

# **The Assessment of Professional Competence - Associate**

The Route from Associate to Chartered Membership

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## **Introduction**

### **Associate Membership**

Associate Membership is awarded in recognition of academic achievement and demonstrable involvement in or engagement with particular area(s) of spatial planning.

The RTPI's vision for planning is as an inclusive activity encompassing more than traditional statutory land-use planning. A diverse range of professionals contribute to furthering this spatial planning agenda, and Associate Membership is designed to engage with and offer recognition for these individuals.

Candidates for Associate Membership must have:

- A bachelors degree qualification, or equivalent, and
- Eligible experience in spatial planning, of varying number of years depending on the nature of the academic and/or professional qualification held.

Associate Membership is designed to offer a membership class for those who do not hold an accredited planning degree but have demonstrable experience in spatial planning in its broadest sense. Associate Membership might therefore appeal to:

- UK planners who do not hold an accredited qualification;
- Planners whose initial professional education was conducted overseas;
- Teachers and researchers in planning and its related fields;
- Members of other allied built environment professional Institutes engaged with spatial planning

Associate Membership is not available to candidates who are eligible for Licentiate Membership.

### **A route from Associate to Chartered Membership**

For many people working in planning Associate Membership will be the most appropriate class of membership. However, some Associate Members will wish to seek Chartered Membership of the Institute. In many cases the most appropriate means of achieving this, would be to enrol on a Masters Degree at an accredited planning school. For candidates with extensive experience and/or a non-accredited qualification in planning or a related discipline the process outlined below is intended to provide a route from Associate to Chartered Membership. This process is intended to rigorously examine skills,

knowledge and experience and to preserve the integrity and status of Chartered Membership of the Institute.

## ***The Process of Application***

### **Initial Screening interview**

Candidates seeking to progress from Associate to Chartered Membership should complete a **Statement of Education and Experience** (Appendix 1) and send this, together with the appropriate fee to:

Membership Department  
Royal Town Planning Institute  
41 Botolph Lane  
London EC3R 8DL

A member of staff will arrange a time and date for a telephone interview. The purpose of the interview is to ensure that this is the appropriate route to Chartered Membership and to agree a target date for submission.

N.B. The Portfolio must be submitted within 24 months of the date of the interview.

If you should fail to submit within the specified time period then you must arrange another interview (and pay the appropriate fee).

### **The Portfolio**

**You must submit three copies of the portfolio.**

The Portfolio should be organised so as to correspond to the Units of Professional Competence (see table below) and should aim to demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved at an appropriate level. For each Unit of Competence you should prepare a Professional Narrative of Learning (PNL). This is the claim for competence in the Unit in question. You will need to support the statements in this narrative with reference to evidence included in the portfolio.

N.B. Where the term 'practice' is used in the following Units of Competence it is intended that this shall include the 'practice' of teaching planning and researching aspects of planning. It does not include generic aspects of teaching and research such as those that might apply to academics working in any discipline.

The evidence of learning presented in the portfolio is likely to be a combination of Certificated Learning and Learning from Experience.

### Certificated Learning

Certificated (or formal) learning is learning that has been achieved on a non-RTPI accredited planning degree. It should be a relatively simple process to map formal learning onto the learning outcomes for each Units of Professional Competence.

### Learning from Experience

Evidence of learning from experience should allow an assessor to make accurate judgements about the extent and level of learning, knowledge and skills you may have acquired through life, employment, work experience or study which is not formally recognised in the form of an educational or professional certificate.

You will need to demonstrate that what you have learned and achieved through past experiences is equivalent to what is needed for a successful application for Chartered Membership of the Institute; normally an accredited degree at Masters level and an Assessment of Professional Competence following two years' experience in practice. You will also need to demonstrate that your experiential learning is still current.

It is important to remember that credit is awarded for the **learning** you have gained from your experiences, **not for the experiences themselves**.

<b>Aspects of Planning (Units of Competence)</b>	<b>Sub-sections of Units of Competence</b>	<b>Learning Outcomes</b>
<p><b>1. Integrated Spatial Planning</b></p> <p>In this Unit candidates are asked to reflect upon issues beyond land-use planning, such as inequalities in health and education, energy policy, urban design and the rural economy.</p>	<p><b>Knowledge and Understanding of Spatial Planning</b></p>	<p>Candidates must provide evidence that they are able to:</p> <p>Reflect on the arguments for and against spatial planning and particular theoretical approaches</p>
		<p>Assess what can be learned from experience of spatial planning in different contexts and spatial scales</p>
	<p><b>Spatial Planning in Practice</b></p>	<p>Generate integrated and well substantiated responses to spatial planning challenges</p>
		<p>Contribute to the development and delivery of creative, coherent and integrated plans within the relevant institutional and legal frameworks</p>
		<p>Demonstrate a critical understanding of the principles and processes of design for creating high quality places and enhancing the public realm for the benefit of all in society</p>
		<p>Demonstrate how efficient resource management helps to deliver effective</p>

		spatial planning
<p><b>2. Inclusive Planning</b></p> <p>In this Unit candidates are asked to reflect upon: the role of planning in reducing social and spatial inequalities; meeting the expectations and aspirations of communities for greater influence on the impact of development and the quality of the environment; and the role of community engagement. Planning cannot always be achieved through consensus, so clear and equitable decision making is essential.</p>	<p><b>Equality and Diversity</b></p>	Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of equality and equality of opportunity in relation to spatial planning
		Reflect on examples in their own work of enabling, improving and promoting access and a respect for diversity of cultures, views and ideologies
	<p><b>Working with Stakeholders</b></p>	Reflect on the importance of stakeholder involvement, community engagement and public participation in the planning process
		Show through evidence in practice engagement and communication with a diverse range of stakeholders
		Explain the political and ethical nature of spatial planning and demonstrate in practice examples of working effectively within democratic decision-making structures and engaging a wide range of stakeholders.
Evaluate the impact that development decisions have on different stakeholders. Show from practice how this can be taken into account in planning decision-making		

		Recognise the role in the planning process of such skills as negotiation, mediation, and advocacy and provide evidence of the effective use of these skills in practice
<p><b>3. Sustainable Planning</b></p> <p>In this Unit candidates are asked to demonstrate an understanding of the often conflicting objectives of economic development, social justice and inclusion, environmental integrity and integrated transport.</p>	<p><b>Sustainable values</b></p>	Explain the values underlying interpretations of sustainability, and drawing on examples from practice, reflect upon what sustainability implies about the role of planning in promoting social and economic development, while conserving environmental, social and cultural heritages for transmission to future generations
		Explain the contribution that planning can make to the built and natural environment and in particular the implications of climate change.
	<p><b>Development Economics</b></p>	Explain the relationship between market processes, built form, patterns of movement and different development models
		Evaluate different development strategies and the practical application of development finance; assess the implications for generating added value for the community

<p><b>4. Legal and Ethical Frameworks</b></p> <p>In this Unit candidates are asked to show knowledge and understanding of the legal system within which planning operates and critically reflect upon the ethical issues facing them in professional practice.</p>	<p><b>The Legal Framework</b></p>	<p>Debate the concept of rights, including the balance between individual and collective rights</p>
		<p>Debate the legal and practical implications of representing rights in planning decision-making process</p>
	<p><b>Ethics in Professional Practice</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate how the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct impacts on the candidate's work in professional practice</p>
		<p>Reflect on the ethical issues encountered in professional practice and how these can be resolved.</p>
<p><b>5. Professional Practice</b></p> <p>In this Unit candidates are asked to show how reflection on their professional practice leads to continuous improvement and an ability to identify and address their own development needs.</p>	<p><b>The characteristics of the reflective practitioner</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate critical awareness in assessing the success of a course of action</p>
		<p>Demonstrate engagement in a process of continual review, including re-evaluation of professional activity</p>
		<p>Give evidence of how critical reflection on a particular piece of work impacted on subsequent practice</p>
	<p><b>Lifelong learning</b></p>	<p>Evidence how CPD activities specifically contribute to learning and the ongoing development of professional skills</p>
		<p>Demonstrate a commitment to sharing knowledge and expertise with planners and</p>

		other professionals.
<p><b>6. Specialist Expertise</b></p> <p>In this Unit candidates are asked to demonstrate a depth of knowledge and understanding in an area of specialist expertise.</p>	<p><b>Specialist Knowledge and Understanding</b></p>	Engage in theoretical and practical debates at the forefront of the area of specialism
		Evaluate the social, economic, environmental and political context for the area of specialism
		Within a spatial planning context, conceptualise the relationship of the particular area of specialism to other areas of specialist expertise.
		Assess contribution of the specialism to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.
	<p><b>Research and Problem Solving</b></p>	Demonstrate an ability to identify research questions and/or identify issues or problems to be addressed
		Frame problems with regard to technical, procedural, political, legal, ethical and other factors
		Demonstrate effective research, analytical, evaluation and appraisal skills

		Demonstrate the ability to reach appropriate, evidence based decisions or recommendations and communicate these effectively
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## **The Professional Narrative of Learning**

For each Unit of Professional Competence you are asked to produce a statement (**no more than 2000 words**), the Professional Narrative of Learning (PNL), in which you outline your claim for prior learning. The PNL should be a **reflective** statement, drawing on examples of formal and informal learning. Formal learning will usually be courses of study which you have undertaken, and for which you have certificates and other documentation which demonstrate that you have passed the qualification in question. It is not necessarily enough to have passed the qualification at a date in the past; you may also need to show how you have kept your knowledge and understanding up-to-date, or enhanced it in the light of changed circumstances, such as moving to a different legal jurisdiction. Informal learning may have taken place as the result of work or other experience. Here it is particularly important to reflect on the **learning** that has taken place as a result of the experience. It is for example possible to learn from an experience that did not go well. The assessors will not necessarily be looking for evidence that you always do everything perfectly, but that in reflecting on your experience, you can demonstrate that learning has taken place.

For each Unit of Professional Competence **you must show how you meet each of the learning outcomes** and how you have kept that learning up to date. You should set your demonstration of the learning outcomes in the context of the broader statement in the left hand column. However, failure to specifically address a learning outcomes will result in the Assessors failing you on that Unit of Professional Competence.

The statements made in the PNL must be cross referenced to evidence.

## **Evidence**

In the 'Evidence' sections of the Portfolio you will need to produce evidence of your learning, which might include:

- Certificates and Module Outlines from a course of study
- Samples of coursework
- Samples of professional work
- Practice-based documents
- Reports on observations of practice
- Witness testimony from relevant people such as line managers, colleagues, those who can confirm your achievement/learning gained

Portfolios will consist of a combination of certificated evidence from formal learning and evidence of experiential learning. This is because where learning has been achieved through a formal course of study it will need to be supplemented by learning in practice and the learning will need to have been kept up to date to maintain its currency.

You should not expect the Assessors to read through **all** of your evidence. They will refer to it as required, in much the same way that you might not read all the footnotes in a book or article, but you are likely to follow up on those that particularly interest you. It is thus not enough to include material about a learning outcome in the evidence, if it is not specifically referred to in the Professional Narrative of Learning.

### **The Professional Development Plan and CPD Record**

You should submit a Professional Development Plan, looking forward for the next two years and a record of the last two years of CPD in accordance with the [Code of Professional Conduct](#) (Clause 1(a) and Supplementary Regulations A1), [the Professional Guidance Note](#) and Guidance published on the [RTPI website](#).

### **Assessment**

Your portfolio will be reviewed by two assessors. They must evaluate your submission in terms of:

**Authenticity** Is the evidence genuine, and clearly your own achievement?

**Relevance** Is the learning demonstrated by the evidence relevant to the Unit of Competence? This means that it must be at Masters level, meet the learning outcomes, and cover the relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

**Validity** Does the evidence support your claim? Is it relevant to the learning outcomes for the unit?

**Level** Are the learning, knowledge, skills and achievements demonstrated through the evidence at Masters level?

A Masters level learner has been characterised as:

- Exhibiting self-regulation and autonomy and is in a position to disseminate knowledge
- Having their own perception of extensive theoretical knowledge and can produce new knowledge in a specialist area.<sup>1</sup>

Is there evidence that the candidate has achieved the level of the experience commensurate with Chartered Membership of the RTPI?

**Sufficiency** Is there sufficient evidence to support your claim?

**Currency** Is the learning current, or if not, is there evidence of appropriate updating?

The evidence you present must show that you are familiar with the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience for the learning claimed, including the ability to evaluate your professional practice within this framework. For example, if you are submitting evidence that you are able to:

*Generate imaginative and well substantiated responses to spatial planning challenges,*

then some knowledge of the theories and models relating to spatial planning would be expected and an ability to evaluate your own practice critically - possibly focusing on a specific case or incident.

The assessors may, at their discretion, balance exceptional strength in one or more Unit of Competence against limited experience in another, provided that they can satisfy themselves that there is evidence of 'threshold' levels of competence in all units.

Each claim is individual, and will be considered on its own merits.

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<sup>1</sup> Lovemore Nyatanga, Dawn Forman and Jane Fox, *Good Practice in the Accreditation of Prior Learning*, (London 1998) 63.

## **Outcomes**

In order to progress to Chartered Membership of the Institute assessors need to satisfy themselves that you have reached the appropriate standard in each of the six Units of Professional Competence AND that you have submitted a satisfactory Professional Development Plan and CPD record.

Should you pass one or more of the Units of Competence you may hold that 'pass' for a period of up to two years, during which time you may re-submit any failed Units of Competence. After two years have elapsed, you will need to demonstrate to the assessors that the skills and knowledge have been maintained through further experience and/or appropriate CPD. Where you are re-submitting aspects of your portfolio, you must on each occasion submit the entire portfolio (including previously passed units) and a revised Professional Development Plan. The institute will not consider incomplete portfolios. You may not submit Units of Competence one at a time.

## **Fees**

Registration (including Initial Screening Interview) .....	£60.00
Submission of Portfolio .....	£360.00
Re-submission (Per unit of Competence) .....	£70.00
Re-submission (Professional Development Plan) .....	£70.00

## ***Advice and Guidance for Candidates***

### **Professional Narrative of Learning**

When preparing the Professional Narrative of Learning you will need to explain: how you have acquired your learning, and how you have put that learning into practice? When explaining your practice, the assessors will be looking to see that you exhibit the characteristics of a lifelong learner; that is to say, someone who continues to reflect on their practice and to learn from their experiences.

### **Evidence**

The RTPI cannot undertake to return original documents (e.g. Degree Certificates). It is your responsibility to demonstrate to the assessors the authenticity of qualifications. It is recommended that a good quality photocopy be made of any certificates and that you show BOTH the copy and the original to a Chartered Member of the Institute (perhaps your mentor) and that the member should write a signed and dated statement on the copy, that s/he has seen the original and that as far as they can tell this appears to be a *bona fide* certificate.

N.B. The Institute reserves the right, at any time, to request sight of the original documentation.

Where you are presenting documents drawn from your professional practice it may be advisable to have a colleague or senior manager endorse such documents, indicating the extent to which this represents your own work, or the role that the you played in a piece of work created as part of a team.

The Institute recognises that for reasons of confidentiality it may sometimes be necessary to anonymise documents.

You may wish to submit evidence in the form of a manager, colleague or client's observation of your work in practice. This may be particularly appropriate where the work is of a transitory nature, e.g. contribution to a meeting, or the delivering of a presentation. Such observations should be supported with appropriate documentation, e.g. agenda and minutes, handouts or slides. You should advise observers to record the date, duration, and purpose of the meeting and to make reference to specific learning outcomes and the candidates own contribution. Observers should also give consideration to the candidate's preparation for the event, and any follow up actions. It would be considered best practice if you reflected on your own

performance at the same event. What were your aims and objectives? To what extent did you fulfil these? What did you learn from the experience? How might you modify your practice in similar situations in the future?

There are no word limits for documents submitted as evidence. However, where documents are lengthy, you are strongly advised to direct the assessors to the particularly relevant sections, using page and paragraph referencing, or highlighting.

### **Filling gaps in knowledge and experience**

Where you find that you have a gap in your knowledge and experience, it may not be practical to gain this experience in your current working environment. In these circumstances it may be appropriate for you to undertake a formal course of study, to make good the shortfall, or to acquire relevant experience through voluntary work (e.g. with Planning Aid).

### **Mentor**

Mentors fulfil a variety of different roles in relation to the individual with whom they are paired. At any one time the mentor might be a coach, a counsellor, a facilitator of networking opportunities, or critical friend.

The role of the Mentor is to provide support and advice as a fellow planning professional.

Mentors are not trained Assessors and will not be able to accurately predict the outcome of your submission. It is not the mentor's responsibility to instruct or direct your progress, nor will they set objectives on your behalf. However, the mentor can and should provide advice in all these areas.

The Mentor is expected to:

- Guide and encourage;
- Assist you drawing out relevant professional experience;
- Guide you towards becoming more critically reflective;
- Provide support and advice on professional and professionally-related matters;
- Support you in the preparation of your portfolio.

When selecting a Mentor you should read the above bullet points and choose someone with these in mind.

Please be mindful that the Mentor is volunteering their time and effort and not under 'obligation' to you. The relationship needs to be one that both sides approach in a professional, understanding and supportive manner.

### **Word limits**

**All word limits are mandatory.** Units of Competence or the entire portfolio may be failed where the mandatory word limits are exceeded.

Whilst there are no word limits for the Evidence supplied in support of the Professional Narratives of Learning, experience suggests that a concise presentation of evidence is most effective.

### **Presentation**

Details of how to present the portfolio for electronic submission will be issued in before the end of 2011.



**C: Employment History**

Employer	Post(s)	Dates

**D: Description of Planning Employment (max 1000 words)**

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## **Appendix 2: Sample Table of Contents for Portfolio**

1. Contact details
2. Statement of Education and Experience
3. Professional Narratives of Learning
  - a. Integrated Spatial Planning
  - b. Inclusive Planning
  - c. Sustainable Planning
  - d. Legal and Ethical Frameworks
  - e. Professional Practice
  - f. Specialist Expertise
4. Evidence in Support of the PNL
5. CPD Record
6. Professional Development Plan
7. Signed Statement of Authorship

### **Appendix 3: Suggested format for observation of practice.**

From time-to-time you may wish, as part of your portfolio of evidence, to submit an observation of your practice by a colleague, manager, mentor or other relevant individual. This would be particularly appropriate where the event in question is of a transitory nature, e.g. a meeting or presentation. You may wish to bear in mind that the weight attached to such an observation may be related to the appropriateness of the chosen observer and to the thoroughness with which the observation is documented. It is your responsibility to brief the observer appropriately. As an aid to candidates and your chosen observers a template for the observation of practice is included here. You are strongly advised to use the template as this gives a clear indication of the sort of information for which the assessors will be looking.

It is considered good practice for the observer and the candidate to discuss the event in advance of the observation. The template indicates the sort of information that should be covered in such a pre-meeting (Section B). It is also recommended that the observer feeds back to the candidate (Section D), and that you reflect on the observation (Section E).

## Observation of practice template

### **A: Personal details**

Name of Candidate:	
Name of Observer:	
Relationship of observer to candidate (e.g. colleague; line manager, mentor, client etc.):	

### **B: Preparing for the observation of practice**

(To be completed jointly by the candidate and the observer at a meeting in advance of the event observed.)

A brief description of the nature of the event

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Date:		Duration:	
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Location:	
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What does the candidate hope to achieve at this event? (List aims, objectives, and state how they will know that they have been achieved.)

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Which learning outcome(s) is the candidate seeking to address through this observation of practice? (Normally, not more than two)  
Reference to the learning outcomes and how they have been demonstrated in section C, D and E.

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### **C: Record of the observation**

What contribution did the candidate make to the event observed?  
(Observers may include here reference to evidence of preparation, and follow-up as well as direct observation of the event itself.)

To what extent were the aims and objectives achieved?  
(Aims or objectives not achieved may not necessarily reflect badly on the candidate. Give reasons for limited success or failure to achieve objectives. This will help the candidate reflect and learn.)

**D: Observer's feedback to the candidate**

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Signature:

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Date:

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Contact details:

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**E: Candidate's reflection on the observation of practice**

Large empty rectangular box for candidate's reflection.

Candidate's  
signature:

Empty box for candidate's signature.

Date:

Empty box for date.

## **Appendix 4: Template for Professional Development Plan**

### **Professional Development Plan (PDP)**

<b>Period of plan (next two years):</b>	
<b>Date of next review (at least annually):</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Membership number:</b>	

**Where am I now?**

<b>Current job title and employer details</b> (name of employer, type and size of practice):
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<b>Current job/role</b> (jobs you are expected to do, areas you need to be knowledgeable about and skills you need to possess):
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<b>Current strengths</b>
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<b>Current areas for development</b>
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**What are my career goals?**

<b>Long term career goals (5 years +)</b>
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<b>Short term career goals (1-2 years)</b>
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**What do I need to do to get there?**

Your objectives should relate to your career goals and areas for development.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>How will I get there?</b>	<b>How will I know that I have got there?</b>	<b>Target date for review and/or completion</b>

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (mentor – if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5: Statement of Authorship

Personal details	
Name of Candidate:	
Membership Number:	
Address:	
Telephone	Home:
	Work:
	Mobile:
Email address:	

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of the work of others as one's own (including ideas, arguments, words, diagrams, images or data). It includes the explicit claim that another's work is one's own and, no less seriously, the failure to acknowledge adequately the sources used. This applies whatever the source of the material (for example, a published source, the World-Wide Web, a verbal communication, or the work of colleague).

Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty.

### Declaration

I certify that the Portfolio submitted to the Institute is my own work and use of material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged in the text. I have read the definition of plagiarism given above. I understand that the consequence of committing plagiarism and if proven this may constitute a breach of the Code of Professional Conduct.

In submitting (whether signed or not) this statement of authorship, I am agreeing to the Institute using any available tools and techniques to detect plagiarism. I may be asked to provide a copy of this work in an electronic format to facilitate this process and agree to supply this promptly, if requested to do so.

Candidate's Signature:	
Date:	

## Appendix 6: Assessors' feedback form

Royal Town Planning Institute  
41 Botolph Lane, London, EC3R 8DL  
Charity registered in England 262965 and Scotland SC037841



### Associate to Chartered Membership (AM2CM) ASSESSOR FEEDBACK FORM

<b>Candidate</b>	
<b>Submission round</b>	<b>March 2011</b>

Aspects of Planning	Can the candidate demonstrate competence in the following Aspects of Planning? YES/NO ONLY	Assessors' Comments
<b>Integrated Spatial Planning</b>		
1a, Knowledge and Understanding of Spatial Planning		
1b, Spatial Planning in Practice		
<b>Inclusive Planning</b>		
2a, Equality and Diversity		
2b, Working with Stakeholders		
<b>Sustainable Planning</b>		
3a, Sustainable values		
3b, Development Economics		
<b>Legal and Ethical Frameworks</b>		
4a, The Legal Framework		
4b, Ethics in Professional Practice		

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<b>Professional Practice</b>		
5a, The characteristics of a reflective practitioner		
5b, Lifelong learning		
<b>Specialist Expertise</b>		
6a, Specialist Knowledge and Understanding		
6b, Research and Problem Solving		
<b>Professional Development Plan (PDP)</b>	<b>Does the plan demonstrate the three key elements? YES/NO ONLY</b>	<b>Assessors' Comments</b>
A review of what has been achieved		
Forward look at aims and objectives		
Reflection on how these objectives can be reached		
<b>General</b>	<b>Does the submission fulfil these criteria? YES/NO ONLY</b>	<b>Assessors' Comments</b>
Produced to a sufficiently high professional standard		
<b>Further comments by the assessors</b>		
<b>Outcome of assessment (Aspects of Planning Passed 1-6)</b>		