

**RTPI**

mediation of space · making of place

RTPI Assessment of Professional Competence Guidance Notes for Mentors

Note 5: Meeting the APC Assessment Criteria

Detailed guidance on the Assessment Criteria for the APC can be found in the Guide to the APC, as well as the template Assessor Feedback Form. This guidance note is designed to get mentors thinking about and questioning their Licentiates on some of the key aspects of each section of the submission.

The Practical Experience Statement (PES)

The key test for this section is whether the Licentiate can demonstrate a full two years (including at least one year post-qualification as a Licentiate Member) of professional planning experience. The following questions may therefore be helpful in considering whether the Licentiate is yet eligible to apply, and ensuring that the PES is put together correctly. If they are in any doubt over the eligibility of their experience, Licentiates should be directed to the Membership Team.

- Is the Licentiate's experience all at a suitable *professional* level? Assessors have expressed concern that some Licentiates are rushing to submit applications as soon as they meet the minimum criteria, or that in many cases experience gained prior to an accredited degree, particularly if is less than a year in duration, is often administrative rather than professional by nature and therefore not eligible for the APC. Licentiates who wish to present experience from prior to their degree should critically examine for themselves whether their previous work was at the same professional level as the work undertaken subsequent to it – were they able to operate as a planner without the background knowledge afforded by their degree?
- Has the Licentiate drawn out the spatial planning elements of his/her work?
- Are dates clearly indicated? Licentiates may be referred or even failed if they submit misleading dates which prevent Assessors from making a clear assessment of their work.
- Is part-time work clearly indicated? Part-time work is certainly eligible towards the APC, but on a pro rata basis, and it should be clearly indicated what proportion of a working week the Licentiate was undertaking in order that Assessors can make a clear assessment.

The Professional Competence Statement (PCS)

The PCS is assessed using the assessment criteria set out in Section 7.5 of the Guide to the APC. The criteria are not designed to be specific technical competences, as we appreciate that Licentiates will be employed in a wide range of planning roles. Instead, the assessment criteria are designed around the notion of a 'professional process' undertaken by all planning professionals regardless of the specificity of their role. Relating to their own employment, then, Licentiates are required to demonstrate that they understand their role and its relation to the wider context; that they can independently identify problems and research these toward the making of recommendations; that they can then take these recommendations forward, all the time mindful of how effective the solutions were. Candidates will be able to show how undertaking a particular task or project affected their ability to act in the future, and that they all the time operate within the RTPI's Code of Professional Conduct.

The first three criteria are generally well handled by Licentiates, while the later criteria tend to be less well addressed. This may be due to inappropriate selection of the example projects or activities; or because candidates have selected too many examples, thus spending too much time on describing each activity and leaving insufficient space for detailed reflection on what was undertaken.

An understanding of context

- A demonstration that Licentiates understand the wider spatial planning context in which their role sits.

An ability to identify and analyse issues

- A demonstration that Licentiates can actively identify problems, challenges and courses of action for themselves when presented with a task, rather than under instruction from a line manager.

Competence in gathering appropriate information

- A clear indication of how Licentiates are able to use data collection methods appropriate to the problem in hand, including an understanding of why the method of data collection was relevant and useful.

Competence in identifying and evaluating strategies

- Licentiates do not have to be working in strategic planning to demonstrate this competence. This competence is an assessment of how well the Licentiate can take the results of their research/information gathering, to make appropriate recommendations.
- Licentiates should indicate why they selected the particular course of action by justifying their selection with regard to the information gathered, and with regard to other rejected solutions.

Competence in initiating action to implement strategies

- Licentiates do not need to be working in implementation to demonstrate this competence. This competence is an assessment of how well Licentiates take steps to take forward their recommendation/strategy/solution.
- This could include such actions as communication to relevant stakeholders; anticipation and resolution of barriers to action; consultation; further data collection in order to refine recommendations; etc.

Engagement in a process of monitoring and review

- In relation to the selected course of action Licentiates should be able to consider
 - How successful was the recommendation or strategy?
 - How did the outcome affect their ability to act in the future?
 - Would they repeat the same course of action again in the future?
 - What changes might they consider making in the future to improve the outcome?
 - How could the principles of the course of action be applied in similar but differing cases?
- Meeting this competence could also include references to the log book to evidence processes of monitoring and review, and development over time.

An awareness of the legal framework and ethical challenges of the work

- Candidates must be able to demonstrate aptitude with both legal frameworks and ethical dimensions in order to be successful in this criterion.
- Licentiates should be strongly encouraged to read the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct and consider the implications for their own practice. Mentors can assist with this. Successfully demonstrating this criterion does not imply that there must be evidence of the Licentiate having dealt with an actual breach of the Code, but Licentiates must be able to demonstrate that they understand the implications of the Code for their own work.
- In some cases Licentiates are identifying appropriate issues e.g. decisions contrary to recommendation; sale and development of land in which the local authority has an interest; pre-application discussions/inquiries where the client does not wish matters to come into the public domain at present, etc., but are not adequately drawing out the significance – suggesting that there has been no reflection on the implications of these occurrences.
- It is helpful in demonstrating this competence for Licentiates to make explicit reference to the Code of Conduct – not necessarily to quote directly, but to show clear knowledge of the section(s) of the Code which have a bearing on the work they are discussing in their submission.

Conclusion

There is a strong suggestion that Licentiates either do not leave enough time to produce a strong conclusion, or that they see it simply as an 'add on' to the main submission, rather than an integral part of it. Licentiates can be and indeed have been referred or failed for producing inadequate PDPs as part of their conclusion.

Licentiates should ensure that there is a strong link between their SWOT analysis and their PDP – areas that are defined as weaknesses in the SWOT should be conveyed into the PDP, with objectives set for addressing these.

Detailed guidance to help mentors to support Licentiates in producing a strong PDP can be found in Note 3.