



# The Royal Town Planning Institute

Incorporated by Royal Charter, Registered Charity in England and Wales No. 262865

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR APPLICANTS COMPLETING FORM SM1 AND FOR THEIR SPONSORS, CORROBORATORS AND REFEREES**

Please read these notes carefully before completing the application form.

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## APPLICATION FOR ELECTION TO MEMBERSHIP (Special Entry)

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The Special Entry arrangement into corporate membership is aimed at those people who have already made a significant contribution to the Town and Country Planning process but who do not hold an RTP1 accredited planning qualification. However, **this is not an alternative route into membership** and anyone with limited planning experience is advised to undertake an accredited postgraduate planning course and apply for membership through the standard entry route. Application via Special Entry requires the demonstration of a graduate level qualification and a minimum of ten years' relevant town planning experience.

### The requirements

Applicants must satisfy the Council that, at the time of their application, they:

- hold an academic qualification(s) with an acceptable planning content at graduate or equivalent level; and
- have the equivalent of ten years' full-time, good quality, relevant town planning experience. **At least five of these must have been obtained after the qualification.**

This special arrangement was introduced in 1989. The criteria are reviewed and amended periodically, which again indicates that it should not be regarded as an alternative route into membership.

### Exceptional circumstances

Since January 1992, the Council agreed that there should be no relaxation of the above academic and practice requirements, **save in exceptional circumstances**. If you wish to claim such special circumstances you must indicate clearly what you believe these are, and your corroborators, sponsors and referees should also provide statements indicating what they believe these to be.

**If you were an unsuccessful applicant considered prior to January 1992 and wish to resubmit an application you will now have to do so under these revised criteria.**

### Submission of applications

To apply, you should complete Form SM1 (in typescript or on a word processor) and submit this, together with a cheque for the administration fee, to the Membership Department at the Institute. Details of the current fees are included on the enclosed note together with the closing dates for each election point, and some information on current subscription rates. Applications will be acknowledged as quickly as possible. However, if you would like an immediate acknowledgement, please use the reply postcard. Please do not send a photocopy of your form as all signatures must be originals. Faxed copies are not accepted.

The Council has appointed the Membership Panel to consider and make recommendations to it on the applications for membership. Your application will be carefully considered on its merits and, for this reason, it is not possible to offer an 'informal' view on its acceptability prior to its consideration by the Panel. However, if you have any general queries about the requirements or the application process, please contact the Membership Department.

### Decisions on applications

Successful applicants will be notified of their election, and the amount of subscription due, as soon as possible after this has been confirmed at the Council meeting. A Certificate of Membership will be sent to newly elected Members as soon as possible after the date of election.

Where the Panel has decided that additional information is required, applicants will be notified of this after the Council meeting. In borderline cases the Panel may decide to ask an applicant to attend an interview, at his or her own expense, before a final recommendation is made to the Council. In some cases, the Panel can require an applicant to undertake some further educational studies or practical experience before it recommends election.

The Council does not undertake to state the reasons for its decisions but the Panel does try to give a clear explanation and there are procedures to allow unsuccessful applications to be reconsidered. For example, an unsuccessful applicant may provide the further information requested by the Panel or, preferably as a last resort, may make a formal appeal. Appeals must be made within three months of the notification of the decision and are considered by the Appeal Panel which is independent of the Membership Panel but also makes its recommendations to the Council.

## A. APPLICANT INFORMATION

The postal address which you give will be used for all correspondence, and if you are elected it will determine, for UK and Irish members, the local Branch of the Institute to which you will be allocated, unless you advise us otherwise. If you have no objection, your address may also be used for the direct mailing of advertising and other promotional material and your name, address, employer and election date may also be published on the Institute's website.

The names of people applying through the Special Entry arrangement are published in the Institute's journal, 'Planning', prior to being considered by the Membership Panel. Any Corporate Member who has any reason to object to or comment on an application can write to the Institute and their comments will be considered by the Panel.

## B. DATE OF ELECTION TO STUDENTSHIP OF THE ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

Please give the date of your election to Studentship, if applicable. If you have been a Student of the RTPPI and allowed this to lapse, you may have outstanding subscription which will have to be paid before your application can be considered. If you have any queries about your former membership status, please contact the Membership Department.

## C. CURRENT CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP OF OTHER PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Please indicate your membership giving the appropriate designatory letters, eg, RIBA, MICE etc, with the dates of election.

## D. EDUCATION

You are asked to demonstrate that you have an academic qualification(s) at graduate or equivalent level, which should preferably be planning related. For these purposes, graduate level is taken as being a UK or Irish degree; or the equivalent overseas degrees; or the Final Examination of an appropriate professional body, eg, RIBA, RICS, ICE, Landscape Institute, CIH.

The RTPPI's former First Professional or Intermediate Examinations have been accepted as being graduate equivalent for this purpose.

In Section D, please give full details of your professional and/or degree or diploma examinations passed. Please state whether BA, BSc, DipArch, DipTP etc. and also give the formal description and the name of the university or college concerned eg. BA (2(i)) Geography, University of Manchester, June 1976. **A photocopy of your degree or diploma certificate should be submitted with your application.** In the case of undergraduate sandwich and postgraduate block release courses, please also clearly indicate the periods of time spent both in the university and in offices. In some cases, the Membership Panel may require the original certificate to be sent.

If you have qualified by way of the Final Examination of a professional body, please give the date (month and year) of passing the examination.

Where your application is being made on the basis of a professional qualification, **a photocopy of the election letter or membership certificate should be submitted with your application.** If you are not currently in membership of this body, please give the reasons.

## E. ASSESSMENT OF THE PLANNING CONTENT OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

To enable the Membership Panel to assess whether your academic qualification has an acceptable planning content, you are asked to indicate how you feel that a combination of your qualification(s), practical experience and any Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity or any other form of training covers the "core" competence expected of Chartered Town Planners. Information about this "core" competence has been extracted from the Institute's formal Education Policy statement and has been summarised as a series of headings: Knowledge, Skills and Values/Attitudes components, in Section E of the form. You do not need to read or have a copy of this document ("The Education of Planners"), as all of the information you require has been reproduced on the form.

If there have been any gaps in your academic qualification, the Panel will wish to see how your practical experience and any other training has compensated for these gaps. **References to the titles of a degree course will not be sufficient. Details of the studies undertaken must be included.** If necessary, please cross reference Section E with your statement of experience (Section G).

If you have a qualification from overseas you are asked to provide brief details of your local and comparative knowledge of planning law and practice.

The onus is on you to provide the necessary information on course content and its relationship to the Institute's "core" competence by completing Section E clearly and succinctly and **not through the provision of course documents.** However, in some cases, the Membership Panel may request that the course documents be made available, eg if you are asked to attend an interview.

## F. POSTS HELD

Please give details, in chronological order, of posts held, the employing authorities or firms, indicating relevant Departments and/or Sections of the organisations concerned, eg. Planning Assistant, Department of Architecture and Planning (Development Control Section), giving the dates (month and year) and stating whether your experience was gained full-time, part-time or on a job-share basis.

## G. STATEMENT OF EXPERIENCE

You will need to demonstrate that you have:

- completed the equivalent of ten years' full-time relevant planning experience, preferably undertaken predominantly in a town and country planning environment, and with at least five of these years having been obtained post qualification; or
- if you wish to use an element of teaching experience, you will need to demonstrate a combination of six years' relevant teaching experience plus four years' practical experience in town planning. The latter may include relevant planning research/research consultancy as indicated below.

**Practical experience gained only at Planning Assistant level or below will be unlikely to meet the requirements.**

The practical experience requirements for membership reproduced below are based on those for corporate membership which came into operation in September 1973, expressed in the formal wording agreed by the Council:

### “Aim of the Practical Experience in Town Planning Requirements

The aim of the practical experience in Town Planning requirements is to enable the Council of the Chartered Institute to be satisfied that a candidate has appropriate experience which, coupled with the separate measure of educational achievement, warrants his/her engaging in and contributing towards the profession of Town Planning as defined in the Royal Charter. The Council will appoint a Committee or Panel to make recommendations to it on each individual application for Membership, in the light of the submission described below, after making such further enquiries as the Committee or Panel sees fit to make.

### Nature and Form of Experience

1. Experience may be gained in any part of the world and the following types of activity, whether broad-based or specialist, shall be accepted as relevant planning experience:
  - (a) planning research and analysis of information related to the making of planning policy or planning recommendations and decisions;
  - (b) planning policy formulation;
  - (c) development plans; planning briefs; area plans; control of development (including the submission or receipt of applications); planning appeals; public consultation and similar activities;
  - (d) implementation and realisation of policies and/or proposals including area improvements; economic development; conservation; tourism; traffic and transportation; minerals; derelict land reclamation; and planning involvement in housing and housing management; community development, environmental education and recreation.

The above list is intended to be illustrative but not exhaustive. In considering the relevance of experience regard will be given to:

- (i) whether the experience has been obtained at a suitable professional level;
- (ii) whether the experience is acceptable town planning experience and not experience of another and quite different kind. In this connection it should be noted that while local authority Planning Departments employ, by far, the majority of Chartered Town Planners there is, and never has been, any reason why relevant and acceptable planning experience obtained with, for example, a local authority Housing Department, a Regional Water Authority, British Rail or a Hotel and Catering chain, should not contribute towards the qualifying experience period. In saying this, however, it should be borne in mind that the nature of the planning work undertaken in these circumstances might possibly be rather limited as regards content, variety and substance which, of itself, might not be adequate to ensure election without spending a longer period in the same post in order to accumulate the equivalent concentration and/or variety of experience expected or having to seek further planning experience elsewhere. Applications from academically qualified practitioners in other professions whose experience is of a mixed kind will be considered on their merits. An applicant will, however, be expected to demonstrate that he/she has obtained a total of ten years' full-time relevant town planning experience. As part of the demonstration, he/she will be required to indicate the proportion of their time spent in planning work;

- (iii) the breadth of that experience and whether it has a reasonable measure of substance, compactness and coherence and is not of a fragmented, diffuse or peripheral nature. It should be noted, for example, that while experience gained in an office as part of an accredited sandwich course is eligible for consideration, vacation experience or experience gained as part of, or alongside, a full-time taught undergraduate course, or a postgraduate course completed in two years or less, or time spent on a block release course is not acceptable as contributing towards the practical experience period;
- (iv) the attainments of the applicant;
- (v) whether the experience has been obtained under the supervision of a Chartered Town Planner;
- (vi) whether, in the case of applications containing an element of teaching experience, the combined experience is relevant, sufficiently practical in content and has a reasonable measure of substance, compactness and coherence. The teaching experience should be linked with the types of activity indicated in Section 1 above.”

You will be expected to demonstrate in your statement of experience, in not more than 2,000 words, that you have spent the equivalent of ten years’ full-time in professional work directly related to Town Planning. At least five of these years must have been obtained post qualification. You are asked to write the statement in such a way that the experience can be judged in its totality, eg. what percentage of work was directly related to town and country planning as opposed to work of another nature. You should clearly describe your personal contribution in both breadth and depth, in accordance with the “Nature and form of experience” as outlined above. Please describe the posts held and their direct relevance to the work of a planning team.

Your statement will have to be fully corroborated (see Note H). However, if you experience difficulties obtaining corroboration for some periods of employment, you should give an explanation of the particular circumstances.

The nature of the practical experience you are offering should be of such a kind that you can demonstrate a competence to undertake some aspect, or aspects, of professional work. The experience can be generalist or specialist; it can be broad-based or contributory to one particular field; it can be gained in team work or in an individual capacity; it can relate to public service, private practice, research and, in certain circumstances, to teaching. Where your experience is limited to one particular field you will have to indicate why you feel your narrower experience justifies your election.

In your statement of experience, you should also refer to your management competence, by demonstrating, briefly, where your work has included some elements of the following: management of operations; processes, people; other resources; information; or personal time management. You are not expected to concentrate on management as an isolated subject, but rather to show how your management competence relates to and is an integral part of your planning experience. You should also address these points within your Professional Development Plan (Section I).

If you are making an application under the **exceptional circumstances** facility, ie:

- on the basis of not having a graduate level or equivalent qualification, the Membership Panel will expect all of the ten years’ relevant experience to be at a **senior level**. The type of experience which would be considered to be of a “senior level” would be a post at middle management level or equivalent or above, which has both supervisory responsibilities for more junior professional staff and a measure of initiative in decision-making. You will also need to provide a clear description of your academic attainment and the reason(s) for not gaining a graduate level qualification; or
- if this is on the basis of not having the equivalent of ten years’ full-time relevant experience, the Panel will want you to demonstrate clearly how your *personal* contribution to promoting the science and art of town planning has had a significant effect on the profession and shows distinction and innovation.

Your Sponsors and Referees will also need to comment on these aspects of your application.

## H. CORROBORATION OF THE STATEMENT

Your statement of experience (Section G) must be certified by one or more Corroborators who have personal knowledge of the work you have described and who can verify that your experience was gained at an acceptable level and was of a consistent professional standard. Your Corroborators should be in senior positions and preferably, but not necessarily, Chartered Town Planners. Each Corroborator should countersign your statement in the margins provided and sign the relevant spaces of Section H. Should you require more than five Corroborators, please attach a separate sheet with the additional details and signature. Your Corroborators may also act as your Sponsors.

## I. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Your Professional Development Plan (PDP) needs to cover the following two years, identifying your personal professional development needs during that time. Your Plan must be approved and signed by one of your Sponsors.

Clause 1(a) of the RTPI's Code of Professional Conduct requires that:

“Members shall take all reasonable steps to maintain their professional competence throughout their working lives and shall comply with the Council's continuing professional development (CPD) regulations as amended from time to time.....(and)....at least once a year prepare a professional development plan for the next two years identifying his or her personal professional development needs.”

The Institute's policy is outlined in Professional Conduct Advice Note No. 1 (PCAN1). Copies of this are available from the Institute and on the website ([www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk)). To access PCAN1 on the website: click on “The RTPI & the planning profession”, then on “Continuing Professional Development” and then on “Professional Conduct Advice Note 1”. The document is supplied as a PDF file for you to download. In order to read the PDF file you will require Adobe Acrobat Reader. If you do not have this on your computer, you can download it free of charge direct from Adobe's own website on [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com). A copy of the Note is sent to all new members on election. To assist you in completing this part of the form, the following advice has been extracted from the Note (please see also Note G and the reference to including management issues within your PDP):

## THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

### (Extract from PCAN No.1)

3.1 The Institute believes that one of the most valuable single pieces of CPD you can do is carefully to prepare a professional development plan (PDP), having reflected on your current and anticipated needs. You will need to identify clear objectives in order to identify relevant CPD activities and to monitor the extent to which they meet your needs.

#### What's the plan for?

3.2 A PDP is first and foremost an analysis of your current CPD needs, having regard to your present circumstances, to any anticipated changes to your circumstances in the foreseeable future, and to your longer term aspirations.

3.3 Secondly, it is an attempt to identify how those needs might best be met.

3.4 Thirdly, it is an attempt to plan (so far as it is practicable to do so) what CPD activities you will actually undertake during the period of the plan.

3.5 It thus identifies an anticipated course of action, designed to focus and accelerate the learning process.

3.6 It will be unique to you.

3.7 It is not an inflexible blue-print. It does not prevent you from taking advantage of (and recording) valuable but unexpected, and therefore unplanned, CPD opportunities. But it does enable you to evaluate all your CPD activities against carefully identified needs.

#### What will it look like?

3.8 This will depend on you and your circumstances.

3.9 It can be a short, succinct statement – perhaps no more than half a page in length – of where you are at, and what you need to do to stay there.

3.10 Alternatively, it can be a detailed analysis of your personal and professional circumstances, aspirations and needs and the steps you have identified to meet those needs.

3.11 Examples of each are given in the appendix to this advice note. (*One example only is given below*)

#### How do I do one?

3.12 You should allow yourself at least an hour to complete your PDP.

3.13 Begin by writing down all the jobs you are currently expected to do, the areas you have to be knowledgeable about, the skills you need to possess, and changes that are likely to occur in the next two years.

3.14 Seriously consider any short or longer-term ambitions you might have for developing or adapting your career. Be realistic, both about your ambitions and about the time needed to achieve them.

3.15 Next, start to develop ideas about what areas of CPD you need, and what priority each has.

3.16 Don't necessarily restrict yourself to thinking about your current professional responsibilities. Think about your career and its development, and consider whether this is a time to strengthen existing skills, develop new skills or broaden your understanding of the planning process.

3.17 Now list your priorities for the next two years.

3.18 The resulting document will be your PDP.

3.19 It will need to be reviewed and updated regularly, responding to changing needs or circumstances.

## AN EXAMPLE OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**Name:** E Howard

**Period:** 1/1/97 to 31/12/98

**Date of next review:** December 1997

E Howard is in his early 40s. He has just been promoted to the position of Director of Planning in a firm of Chartered Surveyors.

The original aim of his PDP was to consolidate his position within the organisation. Early into his new job he identified a weakness in presentation skills, highlighted by the sudden increase in the number of public meetings/conferences he was asked to address.

Date Set	Objective	Action	Target Date
Dec 96	Develop managerial skills	Attend managerial seminars at Business School	Mid 97
		Background reading	Easter 97
		Organise and lead team building weekend with senior staff	1997
Dec 96	Develop expertise in Environmental Legislation issues	Attend seminars on current environmental legislation	one in 97 one in 98
Dec 96	Maintain knowledge of current planning issues	Attend seminars	Continuous
		Background reading	Continuous
June 97	Improve presentation skills	Arrange personal training/coaching in public speaking	End 97

## J. SPONSORS

Your application must be supported by two Sponsors. They must be Chartered Town Planners and should wherever possible include your Head of Department or practice. **Your Sponsors can also corroborate your statement of experience but they cannot act as your Referees.** As indicated in Note I above, one of your Sponsors will also have to approve and sign your Professional Development Plan.

The Membership Panel has agreed that the names of Sponsors and Referees can be made known, on written request, to other corporate members. All other information within your form remains confidential to the application process.

## K. REFEREES

In addition to having two Sponsors, you also need two Referees, at least one of whom must be a Chartered Town Planner. Your Referees are asked to provide confidential references on the forms enclosed (Forms SM1 (A) and (B)), referring to issues such as your:

- personal contribution to planning/the profession
- demonstration of professional attitude
- demonstration of professional quality/breadth/rigour
- personal qualities (flexibility, cooperation etc)
- management skills (personal, supervisory etc)
- relationships (with colleagues, clients, public etc).

These must be sent separately to the Institute and should be marked **CONFIDENTIAL**. You should ensure that the references are sent to the Membership Department before the closing date for applications or *at the latest* a week later. **Your Referees may not act as your Sponsors.**

## L. OTHER INFORMATION

The completion of Section L of the form is not obligatory but the information is very helpful to the Institute in monitoring the profile of the profession. You are assured that the information given will not affect your application in any way.

## M. APPLICANT'S DECLARATION

The Membership Panel will assess your application only on the basis of the information given. Therefore, it is important that you provide the Panel (and, beforehand, your Sponsors, Referees and Corroborators) with all of the necessary information, and present it clearly and precisely. You need to make sure that the correct signatures have been obtained and that official positions are given with dates (month and year), together with the names of employing authorities or firms clearly indicated.

Please ensure that all signatures, including your own, are original.

### Queries

If, after reading this guidance note, you have any queries about any aspect of the application process, please contact the Membership Department (0207 929 9454/ 9462/ 9467/ 9484).

Finally, remember that consideration of your application could be delayed if you submit incomplete forms or provide unclear information.