



Assessment of Professional Competence

Preliminary reviewer guide

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Foreword

I am grateful for the contribution that you are making to RICS through committing your time and expertise to assess potential new professionals.

The Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) is the start of a lifelong professional commitment to our standards for thousands of people each year. As an APC preliminary reviewer you play an important role in ensuring that only those who provide the appropriate evidence and present it professionally proceed to final assessment.

It is vital to our professional status and credibility that the assessment process is consistent worldwide. This guide explains the criteria involved and provides guidance on how to perform the preliminary review.

Candidates will present themselves from a variety of backgrounds, showing the diversity of the profession and that all must meet the standards required.

Thank you for your commitment to RICS and to ensuring the future of the profession. I hope you will find the role both professionally and personally rewarding.



Sean Tompkins

Chief Executive

Introduction

This guide has been written for all preliminary reviewers who have completed RICS preliminary reviewer training. It will help you:

- understand the ideas behind the APC and the stages that lead to the final assessment interview
- understand the approach to interviewing and how preliminary review supports this
- manage the preliminary review process and understand the various documents
- perform the review, prepare the feedback and decide if candidates should proceed to interview or not.

This acts as a supporting document for your training and for future reference.

Assessment Resource Centre (ARC)

The Assessment Resource Centre (ARC) is 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 have access to ARC in order to download candidate submissions and details of the each interview panel you are assigned to.

Guidance on using ARC is available at rics.org/assessments

APC explained

Pathways and competencies

The RICS qualification covers many different professional disciplines in land, property and construction. RICS has identified competencies required for each of these disciplines – these groupings of competencies are known as pathways.

There is a guide for each pathway, which explains the competencies in detail and in context – visit www.rics.org/pathway.

Competencies

A competency is a statement of the capabilities required to perform a specific role. RICS competencies are defined at three levels.

Level 1 – knowledge and understanding

Level 2 – application of knowledge and understanding

Level 3 – reasoned advice and depth of knowledge.

Each pathway is made up of three types of competency:

Mandatory – personal, interpersonal and business skills common to all pathways.

Core – Compulsory and relate to the primary technical skills of the chosen pathway.

Optional competencies – selected from the list of technical skills for the chosen pathway.

Entry requirements

RICS recognises that a mix of academic/professional qualifications with relevant experience can provide the skills and levels of competence required to become a chartered surveyor. The eligibility requirements to begin the APC are:

- RICS accredited degree – At least 24 months' structured training and a minimum of 96 hours' Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- RICS accredited degree with a minimum of 5 years' relevant experience – At least 12 months' structured training and a minimum of 48 hours' Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- RICS accredited degree with a minimum of 10 years' relevant experience – Demonstrate a minimum of 48 hours' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) over the preceding 12 months. No structured training period required.
- Bachelor degree (or membership of a RICS approved professional body) with a minimum of 5 years' relevant experience (at least 12 months must be post qualification) – Successfully complete the preliminary review and a minimum of 48 hours' Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

This guide relates to candidates required to complete the preliminary review. These candidates are not required to complete structured training; their approach to the APC may be different for the following reasons:

- they may not have completed an RICS-accredited degree
- they may not have completed a degree directly relevant to the industry
- their experience will have been achieved over a period of 5 years or more
- their experience may not have been structured by their chosen pathway or competencies
- they may not have support from their employer
- they may not be able to provide recent evidence of all competencies.

This guide explains how you should perform the preliminary review to reach a decision on each candidate.

Standards of review and assessment

The purpose of the preliminary review is to ensure that candidates understand how the submissions are used as part of the final assessment and that their submissions meet the requirements for final assessment. The feedback report is designed to identify if candidates have met the submission requirements and to provide advice if elements of the submission can be improved. Therefore, all stakeholders can be confident that only candidates who have met the submission requirements proceed to interview.

All candidates completing a preliminary review will follow the same process and if approved will be able to attend the final assessment interview.

The purpose of the final assessment is to ensure that knowledge and understanding, gained through a combination of qualifications, experience and training, are applied in practice and measured consistently internationally. This demonstrates to all stakeholders that only those who have met the required levels of competence become RICS chartered professionals (MRICS).

Variations

To ensure a fair assessment you must always take into account the local practice and norms of the country in which the candidate practises, while remembering the high standards of RICS qualifications. Relevant experience can be gained in a variety of countries; all relevant experience is valid and should be considered during assessment. Candidates are required to have an understanding of the local legislation and practice for the country they are practising and being assessed in. You also need to consider significant differences in experience and job role responsibilities.

Ultimately it will be up to you to judge if the candidate has met the submission requirements and determine what the candidate must address before submitting for final assessment.

At preliminary review you will provide written feedback to guide the candidate on how to improve their submissions. At final assessment the assessment panel will reflect on what answers they will need to receive to be satisfied that the candidate has met the competency requirements for the chosen pathway.

Conflicts of interest

All RICS members are bound by their professional ethics to ensure the credibility of the final assessment process. In particular, it is important that potential conflicts of interest between assessors and candidates are properly identified and managed.

A conflict of interest arises, in the context of final assessment, where a chairman or assessor is privy to certain information or interests which could influence, or could be perceived as influencing, their decisions in relation to a candidate.

'Influences' could include friendships, loyalties to a firm, or loyalties to fellow members of an organisation. Factors of influence could include the possibility of financial gain or other advantages, whether to the individual panel member or to a person or organisation they are connected with.

There is no definitive list of situations where a conflict would arise.

The following is only to illustrate relationships which could give rise to conflict.

- friend, neighbour, acquaintance or friends in common
- any family relationship (even remote)
- colleague past or present
- client or competitor
- does business with you or your firm.

Example questions to ask yourself

- Do I or my firm have an ongoing commercial relationship with the candidate or his/her firm?
- Has there been any conflict between our firms or the candidate in the past, regarding services provided, or financial charges?

- Could the outcome of the review positively/negatively affect the assessors' business interests?

'Personal' versus 'Prejudicial' distinctions

There is a distinction between personal interests and prejudicial interests.

'Personal' interests: in certain circumstances, there may be a connection between the reviewer and the candidate, but this may not present an issue to the candidate in practice. For instance, the individuals may have met at a CPD event or know of one another in a professional capacity.

'Prejudicial' interests: where the reviewer either stands to benefit from the outcome of review or might otherwise be perceived as being influenced, the reviewer must declare the conflict and should recuse themselves from the review role at the earliest opportunity (so that the role can be reallocated).

Before you complete the review

You must check the documents for any potential conflicts of interest.

- RICS uses all reasonable endeavours to identify and avoid any obvious conflicts of interest, when selecting reviewers, prior to the review going ahead.
- Once in receipt of the candidate's submission the reviewers should ensure that they do not have a conflict of interest and if so declare it to RICS, who will decide whether the role needs to be reallocated or is okay to proceed.

If you think a conflict of interest might exist you should declare this immediately and in advance of completing the review. You should contact your RICS staff representative and explain the circumstances fully. Together you need to decide whether the personal interest is 'prejudicial'. Could the interest affect your judgement? Would a member of the public reasonably think it could? If it is decided that the personal interest is not prejudicial, the review can go ahead.

If it is decided that the personal interest is prejudicial, alternative arrangements will be made.

Note: Whenever a potential conflict of interest arises please contact your local RICS office, so they can advise you.

Competency assessment

RICS has one standard required to qualify as a chartered surveyor through the APC, irrespective of the candidates' profiles. The assessment standard, technical and professional requirements and structure of the final assessment interview is the same for all APC candidates. All APC candidates proceeding to final assessment will be interviewed following the same procedure and assessed against the same standard of competence and professionalism, to ensure a fair and consistent assessment for all.

Your role supports candidates and assessment panels to benefit from the submission at interview.

Overview of the final assessment

The interview panel will normally be made up of three assessors (minimum two), one of who will act as the chairperson. All assessors have equal responsibility for the interview process. The chairperson is responsible for supervising the final assessment process.

The chairperson will contact the assessors before the final assessment day to discuss the candidate as a panel.

Assessors will prepare for each interview by reading the submissions in order to understand the candidate's background and experience and familiarise themselves with the candidate's declared competencies. The submission is also used by the APC assessors to develop a questioning matrix for the interview.

Candidate submissions

Qualification and employment information

This will add to your appreciation of the candidate's training and experience, provide an overview of the candidate's career and help you to ensure there are no conflicts of interest.

Summary of experience

The summary of experience is an overview of the candidate's declared competencies and attainment levels as agreed with their counsellor. It is made up of a series of statements against each level of the technical and mandatory competencies at each declared level. This shows you the knowledge, experience and activities that the candidate has undertaken to demonstrate competence.

In addition to showing the candidate's abilities and experience in the individual competencies, it provides examples of the work they have completed against each competency.

The summary of experience is 1,500 words in total for the mandatory competencies and a maximum 4,000 words in total for the technical competencies.

RICS is looking for evidence that the candidate can do the relevant job at the required level.

Case study

This is a written report that gives a detailed analysis of a project(s) with which the candidate has been personally involved. It should be a maximum of 3,000 words. The objective is to allow the candidate to demonstrate their problem solving abilities and standard of professional and technical knowledge. The conclusion must contain an evaluation of the outcome and also reflection on the experience gained and the lessons learnt.

The case study will form the basis for the start of the interview: the candidate's presentation and the first ten minutes of questioning.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

All candidates are required to complete CPD. Candidates need to demonstrate a minimum of 48 hours in the 12 months prior to preliminary review. All candidates will record their CPD on the submission template.

The 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 the CPD undertaken must be dedicated to formal development.

Assessor questioning

The aim of questioning at final assessment is to help candidates demonstrate their competence successfully. There are three progressive levels of questioning.

- Level 1 tests the candidate's knowledge and understanding of principles and theory.
- Level 2 tests how the candidate has applied the knowledge by providing specific examples.
- Level 3 tests the candidate's reasoned judgement and ability to provide professional and sound advice, against the full extent of their ability and knowledge.

Review guidance

The preliminary review is based on the candidate's submission only. The purpose of the review is to determine if the candidate is ready to proceed to final assessment. The difference between preliminary review and final assessment interview can be expressed as follows:

- At preliminary review, the question to be answered is: Is the submission suitable for the assessment panel to prepare for and conduct the final assessment interview effectively?
- At final assessment interview, the question to be answered is: Is the candidate competent to fulfil the role of an RICS chartered professional?

The preliminary review feedback template is in three parts:

1. Candidate details and result.
2. Part A Format requirements.
3. Part B Content requirements.

We recommend you complete the review as follows:

1. Read through the submission in full.
2. Complete part A, Format requirements.
3. Read the summary of experience.
4. Complete part B1, Content requirements, Summary of experience.
5. Read the case study.
6. Complete part B2, Content requirements, Case study.
7. Read through the submission in full and your feedback responses.
8. Decide on the result.

Instructions to complete parts A and B

Parts A and B of the template are structured in tables with the submission elements for you to mark as suitable or not and provide feedback on. Additional guidance is provided in the template that explains key terms and expectations to support you in answering each question.

You should complete the template as follows:

1. Identify if the element is suitable by stating Yes (Y), No (N) or not applicable (n/a).
2. If Yes, provide feedback if the element could be improved. If No, provide feedback on how the candidate can meet the requirement(s) of the element.

	Enter answer here [Y or N]	Enter feedback here
Word count		
Case study date		
CPD record		

Deciding on the result

There are two options for the result. Standard wording is included for each option to explain what the candidate must do. You do not need to amend or add to this wording.

A preliminary reviewer summary box is available for you to briefly explain why you decided on the result and to provide additional encouragement and guidance to the candidate.

Your submission is suitable for you to proceed to final assessment

Use this option if you have answered each element Yes or if you are confident the candidate can address the feedback you have given without the need for an additional preliminary review.

Your submission is not currently suitable for you to proceed to final assessment

Use this option if the submission is not currently suitable and you judge that the candidate needs an additional preliminary review to check the submission requirements are met.



Confidence through professional standards

RICS promotes and enforces the highest professional qualifications and standards in the valuation, development and management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our name promises the consistent delivery of standards – bringing confidence to markets and effecting positive change in the built and natural environments.

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