RICS®

Associate Assessment

Assessor guide

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Associate Assessment

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 RICS Associate members.

RICS Associate is a high-value grade of membership in its own right. It also provides a stepping stone to advance to full 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.

Assessors

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:

Lead assessor – an AssocRICS, MRICS or FRICS who assesses the submission and decides whether the candidate has met the requirements of the pathway. The lead assessor has the extra responsibility of writing the feedback for referred candidates and managing the contact with the co-assessor before a decision is reached.

Co-assessor – as able, but not involved in writing the feedback or managing arrangements.

All trained assessors will take their turn as the lead or co-assessor – whether you are lead assessor in any particular case 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.

Associate candidate

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 qualification calibrated by RICS.

The candidate's written submission

The candidate submits electronically for their assessment which consists of:

- summary of experience
- case study
- record of continuing professional development (CPD)

Confidentiality

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 his/her 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 2000 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** of these by writing one brief example for each. There is a word limit of 1000 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 online RICS ethics module and test.

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 his or her 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. Candidates are asked to use a recent project. The case study must not exceed 2500 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 candidates 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.

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 required to submit a record of their CPD.

Once candidates have been awarded Associate membership (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 that does not demonstrate 48 hours of CPD from within the last 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?

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 and give you the candidate's details. 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.

Please let us know **within 2 working days** of receiving the email whether you can carry out the assessment.

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.

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 judge candidates against the standard of chartered membership – the Associate member will not normally have the academic background, the breadth of skills, or the level of experience and professional responsibility of a professional RICS member (although s/he may well be capable of progressing to that level).

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 s/he has achieved the mandatory competencies (judgement is needed here, because there is less evidence for these competencies)
- has submitted reasonable evidence that s/he is a fit person to practise as an RICS Associate member

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

Overall assessment

During the assessment you must ask yourself:

- Is the candidate describing his/her 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

All candidates for all grades of RICS membership must achieve the highest standard in the competency 'Conduct rules, ethics and professional practice'. RICS has developed a learning module, including a test, to introduce candidates to RICS ethics and examine them on this competency. In addition to submitting their written documentation, candidates must successfully complete the ethics module before they can become an RICS Associate.

This means that you are not required to assess this competency. Provided the candidate passes the module, RICS will accept that s/he has achieved the required standard.

If accepted into membership, the candidate will be bound by RICS' rules and regulations and his/her ethical conduct will be subject to scrutiny by RICS.

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 must be notified of the decision within four weeks of being accepted for assessment. If the decision is to refer, the candidate must get the referral report within that time. You and your co-assessor should therefore agree the decision **by day 10** of accepting the assessment. Please notify your RICS contact of the decision by email.

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 s/he should do to remedy any deficiencies. Those deficiencies, and the remedy for them, must be set out in the feedback.

After the assessment

Four weeks after the candidate comes forward for assessment, we will email the candidate with the result. If the candidate has passed, s/he will become an RICS Associate (AssocRICS). RICS staff will take over the process from here.

If you refer the candidate, s/he 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 which 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, (so that it does not cause unreasonable delay for the candidate in coming forward for reassessment)
- it is proportionate

We provide a template for the referral report.

Banked elements

If a candidate is referred, your feedback must identify which individual elements of the submission were satisfactory. These are then 'banked' by the candidate for 12 months from the date of the result being issued.

The candidate can submit for reassessment as soon as they have produced the new or updated submission required in a referral report, and a minimum of four weeks has passed since the previous assessment. However, if you specify that the candidate must complete a longer period of additional experience, s/he cannot re-submit for assessment until that period has been completed.

When assessing a previously referred candidate, you may not question any banked elements, even if you do not agree with the views of the original assessors. You must simply accept that the item is satisfactory, and assess the candidate on the basis of the new/additional items submitted. If you think the original assessment was poor you should however notify us so that we can quality assure the assessment process.

Maintaining assessors' skills

When assessing a previously referred candidate, you may not question any banked elements, even if you do not agree with the views of the original assessors. You must simply accept that the item is satisfactory, and assess the candidate on the basis of the new/additional items submitted.

If you think the original assessment was poor you should however notify us so that we can quality assure the assessment process.

We provide assessors with an online community. This enables you to share best practice and discuss issues of concern. It will also be used by us to communicate with assessors regularly.

As an assessor you are committed, through the service level agreement, to continuous improvement and development. We may from time to time invite you to undertake refresher training. All RICS assessors are required to complete the RICS ethics module and test every three years.

Confidence through professional standards

RICS promotes and enforces the highest professional qualifications and standards in the development and management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our name promises the consistent delivery of standards – bringing confidence to the markets we serve.

We accredit 125,000 professionals and any individual or firm registered with RICS is subject to our quality assurance. Their expertise covers property, asset valuation and real estate management; the costing and leadership of construction projects; the development of infrastructure; and the management of natural resources, such as mining, farms and woodland. From environmental assessments and building controls to negotiating land rights in an emerging economy; if our professionals are involved the same standards and ethics apply.

We believe that standards underpin effective markets. With up to seventy per cent of the world's wealth bound up in land and real estate, our sector is vital to economic development, helping to support stable, sustainable investment and growth around the globe.

With offices covering the major political and financial centres of the world, our market presence means we are ideally placed to influence policy and embed professional standards. We work at a cross-governmental level, delivering international standards that will support a safe and vibrant marketplace in land, real estate, construction and infrastructure, for the benefit of all.

We are proud of our reputation and we guard it fiercely, so clients who work with an RICS professional can have confidence in the quality and ethics of the services they receive.

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