

# POLITARCHOPOLIS PERSONA PENTATHLON – DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

## **Background:**

The Persona Pentathlon is a challenge to produce five different things that someone would have owned if they lived in a single time and place that existed prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. (You can find more information on the specifics of the competition here:

<https://politar chopolis.lochac.sca.org/2019/07/the-baroness-of-politar chopolis-persona-pentathlon/>)

Like many competitions in the SCA, entrants are encouraged not just to provide the physical item, but some background for it, known in the SCA as *documentation*. For this competition, entrants are encouraged to tell us about what they have made, and their choices leading to the final item in one of two forms:

- Written reports (2 pages, with attached pictures).
- Presentations (5 minutes recorded)

The first reason to provide documentation is to help the judges understand the items that you have made (which they will judge against a rubric you can find here:

<https://artsandsciences.lochac.sca.org/judging-scheme/>)

The second reason is just as important: to help guide you during the process of making. In other words, this is your place to check what sorts of things you are considering as you plan and make the item, and it is much easier to do at the same time as creating an object than trying to remember all your decisions later. Think of it as less of a book report, and more a series of recommendations you might make to someone else who wanted to try this:

- **About the persona** – Tell us who they are, where and when from, and where this person fits into the society of the time. This explains the context of each item and helps us understand why you have chosen what to make. Try using the optional persona questionnaire if you need help to refine this. A full history isn't required, keep it brief.
- **About what you have made** – Tell us what this item is, when this type of item would have existed, and who would have used it. This explains the item's context in its time, beyond just the persona.
- **About how you learned about the item** – Tell us how you found out what you know. These are your references. This can be from:
  - Primary sources, or items that still exist, in physical form in museums, or that were illustrated or written about in your time period.
  - Secondary sources, or what people have written after that time period which helped you to understand the item, ranging from in-depth history books and articles to blogs made by others explaining their journey making a similar item.
- **About your process** – Tell us about materials and techniques that you used and why you substituted items eg – poisonous, too expensive, unavailable. It's ok to substitute so long as you let the judges know you realise these weren't the original materials used. It is important to add any important lessons you learned along the way that could help others to make the same item, including how you would change your approach if making it again

In order to make this easier, you can download the documentation template at the end which lays this all out, and provides some word lengths, and some examples.

## FAQ

### **How do I structure this? Is there a template?**

Yes! There is a template below if you want help to create this document. It is quite structured and gives suggested word lengths to help you stay on track. Don't feel you have to use this, but it will help set your expectations for what the judges might want to see with your entry. You should try to complete one per item unless you are entering two of the same type of item in one of your categories.

### **Help, my documentation is too short!**

The basis of documentation is to explain the item to someone. It gives you a chance to show what you know about these items as they existed and how they were or could be made. If your documentation is too short, there is a strong possibility that you haven't thought of yourself as explaining this to someone who is completely unfamiliar with the item. Help them understand what the item is, why it existed, what it is used for, and where they can find more information. You can use the template below to help, or the optional persona questionnaire.

### **Help, my documentation is too long!**

While these reports are short, this doesn't mean that you can't do something longer elsewhere, and we would encourage you to do so to help others in their SCA journey. In our case, we are hoping this will help people to concentrate on what is important and develop their skills in succinctly explaining what they are working on. It will also help our judges get through a number of entries more easily. Here are a couple of ways you can shorten the report, without reducing its quality:

- Cut out any pictures of items you are submitting unless you aren't able to physically get them to the judges and are sending photos only (include from all angles)– generally they can see them!
- Cut out long-winded explanations of your process in favour of a brief description and lessons you have learned (unless it is not evident from the final outcome – chances are a judge will have tried the same methods and understand what you have done.
- Move your pictures of extant items and processes out of the document, and attach them at the back of the document, with brief captions.
- Check the balance of your documentation, to make sure you haven't spent a lot more time on any one section.

### **Where can I get more information on writing documentation?**

The first place to go to ask specific questions or get help is the Persona Pentathlon group on Facebook. If you aren't a user of Facebook then email [arts@politar chopolis.lochac.sca.org](mailto:arts@politar chopolis.lochac.sca.org) and the Arts & Sciences officer will assist in finding an answer for you. There are also a lot of excellent resources available on the web. These two (from the Lochac A&S site's explanation of documentation <https://artsandsciences.lochac.sca.org/documentation>) are great examples:

- ***An Approach to Documentation*** (Mistress Ailis ingen Mheadhbha)  
This article explores how to research an item, and unpacks thinking about documentation, and questions you can ask yourself to guide writing documentation.  
<https://artsandsciences.lochac.sca.org/files/2013/08/Ailis-Doco-Class.pdf>
- ***A&S Documentation: what do they want?*** (Mistress Ealasaid nic Suibhne)  
This article gives examples of documentation ranging from poor to excellent, to give you an idea about how judges consider documentation, and what they will be looking for.  
[http://baronyofatenveldt.org/uploads/library/A\\_and\\_S\\_Documentation\\_97.pdf](http://baronyofatenveldt.org/uploads/library/A_and_S_Documentation_97.pdf)

## A suggested documentation template

<p><b><u>Name:</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Category:</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Persona:</u></b></p> <p><i>Describe your persona here in 50-100 words, giving the judges context for the item.</i></p> <p><i>Include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>when and where your persona is from,</i></li><li>- <i>what their role and status is in that time and location,</i></li><li>- <i>why your persona would have this item, and how it fits in their life</i></li></ul>
<p><b><u>Item:</u></b></p> <p><i>Describe the basic details about your item here, in 50-100 words</i></p> <p><i>Include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>what this item is and what items like it were used for</i></li><li>- <i>when and where these items would have existed</i></li><li>- <i>what sort of people would have used or consumed these items, and why</i></li></ul>
<p><b><u>Primary evidence:</u></b></p> <p><i>Describe how you know about this item from original evidence in 150-200 words, attaching any relevant pictures at the back of the document.</i></p> <p><i>Include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Any examples where this particular type item still exists, including its current condition and location, and if many similar examples still exist, and what that tells you about construction or use of the item.</i></li><li>- <i>Any examples of illustrations you have found to help you understand specific details about how and when the item was and who owned or used it.</i></li><li>- <i>Any examples of writing from that time that give details about how the item was made or used and by whom, including recipes, manuals, descriptions from observers, or legal documents like laws or wills.</i></li><li>- <i>Include information about how the items may vary (eg size, colour, texture, taste, etc) or in the way they are made or used.</i></li></ul>
<p><b><u>Secondary evidence:</u></b></p> <p><i>Describe any sources that you have used to understand these items in 150-200 words</i></p> <p><i>Include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Any specific information on the construction of these items</i></li><li>- <i>Any specific information from resources like books, articles, reports or web-pages about this or similar items that have helped you understand the item's context or the process of making an item like this, including materials and construction methods.</i></li><li>- <i>Any specific information from other reenactors that have helped you with your decision-making about how to re-create this item, including materials and construction methods</i></li><li>- <i>Include any information on how opinions vary in the details about the use or making of the item</i></li><li>- <i>Information about who would have made or supplied this item to the person you are making it for if they, that person, would not have made it for themselves.</i></li><li>- <i>Details on the cost, status and prevalence of these items if you have found them.</i></li></ul>

- *Reference your information as you go, noting the author, source and page number (any format is fine, ask for help if you need it), remembering to list all these resources in the references section at the bottom*

### **About your process**

*Describe how you have used the evidence above to make the decisions about what you made, in 250- 300 words*

*Include:*

- *The materials you have chosen, including any substitutions you have made and why. This can include where you sourced the materials, and any considerations like availability or cost that caused you to choose alternative materials.*
- *Your process to create this item, including the techniques you have used, and any recipe or method redactions or adaptations.*
- *Specify if you have learned any new skills as a result of this, and if you would choose to use these skills again or in other projects.*
- *What you have learned about what you have made that you would repeat or change if you were making another item like this or teaching other people to make an item like this.*
- *How your understanding of the item or process has changed along the way.*
- *How your understanding of your persona has changed by learning about or making this item.*

### **References**

*This is a list of the information that guided your process. This is about showing your research as well as giving credit to those who have created resources you have found useful. Remember to list museums and galleries that contain your primary evidence, as well as any books, journal articles or websites that have helped with your research or learning process for making this item. If you want to note when one has been particularly useful (or given you poor advice) for someone else making a similar item, that is particularly appreciated.*

*Examples:*

- *The Moustache Museum, <http://moustachemuseum.co.uk>, accessed 21 June 2020. This was really great to get pictures of moustaches and grooming tools across time.*
- *A Smith, *The Big Book of Moustaches*, Insouciant Press, Nowhere Indiana, 1989. This was particularly useful on moustache as a status symbol.*
- *B. Johnson, "Moustaches in Medieval France", *Journal of Everything*, Winter 2010, pp.1-9. This was particularly helpful for the type of moustache and tools my persona would have.*
- *"Moustaches and Beard growing", Master Rainbow Sparkles Guide to Personal Grooming, [www.rainbowsparkles.net.bz](http://www.rainbowsparkles.net.bz), accessed 21 June 2020. This was a great reference for moustache wax recipes.*

### **Attachments**

*This is the place to list what you are attaching to your documentation in case they become detached. This is your chance to attach illustrations, as long as they are directly relevant. Try to keep them to a minimum, and if they are large pictures, crop them to show the relevant information.*

- *Attach no more than two pages of illustrative materials:*
  - o *Primary evidence objects or pictures (1 page compilation). Make sure they are labelled with what they are, and the place and time they are from, and use them in your explanation so the judges can see their relevance.*
  - o *Your construction process (1 page compilation). Limit this to illustrate your techniques and highlight any issues you encountered.*