

Assessment of Professional Competence (APC)

January 2010

Graduate routes 1 and 2 candidate guidance

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This guide will help you prepare for the commitment and responsibility that go with training for the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC). Completing this successfully leads to professional membership of RICS and entitles you to call yourself a **chartered surveyor**.

Section one – The Assessment of Professional Competence

What is the APC?

The APC is the practical training and experience which, when combined with academic qualifications, lead to RICS membership.

The objective of the APC is to ensure you are competent to practise as a chartered surveyor. The graduate APC consists of:

- a period of structured training
- a final assessment interview

Depending upon your graduate membership route, your APC structured training will take 12 or 24 months, during which you must complete a minimum of 200 or 400 days relevant practical experience. This may take longer, depending on your supervisor's and counsellor's assessment of your progress, but must be completed within six years of your APC registration.

Graduate routes to membership

RICS recognises that some graduates will already have considerable work experience by the time they complete an accredited degree. This is reflected in the APC requirements, i.e. RICS reduces the period of structured training for those with more than five years relevant work experience.

- Graduate route 1 is for candidates with limited, or no, prior relevant experience
- Graduate route 2 is for candidates with at least five years relevant experience

The requirements of graduate routes 1 and 2 are shown below.

Graduate routes 1 and 2 - at a glance

Academic Qualifications	Relevant Prior Experience	APC Structured Training	APC Final Assessment Interview
<p>Graduate 1 RICS accredited degree*</p> <p>Part-time and placement year students may enrol on to the APC during the final year of study or during the placement year. At least 12 of the 24 months structured training must be completed after graduating</p>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 months structured training to meet competency requirements • Regular meetings with supervisor/counsellor • 48 hours professional development for each 12 months structured training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 minute interview including 10 minute presentation • Testing on professional practice/ethics
<p>Graduate 2 RICS accredited degree*</p> <p>The 12 months structured training must be completed after graduating</p>	At least five years relevant experience before starting APC. <i>Pre-degree experience can count</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 months structured training • Regular meetings with supervisor/counsellor • 48 hours professional development over the structured training period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 minute interview including 10 minute presentation • Testing on professional practice/ethics

* Those undertaking an accredited postgraduate degree part-time may enrol onto the APC and complete the structured training concurrently. They must have graduated from an RICS accredited course before being eligible to take the final assessment.

The competency approach

The APC structured training period is primarily competency-based. It requires you, the candidate, to demonstrate that you have the skills and abilities needed to perform specific tasks or functions. The competencies are based on attitudes and behaviours as well as skills and knowledge.

The specific competencies you must demonstrate depend on the APC pathway you follow. The APC pathways are listed on page 8.

Your choice of APC pathway will be determined by your employment as you can only demonstrate competence on the basis of actual work experience. Your supervisor will advise you on your choice of APC pathway. The detailed requirements for each APC pathway are set out in the 'APC requirements and competencies guide' which is available in 'Key APC documents/templates' in the 'How to join' section on www.joinricsineurope.eu. You can also find the Pathway guides in the "How to join" section.

Your training must be structured to make sure you achieve the required competencies. Throughout the APC your supervisor and counsellor will continually monitor your progress. You will not be able to apply for the final assessment interview until your supervisor and counsellor certify that, in their opinion, you have

reached the level of competence required and have fulfilled the minimum training period.

In addition to achieving the required levels of knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the competencies, you must also demonstrate that you:

- are a good ambassador for your profession, RICS and your employer
- are aware of the professional and commercial implications of your work
- understand your clients' and employer's objectives
- have an up-to-date and developing knowledge of legal and technical matters relevant to the work you do and the law of the region or country in which you practise
- have the confidence to work unsupervised.

Eligibility

The point at which you are eligible to **start** the APC depends on:

- whether the RICS accredited degree you are taking (or have completed) is undergraduate or postgraduate
- the mode of study you are following.

Note: For *all* candidates, you must have successfully completed your RICS accredited course *before* applying for the final assessment interview.

Undergraduate start points		
	Graduate route 1	Graduate route 2
Full-time	Start structured training as soon as you are in relevant employment	Start structured training as soon as you are in relevant employment
Part-time/ distance learning	Start structured training as soon as you have completed second level of the degree. A maximum 12 months can be completed concurrently with your studies. The second 12 months training must be after successful completion of the accredited degree	Start 12 months structured training after successful completion of the accredited degree
Placement (sandwich)	Start structured training when you start your work placement, provided you have also completed the second level of the degree. The second 12 months training must be after successful completion of the accredited degree	Start 12 months structured training after successful completion of accredited degree
Postgraduate start points		
Full-time	Start structured training as soon as you are in relevant employment	
Part-time/ distance learning	Start structured training as soon as you begin your course provided you are in relevant employment. You can complete the required structured training concurrently with your studies	

Section two – Before you start training

Registering for the APC

You will first need to fill in the APC Passport (enrolment form) available in MyAPC on www.joinmyapc.eu, the online platform for the APC process. An account will be opened for you once the route to membership has been confirmed by your National Group or RICS Europe. You have to submit all the required material and pay the relevant fee before your enrolment is accepted and you are registered as a trainee.

Once accepted, RICS will confirm your registration and give you a start date for recording your experience.

A delay of a few weeks in your enrolment could put your final assessment back six months, as in most countries final assessments are held twice a year. For final assessment dates, check on www.joinricsineurope.eu/final-assessments or contact the National Group of your country of residence or the RICS Europe office in Brussels (see the list on www.joinricsineurope.eu/contacts).

In addition to this guide, the following guidance is available:

- the 'APC guide for supervisors, counsellors and employers',
- the 'APC requirements and competencies guide' which details the competencies you need to achieve for your APC pathway.

Both documents are available in 'Key APC documents/templates' in the 'How to join' section of www.joinricsineurope.eu.

Change of employment

If you change employment during the training period, you have to indicate this in the APC Passport that you have completed before enrolling for the APC and inform the National Group of your country of residence or the RICS Europe office in Brussels. Before changing employer, you will need to have your experience at your current employer signed off by your supervisor and counsellor.

Change of route to membership

If, during the period of your APC registration, RICS approves a change to your route to membership, e.g. from graduate route 1 to graduate route 2, your start date for the new route will be the day the National Group of your country of residence or RICS Europe in Brussels receives your request to change.

Section three – Choosing your competencies

The APC pathways are as follows:

- Arts and antiques
- Building control
- Building surveying
- Commercial property practice
- Environment
- Facilities management
- Geomatics (including hydrographic)
- Housing management and development
- Machinery and business assets
- Management consultancy
- Minerals and waste management
- Planning and development
- Project management
- Property finance and investment
- Quantity surveying and construction
- Research
- Residential property practice
- Residential survey and valuation
- Rural
- Taxation allowances
- Valuation

Each APC pathway requires a period of structured training during which you complete the mandatory and technical competencies that make up the minimum requirements for the APC.

You must fulfil the competencies specified in your APC pathway to the required levels. The competencies have three levels of attainment that are progressive in terms of skills and abilities:

Level 1: Knowledge and understanding

Level 2: Application of knowledge and understanding

Level 3: Reasoned advice and depth of technical knowledge

The mandatory competencies

These competencies are a mix of the professional practice, interpersonal, business and management skills that are considered common to, and necessary for, all surveyors. These competencies are compulsory for all candidates.

You must achieve the following minimum standards.

Conduct rules, ethics and professional practice – to level 3

Client care]	
Communication and negotiation]	to level 2
Health and safety]	

Accounting principles and procedures]	
Business planning]	
Conflict avoidance, management and dispute resolution procedures]	to
Data management]	level 1
Sustainability]	
Teamworking]	

The technical competencies

For each APC pathway, specific technical competencies must be achieved. These are divided into core and optional.

It is important that you give careful thought to your choice and combination of competencies. The combination of core and optional competencies will reflect the work you do in your day-to-day environment (driven by the needs of your employer/clients). You will be advised on your choice by your supervisor and counsellor. Do not necessarily expect to make your full choice of optional competencies at the start of your training. Your choice may alter as your training develops.

The choice and combination of competencies will be a reflection of your judgement and that of your supervisor and counsellor. At the final assessment interview, the assessors will take these choices into account and will consider their appropriateness.

The number of days taken to reach the appropriate level of competence will depend on a combination of the following:

- the starting point – has there been any previous experience
- your aptitude and speed of progress with the competency
- the quality of the training and experience provided
- the particular competency.

Note: there is no minimum requirement for the number of training days under each competency other than, in total, a minimum of 400 days within 24 calendar months structured training for graduate route 1 candidates and 200 days within 12 calendar months structured training for graduate route 2 candidates. Candidates will not necessarily achieve the required level of competence within the minimum training period.

Section four – Key elements of the APC

Structured training: the formal, structured approach to the delivery of training and experience over any given period.

Record of progress (Template available in MyAPC on www.joinmyapc.eu): quarterly reports which summarise in 500 words how your experience and training meet the competency and professional development requirements.

They must be signed and dated by your supervisor and countersigned by your counsellor. It is your supervisor and counsellor, at the time of your application for the final assessment interview, who must be satisfied that you have achieved the specific competencies.

Professional development (Template available in MyAPC on www.joinmyapc.eu): the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of professional knowledge, understanding and skill throughout your career. As part of the structured training you must undertake a minimum of 48 hours professional development for each year of structured training. Further details are given on pages 15-16.

Critical analysis (no template): a written report of **your personal involvement** in a project or projects during your training. It must provide a critical appraisal of the project together with an outline of the lessons you have learned. It will provide important evidence of the competencies you have achieved. The critical analysis must give detailed evidence of your ability to work competently and to apply the knowledge relevant to your APC pathway. Further details are given on pages 17-18.

For further explanations of APC terms, go to 'APC terminology explained' in the 'How to join' section of www.joinricsineurope.eu

Section five – The people

To achieve your goal of becoming a chartered surveyor, you will work with a number of people during your training.

Your employer: it is recommended that your employer completes the APC Passport (enrolment form) with you. Your employer must encourage you, make facilities and time available to you and ensure you complete certain documents at the right time.

Your supervisor: normally but not necessarily a chartered surveyor, your supervisor is appointed at your work place. Your supervisor, normally your line manager, is responsible for giving you guidance on your training and day-to-day work.

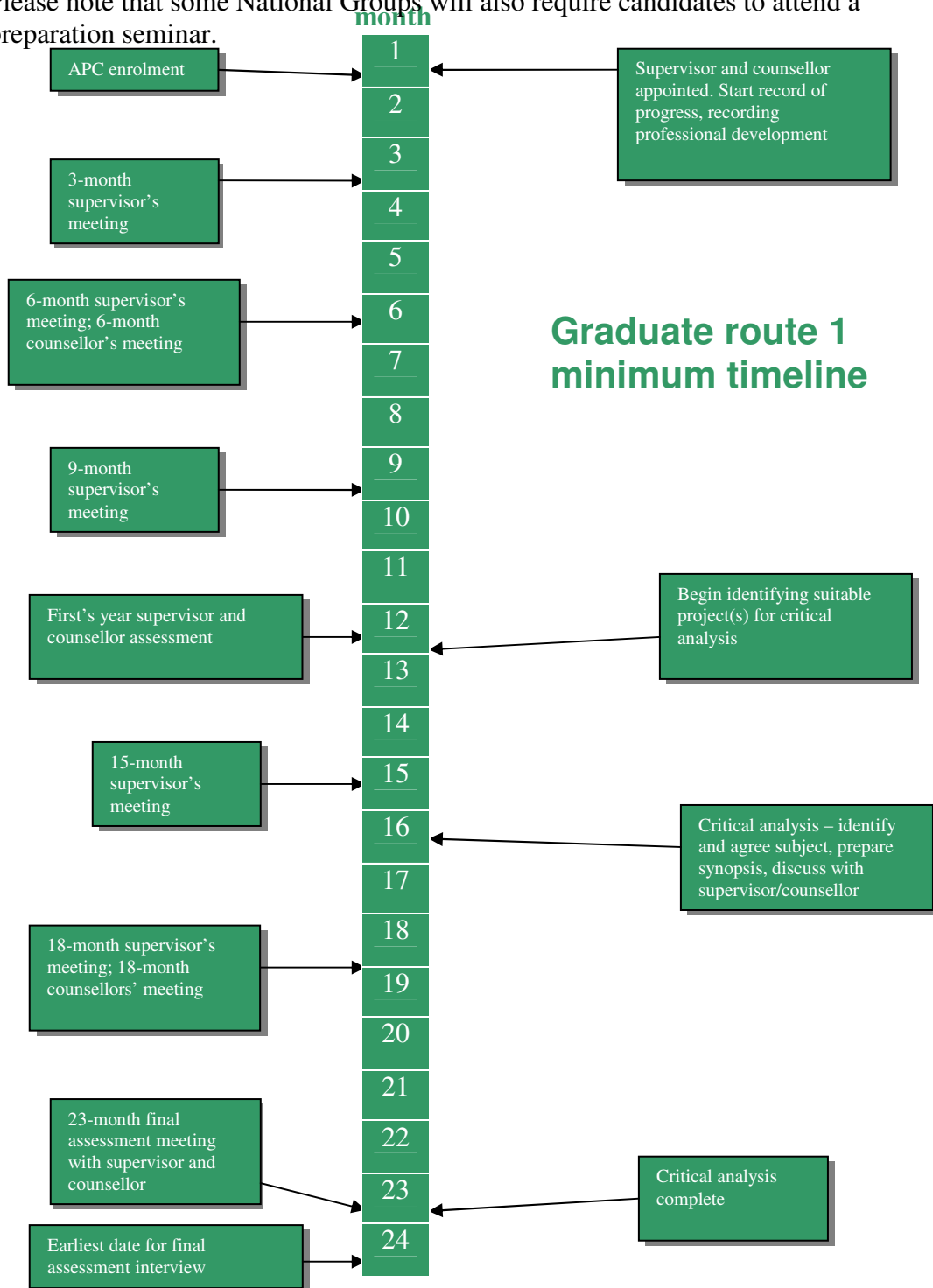
Your counsellor: must be a chartered surveyor and is usually (but does not have to be) appointed at your work place. The supervisor and counsellor decide when you are ready to apply for final assessment, certify all the documents you submit for final assessment, and ensure your training is structured to meet the needs of your APC pathway. RICS will record details of your counsellor to ensure that up-to-date information about the APC can be communicated. You must inform RICS if your counsellor changes.

The supervisor and counsellor should normally be different people, but they can be the same person, in which case he/she must be a chartered surveyor. Either your supervisor or counsellor must have experience of the competency requirements of your chosen APC pathway. If your supervisor or counsellor changes during your training, you must ensure your original supervisor/counsellor certifies the relevant parts of the documents you will submit.

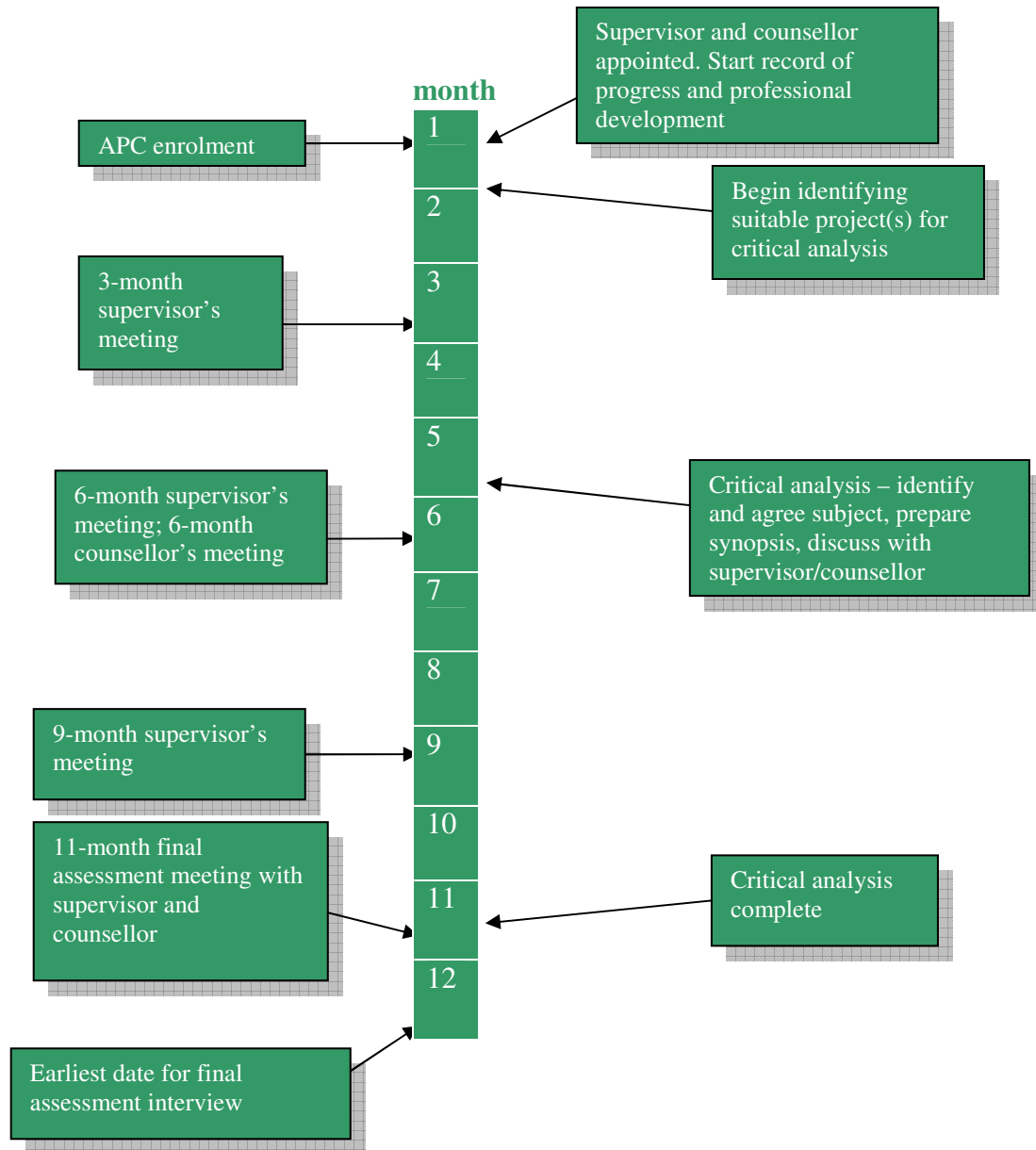
The assessors: chartered surveyors who conduct your final assessment interview. The interview panel is composed of two to three members. All assessors are specially trained for this purpose.

Section six – APC training – what’s involved

Please note that some National Groups will also require candidates to attend a preparation seminar.



Graduate route 2 minimum timeline



Day-to-day

Your supervisor and counsellor must keep in regular contact with you but ultimately you are responsible for your day-to-day activities. You must:

- ensure your day-to-day work covers the required competencies of your APC pathway
- keep your record of progress in a format that will encourage meaningful discussion at the formal quarterly reviews of progress against the competencies and will assist with the preparation of your assessment records
- discuss before, and evaluate after, any planned training or professional development events
- keep notes of examples of practical experience and casework to assist at your quarterly reviews.

Final assessment application

You will have decided your target final assessment date with your supervisor/counsellor.

The National Group of your country of residence or the RICS Europe office will inform you about the Final Assessment dates and the submissions deadline a couple of months before the Final Assessment date.

You will need to complete all your submissions **or you will not be eligible to take the final assessment**. Once these submissions are received by us, you will be sent confirmation of the date, time and venue of your final assessment.

If you are not ready and need **to postpone your final assessment**, contact us immediately. Failure to do so and not attending the final assessment will result in RICS having to charge you a no-show fee. For details of this no-show fee, see the 'APC Fees list' in the 'How to Join' section of www.joinricsineurope.eu

Section seven – Professional development

It is your responsibility to plan and achieve the required professional development. For each 12 months of structured training, you must undertake a minimum 48 hours professional development (see Template available in MyAPC on www.joinmyapc.eu). This helps you gain extra skills and knowledge which are not always achievable within the week-to-week business of the practice. For example, you might study business management, professional ethics or information technology through formal training courses, distance learning programmes or more informal structured reading. It is important that your supervisor and counsellor take an active interest and help with the planning and evaluation of your professional development.

Special attention must be given to the principles underpinning professional development. It should be:

- gained in a structured manner
- based on an explicit process of selecting, planning and evaluating the activities
- reflect learning from informal training sources e.g. structured reading, secondments.

Professional development should complement and support your mandatory and technical competencies. RICS suggests the following framework to help you and your employer design a flexible plan that reflects your development needs.

Professional development plan

Personal skills development: linked to mandatory competencies – normally 16 hours per year

Technical skills development: linked to core/optional competencies – normally 16 hours per year

Professional practice skills development: linked to professional practice competencies, code of ethics and conflicts of interest – normally 16 hours per year

Personal skills development

Development of transferable personal and interpersonal skills such as:

- communication
- client care
- data management
- information technology
- teamworking.

Technical skills development

Development of competencies related to your APC pathway. This could include short update sessions and skills-based training.

Professional practice skills development

Development of professionalism:

- understanding client care
- conflict avoidance, management and dispute resolution procedures
- RICS code of conduct, professional practice and bye-laws, which are available in 'More about ethics' in the 'Why join' section of www.joinricsineurope.eu
- structure and role of RICS. Information on this is available on www.joinricseurope.eu

Selection, planning and evaluation

Please discuss your selection of topics with your supervisor and counsellor. You must provide evidence of a planned, systematic approach to your choice, demonstrating the relationship between the topics and the development of the competency.

You must evaluate the benefits of your professional development and provide evidence of this as part of your submissions, showing the key learning gained from each element. Private study and structured reading is acceptable as part of your professional development but should not be more than two thirds of the total hours required in any 12 months of structured training.

Part-time/distance learning/placement students

If you are on a part-time or distance learning accredited degree, RICS will consider your final year as counting towards your professional development for that year. This should be supplemented by other professional development activities for that year.

If you are a placement student, you may be taking structured study as part of your year in industry.

Section eight – Critical analysis

The critical analysis is a written report of a project or projects with which you have been involved during your training. Your choice of topic is very important and must reflect your APC pathway. You may be working for a large organisation where you have been involved with a complex instruction or project. Your role and contribution could be an appropriate topic. Alternatively, the instruction or project may be more straightforward and not of great financial value. It may simply be typical of the work you have been involved with during your training. Ideally your critical analysis should focus on one aspect of your work. You may want to use a number of projects to highlight an issue or aspect of your work. The project may be based on, or include, work undertaken outside your country of practice.

You are not necessarily expected to be running the project. **It is YOUR involvement or role in the team that you must outline, analyse and comment on.** If the project has been running for some time you may not have been involved from the start, your involvement may not have been continuous, or the project may not be finished when you prepare your critical analysis. In this latter case, you should provide a prognosis of the outcome. If you know the outcome between sending in your critical analysis and your interview, include it in your presentation.

Critical analysis format and content

The critical analysis must be:

- word processed
- a **maximum** of 3 000 words (excluding the appendices)
- signed and dated by you, and can include photographs and plans (no larger than A4 size when folded).

You must explain not only the project itself but the processes you followed and the rationale behind your decision-making. Your focus must be on analysing the project: do not simply provide a summary of what it involved. It is quality not quantity that counts. Appendices should support your report, not add to or expand on it.

You should include the following four aspects.

- **Key issues:** your project may be complex. If you select too many key issues you will skim the surface instead of providing a detailed analysis. Be selective. Think about the depth required as being to about level three of the various competencies involved. There may be one key issue that can form the basis of your critical analysis.
- **Options:** before proposing a solution to a client, you should consider all the options, demonstrating your ability to think logically, laterally and professionally. You must demonstrate you have genuinely considered the options. Give reasons why some options may not be feasible.
- **Your proposed solution:** you must give a detailed account of the reasons supporting your adopted course of action. Relate your reasons to the technical competencies. Think about all the aspects that support your decision, for example client care, financial/technical/professional aspects, rules of conduct, ethics and conflicts of interest.

- **Conclusion and analysis of experience gained:** finally, and most importantly, your conclusion must provide a critical appraisal of the outcomes, with a statement of what you learned from the experience. This part of your report should comprise approximately one third of the total number of words. You should look at the project, consider what has gone well and identify what did not go well. You can then plan how you might improve the next time you carry out a similar task. Stand back from the project and reflect on what you have learned.

The assessors will use your critical analysis as a starting point to question you beyond what you actually did, probing your understanding of your project's wider issues. Start thinking about these processes while you are writing your critical analysis so you are well prepared for the interview. Focus on matters that cross the whole project.

Confidentiality: you must ensure you have your employer's and client's consent to disclose any sensitive details in your critical analysis. If you cannot get this consent you should disguise facts that might otherwise make the project identifiable.

Note: the information contained in your critical analysis will be treated in the strictest confidence by the panel of assessors.

References: sources should not be quoted at length but essential references must be given.

Total word count: you must include a word count at the end. You can include notes on what you have included in the count.

Finally: your critical analysis must reflect your abilities in the following areas:

- written and graphic communication
- professional standards of organisation and presentation
- analysis, reflective thought and problem-solving
- learning from experience gained.

Section nine – Final assessment

In most countries where we have a National Group final assessment interviews are held twice a year. The interview will last one hour and is designed to determine whether you:

- express yourself clearly in an oral presentation and interview
- can demonstrate, in support of your written submissions, your understanding of the knowledge gained and competencies achieved during your training
- have an acceptable understanding of the role and responsibilities of a chartered surveyor
- can apply your professional and technical skills to benefit those who employ your services.

Important: If you are not ready and need to **postpone your final assessment**, contact us immediately. Failure to do so and not attending the final assessment will result in RICS having to charge you a no-show fee. For details of this no-show fee, see the 'APC Fees list' in the 'How to join' section of www.joinricsineurope.eu

Interview

The interview will be conducted by a panel comprising two to three chartered surveyors, trained and selected for this role.

At the interview you will be questioned on:

- your presentation and critical analysis
- your submissions
- the broader aspects of your experience and knowledge, including ethics, RICS rules of conduct and current issues of concern to the profession.

The assessors will base the questioning on the law and practice of the country in which the interview is held.

On the critical analysis, the assessors will normally ask you about what you did and about why you took a particular approach. They will also ask about your understanding of the wider issues surrounding your report.

The assessors will try to determine your general level of ability - they do not expect you to be an expert in every area of professional activity. They will be looking to ensure you have achieved at least the minimum required levels of competence in key areas for the clients you serve, and that you understand the level of professional conduct expected of a member of RICS.

The assessors will take a holistic view of your training, submissions, presentation and interview.

Special needs and disabilities

RICS will be responsive to candidates with special needs or disabilities. It will do its utmost to ensure that suitable arrangements are made to assist candidates. It is, therefore, essential that you give suitable notice to RICS of any special needs or disabilities you have, to ensure appropriate assistance is available at the final assessment.

The structure of the interview

The interview structure is as follows:

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| • Chairman's opening and introductions | 3-4 minutes |
| • Candidate's presentation on critical analysis | 10 minutes |
| • Questions on the presentation | 10 minutes |
| • Discussion on overall experience including professional development, competencies, rules of conduct and professional practice | 35 minutes |
| • Chairman closes | 1-2 minutes |

Note: presentation facilities will not be provided at assessment centres.

Section ten – After the assessment

Outcome of the interview

The National Group of your country of residence will inform you on the result of your final assessment within 21 days. If you are successful you will be awarded professional membership of RICS (MRICS). In broad terms, the weighting placed on the various components of the final assessment is as follows:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Mandatory competencies | 20% |
| • Technical competencies | 70% |
| • Ethics, professional identity and accountability | 10% |

Referral (not succeeding the final assessment)

If the outcome is a referral you will be sent a referral report within 21 days after the assessment explaining why the assessors reached this decision. To be eligible for re-assessment you must:

- record a minimum of a further 100 days relevant professional experience by filling the referral assessment record (available in MyAPC on www.joinmyapc.eu) – if you change any of your competencies you must provide an update to the National Group of your country of residence or RICS Europe office.
- do a minimum of a further 24 hours professional development
- provide the critical analysis (redrafted or updated if required in the referral report)
- agree with your supervisor and counsellor how you will address the deficiencies identified in the referral report.

You must continue to maintain and record your experience until you are successful. If you have not applied for the next available assessment the above is a minimum requirement, e.g. the professional development requirement will increase for every six-month period.

Once you have completed the above, you will be re-interviewed.

You will also need to pay a referral fee before you are entitled to re-sit. For details of the fee, see the 'APC Fees list' in the 'How to join' section of www.joinricsineurope.eu

Appeal

Before final assessment

If your country's National Group rejects your application for entry to the final assessment under Graduate 1 or 2 routes, you may request RICS Europe to review your application.

If you wish to have your application reviewed, please email your full CV, the communication you have received from the National Group and a statement setting out the reasons why you consider that your application should not have been rejected, to RICS Europe on ricseurope@rics.org. All requests for review will be dealt with within 15 days.

After final assessment

If you are referred after your final assessment, you have 10 days from the date of the results letter received from your National Group to appeal. This letter will explain the reasons for the referral and details of how to make an appeal. Appeals may be made for one of three reasons:

- administrative or procedural matters: for example, the panel may not have been provided with the correct information
- questioning and testing of competence that has concentrated too much outside of the main areas of training and experience
- any form of discrimination.

When an appeal is made it must:

- be in writing, accompanied by an administrative fee, which will be returned if the appeal is upheld. For details of the fee, see 'APC Fees list' in the 'How to join' section of www.joinricsineurope.eu
- be made by you and not a third party
- clearly state the grounds on which the appeal is being made, supported by appropriate evidence.

The appeal needs to be sent to the RICS Europe office, who will respond within 15 days.

Section eleven – Where to find help

Completing the APC carries with it responsibility and commitment. Extensive support and guidance are available for candidates and employers. If you need any help during the training period please contact the National Group of your country of residence or the RICS Europe office in Brussels (see contact details on www.joinricsineurope.eu).

Finally

Remember to ensure that the National Group of your country of residence or the RICS Europe office in Brussels has your up-to-date contact details.

For contact details or further information, go to: www.joinricsineurope.eu