



**Professional
Association of
Assistive
Technologists**

Raising standards, empowering
practitioners, transforming lives

Professional Association of Assistive Technologists

**Certification Handbook for Associate Members, Members
and Senior Members**

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1. Introduction to PAAT

As a professional association, the overarching aim of PAAT is to improve Assistive Technology (AT) as a discipline, resulting in improved quality, standards, opportunities and impact for Assistive Technology users, Assistive Technology practitioners and leaders in the field. More specifically, the aims of PAAT are to achieve:

- Improved delivery for AT users and their families/carers.
- Improved professional status.
- Independence and integrity of the Assistive Technologist role.
- Improved professional training routes.
- Standardisation of terms and conditions.
- A code of practice and CPD standards leading to
 - improved quality of provision (standards and consistency)
 - maintained standards via a professional code of conduct
 - CPD requirements, supported by development opportunities, training, conferences, etc.
- Opportunities for peer support as part of a professional community.
- Enhanced confidence across the sector about the quality of AT services provided.
- Acceptance by commissioners and regulators for the inclusion of AT services as core, rather than 'additional' to service delivery.

PAAT does not look to replace any existing Professional Bodies in the education, health or social care field, rather PAAT is a place for AT professionals who don't already have a professional 'home'. We want to work with and alongside other professional membership bodies. Assistive Technologists frequently work as part of a multi-disciplinary team and PAAT looks to do the same.

In large part, the achievement of our aims will be through the administration of our professional certification scheme. The purpose of this handbook is to guide applicants working towards the award of Certified Associate Member, (CAM), Certified Member (CM) or Certified Senior Member (CSM) of the Professional Association of Assistive Technologists (PAAT). See the PAAT website at <https://pa-at.org/> for more information.

1.1 Definitions and Terminology

Definition of Assistive Technology

PAAT acknowledges that a range of terms are used in the community, but for the purposes of this professional certification scheme, the term Assistive Technology will be used as it is the term that the majority of people in the community are familiar with.

PAAT recognises and supports the delivery of digital Assistive Technology (AT). For membership purposes the definition of AT covers hardware, software and access equipment. This also includes mounting systems and other accessories which are designed to enable access to digital hardware and software or extend the capabilities of medical devices such as hearing aids and wheelchairs.

PAAT recognises that Assistive Technologists work in a wide range of contexts (e.g. education, health, social care) and support users with a wide range of needs, abilities and preferences and may be delivering a broader range of AT solutions such as those defined by the World Health Organisation:

Assistive products include devices, equipment, instruments or software from six functional domains: mobility, vision, hearing, communication, cognition and self-care. Examples of assistive products are physical products such as wheelchairs, spectacles and hearing aids, and digital products such as software and apps [1]

The World Health Organisation consider self-care products such as catheter kits, toilet and shower chairs and continence products to be assistive technologies. These are however, outside the scope of our membership body.

We recognise that in health and social care settings, the terms 'care technologies' or 'health care technologies' are growing in use. In the context of the PAAT certification scheme we are specifically interested in how these technologies are adapted for the user. For example, how a switch user is supported to make an alarm system work. We do consider however, that 'health care technologies' such as remote monitors, electronic health records, and clinical decision support tools are out of scope for PAAT accreditation since the primary intended users are health and social care professionals rather than the patients or clients that they are supporting.

Definition of Assistive Technology User

In the context of the PAAT certification scheme we are defining an AT User as someone whose quality of life is enhanced through the use of AT. In line with the World Health Organisation, our definition of AT User includes people who are disabled, people who are aging, people with temporary injuries and people managing chronic health conditions.

Disability language and the use of the term ‘disabled people’

PAAT acknowledges that some members of the community prefer people-first language to identity-first language. Both terms are valid, and we respect people’s right to choose the term that they feel best describes their own experiences. In the context of the PAAT certification scheme we have chosen to use identity-first language because we feel it is important to acknowledge how people are disabled by society and inaccessible environments and also to reflect the language predominantly used by disabled people’s organisations and government bodies.

1.2 Core principles

Being an effective Assistive Technologist is as much about ‘mind-set’ as it is skills. PAAT seeks to recognise practitioners who are committed to a user-centred and evidence-based approach and who recognise the importance of developing their own practice as well as supporting the practice of others. Members of PAAT must therefore demonstrate a commitment to:

User-centred practice: that respects the rights of AT Users (and/or where appropriate their advocates) to access and use AT, supports them to make informed decisions about their AT use and adapts AT and AT support to ensure all of their AT related needs are met. Key components of user-centred practice include advocacy, presumption of capacity and supported decision-making in relation to managing any potential risks of AT use.

Evidence-based practice: that actively seeks and evaluates evidence in order to identify and implement the best possible AT solutions. This evidence may be derived from a range of sources including feedback from the AT user when reviewing personal goals and progress; personal and AT user reflections on the effectiveness of previous AT solutions; publicly disseminated AT research; AT policy documents and debates.

Continual development of own professional practice: that regularly reflects on successes and failures of own practice, regularly plans and appraises current and future goals and regularly attends externally run professional development initiatives such as university/college courses, supplier courses, webinars from recognised organizations and conferences (research or practitioner focused).

Community-focused practice: that actively seeks to work with other professionals who are supporting the AT user (e.g. through multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary teamwork) as well as supporting the developing practice of other AT practitioners through sharing and disseminating own and others best practice.

1.3 Core competencies

Technical knowledge of AT on its own is not sufficient to demonstrate competence as an Assistive Technologist. PAAT seeks to recognise 'well-rounded' practitioners who have a good understanding of the AT user, AT, the AT eco-system and the wider AT context.

Members must therefore demonstrate competency in the following areas:

AT users: A knowledge of the strengths, needs, preferences and aspirations of AT Users and how these might inform the decisions they make about the role and value of AT in their lives (does not have to be all AT or all disabilities/needs, but those that are particularly relevant to the context the applicant is working in).

AT: An understanding of the constraints and benefits of different AT for At Users (does not have to be all AT or all disabilities/needs, but those that are particularly relevant to the context in which the applicant is working). Plus technical knowledge and ability in the use of AT that is relevant to their workplace (i.e. has basic ability to switch on and set up AT including accessibility settings that meet the needs of different users they are supporting).

The AT eco-system: An understanding of the processes by which access to AT is funded, assessed, delivered and evaluated within the context (s) that they are working.

The wider AT context: An understanding of relevant national and international legislation and how it applies to the context the applicant is working in (e.g. related to how equalities, inclusion, accessibility and rights are affected by access or lack of access to suitable AT).

2. The PAAT certification scheme

There are three different membership levels within the PAAT certification scheme: associate member, member and senior member. There is no expectation for all applicants to start at associate member status and move their way up the levels incrementally. Applicants may apply to join PAAT at whatever level they feel is commensurate with the evidence they can provide. It is possible for an applicant to apply in the first instance for associate member status and then as they gain more experience, to re-apply for member status. Similarly for those who apply in the first instance for membership status, it is possible for them to re-apply in the future for senior member status.

2.1 Who can apply for certification?

Practitioners who have been working in the field of AT for less than 3 years or those who have been practicing for three or more years but only engage with AT as a smaller part of their role can apply for Certified Associate Member status.

Established Practitioners who have been working within the field of AT for three or more years and engage with AT as a core aspect of their role can apply for Certified Member status.

Established Practitioners who have been working within the field of AT for three or more years, engage with AT as a core aspect of their role and have AT related management, leadership or strategic responsibilities can apply for Certified Senior Member status.

We are positioning certified senior members of PAAT as exceptional practitioners who are widely recognised as role models to others in the AT field. With this in mind, we anticipate that our membership cohort will reflect a 'bell-shaped' curve. In other words, the majority of accepted members are likely to be 'certified members', and relatively fewer are likely to be 'certified senior members' or 'certified associate members'.

Assistive Technologists work in a variety of roles and contexts and job titles will vary to reflect this diversity. It is therefore not essential that applicants have the phrase 'Assistive Technologist' contained within their job title. The focus of the role is more important than the specific job title.

2.2 The focus of an application for certified status

All applicants must demonstrate a commitment to all four of the core principles of PAAT (See Table 1).

Applicants for Certified Associate Member Status must also:

- demonstrate evidence of three of the core competencies of PAAT (AT Users, AT, AT Eco-system (see Table 1).

Applicants for Certified Member Status must also:

- demonstrate evidence of all four of the core competences of PAAT (see Table 1).
- demonstrate evidence of independent practice in one AT specialist area. (e.g. AT assessment and provision; AT research; AT design and development; AT policy; AT

Professional Development; AT outcomes and evaluation; AT service development and evaluation; AT funding). This might be unique to the member, or common across the team that they work in, but it must go beyond the core competencies.

Applicants for Certified Senior Member status must also:

- demonstrate evidence of all four of the core competences of PAAT (see Table 1).
- demonstrate evidence of independent practice in two particular AT specialist areas. (e.g. AT assessment and provision; AT research; AT design and development; AT policy; AT Professional Development; AT outcomes and evaluation; AT service development and evaluation; AT funding). These specialist skills might be unique to the applicant, or common across the team that they work in, but it must go beyond the core competencies.
- demonstrate evidence of impactful AT leadership. An ability to develop and implement, through critical thinking and problem-solving, strategic initiatives that support AT users and or AT professionals to achieve their goals.

Table 1: Differentiating between the three membership levels

Sections	Subsections	Associate Member	Member	Senior Member
1. AT Users	1a. A knowledge of the strengths, needs, preferences and aspirations of A Users and how these might inform the decisions they make about the role and value of AT in their lives .	Required	Required	Required
	1b. Ability to advocate for the AT needs of AT Users disabled people and/or to support disabled people to self-advocate		Required	Required
2. AT	2a. An understanding of the constraints and benefits of different AT for At Users. (does not have to be all AT or all disabilities/needs, but those that are particularly relevant to the context in which the applicant is working).	Required	Required	Required
	2b. Technical knowledge and ability in the set up and use of AT that is relevant to their workplace, including accessibility settings that meet the needs of different users they are supporting.	Required	Required	Required
	2c. Supporting the effective and sustained use of AT by AT Users and their support circle.		Required	Required
3. The AT eco-system	3a. An understanding of the processes by which access to AT is assessed, funded, delivered and evaluated within the context (s) in which they are working.	Required	Required	Required
	3b. An understanding of the factors that facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of processes within the AT eco-system.		Required	Required
4. The wider AT context	4a. An understanding of relevant national and international legislation and how it applies to the context in which the applicant is working.		Required	Required
	4b. Understanding and implementing relevant AT policies or standards at a national, regional or organizational level		Required	Required
	4c. Ability to develop, adapt, shape or influence AT relevant legislation, policies or standards at an international, national, regional or organizational level			Required
5. AT Specialist Skills	Specialist Area 1		Required	Required
	Specialist Area 2			Required
6. AT Leadership	Ability to develop and implement, through critical thinking and problem-solving, strategic initiatives that support AT users and or AT professionals to achieve their goals.			Required

3. Preparing your application for Certification

Applicants for PAAT Certification will normally be required to:

- Complete an application form which can be downloaded from the PAAT website as a Microsoft Word document.
- Create an account on the PAAT membership application section of website.
- Upload the application form along with any additional supporting evidence to the PAAT website, using their bespoke login details.

Alternative assessment methods such as viva may be requested by those with particular access needs.

PAAT does not accredit prior learning or prior qualifications. Instead applicants are invited, through their online application and supporting evidence, to show, how their prior learning or qualifications map onto the core principles and competencies.

For Certified Associate Member status, applicants will need to download and complete a six-part application form which includes the following information:

Component	Content/ word count range
1. Applicant information	Name and contact details
2. Role and career history	Work experience details (institution and date); Qualification details (institution and date).
3. Work context	A word statement outlining how qualifications and work experience support application. 300-500 words in total.
4. Core principles	Description and reflection on examples of practice that demonstrate commitment to the four core principles. 1200-1500 words.
5. Core competencies	Description of examples of practice that demonstrate competence in each of the core areas. 1200 to 1500 words.
6. Professional Testimonials	Contact details for one person who has agreed to provide a professional testimonial.

Once completed this document needs to be uploaded online through our online application form. In addition applicants have the option to upload to the following:

7. Curriculum Vitae	A full CV that includes for example educational and professional qualifications, full work experience, publications, grants, CPD attended/delivered.
8. Supporting Evidence	Up to ten supporting items that corroborate claims for meeting one or more of the core principles or core competencies. These can be uploaded to the PAAT website alongside the Application form.

For Certified Member status, applicants will need to download and complete a seven-part application form which includes the following information:

Component	Content/ word count range
1. Applicant information	Name and contact details
2. Role and career history	Work experience details (institution and date); Qualification details (institution and date).
3. Work context	A statement outlining how qualifications and work experience support application. 300-500 words in total.
4. Core principles	Description and reflection on examples of practice that demonstrate commitment to the four core principles. 1200-1,500 words.
5. Core competencies	Description of examples of practice that demonstrate competence in each of the core areas. 2700 to 3375 words.
6. AT Specialist Skill 1	An account that i) describes the context for the AT specialist skill; ii) describes practice in this specialist skill or area and iii) evaluates the impact of practice in this specialist skill area on AT users and others in their circle of support. 750-925 words in total.
7. Professional Testimonials	Contact details for two people who have agreed to provide a professional testimonial.

Once completed this document needs to be uploaded online through our online application form. In addition applicants have the option to upload to the following:

9. Curriculum Vitae	A full CV that includes for example educational and professional qualifications, full work experience, publications, grants, CPD attended/delivered.
8. Supporting Evidence	Up to fifteen supporting items that corroborate claims for meeting one or more of the core principles or core competencies. These can be uploaded to the PAAT website alongside the Application form.

For Certified Senior Member status, applicants will need to download and complete a nine-part application form which includes the following information:

Component	Content/ word count range
1. Applicant information	Name and contact details
2. Role and career history	Work experience details (institution and date); Qualification details (institution and date). A 200-300-word statement outlining how qualifications and work experience support application.
3. Work context	A statement outlining how qualifications and work experience support application. 300-500 words in total.
4. Core principles	Description and reflection on examples of practice that demonstrate commitment to the four core principles. 1,200-1,500 words.
5. Core competencies	Description of examples of practice that demonstrate competence in each of the core areas. 3000-3750 words in total.
6. AT Specialist Skill 1	An account that i) describes the context for the AT specialist skill; ii) describes practice in this specialist skill or area and iii) evaluates the impact of practice in this specialist skill area on AT users and others in their circle of support. 750-925 words in total.
7. AT Specialist Skill 2	An account that i) describes the context for the AT specialist skill; ii) describes practice in this specialist skill or area and iii) evaluates the impact of practice in this specialist skill area on AT users and others in their circle of support. 750-925 words in total.
8. AT Leadership	An account that provides evidence for ability to develop and implement, through critical thinking and problem-solving, strategic initiatives that support AT users and or AT professionals to achieve their goals. 750-925 words in total.
9. Professional Testimonials	Contact details for three people who have agreed to provide a professional testimonial.

Once completed this document needs to be uploaded online through our online application form. In addition applicants have the option to upload to the following:

10. Curriculum Vitae	A full CV that includes for example educational and professional qualifications, full work experience, publications, grants, CPD attended/delivered.
11. Supporting Evidence	Up to twenty supporting items that corroborate claims for meeting one or more of the core principles or core competencies.

3.1 Role and career history

This section asks you to situate your work specifically within an Assistive Technology context.

The first table in this section will invite you to list and provide details of your relevant work experience within the last three or more years. Alongside detailing relevant paid employment, you may include engagement in voluntary roles, such as volunteering at a hospital.

The second table in this section will invite you to list and provide details of your relevant qualifications. Relevant qualifications may include:

- Degrees (including undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications) e.g. MSc in Educational Assistive Technology, BSc in Healthcare Science (rehabilitation engineering).
- Specialist qualifications e.g. PGCE, SENCO.
- CPD certificates, e.g. Talking Mats Foundation Course; Ace Centre Course on Using AAC to Play.
- Other recognition schemes, e.g., CSP, RCOT, RCSLT.

For both tables, include details about which institution you worked at or awarded you your degree or CPD certificate (e.g., University of Dundee, Ace Centre Oxford, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists) and the date(s) you worked at the institution or achieved the qualification.

3.2 Work context

This section enables you to orient the assessor to the context in which you currently work. Assessors will find this section particularly helpful in understanding any examples that you provide in later sections.

Tell us about the current context in which you are working. Where do you work, for whom and in what sector (e.g., health, education, social care, legal). What are your main roles and responsibilities? What kind of AT users do you support (e.g., older people; school children, adults with learning disabilities).

Where appropriate it is acceptable to insert hyperlinks to web pages that help to support your description (e.g., organisational websites). **Your statement should be between 300 and 500 words in total.**

3.3 PAAT core principles

This section invites you to describe and reflect on examples of your practice that demonstrate your commitment to the four core principles. Your statement should be between **1,200 to 1,500 words** in total. In writing your statement, you should select what you feel are the strongest examples that you have developed in your role as an Assistive Technologist. For each principle, it is acceptable to provide us with a range of examples, but please ensure that you provide a detailed description or discussion of one or two of these examples. The quality of the examples (depth) given is more important than quantity (breadth). For each principle, make sure the focus is clearly on your practice as it relates to Assistive Technology.

Please note: Examples of potential activities are provided in the following section. These are only suggestions and not a comprehensive list. The order does not indicate any preference for approaches. You are not required to include any or all of these suggestions in your application.

Principle 1: User-centred practice

User centred practice respects the rights of disabled people to access and use AT, supports At Users(and/or where appropriate their advocates) to make informed decisions about their AT use and adapts AT and AT support to ensure all of their AT related needs are met. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Creating bespoke communication boards (or equivalent) based on users' needs. You may have identified these needs based on your work with the user and their circle of support.
- Using the AT users preferred communication methods/tools to gather and share information during AT assessment, goal setting or review meetings
- Adapting your AT support or delivery to different user needs and contexts.
- Offering support at the level requested by the AT User.
- Co-designing or co-delivering AT resources and/or AT support with AT users.

Principle Two: Evidence-based practice

Evidence-based practice actively seeks and evaluates evidence in order to identify and implement the best possible AT solutions. Evidence that demonstrates evidence-based practice may be qualitative or quantitative and can be derived from a range of sources including feedback from the AT user when reviewing personal goals and progress; personal and AT user reflections on the effectiveness of previous AT solutions; publicly disseminated AT research; AT policy documents and debates. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Using AT users feedback to enhance AT provision or delivery. The feedback may be from an individual or from multiple AT users. The feedback could be ‘in-the-moment’ (during an interaction with an AT user) or ‘after-the-moment’ (sometime after an interaction).
- Assessing AT users’ requirements using a validated framework or model.
- Conducting an evaluation trial of a new AT (or model, approach, resource) within own practice context and using results to inform own practice or service delivery.
- Analysing AT related outcome data in order to inform own practice or service delivery.

When assessing your claim that your practice demonstrates this principle assessors will be looking for evidence of criticality in the way that you judge the quality and validity of the evidence you are drawing upon. It is not necessarily appropriate to treat all evidence as equal. Some evidence available in the AT field might be biased, depending on who has produced it. Some evidence has been discredited or disproved, through for example systematic literature reviews. Some vital evidence in the AT field can be ignored or lost by failing to examine sources that are older than 5 years or more.

Principle Three: Continual development of own professional practice

Continual development of professional practice involves regularly reflecting on successes and failures, regularly planning and appraising current and future goals and regularly attending externally run professional development initiatives such as university/college courses, supplier courses, webinars from recognised organizations and conferences (research or practitioner focused). Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Engaging in regular professional conversations (through for example mentoring meetings with your manager, staff or team meetings) and using these as opportunities to review progress and plan future activities.
- Updating knowledge of current technologies by attending supplier update events, exhibitions and seminars.
- Engaging in regular professional supervision with a more experienced Assistive Technologist or relevant professional.
- Studying for a Master’s degree or similar qualification and using the dissertation module as an opportunity to research/evaluate an issue or challenge that is relevant to own practice.

Principle Four: Community-focused practice

There are two key elements to community-focused practice. Firstly, where appropriate, working with other professionals who are supporting the AT user (e.g. through multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary teamwork). Examples of such professionals might include Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Clinical Scientists, Social/Care workers or Teachers. Secondly, supporting the developing practice of other AT practitioners through sharing and disseminating own and others best practice. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Working with a Speech and Language Therapist to identify the preferred communication methods of an AT User.
- Attending an AT related conference and preparing an evaluative or reflective report to share with colleagues within your workplace.
- Producing or contributing to a regular blog or equivalent in which you share and comment on AT related issues with a network of others within the AT community.
- Leading CPD initiatives (e.g. workshops, seminars) within or outside your own workplace where you share with others what you have learnt through your own AT practice and experience.
- Contributing to online AT communities and forums via discussions and problem solving.
- Delivering AT related presentations at conferences or community events.

3.4 PAAT Core Competencies

This section invites you to describe and reflect on examples of your practice that demonstrate your competence in each of the four core areas.

- If you are applying for Certified Associate Member status your statement should be between **1200** to **1500** words in total.
- If you are applying for Certified Member status your statement should be between **2700** to **3375** words in total.
- If you are applying for Certified Senior Member status your statement should be between **3,000** to **3750** words in total.

In writing your statement, you should select what you feel are the strongest examples that you have developed in your role as an Assistive Technologist. For each competency, it is acceptable to provide us with a range of examples but please ensure that you provide a detailed description or discussion of one or two of these examples. The quality of the examples (depth) given is more important than quantity (breadth).

Please note: Examples of potential activities are provided in the following section. These are only suggestions and not a comprehensive list. The order does not indicate any preference for approaches. You are not required to include any or all of these suggestions in your application.

Core Competency 1: Understanding AT Users

CC1A (Associate, Member and Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate a knowledge of the strengths, needs, preferences and aspirations of AT Users and how these might inform the decisions they make about the role and value of AT in their lives (does not have to be all AT or all disabilities/needs, but those that are particularly relevant to the context the applicant is working in). Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Taking the time to observe, talk to and get to know the AT user before making any AT recommendations.
- Accessing and evaluating background information about individuals prior to working with them. This might include developing a 'pen-portrait' or profile of the AT user.
- Using the Matching Persons to Technology Assessment process, the HATT or SETT frameworks (or equivalent) to evaluate a user's strengths, needs, preferences and environment in order to make appropriate AT recommendations that maximise opportunities for success.

CC1B (Member and Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate an ability to advocate for the needs of AT Users and/or to support AT Users to self-advocate. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Supporting a disabled person to use AT (e.g. AAC) to communicate their needs to support workers, service providers and others in their circle of support.
- Using participatory/inclusive research methods to elicit the AT related experiences of disabled people sharing this data with policy makers and others in order to improve AT provision.
- Setting up and supporting an AT user group or equivalent and working with this group to develop user-led services within your organisation.

Core Competency 2: Understanding AT

CC2A (Associate, Member and Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of the constraints and benefits of different AT for AT Users people. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Supporting a disabled person to test two or three different kinds of software (apps, input devices or equivalent) and to create a set of criteria, based on priorities identified by the user that can be used to compare and contrast them.
- Arranging longer trials of complex hardware and software (e.g. eye gaze, voice recognition software) so users have opportunities to test in a number of contexts and over time.
- Ensuring AT is relevant to the user's current environment e.g. when moving from education to a workplace.
- Undertaking a risk assessment in partnership with the AT user and identifying strategies for managing any potential risk or alternative AT choices that eliminate the identified potential risk.

CC2B (Associate, Member and Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate an ability to set up and use AT that is relevant to their workplace, including knowledge of accessibility settings that meet the needs of different users they are supporting. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Supporting a disabled person to edit the accessibility settings on their smart devices.
- Ensuring users' AT is compatible with systems in the setting e.g. workplace and education software, online training tools, communication and access systems.
- Liaising with IT or digital services within a school, college or workplace to ensure that technology infrastructure meets the need of AT users e.g. Roaming profiles are in place, checking accessible password policy.

CC2C (Member and Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate an ability to support the effective and sustained use of AT disabled people and those in their support circle. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Conducting regular progress reviews with AT users and using AT outcome tools to assess impact over time and adjust AT recommendations and provision.
- Ensuring everyone within the AT user's circle of support knows how to use the AT.
- Being available to answer questions and provide ad-hoc support.
- Producing accessible documentation that AT users and others can use for troubleshooting.
- Point of contact for individual or support in case of issues.

Core Competency 3: Understanding the AT eco-system

CC3A (Associate, Member and Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of the processes by which access to AT is accessed, funded, delivered and evaluated within the context(s) in which they are working. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Possessing up-to-date knowledge of the AT resources available within your current workplace.
- Supporting a disabled person to apply to the Access to Work scheme for a grant to purchase AT.
- Regularly updating a local list of all the places that offer free mobile data SIM cards (e.g. National Databank run by Good Things Foundation) for AT users who are experiencing digital poverty and therefore at significant risk of digital exclusion.
- Possessing up-to-date knowledge of the AT funding models within the UK and how these might influence your AT user and/or the AT you recommend them.
- Knowing when to refer an AT User to another specialist service or professional if the support required by the AT User is beyond the scope of the applicant or the organisation the applicant works within.

CC3B (Member and Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of the factors that facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of processes within the AT eco-system. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Checking whether the technology that AT users currently use is appropriate, damaged or outdated and proposing an appropriate action in response to these checks.
- Conducting an audit of the digital skills and confidence of disabled people/AT users (including those within their circle of support) that you support and the implications this has for the support you need to provide them.
- Creating and disseminating information about readily available AT solutions in the AT user's environment (e.g. workplace).

Core Competency 4: Understanding the wider AT context

CC4A (Member and Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of relevant regional, national and international legislation or policy and how they relate to the context the applicant working in (e.g. related to how equalities, inclusion, accessibility and rights are affected by access or lack of access to suitable AT). Some examples of possible evidence may include:

- Assessing the extent to which your organisations websites and mobile apps meet the WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standard.
- Understanding what circumstances might lead AT to be considered a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act and the implications this might have for the advice and guidance you give to AT users and those within their circle of support.
- Understanding how the Communication Bill of Rights developed in the AAC community in the US can be adapted and implemented by your organisation or service.
- Understanding the five principles underpinning the 2005 Mental Capacity Act and how these might guide how you or your organisation/service support an AT User to make decisions about their AT use.

CC4B (Member and Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of and ability to implement relevant AT policies or standards at a national, regional or organizational level. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Using the Natspec’s ‘TechAbility Standards’ (or equivalent) as a tool to audit current AT provision within your team or service.
- Contributing to the development of a digital inclusion policy or strategy within your service or organisation aimed at tackling the causes of digital exclusion for disabled people in the communities and environments in which you work.
- Collaborating with other services (education, health or social care) in order to provide a cohesive AT related support package as mandated by the Children and Families Act 2014.
- Using the Preparing for Adulthood Framework to help AT users consider their AT related goals and needs as they transition from education into adulthood.
- Setting up a staff development programme within your service or organisation that is informed to the AT Competency Framework for effective AT training developed by the University of Dundee in collaboration with the DfE.
- Documenting outcomes of any relevant AT risk assessment and evidencing responses to identified risks.

CC4C (Senior Member): Applicants must demonstrate an ability to develop, adapt, shape or influence AT relevant legislation, policies or standards at an international, national, regional or organization level. Some examples of possible activities may include:

- Presenting evidence to a parliamentary select committee or equivalent.
- Contributing to the work of a standards body such as the World Accessibility Initiative.

- Engaging with all relevant AT stakeholders to capture their voices and perspectives on AT related issues, analysing this information and disseminating to relevant AT policymakers, groups or forums.
- Developing a new practice or service; collecting and analysing evidence of the efficacy of that new practice or service and sharing this evidence with the community in order to inform and shape discussions regarding standards of 'best practice' in the field.
- Serving as an advisor to or Trustee of major committees or boards on AT related issues (e.g. Microsoft Advisory Board).
- Engaging key stakeholders in the results of your AT related research and supporting them to implement the key findings or outcomes.

3.5 AT Specialist Skill 1 & 2

These sections invites you to provide two detailed accounts that:

1. Make it clear from the beginning of your account what particular AT Specialist Skill you are claiming e.g., AT assessment and provision; AT research; AT design and development; AT policy; AT Professional Development; AT outcomes and evaluation; AT service development and evaluation; AT funding;
2. outline the context for the AT specialist skill that you are claiming;
3. describe your practice in this specialist skill or area;
4. provide evidence of the impact of your practice in this specialist skill area on AT users and others in their circle of support.

Each account should be between **750 and 925** words in total.

A key focus of each case study should be to evidence your independent practice in a particular AT specialist area. Specialist areas in the AT field include, but are not limited to:

- AT assessment and/or provision.
- AT research.
- AT design and development.
- AT policy.
- AT Professional Development.
- AT outcomes and evaluation.
- AT service development and evaluation.
- AT funding.

We anticipate that some or all of the specialist area categories we have listed in the previous section can and will be interpreted quite broadly. For example:

- if you have been instrumental within your organisation for making a legal or business case for why your organisation should recognise digital accessibility as an issue and embed it within its core operations it would seem reasonable for you to claim this as a specialist skill and to label this skill as an AT Policy skill, particularly if organisational policies were altered as a result.
- AT design and development might involve creating new AT products from scratch or redesigning/updating existing AT products.

The specialist skill might be unique to you, or common across the team that you work in, but each case study must make it clear how your specialist skill goes beyond the core competencies.

If you are applying for senior membership, the second AT Specialist Skill must be distinctly different from the first. For example, if your role is predominantly assessing what AT might best support AAC users, it may be appropriate to provide one account where you detail what assessment models or frameworks you use and why and another account where you detail how you evaluate the impact of your AT recommendations on the AAC user(s) you worked with.

In describing your practice in a particular specialist area make sure that you help the assessors understand the decisions you have made and/or information you drew on to inform the strategies or approaches you have adopted (e.g., why you recommended one AT in preference to others). Your claim will be strengthened if you can provide concrete evidence that your practice (as reflected in your specialist skills) has had a positive impact on the AT users you have worked with.

Be careful not to include any sensitive information in your account that might identify the AT Users and/or colleagues that you work with.

In preparing your accounts, you may find it helpful to plan what additional pieces of evidence you might supply in the Supporting Evidence section of your application that might usefully expand and corroborate the information you provide (e.g. an anonymised copy of an AT assessment report that you conducted with/for an AT user or quantitative/qualitative evaluation data derived from follow ups to initial assessment or interaction with the AT user). It will be helpful if you signpost these to the assessor within the main text of your account (e.g., insert “See Supporting Evidence 1- testimonial from AT User group”).

3.6 AT Leadership

This section invites you to provide a detailed account that:

1. briefly outlines the context for the AT leadership skill that you are claiming
2. describes the strategic initiative(s) you have developed and implemented
3. Explains, with evidence, the particular issue or problem that the initiative(s) was trying to address
4. Justifies the strategic decisions you made
5. Provides evidence that your strategic initiatives have successfully supported AT users and or AT professionals to achieve their goals.

Your account should be between **750 and 925** words in total. A key focus of your account should be to evidence your ability to lead strategic initiatives that have the potential to enhance the practice of AT professionals other than yourself and enhance the experience of AT users other than those that you directly work within.

In describing your AT leadership practice make sure that you help the assessors understand what evidence you were drawing upon to identify problems and potential solutions, how you used this evidence to identify appropriate solutions or strategies and/or what evidence you use to evaluate the impact or outcome of your strategic initiative. This will require you to share that evidence with the assessors (or a summary of it). Examples might include data comparing outcome measurement scores or perceived impact before and after an intervention or initiative; longitudinal data (e.g., satisfaction scores; wait times for assessment; quality of life indicators; school attendance data; goal attainment data) showing changes over time.

Be careful not to include any sensitive information in your case study that might identify the AT Users and/or colleagues that you work with.

In preparing your account, you may find it helpful to plan what additional pieces of evidence you might supply in the Supporting Evidence section of your application form that might usefully expand and corroborate the information you provide in the case study. (e.g. a copy of a report that evaluates the outcomes of your strategic initiative). It will be helpful if you signpost these to the assessor within the main text of your case study.

3.7 Supporting Evidence

This section of the online application form requires you to provide supporting items that corroborate your claims to meet one or more of the core principles or core competencies.

- If you are applying for Certified Associate Member status you can provide **up to ten** supporting items of evidence.
- If you are applying for Certified Member status you can provide **up to fifteen** supporting items of evidence.
- If you are applying for Certified Senior Member status you can provide **up to twenty** supporting items of evidence.

For each supporting item of evidence you need to upload a digital copy (e.g. JPG, MP4, PDF, word or PowerPoint file). Examples of supporting evidence might include:

- A copy of a relevant undergraduate or degree certificate.
- A copy of relevant specialist qualification.
- A copy of certificate of successful completion of relevant CPD activity.
- A copy of a letter or certificate confirming membership of another relevant professional recognition scheme.
- A link to a personal social media page or feed (e.g. blog, LinkedIn profile, X account).
- A copy of a report/policy/proposal /standard/strategy/research paper that you have authored that has been formally disseminated across your organisation or beyond.

It is not compulsory to provide additional supporting evidence, but it can be helpful for corroboration or triangulation purposes. If you choose to provide supporting evidence, try to include items that have some status or depth. For example, a photograph of an agenda for an AT related meeting that you attended tells the assessors very little.

3.8 Professional Testimonials

This section requires you to provide contact details (name, role, organisation and email) for people who have agreed to provide a professional testimonial for you.

- If you are applying for **Certified Associate Member** status you will need to provide contact details for **one** person who has agreed to provide a professional testimonial for you. This person can be from within the organisation or service that you work.
- If you are applying for **Certified Member status** you will need to contact details for **two** people who have agreed to provide a professional testimonial for you. One of these people must be external to the organisation or service that you work.

- If you are applying for **Certified Senior Member status** you will need to you will need to contact details for **three** people who have agreed to provide a professional testimonial for you. Two of these people must be external to the organisation or service that you work.

The people you choose to provide a professional testimonial must be working in the AT field and have some direct knowledge of your practice. They do not necessarily have to have worked with you on a daily basis, but in their testimonial we are looking for detailed descriptions/evaluations of your practice, based on their direct experience of engaging with you. For testimonials provided by someone from the organisation or service in which you work, it can be a manager or a colleague. However, generally speaking, it would not be advisable to ask someone you line manage to provide a testimonial as this may place them in a potentially awkward position.

When approaching potential people who might be able to provide you with a testimonial it would be advisable to share your application with them, prior to submitting it to PAAT to help orient them to what areas they might focus on in order to best supplement or support the claims you are making.

PAAT will contact the named people directly to elicit a testimonial using a standard testimonial template. When we contact them we will advise them to treat the testimonial like a letter of recommendation and as such, if after reviewing the requirements of the association, they do not feel that they can offer any useful insight that would support your application, we invite them to simply decline our invitation.

4. Submitting your application

4.1. Submission process

Applicants can apply for certification at any point throughout the year using the online application process that can accessed via the PAAT website: <https://pa-at.org/> .

The panel will convene three times per year to assess submissions. PAAT will acknowledge receipt of the submission and endeavour to provide the applicant with an outcome within 16 to 20 weeks of submission. All applicants will receive written feedback, identifying areas of good practice and any areas for development.

If you have any queries about the application process, please email: membership@pa-at.org.

4.2. Appeals procedure

If you have any concerns about the application process, please email: membership@paat.org detailing your specific concerns. Please note that any appeal would need to be related to the review process not being adhered to rather than the outcome. All appeals will be managed by the Chair of PAAT Directors to reduce any conflict of interest and to ensure that the appeal decision is fair. The appeal decision will be final. The timeframe for dealing with complaints will normally be 8 weeks.

5. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

5.1. Am I eligible to apply for certification?

Practitioners who have been working in the field of AT for less than 3 years or those who have been practicing for three or more years but only engage with AT as a smaller part of their role can apply for Certified Associate Member status.

Established Practitioners who have been working within the field of AT for three or more years and engage with AT as a core aspect of their role can apply for Certified Member status

Established Practitioners who have been working within the field of AT for three or more years, engage with AT as a core aspect of their role and have AT related management, leadership or strategic responsibilities can apply for Certified Senior Member status.

We are positioning certified senior members of PAAT as exceptional practitioners who are widely recognised as a role models to others in the AT field. With this in mind, we anticipate that our membership cohort will reflect a 'bell-shaped' curve. In other words, the majority of accepted members are likely to be 'certified members', and relatively fewer are likely to be 'certified senior members' or 'certified associate members'.

Assistive Technologists work in a variety of roles and contexts and job titles will vary to reflect this diversity. It is therefore not essential that applicants have the phrase 'Assistive Technologist' contained within their job title. The focus of the role is more important than the specific job title.

5.2 Will PAAT accredit any prior learning or qualifications that I have?

PAAT will not formally accredit any prior learning or prior qualifications that you have. Instead, you are invited, through your online application and supporting evidence, to show how your prior learning or qualifications map onto the core principles, core competencies, AT Specialist Skills and AT Leadership skills.

5.3 How many examples do I need to include in my application?

Overall, across the whole of your application we are expecting to see a variety of examples that show the breadth of your evidence. Having said this, there is no set number of examples you should provide for each value or competence. Although you can include more than one relevant example for each value or competence, a key consideration is how your evidence demonstrates you have met the requirements of that value or competence. One example may be sufficient to evidence how you meet the value or competence in your practice.

5.4 How recent does my evidence need to be?

The majority of your evidence should be recent, within **three years**. However, you may include a project or activity that commenced more than three years ago, detailing its development over time. This approach could provide valuable context, allow for reflection, and demonstrate how your practice has evolved.

For those applying for senior membership we recognise that you may be in management roles where you have not had direct contact with AT Users for three years or more. In these circumstances it is acceptable to give a brief overview of how you worked with AT Users prior to taking on your management roles and then detail how this experience has informed the processes and procedures that you have put in place as a manager to support the AT User and/or the staff you lead or manage.

5.5 Can I include supporting evidence?

There is a section of the online application process that allows you to provide supporting items that corroborate your claims to meet any or all of the core principles, core competencies, AT Specialist Skills or Leadership skills (see pages 10 to 12) of this handbook for further details). For each supporting item of evidence you need to upload a digital copy (e.g. JPG, MP4, PDF, word or PowerPoint file).

5.6 Should I support my application with citations and references from research or practice literature?

Although citations to academic or practice literature may help you to evidence how you meet the core principles and competencies (e.g., evidence-based practice; Specialist Skill relating to AT research), they are not a requirement for your application. If you would like to include citations, you should use an appropriate author-date referencing system (such as APA, Chicago, or Harvard) to cite where you have drawn on material in your application. Please note that references may be academic texts, but they could also be other materials, such as podcasts, magazines, or conference talks.

5.7 Can I use Generative AI to write my application?

The use of Generative AI technologies to create substantive content for your application is not appropriate. However, such technology may be utilised to improve the clarity, spelling, and grammar of your text. It is essential that your application reflects your professional practice and is created and written in your own words.

5.8 Is there a word limit for the application?

There are word limits for each section of the application form, some of these will be different depending on what type of membership you are applying for (see pages 11-13 of this handbook for more details).

5.9 Is there an alternative to completing the online form?

Alternative assessment methods such as viva may be requested by those with particular access needs. Applicants must email: membership@pa-at.org to make such a request.

5.10 How many hours will my application take?

There is no set amount of time you should work on your application. You may wish to factor in time for approaching people who might be willing to provide a professional testimonial for you. Our advice would be to take your time to carefully draft and collate your evidence. The PAAT assessment process has been designed to be fair and rigorous. It has not been designed to be quick to complete.

5.11 What recognition will I receive if my application is successful?

Once your application has been successful you will receive a certificate. Your profile can be added to a list of other Certified Associate, Members or Senior Members on the PAAT website. You will also be encouraged to use 'Certified Associate/Member or Senior Member of PAAT' in your email signature and similar communications to recognise your professional status.

5.12 How many times can I resubmit my application?

Should a submission not meet the evidence required, each potential member will be permitted one re-submission at the next assessment date, without further charge.

5.13 How long can I wait to apply for the next membership level?

Applicants may apply to join PAAT at whatever level they feel is commensurate with the evidence they can provide. It is possible for an applicant to apply in the first instance for associate member status and then as they gain more experience, to re-apply for member status. Similarly for those who apply in the first instance for membership status, it is

possible for them to re-apply in the future for senior member status. Given the amount of additional evidence that is required for each progression, our advice would normally be to wait at least a year.

There may be occasions where the assessment panel reviews an application and considers that the applicant is under-selling themselves and has the potential to apply for the next membership level. In such cases, they may recommend that the applicant considers applying for the next membership level in less than 12 months.

5.14 Do I need to revalidate my certification status once successful?

The term of certification is valid for one year from the date of approval of your application. Each year, on the anniversary of your accreditation you must pay an annual membership fee. In addition you are required to keep a record of the CPD you have undertaken in the past 12 months. PAAT will conduct random audits where some members are then required to provide evidence of this CPD.

5.15 What are the terms and conditions of membership?

The terms and conditions of PAAT membership are:

1. Membership subscriptions to the Professional Association of Assistive Technologists (PAAT) shall be payable annually and must be paid in full by the renewal date for membership to remain current.
2. Members may refer to themselves as a member of PAAT and use the category to which they have been accepted into membership **only** after their application has been approved **and** after subscription or renewal is paid. These categories shall be referred to as one of:
 - Associate Member of the Professional Association of Assistive Technologists
 - Member of the Professional Association of Assistive Technologists
 - Senior Member of the Professional Association of Assistive Technologists
3. Members are required to maintain conduct that upholds the reputation of PAAT and its accreditation scheme, avoiding actions that may harm PAAT or its members.
4. Payment of the annual membership subscription shall constitute the member's confirmation that the membership category recorded for them, whether Associate, Member, or Senior Member, is correct.

5. By paying the annual membership subscription, the member affirms their agreement to comply with the professional standards as outlined in the PAAT Core Principles.
6. By paying the annual membership subscription, the member confirms that they will maintain an annual record of their continuing professional development and professional practice. This record may be requested by PAAT for inspection as part of a monitoring process.
7. By paying the annual membership subscription, the member confirms that they will notify PAAT promptly of any change in circumstances that results in them no longer practising in the field of Assistive Technology.
8. Infringement of these terms and conditions may result in removal of membership with no reimbursement of subscription.

Directors retain the right to update the terms and conditions of membership including content contained within this handbook to ensure it remains current, relevant and meets the needs of members and prospective members. Members will be informed of any changes which affect them during their current membership period.

5.16 Will I have to pay to submit a membership application?

Yes, you will have to pay. Payment is split into two portions: an application processing fee and a membership fee. You will be required to pay the application fee when you submit your application. If your membership application is successful, you will be charged an additional membership fee.

5.17 What do I do if I have technical difficulties with the online application form?

The online application process offers opportunities to regularly save your application and we would advise you to do this to reduce the chance of losing information you have inputted. At the end of the online application process you will be offered the opportunity to check and preview your whole application prior to clicking the submission button.

If you should face technical difficulties with the online application form it may be worth checking if these difficulties persist if you change web browsers. If you are using an organisational device/network to submit your application it may also be helpful to check if their firewall protocols are preventing access to the form. If all else fails, please contact PAAT at membership@pa-at.org and we will endeavour to identify a solution for you.