



**RTPI**

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## **RTPI Assessment of Professional Competence Guidance Notes for Mentors**

### **Note 2: APC Log Book**

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The APC log book is an important and indeed mandatory part of the APC. Although it is not formally assessed, it is sent to APC Assessors along with the written submission in support of the application. A well constructed log book, then, could provide additional information to Assessors which will help them to pass an application rather than refer it pending further information.

A well constructed log book is also invaluable to Licentiatees when they come to compose the final submission, by providing a portfolio of evidence of work which should allow them to select the best examples to demonstrate how they have met the assessment criteria.

This note seeks to help mentors to think about the questions they should be asking of Licentiatees in order to produce the best possible APC log book.

#### **1. Does the log book give a good overview of the Licentiate's work for that month?**

The log book should seek to provide a representative overview of the Licentiate's work for that month, although not all entries will be at the same degree of detail (see below). A 'representative overview' could include a summary of DC caseload, indicating the volume of work taken on, or perhaps an overview of how project(s) have progressed.

Providing an overview to accompany examples in greater detail (see below) is helpful for Assessors as it provides them with a better understanding of the Licentiate's workload – were they concerned with just one planning application, for example, which is why they have included only one example, or is one example representative of many, or focused on because it was particularly interesting, challenging or out of the ordinary?

The overview should also help the Licentiate to represent their work in broad terms, before focusing on more specific examples. This is preferable to a log book which is too firmly rooted in trivial elements of day-to-day workplace experiences e.g. completing timesheets, details of Licentiate's break-times etc.

#### **2. Does the log book go into sufficient detail on specific examples?**

As well as the overview of the Licentiate's work, there should be a focus on some detailed examples of work. This helps to avoid repetitious log book entries (see below).

How the Licentiate chooses to structure this may depend on the nature of their work. Where Licentiatees are working on continuous, long-term projects, they will need to think about breaking this down into smaller, more self-contained activities that they have undertaken that month in order to enter this in the 'Nature of Work' column. This could include client meetings; site visits; pieces of research; presentations; consultations etc. Having recorded the details of the work in the 'Nature of work' column, Licentiatees can then turn to considering what exactly they have learned from the work, how it might affect their ability to act in the future, and whether it has presented new avenues to continue their development. For planners working on smaller activities, e.g. within development control/management, particular applications could provide the examples to be entered into the 'Nature of Work' column, drawing out the circumstances of the particular application, what made it interesting, useful or challenging, and how they tackled it. They will then be able to reflect on the skill and knowledge development particular to that application in the remaining columns.

#### **3. Are the entries overly repetitious?**

It is understood that, in terms of the processes Licentiatees are working with, entries in the log book could become repetitious. However if Licentiatees are encouraged to think less about the process they are following, and more about the particular examples they are dealing with, this should present useful material for the log book.

For example: a planner working in a development control function will be following the same processes in dealing with different planning applications. Entering 'Processed planning applications' into the 'Nature of Work' column of the log book, while technically correct, will therefore not provide sufficient information for the Licentiate to draw out knowledge and skill related to a particular case. Such an entry would probably lead to knowledge and understanding in 'planning law', and skills and competence in 'researching applications', 'report writing' or, even more blandly, 'processing planning applications'. Clearly this does not provide useful information either for APC Assessors or for the Licentiate when they look back on the log book to chart their progress or to identify the best examples for their written submission.

Conversely, entering more specific details of a particular application (naturally observing any restrictions with regard to disclosure of confidential information) will allow the Licentiate to think in more detail about what made the application interesting or challenging, and how he or she had to act to deal with the application. This then roots the log book entry in a particular example, which helps the Licentiate to draw out, specifically, the knowledge and skill that was required or developed in order to deal with such an application.

Where log books are becoming overly repetitious, or in extreme cases where Licentiates are seeming simply to cut-and-paste entries from month to month, this suggests that the log book is not being completed correctly, and that the entries into the 'Nature of Work' column are not sufficiently rooted in real, specific examples of the Licentiate's work. This is unhelpful for both the Licentiate and the Assessor, as it hides how the Licentiate will have progressed their experience, knowledge and skill over the period of experience.

#### **4. Does the log book include technical knowledge, as well as more generic skills?**

The log book template is set out so that Licentiates are led towards including evidence of the planning and technical knowledge they have developed rather than just focusing on more generic and business skills. Often Licentiates are more successful at drawing out the generic skills they have used, rather than thinking more specifically about their professional planning work. Mentors can help Licentiates to draw this out in their log book, to ensure that it is clearly rooted in their planning work – it should be perfectly clear to anyone reading the log book that the author is engaged in planning employment.

Naturally there is a strong integration between knowledge, understanding, skill and competence. If Licentiates who have identified a particular area of development do not need to agonise at length about whether it is entered in the 'right' column, as long as there is logic to the entries and their reflection on their development is recorded.

#### **5. Has the Licentiate included examples of CPD activity?**

If Licentiates are undertaking CPD activity in addition to their daily work, this can be a useful addition to their log book. Licentiates should ensure they draw out what they have learned from this experience in the same way as they do for their professional work. Examples of CPD activity could include formal courses; additional reading in their own time; online learning; volunteering, including RTPI activities.

However mentors and Licentiates should also be aware that CPD activity should not be recorded at the expense of the Licentiate's professional work. This means that the APC log book should always be primarily a reflective record of the Licentiate's professional work, rather than just a CPD log. Mentors may be able to help Licentiates to think about whether this applies to their log book.

#### **6. Does the log book feed into the PDP?**

While APC Assessors do not receive the PDPs completed by Licentiates as they go along, a PDP is included in the final written submission. One of the main criticisms of Licentiates' PDPs is their lack of personalisation, with the corresponding lack of integration between the PDP and the overall submission and SWOT analysis (see Notes 3: PDP and 5: Written Submission).

In order to prepare for this, mentors can help Licentiates to think about whether the entries they are making in their log book also feed into their PDP. The penultimate column of the log book, which invites Licentiates to consider what skills and knowledge they need to develop further, can and should feed directly into objective setting within the PDP. If the same areas for development are cropping up in the log book month after month, this could suggest that the Licentiate has not translated these into objectives in their PDP, and are therefore not addressing them.