



RTPI

Royal Town Planning Institute

Reflective Journal Advice Note

Supplementary Guidance

For Chartered Town Planner Apprentices

Published August 2019



The RTPI are currently developing resources for apprentices completing the Degree Apprenticeship End Point Assessment. Main guidance is due to be published in early 2020 at: www.rtpi.org.uk/da-epa-resources In the interim, this supplementary guidance should allow apprentices to complete the Reflective Journal element of the application.

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1. General information

1.1 Who is this advice note for?

This advice note is applicable to Chartered Town Planner Apprentices.

1.2 How to use this advice note

This advice note provides supplementary guidance on how to complete the Reflective Journal for Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Chartered Town Planner Apprentices. It **must** be read in conjunction with the **Degree Apprenticeship End Point Assessment Main Guidance available at: www.rtpi.org.uk/da-epa** (to be published early 2020).

1.3 What is the Reflective Journal?

You must submit a Reflective Journal that critically reflects on your work, highlighting key tasks, activities, milestones and projects. The Reflective Journal is not assessed but provides supporting evidence for the Professional Discussion and the Degree Apprenticeship Assessment of Professional Competence (DA-APC) written submission. The Reflective Journal should not include extraneous materials such as cuttings, plans etc.

The RTPI provides a template for the Reflective Journal, which you can amend to meet your preferred style of writing.

The relevant employer(s) or supervisor(s) must corroborate all experience within the Reflective Journal.

1.4 Why is the Reflective Journal important?

Your Reflective Journal forms a fundamental part of the learning and reflection that will develop your competence as a professional planner. While it is not formally assessed, the Reflective Journal will form the foundation of your application and can provide additional insight for the assessors to understand the context of your experience and help reinforce demonstration of behaviours where they may be considered marginal.

The Reflective Journal will make it easier to prepare for the Professional Discussion and DA-APC as you undertake the required critical thinking while gaining the experience, rather than at the end of the period. For the DA-APC, you should use your Reflective Journal to highlight any particular experience that goes towards demonstrating the competencies (and to identify competencies you are not meeting). This will assist you when you come to select appropriate case studies to use in your submission.

The Reflective Journal – look beyond the End Point Assessment

The Reflective Journal is a valuable career development tool and you are encouraged to view it within this context (rather than as just a tool to support your end point assessment). If detailed, the Reflective Journal functions as a work portfolio, which can be shared at appraisals, with your employer and when applying for jobs.

1.5 Scope and structure

Your Reflective Journal must be submitted for both methods of the Degree Apprenticeship End Point Assessment:

- Method 1: Professional Discussion. For this method, your Reflective Journal must cover a minimum of **1 year of recent experience (full-time equivalent) from the apprenticeship period** (prior to becoming a Licentiate of the RTPI).
- Method 2: Degree Apprenticeship Assessment of Professional Competence (DA-APC). For this method, your Reflective Journal must cover the experience gained whilst registered as a Licentiate of the RTPI and any case studies you use within the DA-APC application.

You are encouraged to focus on the quality of your Reflective Journal content rather than quantity. There is no minimum or maximum word limit for the Reflective Journal but you would generally be expected to complete at least two entries a month, with each entry focusing on a specific task or activity you have done.

KEY ELEMENTS OF A REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Your Reflective Journal should be completed regularly and entries should contain **four key elements**:

- description of the nature of professional work / task you undertook;
- skills that you developed;
- knowledge / understanding you gained; and
- future development of your skills / knowledge.

'Knowledge / understanding' refers to learning concepts, principles and information. 'Skills' refers to the ability of using that information and applying it in a context. **Skills + knowledge = competence.**

You may prefer to complete the Reflective Journal fortnightly or monthly, or to update your Reflective Journal after completion of a task or project. Updating the Reflective Journal 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 submission.

Your Reflective Journal 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 larger projects in detail.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

The Reflective Journal is more than just a work log or timesheet. It should highlight key learning milestones and achievements from your experience. Repetition is an indication that the Reflective Journal is not being completed effectively. You can avoid repetitive entries by reviewing the 'Nature of professional work / task undertaken' column and ensuring entries are sufficiently rooted in real, specific examples of your work.

1.6 Referring to your Reflective Journal within the DA-APC

Within your DA-APC written submission, you should refer to entries in your Reflective Journal to emphasise, clarify or elaborate upon

an area of experience; however you must fully demonstrate all the competencies in your submission. The Reflective Journal should provide background information only – the key information and / or argument showing how you satisfy the relevant competency must be fully contained in the submission (e.g. in the Professional Competence Statement, PCS) itself.

When referring to your Reflective Journal, clearly indicate where the assessors can find the reference, for example, by using footnotes.

Where you make reference to the Reflective Journal, you should ensure the information is of the same standard as the rest of the submission, including standards of presentation and English language. Pages of your Reflective Journal must be numbered.

2. Completing the Reflective Journal

2.1 Reflective Journal template

The RTPI provides a template for your Reflective Journal available on the RTPI website with Degree Apprenticeship End Point Assessment resources: www.rtpi.org.uk/da-epa-resources.

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL TEMPLATE



REFLECTIVE JOURNAL TEMPLATE CHARTERED TOWN PLANNER APPRENTICES

Chartered Town Planner Apprentices must submit a Reflective Journal (previously known as the Log Book) for End Point Assessment. For full details on what is required, see the main guidance and Reflective Journal Advice Note: www.rtpi.org.uk/da-epa-resources

Period of review (month / year):

Membership number:

Date	Nature of professional work or task undertaken	What skills and behaviours has this work developed?	What knowledge and understanding has been gained as a result of this work?	What skills, behaviours or knowledge do you feel you need to develop?

There are four key columns to the template.

COLUMN 1: NATURE OF WORK / TASK

This column should be a factual note of the planning or planning-related work undertaken. Do not make the entries too generic. Providing more detail will allow you to explore what you have learned. In many Reflective Journals, 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'.

Expanding the description of the task also helps to avoid repetition and set out how a particular project added to your experience. You might be managing a number of development applications, and by 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 circumstances to the next situation.

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.

COLUMN 2: SKILLS / BEHAVIOURS DEVELOPED

In this column you should consider the type and level of skills and behaviours utilised or obtained in order to undertake a particular task.

Skills refers to successfully applying learning concepts, principles and information in practice and getting expected results. Behaviours are how you act as a professional planner. The skills and behaviours for the Chartered Town Planner Apprenticeship are listed below and you can read more details of the requirements in the apprenticeship standard:

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/chartered-town-planner-degree/>

Skills	Behaviours
Preparation of plans, policies and related documents	Demonstrate the five core principles of the RTPI's Code of Professional Conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Honesty and integrity ➤ Independent professional judgement ➤ Due care and diligence ➤ Equality and respect ➤ Professional behaviour
Plan implementation	Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning and reflective professional practice
Creative vision and design	Demonstrate reliability, integrity and respect for confidentiality on work related and personal matters, including appropriate use of social media and information systems.
Critical analysis and decision making	Demonstrate a focus on outcomes and a positive attitude
Stakeholder management and leadership	Demonstrate curiosity and a desire to improve the built and natural environment
Project management	
Collaborative and multidisciplinary working	
Interpersonal skills	

Describe skills and behaviours at a suitably detailed level rather than at a broad generic level. For example, candidates often refer to improving their communication skills. Consider the context in which the skills are being developed. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Was the communication written or oral?
- Was it undertaken in an adversarial climate?
- Were you involved in further negotiation as a result?
- What worked and what didn't?
- What were the outcomes for the stakeholders or project?

The more insightful the questions, the more effective the reflection will be.

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’.

You will be expected to give examples of how you have achieved the required skills and behaviours in your Professional Discussion. A good reflective journal will help you to identify the best examples to use for your Professional Discussion.

COLUMN 3: KNOWLEDGE / UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPED

In this column you should reflect on the knowledge / understanding you acquired or developed as a result of the activity. Some experiences may lead you to readjust the knowledge you have.

The areas you are expected to be knowledgeable in are listed below and you can read them in more detail in the apprenticeship standard.

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/chartered-town-planner-degree/> These will be reflected in the assessment criteria and competencies in the Degree Apprenticeship End Point Assessment Main Guidance (to be published in early 2020).

Knowledge
Planning theory, policy and practice
Planning and related law
Political framework
Sustainability and resource management
Placemaking and design
Stakeholder engagement and community involvement
Economic framework
Professional ethics and ethical framework

COLUMN 4: FUTURE SKILLS / KNOWLEDGE YOU NEED TO DEVELOP

In this column you are required to reflect on the work you have undertaken and identify potential training and development needs to achieve all of the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the apprenticeship.

Reflective practice is “the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning”¹.

You should be honest about your weaknesses and areas for development. Ask yourself questions such as:

- What aspects of the task did I find difficult or challenging?
- In the future, how could I alter my practice and / or methods to deliver a better outcome for this task?

¹ Schon, D. (1983) The Reflective Practitioner. Basic Books, New York.

You should identify areas for development for each entry of your Reflective Journal. Your mentor may be able to help you identify these if you are having trouble.

Assessors will also expect to see how a record about a future development is referenced in future entries – how the skills, knowledge or behaviours were acquired and developed.

There should be **clear links** between the Reflective Journal and the third section of your DA-APC written submission, the **Professional Development Plan (PDP)**, especially from your later Journal entries.

Use your Reflective Journal entries to identify competencies and case studies

Your Reflective Journal is a valuable tool, which can ensure your success in obtaining Chartered membership. Use it to track your progress throughout your apprenticeship – which competencies are you meeting (or not) and why? Use your Reflective Journal to identify examples for your Professional Discussion and record your final case studies.

2.2 How often should you complete the Reflective Journal entries?

It is important that your Reflective Journal is kept up to date so that it provides an effective method of supporting your professional development. You should aim to update your Reflective Journal regularly, at a time which is most effective for you. Some candidates prefer to update the journal weekly or monthly, whereas others may add entries on the completion of smaller scale tasks and projects. Try to find the best time for you and your development.

2.3 Recording long term and short term projects

How you choose to structure your Reflective Journal will depend on the nature of your work.

LONG TERM PROJECTS

If you are working on **continuous, long-term projects**, you will need to think about breaking these down into smaller, more self-contained activities that you have undertaken in order to enter this in the 'Nature of work' column. This could include client meetings; site visits; pieces of research; presentations; consultations etc. Having recorded the details of the work in the 'Nature of work' column, you can then consider what exactly you have learned from the work, how it might improve your ability to act in the future, and whether it has presented new avenues to continue your development. Once you have set the scene / detail in an initial entry, there is no need to repeat this unless the project scope changes.

SHORT TERM PROJECTS

If you are working on **smaller scale tasks**, each one could form a separate entry. For example, within development management, particular applications could provide the examples for the 'Nature of work' column, drawing out the circumstances of the particular application, what made it interesting, useful, or challenging and how you tackled it. You will then be able to reflect on the skill and knowledge development, particular to that application, in the remaining columns.

Maintaining confidentiality within the Reflective Journal

When completing your Reflective Journal entries, you may want to use a code or referencing system for confidential projects, particularly for any that are longer term or that span several entries.

2.4 Avoiding repetitive entries

Entries in the Reflective Journal could become repetitive if they focus on the **processes** you undertake or **lack detail**. However, if you think less about the process you are following, and more about the particular examples you are dealing with, this should present useful material for the Reflective Journal.

For example, a planner working in a development management function will be following the same processes in dealing with different planning applications. Entering 'Processed planning applications' into the 'Nature of work' column of the Reflective Journal, will not provide sufficient information to draw out knowledge and skill related to a particular case. Such an entry would probably lead to knowledge and understanding in 'planning legislation', and skills and competence in 'researching applications', 'report writing' or, even more blandly, 'processing planning applications'.

Conversely, entering more specific details of a particular application (while observing any restrictions with regard to disclosure of confidential information) will allow you to think in more detail about what made the application interesting or challenging, and how you had to act to deal with the application. This provides a Reflective Journal entry, which helps you to draw out the knowledge and skills that were required or developed in order to deal with that specific application.

2.5 Planning skills versus generic skills

The Reflective Journal template is structured to encourage you towards including evidence of the planning and technical knowledge you have developed rather than just focusing on more generic and business skills.

Your Reflective Journal should be focused on planning work – it should be clear to anyone reading the Reflective Journal that you are engaged in planning activities.

There should be a strong interrelationship between knowledge, understanding, skills and competence. You should not be too concerned about whether you have entered a particular area of development into the 'right' column, as long as there is logic to the entries and your reflection on your development is recorded.

2.6 Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Your experience should help you develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for the Chartered Town Planner Apprenticeship as set out in the Chartered Town Planner Apprenticeship standard. <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/chartered-town-planner-degree/>

You do not have to refer to the knowledge, skills and behaviours using the same terminology as the apprenticeship standard as you may wish to refer to a specific knowledge or skill rather than the overarching heading e.g. mediation skills rather than 'collaborative and multidisciplinary working'. This level of detail can help with critical reflection.

2.7 Style

There are no restrictions on the style you use for your Reflective Journal. 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 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'.

Within your Reflective Journal, it is essential that you:

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

2.8 Should CPD activity be included in entries?

RTPI members are required to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) activity as part of their membership. In addition to your daily work, it can be useful to record some of this CPD in your Reflective Journal. CPD activity should be recorded **in addition** to your professional work. This means that the Reflective Journal should always be primarily a reflective record of your professional work, rather than a CPD log. You should also keep a record of your CPD activities.

2.9 Reflective Journal in the workplace

You may already be keeping a work record or time log as a requirement of your employer, but this is unlikely to include the reflection expected in the Journal. The Reflective Journal is not simply a work record; it should include critical reflection on the work undertaken. You may wish to discuss with your employer or with your mentor how the two requirements can best complement one another.

You should use your Reflective Journal to assist you at appraisals and to help build your curriculum vitae. It is a valuable career development tool.

3. Examples

3.1 Reflective Journal – good examples

The following examples are detailed entries, which clearly outline the candidate's role and the rationale behind the work including past problems. The candidate 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.

GOOD REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY: EXAMPLE 1			
Nature of work	Skills / behaviours	Knowledge / understanding	Future development
<p>Planning Future Service Provision in (Location) seminar – I organised this event as part of my role to coordinate responses from internal service providers to borough Local Plan and now Local Development Framework (LDF) consultations. In the past it has been difficult to extract information from these providers and opportunities for X County Council 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. X County Council service providers and District Council 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 into 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>

GOOD REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY: EXAMPLE 2

Nature of work	Skills / behaviours	Knowledge / understanding	Future development
<p>Reviews of a planning application.</p> <p>I was asked by a senior colleague to review a planning application. We were submitting the representation on behalf of our client who lived next door to where the application was proposed.</p> <p>The application involved the erection of a replacement dwelling considerably bigger than the existing. It was also located within an area of special landscape character as identified on the proposal's map.</p>	<p>Identification of Issues and Using Appropriate Research Methods – It soon became apparent that the applicant's case centred upon the interpretation of paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and whether the creation of the new dwelling could be said to be 'truly innovative'.</p> <p>With the NPPF providing limited elaboration upon what this term means, I used a compass search to find appeal decisions that have been made post NPPF involving paragraph 55. This provided a key part of the evidence that I used to support my case.</p> <p>Time Management – Time management was critical on the project as there was only a week left to run on the statutory consultation period.</p> <p>Aesthetic and Design Awareness – Having identified the extent to which the proposals were seen to meet paragraph 55 of the NPPF as being crucial in the argument, my colleague suggested that as part of our argument we should draw upon the thoughts of a Landscape and Visual Impact consultant to bolster our</p>	<p>I am feeling more confident in talking to clients and responding to their questions on a daily basis. I also feel more confident in instructing and directing sub consultants.</p> <p>I have a much greater understanding of paragraph 55 of the NPPF and the tests that need to be established in determining whether a design can be said to be truly innovative.</p> <p>I know that it is important to manage client expectations when writing representations on behalf of clients.</p> <p>I realise the importance of drawing upon the expert knowledge of others in helping to build a case for a planning application. To use them is not a shortcoming of your own knowledge but helps in justifying your own case. This complies with clause X of the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct.</p>	<p>Resource Management – I need to think more critically about what other resources, beyond that immediately available to me, I need in order to undertake tasks effectively.</p> <p>Having a landscape architect review the proposals gave our argument additional weight beyond that as planners we could comment on. I need to appreciate the wider network of specialists that can support planners in making their arguments.</p> <p>Time Management (Fees) – I ended up spending more time on the project than the total fee that had been assigned for us to do the work. I need to ensure that I translate fee budgets into the amount of time that is available to resource a project to ensure I use clients' time appropriately.</p>

GOOD REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY: EXAMPLE 2

	<p>argument. Their knowledge and experience has allowed me to gain a greater understanding for design.</p> <p>Project Management – The work produced by the Landscape and Visual consultant was key to our case, as such, it was important that they were set clear objectives and instructions to ensure that timescales were met.</p> <p>Written Communication Skills – I wrote the letter of representation which helped me developed important skills for writing to persuade.</p>		
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GOOD REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY: EXAMPLE 3

Nature of work	Skills / behaviours	Knowledge / understanding	Future development
<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 permitted 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 and oral advice to clients to improve my competency and confidence.</p>

3.2 Reflective Journal – poor examples

The following examples illustrate many of the poor practices in putting together a Reflective Journal. It has been put together to include many areas of bad practice which should be avoided.

In these poor examples, the headings are too general, and do not give the candidate 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.

If key themes (e.g. communication, research) seem to occur repetitively, 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 communicating orally? (This might then lead to another key theme of negotiation.)

POOR REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY: EXAMPLES			
Nature of work	Skills / behaviours	Knowledge / understanding	Future development
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 Supplementary	<i>Problem solving skills</i> – via the research and collection of data in relation to the draft SPD.	Knowledge of the written form required for the submission of written representations.	Further practice of submitting representations to

POOR REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY: EXAMPLES

<p>Planning Document (SPD) relating to developer contributions at the borough council.</p>	<p><i>Communication skills</i> – via the preparation of written representations in the form of a letter to the Local Authority.</p>		<p>improve my competency and efficiency.</p>
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**Access all resources including
main guidance at:
www.rtpi.org.uk/da-epa-resources**

**Contact the Membership Team:
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+44(0)20 7929 9462**

**Thank you for reading this
supplementary guidance.**