

Minutes

Meeting	Professional Examiners Forum
Date	14 November 2008
Venue	RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD

1.0	<p>Welcome and Introduction David Gloster, Director of Education, RIBA</p>
2.0	<p>The Proposed New Criteria for Validation for Part 3 Gordon Gibb</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighted buy-in so far from organisations consulted. • Described how a mapping process took place to ensure that the existing criteria were covered in the revised criteria. • Explained how the introductory paragraphs are useful for those in education and practice, as well as examiners. • It was commented that having 50 points to consider is quite a considerable number – however the priority of the elements is up to the candidate and examiner, and a spread of activities across the 5 main headings would be expected. It was noted that the main emphasis should be on the criteria, and that the points underneath are a steer for candidates, as well as those drafting curricular content for a Part 3 course. • It was commented that it is hard to identify core activities and that the document is a little open. For example, planning is just one point of the 50. Could some activities be made core? It was reiterated that the 10 points below each criterion are for guidance-the principle aspects are in the paragraphs above them. • It was welcomed that professionalism is the first of the criteria. It was commented that it is hard to fail a student on a lack of integrity as this does not fit into an academic examination. However it is felt that you can do this as it is a judgement – compared to say failing on planning, as they could demonstrate where to go to for help with this if needed – unlike integrity. • It was queried whether there should be more reference to ability to apply knowledge? In response it was noted that this could go into the 3 introductory paragraphs and should be considered as part of the consultation. • It was queried whether there should be a point expecting candidates to understand risk management. (GG later commented that this terminology has now changed and this would be covered under QA) • Guidance will be needed from institutions to prepare students and examiners.

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3.0	<p>Workshop A New and Less Experienced Examiners</p> <p>Pam Cole, Wendy Colvin and John Edmonds With Tony Cleford and Gordon Gibb</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All Part 3 courses are validated by the same criteria held in common by the RIBA and ARB – however there is a level of regional differences between the courses.• As a professional examiner you will be working for an academic institution. The course leader will be the first point of contact.• The Professional Examiners at the workshop had been recruited through a combination of adverts in BD, word of mouth and regional RIBA emails.• Professional Examiners should encourage others to come forward too.• The group discussed ways that the RIBA could actively encourage people to come forward to join the list of Professional Examiners in order to reach out to different groups and encourage a broader diversity among the examiners.• The RIBA list of Professional Examiners is circulated to institutions upon request.• Academic institutions recruit at different times of the year, and are not always looking for local practitioners – its important to get a mixture of professional examiners.• Institutions will require examiners to be on the RIBA database in order to ensure that the institution meets its QAA requirements – this ensures that the examiners are invited to training events. <p>Examining – Common Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A new Professional Examiner is normally paired with a more experienced examiner. It is usual practice for one examiner to take the lead – this would normally be the Category 1 examiner.• Sometimes the term ‘Professional Examiner’ is confused with ‘External Examiner’. However, the External Examiner does not usually examine. <p>Methods of Assessment</p> <p>Whilst there are variations between institutions, in general terms most Part 3 courses will use the following methods of assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PEDR• Career Evaluation• Professional CV• Case study• Written Examinations <p>PEDR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PEDR is a 24 month snapshot of a candidate’s experience -
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	<p>Professional Examiners should be aware that this is a snapshot and may not include all of the candidate's experience.</p> <p>Career Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are differences in practice between academic institutions as to what candidates should include in the Career Evaluation.• Some institutions encourage candidates to adopt a more personal, informal approach to this method of assessment – keeping the tone chatty, and including other experiences including travel. <p>Case Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The case study is project specific.• The candidate is encouraged to outline problems when they occur and explore solutions. <p>Written Examinations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not all Part 3 course providers use written examinations.• For those that do, the Professional Examiner should bear in mind when looking at examination scripts that this assessment is time limited, and may have been stressful for the candidate.• There are different approaches – some examinations are office-based and held under examination conditions, others may be held at the Part 3 institution.• There is debate among academic communities as to whether written examinations are an accurate test of the candidate's knowledge or judgement. However, the examination can serve to assess how the candidate reacts to pressurised situations.• Other methods of written assessment include coursework - which normally take the form of essays.• All of the work is mapped against the Part 3 criteria.• It was noted that a problem with written examinations is that many of the candidates will not have written exams for many years – the scripts can be unfocused. Perhaps targeted questions would be a better way of judging if the candidate has the knowledge?• Professional Examiners are encouraged to read the examinations script and see which questions were not answered.• If Professional Examiners look at the PEDR, Case Study and examinations then you can identify if there are any gaps which can be addressed in the Professional Examination.• Professional Examiners will each have their own methods to glean the profile of a candidate. Most institutions will send their marking scheme or examination criteria.• It was noted that the number of candidates can be quite high – for example one cycle had over 70 candidates.
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The Role of the Professional Examiner:

- Again, this varies between institutions - for example some mark examination papers as part of their role.
- Some Part 3 course providers offer an academic qualification as well as the Part 3 award – so some Professional Examiners may be marking an academic qualification as well as the professional exam.
- A discussion followed as to how much time examiners spend marking papers - It was agreed that marking can be an onerous task, and the Professional Examiner requires guidance from the institution – normally in the form of assessment criteria.
- It is important for the Professional Examiner to know their role within the institution, if the Professional Examiner examines at more than one institution, it is important that they do not assume they have the same role within each institution.
- The Professional Examiner needs to be clear on what they are marking and how it will affect the final grade.

Briefing Session:

- Most institutions start the day with a briefing session.
- The timetable will be discussed during the briefing session. The interview will last for 40-45 minutes. If there are a lot of candidates then there may be only 15 minutes turnaround between each candidate.
- This time should be used to collect thoughts on the previous candidate and to prepare for the next.
- The Professional Examiner will need to remember to keep to time during the examination. The institution will be open to appeal if there is discrepancies between times for candidates – a longer time for a candidate may mean the difference between them passing or failing – and the candidate could appeal this.
- Extenuating circumstances will also be raised at the briefing session, and Professional Examiners will be made aware if any of their candidates require special provisions.
- If at the briefing session there are any issues identified with a particular candidate then the external examiner could sit in on their examination.
- The presence of the external examiner can be reassuring to the candidate – can put them at ease that correct procedure is being followed.

Oral Examination:

- Professional Examiners should refer to the candidates experience during the interview – the candidate can feel disillusioned if they are not asked.

Preparation:

- The group had a general discussion on the amount of preparation that is involved with examining.
- It was agreed that at first reading the documentation relating to one

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	<p>candidate might take considerable time – but with experience this speeds up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Professional Examiners are invited by the institution to meet the candidates prior to the examination. • Candidates are aware of who will be examining them. • It is essential to establish if the candidate and examiner know each other. This can be another reason why distance works well – as candidate and examiner may be less likely to have a connection. <p>Feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the examination, it is important the candidate receives appropriate feedback -most institutions will ask the Professional Examiner to provide this. • Feedback tends to be relatively brief – typically no more than 1 paragraph per candidate. • Whilst the Professional Examiner does not compile a full report, any feedback that can be provided to the institution on examination procedures will be useful. • There is also normally an observers report compiled by the external examiner, which will typically comment on the Professional Examiners level of teamwork, communication and focus of the questions. • Sometimes it is useful to ask the Professional Examiner to question the candidate on how they found the Part 3 course – as this is a good way for the tutors to receive feedback on the programme.
4.0	<p>Workshop B Question and answer session with a panel of experienced professional examiners</p> <p>Question 1: What is the best way to assess candidates who, in times of recession, may be more likely to set up their own practice soon after passing Part 3?</p> <p>Panel responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the candidate is a ‘safe pair of hands’. • Candidates should recognise the limits of their knowledge. • Candidates are at the outset of their careers and examiners should take this into account. • Examiners must be careful not to impose expectations based on their own personal experience. • Questions should be balanced within the candidate’s knowledge and understanding. • Important that candidates show they have the potential to work autonomously and appropriate that this is included in the new criteria.

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Question 2: Should one apply different standards to different candidates?

Panel responses:

- No – consistency and transparency are crucial, and the consistency across centres is very good.
- Having a pair of examiners is a necessary levelling service.

Question 3: Should pairs of examiners be formed of those from different backgrounds e.g. one from a small practice and one from a large practice, for example?

Panel responses:

- The pairs of examiners can be swapped around at lunchtime.
- Institutions must not be afraid to remove examiners whose performance they are unhappy with.
- At some schools, examiners and candidates mix at an informal briefing prior to the oral examination which can be very useful for both parties.
- Many candidates do a great deal of research about their examiners in advance.
- The approach of institutions can vary depending on whether the exam is independently run, or whether institution has a pastoral approach to students.
- Examiners must not use the oral examination to air personal opinions about a candidate's practice – only candidates can be failed, not their practices.
- To some extent, more can be learned by poor experiences than good.
- Induction for examiners at new schools should state that anything they write down; plus the principles of quality assurance and accountability.

Question 4: The structure of the Part 3 examination varies across centres. Should examiners be more involved in the setting of the examination?

Panel responses:

- The centre has to be accountable to the university in many circumstances.
- Future changes could see more involvement of examiners and employers, and more open routes to gaining the required professional experience.
- We must allow the current generation to qualify despite the difficult economic circumstances.

Other discussion points

- Rate of pay is important when considering an offer to examine at a new centre.
- Time commitment is also important to consider – may be hard for a small practitioner to be in a position to examine – can be more of an issue than pay.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should the profession regulate itself more – advanced CPD or checks for architects who qualified over a defined number of years ago?
5.0	<p>Workshop C How to judge a case study? A look at assessment issues. Pam Cole</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The marking of case studies varies across institutions – sometimes examiners will see them first, sometimes they will be pre-marked. Knowledge alone does not guarantee competence. Bad experience requires reflective discussion. Approach to conduct and ethics is very important. <p>Attendees split into groups and considered extracts of 8 different case studies, and were asked to consider whether the case studies were passes or fails.</p> <p>It was interesting that there was a consensus of opinion among the Professional Examiners as to the marking of the documents.</p>
6.0	<p>‘The Future for Part 3’ Ruth Reed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the immediate term, it may be necessary to be flexible about the kind of experience which is acceptable to pass Part 3 – for example allowing experience on D&B or PFU contracts, comparing and contrasting etc. May be need to recognise the value of observing as opposed to requiring participation in a task – gaining an understanding of practice’s response to an issue and their place in the wider picture. In the medium term, RIBA is reviewing the PEDR with a view to updating it to reflect current needs. Long term, more management, practice and law could be taught at Part 2 stage. Consideration could be given to specialisms beyond Part 2, such as a design architect, conservations specialist, sector specialist e.g. schools, housing etc. Would this help to protect the profession? If budgets permit, would also like to be able to hold ceremonies at RIBA Headquarters to welcome new Chartered Members to the profession. <p>Questions and discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some discussion as to the fact that RIBA already promoted some specialisms – Client Design Advisors, CDM advisors, project managers Other attendees felt that if people choose to specialise, that could be problematic in difficult economic circumstances. It was raised that Part 3 should remain the benchmark of the competent architect, and that specialisms should go over and above this requirement, if brought in.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others felt that now was a good time to consider allowing people to qualify as architects at the end of Part 2, and for Part 3 to then allow one to be a Chartered Architect. • It was raised that professional education as an architect is skewed towards architectural design, when in fact people should be taught how to be architects earlier – not all about design. In the RIBA's early days, building technology was considered critical but now aesthetics are the key. • Ruth Reed wants to continue these debates into her presidency.
7.0	<p>Reflections on the Part 3 Comments from candidates following interview (DVD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A short film made by Pam Cole and Gordon Gibb of APSAA was shown. Part 3 candidates were filmed after their interviews, and gave their feedback on the assessment and various processes linked to it. A general discussion was held afterwards which also formed the day's plenary session. • It was noted that those who contributed to the film tended to be those who were more confident about how their examination went. • Areas covered included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Type of questions covered ○ How the PE's interacted – did they work as a team? ○ How the PE's put the candidate at ease ○ Did the candidates practice support them during Part 3? <p>After viewing the film the following comments were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What more can the RIBA do to support students in practice? - the Chartered Practice scheme does require practices to abide by the principles of the RIBA's Employment Policy, which in turn requires practices to use the RIBA's guidance on the employment of students. • It would be good to hear the perspective of employers – perhaps for the next film? – or maybe the examiners? • The architect that a student is working directly with may not always be the most appropriate employment mentor. • Could the RIBA establish a register of mentors for those who are not getting support from their practice? • It was raised that according to the Head of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, any set of training which leads ultimately to 'fitness to practice' should be labelled so at the start of the training. • Examiners must respect the fact that it is very precious to students to have the opportunity to take the exam which will culminate in them being able to finally call themselves an architect after many years of training. Examiners must be able to role play back into the mindset of

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	<p>the student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examiners should remember that they can give feedback to the course leader, who can in turn pass it on to the student.• For many candidates, support from their peer group – or study group, if set up – was crucial in helping them to prepare. <p>Useful references:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abercrombie, M.L. (1960) <i>The Anatomy of Judgment: An Investigation into the Processes of Perception and Reasoning</i>, London: Hutchinson.• Sennett, Richard <i>The Craftsman</i>, Allen Lane (2008), ISBN 978-0713998733
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