



RTPI

Royal Town Planning Institute

Legal Associate Membership

Main Guidance

Membership qualification for planning lawyers

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This guidance is applicable to Legal Associate membership candidates submitting their application for the first time from January 2020.

It replaces Legal Associate membership guidance published in January 2017.

Your application will be rejected or deferred if you fail to comply with this document.

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1. General information

1.1 Legal Associate membership (LARTPI)

The Royal Town Planning Institute's (RTPI) vision for planning is as an inclusive activity encompassing far more than traditional statutory land-use planning. The RTPI welcomes into its membership a diverse range of professionals who contribute to furthering this planning agenda, and offers a class of membership exclusively for planning lawyers: Legal Associate.

By joining the RTPI as a Legal Associate, in addition to your own professional body, you become a member of an institute whose charitable purpose is to advance the science and art of planning for the benefit of the public. This demonstrates that you share these values.

QUALIFYING AS A LEGAL ASSOCIATE

Legal Associate membership is awarded in recognition of achievement and demonstrable competence in planning law. The status of Legal Associate of the RTPI, denoted by the post-nominals LARTPI, is an important milestone and a mark of professional recognition. It shows clients and other professionals that you have both experience of, and expertise in, planning law.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A LEGAL ASSOCIATE

As a Legal Associate, you must abide by the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct (available at www.rtpi.org.uk/professionalstandards). This provides confidence that you uphold high professional standards within your field of planning.

You are also required to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity in accordance with the RTPI requirements. You are therefore committed to maintaining and developing your professional competence throughout your career, supported by the RTPI.

1.2 Elements of the Legal Associate written submission

The application process for Legal Associate membership follows a similar structure to the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC), in that it includes a written submission of three sections:

- 1. Practical Experience Statement (PES).** The PES is an **overview statement**, which sets out what **relevant experience** you have gained to meet the eligibility requirements.
- 2. Professional Competence Statement (PCS).** The PCS is an **analytical statement** where you use case studies to demonstrate the competencies you have developed through your experience. The competencies require you to focus not just on what you did, but also **why you did it** in a particular way and **how you went about it**.
- 3. Professional Development Plan (PDP).** The PDP is a **detailed plan**, which identifies and sets out how you are going to meet your personal professional development needs over the two years after your submission. It answers the important question: **what next?**

1.3 What do you submit?

Your application **must** consist of the following:

CORE DOCUMENTS

- **Written submission** of 4,250 words (+/- 10%) comprising three sections:
 - (1) Practical Experience Statement (PES) of approximately 1,000 words.
 - (2) Professional Competence Statement (PCS) of approximately 1,750 words.
 - (3) Professional Development Plan (PDP) of approximately 1,500 words¹.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- **Corroborator Declaration Form(s)** which cover **all** work experience in the application.
- **Sponsor Declaration Form** completed by a Chartered Town Planner.
- Scanned copies of **proof of legal qualification**, as per Table 1 below:

TABLE 1 – PROOF OF LEGAL QUALIFICATION

Type of legal practitioner	Jurisdiction	Proof required
Solicitor	England and Wales	Admission to the Roll of solicitors, as administered by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.
Solicitor	Scotland	Admission to the Roll of solicitors, as administered by the Law Society of Scotland
Solicitor	Northern Ireland	Admission to the Roll of solicitors, as administered by the Law Society of Northern Ireland.
Solicitor	Republic of Ireland	Admission to the Roll of solicitors, as administered by the Law Society of Ireland.
Barrister	England and Wales	Completion of the Bar Standards Board Authorisation to Practise process and copy of a current, full practising certificate.

¹ The RTPI provides a template for the PDP which is compulsory to use at: www.rtpi.org.uk/legal-associate-resources. When calculating your word count, you should only count words which **you** add to the template.

Type of legal practitioner	Jurisdiction	Proof required
Advocate	Scotland	Completion of the Faculty of Advocates Authorisation to Practise process and copy of a current, full practising certificate.
Barrister	Northern Ireland	Completion of the Bar of Northern Ireland Authorisation to Practise process and copy of a current, full practising certificate.
Barrister	Republic of Ireland	Completion of the Bar of Ireland Authorisation to Practise process and copy of a current, full practising certificate.
Chartered Legal Executive	England and Wales	Qualification as a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (FCILEx). ²

Your contact details, education history and work experience information will also be submitted as part of your application.

Find out how to submit and relevant **submission deadlines** at: www.rtpi.org.uk/membership-submit.

If any of your documents are in a language other than English, you will need to provide a certified translation.

1.4 How is your application assessed?

When we receive your application:

- 1. Pre-assessment checks are completed:** These checks ensure you have submitted all relevant documentation, are within the word limit, and meet the basic eligibility criteria. Your application may be delayed or rejected if everything is not included, or your fee has not been paid, so please ensure you also undertake the checks yourself prior to submission.
- 2. Two trained assessors receive your application:** 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 membership.

² Other membership grades of CILEx are not eligible to become Legal Associates but would be able to become Affiliates of the RTPI.

- 3. Assessors review your application:** They do this independently of each other and then arrange to confer and agree on a recommendation as to whether you have met the requirements.
- 4. Assessors complete a feedback report:** This details the outcome of the assessment and makes 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. Post-assessment checks are completed:** These checks review the assessors' feedback report to ensure that due process has taken place.
- 6. You are notified of the assessment outcome.**

1.5 Assessment outcomes

There are three possible assessment outcomes – successful, deferral or rejection.

- A **successful** outcome means you have demonstrated all of the requirements. If you are successful, you will be elected to the relevant membership grade. You may be referred to a PDP support phase if there were weaknesses identified in the PDP, for further details see: www.rtpi.org.uk/pdp-support-phase.
- A **deferral** means that you have not yet met some or all of the requirements. This is not a fail. You are being asked to provide additional information to demonstrate the relevant requirements.
- A submission can be **rejected**, but only if your experience, demonstrated in the PES, is short of the experience requirements by two years or more³. In this instance, the assessors cannot reject your application on the first attempt; they must **defer your application at least once** and give you the opportunity to clarify your experience in a resubmission. Your submission cannot be rejected solely on the PCS and / or PDP. If the PCS and / or PDP do not meet the requirements, the submission will be deferred (see above).

You will receive a feedback report with your results. The report has a summary of your results on the front page, with assessor comments on each of the three parts of the written submission separately, as well as general presentation.

1.6 Resubmission and appeal

If you have not met the requirements you will be asked to either resubmit the full section or provide a supplementary statement. Any resubmission can be made up to **two years from the date of your first submission** (resubmission fees apply). After this period you will have to submit a new application which will be assessed in its entirety by new assessors; the new application would need to comply with guidance in place at that time.

³ See [section 1.6](#) – you have up to two years from the date of your first submission to gain more experience.

Further details about resubmission are available at: www.rtpi.org.uk/resubmissions.
Resubmission deadlines can be found at: www.rtpi.org.uk/membership-submit.

If you feel due process has not been followed in the assessment of your application, you have a right of appeal but only after at least one resubmission attempt to address the unsuccessful elements. An appeal must be submitted in accordance with the Membership Appeal Procedure available at: www.rtpi.org.uk/membershipappealprocedure. For any queries about appeals and the process, please contact the Membership Team on +44(0)20 7929 9462.

1.7 Tips for success

- 1. Read this guidance:** this guidance is the key to your success – read it thoroughly several times, prior to preparing your submission.
- 2. Use the resources available to you:** speak to other professionals and colleagues, find a mentor, attend RTPI membership events and access online resources through the RTPI website: www.rtpi.org.uk/legal-associate.
- 3. Competency criteria are the key:** have you sufficiently addressed each competency in your submission? The best way to meet the competency criteria is to explain the reasoning behind your decisions and actions in the case studies. A checklist is available on the RTPI website to help you.
- 4. Select your case studies carefully:** choose case studies that were challenging to you personally and which showcase your involvement. You do not have to choose the biggest, most impressive project you have worked on.
- 5. Be critical:** do not be afraid to explain how you would do things differently if you were doing a task again. Strong case studies do not need to be successful projects.
- 6. Spend time on your PDP:** a detailed plan for your future development is needed. Refer to the PDP checklist⁴ to make sure you meet all of the requirements.
- 7. Prepare:** do not leave your submission until the last minute before the deadline, and allow your mentor, manager or colleagues time to review your application.
- 8. Review your submission:** give it to someone who has never read it before – is your experience and role in the case studies clear? 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 presented and bring no prior knowledge of you to the process.
- 9. Check the presentation and formatting:** have you presented your submission in accordance with the details in the guidance, including the word counts? Make sure your Corroborator Form(s) are clearly labelled so the assessors can easily identify what they are looking for.

⁴ See [section 5.9](#) of this guidance.

2. Eligibility and experience

2.1 Who is Legal Associate membership for?

In recognition of the diversity of the legal profession, the RTPI welcomes applications from planning lawyers working in the public and private sectors, or employed by charities or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Applications are encouraged from:

- Solicitors
- Barristers or advocates
- Chartered Legal Executives (FCILEx)⁵

Candidates who initially qualified in a jurisdiction other than a UK jurisdiction or the Republic of Ireland can become Legal Associates. They will need to submit proof of being qualified to practise law in a UK jurisdiction or the Republic of Ireland (for example, through a requalification process such as the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme run by the Solicitors Regulation Authority in England and Wales) and have the required amount of UK or Republic of Ireland experience⁶. The reason for this is that law is territory-specific and a regulated profession: lawyers are only qualified to practise in a specific jurisdiction.

Candidates do not need to demonstrate that all their experience and practice is in planning law. It is understood that candidates may also practise other areas of law. However, as the Legal Associate class denotes expertise in planning law, those who practise other areas of law but have only an interest in, or limited experience of, planning law, should consider instead becoming an Affiliate or Associate of the RTPI. Becoming an Affiliate or Associate is also an option for planning lawyers who work outside the UK and Republic of Ireland.

2.2 Are you eligible?

To be eligible to submit your Legal Associate membership application:

- You must be a **qualified legal practitioner** (solicitor, advocate or barrister, or Chartered Legal Executive). You will be required to demonstrate proof of this⁷.
- You must have experience⁸ specialising in planning law which was **gained within the last 5 years leading up to the application**, while a qualified legal practitioner. To demonstrate this you need at least:
 - 720 hours per year for 3 years⁹; **or**
 - 432 hours per year for 5 years (more applicable to candidates working part time).

⁵ FCILEx currently exist only in England and Wales (for example, there is a registered paralegal scheme in Scotland but planning is not one of the registered areas covered), but this guidance will be updated should this change in the future.

⁶ See [section 2.2](#).

⁷ See [section 1.3](#) for types of proof accepted.

⁸ See [section 2.3](#) and [section 2.4](#) for experience requirements.

⁹ This works out to be approximately 102 days of planning law work a year (full-time equivalent).

2.3 Does your experience qualify?

Whatever your background, assessors will be looking for a breadth of experience in planning law, to give confidence to clients and other professionals.

You must be giving planning law advice and negotiating with or on behalf of Local Planning Authorities, clients and / or with other public or statutory authorities (for example, highways authorities) in at least **five** of the **areas of practice in List A**. This must be evidenced within the Practical Experience Statement (PES)¹⁰

LIST A

- Planning and associated infrastructure agreements e.g. drafting, review and variation of agreements.
- Reviewing planning applications and their determination for risk (e.g. relating to judicial review and statutory challenges to decision making).
- Advising on the content of reports or other documents associated with a planning application.
- Conduct and advice on submission of, or responses to, planning appeals in whatever form, e.g. instructing and / or briefing counsel.
- Disputes over breaches of planning control, e.g. conduct of and advice on submission of enforcement appeals.
- Advising on the need for planning permission e.g. permitted development.
- Making representations and / or advising on statutory and non-statutory planning documents.

You may also include areas of practice in **List B**, if applicable. These are additional areas in support of your experience: it is not mandatory to have covered these areas.

LIST B

- Dealing with planning issues arising from specialist areas, such as:
 - listed buildings;
 - conservation areas;
 - natural and cultural heritage issues;
 - minerals and waste;
 - transport, rights of way and highways;
 - major or nationally significant infrastructure;
 - trees;
 - flooding;
 - advertisements;
 - Call-Ins; and
 - Related areas of development law, such as Town & Village Greens and Assets of Community Value.
- Representation about statutory and non-statutory planning documents.
- Compulsory purchase orders and compensation matters.
- Advising on and / or submitting applications for Certificates of lawfulness.
- High Court challenges under the Planning Acts and judicial review.
- Time spent on adjudicating appeals.

You do not need to have spent an equal amount of time on each area, it is understood that you may do more work in some areas than in others.

¹⁰ See [section 3](#).

2.4 Calculating your relevant experience

The table below outlines the types of experience that can and cannot count towards the application.

TABLE 2 – COUNTING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Experience type	Can it count?
Full- or part-time experience. As long as you meet the required hours ¹¹ .	Yes
Paid or voluntary experience.	Yes
Experience gained whilst self-employed. As long as you can demonstrate a consistent period of planning law experience.	Yes
Experience that is non-consecutive. Breaks in employment for parental leave, redundancy or travelling are fine. They just need to be excluded from your overall planning law experience, providing your experience is within the 5 year period.	Yes
Experience gained whilst studying.	Yes
Experience gained in the jurisdictions of the UK or the Republic of Ireland.	Yes
Experience gained in jurisdictions other than the UK or the Republic of Ireland.	No
Experience spread over a period of more than 5 years leading up to your initial application.	No
Periods of employment less than three months in duration.	No
Experience gained while training to become a legal practitioner.	No
Experience that is purely administrative or at a support level.	No

¹¹ See [section 2.2](#).

3. Written submission: Practical Experience Statement (PES)

3.1 What is the PES?

The PES is the first section of the written submission, and is an overview statement which sets out what **relevant experience** you have gained to meet the eligibility requirements. It should also provide the assessors with enough information to understand the context within which you work.

The relevant employer(s) or supervisor(s) must corroborate¹² all experience within the PES.

3.2 Scope and structure

The PES **must** describe the relevant planning law experience you have gained and cover **five of the areas of practice in List A**¹³. It must be current up to a month prior to submission (though you do not necessarily need to be working in planning law when submitting your application¹⁴).

It is recommended that the PES be structured in chronological order, role by role, to provide comprehensive coverage of your experience to date.

For each position you have held, the PES **must** include:

- the name and type of employer e.g. public sector, private sector;
- the nature of the organisation (law firm, local planning authority, multi-disciplinary practice etc.);
- your own job description: a summary of the main role and responsibilities;
- the nature of the work you undertook in the role; and
- dates and time periods covered.

It is also helpful to provide information on the size of the organisation and where you sit within the organisational structure, but this is not a requirement.

What if I have achieved more?

If you exceed the minimum experience requirements, you are encouraged to demonstrate this additional experience within the PES as long as it is supported by a Corroborator Declaration Form.

¹² See [section 7.3](#).

¹³ See [section 2.3](#).

¹⁴ See [section 3.5](#) for how to address gaps in your experience in the PES.

3.3 Articulating your role

The PES is a factual account of your **own** professional responsibilities and an overview of your experience; it does not need to focus on competencies. Where you have been involved in group tasks or projects, you must describe how you personally contributed to the project as a whole. It is not necessarily expected that you will have been managing entire projects or been involved in a project in its entirety. 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 planning law 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.

Finding it difficult to explain your experience?

Make use of bullet points, tables and / or a timeline to present your experience clearly.

If you gained some of your experience in areas that were not solely planning law related, you need to estimate and clearly set out the **proportion** of your time that was devoted to planning law responsibilities (see [section 2.4](#) for how to calculate relevant experience).

3.4 Avoiding common mistakes

The assessors will use this part of the submission to determine whether you have the right amount and 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; or
- you have described roles that are predominantly administrative or managerial and not planning law; or
- they are not convinced you have gained the minimum amount of relevant experience; or
- they have difficulty identifying what part of the work outlined was done by you; or
- you have included work done while training; or
- you have included work that is not recent (not within the last 5 years); or
- you have not covered five of the areas of practice in List A¹⁵.

If you are concerned that your experience is not sufficiently robust to meet the minimum requirements, you may prefer to gain more experience before you submit¹⁶.

¹⁵ See [section 2.3](#).

¹⁶ See [section 2](#) for experience requirements.

3.5 Gaps in your experience

Should you have gaps in your periods of eligible experience, for example due to extended or parental leave or a career break, which are greater than normal annual leave or sickness entitlements, these periods should be excluded from the experience period presented and not included in the calculation of experience.

You should briefly explain any gaps in your experience within your PES.

4. Written submission: Professional Competence Statement (PCS)

4.1 What is the PCS?

The PCS is the second section of the written submission, and is an **analytical statement** where you use case studies to reflect on competencies you have developed through your experience. Overall, you must demonstrate all competency criteria to be successful on this section.

The relevant employer(s) or supervisor(s) must corroborate¹⁷ all experience within the PCS.

4.2 Scope and structure

In the PCS you must demonstrate that you are a reflective professional and a competent planning lawyer. 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 also show that you are aware of the factors that impact on your work and that you can analyse and critique your work to improve your performance.

Your PCS will be assessed against **4 competencies** which are all equally important. The competencies are interrelated and linked to one another. You are required to select **1 to 2 case studies**¹⁸ from your experience to demonstrate **all competencies** at the **appropriate level**.

EVIDENCE TYPES FOR COMPETENCIES – AWARENESS TO CORE

A minimum type of evidence is required for each competency, however, if you have experienced more in your career you are encouraged to demonstrate this.

The types of evidence range from Awareness to Core and are defined in this section. Awareness level is not required for candidates applying to Legal Associate membership, but the definition has been provided so that you can benchmark your experience.

The criteria for Core competencies need to be demonstrated throughout all case studies you present, unless indicated next to the specific criterion. Application, Understanding and Awareness competency criteria only need to be demonstrated in sufficient detail within one case study to be successful.

¹⁷ See [section 7.3](#).

¹⁸ For information on how to structure case studies, see [section 4.3](#) and [section 4.4](#).

1. Awareness (Recognise): Appreciate the principles of the competency recognising they have implications for your case study (not required for Legal Associate membership; only required for Associate membership).

- **How do I know if I have reached Awareness?** I know how planners are expected to operate in their professional capacity.... I can recognise good practice....

2. Understanding (Explain): Explain specific implications of the competency for your case study, which could be an observed or hypothetical scenario.

- **How do I know if I have reached Understanding?** I can explain how a planner should operate in their professional capacity..... I can explain what good practice looks like...

3. Application (Do): Demonstrate how you have applied the competency through your case study.

- **How do I know if I have reached Application?** I operate in a professional way in my practice..... I use my understanding of professional practice to guide my actions...

4. Core (Behave): Demonstrate repeated application of the competency through your case study and practice.

- **How do I know if I have reached Core?** I consistently behave in a professional way in my practice, in a range of situations, some of which are challenging and unpredictable... I use my knowledge and experience from similar situations to inform and guide my actions in new and unfamiliar situations...



HOW TO READ THE COMPETENCIES

Each competency is structured in three parts as follows:

- **Descriptor:** defines the competency and its relevance to the planning profession.
- **Criteria:** sets out the minimum standards you **must** meet to achieve success with the competency. Failure to demonstrate **even one criterion** means your application will be unsuccessful. There are between one and five criteria per competency.
- **Examples:** provides examples of how the competency **could** be demonstrated at the relevant Awareness, Understanding, Application or Core evidence type. The examples provided are **purely indicative** of how whole or partial criterion / criteria might be demonstrated within a competency – they are not an exhaustive list. Using these examples does not guarantee your success; you are encouraged to consider the examples within the wider context of your case studies and experience.

TABLE 3 – COMPETENCIES FOR LEGAL ASSOCIATE

Competency	Evidence type
C1 Professional ethics and the RTPI Code of Conduct	Core
C8 Politics in planning	Understanding
C10 Reflection and review	Core
C15 Identifying and analysing legal issues and risks, and assessing alternative courses of action	Application

Do not 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 must therefore use case studies to demonstrate them, rather than a short example for each. The PCS should not be structured with the competencies as sub-headings.

For detailed information on each competency, see [C1](#), [C8](#), [C10](#) and [C15](#).

C1 Professional ethics and the RTPI Code of Conduct (Core)

DESCRIPTOR

Members must demonstrate their commitment to the RTPI's Code of Professional Conduct¹⁹. Its five core principles relate to:

- Competence, honesty and integrity
- Independent professional judgement
- Due care and diligence
- Equality and respect
- Professional behaviour

Professionals must liaise and cooperate effectively with others and may need to use different communication methods tailored to their audience. Negotiation, mediation, influence and advocacy are also key attributes.

Ethical behaviour underpins the five core principles of the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct but it is important to recognise that ethics can go beyond the requirements of law and regulation. To build trust in the profession, it is vital to behave in an appropriate manner, to recognise right from wrong, and to be able to reflect on society's expectations of planning practice.

CRITERIA

In your PCS, **you must**:

- a. Demonstrate professional behaviour, in line with the principles outlined in the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct (**required throughout PCS**); **and**
- b. Reference a **specific clause** of the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct **and** show how you complied with it (**required once in PCS**); **and**
- c. Reflect on **how** your action has minimised reputational risk to the profession, and **why** this built trust in the profession (**required once in PCS**).

EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCY C1 AT <u>CORE</u> EVIDENCE TYPE	COULD DEMONSTRATE CRITERIA
Show how you navigated difficult professional situations and reflect on why you believe you followed an appropriate approach. Situations could include; a request to represent the council at an appeal following a refusal against your recommendation, standing by your professional judgement when under challenge, or reflecting on the approach you take when a client insists you follow a particular course of action that goes against your advice.	a, c

¹⁹ The RTPI Code of Professional Conduct is available at: www.rtpi.org.uk/professionalstandards.

EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCY C1 AT <u>CORE</u> EVIDENCE TYPE	COULD DEMONSTRATE CRITERIA
Reflect on how you dealt with a real or perceived conflict of interest and why it was or was not appropriate to continue with the task.	a, c
Consider how and why you took an informed and balanced approach in a situation which presented moral tensions.	a, c
Reflect on the steps you took to ensure sensitive information was not inappropriately disclosed and why it was important for you to act.	a, c
Evidence how you have managed pressures from stakeholders; or reflect on how you dealt with personal criticism when undertaking work.	a, c
Reflect on how you dealt with the provision of gifts by clients, consultants or other stakeholders.	a, c
Evidence your compliance with relevant employer procedures in relation to behavioural standards.	a
Show through action how you have acted professionally within your case study.	a
Explain the steps you took to guard against the abuse of elected officials' interests and reflect on why you took the relevant action.	a
Demonstrate quality customer, stakeholder or client care when faced with challenge.	a
Refer to a specific clause of the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct and explain what you did. Clauses cover areas such as; exercising independent and impartial professional judgement, conflicts of interest, disclosure, issues of discrimination, setting out fees.	b
Reflect on how you acted to help safeguard the profession or the public and the consequences if you had not taken action.	c

Top tips for this competency

#1 Criterion (b) requires reference to a **specific clause** of the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct. Your application will be deferred if you fail to do this, or do so without explaining the context and its implications i.e. how it impacted on your course of action.

#2 For criterion (c) you should consider how your actions look from the outside and whether you are acting in the public interest. Historically, acting in the public interest has been defined in terms of protecting public health, public amenity and the environment from 'harm'. Nowadays RTPI Members serve a range of interests. Acting in the public interest involves having regard to the expectations of clients, employers, the local community and politicians as well as future generations (RTPI Practice Advice: Ethics and Professional Standards, 2017).

C8 Politics in planning (Understanding)

DESCRIPTOR

The planning process and planning decisions often come under scrutiny, nationally and locally in the UK and abroad, 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 and the political influence that this brings. Consequently, any practitioner involved in planning should see the need for a clear and ongoing appreciation of the political system in which planning operates and the potential for politics to influence different outcomes.

CRITERIA

In your case study, **you must:**

- a. Explain how the political system you operate in, influences a planning process **or** planning outcome; **and**
- b. Reflect on why the political system has implications for your work.

EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCY C8 AT <u>UNDERSTANDING</u> EVIDENCE TYPE	COULD DEMONSTRATE CRITERIA
Explain the political nature of the area of planning in which you work and how this affected, or could have affected, the case study.	a, b
Discuss a situation where local concerns or reservations were weighed up, perhaps contrary to wider national or regional policy.	a, b
Explain how you might adapt an argument to suit a particular political audience within your case study.	a, b
Discuss why engagement with elected officials may be necessary in the case study.	a
Discuss why elected officials may have overturned planners' recommendations in your case study.	b

Top tip for this competency

This competency is not simply about engaging with elected officials. While it is not always possible to anticipate the role that politics plays in the planning process, you should show an ability to learn from, and adapt to, such situations.

C10 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”²⁰. 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 members to regularly reflect on learning through the Code of Professional Conduct and its continuing professional development (CPD) requirements.

CRITERIA

In your PCS, **you must:**

- a. Reflect on what you did well and how you could improve your performance (**required throughout PCS**); **and**
- b. Analyse how your performance impacted on your subsequent practice, or how you would do things differently in the future (**required throughout PCS**); **and**
- c. Identify your areas for professional development of knowledge **and / or** skills based on your prior performance (**required throughout PCS**).

EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCY C10 AT <u>CORE</u> EVIDENCE TYPE	COULD DEMONSTRATE CRITERIA
Consistent reflection on areas for improvement in relation to procedures you adopted such as; recognising that there were other strategies or information, which could have been used to achieve a better planning outcome.	a, c
Consistent reflection on your areas for development such as; the need to develop your stakeholder management skills, improve your knowledge of specific policies, increase your understanding of project management following challenges that arose during the course of your project.	b, c
Consistent reflection on how your approach in a case study was affected by your previous experience.	b

Top tips for this competency

#1 To demonstrate this competency, you need to explain not just the ‘what’ of the example (i.e. your actions) but the ‘**so what?**’ (i.e. what happened / did not happen as a result of your action / inaction) and also the ‘**now what?**’ (i.e. what you learnt from this situation and its outcome and how you will act differently in the future because of it).

#2 Any weaknesses in your skills or knowledge highlighted in the PCS will need to be drawn through to the PDP.

²⁰ Schon, D., (1983). The Reflective Practitioner. Basic Books: New York.

C15 Identifying and analysing legal issues and risks, and assessing alternative courses of action (Application)

Competency note

This competency is unique to the Legal Associate class, and is designed to bring out the specialist expertise of candidates. As a guide, you should therefore allocate approximately 1,000 words of your PCS (out of 1,750) to this competency.

DESCRIPTOR

A professional planning lawyer must have the ability, based on a thorough knowledge and understanding of planning law, to reach appropriate, evidence based legal decisions and to appraise all options with potential solutions in mind. They should be able to identify and analyse the relevant legal issues and risks themselves rather than under instruction from others. Once they have a full understanding of the legal issues and risks, supported by appropriate information, they will recommend a course of action to address these issues.

Analysing legal issues and risks is a key competency of the RTPI Legal Associate. It demonstrates the distinction between planners' and planning lawyers' roles. Planners weigh up evidence, consult, analyse information and advise accordingly. Planning lawyers look at planners' reasoning and advice, evaluate whether it is legally correct, assess the legal risk involved and recommend an appropriate course of action.

CRITERIA

In your case study, you **must**:

- a. Explain the process you used to identify the relevant legal issues and risks **and** how you considered them; **and**
- b. Show evidence on how you build risk analysis into the recommendations you make as a planning lawyer; this must include referring to relevant Acts, statutes or international agreements; **and**
- c. Identify **more than one** possible course of action in a planning law and procedure context; **and**
- d. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of each course of action; **and**
- e. Justify why you chose a particular course of action **and** why you rejected the alternatives.

EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCY C15 AT <u>APPLICATION EVIDENCE</u> TYPE	COULD DEMONSTRATE CRITERIA
Show how you assessed whether a planning decision could be challengeable and explain how you advised accordingly.	a, b, c, d, e
Show how you assessed and advised on the possibility of judicial review and prospects of success.	a, b, c, d, e
Explain how you assessed and advised on the possibility and implications of planning enforcement action.	a, b, d, e
Reflect on the commercial implications of the advice you gave in terms of risks, costs and economic outcome.	a, b, d
Demonstrate how you reviewed planning applications to assess compliance with the relevant development plan and whether other material considerations were sufficiently explained.	a, b
Reflect on a particular course of action which may be legally feasible but which has adverse consequences for the person or organisation carrying out that course of action.	a, b

Top tip for this competency

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

4.3 Selecting case studies

WHAT IS A CASE STUDY?

A case study is an example of work which you have been a part of – it must allow you to drill down into the details of your practice. A case study will therefore focus on a **specific** application, proposal, scheme, policy document, research report or project. If the project was of a large scale, you may wish to focus on **one aspect, stage or phase** of the project as your case study.

Selecting an area of work or a process e.g. ‘appeals’, ‘planning applications’ or ‘research programme’ is usually too broad. Instead, you are advised to focus on a specific appeal, application or piece of research.

What if the project is unfinished?

You can use a project that is unfinished or undetermined as your case study if you feel it best demonstrates the competencies. Within the case study, let your assessors know what stage the project has progressed to.

IDENTIFYING CASE STUDIES

The PCS is not simply an extended PES. When selecting a case study you should:

- Think of a case where you were **personally challenged**. It is easier to show reflective thinking when something went wrong. The assessors are not judging you on the outcome of the case study but on your discussion of it.
- Determine how you will **divide the section word limit**. In some projects, you may have had a major role in evaluating legal risks while in another you may have dealt with political considerations. Alternatively, you may have been involved in one project which demonstrates all the competencies.

Think about confidentiality

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

4.4 Using case studies to demonstrate competencies

HOW TO STRUCTURE A CASE STUDY

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 considered and addressed them; and
- a conclusion which summarises what you learned from the experience and how it relates to the competencies.

The RTPI also provides an indicative outline to help you structure your case study see: www.rtpi.org.uk/legal-associate.

WRITING STYLE FOR CASE STUDIES

To demonstrate the competencies, it is important that you explain how you used your professional judgement in your case study to demonstrate your personal contribution. 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 about also why and how you achieved it.

You should therefore use language that shows your contribution such as:





- “I contributed to this by...”
- “I was responsible for...”
- “this project helped me to understand...”
- “the tensions resulted in the need for me to...”
- “this was a challenge for me because...”
- “as a result of changing circumstances, I...”
- “I did this because...”
- “I did this in order to...”

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.

Analyse and evidence – what, why, how?

The PCS is about not only what you did, but also **why you did it** in a particular way and **how you went about it**. The main error you could make in this section is to be too descriptive and not sufficiently analytical and reflective.

WRITING STYLE FOR CASE STUDIES – EXAMPLES

Poor examples	Improved examples
<p>“I communicated effectively with all stakeholders and secured their agreement for the proposal.”</p> 	<p>“I decided to communicate X to the stakeholders through Z method, as this would ensure A. This ultimately secured their agreement for the proposal.”</p>
<p>“We implemented the strategy by doing X, Y and Z. I then revised the plans to achieve B.”</p> 	<p>“I was responsible for implementing X, Y and Z elements of the strategy. To do this, I prepared a timetable for A and circulated it to B to ensure X.”</p>
<p>“I worked with expert X to understand how Y construction methods would deliver Z outcome.”</p> 	<p>“Expert X explained Y, I therefore concluded that Z construction method would deliver B outcome.”</p>
<p>“Throughout this project I demonstrated due care and diligence in accordance with the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct.”</p> 	<p>“When the costs of the project escalated, I revised the fee proposal and sent it to the client in accordance with clause X of the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct (due care and diligence); the client confirmed their agreement.”</p>

5. Written submission: Professional Development Plan (PDP)

5.1 What is the PDP?

The PDP is the third section of the written submission; it is a **detailed plan** which sets out how you are going to meet your professional development needs in the two years after your submission. It answers the important question: **what next?** You are required to maintain a PDP as part of your membership and the assessors are looking to see that you understand this process.

5.2 Why is the PDP important?

All members entering the profession are required to begin a habit of lifelong learning and continuing professional development (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 cycle²¹.

The RTPI Code of Professional Conduct states that members must:

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

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

Please note that every year the RTPI carries out an audit of PDP and CPD records from a randomly selected sample of its membership. For more information on CPD monitoring please visit the RTPI website: www.rtpi.org.uk/cpd.

²¹ See [section 5.8](#) for a list of types of CPD.

5.3 Scope and structure

The PDP consists of:

- **SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis:** The SWOT analyses your current personal strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that could impact on your ability to meet your career goals. It should clearly link to the PES and / or PCS, and inform your approach to the goal, objectives and actions.
- **Goal(s):** A goal should be a high-level strategic statement of what you want to achieve. Each goal should be clearly set in the context of furthering your planning skills and knowledge. It should specify the end result i.e. what you will be able to do or be as a professional in two years' time, as a result of carrying out your plan. You must identify **one or two goals within your PDP**.
- **Objectives:** The objectives are sub-goals that narrow down and identify the developmental areas of knowledge and skills you will need to gain to achieve your goal. They are therefore a way of breaking down your longer term goals so that you can begin to work towards or prepare for it. You must identify **two to four objectives for each goal**.
- **Action plan:** 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 model²²). You must draft **two to four SMART actions for each objective**.

The RTPI provides a **compulsory template** for the PDP that reflects this structure. When writing your PDP you should use the PDP checklist²³. Additional PDP resources are also available at: www.rtpi.org.uk/pdpresources.

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 plan your professional development in a structured way and evaluate all your CPD activities against carefully identified needs.

Personal or business development?

Your PDP must focus on your own personal professional development – what are **you** getting out of the plan? Your PDP is likely to be unsuccessful if it benefits an employer, business or organisation but does not clearly benefit or develop you. For example, whilst developing networking skills might be an appropriate objective, growing your professional network is not.

²² See [section 5.7](#).

²³ See [section 5.9](#).

5.4 SWOT analysis

Your SWOT analysis is presented in a grid so that you can easily assess your current circumstances.

EXAMPLE SWOT ANALYSIS

<p>Strengths For strengths, you might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • areas of strong planning knowledge and understanding • strong transferable skills and competencies, such as communication skills <p>Be confident about what you are good at – use your strengths to inform your goal.</p>	<p>Weaknesses For weaknesses, you might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • areas of weakness in planning knowledge and understanding • underdeveloped transferable skills and competencies, such as presentation skills • understanding that there is more to planning than your current experience <p>Your weaknesses should be used to inform the goals, objectives and actions for your plan. You are expected to address the majority of the weaknesses you have identified.</p>
<p>Opportunities For opportunities, you might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities within the industry • opportunities within your organisation • training and professional development opportunities • support of RTPI (Nations and Regions, Networks etc.) • opportunities to volunteer <p>Consider what opportunities can be integrated into your goal.</p>	<p>Threats For threats, you might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • industry downturns • negative changes within the organisation e.g. downsizing or restructuring • better qualified competitors • limited training opportunities <p>What threats could affect your ability to meet your goals?</p>

Watch out for weaknesses

There should be a clear link between your “weaknesses” and the goals, objectives and actions identified. The majority should be based around planning knowledge, skills or experience.

You do not need to list more than five weaknesses (at least three are required). Your PES and PCS should support and help to explain which weaknesses you are taking forward and why.

5.5 Writing goals

You must identify **one or two goals within your PDP**.

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);
- what challenges will you face at work;
- the level you would like to be working at; and / or
- any gaps in your knowledge or skills or any emerging trends that you need to be aware of (bear in mind that this would need to be strategic enough so it can be broken down further in the latter parts of the plan).

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.

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.

EXAMPLE GOAL: I will be working as a senior planner within Organisation X dealing with large-scale residential planning applications with minimum support.

Keep your goal focused and strategic

Your goal does not need to include a lengthy explanation – one or two sentences will do. Consider the question: as a professional planner, where do you want to be in two years? You should take time to carefully consider your goals, as a reliance on vague or generalised statements will result in the PDP being deferred.

Goals that should generally be **avoided** include:

- 'To become a Chartered / Associate / Legal Associate Member'. This goal is not very meaningful. The whole process leads up to this, and once an application is submitted it is essentially out of your control. It also provides no indication as to how you would like to develop professionally in terms of knowledge and skills.
- 'To progress my career'. This goal is too vague to be meaningful. With this kind of goal you should consider what direction your progress will take, in what time frame, or indeed what you mean by 'progress'?
- 'To gain a promotion'. This goal is, in itself, too vague and would need to be broken down to explain the planning context. What type of promotion are you aiming for? What specific knowledge and skills will you need to gain, to be in such a role? This should lead to the setting of other, shorter-term objectives focussed on CPD activity."

5.6 Writing objectives (sub-goals)

You must identify **two to four objectives for each goal**.

Objectives can be:

- focused on a specific area of knowledge or skill, relating to the goal;
- shorter-term than your goal, and are likely to be addressed in the next 6-18 months.

They do not have to be SMART²⁴ or measurable.

Improvements in professional skills such as negotiation, presentation or management are acceptable objectives as long as these are within the context of your planning career aspirations and the overarching goal(s).

EXAMPLE OBJECTIVE: Develop my presentation skills.

Need help identifying your development areas?

The RTPI provides a Core CPD Framework, developed with input from members, employers and the wider profession, which highlights the skills and knowledge areas members need to meet the planning challenges of today and the future, see: www.rtpi.org.uk/cpdframework.

5.7 Writing an action plan

You must draft **two to four SMART actions for each objective**.

Your Actions **must** meet the SMART model:

Specific: identify the specific CPD activity²⁵ to be undertaken e.g. what reading, research, work-based learning or training course will you do?.

Measureable: identify your learning objectives and consider key performance indicators, or ways in which to consolidate your learning.

Achievable: show you have funding, approval, time off to undertake the activity. If you cannot show that the action is achievable, you need to have a back-up plan in place.

Relevant: to you in your work setting and objective.

Time-based: specify the dates the action will begin and end – all actions need to take place within the plan period.

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.

²⁴ See [section 5.7](#) for a definition of the SMART model.

²⁵ See [section 5.8](#) for acceptable forms of CPD.

A good action plan should be detailed enough for someone else to implement. It should answer questions such as:

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

The PDP template has columns to help you to ensure your action plan is SMART.

EXAMPLE ACTIONS

Action	How will you measure your learning?	Start date and end date
(Specific, Achievable and Relevant to an objective on environmental regulations within planning)	(Measureable)	(Time-based)
Agreed with my manager to give a presentation on changes to environmental regulations within planning at our staff CPD event.	Feedback forms will show that my colleagues understood and learnt from the session.	14 July 2020
I will review the following free resources on environmental regulations within planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • XXXX • XXXX • XXXX 	I will note down my learning and incorporate them into future projects on X and Y.	April – August 2021

Action	How will you measure your learning?	Start date and end date
(Specific, Achievable and Relevant to an objective on leadership skills)	(Measureable)	(Time-based)
Attend XXX Leadership Skills course. This will be self-funded and completed in my own time as I am a sole practitioner.	My increased confidence in speaking with be noted by clients and stakeholders at relevant meetings.	5 November 2020
I will mentor a junior planner to improve my coaching and leadership skills. If no junior planner is available to mentor, my back-up plan is to read X book on leadership.	I will seek feedback from the junior planner to determine how I have performed and how I could improve my mentoring.	December 2020 – April 2021, fortnightly meetings

5.8 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 inquiries 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.

See also: www.rtpi.org.uk/cpdframework.

What actions are appropriate for a PDP?

Your Action Plan should **only** contain activities that are developmental for you e.g. reading or research, work shadowing, attending courses, work-based learning etc.

Actions that focus on doing your day job, applying for jobs or achieving professional membership are not usually developmental and should be avoided. Work based learning is acceptable, but you must highlight what you will learn from it (e.g. how taking on a new area of work will develop specific knowledge and skills).

Business development activity is also unlikely to form a SMART action, unless it is clearly linked to a personal development objective.

5.9 PDP checklist for success

Your PDP will be assessed against the following checklist:

- Your PDP must be on the template prescribed by the RTPI and available on the RTPI website: www.rtpi.org.uk/apc
- Your **SWOT links** to your PES and / or PCS (either partially or in its entirety).
- Your Action Plan addresses the **majority of weaknesses** identified in the SWOT.
- You have identified **one or two goals**.
- For **each goal** identified, you have **two to four objectives** which focus on skills and knowledge.
- For **each objective** identified, you have **two to four SMART actions**²⁶.
- Your PDP focuses on at least 50% planning related skills or knowledge. It is acceptable for other professional skills to make up the remainder of the plan.
- Your PDP covers the two-year period **after** the date of your submission. For example, if you submitted in January 2020 your PDP would run from January 2020 to January 2022.
- Your PDP is within the word limit for the written submission (guide of 1,500 words)²⁷.

These points must be met for the PDP to be successful.

Does the PDP need to be corroborated?

You are not required to have your PDP corroborated although you should indicate that you have the relevant support for any actions which require it (e.g. budget in place for attendance on a training course).

²⁶ See [section 5.7](#) for an explanation of the SMART model.

²⁷ The word count for the PDP **only** includes the text you enter into the template.

6. Presenting your submission

6.1 General presentation

The submission is a demonstration of your professionalism and a reflection of the standard of your work. Your application will therefore also be assessed on its presentation and may be deferred if it:

- contains spelling mistakes;
- uses incorrect grammar and punctuation;
- is poorly laid out and / or not professionally presented.

In addition to the above, for your application to pass the RTPI's validation checks, the submission **must**; be in English, be within the word limit, the PES and PCS must have page and paragraph numbers and the PDP template must be used.

This is a professional qualification and submissions that include inappropriate information, or breach confidentiality, are likely to be unsuccessful.

6.2 Recommended format

The following format for the submission is recommended:

- word processed in Arial 11pt font;
- double spaced for easier reading and assessment;
- your membership or contact reference number is on each page;
- referencing, where required, should be to the Harvard style (i.e. author, date).

Details on how to submit your application can be found online at: www.rtpi.org.uk/membership-submit.

Do not forget to proof read

Build time into your application preparation to ask someone to read your submission. It may help to ask a non-planner to read your submission to see if they can understand what you do.

6.3 Diagrams, illustrations and additional materials

You are permitted to include illustrations in your written submission, though this is not a requirement. It is unlikely that more than two illustrations would be needed in the main body of the submission.

Appendices, including any additional materials including reports, cuttings or diagrams, are not permitted to accompany the written submission. Assessors will base their decision on the work described and reflected upon within your written submission and will not take into account opinions of a third party (appraisals, references, performance reports etc.).

6.4 Confidentiality, plagiarism and ethical considerations

Your submission should be written in the spirit of the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct. This means that you need to:

- maintain professional confidentiality (for example, when referring to material that may be considered professionally sensitive you may wish to anonymise names and locations);
- avoid specifically naming colleagues or other professionals, regardless of whether this is in a positive or negative light;
- ensure the submission is entirely your own work and appropriately reference other sources of material (if applicable).

If that proves to be difficult, please contact the RTPI Membership Team to seek advice.

The RTPI will investigate all suspected instances of plagiarism by candidates and take disciplinary action if necessary; and you may be asked to adhere to administration procedures which seek to address plagiarism.

Your submission is confidential

All submissions are treated as confidential and our assessors are bound by a confidentiality agreement.

6.5 Word limit

The word limit for submissions is 4,250 words +/-10% (i.e. 3,825 – 4,675 words). The submission itself is indicative of your research, analysis and report writing skills.

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

PES – 1,000 words
PCS – 1,750 words
PDP²⁸ – 1,500 words

You must include a word count at the end of each section of the submission.

Exceeding the word limit will result in delay and possible rejection of your submission.

²⁸ The RTPI provides a template for the PDP which is compulsory to use. When calculating your word count, you should only count words which **you** add to the template.

6.6 Footnotes

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

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.

7. Corroboration, sponsorship and supporters

7.1 The people involved

Many people will assist you in the membership application process. The roles these people will play are explained below.

THESE PEOPLE GET INVOLVED...

EARLY ON



Mentor: Critical friend who will help you throughout the process. Having a mentor is not compulsory. They can, however, be a useful tool and resource. Mentors can provide you with career advice, planning related advice and specific advice on competencies.

PRE
SUBMISSION



Corroborator(s): Employer or supervisor who has first-hand experience of your work and confirms the accuracy of your claims. You must get all the work experience in your application corroborated.

Sponsor: RTPI Chartered Member who countersigns your application declaring that they consider you a professional who reflects the values of the Institute.

ON OR AFTER
APPLICATION



Assessors: Trained and fully qualified RTPI members who assess your application. Assessors work in pairs and come from a range of different backgrounds and sectors. For details on how our assessors are trained and operate, see: www.rtpi.org.uk/assessors.

The RTPI Membership Team are also available to support you from beginning to end. They can advise on queries about the process and regularly publish resources to assist you; they also deliver RTPI membership events. After you have submitted your application, the Membership Team will complete relevant validation checks and can help if you are required to resubmit your application or are considering an appeal.

Can one person be my corroborator, sponsor and mentor?

Your corroborator, sponsor and mentor could all be the same person if they can fulfil each of the roles defined above. They must complete the relevant form for each role.

7.2 Mentors

Mentors are not compulsory, and may fulfil a different role for those practitioners who have extensive experience. A mentor can help you get the most from the application process, provide you with additional support and help you with reflection. The RTPI therefore encourages all candidates to consider working with a mentor.

THE MENTOR'S ROLE

Mentors can fulfil a variety of different roles: a coach, a counsellor, a facilitator of networking opportunities, or simply a sounding board. 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 the production of a PDP;
- offer advice, where appropriate, on the final written submission;
- guide you towards becoming more critically reflective of your own practice and progress; and
- give you support and advice on professional matters.

Confidentiality is central to the mentoring process and open discussions will strengthen the relationship and lead to better outcomes. It is not the role of the mentor to lead the application process, which will always be your responsibility.

FINDING A MENTOR

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, however, they do need to understand the RTPI membership application process (i.e. read this guidance). Your mentor could be someone you know already from your own professional networks; other avenues for finding a mentor include networking through RTPI networks or at RTPI regional or national events.

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

The RTPI provides a Mentoring Advice Note to assist mentors.

7.3 Corroborator Declaration Form

Your application **must** be accompanied by completed Corroborator Declaration Form(s), which are available on the RTPI website. Corroboration is a vital part of the application as it ensures the integrity of all submissions.

WHO CAN CORROBORATE?

The Corroborator Declaration Form must be completed by your supervisor(s) or employer(s). You cannot have your application corroborated by subordinates. Corroborators need to read your application (excluding the PDP) and confirm the accuracy of your claims. They therefore must have first-hand experience of your work. Your corroborators do not have to be members of the RTPI.

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 application.

CORROBORATOR DECLARATION FORM REQUIREMENTS

Your corroborator **must** provide the following information in the Corroborator Declaration Form:

- your name;
- your role within the organisation;
- your relationship to the corroborator;
- start and end dates of the corroborated time period²⁹;
- details on the work you have undertaken during the corroboration period; and
- confirm that the corroborator has read the relevant parts of your application and that they agree with your claims.

How many Corroborator Declaration Forms do I need?

The number of Corroborator Declaration Forms you submit will be dependent on your work history. **All experience in your application must be supported by a Corroborator Declaration Form.** If you are unable to obtain corroboration for a certain time period, please see our Corroborating Your Submission Advice Note.

Self-employed applicants must have the Corroborator Declaration Form completed by clients or other professionals who have direct knowledge of their work.

For further details on corroboration, see the Corroborating Your Submission Advice Note.

7.4 Sponsor Declaration Form

Your application **must** also be accompanied by a completed Sponsor Declaration Form, signed by a current Chartered Member of the RTPI. The Form is available on the RTPI website. Your sponsor must declare that they have read and support your application and that they consider you a professional who reflects the values of the RTPI.

You must have known your sponsor in a professional capacity for a minimum of six months.

²⁹ If the corroborator is unable to verify the entire period of employment in a role, additional corroboration will be required.



RTPI

Royal Town Planning Institute

LEGAL ASSOCIATE MAIN
GUIDANCE
RESOURCES



**Access all resources including advice notes, templates, forms, online learning modules and events at:
www.rtpi.org.uk/legal-associate**

**Contact the Membership Team:
membership@rtpi.org.uk
+44(0)20 7929 9462**

Thank you for reading this guidance.

Good luck with your application.

**FIND OUT MORE:
[www.rtpi.org.uk/
legal-associate](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/legal-associate)**