



**RTPI**

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# **ASSOCIATE ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE (A-APC) GUIDANCE**

**Associate guide to RTPI Chartered membership**

**Published June 2016**

Applicable from January 2017

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**This document replaces the previous Associate APC (A-APC) guidance. It must be used for first time applications submitted from January 2017 onwards<sup>1</sup>**

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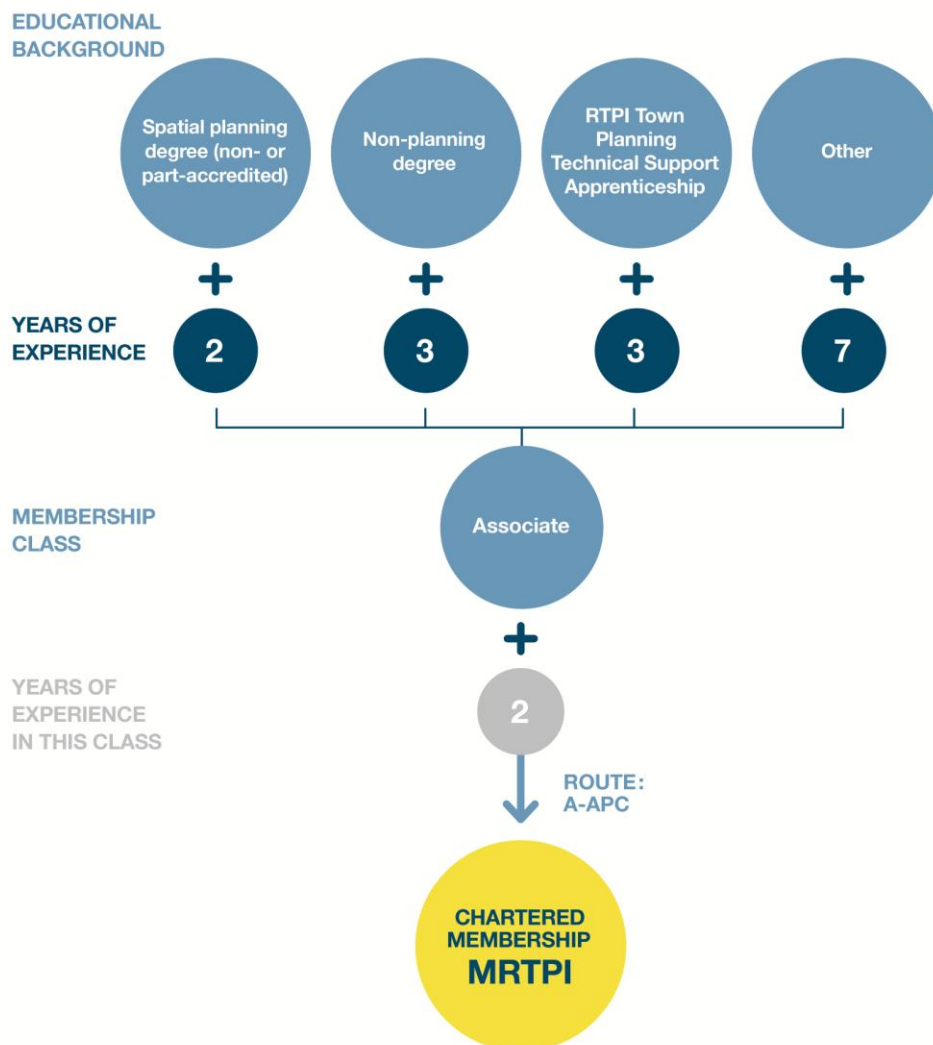
<sup>1</sup>Associates who completed their A-APC initial screening interview **before** the end of December 2016 should follow A-APC Guidance (updated February 2015). If you are not sure whether you fall into this category, please contact the Membership Team.

# 1. Overview of the A-APC

## 1.1 What is the A-APC?

For over 100 years, membership of the RTPI has been the hallmark of professional expertise and integrity. Employers, clients and the wider community recognise the high quality of skills and experience that are held by Chartered Town Planners (MRTPI). They know that they can rely upon the designation MRTPI as a sign of competence and professionalism.

The Associate Assessment of Professional Competence (A-APC) is the route to becoming a Chartered Town Planner for those who have already achieved Associate membership of the RTPI and are therefore already members of an institute whose charitable purpose is to advance the science and art of planning for the benefit of the public, and share those values.



The A-APC builds on the experience, knowledge and understanding that you have already acquired during your time as an Associate. It assesses your ability to progress to the next step of full professional recognition: Chartered membership.

The A-APC is a structured programme concluding in a final **competency-based** written submission. It is designed to:

- raise standards of professional competence;
- encourage networking and participation;
- maintain the habit of lifelong learning and continuing professional development which is already embedded in Associate membership and is required by the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct.

The A-APC is a valuable yet rigorous process designed to assess your competence. The RTPI aims to support candidates and provide as much guidance as possible. This document sets out in detail what you need to do to complete a successful submission.

## 1.2 Eligibility

To be eligible to submit your A-APC you must:

- be a current Associate;
- have a minimum of 24 months' (full-time equivalent) spatial planning experience at the relevant professional level, all of which has been gained whilst an Associate member of the Institute; and
- complete a log book detailing a minimum of 12 months' recent experience (full-time equivalent) from the Associate period.

Queries about eligibility should be directed to the RTPI Membership Team on 020 7929 9462 or at [membership@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:membership@rtpi.org.uk).

## 1.3 Becoming an Associate

Information about the requirements to become an Associate is on the [RTPI website](#). A period of experience engaged with spatial planning is required; the exact amount varies according to educational background.

There is an administration fee payable at the time of application and a yearly subscription fee.

### NOTE

You must be an Associate to apply for the A-APC. If you have more extensive experience, you may prefer our [Experienced Practitioner Assessment of Professional Competence \(EP-APC\)](#).

## 1.4 Experience requirements

Before you can apply for the A-APC, you must gain a minimum of 24 months' spatial planning experience at the relevant professional level (full-time equivalent). All of this experience **must** be gained whilst an Associate. Experience gained prior to the Associate period can be used in addition.

'Professional level' is broadly defined as exercising independent professional judgement to make decisions or influence spatial planning outcomes. This is different from the experience required to become an Associate, which is about being engaged in spatial planning. You can use the required period of 24 months as an Associate to develop your skills and broaden your experience, until you are ready to submit your A-APC.

The table outlines the different types of experience that can and can't count towards the A-APC.

Experience type	Can it count?
<b>Full- or part-time experience or a combination of both (pro rata).</b> To calculate part-time experience you need to pro rata your part-time hours against the 35 hour week. <sup>2</sup>	Yes
<b>Paid or voluntary experience.</b>	Yes
<b>Experience gained in the UK or overseas.</b>	Yes
<b>Experience spread over a period of time longer than 24 months.</b> The 24 months do not need to be consecutive, breaks in employment for parental leave, caring, redundancy or travelling are fine and can just be factored into your spatial planning experience.	Yes
<b>Experience gained whilst on a sandwich year or vacation placement.</b> Please note that, in some cases, the work undertaken on a sandwich year may not be of a professional level and therefore may be discounted by the assessors.	Yes
<b>Experience gained whilst self-employed.</b> As long as you can demonstrate a consistent period of planning experience at the appropriate level.	Yes
<b>Experience gained prior to the Associate period.</b> At least 24 months of your experience must be gained whilst an Associate, however, experience gained prior to becoming an Associate can also be included as long as it is at the relevant professional level.	Yes
<b>Experience gained whilst undertaking a full- or part-time degree or further studies.</b>	Yes
<b>Experience less than three months in duration (full-time equivalent).</b>	No
<b>Administrative experience or technical support experience.</b> Experience must be of the relevant professional level, as defined above.	No

If you are unemployed whilst an Associate, or were working part time, you will have to continue as an Associate until you have gained the full period of experience. If you let your Associate membership lapse, you cannot count the time you were not an RTPI member towards your Associate experience.

<sup>2</sup> Please note you can only pro rata part-time experience. You cannot pro rata full-time experience if working more than 35 hours a week.



## NOTE

If you do not have 24 months of full-time experience as an Associate you must demonstrate how you calculated your eligibility.

For example, if you have 36 months of 4 days a week, you would state:

36 months at 80% of a full-time role is equivalent to 28.8 months' full-time work.

If you worked in a role that was part planning and part surveying for 12 months, then six months' full-time planning followed by 12 months' part-time, you would state:

12 months at 40% of a full-time role is equivalent to 4.8 months' full-time work.

6 months' full-time work.

24 months at 80% of a full-time role is equivalent to 19.2 months' full-time work.

**Total: 30 months**

## 1.5 Nature of experience towards A-APC

Examples of spatial planning work that are eligible towards the A-APC will include some of the points below. Please note that this is a non-exhaustive list of the broad types of work included as spatial planning and candidates do not require experience in all these areas.

### The preparation of plans, policies and related documents

Some examples of this type of work include:

- research and analysis of information for policy formulation;
- the preparation of contributory material or actual formulation and monitoring of policy, guidelines and advice;
- spatial development strategies and statutory development plans as well as master, town, village/parish settlement and conservation plans for buildings, urban areas and the countryside;
- development briefs, design guides, environmental, economic and traffic impact assessments;
- sustainability appraisal, transportation and economic assessments and travel plans;
- the associated processes of economic development, viability assessments, community engagement, preparation of materials for Inquiry, advocacy and presentations to clients, which are regarded as integral to plan preparation;
- landscape/biodiversity assessments and appraisals.

### Plan implementation

This includes but is not restricted to activities such as:

- statutory development management/control and enforcement are included with the handling of appeals at all stages;
- preparation, submission and following through of planning applications and other consenting regimes;
- implementation of plans or schemes for conservation, environmental improvement, economic development, urban regeneration, traffic and transportation, tourism, minerals, waste disposal, or derelict land reclamation, including funding and delivery options;

- planning involvement in housing and housing management, community development, environmental education and recreation, and urban design;
- site appraisal, feasibility studies, scoping exercises and all forms of study preparatory to the submission of a planning application;
- water and marine planning such as flood risk planning;
- experience gained from involvement in investigation, negotiation and resolution of breaches of planning control, preparation of notices, handling of enforcement appeals and court proceedings.

### Monitoring and research

Monitoring and research activities could include:

- research and analysis of information leading to the making of planning policy or planning recommendations and decisions;
- funded research for clients from the public/private/voluntary sectors;
- the monitoring of plans and policies leading to reports and plan revision;
- planning submissions, or research appraisal;
- relevant research undertaken towards a PhD qualification. Be aware that A-APC assessors will consider the prime purpose of the research; the stage of the research; the organisational context of the research; and how it relates to the making of spatial planning policy and the delivery of planning outcomes.

### Teaching and research

This includes higher education teaching experience linked with the types of activity described in paragraphs above and takes place on courses related to spatial planning. More information about using research and teaching experience is provided in the *Advice Note – Academic Experience* which is available on the [RTPI website](#).

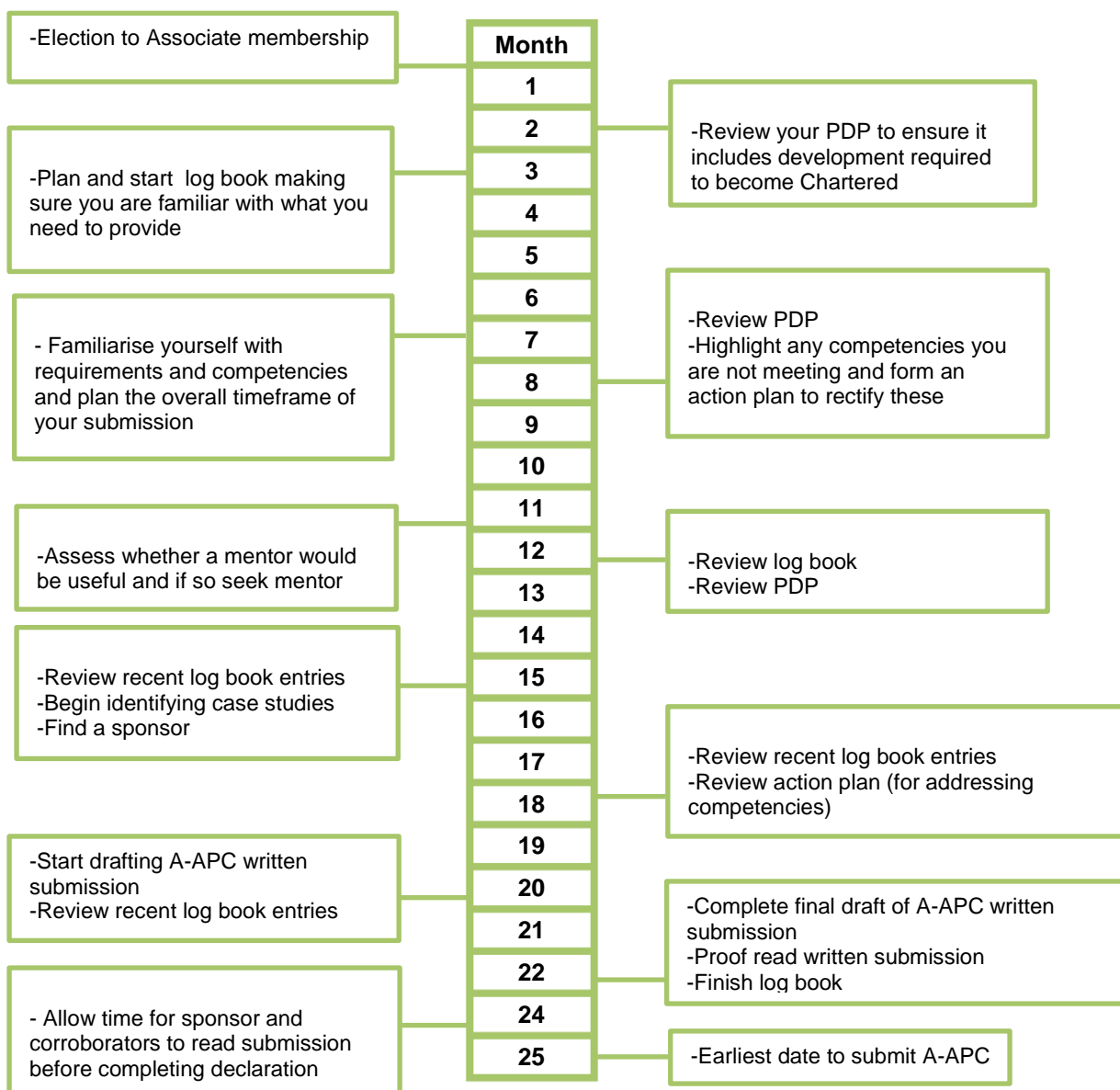
## 1.6 A-APC timeline

At the beginning of your A-APC journey, you should plan when you will do your log book and review your existing Professional Development Plan (PDP). Ultimately, you are responsible for your day-to-day activities. However, regular reviews of your log book and PDP are important.

You should also be reflecting on whether you are meeting the relevant competencies throughout your time as an Associate, particularly the ones that you did not need to demonstrate previously. The two years as an Associate are important for making sure that you are progressing from the level of experience and competence required for Associate membership to the higher level required for Chartered membership.

The RTPI has put together a suggested timeline of the minimum activities an Associate might do to complete the A-APC process.

## Suggested timeline



### NOTE

Case studies must be drawn from your log book. If you plan to use a project from your first year as an Associate, you should make sure you log this work.

## 1.7 The people involved

Many people will assist you in attaining Chartered status. The roles these people will play are explained below.

- **You:** The A-APC process, from start to finish, is about you. You are responsible for developing your professional competence and will need to do so independently of

others. Ultimately, it will be up to you to set aside time each month to log and reflect on the work you have done.

- **Your employer:** They play a key role in supporting you to meet the A-APC competencies. If you are not meeting the competencies you need to address this with your employer and form an action plan to gain the required experience. Some organisations have already demonstrated a commitment to supporting and developing their staff through the RTPI Learning Partners scheme.
- **Your mentor:** Acts as a critical friend who can help you throughout the A-APC process. More information about mentors can be found at [Section 1.8](#).
- **Your sponsor:** A current Chartered Town Planner who will sponsor your application for membership. Your sponsor must sign the Sponsor Declaration Form. More details on the sponsor declaration can be found in [Section 2.3](#).
- **Your corroborators:** This is someone who has first hand knowledge of the work you have done and will confirm, in writing, the accuracy of your claims (for example, this may be your line manager or employer). All the work experience used to support your application for membership must be corroborated. The number of corroborators you have will vary depending on your employment history. More details on what a corroborator needs to provide can be found in [Section 2.4](#).
- **The assessors:** Chartered Town Planners who review your final submission and log book. Our assessors come from a range of different backgrounds and sectors, and are based in the UK and internationally. Our assessors work in pairs and receive training on an annual basis.
- **The RTPI Membership Team:** Any specific queries about the A-APC process can be directed here. The team can also provide additional support to candidates who are resubmitting. You can contact the Membership Team on 020 7929 9462 or at [membership@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:membership@rtpi.org.uk).

Some of these roles may overlap (e.g. your mentor may also be your sponsor if they are Chartered). Please note that assessors are unable to act as mentors.

## 1.8 Mentors

As with your application to be an Associate, a mentor can help you get the most out of your experiential learning and will provide you with additional support. Mentors can fulfil a variety of different roles: a coach, a counsellor, a facilitator of networking opportunities, or simply a friend. However, mentors will generally:

- make themselves available to provide advice and support you either face-to-face, by email or over the phone;
- attend meetings with you at mutually agreed times;
- offer advice in setting specific and measurable objectives;
- offer guidance on recording experience in the log book;
- offer guidance on the production of a PDP;
- offer advice, where appropriate, on the final written assessment;
- guide you towards becoming more critically reflective of your own practice and progress;
- give you support and advice on professional and professionally-related matters.

Confidentiality is central to the mentoring process.

If you feel that you would benefit from having a mentor, it is your responsibility to find one as this is part of your professional development. Your mentor does not have to be a Chartered Town Planner.

Many people have a stereotypical view of a mentor, assuming they need to approach a very senior person in their organisation or their supervisor/manager. This is not necessarily so. Ask around your organisation. Ask around your organisation and professional networks. Other avenues for finding a mentor include:

- networking through RTPI networks or forums;
- networking at RTPI regional or national events;
- speaking to fellow graduates in other organisations; or
- contacting large planning organisations.

Current assessors are not able to act as mentors, nor comment on specific A-APC applications, though they can give general advice on the A-APC process and principles, as well as general careers advice.

## 2. The A-APC process

### 2.1 What do I submit?

Your submission must consist of the following:

- a completed application form;
- a personal details and payment form;
- a written submission of 6,750 words (+/- 10%) comprising:
  - i. [Practical Experience Statement \(PES\)](#) – approximately 1,250 words;
  - ii. [Professional Competence Statement \(PCS\)](#) – approximately 4,000 words;
  - iii. [Professional Development Plan \(PDP\)](#) – approximately 1,500 words;
- a recent [log book](#) detailing a minimum of 12 months' recent experience (full-time equivalent) as an Associate;
- a [sponsor](#) declaration;
- declarations from [corroborators](#) which cover the whole period of your employment history;
- a proof of payment of the A-APC administration fee either online or by cheque.

Each of these components should be submitted as a separate Word or PDF file and labelled as indicated in [Section 2.5](#). If you are using a Mac computer please save your document in a Word compatible format.

Top tips on how to prepare your submission can be found in [Section 8](#) of this document.

### 2.2 The written submission

The written elements of your submission are all interrelated. You should cross reference between them and ensure that each section is consistent with the others. **Please ensure you proof read your submission.**

Sections 5, 6 and 7 of this document provide information on each of the three elements of the submission (PES, PCS and PDP) and on how to best prepare your submission.

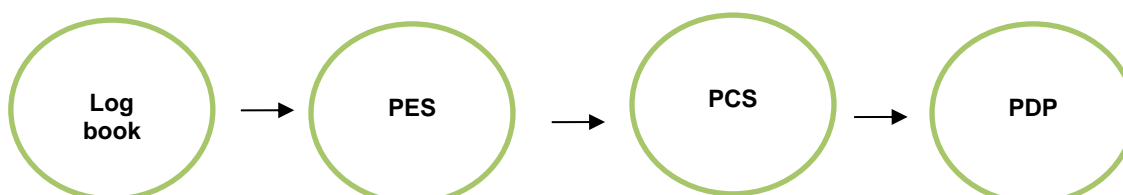
#### Relationship between the log book, PES, PCS and PDP

The log book is a reflection on your work and professional development and must link to the PES, PCS and PDP

The PES sums up your experience and should relate to your log book

The PCS reflects on the experience in the log book and leads into the PDP

The PDP reflects the learning in the PCS and looks forward at your long term goals and how you will continue to develop over the coming two years



## 2.3 The sponsor declaration

Your application for Chartered membership must be sponsored by a current Chartered Town Planner. You must have known your sponsor in a professional capacity for a minimum of six months. The Sponsor Declaration Form is available on the [RTPI website](#). Evidence of sponsorship must be included with your application.

Your sponsor must confirm that they have read your submission, and declare that they support your application and that they consider you to be a professional who reflects the values of the RTPI.

Your corroborator or your mentor can also be your sponsor; however, they must complete the sponsor declaration as well as providing corroboration.

## 2.4 Corroborating your submission

It is important that you have your log book, PES and PCS corroborated by the relevant supervisor or employer. This is, in part, to ensure the integrity of all submissions. It is also for your benefit. Having someone review your submission will assist you in your reflection. This process will also ensure that your employer is aware of the claims you are making and the work that you have put into your submission. Please note that the RTPI does not require you to have your PDP corroborated.

You should maintain relations with previous employers when you change jobs. This will make it easier to obtain corroboration at a later stage, when you have finalised your written submission and log book<sup>3</sup>.

### NOTE

**Any experience that you rely on in your submission must be corroborated.**

Corroboration must come in the form of a letter or email from each employer or manager referenced in your submission. Within the letter or email, the corroborator must state:

- your name;
- your role within the organisation;
- their relationship to you;
- dates that you were employed;
- comment specifically on the work you have undertaken; and
- that they have read the relevant parts of your submission and agree with your claims.

The corroboration must be on letterhead or sent from a work email. (For corroborators' convenience, a form has been produced to help them gather the required information and is available on the [RTPI website](#)). It is not adequate to provide a generic letter. Self-employed applicants should include statements from clients or other professionals who have direct knowledge of your work.

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<sup>3</sup> If your previous employer has changed jobs or retired, or the organisation you worked for no longer exists, you should ensure that they declare this within their corroborating statement.

Your corroborators do not have to be members of the RTPI. Your corroborator can also be your sponsor if they are a Chartered Member. Your mentor can corroborate your statement if they are also your employer.

## 2.5 How to submit your application

You must submit your application electronically as either a Word document or a PDF file. Submitting as a PDF file will ensure that your formatting, such as page layout, will not change so you may prefer to convert your files to PDF. Any letters or emails of corroboration are also best submitted as a PDF file. If you are using a Mac computer, please save your document in a Word compatible format.

Your application form, personal details and payment form, PES, PCS, PDP, the log book, sponsorship and corroboration must be submitted as separate files. Please label each file using the following convention:

**Membership no – last name – A-APC – description of file (e.g. 00000 Smith A-APC PDP)**

Email your submission to [membership.applications@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:membership.applications@rtpi.org.uk). The RTPI accepts files up to 10 MB. If your application is larger than this, you will need to divide the application over several emails. Please ensure each email is properly labelled so that RTPI staff can identify all elements of your application. **Please also include your membership number and 'A-APC application' in the header of your email.**

You can pay your administration fee online, by accessing the 'Membership' pages of the [RTPI website](#). Please include a copy of the receipt with your application. If you are paying by cheque or your employer is paying, please submit a copy of the application form with your cheque. Cheques should be payable to 'Royal Town Planning Institute'. Submissions will only be accepted electronically in the required format detailed above.

## 2.6 Submission deadlines and results dates

Submission deadlines and results dates are scheduled in advance and published on the [RTPI website](#). You will be advised of the outcome of your application by email and your full results will be posted to your primary address to arrive by the published date. The RTPI will not provide results before the published date.

## 2.7 How the submission is assessed

Once you have submitted your application:

1. The Membership Team will complete administrative checks to ensure you have submitted all relevant documentation. Your application may be delayed or rejected if everything is not included, or your fee has not been paid, so please ensure you undertake the checks yourself.
2. The submission will be sent to two RTPI trained A-APC assessors, who are current Chartered Town Planners. They will consider whether you have demonstrated all the competencies and whether you have acquired the appropriate knowledge, skills and reflective practices to be elected to the RTPI as a Chartered Town Planner.
3. Initially, the assessors will consider the submission independently of each other and then arrange to confer and agree on a recommendation as to whether you have met the requirements.



4. The assessors complete a feedback report detailing the outcome of the assessment and make a recommendation as to whether you have demonstrated the requirements to become a Chartered Town Planner. You are formally assessed on the PES, PCS, PDP and general presentation.
5. The Membership Team review the assessors' report to ensure that due process has taken place.
6. You will be sent your results and the feedback report.
7. If you have been successful, you will be elected as a Chartered Member of the RTP. If the assessors feel that some improvements are required for your PDP, you will be elected and enter the PDP support phase (see [Section 2.9](#) for further details).
8. If you have been unsuccessful, you will receive information in your feedback report detailing what you have to resubmit.

## 2.8 Assessment outcomes

There are two possible assessment outcomes – successful and unsuccessful. A successful outcome means you have demonstrated that you have the required experience and meet all the competencies. If you are successful, you will be elected as a Chartered Member. An unsuccessful outcome means that you have not yet met some or all of the requirements. An unsuccessful outcome is not a failure. You are being asked to provide additional information to demonstrate the relevant competencies.

You will receive a feedback report with your results. The report has a summary of your results on the front page and addresses each of the three parts of the submission separately. If you have been unsuccessful, the feedback report will explain the reasons for the outcome. Most importantly the report will give you direction on what you need to do to address the assessors' concerns with your submission. Depending on what you have been unsuccessful on, the assessors will request either a full resubmission of the relevant section or a supplementary statement. Where possible, resubmissions are sent to the same assessors who determined the outcome of the original application.

### NOTE

If you are required to resubmit, you will not be reassessed on any part of the submission or competencies that have already been considered successful, except general presentation.

## 2.9 PDP support phase

The PDP is an important part of being a reflective practitioner. The assessors may feel that your A-APC submission is successful, and that you have demonstrated your competence as a spatial planner, but there are elements of your PDP that could be improved. You will be informed of this in your results letter and feedback report. In this event, **you will be elected as a Chartered Member** and you will be required, within one month:

- to review the online PDP advice and guidance;
- to complete and submit an updated PDP addressing the feedback from the assessors; and

- in some cases, to discuss a revised draft with RTPI officers prior to submitting again.

Once you have produced a successful PDP you will enter Continuing Professional Development (CPD) monitoring. This means that after two years you will be asked to submit:

- i. Your current PDP
- ii. PDPs for the two year period
- iii. A CPD record showing 50 hours of CPD in the previous two year period.

CPD is a requirement under the Code of Professional Conduct. If you fail to submit a PDP or fail to comply with the RTPI's CPD monitoring request, this will constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct and disciplinary action would be taken against you.

## 2.10 Resubmissions

If you have not met any or some of the competencies you will be asked to resubmit either the full section or provide a supplementary statement. If you have not met the experience requirements you can wait for the appropriate future submission date. You may wait with your resubmission up to two years from the date of your original submission, after this period you will have to submit a new application with at least one recent case study.

Further details about resubmission are on the [RTPI website](#).

## 2.11 Appeals procedure

Candidates who have resubmitted their application at least once, and are still unsuccessful, can submit an appeal, if they feel that they have a reason to presume that the assessment of their submission was not carried out in a thorough and professional manner. For any queries about appeals and the process, please contact the Membership Team on 020 7929 9462.

## 3. Format of the A-APC written submission

### 3.1 Structure

The submission should be broken down into the three sections:

- [Practical Experience Statement \(PES\)](#)
- [Professional Competence Statement \(PCS\)](#)
- [Professional Development Plan \(PDP\)](#)

There are templates available on the [RTPI website](#) which show you how to set out your log book and PDP. Use of the PDP template is compulsory.

### 3.2 Professional standard

Candidates must ensure their submission is of a high professional standard. You are formally assessed on general presentation. This is a demonstration of the quality of work you would submit professionally and should not be taken lightly.

You must check your submission to ensure:

- it does not contain spelling mistakes (spell check does not always give the right outcome so do not rely on it);
- the grammar is correct;
- it is laid out clearly;
- it meets the guidelines on formatting as set out below; and
- it is professionally presented.

Build time into your application process to ask someone to read your submission. Badly presented submissions are likely to be unsuccessful. This is well within your control and a hastily put together submission is not going to get you the outcome you want. Ask a non-planner to read your submission to see if they can understand what you do.

Your submission should be considered as a demonstration of your professionalism and should be a reflection of the standard of your work. This is a professional qualification and submissions that include inappropriate information, or breach confidentiality, are likely to be unsuccessful.

### 3.3 Presentation

Consider how your submission is presented. The submission must be Word processed in Arial 11pt font and double spaced for easier reading. The submission must be in English and composed to a high professional standard.

Referencing, where required, must be to the Harvard style (e.g. author, date). **Paragraphs and pages of your submission must be numbered** – this enables the assessors to provide specific feedback on your submission. Include your full name and contact reference number on each page.

### 3.4 Reference to the log book

You should refer to entries in your log book to emphasise, clarify or elaborate upon an area of experience, however you must fully demonstrate all the competencies in your PCS. Your

log book should provide background information only – the key information and/or argument showing how you satisfy the relevant competency must be fully contained in the PCS itself.

When referring to experience in your log book, clearly indicate where the assessor can find the reference. Do not expect the assessor to search through the log book to corroborate your reference. Please note that referencing of the log book is not a way to overcome the word limit.

Where you make reference to the log book, you should ensure the information is of the same standard as the rest of the submission, including standards of presentation and well written English. Pages of your log book should be numbered.

### 3.5 Additional materials

Associates are permitted to include illustrations in their written submission, though this is not a requirement. It is unlikely that more than two illustrations would be needed.

Appendices, including any additional materials, such as reports or cuttings, are not permitted to accompany the written submission. Assessors will not base their decision on the examples of the Associate's professional work other than that described and reflected upon within the written submission and will not take into account opinions of a third party (manager appraisals, references, performance reports etc.).

### 3.6 Confidentiality, plagiarism and ethical consideration

You are required to demonstrate an appreciation of the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct, and the A-APC submission should be written in the spirit of this Code. Therefore, you should be aware of professional confidentiality and ensure you have your employer's consent before disclosing any material that may be considered to be professionally sensitive. In the event that this consent cannot be obtained, you must either omit or disguise this information by anonymising names and locations.

You should avoid specifically naming colleagues or other professionals, regardless of whether this is in a positive or negative light. If that proves to be difficult please contact the Membership Team to seek advice. All submissions are treated as confidential and our assessors are bound by a confidentiality agreement.

Your submission must be all your own work. In the event that a candidate is found to have plagiarised, appropriate action will be taken by the Membership Team.

### 3.7 Word count

The word limit for A-APC submissions is 6,750 words +/-10% (i.e. 6,075 – 7,425 words). The submission itself is indicative of the Associate's research, analysis and report writing skills. You should include the word count at the end of each section of the submission. The log book is excluded from word limitation.

The submission should be divided, approximately, in the following proportions:

PES – 1,250 words  
PCS – 4,000 words  
PDP – 1,500 words

Write the word count for each section after the final paragraph. Introductions, headings and sub-headings must all be included in the word count.

The PDP template (instructions, column headings etc.) is not included in the word count. Exceeding the word limit will result in delay and possible rejection of your submission so please double check the word count before sending the submission.

### 3.8 Footnotes

Footnotes must only be used for cross referencing (e.g. to your submission or other documents) or explaining abbreviations. Footnotes are not included in the word count.

Footnotes should not normally take up more than the equivalent of four lines of text. Excessive use of footnotes, or using footnotes to include additional information, and therefore increasing your word count, will result in you being asked to review your submission. Competencies or experience demonstrated only or predominantly in footnotes will not be deemed successful.

## 4. Capturing your experience: the log book

### 4.1 Why is the log book important?

Your log book forms a fundamental part of the learning and reflection that will develop your competence as you progress from Associate to Chartered membership. While it is not formally assessed, the log book will form the foundation of your written submission and will therefore require a certain amount of commitment.

The log book is important for several reasons:

- **It will make your written submission easier and quicker to prepare.** It will be much quicker if you have done most of the required thinking over the course of your time as an Associate, rather than trying to draw on experiences and learning outcomes at the end of the period. Your log book will form the basis of your written submission and should be an accurate record of the experience you have gained as an Associate.
- **It requires you to critically reflect on your work.** Critical reflection is the process of reviewing and analysing your performance and decisions to evaluate their effectiveness and lead you to a practice of life-long learning. To get the full benefit from keeping the log book, you should continually reflect on the work that you have undertaken and on the way in which this has contributed to the development of your professional competence.
- **It will help you identify if you are achieving the required competencies.** You should use your log book to highlight any particular experience that goes towards demonstrating the competencies. This will assist you when you come to select appropriate case studies to use in your submission.
- **It will help the assessors see the professional behind the text.** The log book may be used by the assessors to gain more information about the work you have done and the case studies you reference. The assessors have been known to make a final decision based on an Associate's log book.

### 4.2 Log book requirements

You must submit a log book that covers a minimum of **12 months**<sup>4</sup> (full-time equivalent) recent experience whilst an Associate. Experience prior to becoming an Associate does not need to be logged. It is important that the log book is recent, so that you are demonstrating your competence at the point you make your A-APC submission.

### 4.3 Preparing your log book

The log book should be completed regularly and should contain four key elements:

- description of the nature of professional work/task undertaken;
- competency/skill development;
- knowledge/understanding gained;

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<sup>4</sup> Please note that although you only need to submit a log book covering 12 months of your experience as an Associate, you must have a minimum of 24 months as an Associate before you submit your A-APC.

- future development of skills/knowledge.

Some Associates prefer to complete the log book fortnightly or monthly, while others prefer to update their log book after completion of a task or project. Updating the log book after a large task can make it more difficult to manage and you may be in danger of missing out important sections of your work that you may want to refer to in your A-APC submission.

Your log book must cover any projects and competencies you reference in your submission. It is essential that you do not simply record work or time; though it may be useful to assist in completing any such requirements by your employer (see [Section 4.4](#)).

Your log book can either be process-led where you include an overview of all your workload with some examples in detail. Alternatively it can be project-led where you cover one or two projects in greater detail. Either way, it must cover the full period and recording must be regular.

It is important that Associates improve skills and knowledge together, whether it be through CPD activity or practical experience gained through on the job training. This leads to professional competence. Knowledge refers to learning concepts, principles and information (i.e. theory). Skill refers to the ability of using that information and applying it in a context. In other words, knowledge refers to theory and skill refers to successfully applying that theory in practice. **Skills + knowledge = competence**

Some guidance on what is required in each of the components is provided in [Section 4.5](#).

#### 4.4 The A-APC log book in the workplace

You may already be keeping a work record or time log as a requirement of your employer. The A-APC log book should not require work to be duplicated. However, the A-APC log should include critical reflection on the work undertaken, not simply a work record; and you should ensure that this element is included. You may wish to discuss with your employer how the two requirements can best complement one another.

You should use your log book to assist you at appraisals and to help build your CV. It is a valuable career development tool.

#### 4.5 Log book template outline with guidance notes

The RTPI provides a simple template for your log book which you can download from the [RTPI website](#). It is recommended that you use this as it ensures you cover each of the required elements. Using a work-based template may save you time, but it is unlikely to have a focus on critical reflection which may cause you difficulties when you come to complete your submission.

Nature of Professional Work/Task Undertaken	What skills/competencies has this work developed?	What knowledge/ understanding has been gained/developed as a result of this work?	What skills/knowledge do you feel you need to develop?
<p><i>This column should be a factual note of the spatial planning or spatial planning-related work undertaken. Do not make the headings too generic. Providing more detail will allow you to explore what you have learned. In many log books, it is possible to see the improvement in reflection as candidates put more detail in the nature of the work. For example, you might consider expanding 'Site Visit' to include 'conducting an inspection, recording and identifying relevant data, considering local impacts and evaluating the importance of neighbour representations received'.</i></p> <p><i>Expanding the description of the task also helps to avoid repetition. You might be managing a number of development applications, and providing more information about each one you can reflect more clearly on how each new application contributed to your knowledge and skills, how they differed and how you applied what you learned from one set of circumstance to the next situation.</i></p> <p><i>Try to select interesting examples that have challenged you in skill or knowledge development, or have produced contentious issues to be resolved. This also demonstrates a good understanding of the issues surrounding each experience.</i></p>	<p><i>In this column you should consider the type and level of skills utilised or obtained in order to undertake a particular task.</i></p> <p><i>Skill refers to successfully applying theory in practice and getting expected results.</i></p> <p><i>Describe skills at a suitably detailed level rather than at a broad generic level. For example, rather than refer to "improving my communication skills", consider the context in which the skills are being developed. Ask yourself questions such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the communication written or oral?</li> <li>• Was it undertaken in an adversarial climate?</li> <li>• Were you involved in further negotiation as a result?</li> <li>• What worked and what didn't?</li> </ul> <p><i>The more insightful the questions, the more effective the reflection will be.</i></p> <p><i>One example of how you might explain good communication skills: 'I had to liaise with the case officer to obtain up-to-date information – using telephone and email effectively. I drafted an application response and learned the importance of clear, succinct writing. I also learned how to raise objections in a positive and helpful way, providing guidance on what needed to be done to advance the application'.</i></p>	<p><i>In this column you should reflect on the knowledge/understanding you acquired or developed as a result of the activity.</i></p> <p><i>Some experiences may lead you to readjust the knowledge you have.</i></p> <p><i>Some examples of knowledge you might gain include: knowledge of relevant policies or legislation, knowledge of the RTPI Code of Conduct, or knowledge of political issues/framework.</i></p>	<p><i>In this column you are required to reflect on the work you have undertaken and identify potential training and development needs.</i></p> <p><i>Reflective practice is "the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning" (Schön 1983).</i></p> <p><i>You should be honest about your weaknesses and areas for development. Ask yourself questions such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What aspects of the task did I find difficult or challenging?</li> <li>• In the future, how could I alter my practice and/or methods to deliver a better outcome for this task?</li> </ul> <p><i>Candidates should identify areas for development for each log book entry. Your mentor may be able to help you identify these if you are having trouble.</i></p> <p><i>Assessors will also expect to see how a record about a future development is referenced in future log entries – how the skills were acquired and developed.</i></p> <p><i>There should be strong linkages between the log book and your PDP.</i></p>



**What are relevant professional planning skills?**

Your experience should help you develop skills and competencies relevant to spatial planning. The following list provides some guidance of the type of skills that your experience could be directed towards developing. It has been drawn from RTP1 educational policy documents, and from the government document *Skills for Sustainable Communities* which was contributed to by the RTP1.

Some examples of relevant skills are described in the table below.

<p><b>Creative vision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Producing creative and innovative strategies and solutions.</li> <li>• Making lateral connections.</li> <li>• Aesthetic and design awareness and critique.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Collaborative and multidisciplinary working</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership working - engaging with all professionals employed in the creation of sustainable communities and the built environment.</li> <li>• Creating an environment where information is shared.</li> <li>• Effective networking.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining objectives.</li> <li>• Delivering - making it happen given constraints.</li> <li>• Resource management, including financial and personnel management and use of information technology.</li> <li>• Process management and evaluation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Professionalism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrating the characteristics of a reflective practitioner, and an ability to learn from prior practice.</li> <li>• Upholding standards of ethical behaviour.</li> <li>• Commitment to lifelong learning and maintaining professional competence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Problem solving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem definition.</li> <li>• Data-collection, investigation and research.</li> <li>• Quantitative and qualitative analysis and appraisal.</li> <li>• Weighing evidence and evaluation of alternative solutions.</li> <li>• Decision making.</li> <li>• Mediating between the different requirements and expectations of other professionals, consultees and stakeholders, clients and regulators, communities and lobbying groups to deliver an equitable planning solution.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written, oral, graphic and multi-media communication.</li> <li>• Listening actively.</li> <li>• Using appropriate communication methods tailored to the audience.</li> <li>• Managing misinformation.</li> <li>• Internal communication and information sharing.</li> <li>• Community involvement and facilitation.</li> <li>• Understanding and accommodating the role of various types of media.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiring and motivating others at all levels.</li> <li>• Leading by example – displaying enthusiasm, tenacity, flexibility and self-motivation.</li> <li>• Embracing and leading through change.</li> <li>• People and organisational management.</li> <li>• Coaching and mentoring.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stakeholder management &amp; conflict resolution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying stakeholders and customers, and awareness of how these groups can change.</li> <li>• Relationship building.</li> <li>• Negotiation, mediation and advocacy.</li> <li>• Understanding the dynamics of conflict and how to achieve mutual agreement.</li> <li>• Demonstrating good practice, including respect, tolerance, confidentiality and honesty.</li> </ul>

## 4.6 Log book examples

### Example of good log book entries

The following example is a good, detailed, entry which clearly outlines the Associate’s role and the rationale behind the work including past problems. The Associate has been able to explain the new skills and knowledge developed within the context of each piece of work and has managed to draw out specific areas for improvement.

Nature of Professional Work/Task Undertaken	What skills/competencies has this work developed?	What knowledge/ understanding has been gained/developed as a result of this work?	What skills/knowledge do you feel you need to develop?
<p>Planning Future Service Provision in (Location) seminar – I organised this event as part of my role is to coordinate responses from internal service providers to borough Local Plan and now LDF consultations. In the past it has been difficult to extract information from these providers and opportunities for DCC services to benefit from development have been missed. At the start of the new era of spatial planning we explained the new system and how and why service providers should get involved right from the start. DCC service providers and DC Planning Policy Officers were invited. Themed group meetings will be set up to deal with the service provider’s more detailed aspirations for the County and individual districts for input to LDFs.</p>	<p>Creating an environment where information is shared between County Council and District Councils (two way process), effective networking, partnership working, improving internal communication, identifying customers.</p>	<p>Greater understanding of the views and issues other service providers have, greater knowledge of the way they can input to this new system and how planning can bring service providers together to create better services for the public.</p>	<p>Negotiation, mediation and advocacy, ongoing communication with these groups.</p>
<p>Planning history search and letter of advice to a client in relation to forthcoming proposals for an extended foodstore in city centre. The proposals have the potential to have a damaging effect on our client’s consented proposal for a retail development nearby.</p>	<p><i>Problem solving skills</i> – by identifying the relevant planning applications within the planning history and projecting what the forthcoming planning application may comprise, and researching the planning policy position.</p> <p><i>Communication skills</i> – by preparing the letter of advice and giving oral advice to the client.</p>	<p>An understanding of the planning history attached to the foodstore identified and knowledge gained on how any forthcoming proposals may have a detrimental impact on competing retail developments nearby.</p>	<p>Need to give both written advice to clients to improve by competency and confidence.</p>

### Example of poor log book entries

The following example reflects many of the poor practices in putting together a log book. Fortunately, this is not a genuine example of a log book, but has been put together to indicate what Associates should seek to avoid doing.

Nature of Professional Work/Task Undertaken	What skills/competencies has this work developed?	What knowledge/understanding has been gained/developed as a result of this work?	What skills/knowledge do you feel you need to develop?
Processing planning applications	Research, delivering – making it happen, communication	Planning Law	Further knowledge of planning law
Regional CPD event – Development Control	Effective networking	Knowledge of development control policies	To apply information from CPD event to my daily employment
Contacted consultant with regard to listed building regulations	Research – finding a consultant; communication skills	The limits of my own responsibility for specialist applications	More knowledge of listed building regulations
Site visits	Data collection, investigation and research; quantitative and qualitative analysis and appraisal	That it is useful to have first hand knowledge of a site involved in an application	None – successfully achieved all elements
Answering telephone calls from the public	Negotiation, mediation and advocacy; relationship building; ethics of good practice	Knowledge of the relevant areas of planning law	Telephone skills
Preparation and submission of representations objecting to a draft SPD relating to developer contributions at the borough council.	<i>Problem solving skills</i> – via the research and collection of data in relation to the draft SPD.  <i>Communication skills</i> – via the preparation of written representations in the form of a letter to the Local Authority.	Knowledge of the written form required for the submission of written representations.	Further practice of submitting representations to improve my competency and efficiency.

In the examples on the previous page, the headings are too general, and don't give the Associate an opportunity to explore the different skills and knowledge that might be related to each case. Greater detail on the specifics of each application/type of application might be more useful, as this would give greater opportunity to explore what they have learned.

Relevant knowledge development might cover applicable areas of planning law etc. but it is the **specifics** that will be most helpful.

Associates should avoid simply listing the competencies from the A-APC guidance but rather use these competencies as a guide for what skills might have been developed. Key themes (e.g. communication, research) seem to occur repetitively, but a more careful reflection on the exact nature of the skill involved will alleviate this. For example, did the communication take place in writing or orally? How was written communication produced? Was there any antagonism when communicated orally? This might then lead to another key theme of negotiation.

Within your log book, it is essential that you:

- use page numbering;
- include your membership number on each page; and
- date your entries.

## 4.7 Style

There are no restrictions on the style you use for your log book. Make the style something that you are comfortable with rather than using a format that you think an external reader may prefer. You may prefer bullet points or be happier with a more conversational style as in the example below.

One example of conversational style: 'I was also reminded once again of the importance of the pre-application advice, this was an instance where the XXXX had given misleading and inconsistent advice, leading to an awkward path for the application and a difficult situation for me'.

## 4.8 Submitting your log book

The log book is a stand-alone document excluded from word count limit, it is not assessed but it supports your submission. It must not include extraneous materials such as cuttings, plans etc. It must note clearly where extended breaks in experience have occurred that are not associated with standard annual leave or occasional sickness.

The log book must be sent to the RTPI as a Word document or PDF file along with the submission and will be used to support an assessment of whether the work experience conforms to the RTPI's experience requirements. The written submission may refer to the log book for detailed examples of particular types of work undertaken.

Some log books will become quite a large file. If you need to save your log book in several files please make sure the title of the file includes to and from dates. The easier you make it for the assessors to find something in your log book, the more likely they are to consider it.

## 5. Practical Experience Statement (PES)

This is the first of the three sections of your written submission. The recommended word count for this section is 1,250 words.

### 5.1 The purpose of the PES

In this section, you are providing an overview of your 24 months' experience as an Associate and you must demonstrate that you have the right amount of experience at a suitable professional level. 'Professional level' is broadly defined as exercising independent professional judgement to make decisions or influence outcomes.

Candidates who are unable to demonstrate that their experience is of a professional level, will usually be asked to wait before resubmitting. It is best to make a professional judgement yourself about your experience.

Candidates who have more than the 24 months' experience at a professional level (either as an Associate or before becoming an Associate) can demonstrate the breadth of this experience within their PES. If you wish to do this, please note that this experience must be corroborated (see [Section 2.4](#)).

The PES is used to assess whether you have undertaken sufficient practical experience at a relevant professional level to justify your election to Chartered status. It must be current up to a month prior to your submission.<sup>5</sup>

### 5.2 How to structure the PES

In the PES, you need to describe the planning experience that you have gained over the period of practical experience. You should provide comprehensive coverage in chronological order. For each position you have held, the statement must include:

- the name and type of employer;
- the nature of the business (mainstream planning, local planning authority, multi-disciplinary practice etc.);
- the size of the organisation and where you sit within the organisation;
- your own job description: a summary of the main role and responsibilities, including any line management responsibility;
- the nature of the work you undertook in the role; and
- dates and time periods covered.

The PES must focus specifically on your **own** professional responsibilities. It is a factual description of roles and responsibilities and does not need to focus on competencies. Where you have been involved in group tasks or projects, you must describe your own role and responsibilities and how you personally contributed to the project as a whole. Some projects you have been involved in may not have reached completion when you are finalising your submission.

You need to describe the type of spatial planning work that you undertook. If your job has changed or evolved within a single organisation over the period of practical experience, you should clearly indicate this. If some of your experience was gained in areas that were not solely planning related, you need to estimate the proportion of your time that was devoted to spatial planning responsibilities.

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<sup>5</sup> If you are not currently in employment, please indicate in your PES how you are keeping your planning skills and knowledge up to date.

## NOTE

If you do not clearly articulate what **you** did in your roles, you may be asked for a supplementary statement or to resubmit a section of your submission which will delay your election. Spending the time defining your contribution in the PES will make preparing your PCS easier.

Your PES must show that you have **gained 24 months'** full-time relevant spatial planning experience whilst an Associate (full time equivalent). Experience prior to the Associate period can be mentioned, **in addition** to the 24 months.

### 5.3 What do the assessors look for in the PES?

The assessors will use this part of the submission to determine whether you have the right amount and the right type of experience. Assessors may disregard parts of your experience if:

- you only describe the function of your organisation or department rather than the work you have done;
- they have difficulty identifying what part of the work outlined was done by you;
- you have described roles that are predominantly administrative, or generic management, and not spatial planning;
- they feel a significant proportion of your work is more aligned to another aspect of the built environment such as surveying or architecture; or
- they are not convinced you have gained the minimum 24 months' experience as an Associate.

Please see [Sections 1.4-1.5](#) for more information on experience eligibility.

### 5.4 Demonstrating your specialism

As well as demonstrating the Specialism competency in your PCS, you will need to include a line in your PES stating what your specialism is, so that it is absolutely clear to the assessors. For more details on the Specialism competency and what is required, see [C14](#).

## 6. Professional Competence Statement (PCS)

This is the second section of your written submission. The recommended word count for this section is 4,000 words.

### 6.1 The purpose of the PCS

Planners rarely encounter standard problems needing standard solutions and it is thus the ability to learn in a reflective manner, through taking action, that is the hallmark of the true professional. A reflective practitioner grows and develops through experience and you must demonstrate that you are now working at a higher level of responsibility and able to make more professional judgements than you did when you became an Associate.

All planners operating at a professional level must be able to critically assess a problem, research the issues and select an appropriate response after considering a number of options. This work is undertaken in an environment complicated by multiple stakeholders with different expectations, complex legal guidelines and political objectives.

In the PCS, you must demonstrate that you are a reflective professional and a competent spatial planner. You are not only trying to show what skills you have, you are trying to show that you learn and grow in your work by thinking about the context in which you operate, you are aware of the factors that impact on your work and that you can analyse and criticise your work to understand how you have developed and how you can improve your performance. It is not only about what you did, but also **why you did** it in a particular way and **how you went about it**.

One of the main errors candidates make in this section is to be **too descriptive** and **not sufficiently analytical/reflective**.

There are 14 competencies in total that you will need to demonstrate in the PCS. Information on how to demonstrate each competency can be found in [Section 6.3](#).

#### IMPORTANT

Do not treat your submission in the same way you would frame a job application. They are not the same. You are expected to be **analytical and critical** of your performance, of the environment in which you operate, of the processes you have used and of the outcomes you have achieved. You are to demonstrate what you have learned and how you have become a better planner as a result of that experience. You must also demonstrate your personal professional contribution to the tasks you describe.

### 6.2 Using case studies

The PCS is not simply an extended PES. You are expected to go into considerably more detail through the use of case studies and you should:

- **Use between two and four case studies to demonstrate you have met all the competencies.** The most effective way to demonstrate your professional competence is by discussing two to four case studies or projects drawn from your experience gained during the Associate period. Identify which aspects of your experience demonstrate each of the competencies outlined in [Section 6.3](#). In some projects, you may have had a major role in researching and monitoring and in another

you may have dealt extensively with other professionals or with a complex group of stakeholders. Alternatively, you may have been involved in one project which required you to use all your skills. Carefully select your case studies and determine how you will divide the word limit.

- **Use your log book to identify case studies.** If you have maintained your log book effectively you will already have most of the material for your submission. Go through the log book with a list of the competencies. Look for projects in which you demonstrated some of the competencies. For example, look for work you undertook that involved gathering and analysing information or evaluating options. Your log book should contain your reflections at the time and provide valuable analysis.
- **Explain how you used your professional judgement in your case studies to contribute to outcomes.** You should not expect the assessors to presume anything from the tasks you describe in your PCS. Consider your decision making process and how you approached the task in question. The PCS is not only about what you did, but also why and how you achieved it.
- **Use language that shows your contribution in moving the case study forward.** Use language such as: “I contributed to this by...”; “I was responsible for...”; “this project helped me to understand...” or “the tensions resulted in...”; “this was a challenge for me because...” or “as a result of changing circumstances, I...”. Please note that the use of language such as “we decided...” or “the project team agreed...” or “the decision agreed in the meeting was...” **does not** demonstrate your own role.

#### NOTE

While your case studies should be self-sufficient and self-explanatory, you should also cross reference your case studies to the relevant entries in your log book. This provides the assessor with more information should they wish to clarify something. There should be strong linkages between all the elements of the submission.

Keep in mind that:

- **You must not structure your submission around the competencies.** You will not be able to present an effective submission if you adopt a tick-box approach using a short example of how you met each competency or if you use the competencies as sub-headings. The competencies are interrelated and describe what you would do to manage an activity within the planning environment.
- **You do not need to only use case studies where the outcome was successful or where your decisions and actions were successful.** It can sometimes be easier to show reflective thinking when something was unsuccessful or where the anticipated outcomes were not achieved. The assessors are not judging you on the outcome of the case study project but on your contribution and learning.
- **You are not being judged on the size of your case study.** It is better to choose a smaller case study where you have had considerable involvement and input, over a larger case study where your contribution may have been limited.



One way to structure a case study is to include the following elements:

- problem definition – briefly describe the issue and provide enough background to provide the assessors with the context of the situation;
- the challenges and issues that arose and how you addressed them; and
- a conclusion which summarises what you learned from the experience and how it relates to the competencies.

#### NOTE

You should ensure your submission only refers to information in the public domain and does not breach professional confidentiality. Your submission should not refer to individuals by name or make references which could make individuals easily identifiable.

### 6.3 The A-APC competencies

Your PCS will be assessed against 14 competencies which are all equally important and integral to being a Chartered Town Planner. The competencies are interrelated and linked to one another. They build on the competencies required for Associate membership.

The Institute has set out the minimum type of evidence you are required to demonstrate for each competency. As you are already an Associate, you may well be able to demonstrate more than the minimum type and are encouraged to do so.

The types of evidence required range from 'understanding' to 'core' and are defined below:

1. **Understanding** – Demonstration of how the competency applies to your case study from a theoretical or observational viewpoint. Whilst your personal experience of the competency is not essential, your understanding of how and why the competency applies to your case study should be apparent.
2. **Application** – Demonstration of how the competency applies to your case study from a personal practical viewpoint. Your personal experience and evidence of depth of knowledge of the competency are essential.
3. **Core** – Demonstration of how the competency is integral to your actions as a professional planner. This is more than just the application of your knowledge, it should be core to how you operate and be imbedded throughout your case study.

For each competency there is an accompanying descriptor, guidance statement and prompts to aid your thinking. The descriptor defines the competency, the guidance statement explains how to demonstrate the competency and the prompts are an indication of how you will be assessed. For more information on each competency, please see Sections C1. to C14.

**You must demonstrate all competencies for your PCS to be successful.** Please note, you do not need to demonstrate all of the competencies in all of the case studies. You are free to select those case studies you consider best demonstrate your achievements.

The assessors will assess your PCS against each of the competencies ensuring that you have demonstrated the **minimum** type of evidence required as stated below:

Competency	Type of evidence
C1. Professionalism and the RTPI Code of Conduct	Core
C2. The spatial planning context	Application
C3. Identifying and analysing issues	Application
C4. Gathering appropriate information	Application
C5. Identifying and evaluating a course of action	Application
C6. Initiating and implementing a course of action or (for academic applications) dissemination of knowledge	Application
C7. The legal framework	Understanding
C8. Ethical challenges	Understanding
C9. The political framework	Understanding
C10. The economic context	Understanding
C11. Reflection and review	Core
C12. Sustainability	Application
C13. Engagement and participation	Understanding
C14. Specialist knowledge and its relationship to spatial planning	Application

## C1. Professionalism and the RTPI Code of Conduct (Core)

### Descriptor

Chartered membership of the RTPI is the gold standard for planning practice. The highest levels of professionalism should be exhibited by professional planners. In line with the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct, Chartered Members should demonstrate their commitment to good practice, including respect, tolerance, confidentiality and honesty.

Part of being a professional includes liaising and cooperating with others and may require the use of different communication methods tailored to the audience. This should come through in recognising the need to act in the public interest. Members should also show an understanding of equality, diversity and inclusive planning in all their activity. Negotiation, mediation, influence and advocacy are also key attributes.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency, professionalism and adherence to the Code of Professional Conduct must be evident throughout your case study. You must also provide a specific example in at least one of your case studies as to how the Code of Professional Conduct applies to your work. You should evidence a clear sense of professional

responsibility for your own actions and how your performance impacts on others. This may be in relation to conflict of interest, disclosure, professional conduct, discrimination, fees or any other issue covered by the Code of Professional Conduct.

For example, you might show an understanding of equality and diversity by explaining how you adapted a consultation process. Or if you work in the public sector, you might explain how you responded to a request to represent the council at an appeal following a refusal against your recommendation.

Just mentioning the Code without explaining the context and its implications will not result in a successful application. While demonstration of this competency may overlap with other competencies (in particular ethical challenges), you are still expected to demonstrate this competency separately.

Please remember, professionalism also relates to the standard of your submission and quality of your work as set out in [Section 3.2](#). This will be formally assessed under 'general presentation'.

### Prompts

- Have you demonstrated professional characteristics including the importance of upholding the highest standards of behaviour?
- Have you demonstrated how the Code of Professional Conduct impacts on your work in professional practice and why it is important?
- Is this competency integral to your approach throughout your case study?

## C2. The spatial planning context (Application)

To demonstrate this competency, you must link planning theory to your case study, demonstrating that you understand the principles behind your practice, that is, why you do what you do<sup>6</sup>.

Background research and/or reading may be required for this competency (a reading list is provided on the [RTPI website](#) for candidates who would like to do further study in this area before submitting).

### Descriptor

The work planners do will impact on other professionals, have wider spatial implications and will affect a number of stakeholders. Professional planners need to have an understanding of the broader environment in which they work and an appreciation of the frameworks within which they operate. Planners also need to understand the inter-relationships that operate across national, regional, sub-regional and local spatial scales; as well as an ability to focus on site specific issues where appropriate.

Spatial planning (i.e. managing competing uses for space and creating places valued by people) embraces regeneration, urban design, community or neighbourhood planning,

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<sup>6</sup> The requirement for theoretical understanding as well as experience makes the demonstration of this competency different from the demonstration of *C2 The spatial planning context* as part of the Licentiate APC. Licentiates do not need to demonstrate theoretical knowledge because they already have a fully RTPI accredited degree.

transport planning, environmental planning, economic development and many more specialist planning activities.

### **Guidance statement**

To demonstrate this competency, you must link planning theory to your case study, demonstrating that you understand the principles behind your practice, that is, why you do what you do. For example, you might consider how a particular planning movement or theory has played out in practice.

Additionally, you should reflect on how your work relates to local communities, the natural environment, the profession and other professionals. You should also demonstrate your understanding of the spatial element of planning and the relationship between a site or area and the surrounding areas, and how this relates to other local and strategic activities such as infrastructure provision.

For example, you might explain the impact of your project on planners in other sectors, or other built environment professionals and how you engaged with them. Or you might explain how you gave consideration to broader spatial planning issues such as environmental, social, economic or design issues and inclusive planning; or explain how community input affected a project. You might explain how you considered issues beyond traditional land-use planning such as inequalities in health, education and access, energy policy, urban design or the rural economy.

### **Prompts**

- Have you set the scene and background for your case study succinctly?
- Have you identified the stakeholders and who was affected by your decisions? Who did you need to consult and why?
- Have you demonstrated your understanding of spatial planning theory and how it underpins your work in practice?

## **C3. Identifying and analysing issues (Application)**

### **Descriptor**

A professional planner is rarely presented with a problem with clearly defined issues. Planners should therefore be able to identify and analyse problems and challenges themselves rather than under instruction from others.

### **Guidance statement**

To demonstrate this competency you must show how you used your judgement to identify and analyse issues within your case study. You need to demonstrate effective research, analytical, evaluative and appraisal skills and the ability to reach appropriate, evidence based decisions.

For example, you may want to think about any technical, administrative/procedural, political, legal, ethical or other factors you took into consideration as part of your case study. You must clearly explain what the issues were, how you weighed them up and how this affected the direction of your case study in question.

It is vital that you explain your thinking here and do not rely simply on a narrative of what the team or department did during a project. If you are using a team example, give a critical

analysis of how the project was undertaken, how you approached your role in this and what factors you personally considered.

### Prompts

- Have you clearly explained the process you used to define the problem and how you considered it?
- Have you demonstrated your personal contribution in defining the problem?
- Have you explained what critical factors you took into account and why they were relevant?

## C4. Gathering appropriate information (Application)

### Descriptor

The decisions a professional planner makes can have a significant impact on individuals and whole communities. To make good decisions, planners need to have the right information to hand and a robust evidence base to draw on.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency you need to show how you engaged in a range of information gathering strategies within your case study, whether desk or site based. You should demonstrate that you are capable of reviewing relevant information and can articulate why the methodologies were appropriate to the case in question.

For example, you might explain what data sources were available for a project – such as plans, statistics, demographics, site visits, and public consultations or desktop research. You could also explain why you used particular research methods and not others; whether there were difficulties you had to overcome; how you analysed and assessed the information you gathered and the impact it had on your project.

### Prompts

- Have you demonstrated more than one information gathering strategy?
- Have you demonstrated how you weigh up and evaluate information?
- Have you analysed the appropriateness of certain information gathered and the strategies used?

## C5. Identifying and evaluating a course of action (Application)

### Descriptor

It is important that a professional planner has the ability to reach appropriate, evidence based decisions and to appraise all options with potential solutions in mind. Once planners have a full understanding of a project, supported by appropriate information, they will begin to develop plans or recommendations to address the issues and to achieve the outcomes they are looking for.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency you should briefly outline the solutions you considered and then explain **why** you chose a certain course of action. You should also articulate the thought processes that supported the selection of a particular course of action, explain how you evaluated the alternatives and reflected on the relative merits of your plan of action in the

immediate and wider spatial planning context; and explain the rationale for rejecting other strategies.

If you were not responsible for the overall direction of the project, you should demonstrate how the tasks that were directly in your control contributed to the overall outcome.

### Prompts

- Have you identified and evaluated more than one possible course of action?
- Have you clearly articulated your thought process and explained why you chose the course of action you did?
- Have you explained why you rejected the alternatives?
- Have you explained how you used your professional judgment in this situation?

## C6. Initiating and implementing a course of action or, for academic applications, dissemination of knowledge (Application)

This is the only competency that is worded differently for academic applicants to specifically apply to an academic rather than practice context. See the *Advice note – Academic Experience* for more details on this.

### Descriptor

The practice of good spatial planning requires clear thinking, reflection on the available evidence base, determination of appropriate solutions and strong project management skills to ensure delivery. This includes the ability to understand and communicate the link from researching and evaluating options, to implementing solutions in a proactive and professional manner.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency you will need to outline in detail your own role in actually implementing a project or activity and the extent of your responsibilities.

This competency aims to appraise how you put ideas into practice, what steps you have taken to realise delivery and how you communicated the proposed solution. The particular course of action or strategic direction could have been determined by senior management, politicians or a client. What we are seeking, however, is how you take responsibility for its implementation.

For example, you might describe a situation where you engaged with other built environment professionals to seek their input; negotiated agreements or mediated between stakeholders and developed relationships. You could also explain a situation where you took recommendations back to the client and explained their implications, faced any particular barriers or objections to your original course of action or responded to issues arising from consultation. You might describe how your research findings have been utilised and shared (more information on this is in the *Advice Note: Academic Experience*).

### Prompts

- Have you explained why the action was necessary?
- At what point was your involvement critical to the success of the issue at hand?

- How did you keep track of activities and ensure critical paths were achieved?
- What were your or others' objectives in implementing the course of action?
- Given the resources, what options were available or were there any constraints to delivery?
- How did you achieve the objectives by working with others?
- How have you communicated and shared your research findings and how might they be applied in practice?

## C7. The legal framework (Understanding)

### Descriptor

Planning operates in a highly regulated environment. Over time, there have been different proposals for reform to planning in different administrations within the UK and beyond. However, even when Planning Acts have been passed, it is often the case that changes happen on an incremental basis, when legal judgements are made by the courts, or policy is revised by central or local government. A successful planner must therefore ensure their understanding of the legal framework is current.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency you need to show an understanding of the legal framework within which you operate and how it can impact on your work. It is not sufficient to simply state the title of a relevant Act or other statute in your submission to demonstrate this competency.

Instead, you need to show that you understand the implications of the law on your case study. You will need to demonstrate you understand the decisions that have been made and actions taken in the context of the legal framework you must operate within.

For example, you might explain how you have been involved in the delivery of, or have delivered yourself, a planning solution that met relevant statutory and regulatory requirements. You might also explain what you had to do to understand and, if necessary, translate for others, certain legal requirements; and any changes that needed to be made as a result.

### Prompts

- Have you demonstrated how a relevant Act or other statute informed your approach to the case study?
- Have you explained the purpose of the specific legislation within the context of your case study?

## C8. Ethical challenges (Understanding)

### Descriptor

The nature of planning work means that professional planners are faced with ethical challenges. They must understand and act appropriately given the sometimes conflicting requirements of their employer, the needs of the individuals affected, the collective needs of the community and their own personal views. All planners need to understand how to behave in situations where their ethical and moral behaviours are tested.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency you need to show an understanding of ethical challenges and how these can impact on your work. You should either consider a situation where you have observed and reflected on, or have experienced, an ethical challenge within your work and have acted appropriately. Ethical behaviour is, of course, closely aligned with the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct and professionalism but it is also a very distinctive trait of the accomplished practitioner and one which builds trust in the individual. You do not necessarily need to reference the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct for this competency.

You may want to consider a situation where you had to balance your personal and professional views and navigate the situation using purely your professional judgement. Most importantly, you need to explain why this was an ethical dilemma for you and how you overcame the problem.

For example, it could be a situation where you or a colleague has been asked to disregard the outcome of a consultation process or ignore a consultation response; or may have been offered a personal inducement to support a particular outcome on a planning application. Or how might you deal with a situation where you uncover technical errors in a colleague's work prior to client submission/committee approval?

### Prompts

- Have you clearly explained why the situation you observed or experienced was an ethical challenge for you?
- Have you explained how your personal views came into conflict, or could come into conflict, with your work?
- Have you explained how the situation was resolved?
- If you observed, rather than experienced a situation relating to your case study, have you explained what you would have done if you were in that situation?

## C9. The political framework (Understanding)

### Descriptor

The planning process and its outcomes often come under scrutiny, nationally and locally, on account of the level and range of impact and what it can achieve. New jobs, additional housing, or an alternative use for a plot of land whose openness is valued by members of a community are examples of this. Whilst professional planners apply technical skills to inform judgements, ultimately, they have to balance a range of conflicting demands in the use of land, including differences between varying public opinions. Consequently, any practitioner should see the need for a clear and ongoing understanding of the political framework in which planning operates.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency you need to show an understanding of the political environment within which you operate and how this can impact on your work. This does not simply mean engagement with elected officials but you should refer to the role and impact of the political framework that can influence and shape planning policy and its outcomes. You should show an understanding of how particular influences on your organisation and on the case study you have been involved in, may have affected the outcome. The public profile of your organisation and relative impact of its activities might also be a factor for consideration.



For example, you might explain a situation where you had to weigh up local concerns or reservations, perhaps contrary to wider national or regional policy. Or you might explain how you might adapt an argument to suit a particular political audience.

### Prompts

- Have you explained the political nature of the area of planning you have been working in?
- Have you explained how planners, and you in particular, work effectively within this structure?
- Have you demonstrated how the political framework informed your approach to the case study?

## C10. The economic context (Understanding)

### Descriptor

In order to deliver social and environmental objectives, the 21<sup>st</sup> century planner needs to understand the economic context of planning decisions. Professional planners need to recognise the range of ways in which they can add value to development activity and other planning decisions. Planners thus use their understanding of how markets operate, including the economics and financing of development, to ensure that development adds value by being economically sustainable.

The financial implications for public, private and other sectors thus need to be taken into account to avoid raising local expectations or forming unachievable planning strategies; and to maximise the value from investments whilst balancing this against wider sustainability objectives. This is not the same as always being 'pro-development' or prioritising development interests. The ultimate aim should be to generate added value for the whole community by looking at the long term contribution of planning options as well as at their immediate impacts.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency you need to show an understanding of the economic and financial issues relating to spatial planning decisions and how you have balanced these against other considerations. You should be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of how different planning approaches can affect delivery and viability. You need to show how you have understood that development needs to be financially viable for those promoting it.

For example, how might density or design requirements affect a development scheme? What could the implications be if specific infrastructure is required up-front? You might also show how you have had to take into account the economic and financial context in which a client, applicant or other stakeholder operates, whether public, private or not for profit. You may have attended meetings where the economics of a situation were considered, how did this help your understanding and what was your contribution to these discussions?

### Prompts

- What were the economic and financial factors that had to be considered in a particular situation and why?
- Have you explained the economic and financial context of your example?
- Have you shown an understanding of how planning influences and affects delivery of development?

## C11. Reflection and review (Core)

### Descriptor

Reflective practice is a distinguishing feature of a professional and is defined as “the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning” (Schön 1983, p26). A process of reflection and review ensures that professionals evaluate their work outcomes, are aware of how their work can be affected by external changes; and use that reflection to influence the success of future practice. It also means taking a critical look at your own learning as well as performance. The RTPI requires Chartered Members to regularly reflect on learning through the Code of Professional Conduct and its CPD requirements.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency you must reflect on and review your work throughout your case study. You must provide a specific example of how critical reflection impacted on subsequent practice or how, as a result of your reflection, you might do things differently in future. You need to explain how you reflect on and review both your professional practice and your own personal development. This is not about demonstrating that you are a perfect planner but rather highlighting what you may do differently and areas for development.

### Prompts

- Have you evaluated how successful a project or course of action was?
- Have you explained how critical reflection on a piece of work impacted on subsequent practice, or how you would do things differently in the future?
- Have you demonstrated the benefit of reviewing your behaviours, actions and performance?
- Have you demonstrated a commitment to continuous reflection in your ongoing development of professional skills and knowledge?
- Is this competency integral throughout your case study?

## C12. Sustainability (Application)

### Descriptor

Sustainability seeks to balance economic, environmental and social dimensions and planners need to understand and take into account all three. Planning plays a key role in promoting social and economic development, while conserving environmental, social and cultural and/or historic heritages for transmission to future generations.

Planners need to understand the implications of climate change for places (such as the climate hazards an area may face, and their social and economic costs and consequences) and how planning is critical in responding to the challenges posed by climate change. For example, planning can help to shape patterns of urban and rural development, mitigate against the increased risk of flooding, reduce energy demand and carbon emissions from the built environment, improve air quality and support integrated sustainable forms of transport and energy consumption. Better mitigation and adaptation to climate change is crucial to a sustainable economy and society.

### Guidance statement

To demonstrate this competency, you must show how you have applied your knowledge of sustainability and climate change issues in your case study. You must demonstrate, in your

case study, how your planning experience relates to all three dimensions of sustainability and in particular how you can address the implications of climate change.

Planning outcomes may have different impacts on different communities so it is important to consider the long term impacts of planning decisions. The costs and consequences of climate change most affect poorer or more vulnerable communities. When considering the effect on different communities, you must also demonstrate how planning outcomes can be designed to address issues of disadvantage.

Some of the ways you could meet this competency include:

- Demonstrating how getting a site in the right place and using the inherent qualities of the site can help achieve sustainability (e.g. drainage, passive solar).
- Demonstrating how you have considered in your work the role of planning in achieving sustainability, not just in terms of the environmental aspects of building design but also the social ones, such as lifetime design, inclusive planning, accessibility and meeting the different needs of the community.
- Developing local planning policies so that they play a role in reducing the need to travel (particularly by private car) and/or in ensuring a high proportion of trips are made by sustainable transport modes (which could include public transport, walking and/or cycling).
- Demonstrating how planning can play a role in cutting carbon or other greenhouse gas emissions at strategic, local/neighbourhood and development site levels.
- Demonstrating how infrastructure planning can address climate change (for example through renewable energy production, energy and transport networks, water and waste).
- Demonstrating how you have considered in your work the role planning plays in climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Demonstrating how planners can reduce emissions from existing stock (e.g. through building design, energy distribution networks or the use of energy efficient materials) as well as from proposed development.

### Prompts

- Have you demonstrated how planning decisions affect sustainability and the way they can mitigate against the effects of climate change?
- Have you demonstrated how planning outcomes can be designed to address issues of social inequality?
- Have you explained the challenges that you faced in balancing the three dimensions of sustainability and how you have addressed them?
- Have you demonstrated the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability and the role that planning plays?

## C13. Engagement and participation (Understanding)

### Descriptor

Engagement and participation are integral aspects of good planning. When carried out successfully, they can reduce conflict, result in better development and, most importantly, allow people and communities to have an influence over the shape of the places where they live. They are also crucial to ensuring planning respects equality and diversity in decision making.

Engagement is generally regarded as a positive process, delivering a range of widely recognised benefits including:

- Better decision making, improved legitimacy and democratic accountability;
- Developing more cohesive communities;
- Aligning the needs of people in an area with the services provided;
- Improving people's understanding of spatial planning; and
- Improving the skills of individuals and communities, which in turn encourages people to engage further.

Given people's different lives and backgrounds, identifying and making effective contact with a wide range of individuals and organisations can be challenging. But for planners, capturing the views of as many people as possible is critical if balanced and informed decisions are to be made. Gaining a balanced and inclusive view is the only way to ensure that a representative voice is heard, one on which good decisions can be taken.

Reaching out to those who do not normally engage or who have difficulty in doing so requires more thought and preparation, but is vital if a balanced response is to be secured. Understanding the need to be inclusive, informing people of how their views have been taken into consideration and why certain decisions were made, and developing an approach which seeks to address the variety of reasons why people do not engage, is the key to success.

### **Guidance statement**

To demonstrate this competency, you should explain your understanding of the principles of equality and equality of opportunity in relation to spatial planning. (This competency relates to engagement with the wider community, not just stakeholders, as in *C2. Spatial planning context*.) You might do this by reflecting on examples, within your case study, of enabling, improving and promoting access and respecting diversity of cultures, views and ideologies.

You should demonstrate your understanding of the potential for spatial planning to have different outcomes for different social groups, whether defined by age, gender, disability, religion or race; and the need to analyse decisions and recommendations, assess how they may affect different groups and make judgements about the impacts you anticipate. (This is sometimes referred to as "proofing" as in "equality-proofing".) When considering the effect on different social groups, you should also demonstrate your understanding of how planning outcomes can be designed to address issues of inequality.

You should show your understanding of engagement and participation issues, by demonstrating your understanding of the difference between engaging with stakeholders (for example, applicants, statutory bodies, landowners) and with other interested parties (for example, local communities), some of whom have to be encouraged to understand that they have an interest.

### **Prompts**

- Have you shown an understanding of why engagement and participation are important in the planning process?
- Have you demonstrated how planning decisions affect different groups and how this can be taken into account in planning decision-making?
- Have you demonstrated how planning outcomes can be designed to address issues of inequality?
- Have you demonstrated how negotiation, consultation and and/or advocacy skills play a part in facilitating effective engagement?
- Have you evaluated some of the obstacles or challenges that might make it difficult for people to engage in the planning process, and how planners can overcome these?

- Have you explained different tools and techniques that you can use to support effective engagement and participation in spatial planning?

## C14. Specialist knowledge and its relationship to spatial planning (Application)

### Descriptor

Spatial planning (i.e. managing competing uses for space and creating places valued by people, as described in C2.) is a broad family of activities which sit alongside what are often seen as the core planning activities of planning policy, development management/control and enforcement. Chartered Members can, therefore, be involved in a wide range of specialist activities such as regeneration, economic development, urban design, community or neighbourhood planning, transport planning, environmental planning and many more related fields.

Candidates applying through the A-APC route may well come from one or other of these more specialist fields of activity. A specialist area of operation should not, however, be seen as something that is too narrow or restrictive. It will be a topic, an area of work, rather than a discrete planning process or series of tasks.

### Guidance statement

Depending on your experience and professional background, there are different ways you could demonstrate this competency. If your experience has been in mainstream planning, you are likely to have developed your understanding of at least one particular area of planning (such as development management/control or enforcement) as your career has progressed. If you are coming into planning from another profession or discipline, it is likely that this background will have provided you with specialist knowledge and skills that you are now bringing to spatial planning.

To demonstrate this competency, you must show in depth knowledge of one area of planning practice. You must explain in your case study how you have practically applied this knowledge. You must also show how your specialist area of operation links with spatial planning in the wider sense.

The RTPI would not wish to restrict what might qualify as a specialist area of operation. Examples you could use if your experience has been largely in spatial planning might include 'environmental management', 'urban design', 'transport planning', 'minerals and waste planning', 'infrastructure planning', 'economic development', 'planning law', 'planning policy', 'development management/control', 'planning enforcement', 'housing planning' 'residential or commercial development' or 'coastal/marine planning'. If you have come from a related profession such as housing or surveying, you could demonstrate how you can apply this specialist knowledge when working in spatial planning. If you are an academic, you might want to demonstrate how you have carried out academic research into, or taught (e.g. specialist modules), one of the above or other topics.

### Prompts

- Have you demonstrated how you use your specialist knowledge and skills?
- Have you demonstrated the relationship of your specialism to other aspects of spatial planning? You might explain the social, environmental, economic and political context for the area of specialism.
- Have you explained how you considered broader spatial planning issues when making decisions?

**NOTE**

Go back over your PCS and check (for your own reference) where you have addressed each of the competencies. If you can't find the reference, don't expect the assessors to.

## 7. Professional Development Plan (PDP)

This is the third section of your written submission. The purpose of the PDP is for you to demonstrate the ability to analyse your professional learning needs and develop a plan to cover any gaps in your knowledge and skills. The recommended word count for this section is 1,500 words.

### 7.1 Why is the PDP important?

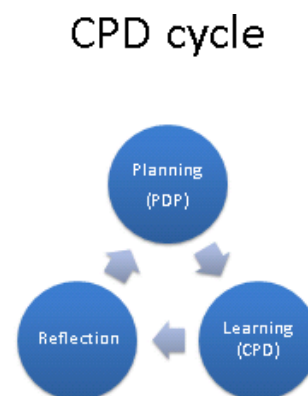
The RTPI believes that one of the most useful pieces of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) you can do is to carefully prepare a PDP. CPD is the way in which professionals maintain and develop their expertise via an ongoing process of learning through planning and reflection ([Section 7.5](#) contains a list of types of CPD activities).

All members entering the profession are required to begin a habit of lifelong learning and CPD. Qualifying to enter a profession does not mean that you remain competent to practice for the rest of your life. All professions change, requiring all practitioners to continue to learn, debate, discuss and update skills or knowledge on an ongoing basis. The PDP represents the planning stage of the CPD cycle.

Your profession, your clients and the general public must have confidence in the position of Chartered Town Planner. It is a designation that implies a standard that you will be required to uphold. This focus on lifelong learning that leads to a reflective and analytical professional is embodied in the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct.

As an Associate, you will be familiar with the Code, which states that members should:

- at least once a year prepare a PDP for the next two years identifying his or her personal professional development needs;
- in any two year period undertake a minimum of 50 hours' CPD activity related to the undertaking or managing of town planning;
- maintain a written record of his or her CPD activity.



It is a requirement to continue the reflective practice of preparing a PDP throughout your career as a Chartered Town Planner and the assessors are looking to see that you understand this process.

Please note that every year we carry out an audit of PDP and CPD records from a randomly selected sample of our membership. For more information on CPD monitoring please visit the [RTPI website](#).

#### NOTE

Don't treat your PDP as a last minute add-on to your submission. It is as important as the PES and PCS and more candidates are asked to resubmit this section than any other. Give this part of your submission equal consideration. The Code states that members should prepare a PDP at least once a year, however, it is recommended that during your required two years as an Associate you review your PDP at least bi-annually to support your professional development as you go through the A-APC process.

## 7.2 Structure and scope of the PDP

The PDP structure starts with a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis looking at your current personal strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that could impact on your ability to meet your career goals. The SWOT is followed by an Action Plan that consists of a hierarchical structure of a goal, objectives and actions:

- A goal is the overarching, long-term and strategic outcome for the plan. The goal should outline what you will be able to do or be as a professional in two years' time, as a result of carrying out your plan.
- The objectives then narrow down and identify the developmental areas of knowledge and skills you will need to gain to achieve your goal.
- The actions are the specific details of the CPD activities you will carry out to gain the skills and knowledge needed to meet your objectives. They need to include what you will do, where, when, why and how, what you will gain from it and how you will measure that development (meeting the SMART model outlined in [Section 7.4](#)).

The RTPI has produced a PDP template (explained in detail in [Section 7.4](#)) that you must use to ensure that your PDP follows the correct format.

Goals can be career aspirations, like developing a specialism, moving sector or gaining a promotion, as long as the planning context is clearly explained and the associated objectives are focused on furthering skills and knowledge.<sup>7</sup> It is better to explain what level you expect to be working at in terms of the level of responsibility you will have and the type of work you will be doing.

Some of your objectives may be the same as those identified in any work-based staff development scheme. However, your overall ambitions are likely to be wider than meeting the requirements of your current role and you should use your PDP to plan your own professional development. Note that your PDP must focus on your own professional development and not on developing the business or organisation. Your PDP is not inflexible and should not prevent you from taking advantage of (and recording) valuable but unexpected CPD opportunities. However, it does allow you to evaluate all your CPD activities against carefully identified needs.

## 7.3 Checklist for the PDP

Your PDP will be assessed on the following elements:

- That there is a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis which can be seen to be clearly connected in the main to the PES/PCS. However, this does not mean that every item in the SWOT must be linked to the PES/PCS.
- That the majority of weaknesses identified in the SWOT are addressed in the Action Plan, however, it is recognised that not all weaknesses can be addressed in the timescale of the PDP.
- That one to two goal(s) are identified. These must relate to the PES/PCS. Each goal must have two to four objectives which focus on skills and knowledge and two to four

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<sup>7</sup> Updating your CV or applying for jobs would not be appropriate actions or objectives as they are processes and do not directly result in you furthering your skills or knowledge.



SMART (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based) actions per objective.

- That the PDP has a balance of planning and non-planning skills, with at least 50% being planning. Objectives may be directly related to planning skills or knowledge. However, they do not have to be exclusively focussed on planning skills. Improvements in professional skills such as negotiation, presentation or management are acceptable as long as these are within the context of your planning career aspirations.
- There is an Action Plan which must be SMART (explanation in the template in [Section 7.4](#)).
- That the PDP template which is available on the [RTPI website](#) has been used.
- That the PDP covers the period two years onwards from the date of your submission. It must be forward-looking. For example, if you submit at the end of April 2017 your PDP should run from the start of May 2017 to the end of April 2019.
- That the PDP is within the word limit for the A-APC submission (guide of 1,500 words)<sup>8</sup>.

**Each of these points must be met for the PDP to pass, otherwise you may be asked to resubmit your PDP or be required to enter a supplementary support phase.**

#### NOTE

You are not required to get your line manager to corroborate your PDP although you should indicate that you have line manager support for any actions which require it (e.g. attendance on a training course in work time).

## 7.4 PDP template outline with guidance notes

In this section, a copy of parts of the PDP template is provided, in order to give examples, along with guidance notes. The full template is on the [RTPI website](#).

### PART ONE – SWOT ANALYSIS

#### NOTE

You do not need to give an overview of your role at the start of the PDP, this has already been covered in the PES and PCS.

Develop a SWOT analysis based on your written submission. Your written submission looked back at your achievements over the past few years while the SWOT analysis is looking forward.

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<sup>8</sup> The word count for the PDP **only** includes the text you enter into the template.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p><i>Be confident about what you're good at – use them to inform your goals in part two.</i></p> <p><i>You might include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• areas of strong planning knowledge and understanding</li> <li>• strong transferable skills and competencies</li> <li>• commitment to personal and professional development</li> <li>• good contacts or successful networking</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p><i>Most “weaknesses” that you identify should be used to form goals, objectives and actions in part two. You are expected to address the majority of the weaknesses you have identified.</i></p> <p><i>There should be a clear link between your “weaknesses” and the goals, objectives and actions identified and the majority should be based around planning knowledge, skills or experience.</i></p> <p><i>List only 3 – 5 weaknesses – this is enough. You need to justify which weaknesses you are taking forward into the action plan and why.</i></p> <p><i>You might include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• areas of weakness in planning knowledge and understanding</li> <li>• underdeveloped transferable skills and competencies</li> <li>• understanding that there is more to planning than your current experience</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p><i>Consider what opportunities can be integrated into a goal in part two.</i></p> <p><i>You might include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities within the industry</li> <li>• opportunities within your organisation</li> <li>• training and professional development opportunities</li> <li>• support of RTPI (Regions &amp; Nations, Young Planners, Networks etc.)</li> <li>• opportunities to volunteer</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p><i>What threats could affect your ability to meet your career goals?</i></p> <p><i>You might include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• industry downturns</li> <li>• negative changes within the organisation e.g. downsizing or restructuring</li> <li>• better qualified competitors</li> <li>• limited training opportunities</li> </ul>

Please use the information from your SWOT to identify goals and objectives for Part Two.

## PART TWO – GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTION PLAN

For each goal you intend to achieve, you need to develop objectives and an Action Plan which must be fully SMART. Please ensure you are familiar with SMART planning before starting your action plan.

Please complete one to two goals; two to four objectives per goal; and two to four SMART actions per objective. *You may delete the goals, objectives and actions in the template as necessary.*

You are not expected to get your line manager or mentor to corroborate your PDP but you should gain their support for actions beforehand, if required.

### GOAL

*Where do I want to be professionally?*

*Your goal should be a high level strategic statement of what you want to achieve. Your goal should be clearly set in the context of furthering planning skills and knowledge. It should specify the end result, the output of completing the action plan. What will you be able to do or be as a result?*

*Consider the question: as a professional planner, what direction do you want your career to move in over the next two years?*

*For a goal, you might like to think about where you would like to be working (perhaps in terms of organisation, sector or even country); the nature of the work you would like to be doing (e.g. types of spatial planning role or specialism) and/or the level you would like to be working at. Be aware that a goal such as 'to obtain a promotion' is, by itself, too broad. Instead, identify what type and level of work you will be doing.*

*You must identify between one to two goals.*

## OBJECTIVE

*What outcome will help me achieve this goal?*

*Objectives are sub-goals with measurable outcomes that you expect to help you achieve your goals. They are therefore a way of breaking down your longer term goals so that you can begin to work towards or prepare for it. The objectives should define the areas of knowledge or types of skills that you will need to gain to meet your goal. They must relate to your goals and/or the areas of development identified in your SWOT.*

*Achieving your long term goal might depend on improving your performance in certain ways/addressing areas of weakness identified in your SWOT.*

*While you are encouraged to set a goal that reflects a longer time frame, objectives should be more focused and contribute to your overall long term goal and are likely to be addressed in the next 6-18 months. It is therefore important also to break down the longer term goal into shorter term objectives, and in turn identify realistic Action Plan activities to achieve these in a set time-frame.*

*For each goal, you must identify two to four objectives.*

## ACTION PLAN:

*You must ensure that your actions are specific, measurable, time-bound steps that can be taken to meet your goal. Every action must conform to the SMART model, failure to do so will result in an unsuccessful plan.*

*S – specific (be precise in the 'Action' column below)*

*M – measurable (see examples under 'How will I know if I have achieved it' below)*

*A – achievable (can you achieve this or is it an unrealistic goal, given time and other pressures?)*

*R – relevant (to you in your work setting)*

*T – time-based (specific dates)*

*Include constructions such as:*

*In order to..., With a view to ..., So that I can..., Which will allow me to....*

*Your Action Plan shows a list of actions you will take to achieve each objective. They will answer questions such as:*

- *What will be done?*
- *How will it be done?*
- *Who will do it?*
- *When will it happen?*
- *Do I need senior officer approval?*
- *Is there a budget for this training?*
- *Do you have permission to work shadow someone?*
- *Does it impact on your existing role?*

*Activities and tasks do not need to be sequential. You can carry out two or more activities concurrently. While your PDP is a two year plan, the majority of actions can take place within the first year of the plan, if appropriate. An indication of a good Action Plan is if it is detailed enough for someone else to implement.*

*For each objective, you must identify two to four SMART actions in the columns below.*

Action	How will you measure your learning?	Start and end dates
<i>Clearly identify what specific action (CPD activity) you will undertake to achieve your objectives in order to achieve your goal.</i>	<i>Some examples of how you might measure your learning are listed below:</i>	<i>Give specific months and years.</i>
<i>Work based learning is acceptable, but you must highlight what it is you will learn from it (e.g. how taking on a new area of work will develop specific knowledge and skills).</i>	<i>I will discuss results of my research with colleagues at a team meeting and ask for feedback.</i>	<i>Be more specific than simply “ongoing”.</i>
<i>Ensure that you have done the relevant research into your actions (e.g. what further reading can you access, what volunteering opportunities will be available).</i>	<i>I will feel more confident doing X and this will be noticed by my manager.</i>	
<i>Link your action to your awareness of lack of knowledge and/or skills identified in part one or in the A-APC log book, if appropriate.</i>	<i>I am able to use my new knowledge of X to advise clients on Y.</i>	
<i>If you are listing a course, be specific about which course, where, who is paying for it, what you hope to learn from the course and what you will do with this learning. Consider if you need your manager’s approval or your organisation to fund the action.</i>		

## 7.5 Sources of CPD

The RTPI accepts an extensive range of activities as appropriate CPD, which can be free or very low cost. This means you have a great opportunity to select activities that are appropriate to your needs. Some examples of valid development activities include:

- online learning modules;
- attending planning enquiries or hearings;
- formal events such as conferences, seminars or workshops;
- short courses;
- formal qualifications;
- structured targeted reading on a particular topic e.g. journals, online, policy papers;
- volunteering;
- work-shadowing or placement;
- mentoring or coaching;
- supervised academic research;
- preparation of materials for training courses, technical meetings or the technical press;
- involvement in a professional group;
- secondments;
- project work (beyond your day-to-day work);
- involvement in RTPI Nation or Region, chapter or network.

## 8. Tips for a successful application

### 8.1 Build on your experience

Think about what you have already learnt from the process of applying to become an Associate. Think carefully about any feedback you received or any areas you have to address. You have the advantage of having been through one application process already, so are well-placed to reflect on what went well and what went less well, to help you with this submission.

### 8.2 Read the guidance

One of the most important factors in a successful application is reading and understanding this guidance and what is expected of you. You need to understand the competencies so that you can effectively address them in your submission. Discuss the competencies with your line manager and your colleagues so that you have a thorough understanding of how you might demonstrate them in your work environment.

### 8.3 Use the resources available to you

You should establish a support network of work colleagues, your mentor, past candidates and others who might provide guidance. Use the resources at your work to extend the scope of your experience if you feel you are not getting broad experience in your routine work.

Check the 'Membership' pages of the [RTPI website](#) regularly for updated A-APC resources, advice notes and templates.

### 8.4 Check off all the competencies

Use a checklist like the one on the 'Membership' pages of the [RTPI website](#) to identify where you have addressed each competency in your submission. Make a note in your log book where you have demonstrated the competencies. This will help when you are selecting case studies.

### 8.5 Keep on top of your log book

Although it might seem hard at the time, working on your log book regularly will help you prepare your submission. You will not be able to remember the details of all your work over the year. Use your log book to practice reflective and analytical thinking.

### 8.6 Select your case studies carefully

Careful selection of your case studies will help you address all the competencies within the word limit. The case study does not have to be the biggest or most impressive project you worked on during the years. You should select the case studies which best demonstrate how you met the competencies. A small project on which you had significant control and authority is likely to better demonstrate your skills than a large project in which you only played a small part. Marking each competency in your log book will help you identify a good case study.

## 8.7 Be critical

Evaluate your performance and don't be afraid to explain how you would do it differently if you were doing the task again. Reflect on what you learned and how you would improve the outcome.

## 8.8 Remember your PDP

As an Associate you have already produced a successful PDP. Build on that valuable experience by regularly reviewing and updating your PDP.

## 8.9 Start early

Don't leave your log book and A-APC until the last minute. Work on the submission over the period and make sure you leave plenty of time for checking your work and getting others to give you some feedback. Rushed submissions are very clearly identifiable.

## 8.10 Check your submission

You must check your submission before you submit it. Proof read it. Give it to a non-planner to read. Most importantly, you should have someone from outside your workplace read your submission. It is not unusual for people who are familiar with your work and your projects to read more into the text than is on the page. Remember, the assessors will only read what is written and bring no prior knowledge of you to the process.

All files (except the personal details and payment form and receipt of payment) are sent to the assessors. It doesn't look professional when you scan a document upside down or hand write and scan a document in a sloppy manner or fail to fill in all the sections. Make sure your corroboration is labelled in an intelligent manner so the assessors can easily identify what they are looking for.

## 8.11 Don't submit before you are ready

One of the most common reasons for unsuccessful applications is because the applicant does not have sufficient experience at the right level. You might be able to count up the right number of days, but if you have not developed as a professional planner over the period you will not be successful. Critically evaluate your experience against the competencies before you submit.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this document and good luck with your submission.**

**For more information:**

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