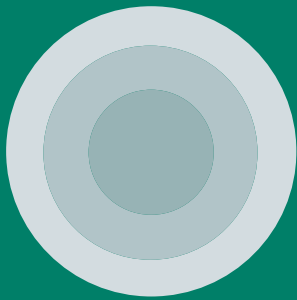


ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP CANDIDATE GUIDE



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CONTENTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 What does it mean to be an Associate Member?
- 1.2 Eligibility – an outline

2. Eligibility of professional experience for Associate Membership

- 2.1 Member of recognised overseas professional planning Institute
- 2.2 Member of related built environment professional Institute
- 2.3 Holder of a non-accredited planning degree or a degree with acceptable planning content
- 2.4 Holder of a non-planning degree
- 2.5 Exceptional circumstances

3. Nature of Experience towards Associate Membership

4. Application for Associate Membership

- 4.1 Professional membership/academic qualifications
- 4.2 Detailed statement of experience
- 4.3 Professional Development Plan (PDP)
- 4.4 Sponsorship of the application

5. Detailed Statement of Experience

- 5.1 Section 1: Statement of Experience
- 5.2 Section 2: Knowledge and Skills
- 5.3 Section 3: Critical Reflection
- 5.4 Corroboration of the detailed statement of experience

6. Professional Development Plan (PDP)

- 6.1 Producing a PDP

7. Application Process

- 7.1 Application form
- 7.2 Submission of the application
- 7.3 Application outcomes
- 7.4 Appeals procedure



1. INTRODUCTION

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

Associate Membership is introduced following the recommendations of the RTPI's Education Commission (which reported in 2003) and sits alongside a range of other membership categories. Full details of all these categories can be found on the RTPI's website, www.rtpi.org.uk, or from membership@rtpi.org.uk.

1.1 What does it mean to be an Associate Member?

Associate Membership is a partial professional qualification, awarded in recognition of the applicant's academic achievement and demonstrable involvement in or engagement with particular area(s) of spatial planning. Associate Membership therefore indicates that the holder has achieved a certain level of knowledge, understanding and competence in his/her chosen spatial planning field.

Associate Members will have the opportunity to progress through to Chartered Membership through a structured route leading to a rigorous assessment of professional competence equivalent to the Standard route to Chartered status. This route will be developed during 2007, and guidance on progressing through this route will be available separately. Once this route is available it will, over a period of time, replace the Special Entry to Membership arrangements, full details of which are available from www.rtpi.org.uk.

All Associate Members must abide by the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct. Associate Membership therefore sends a clear signal that the member upholds high professional standards within his or her field of spatial planning. Associate Members are also required to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity in accordance with the RTPI requirement for all members. Associate Members are therefore committed to maintaining and developing their professional competence throughout their careers, supported by the RTPI.

1.2 Eligibility – an outline

To be eligible for Associate Membership, all candidates must hold a minimum of a degree at undergraduate level, which may have been gained in the UK or overseas. Candidates for Associate Membership may be engaged in 'core' spatial planning functions such as development control/management, planning policy or strategic planning; or they may be engaged in related disciplines impacting on or engaging with spatial planning including, but not limited to, urban design, regeneration, environmental planning, economic development, transport or community engagement. A full list of experience eligible for Associate Membership can be found in Section 3.



Candidates could be employed in the public or private sectors, be employed by charities or NGOs, or be engaged in teaching and research in an area of spatial planning. Candidates may apply for Associate Membership based on experience gained in the UK or overseas, or a combination of the two.

Associate Membership is not open to candidates who are eligible for Chartered Membership (MRTPI). This includes candidates who can gain Chartered Membership through reciprocal arrangements with certain overseas professional planning Institutes, and entry to Chartered Membership through EU Mutual Recognition Directive (#89/48a). Guidance on these routes is available separately. Whilst working towards Chartered Membership, candidates may be eligible for either Associate or Student Membership, and may elect to apply for the most appropriate class according to their circumstances. Candidates working towards Chartered Membership through the Standard Entry route (comprising initial professional education and the Assessment of Professional Competence) must apply to become Licentiate members rather than Associate Members in order to pursue this aim.

2. ELIGIBILITY OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Candidates for Associate Membership must be able to demonstrate, as a minimum:

- An undergraduate degree qualification with honours, 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.

Candidates for Associate Membership will therefore fall into one of four categories:

- Member of a recognised overseas professional planning Institute;
- Member of a related built environment professional Institute;
- Holder of a non-accredited planning degree or a degree with acceptable planning content (undergraduate degree minimum);
- Holder of a non-planning degree (undergraduate degree minimum).

Candidates should indicate the basis of their application in Section B of the Associate Member application form ('Application Type').

In addition to an academic qualification, candidates for Associate Membership must have a number of years experience in spatial planning. The required periods of experience are rendered in terms of full time experience, but candidates may demonstrate the equivalent periods part-time. Periods of eligible experience do not necessarily have to be gained consecutively, and may have been gained in the UK or overseas. The required period of experience could be up to three years depending upon the nature of academic/professional qualification achieved.

Summary of Spatial Planning Experience Required for Associate Membership by Applicant Type

	No additional experience required	2 years experience required	2 years experience required, following receipt of degree	3 years experience required, following receipt of degree
Membership of recognised overseas professional planning Institute				
Membership of a related built environment professional Institute				
Non-accredited planning degree or degree with acceptable planning content				
Non-planning degree				



2.1 Member of recognised overseas professional planning Institute

Chartered members (or equivalent) of overseas professional planning Institutes are entitled to apply to become Associate Members on the basis of this achievement, provided that the planning Institute in question applies an acceptable degree of rigour in the election of members. Chartered Membership, or its equivalent, would therefore usually have been gained following a degree level qualification and a period of assessed experience in spatial planning.

It is the candidate's responsibility to demonstrate achievement of the professional qualification. This must be in the form of recent written confirmation of the current membership status from the relevant institute. Candidates must also provide a summary in no more than 500 words of the requirements for this membership (Section B of application form).

Non-chartered members of overseas planning Institutes are not eligible to apply for Associate Membership through this route. However, they may be eligible to apply based upon attainment of other academic or professional qualifications as indicated in Sections 2.2 – 2.4.

The RTPI will build up a list of recognised overseas professional planning Institutes, published at www.rtpi.org.uk. This list is not exhaustive. Candidates who are in any doubt about the eligibility of their professional membership should contact the Membership Department at the RTPI in advance of making an application for Associate Membership.

An application for Associate Membership by a member of an overseas professional planning Institute may draw on the same period of professional planning experience as was used to apply for the original professional membership. If the candidate has gained any additional experience since that time, they should also recount this experience in their application, to indicate that they are up-to-date with current issues in spatial planning.

2.2 Member of related built environment professional Institute

Chartered members (or equivalent) of related built environment professional Institutes in the UK or overseas are entitled to apply to become Associate Members on the basis of this attainment coupled with two years experience in spatial planning, provided that the planning Institute in question applies an acceptable degree of rigour in the election of members. Chartered Membership (or equivalent) would usually be expected to have been gained following a degree level qualification and a period of experience in the relevant field of the built environment.

It is the candidate's responsibility to demonstrate the achievement of the professional qualification. This must be in the form of recent written confirmation of the current membership status from the relevant institute. Candidates must also provide a summary in no more than 500 words of the requirements for this route (Section B of application form).

In some cases, experience used to gain Associate Membership might also have been used to gain the original professional membership (e.g. in the case of candidates who have taken the Planning & Development Faculty route with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors). All experience used towards the Associate Membership application must meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in Section 3 of this guidance document.

The RTPI will build up a list of related built environment professional Institutes, published at www.rtpi.org.uk. This list is not exhaustive. Candidates who are in any doubt about the eligibility of their professional membership should contact the Membership Department at the RTPI in advance of making an application for Associate Membership.

2.3 Holder of non-accredited planning degree or a degree with acceptable planning content

Holders of degree qualifications, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level, which are either planning degrees or have acceptable levels of planning content, may apply for Associate Membership on the basis of this attainment coupled with a minimum of two years experience in spatial planning, which must have been obtained following successful completion of the qualification.

Acceptable degrees could include planning degrees gained overseas, or non-accredited planning degrees from the UK. Examples of degree qualifications with 'acceptable planning content' could include RTPI accredited 'spatial' or 'specialist' qualifications (when not coupled with the relevant component to make it a 'combined' qualification), geography degrees with established planning modules or other degree qualifications in regeneration, urban design, transport planning, economic development etc. As a general rule, an 'acceptable' level of spatial planning content would normally be 25% of the total taught content. Self-directed study leading to the production of a dissertation relating to spatial planning would not normally be eligible without evidence of taught content.

Candidates for Associate Membership with non-accredited planning degrees will need to describe, in no more than 500 words, the planning content of their degree and how this entitles them to apply through this category (Section B of application form). These candidates must also provide evidence of the degree qualification with their application (e.g. degree certificate).

In the absence of satisfactory demonstration of 'acceptable planning content', the Membership Panel will regard the candidate as a 'holder of a non-planning degree' with the associated spatial planning experience requirements (see Section 2.4).

2.4 Holder of a non-planning degree

Holders of degree qualifications, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level, which have no planning content, may apply for Associate Membership on the basis of this academic attainment coupled with a minimum of three years experience in spatial planning, which must have been gained following successful completion of the qualification. Candidates are required to provide evidence of the degree held.

'Non-planning' degrees include qualifications in any other discipline, and need not relate to the built environment.

2.5 Exceptional circumstances

Where a candidate is not able to meet the minimum requirements the Membership Panel has discretion to consider the application on merit. This will occur only in exceptional circumstances, where the candidate has substantial experience in spatial planning at a professional level.

The decision on exceptional circumstances lies solely with the Membership Panel. This means that the Membership Department of the RTPI will be unable to offer comment on the likely outcome of an application that does not meet the minimum requirements as laid out in this guidance. This in no way prejudices a candidate's application.

Monitoring of exceptional circumstances applications will also allow the RTPI to keep the Associate Membership eligibility criteria under review to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the profession.



3. NATURE OF EXPERIENCE TOWARDS ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Through the introduction of Associate Membership the RTPI aims to give recognition to the diverse range of professionals involved in shaping and influencing the spatial planning agenda. Eligible experience for Associate Membership therefore encompasses traditional land-use planning functions, but extends far beyond to include a wide range of professionals involved in shaping the natural and built environment.

The onus will be on each candidate for Associate Membership to demonstrate how his/her area of work engages with the spatial planning agenda. Each candidate should, therefore, be able to demonstrate a working understanding of the elements of the spatial planning system with which he/she is engaged. The candidate's work may therefore relate to one or more of the following disciplines:

- Architecture
- Community development, planning and involvement
- Conservation & heritage
- Construction
- Development control/management
- Development planning
- Enforcement of planning decisions
- Engineering
- Environmental and sustainability assessment
- Environmental protection
- Economic development
- Housing & housing management
- Land reclamation
- Landscape architecture
- Leisure, recreation & tourism
- Masterplanning
- Minerals & waste
- Management of one or more of the named functions or disciplines
- Policy formulation relating to one or more of the named functions or disciplines
- Property development
- Regeneration
- Strategic planning
- Surveying
- Sustainable development
- Teaching and/or academic research relating to one or more of the named functions or disciplines
- Traffic & transportation
- Urban design
- Water & environmental management

This list is not exhaustive and will be kept under review. Candidates who are in any doubt as to the eligibility of their experience should contact the Education & Membership Officer.

Case Study profiles of different candidates for Associate Membership can be found at www.rtpi.org.uk.

4. APPLICATION FOR ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Candidates for Associate Membership must submit:

- Relevant proof of the professional membership and/or academic qualifications on the basis of which the application is made;
- A summary in no more than 500 words of the content of the academic qualification or professional membership route (with the exception of candidates applying on the basis of a non-planning degree) - Section B of application form;
- A detailed statement of professional experience, in no more than 1500 words – Section E of application form;
- A Professional Development Plan (PDP) – Section G of application form;
- Sponsorship of the application by two Chartered Planners – Section H of application form.

4.1 Professional membership/academic qualifications

Candidates for Associate Membership are required to submit evidence of the degree or professional qualification/membership on which they are basing their application. This would normally be a copy of the degree or membership certificate, but could comprise written confirmation (on appropriately headed paper) from the Institute, Institution or awarding body. Professional memberships will be confirmed by the RTPI with the relevant body at the time of application.

Candidates (other than those applying on the basis of a non-planning degree) are also required to submit a summary in no more than 500 words of the requirements for gaining their professional membership or the content of their planning degree (Section B of application form).

4.2 Detailed statement of experience

The detailed statement of experience (of up to 1500 words) requires the candidate to describe and reflect on his/her role in shaping and influencing the spatial planning agenda. This is divided into three sections, which are clearly identified within Section E of the Associate Membership application form:

Section 1: *Statement of Experience.* A description of the candidate's roles and responsibilities (up to 300 words);

Section 2: *Knowledge and Skills.* Identification of the key knowledge and skills required and applied by the candidate in his/her role(s) (approximately 500 words);

Section 3: *Critical Reflection.* A reflection on how the candidate's input has made a difference to shaping and influencing the spatial planning agenda (approximately 700 words).

Guidance on completing the detailed statement of experience is available in Section 5 of this Guide.

4.3 Professional Development Plan (PDP)

The Professional Development Plan must contain details of how the candidate will maintain and extend his/her understanding of spatial planning following a structured programme of continuing professional development. The Associate Membership application form provides a template for producing the PDP, with guidance available in Section 6 of these notes.

Candidates are not required to submit evidence of previous CPD activity. Once candidates have been elected to Associate Membership they will be required to undertake CPD in line with the requirements set out in the RTPI's Code of Professional Conduct (available at www.rtpi.org.uk).

4.4 Sponsorship of the Application

All applicants for Associate Membership must be sponsored by two Chartered Members of the RTPI (Section H of application form). Sponsors should normally have known the applicant in a professional capacity for at least six months, and are required to confirm that, to the best of their knowledge, the candidate's qualities render him/her eligible to become an Associate Member. Sponsors also confirm that, to the best of their knowledge, the information provided by the candidate has been correctly stated in the application.

Sponsors may also act as corroborators for the statement of experience, where they are in a position to do so.

5. DETAILED STATEMENT OF EXPERIENCE

The detailed statement of experience (Section E of the application form) is divided into three sections, which must each be addressed.

5.1 Section 1: Statement of Experience

A description of the candidate's roles and responsibilities.

This section provides the Membership Panel with a description of the work carried out by the candidate. The statement should describe:

- The type of employer(s), including the nature of the business (mainstream planning, multi-disciplinary practice etc.), and the size of the organisation.
- The candidate's job description, main role and responsibilities, and any relevant line management responsibility. If the candidate's job has changed or evolved within a single organisation over the period of practical experience this should be clearly indicated.

The Statement of Experience should be in the first person and in active voice, for example 'I prepared an environmental impact assessment...', 'I liaised with local authorities...'. Candidates should avoid using phrases such as 'I was involved in...', 'I assisted...', as the Membership Panel will not be able to assess the applicant's direct experience if such phrases are used. Where the applicant has worked as part of a team, he/she should clearly describe his/her personal contribution to the work.

Candidates should refer to Section 3 for guidance on the type of experience that will be eligible for Associate Membership.

5.2 Section 2: Knowledge & Skills

Identification of key knowledge and skills required and applied by the candidate in his/her role(s).

The types of skills and knowledge required by each candidate for Associate Membership in order to undertake his/her role could vary enormously, but may include:

Knowledge of:

- The law and legislation underpinning the particular area of work;
- Government and governance;
- The socio-economic context of the work;
- Environmental issues impacting upon the area of work;
- Financial appraisal;
- Professional ethics.

Skills in:

- Data-collection, investigation and research;
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis and appraisal;

- Exercise of professional judgement;
- Creative vision & design;
- Project & resource management;
- Management and leadership;
- Collaborative and multidisciplinary working;
- Community involvement and facilitation;
- Negotiation, mediation and advocacy;
- Communication (including written, oral, graphic and multi-media communication).

This list is not exhaustive. It is the responsibility of each candidate to demonstrate the key knowledge and skills which particularly relate to his/her area of work.

5.3 Section 3: Critical Reflection

A reflection on how the candidate's input has impacted upon, engaged with, shaped or influenced the spatial planning agenda.

This section allows the Membership Panel to gain a better understanding of how the candidate's role relates to spatial planning and thus qualifies him or her for Associate Membership. Candidates must demonstrate:

- That his/her role has had a direct impact on or engagement with the spatial planning agenda;
- That he/she is able to exhibit the traits of a 'reflective practitioner' .

In composing this section of the application, candidates may wish to consider:

- The nature of their experience;
- What they understand by spatial planning in the context of their experience;
- How their role(s) shape, influence and engage with spatial planning;
- What spatial planning outcomes they have produced (giving examples).

5.4 Corroboration of the Detailed Statement of Experience

The candidate's statement must be certified by one or more corroborators who have personal knowledge of the work described. Each corroborator (if there is more than one) will necessarily certify the sections of the detailed statement of experience which relate to the portion of the candidate's work overseen by them (Section E of application form). Each page of the submission should therefore contain at least one corroborating signature. Corroborators should also include their contact details in Section F of the application form.

Corroborators should be in senior positions and preferably, though not necessarily, Chartered Town Planners. Each corroborator should countersign the submission in the appropriate place and sign the relevant pages of the application form. Corroborators may also act as sponsors if they are Chartered Members of the RTPI.

6. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A Professional Development Plan (PDP) allows you to critically review your achievements, set objectives, and identify ways of meeting those objectives through a structured programme of continuing professional development (CPD). Professional development planning:

- Improves the capacity to structure learning according to personal and professional requirements;
- Promotes effective monitoring and recognition of achievements;
- Encourages learning from experience;
- Encourages increased self-knowledge, specifically, recognition of strengths and required improvements;
- Establishes lifelong learning habits, including a commitment to CPD;
- May be used as a career development tool, for example during appraisals, or when applying for a new job.

Candidates for Associate Membership are required to submit a PDP, which must detail how they plan to maintain and develop their understanding of spatial planning following a programme of continuing professional development over the next two years.

Professional development planning is a personal process, and different people will use different methods to think about their goals. The following guidance is designed to offer advice on how to go about composing a PDP, but by no means offers the only method. A template PDP is provided in the Associate Membership application form (Section G).

6.1 Producing a PDP

There are essentially three questions to be asked when composing a PDP:

- What have I achieved to date (with regard to skills, knowledge and competence)?
- What are my career goals?
- How will these be met?

What have I achieved?

This section considers current strengths and weaknesses. A useful starting point is to make a note of all the jobs you are currently expected to undertake, and think about the knowledge required, the skills needed and the changes that may occur over the period of the PDP (two years) that might require you to develop in certain ways.

If the PDP is being updated from a previously produced plan, it can be helpful at this point to review progress against previous objectives. This allows you to monitor your progress, acknowledging success in previous objectives and identifying new ones.

What are my career goals?

This section considers short and long term objectives, with short term goals often feeding into a larger ambition. An example of a long term goal might be to achieve a promotion; short term goals, such as to improve leadership skills or assertiveness, will contribute to your achievement of the wider objective.

The SMART model can be useful at this stage, by confirming that objectives are:

Specific: precise about what is to be achieved.

Measurable: there is quantifiable evidence when the objective has been achieved.

Achievable: objectives should be challenging, but also capable of being reached.

Relevant: objectives should be personal and relate to the individual's requirements.

Time Based: there should be a set time frame in which the objectives are to be reached.

How will these be met?

Considering exactly how goals are to be achieved is one step towards realising them. This section therefore effectively forms a plan for forthcoming CPD activity. It is important to note that the route to achieving goals will not always involve training courses. Important skills and knowledge can be developed in a number of other ways including, but not limited to:

- background reading;
- internet research;
- networking and communicating with colleagues;
- practical experience, with feedback on your progress and development.

The RTPI supports its members in undertaking CPD through a number of means including, but not limited to:

- Regional & National free and low cost events;
- Participation in Networks & Associations;
- Volunteering with Planning Aid;
- Conferences & conventions, including those organised through RTPI Conferences, the annual Planning Convention, and the annual Planning Summer School;
- The RTPI Library;
- Online modules available through www.planningmatters.co.uk;
- Discounted journal subscriptions.

In producing a professional development plan, candidates may also find it helpful to consider in advance any obstacles that may be encountered, and how best these can be avoided or overcome.

7. APPLICATION PROCESS

7.1 Application Form

Application for Associate Membership is via the application form available at www.rtpi.org.uk. Candidates should use the information contained in this Guide to assist with completing the application.

The application form is an electronic document which can be typed onto directly and printed, but generally cannot be saved to a PC. Candidates may therefore prefer to prepare their detailed statement of experience separately, copying to the application form once it is completed. Candidates will need to ensure that they have all information to hand when completing the application.

All signatures on the application must be in original (see below), so the application will need to be completed in full before being printed and directed to sponsors and corroborators.

Candidates should ensure they complete all sections of the application form, as failure to do so could prevent the application from being viewed by the Membership Panel. Please direct any questions on completing the application to the Membership Team on membership@rtpi.org.uk.

7.2 Submission of the Application

Candidates for Associate Membership should submit their application, accompanied by the administration fee, in time for the published submission deadline. Fee levels and deadlines are published at www.rtpi.org.uk.

All applications for Associate Membership will be considered by the Membership Panel, which is made up of Chartered Members of the RTPI. The Membership Panel has delegated authority from the RTPI Executive Board to make decisions on election to membership of the Institute. The Panel meets four times a year.

The Membership Panel meeting normally takes place within six to eight weeks of the application deadline. Candidates must be able to meet all the requirements by the submission deadline. Applications submitted prematurely, even by a few days, will not be accepted for consideration.

Candidates must not submit faxes or photocopies as all signatures must be originals. This includes signatures of corroborators and sponsors as well as the applicant declaration.

7.3 Application Outcomes

Successful applicants will be notified of their election normally within ten working days of the meeting of the Membership Panel. Notification will be made in writing, and the RTPi cannot disclose the outcome of an election by telephone. Newly elected Associate Members will also receive an invoice for the proportional annual subscription due for that year, and subscription rates for all membership classes are published at www.rtpi.org.uk. A Certificate of Associate Membership will be sent to newly elected Associate Members as soon as possible after the election date.

Where the Membership Panel is not clear as to any element of a candidate's application, they may decide to defer the candidate to a later election and request further information to be provided. Candidates would not normally be deferred for a period in excess of one year, and they may be deferred on more than one occasion. Deferred candidates are not required to resubmit the administration fee.

Where a candidate's academic record, professional experience or skills and competence are clearly insufficient to elect them to Associate Membership, and the deficiency may not be rectified with the provision of further information or gaining of experience within a year, the Membership Panel may decide to reject the application. Full details of the reasons for the rejection of the application will be provided. Candidates may submit a new application at a later date, and will be liable for the new administration fee.

7.4 Appeals Procedure

If an application is rejected the candidate may make a formal appeal against the Membership Panel's decision. Appeals must be made within three months of the notification of the decision and are considered by the Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel is independent of the Membership Panel and has delegated authority from the Executive Board to consider appeals.

RTPI Conferences



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To find out more telephone **0845 120 9602**, email **services@rtpiconferences.co.uk** or visit **www.rtpiconferences.co.uk**

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– Alan Jones, Head of Planning & Development Services, Cherwell District Council

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All forms and documents referred to in this guidance are available from www.rtpi.org.uk.

The RTPI will keep the eligibility criteria for Associate Membership under review to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the profession.