

## **Guidelines for Professional Examiners appointed to Examinations in Professional Practice and Management (Part 3) in Architecture.**

These notes should be read in conjunction with the RIBA Description & Regulations for the Recognition of Courses and Examinations in Professional Practice and Management (Part 3) in the United Kingdom.

### **Introduction**

This information is intended to bring experienced professional practice examiners up to date with the RIBA examination regulations and organisation, and to provide an introduction for practising architects who may be interested in undertaking the Professional Examiner role. It is also intended to underpin and support detailed guidance provided to Professional Examiners on working within the framework of university regulations and examinations.

We hope that you will find these guidance notes helpful in using and developing your Professional Examiner skills within the framework of the RIBA Part 3 Examination structure. Examining at this level is important and skilled work, and the RIBA appreciates the time and care that Professional Examiners bring to it.

### **Appointment and operation of Professional Practice examining teams**

Professional Examiners are appointed by the course provider/examination organiser from the list held by the RIBA. A Professional Examiners presence on the RIBA list of Professional Examiners should not be taken to imply endorsement by the RIBA of an examiner's ability to act as a Professional Examiner. However in undertaking this role, Professional Examiners should be conscious of their wider responsibility to the profession, potential clients and to society.

Applications to the list of Part 3 Professional Examiners must be made on the appropriate form, available by emailing [joanna.parry@inst.riba.org](mailto:joanna.parry@inst.riba.org). Nominations may be made by individuals, architectural practices, Part 3 course providers or schools of architecture.

Examiners will remain on the database for three years, after which they will be contacted to renew their membership. This will normally take place in July. Any resignation from the list should normally be effective from July. Amendment or updating of personal details may be notified at any time.

Examiners' details will not be disclosed to anyone other than Heads of Schools of Architecture, Professional Studies Advisors, officers of the RIBA and members of the RIBA Education Committee to whom the list will be sent annually. Heads of Schools and Professional Studies Advisors may ask for lists of Professional Examiners, available to examine and to assist them in refreshing their teams of examiners, or in appointing an examiner with a particular area of expertise.

The architecture school or Part 3 Examination centre will be expected to ensure that adequate provision is given to the selection, recruitment, training and retirement of Professional Examiners in order that no examiner is engaged to examine the course for more than six years. Professional Examiners will be expected to become familiar with the briefing material issued to them by the RIBA and the more extensive

Examiner Handbooks and Examination regulations issued by the universities where they examine. They should also expect to participate in examiner briefing sessions organised by their universities and in the annual Professional Examiner training day organised by the RIBA.

## **RIBA register of Professional Practice Examiners**

The RIBA will maintain a register of Professional Practice examiners, made up of architects with at least 7 years experience of professional practice in the U.K.

The list of professional examiners will be divided into two categories of examiner:

- **Category one** will be for experienced examiners, actively engaged in architectural practice, who have examined at Part 3 on at least one other occasion;
- **Category two** is for examiners who have as yet no experience as a Professional Examiner at Part 3. They may be practitioners who wish to develop examiner skills at this level, or “internal” examiners, with knowledge of this subject, but appointed from amongst the university staff.

Examiners who have gained sufficient experience of examining at category 2 may apply for re-classification to category 1 at the annual submission of member details which will normally take place in July of each year.

Professional examiners may not be appointed to examine candidates for a course where they already serve as an “internal” or “external” examiner.

It is expected that Professional Examiners will work in teams of two, and that at least one professional examiner in each examining ‘pair’ will be chosen from category one of the list of Professional Examiners. Other examiners may be chosen from either list, or be appointed by the school for future nomination to category two.

## **The role of the Professional Examiner**

The primary purpose of the Examination in Professional Practice and Management (Part 3) is to determine a candidate’s competence to practice architecture. The professional interview is the final element of Part 3. It has been designed to determine the candidate’s breadth of knowledge and experience as presented in the documentary submission (comprising a professional CV; a professional experience evaluation; written examinations; a case study /assessed coursework / scenario-based essays and reports).

Examiners should, therefore, expect the candidate to:

- demonstrate judgement and an understanding of their obligations and responsibilities as professionals to clients, employers, the profession, the other members of the building team and society;
- answer questions relating to the Part 3 Outline syllabus as set out in the documentary submission and the Professional Experience and Development Record. Candidates should be expected to comment on and be aware of current issues in practice and the profession, but it is not reasonable to expect them to have detailed knowledge of matters outside the parameters of their documentary submission and the Outline syllabus.

Passing Part 3 is not the final stage of an architect's learning but a threshold into the profession, enabling the successful candidate to practice as an architect and to continue the process of their professional development.

## **Conduct of the Professional Interview**

The interview will be conducted by two examiners, one of whom must be a Professional Examiner from the list referred to, and at least one of the examiners must have examined at Part 3 on at least one other occasion. The other examiner may be an "internal examiner" i.e. appointed by the university or course provider from the list held by the RIBA, usually a member of staff associated with the course and with extensive experience of architectural practice.

The examiners should conduct the interview and arrive jointly at a decision. If they are unable to agree they will need to discuss the case with a third examiner and at a meeting of the relevant board of examiners.

The examiners should have read the candidates' documentary submission and their Professional Experience and Development Record before the Professional Interview. The purpose of the interview is not to interrogate the candidate, but neither is it an informal discussion. Good interview practice should be observed; with the examiners working together to cover questions and subjects agreed together beforehand, and the candidate is expected to make the major contribution to the exchanges.

Examiners should expect to meet as a panel with the examination organiser prior to the examination process, to ensure that they apply uniform criteria and standards, and are confident of what is expected of them.

## **Best Practice**

The following is a summary of best practice:

- \* Before interviewing the examiners should confer on their assessment of each candidate, and on the individual strengths and weaknesses found.
- \* The examiners should decide who is to take the lead with the questioning.
- \* Avoid a double act approach such as good guy - bad guy.
- \* Decide together how you both want to structure the interview, and who is going to ask particular questions and who is going to make notes, or both agree to make them as you go along.
- \* At the outset – appropriate behaviour – standing up - meeting at the door – shaking hands – introducing yourselves and explaining who you are – exhibit good body language and make eye contact with the candidate – allow the candidate time to settle and offer a glass of water.
- \* After the introductions explain the broad structure of the interview to the candidate, and the individual apportionment of the duties of the examiners (i.e. in some cases, one will have read the case study, the other the exam script(s) etc).
- \* Pattern of questioning – make sure all aspects of submissions are covered.
- \* Don't overload on exam papers unless serious issues have been identified in the candidate's papers which make them boarder line.
- \* Start the interview with general items as 'ice breakers', then use open questions to open out into broader areas. Use closed questions to get factual simple answers.
- \* Allow the candidate to do the speaking and avoid interrupting.
- \* Only use leading questions to try to develop a broader discussion.

- \* Remember nervousness can easily lead to both defensive or aggressive responses and hesitant / incomplete answers.
- \* Always conclude the interview by asking if the candidate wishes to say or add anything further.
- \* After the candidate has left the room, take time to discuss your findings and detail your assessments before agreeing the overall position concerning the candidate.

## **Confidentiality and Access to Information**

Examiners should be aware of the need to maintain the strictest confidentiality relating to possibly commercially sensitive details contained within the case studies and the PEDR. Information submitted in connection with the Part 3 examination is intended only for assessment purposes and is to be discussed only in terms of the professional abilities of the candidate, and should not be shared with other examiners who may benefit commercially from it.

Examiners should also note that under Data Protection legislation candidates have the right to view any comments made on reports or submissions. Care should be taken not to make written comments on any case studies or PEDR's to be returned to candidates, or to give any indication of the recommendation for the outcome of the assessment.

## **Equal Opportunities and Interviewing Techniques**

The RIBA is committed to the principle of equal opportunity in its membership policies, and values the creative potential which individuals from diverse backgrounds, and with differing skills and abilities, can bring to the Institute and the architectural profession. Universities will have similar policies and both they and the RIBA will require examinations to be conducted in a way that demonstrates all candidates have been examined against the same transparent assessment criteria.

However, this final stage of 'Part 3' is both an examination and an interview, where complex assessments of the candidate's professional skills and judgement are made. One of the more obvious requirements for examining during the Professional Interview is the ability to be a good listener: To consider a candidate for entry into the profession the examiner must be able to reach a judgement of the candidate's merits from all elements of the final stage in the qualification process.

Perhaps more than at any other stage of architectural qualification, the final professional practice examination can give rise to concerns by failed candidates that they may not have been fairly treated. For this reason it is vital that examiners apply good practice in interviewing techniques and scrupulously follow guidance on the conduct of the interview issued by their appointing university.

This will probably include such basic points as equality of interview length, focusing on the professional issues (as opposed to diverting into social aspects of CVs) and avoiding questions relating to religion, ethnic or refugee status that may lead to concerns of favour or prejudice, as well as covering more university specific guidance.

On the same basis, examiners should expect to provide clear reasons in the case of failure and clear guidance for remedial action to be taken, so that all failed candidates may be informed in writing and counselled on action needed to achieve a successful outcome in the future.

*(Guidelines for professional examiners v7 final December 2006)*