

Meeting notes

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| Meeting | RIBA Professional Examiners Training Day and Forum |
| Date | Friday 16 th November 2007 |
| Venue | The Glamorgan Building, Cardiff University |

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| 1.0 | Welcome and introduction given by David Gloster, Director of Education, RIBA |
| 2.0 | <p>Professional Examination - An Overview – Soo Ware, the Bartlett School of Architecture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice differs across providers at Part 3 level • Expectations have changed in relation the role of the professional examiner and how Part 3 is examined • There is concern in some quarters regarding the potential conflict of running a professional examination in an academic setting • Some feel there is a need for clarification with Part 3 – is it a professional qualification or an academic award? Under university quality assurance procedures, Part 3 often carries an academic award – and this can have an impact on the conduct of the examination • Positive aspects of having an academic award at Part 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Should ensure consistency ○ Assessment criteria ○ Audits ○ Award of an academic qualification • Negative aspects of having an academic award at Part 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Different awards – 2 titles in some institutions e.g. Part 3 exemption and Masters/PG Dip ○ Different awards across Part 3 e.g. some providers offer PG Cert; PG Dip; Masters • The Part 3 is the gateway/bar/threshold to the profession. Is a Part 3 with a Masters any different to one with a PG Dip, to one with no academic award at all? Does the award a candidate receives have an impact on their employment prospects and future career? • Pass marks vary from 40-50% - but does this matter, as long as examiners understand where assessment criteria are fixed? • Marking practice varies across providers – at some, internal/academic staff mark submissions first – in others, only professional examiners are responsible for marking • Model answers are sometimes provided but not always – their use can be problematic, as students can provide a valid answer which differs from model |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails/retakes practice vary considerably across providers. Should guidance be provided in the RIBA Part 3 Regulations? • Reporting requirements/feedback also varies. <p>Comments from the floor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The oral examination covers area of weaknesses in submissions. 40% pass mark allows further differentiation of excellence • The external examiner must have the right to modify the pass mark • Practice based examiners are looking for threshold; the award is not so important to them – maybe this is more of a concern for academia based examiners? • At some schools, Part 3 is linked with an academic award but extra work, over and above that required for Part 3 exemption, is required to obtain this award – should this be something for all schools to consider? |
| 3.0 | <p>Workshop A – What an examiner needs to be told – Pam Cole, University of Portsmouth, and Helen Little, the Bartlett School of Architecture</p> <p>Attendees split into small groups to discuss this question; and then each fed back their most important point to the floor. These were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An overview of examination, process and where the examiner fits in, provided by the institution 2. Better interviewing skills guidance pre-meeting e.g. do's/don'ts. Bear in mind candidates' inexperience of being in this situation 3. Distribution of all examination material to all examiners plus model answers – this helps examiners to understand what the question writer is getting at 4. How to approach borderline cases 5. Definition of how to pitch marking – where is the threshold? 6. Profile of candidate and their practice in advance of oral examination 7. Formal introduction for new examiners – competency and examining the examiner 8. Allow new examiners to shadow process and examination – time issues and what is involved – prior to actually examining for the first time 9. Detailed knowledge of requirements for practical training 10. Information on special needs of candidates 11. Clear indication of examiner fees/remuneration and expenses policy |
| 4.0 | <p>Judgement of Competence – an insight into how this is done within the School of Dentistry, Cardiff University. Speaker: Richard Oliver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Format of dental education - university course leading to a degree, students must be registered with the General Dental Council – the |

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| | <p>regulatory body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment – students are measured on fitness to practice through 72 competency statements. • Each competency statement has a series of learning outcomes, against which the student is assessed. • Different dental schools have different statements, but all are similar to QAA benchmarks. • Examined by 2 internal examiners from the school and 1 external examiner from another school. • All examiners are academics but maintain practice competence by practising in dental hospital attached to a School of Dentistry • Training is videoed and marked • 4 case reports are provided and all are assessed. 1 is chosen at random by the use of a colour coding system to be assessed by a viva - 2 days notice given to students on which case study is to be covered • Photographs and reflective account are given in case studies – 10 pages approx • Students given three attempts to pass and move to next year • The pass mark is 40% - as that is the Cardiff University pass mark – but pass marks can be adjusted by the School. • New graduates then enter vocational training • Dental practices which take on new graduates get money from GDC budget – approx £8k per graduate per year • Practices must apply each year to local School to take on student/s. Practice is inspected by regional PG School to ensure it is appropriately set up to support a student. • Students normally practice for 4 days per week and attend one day per week at university for CPD purposes • They are registered with GDC at this stage • Trainee provides report on the practice at the end of the year • 40% pass mark is common but this just means adjusting what this means in a standard setting. Ideally would prefer 60%. <p>This is a reflection on the current assessment system in dentistry, which is subject to change in the near future.</p> |
| 5.0 | <p>What to look for in the PEDR – Helen Little, the Bartlett School of Architecture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be comments from the employment mentor – PSAs would normally return the sheets to the employer if they have not commented on the student’s work • Final date of printing – PSAs have their own practice on late submissions. Normally sheets that have been submitted late will not have comments by the PSA unless there were mitigating circumstances. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some candidates will have submitted a pie chart or other graphical representation, breaking down the work stages. • A PEDR sheet will contain a practice summary, a description of the experience from category A-K, hours spent during the work stages, a simple description of the project, along with the budget if there is one. • Candidate’s reflective statement – good to see the candidate mention something they have struggled with here, as well as all areas which went well. • This then gives them something to talk about in the section on what they hope to achieve or improve upon in future • Look out for long periods of gaps in the PEDR, especially if they cannot be explained by sickness, personal problems, travelling etc... <p>Feedback from the floor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Schools of Architecture advise students that they should not illustrate the PEDR with diagrams such as pie charts, but that these should instead be put in the CV and case study. • Others feel that a concise illustrated overview is useful for the PSA and examiner. • Students find the PEDR useful to take to Part 2 interviews. • Sometimes professional examiners may see PEDR records that have 24 months Stage 2 experience – this is fully acceptable as there is no requirement to gain 12 months Part 1 experience – candidates must have 24 months experience – with 12 months minimum at stage 2. |
| 6.0 | <p>Workshop B – developing an understanding of the criteria – Pam Cole, University of Portsmouth</p> <p>Professional examiners undertook a quiz on the Part 3 Criteria.</p> <p>The feedback was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examiners are more knowledgeable of the general areas of the criteria through their practice rather than having an explicit knowledge of each single part. • However, professional examiners need to be aware of the criteria – as this is what the student is working to. • The examination is harder for the candidate as the professional examiners have the criteria in front of them. • Pam added that the new Part 3 criteria will be more reflective of current practice. |
| 7.0 | Interview Best Practice – Soo Ware, the Bartlett School of Architecture |

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- Examiners must have the confidence through assessing the documentary submissions and through the professional interview that the candidate is competent to enter the profession.
- At the professional interview, the examiner is also assessing the 'soft skills' of the candidate – such as the ability to use technical language fluently.
- The examiner must demonstrate their own professional judgement.
- When questioning whether or not a candidate is a pass or a fail – don't expect them to have the same level of knowledge as yourself

Preparation for the oral examination:

- Be prepared for the interview – read all of the documentation.
- Ensure that you understand the assessment process.
- Discuss your approach with your fellow professional examiner, ideally meeting them before the oral examination. Discuss who will be taking notes and who will be leading on the questions.
- Use the pre-meeting as an opportunity to clarify any questions
- Organise your paperwork effectively
- Keep an open mind

Format of the Interview:

- Stand up, shake hands and introduce everyone in the room.
- Explain the format of the interview, and the role of the examiners.
- Having an external examiner can be problematic – especially if they come in later – warn the candidate if this might be happening.
- Explain that someone will be taking notes.
- Allow the candidate a few moments to compose themselves.
- At the end stand up and shake hands, and wait a few moments before starting to write up notes.

In general:

- Candidate should talk more than the examiners
- Examiners should use open questions that invite the candidate to talk
- Time keeping – keep to 45 minute interview, its unfair practice to run over time.
- Look interested and alert, and use eye contact when appropriate.

Difficult situations:

- Extremely nervous candidates can be very difficult to examine – give these candidates a bit more time to settle and start gently
- With very obstinate candidates – remain calm and do not be provoked
- Due to the pressure of the oral interview, some candidates may become

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| | <p>unable to continue. In these situations, it is best to terminate the interview and refer the candidate to their PSA – the interview may be able to be re-scheduled for later on.</p> <p>Exam report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is important to make a decision within the deadline.• Make any recommendations clear and explain what is meant to the PSA.• At the exam board – keep the report brief.• Send the report back to the school of architecture promptly. <p>Comments from the floor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training needs to be provided at schools.• The best training is pairing up with an experienced examiner.• A session at the school for professional examiners before and after the examination process can be useful – as an opportunity for examiners to give feedback.• Advice to new examiners – spend more time on the PEDR |
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