Assessor guide

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Associate assessor guide

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Introduction

The Associate assessment is the process by which those with relevant work experience or vocational/academic qualification (or a combination of these) can become an RICS Associate.

RICS Associate is a high-value qualification in its own right. It also provides a stepping stone to advance to the chartered professional qualification (MRICS). It is gained by submitting written work which demonstrates the candidate's knowledge and understanding, work experience and structured development.

As an assessor, you are responsible for ensuring that only those with a demonstrated level of competence can achieve the qualification. You do
this by assessing the candidate's submission. This guide explains:

- what candidates must do to get to the point of assessment
- how you should approach your task
- what criteria you should apply
- what processes you should follow.

Maintaining assessors' skills

As an assessor you are committed, through the service level agreement, to continuous improvement and development. You will be required to undertake assessor refresher training when appropriate. All RICS assessors are required to complete the RICS ethics module every three years.

Assessor roles

You are one of two assessors. Before you carry out your first assessment, you must complete our assessor training and sign a service level agreement.

You will act as either:

Assessor #1 – an AssocRICS, MRICS or FRICS who assesses the submission and decides whether the candidate has met the requirements of the pathway. Assessor #1 is responsible for writing the referral report for referred candidates and managing the contact with their co-assessor before a decision is reached.

Assessor #2 – not directly responsible for writing the referral report or managing arrangements.

Whether you are Assessor #1 or Assessor #2 in an assessment is a matter of random selection.

Pathways and competencies

You will only assess candidates from your own area of expertise (pathway). There is a detailed guide for each pathway. To prepare for assessing, it is essential that you read the relevant pathway guide and familiarise yourself with the competencies.

1 Candidate submission

Candidates will come from a variety of backgrounds in terms of education. They will all have relevant work experience. Assessment is open to those with four years' relevant experience. The required length of experience is reduced if a candidate has certain specified qualifications calibrated by RICS.

RICS Assessment Platform

An online tool where candidates manage their assessment details, CPD and selected competency records, and prepare their submission for assessment.

As an assessor, you will access the platform to provide your availability to assess and to download candidate submissions and details of each assessment panel you are assigned to.

A short video guide about using the platform is available on the Assessments information web page.

Confidentiality

The candidate submits for assessment in the Assessment Platform. Each submission is confidential and must not be disclosed to any third party without the candidate's permission. Candidates may choose to replace names with pseudonyms.

The following advice looks at the individual components of the submission in more detail.

Summary of experience

This is a record of the candidate's experience, demonstrating how that experience meets the requirements of the technical and mandatory competencies of the chosen pathway.

You are looking for confirmation that the candidate has understood the technical competencies and analysed their work in the context of those competencies. The candidate will also write briefly about each of the mandatory competencies.

Technical competencies

The candidate must demonstrate **six** technical competencies, providing an individual summary for each one. Collectively, all six must come to no more than 2,000 words. Summaries must clearly show how work experience is relevant to each competency.

Mandatory competencies

Non-technical general business skills. The candidate must demonstrate **eight** mandatory competencies. They will write a brief example for seven of these, with a total word limit of 1,000 words in total. Candidates are not required to write about the mandatory competency 'Conduct rules, ethics and professional practice', as they will demonstrate this by completing the RICS ethics module.

Evaluation

Consider whether the candidate has the necessary technical knowledge, and has put that knowledge into practice in day-to-day work. You would not expect the candidate to be providing professional advice to clients. A candidate working at Associate level would normally be contributing to the advice, carrying out research, preparing significant parts of the report or advice, but not signing off the advice under their own name (except in reasonably simple or routine matters, with proper quality assurance from a supervisor).

Is the summary well written and well presented? Is the evidence convincing – in particular, does it appear to be truthful and to be based on the applicant's own experience?

For each of the technical competencies you should refer to the pathway guide and look particularly at the examples given. Does the summary show that the applicant has understood the competency?

For the mandatory competencies, you will be looking for confirmation, again, that the candidate has understood the competencies and recognised their importance.

Case study

An account of a project or piece of work, described in terms of the competencies. It should focus mainly on the two technical competencies most relevant to the candidate's day-to-day work, but will refer to other technical and mandatory competencies as well.

The candidate must select a project or projects that they have been personally involved in the two years prior to their assessment submission date. A project may have started over two years ago but the case study should reference their involvement in the past two years.

The case study must not exceed 2,500 words.

There may be illustrations, calculations or plans, but only if they are directly relevant to the two main competencies covered in the case study.

The template provides a text box for the candidate to describe briefly the context (details such as date and location of project, name of the employer and details of the candidate's role). This section should be no more than 500 words in total.

The case study should show:

- objective of project
- knowledge, skills and experience
- role played and contribution made
- technical skills used
- overall outcome.

It should:

- demonstrate understanding of the competencies
- focus on two technical competencies
- display some of the general business skills (mandatory competencies).

Evaluation

Does the case study clearly identify the objective of the project? Does the knowledge, skills and experience match the descriptions in the pathway guide? Does it demonstrate the ability to reflect on the learning involved in the project? In addition to the two main competencies identified, does it touch on other technical competencies and reflect at least some of the mandatory competencies?

The content is more important than the style, but it should meet the standard expected in a report prepared for a client – well written, unambiguous, technically correct, well organised, and free from errors of spelling, grammar or presentation.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

CPD is the systematic updating and enhancement of skills, knowledge and competence that takes place throughout working life. It should be closely linked to the candidate's current work.

CPD can be taken from various sources including attending conferences, meetings or seminars, completing an academic course or informal reading.

Special attention must be given to the principles underpinning CPD:

- gained in a structured manner
- based on an explicit process of selecting, planning and evaluating the activities
- reflect learning from informal training sources, e.g. structured reading, secondments.

All candidates are required to complete 48 hours of CPD.

The candidate's CPD must be split between formal development such as professional courses, seminars or online events and informal development such as private study or on the job training. At least 50% of their CPD must be dedicated to formal development. Candidates are required to submit a record of their CPD.

Once candidates have been awarded the RICS Associate qualification (AssocRICS) they will continue to undertake and record online a minimum of 20 hours' CPD activity each calendar year as part of their commitment to professional development.

Evaluation

Does the candidate's CPD record complement both their mandatory and technical competencies?

The candidates CPD must be split between formal development such as professional courses, seminars or online events and informal development such as private study or on the job training. At least 50% of their CPD must be dedicated to formal development. Candidates are asked for recent examples. You might question a record where activities are concentrated into a short period of time rather than being completed over the course of 12 months.

Areas to consider are as follows:

- Was this gained in a structured manner?
- Was this based on an explicit process of selecting, planning and evaluating the activities?
- Does the record include learning from informal training sources, e.g. structured reading, secondments?

2 Assessment process

Before the assessment

We will match each candidate with two assessors. We will take account of the candidate's sector, practice area, specialism and employment history. We will email you to tell you an assessment is waiting for you in the Assessment Platform. Check the candidate's name and employment details, and consider whether you have a conflict of interest. You must not accept the assessment if:

- you have personal knowledge of the candidate
- you have significant connections with the candidate's employer (for instance, you have worked for the organisation in the last five years, have close personal relations with any of its employees, regularly do business with the organisation or could be considered a business competitor).

You are bound by the RICS Rules of Conduct in these matters and must act ethically at all times. We will provide advice if you are in doubt.

You must also decline the assessment if you cannot guarantee you will be able to meet the deadline for completing it: see below.

We will let you know whether you are the lead assessor or co-assessor, and we will tell you if the candidate has previously been assessed.

By accepting, you take full responsibility for delivering an assessment with the terms of the service level agreement. At this stage you will also be given the name and contact details of your co-assessor. It is up to you how you prefer to work with your co-assessor, whether by email, telephone, or meeting to discuss.

There are no strict rules on this, provided you reach a fair assessment with each assessor's views being given full weight. RICS does not pay travel or other expenses if you choose to meet.

Completing the assessment

Your benchmarks

As a practitioner and a trained assessor your essential benchmark is your own knowledge and experience of the sector, and the shared view you reach after discussion with your co-assessor. Another important source is the candidate guide: you should familiarise yourself thoroughly with this before you assess a candidate.

Do not assess candidates against the standard of the RICS chartered qualification (MRICS); Associate candidates are not required to have the academic background, the breadth of skills, or the level of experience and professional responsibility of an RICS chartered professional (MRICS), although they may well choose to seek MRICS in the future.

You should be confident of passing a candidate who:

- has demonstrated attainment of six technical competencies defined in the relevant pathway guide
- has submitted reasonable evidence that they have achieved the mandatory competencies (judgement is needed here, because there is less evidence for these competencies)
- has submitted reasonable evidence that they are a fit person to practise as an RICS Associate professional.

Overall, you are looking for confirmation that:

- the candidate's experience is relevant to the pathway competencies
- the candidate demonstrates both knowledge/understanding, and the practical application of that knowledge/understanding
- the candidate is performing quality work at a responsible level?

Your assessment is holistic, and you must use your judgment and discretion to reach a balanced view on the basis of all the elements of the submission. Candidates may have gained experience from other geographical locations. However the candidate must demonstrate they have a working knowledge of the legislation and are competent to practise in the country they are being assessed in.

Access arrangements

RICS makes every effort to protect applicants from discrimination in accordance with the UK *Equality Act* 2010 (the Act) and is committed to equality of opportunity.

Reasonable adjustments: When applying for an assessment, RICS must consider requests for a reasonable adjustment where a candidate, who is disabled as defined by the Act, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled.

A reasonable adjustment must be based on the individual needs of the applicant and their ability to access an assessment.

You will be informed if an adjustment has been agreed and given appropriate guidance.

For further information, refer to: Access Arrangements.

Overall assessment

During the assessment you must ask yourself:

- Is the candidate describing their own work?
- Is the record of professional development appropriate to someone working at that level?
- Is the presentation of a reasonable standard, such as you would expect in communications to clients?

Ethics, Rules of Conduct and professionalism

All Associate candidates must demonstrate the competency 'Conduct rules, ethics and professional practice'.

This is assessed via the RICS professionalism (ethics) module prior to final assessment.

The assessment version of the module includes four units:

Module 1: Introduction to ethics and professionalism.

Module 2: The RICS Rules of Conduct, integrity and professional codes of ethics.

Module 3: Ethical topics and considerations.

Module 4: Choose your own adventure case study.

The module is assessed via a further 'complex' case study and a multiple-choice question test.

This means that you are not required to assess this competency. Provided the candidate passes the module, RICS will accept that they have met the competency requirements.

As an RICS assessor, you must also successfully complete the module every three years. This can count towards your requirement as an RICS member to undertake three hours' CPD related to ethics every three years.

Discussions with the other assessor

When both assessors have had time to read all the material and make their notes, the lead assessor will contact the co-assessor. The first contact must be made as soon as possible after accepting the assessment – this will generally be only to set a time and date for the detailed discussion.

Contact can be by any method – assessors should agree between themselves at the outset what means of communication they prefer. We recommend that assessors discuss each submission by telephone because this enables the fullest exchange of views. The assessors must then undertake a detailed discussion and evaluation of the submission, which should take place at the latest by day 8 after accepting the assessment.

During the discussion you will:

- compare your assessment of the documents
- discuss the candidate's submission in the round
- work towards agreement.

Assessors will develop different ways of working and, provided you can show that you have given proper and thorough consideration to the submission, we do not prescribe a specific approach.

A suggested way of structuring the discussion is to take it competency by competency, then go through each element of the submission in turn to determine whether that competency is demonstrated to your satisfaction.

Decide, taking a balanced view, whether the candidate has satisfied you that the requirements have been met. If so, the candidate has passed. If not, clearly identify the individual competencies in which you think the candidate has fallen short, and the items from the submission which are below standard. This will form the basis of your referral report.

Notifying RICS of your decision

The candidate is scheduled to receive their result within one month of the submission deadline. The lead assessor must enter the result in Assessment Platform by **day 21**. If the decision is to refer, you must upload the referral report within 21 days of entering the result.

As the decision is measured against clear criteria, there should be very few cases where assessors cannot agree. If that does happen, you must notify us as soon as possible but, at the latest, by **day 12** of accepting the assessment. This gives us time to appoint a third assessor. The third assessor will review all the evidence and reach a decision after a discussion with both assessors. The third assessor will have a 'casting vote' and the decision will be reached by a two to one majority.

Note: if, as a result of a casting vote of the third assessor, the candidate is referred, the third assessor will be responsible for preparing feedback for the candidate.

If you refer a candidate you must also agree what they should do to remedy any deficiencies. Those deficiencies, and the remedy for them, must be set out in the feedback.

After the assessment

If the candidate has passed, they will become an RICS Associate (AssocRICS). RICS staff will take over the process from here.

If you refer the candidate, they must do whatever is required in the referral report before submitting for reassessment.

Referral

The referral report is prepared by the lead assessor. It must:

- identify specific competencies that were deficient
- give detailed reasons why the submission was referred
- give general guidance and suggestions for improvement including seeking other/additional experience
- specify what new or revised written material is required.

Again, there are no strict rules, and you can prescribe whatever you consider reasonable, provided:

- it is achievable without creating potential problems for the candidate at work
- it does not require more than 12 months of further experience
- it is proportionate.

We provide a template for the referral report.

Previously referred candidates

The submission from previously referred candidates will include the referral report from the previous assessment panel.

You should conduct the assessment in the same manner as for new candidates before reading the referral report.

1. Read the submission, excluding the referral report.
2. Complete the marksheet.
3. Read the referral report and consider the previous panel's feedback against your own comments.
4. Make any adjustments to your comments and decisions where appropriate.
5. Following discussion with your co-assessor, agree the result.
6. If the result is a pass, continue as normal.
7. If the result is a refer, ensure the feedback on your referral report states the deficiencies in the new submission.

Remember: A candidate can only be referred based on a deficiency in their submission. Your referral report must not make reference to the previous referral report or the previous panel's feedback. The reason for referral cannot be stated as 'you failed to address feedback in the previous referral report'.

Do not use the following phrases, or any similar wording: 'As mentioned by the previous panel ... '; 'Your submission does not address the comments in your previous referral report ... '; 'This competency remains unsatisfactory'.

Delivering confidence

We are RICS. As a member-led chartered professional body working in the public interest, we uphold the highest technical and ethical standards.

We inspire professionalism, advance knowledge and support our members across global markets to make an effective contribution for the benefit of society. We independently regulate our members in the management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others supports their professional practice and pioneers a natural and built environment that is sustainable, resilient and inclusive for all.

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