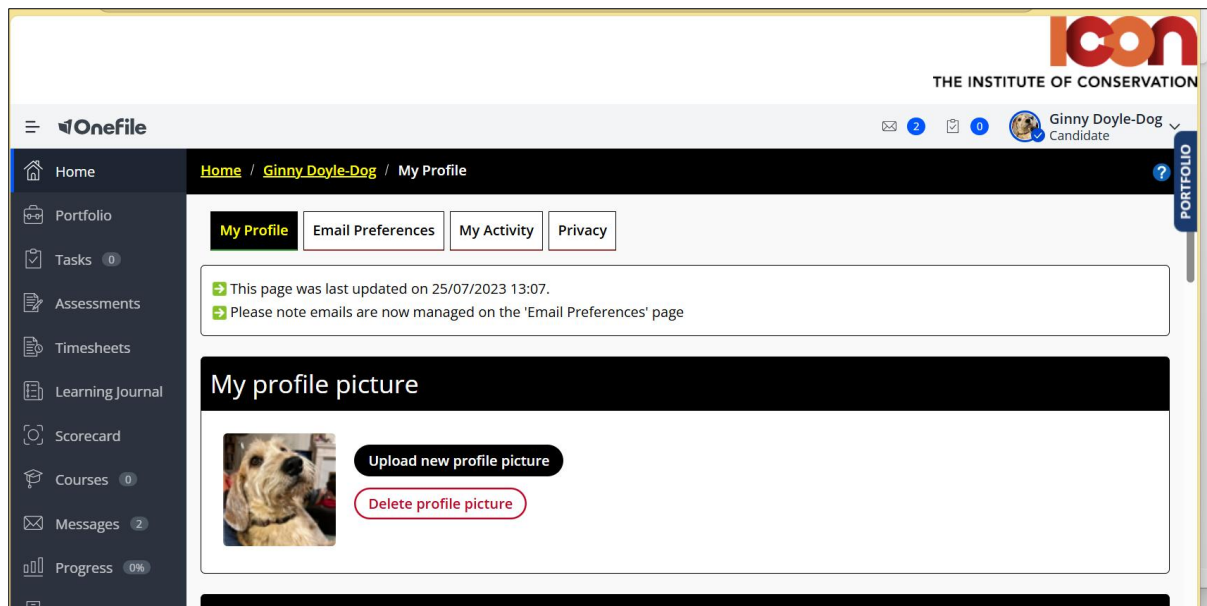
Once you are logged into OneFile, you will see the following Home Screen with your name in the top right-hand corner.



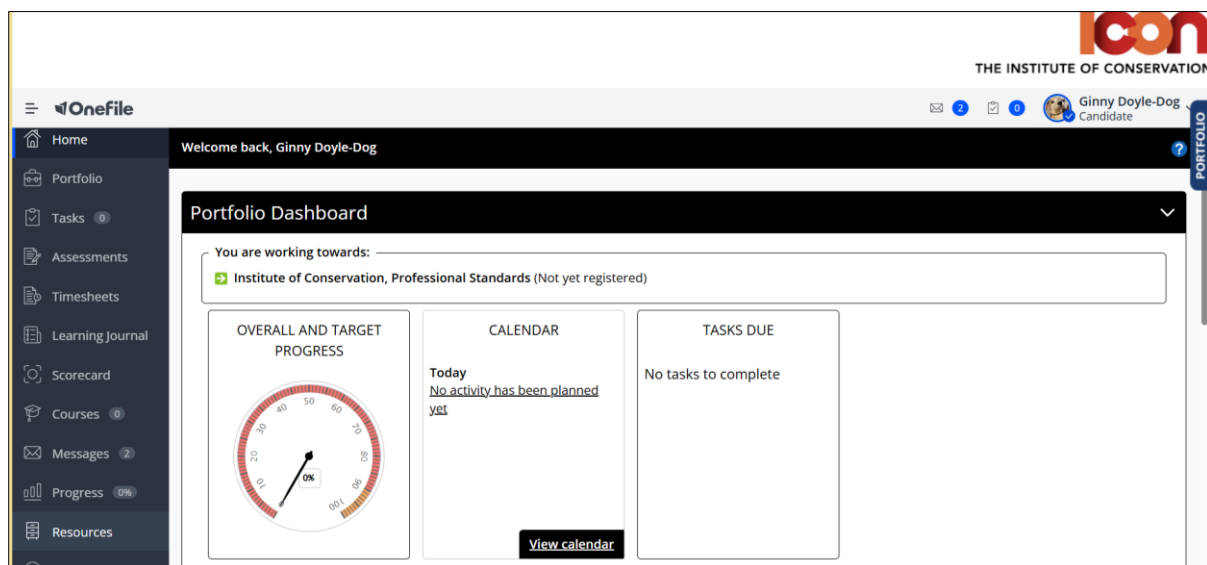
The first thing to do is set up your personal profile with contact details so your assessors can contact you. To do this click the drop-down menu next to your name and select 'profile'.



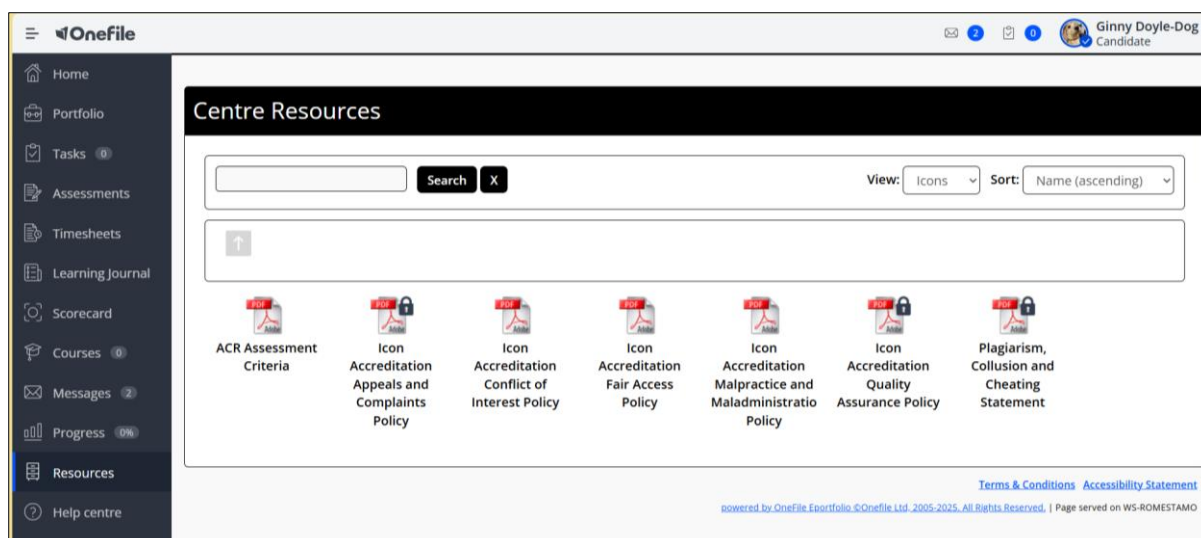
This will bring up a profile page where you can enter your contact details. There are other optional things you can add such as a photo and a CV if you have one.



To access useful assessment resources, go to the black menu on the left-hand side of the page and click 'resources'.



In the resources section, you will find useful reference documents such as the ACR Assessment Criteria and all of Icon's Assessment policies, as well as the Plagiarism, Collusion and Cheating Statement. All of these are available for download, should you wish.



The black menu also has a 'Help Centre' button that can direct you to useful sources of support. There is a 'Messages' button for any direct communication to candidates from either Onefile Tech Support or the Icon Skills Team. There is also a portfolio button which will also take you to your personal home page so you can access your e-portfolio.

Please note, the OneFile system is a general software system used across many assessment contexts and has a lot of functionality that you don't need to use for the purposes of ACR Assessment. Many of the other options on the black menu can be ignored.

HOW MANY PROJECTS DO I INCLUDE IN MY PORTFOLIO?

If you are a practicing **conservator or conservation manager**, you need a **minimum of 4 conservation-restoration projects in your portfolio**. This means projects where you are involved in decisions and/or a course of action for a heritage object. (It does not include write ups of more minor aspects of your work such as community engagement, presentation at conferences etc. Although you may choose to include these in addition to your main projects.) If you work primarily as a **Conservation Lecturer, Conservation Researcher or a Heritage Scientist**, the nature of your work may be slightly different, in which case **seek guidance from Icon about e-portfolio contents**.

On average, candidates tend to use about 5 conservation-restoration projects and 1-2 write-ups of minor aspects of work to successfully meet all of the standards. The exact number of projects you will require depends on the scale of the projects themselves and how many standards each one covers. A Conservation Project Manager working on large-scale renovations of buildings over a year will likely need fewer projects than (for example) an Objects Conservator who can complete 2 projects in a month.

Here is an example of the contents of a typical portfolio for a textile conservator working small / medium sized objects:

Project Ref	Title
1	Conservation of Ladies' Regency evening gloves
2	Conservation of Islamic wall hanging
3	Assessment/preparation of Victorian fan collection for touring exhibition
4	Conservation of 1950s wedding veil
5	Restoration and mounting of feathered showgirl headdress for museum gallery.
6	Development/delivery of conservation workshop programme for Heritage Open Day
7	Research project / research paper into use of soluble cleaning gels on Tudor embroidery.

Here is an example of the contents of a typical portfolio for a Conservation Manager working on large-scale building projects:

Project Ref	Title
1	Managing the restoration of the Great Hall at Beagley Manor
2	Managing the restoration of the Lady Chapel at St Peter the Great Church at Woodleigh
3	Managing the restoration of the Grand Staircase at Warrington Town Hall
4	Managing the conservation of the abandoned tin miners' chapel at Porthcawl.
5	Approach to organisation and management

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROJECTS

When choosing which projects to include, remember Icon's requirements for **complexity and autonomy**.

COMPLEXITY

To hit the criteria at the right level, you need to present complex projects. Icon offers **5 definitions** of complexity.

1) Project requires choices between options that lead to significantly different outcomes and/or

2) Project presents ethical dilemma and value-conflicts or requires significant value-judgements

These two definitions sometimes (but not always) overlap. This kind of complexity enables candidates to demonstrate their critical-thinking and decision-making skills. You should aim to show a detailed understanding of the challenging issues you are facing. Explain the pros and cons of different courses of action and the rationale that informs your decision-making.

Examples of choices that lead to different outcomes could be:

- Whether to conserve or restore
- Whether to undertake a highly interventive or minimally interventive treatment
- Whether to keep an object in use / on display or to retire/remove it.

Examples of ethical dilemma / value judgements could be:

- Conflicts between stakeholder groups – e.g. curators wanting items to be included in exhibitions versus conservators wanting items to be kept in safe storage.
- Whether to remove later additions to an object or retain them.
- Weighing environmental sustainability against the best options for heritage.

(These are a small number of examples, you may have others.)

3) Project presents substantial technical problems, for instance in relation to unstable or degraded materials or the level of risk associated with treatments or strategies

This type of complexity can relate to:

- Very fragile objects that are literally falling apart. In these cases, you should show how your approach, level of material knowledge and practical skill minimises risk to the object.
- Challenging health and safety / managerial issues that require high levels of understanding and complex solutions to be implemented. For instance, an unstable site that requires regular, dynamic risk assessments, or large objects that require complicated, resource-intensive procedures to move safely.

(These are a small number of examples. You may have others.)

4) Project requires a deep level of practical understanding to be applied to a situation

These are projects where the level of knowledge needed to manage the project is over-and-above what a conservator in your field might gain through typical, 'every day' work.

Examples could include:

- Ethical handling of human remains
- Management of a specific hazardous substance or risk – e.g. asbestos, radiation etc.
- Working with an object with an unusual material composition or substrate for your specialist area. E.g. a fine art conservator working on a bark painting or a textile conservator working on a rubber stage costume.
- Working with a sacred / spiritual object that comes with its own set of requirements, e.g. the need for kosher materials/products etc.

(These are a small number of examples, you may have others.)

5) Project requires the marshalling and management of a wide range of resources.

This definition tends to apply to larger scale projects and often relates to the work of Conservation Managers, Collections Care Specialists and Preventive Conservators. Projects that have this type of complexity could involve:

- A large number of different stakeholders – e.g. different trades such as builders, architects, owners/ custodians etc.
- A large number of objects – e.g. preparing a whole collection for going out on tour.
- Drawing together a large amount of information from different sources – e.g. doing a pest audit of a large site such as a museum.
- Delivering a large, multi-stage project that requires layers of organisation and management. E.g. restoring a wing of a heritage property or creating and implementing an Emergency Planning Protocol for an organisation.

(These are a small number of examples, you may have others.)

Note: To be ‘complex’ a project should have 1 or more of these complexity definitions present to a high degree.

Your portfolio does not have to demonstrate all of these different types of complexity.

Remember, the best project for inclusion may not necessarily be your favourite project! Choose carefully.

AUTONOMY

Working at accredited level means you can work with autonomy when dealing with projects that fall within your field of expertise. Your e-portfolio should demonstrate this.

You should be able to show effective, autonomous decision-making skills, only referring to others for decision-making when it falls outside of your area of expertise. (E.g. if you are a wooden furniture specialist, you might refer to a textile conservator if you are dealing with a chair that contains fabric upholstery.)

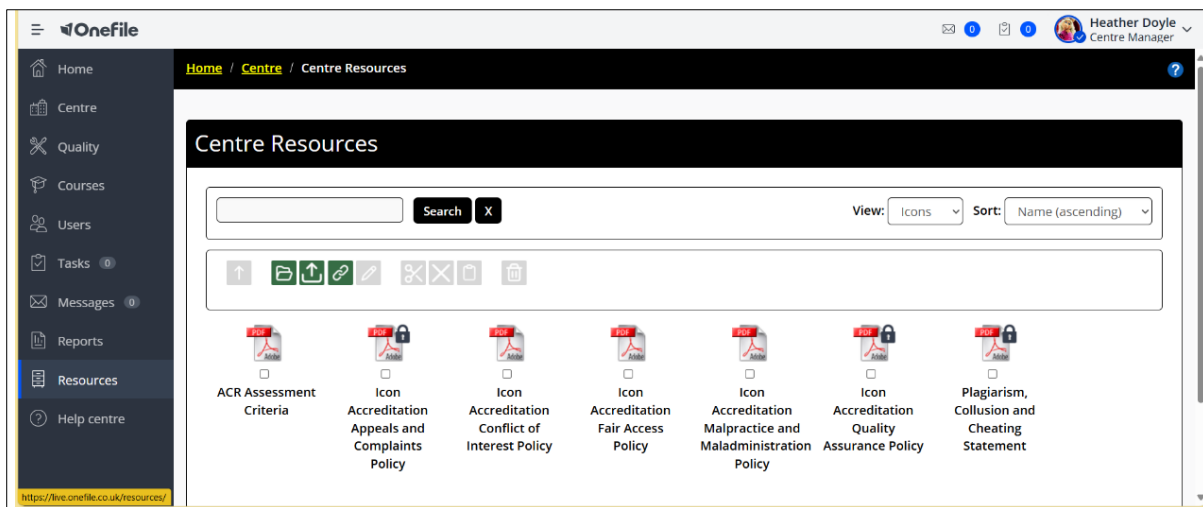
To demonstrate autonomy in your e-portfolio, you should:

- Avoid referring to projects from the junior days of your career. If you are having to be closely supervised by a colleague, seek clarification or ask permission from a colleague before embarking on a task, you will not be able to demonstrate the required level of autonomy. Note we do not accept student projects at all and rarely accept internship projects.
- When working in teams, be very transparent about what is your own specific contribution and what contribution has been made by others – particularly when evidence such as project reports have been co-authored. Phrases like ‘we did’ rather than ‘I did’ can be confusing for assessors and should be avoided. Remember: you can only be assessed on your contribution.

Demonstrate a high level of conservation knowledge that helps underpin solid decision-making.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DEMONSTRATE FOR EACH SUB-STANDARD?

The ACR Assessment Criteria outlines the requirements for each sub-standard. You should use this as your guide throughout all stages of the assessment process. This document can be found in the ‘Resources’ section of OneFile.



HOW MUCH EVIDENCE DO I NEED FOR EACH SUB-STANDARD?

For many of the 37 sub-standards, particularly those that focus on the life cycle of a conservation-restoration project, assessors want to see consistency of approach. So we recommend you aim to cover each sub-standard a minimum of 2-3 times in your portfolio with detailed, good quality evidence.

There are a small number of standards, generally in judgement and ethics, that focus on more minor aspects of a conservator's work e.g. sharing conservation knowledge with expert and lay audiences. For these standards it may be sufficient to have 1-2 pieces of evidence.

Remember, 1 piece of evidence may meet multiple sub-standards, so you don't have to include 3 x 37 unique documents!

The key to passing the standards is to use your best quality evidence for each sub-standard. Assessors should be able to see clearly why that evidence is suitable for the standard and not have to guess why it is relevant. If it's not obvious, you will need to add an explanation.

WHAT ASSESSORS CONSIDER: VARCS

When assessing your evidence at portfolio / discussion, assessors consider the VARCS criteria of assessment. VARCS stands for.

Valid: is the type of evidence presented appropriate for the sub-standard candidates are trying to meet. For example, if you are trying to demonstrate the quality of your hand skills, assessors need visual evidence – e.g. photos, videos and/or live presentation of an object. If you are trying to demonstrate an adherence to health and safety, assessors might expect to see risk assessments, COSHH paperwork, insurance certificates etc.

Authentic: Does the evidence presented appear to be the candidate's own work? When working in a team, is it clear what tasks have been performed by the candidate and what has been performed by others?

Reliable: Can the assessor make a reliable judgement about the standard of the candidate's work based on the evidence – e.g. when several sets of treatment records / risk assessments/ reports are produced, are they all of similar quality or is the quality inconsistent?

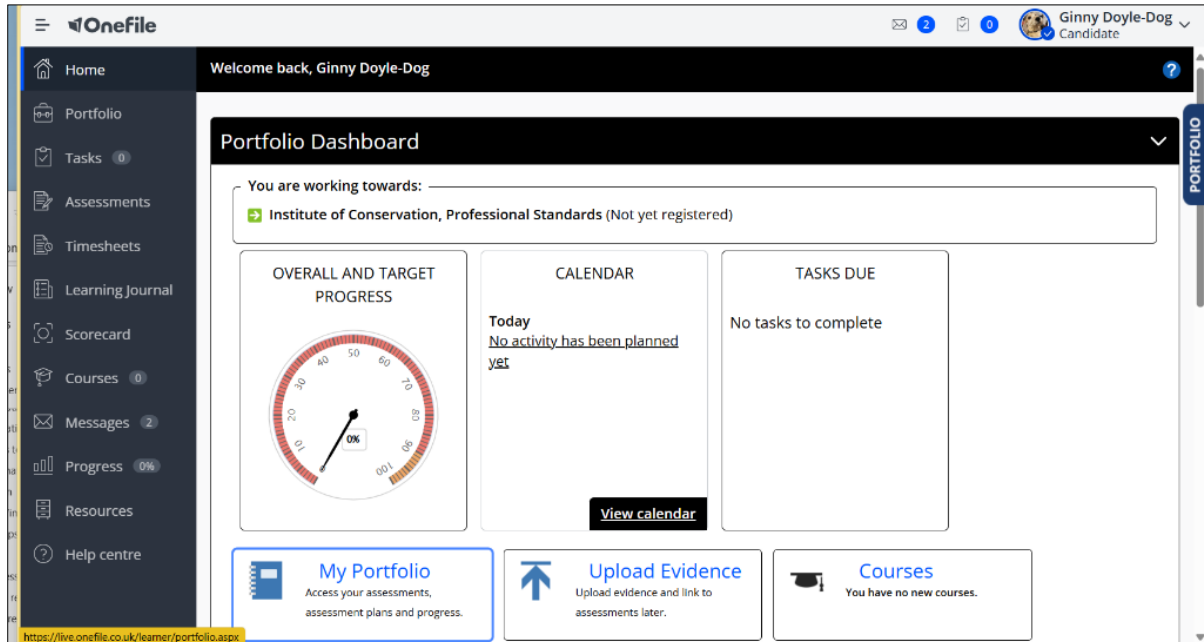
Current: Does the work reflect current best practice or is it outdated? (There is an important caveat to this, we do understand that you may have some projects that are several years old. However, if best practice has moved on since the project was completed, we expect you to acknowledge this and discuss how you might complete that project differently if undertaken today. **Basically, projects can be older, but knowledge must be current.**

Sufficient: Is there enough information to meet the assessment criteria for the sub-standard?

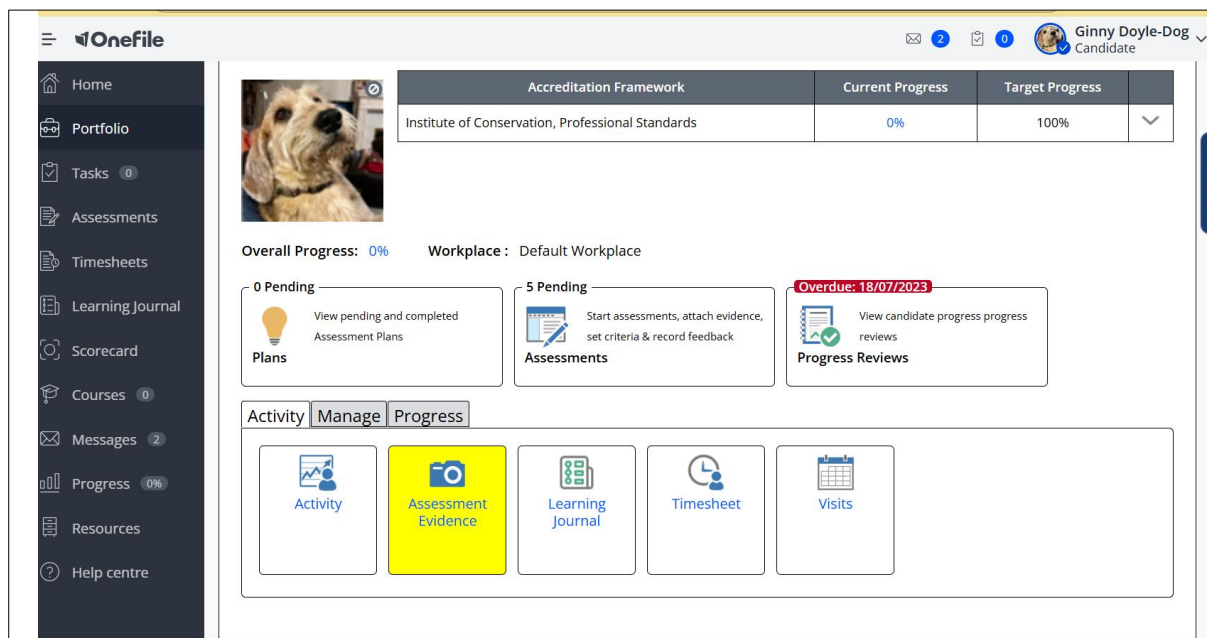
CREATING YOUR E-PORTFOLIO

CREATING A PROJECT

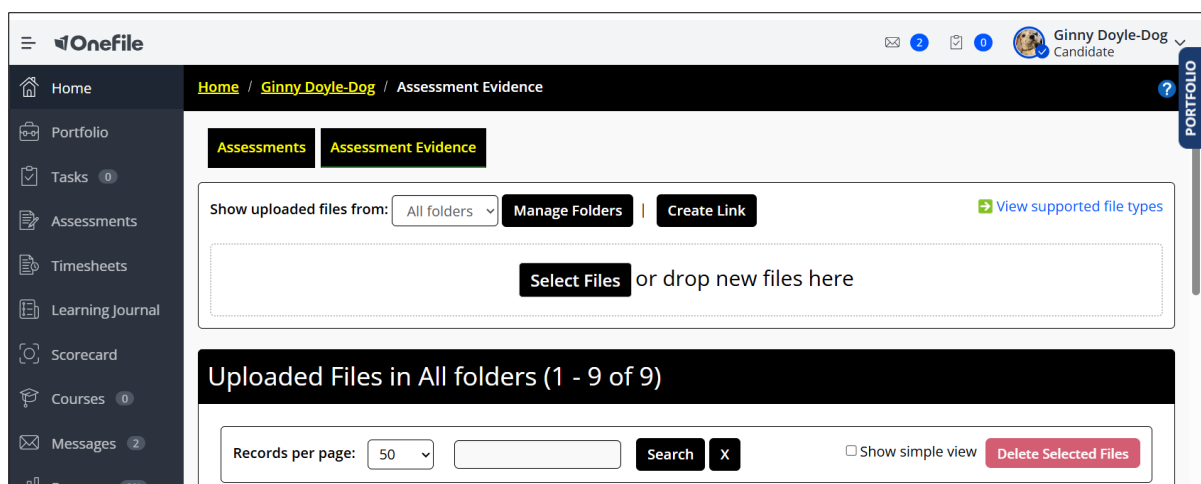
On OneFile, go to your home page and click on the button 'My Portfolio'



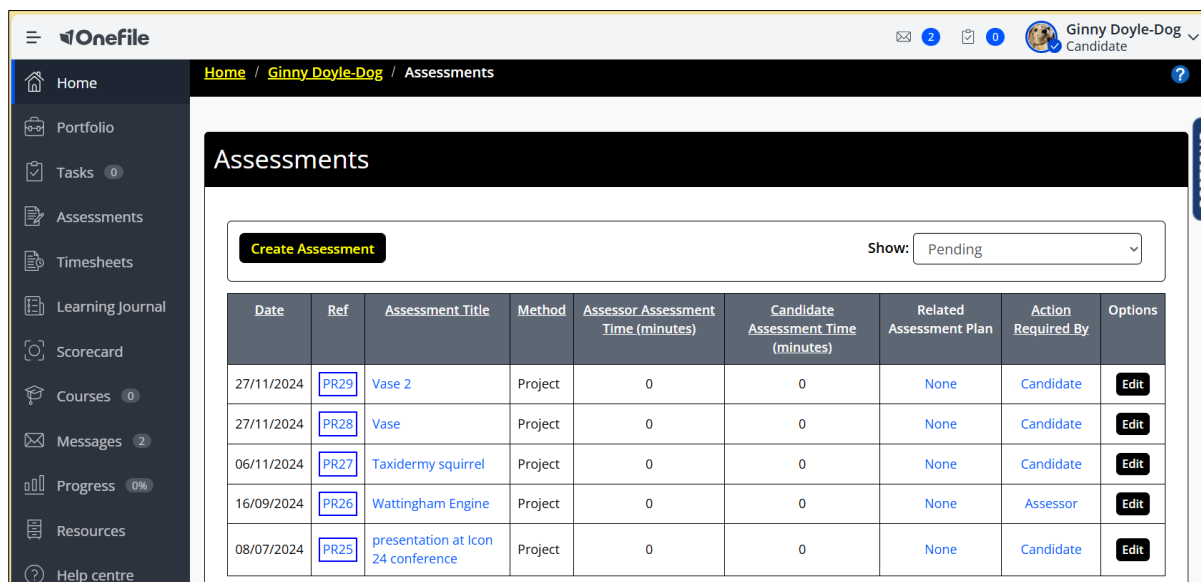
Then click the button called 'assessment evidence'.



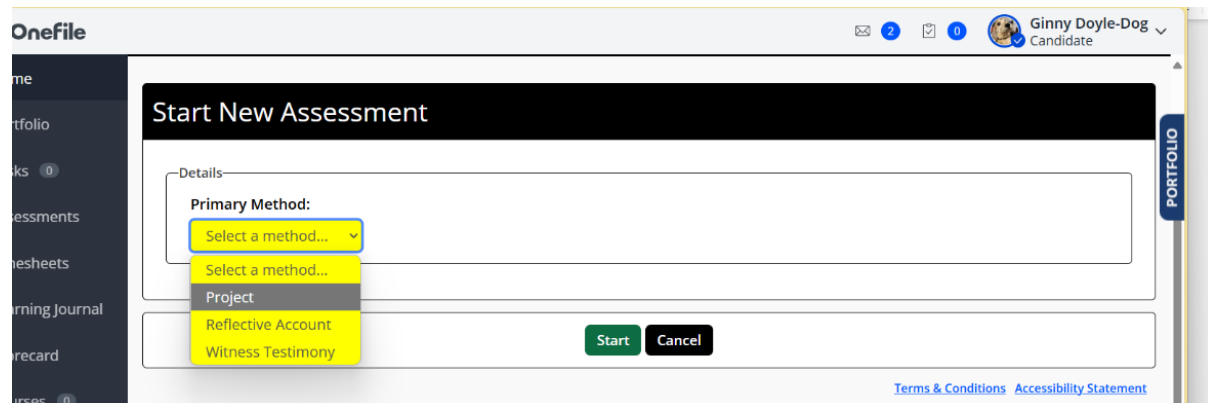
Then click the button in the top left-hand corner that says 'assessments'.



This should bring up the Assessment contents page, you create a project on OneFile by clicking the 'create assessment' button.



You have the option of choosing different types of assessment – this is one of the quirks of the system. For the purposes of ACR assessment, you really don't need to worry about trying to define your work. So, we'd recommend just selecting the 'project' option every time.



Add the title of your project and tick the box that says, 'holistically against multiple criteria' and save.

SET YOUR ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

For each project, you need to clearly state which sub-standards you are trying to meet. Click the 'set criteria' button to link criteria to your project.

This will bring up the drop-down menus for each of the 6 areas of the Icon professional standards. Click the drop-down menus to select the relevant sub-standards for each project.

Select	Criteria	Supporting Evidence	Progress
☒	2.1 Identify and evaluate conservation options	PR27 PR28	P
☐	2.2 Develop advice, recommendations or policies relating to the different options available	PR26 PR27 PR28	P
☐	2.3 Develop or negotiate a considered course of action for implementation	PR26 PR27 PR28	P

Choose your sub-standards and click the green 'save' button at the bottom of the page.

PROJECT WRITE-UPS

For each project, you will need to provide a project write-up. This should be entered into the evidence box underneath the assessment criteria. (See screenshot below).

The screenshot shows the OneFile interface. On the left is a dark sidebar with navigation links: Home, Centre, Quality, Courses, Users, Tasks (0), Messages (0), Reports, Resources, and Help centre. The main area has a top section with a link to 'structures' and a sub-header '[6.12] Understand how the context in which conservation is carried out influences the practices and measures that are appropriate and acceptable'. Below this is a large 'Evidence' box with a scrollable text area. The text in the box describes a project to restore the 1921 Wattingham Engine, mentioning funding from the Heritage Lottery, the engine's historical significance, and the challenges of restoration. A 'Cancel' button is at the bottom right of the evidence box. A vertical 'PORTFOLIO' label is on the right edge of the interface.

The purpose of the project write-up is to give assessors a clear, contextual introduction to each project. There is no word or character limit, so you can write as much as you need to.

(Projects that cover a large number of standards will need more detailed write-ups than those that cover a small number of standards.)

You should aim to include the following:

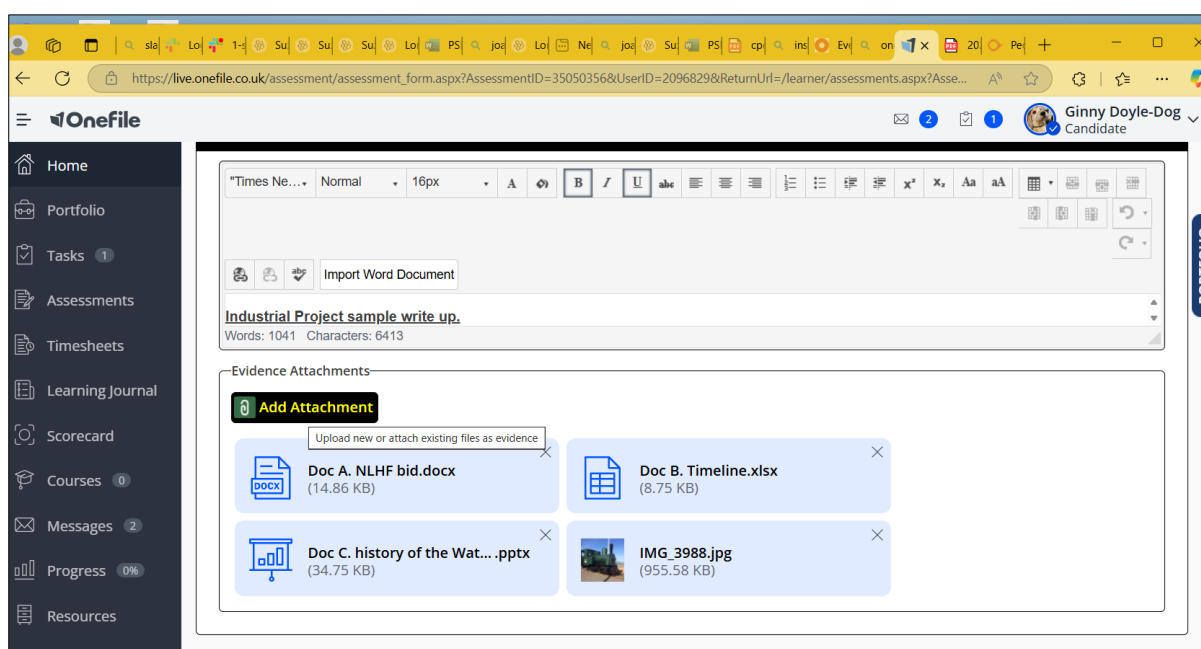
- An overview of the project in question. Keep it short, maybe 200 words. It may include some or all of the following: nature of the heritage, materials, age, artist/creator, provenance, location, use, historical significance, ownership, project dates, etc.
- A narrative of the different elements of the project, being clear on your role at each stage. **Focus on the criteria you feel are being addressed through the project.** For instance, if the project is being used to evidence sub-standards in standard 5 (CPD), include comments on things like the learning gaps you identified, how you addressed those gaps, or your overall reflections on the project. (The Assessment Criteria, in the resources section of OneFile, should help you if you get stuck.)
- A brief explanation of why the project is complex, if it is not obvious.
- A brief summary of the eventual outcome(s) of the project, if it is finished.
- Specific conservation terminology – remember you are writing this for experts in your field, not laypeople. (E.g. if discussing treatments, be specific about products used, concentrations, application methods, etc.)

- Criteria referenced within the text, so that your assessors can pinpoint easily how your project meets the criteria. If it is not immediately obvious how the evidence meets the criteria, be prepared to explain it. (Alternately, you could provide a table at the bottom of the write up that references which documents relates to which sub-standard, with explanation if needed.)
- Clear formatting for ease of reading. OneFile allows you to use paragraphs, subheadings, bullets, different font sizes and bold text. Don't just cut and paste a big lump of text! You might find it easier to use the Professional Standards as sub-headings (e.g. Assessment of Heritage, Options and Strategies etc., but this is not essential.)

Remember: SAVE AS YOU GO! (The green 'save and refresh' button is at the bottom of the page.) In the event of hardware or software glitches, unsaved text is usually not recoverable on OneFile.

ADDING / ORGANISING YOUR E-PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE

To add evidence to a project, go to the Evidence Attachments box (underneath the Evidence box that contains your project write-up.) Click the 'add attachment' button and either upload or drag your file across to the box.



OneFile can accept a wide variety of file types, including Word documents, pdfs, PowerPoint slides, jpegs, Excel spreadsheets, MP3, mpeg etc. To check if your file type is accepted by the system go to: Supported File Types.

If it is not obvious how your attachment meets the assessment criteria, you will need to explain this in your write up.

Assessing 37 sub-standards across your portfolio is a large job. The candidate has a responsibility to organise their attachments clearly so the assessor can access them easily.

Candidates should:

- Ensure files are labelled with meaningful file names so the assessor can find what they are looking for quickly. A file name such as: Ming Vase Conservation Treatment Record is helpful. A file name such as: Document 1 is not.
- Combine project photos into one document such as a report or a PowerPoint slide deck. This way photos can be ordered sequentially, given useful captions and the assessor does not have to hunt through 15 separate jpeg files.
- Check all files are of sufficient quality. If using photocopies / screenshots of documents, is the content clearly legible? If submitting audio-visual evidence, can the sound be heard clearly, is the lighting at acceptable levels?
- Check the content is complete – have you forgotten anything that you refer to in the text?

SUBMITTING YOUR E-PORTFOLIO

Once all of your e-portfolio contents are complete and ready to be submitted, run through the candidate checklist at the back of this document to ensure everything is in order and nothing is missing. **Remember, the assessment fee covers one full review of the e-portfolio by assessors and one assessment discussion. If your e-portfolio needs reviewing multiple times because you have not followed the guidance, you will be liable for an additional charge of £150.**

We recommend you discuss your completed portfolio with your mentor and get their opinions on the contents. (Remember, mentors are volunteers and may not be able to review everything, so use your mentor wisely – perhaps asking for their feedback on specific aspects that you are unsure about.)

To submit, go to submission box at the bottom of each of your projects, read the candidate declaration and tick the submission box. (See below)

Onefile

Home Portfolio Tasks Assessments Timesheets Learning Journal Scorecard Courses Messages Progress Resources Help centre

Declaration & Signatures

Only sign here when you have finished with this assessment and wish to send it to the next person.

Declaration	Name	Signed on Completion	Date
I agree that the information provided here is an accurate account of what has taken place.	Ginny Doyle-Dog (Candidate)	☐	31/01/2025 13:14
I agree that the information provided here is an accurate account of what has taken place.	Assessor	☐	
I have sampled this evidence as part of my verification sample.	Accreditation Moderation Committee Member	☐	
I have sampled this evidence as part of my verification sample.	Icon Skills Team	☐	

Save & Refresh Save & Quit Delete Cancel

Terms & Conditions Accessibility Statement

Once you submit a project, it is locked to candidates and cannot be edited. Icon can unlock it for you (but we can only do this during office hours, and we are a busy team so may not be able

to get to your request immediately.) Consequently, we recommend you don't click submit on any project until you are confident that you have completed the entire e-portfolio.

If you are unsure if the submission process has worked, go back to your assessment contents page. Look at the 'action required by' column in the summary table. Projects that have been submitted successfully will show action required by 'assessor'. Projects that have not been submitted will show action required by 'candidate'. (See below).

Date	Ref	Assessment Title	Method	Assessor Assessment Time (minutes)	Candidate Assessment Time (minutes)	Related Assessment Plan	Action Required By	Options
27/11/2024	PR29	Vase 2	Project	0	0	None	Candidate	Edit
27/11/2024	PR28	Vase	Project	0	0	None	Candidate	Edit
06/11/2024	PR27	Taxidermy squirrel	Project	0	0	None	Candidate	Edit
16/09/2024	PR26	Wattingham Engine	Project	0	0	None	Assessor	Edit
08/07/2024	PR25	presentation at Icon 24 conference	Project	0	0	None	Candidate	Edit

It's also worth emailing the Icon Skills Team on accreditation@icon.org.uk to flag that you have submitted your e-portfolio and are ready to proceed to the next stage.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once you have submitted your e-portfolio, Icon will sense-check it to ensure all sub-standards are linked to projects and the evidence is clearly labelled. If there are obvious concerns, Icon will request the candidate makes amendments. However, be aware that the Icon staff team are not conservators by profession and cannot give comprehensive feedback related to the complexity of projects and quality of evidence. (The onus is on the candidate to have considered these aspects, in consultation with their mentor, before they submit the portfolio.)

Icon will select a qualified End-Point Assessor (from a different conservation specialism) and a Specialist Advisor (who shares the candidate's specialism) to review the portfolio. All parties will be asked to confirm they have no conflict of interest before the assessment begins. At this point Icon hands the process over to the assessors and will only become involved if the candidate or assessor specifically contacts them. The End-Point Assessor and Specialist Advisor should review the e-portfolio within 1 month (unless otherwise agreed). Assessors will feedback directly to the candidate and discuss arrangements for stage 2 of the assessment (the professional discussion.)

CANDIDATE SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

	Yes	No
Do I have a minimum of 4 conservation-restoration projects?		
Are all my conservation-restoration projects complex? (see note on complexity)		
Is my individual contribution to projects clear? (see note on autonomy)		
Have I referred to the ACR Assessment Criteria to understand what is required for each sub-standard?		
Does my portfolio cover all 37 of the Icon sub-standards, hitting most standards 2-3 times? (See note on how much evidence to present.)		
Are all my files uploaded correctly?		
Are the contents of my files legible and (if applicable) audible/visible?		
Are my files named with meaningful file names?		
Have I combined images from each project into a report or PowerPoint slide deck?		
Do my project write-ups reference the sub-standards in the text?		
Are my project write ups written for subject matter experts, using relevant conservation terminology?		
Have I asked my mentor for their view?		

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Signposting which evidence meets the criteria:

Standard covered:	Evidence provided (file name):	How evidence relates to standard (taken from ACR assessment criteria):
1.1 Understand the significance and context of the heritage to be assessed, along with any implications for potential conservation measures	Evidence 1a: Discussion with Adam Adamson Specialist in 19th century decorative ironwork. Folder 1 - 'Lit. research': a) Archive research including Victorian lithograph illustrations of Gatley Park, showing gates in situ. B) Contemporary newspaper account of road traffic accident, Oct 1986, detailing van crash into gates at Gatley Park. C) Photograph. from 1986 showing gates in situ, with damage clearly visible to lower hinge of gate A.	Candidates should be able to identify the information they require in order to effectively understand the significance and context of the heritage: Understanding the object's history, significance and manufacturing process
1.2 Assess the physical nature and condition of the heritage	Folder 2: a) Condition Assessment report. Sept 2024. b) Paint sample analysis results. c) Photographs of mortar decay and damaged stonework on supporting walls, resulting in loosening of gate frame supports	Candidates should demonstrate they have the skills, knowledge and experience to undertake a clear and detailed assessment of the heritage.
3.6 Recommend appropriate sources of further analysis, treatment or preventive care where these lie outside your remit or area of expertise	Folder 2: Email to owner to discuss problems with damaged stonework/ mortar, recommendation to get further condition assessment from stone conservator. (Provided details of Jack Spratt, ACR.)	Candidates should demonstrate a holistic approach to care of heritage, considering further or ongoing care needs.

The Institute of Conservation

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