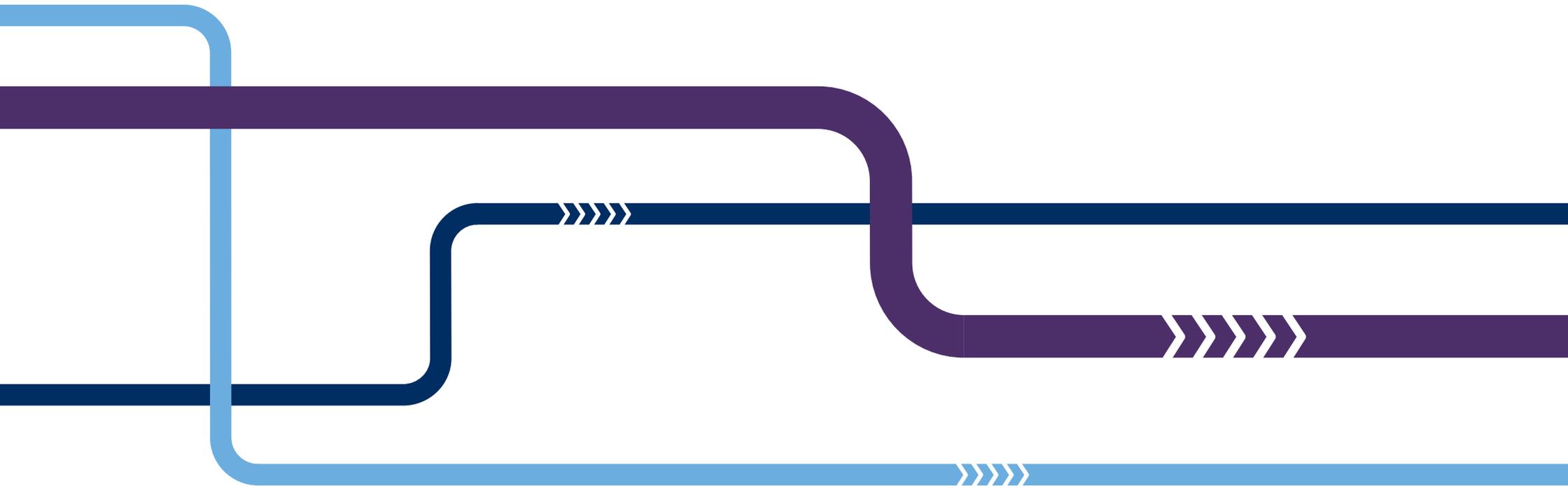




# Counsellor guide

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## Foreword

I am grateful for the contribution that you are making to RICS through committing your time and expertise to support potential new professionals.

RICS Assessments are the start of a lifelong professional commitment to our standards for thousands of people each year. As a counsellor you play an important role in ensuring that those following the assessments have the experience and potential to fulfil our ethical standards and professional competency requirements to become an RICS qualified professional [MRICS].

Your role in preparing candidates is vital to the effectiveness of the assessments and the success of candidates. This guide explains what support you should offer to plan and review their experience and prepare them for the final assessment interview.

Thank you for your commitment to RICS and to ensuring the future of the profession. I hope you will find the role both professionally and personally rewarding.



**Sean Tompkins**

Chief Executive

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## Introduction

Working as a counsellor can be personally rewarding and satisfying, and you will:

- help to maintain the high professional standards expected of qualified professionals
- put something back into the surveying profession
- help raise the profile of RICS and its professionals around the world
- satisfy the 'Service to RICS' characteristic recognised for RICS Fellowship [FRICS].

All candidates will need to appoint a counsellor, to support and guide them through the process. The counsellor must be an RICS chartered professional [MRICS or FRICS]. The counsellor will be responsible and accountable for signing off candidates as ready to undertake the prelim or final assessment. The level of support you will be required to give your candidate will vary depending on their qualifications and experience. For example, if the candidate is following the Senior Professional Assessment, the counsellor role will most likely be a peer-to-peer support role. Whereas an APC structured candidate will probably need more hands-on technical support and regular quarterly reviews.

However, the principles behind your role as a counsellor are the same for each type of candidate because the professional standards being assessed and the requirements for demonstrating competence at the final assessment interview are identical. There are only variances in the evidence a candidate will need to provide in their submission.

This guide provides an overview of the counsellor role for all assessment candidates. You must also familiarise yourself with the relevant candidate guide for the assessment they are following and the appropriate pathway guide.

As a counsellor, it is crucial to the success of RICS Assessments that you have access to all the information you need so we can support the next generation of qualified professionals.

# Candidate profiles

RICS has developed a number of varied assessments to enable individuals – from school-leavers through to experienced professionals – to gain the RICS chartered professional qualification [MRICS]. The correct assessment will depend on the candidate’s level of professional experience, qualifications and current job role.

The amount of time you will need to dedicate to a candidate will depend on the assessment they are following as well as their level of experience. RICS staff will determine the most appropriate assessment based on the information the candidate has provided. The table below provides a summary of the assessment requirements.

	Eligibility	Vetting	CPD	Submission	Assessment
APC Structured	Accredited degree – 0-5 years’ experience	12 or 24 months structured training	48 or 96 hours	5500-word summary of experience – 3000-word case study	<b>Professional Interview</b> • Presentation on case study • Questioning on competencies
APC Preliminary	Degree or professional qualification – 5 years’ experience [12 months post qualification]	Preliminary review	48 hours	5500-word summary of experience – 3000-word case study	<b>Professional Interview</b> • Presentation on case study • Questioning on competencies
Senior Professional	No degree* – 10 years’ experience – Senior profile	CV and 400-word profile statement review	20 hours	400-word profile statement – 1000–1500-word case study on leadership and management – 2 x 1000–1500-word case study on pathway competencies	<b>Professional Interview</b> • Presentation on senior profile • Questioning on competencies
Specialist	No degree* – 10 years’ experience – Specialist profile	CV and 400-word profile statement review	20 hours	400-word profile statement – 1000–1500-word case study on specialist experience – 2 x 1000–1500-word case study on pathway competencies	<b>Professional Interview</b> • Presentation on specialist profile • Questioning on competencies
Academic	Degree or higher degree – 3 years’ academic experience	CV and 3000-word academic statement review	48 hours	3000-word academic statement – 5500-word summary of experience – 4 x academic evidence	<b>Professional Interview</b> • Presentation on 1 x academic evidence • Questioning on competencies

\* The experience requirement can be reduced based on previous qualifications.

A detailed counsellor guide for the Academic Assessment is available at [rics.org/academic](https://rics.org/academic)

## Counsellor training and support

### Assessment Resource Centre (ARC)

To ensure RICS operate consistently across the globe, we use an online platform known as the Assessment Resource Centre (ARC). We recognise counsellors are now far more mobile and can have candidates in many world regions. ARC gives each counsellor the ability to clearly follow a candidate's status and progress during the assessment process digitally, as well as review their readiness for final assessment.

To access ARC login to the RICS website and follow the link at [rics.org/arc](https://rics.org/arc). A video tutorial and user guide are available on this page too.

### Counsellor training

All counsellors must now complete compulsory counsellor training. This can be either by face-to-face training (organised in your local regions) or the e-learning counsellor module that can be accessed via ARC. Even if you have completed face-to-face counsellor training we encourage you to also complete the e-learning module to maintain your knowledge. You will receive a completion certificate and can record two hours' CPD.

### Online ethics module

It is compulsory for our candidates and assessors to complete the online ethics module before being eligible for the final assessment. Counsellors are also encouraged to view and complete the ethics module. If you wish to gain access to the ethics module, please contact your local RICS office.

### Candidate guides

A candidate guide is available for each assessment and provides details on the requirements at each stage of the assessment. Guidance is provided on eligibility, vetting, the ethics module and test, submission and professional interview. You must familiarise yourself with the appropriate candidate guide so you understand the requirements your candidate must meet.

### Pathway guides

It is essential the candidate selects the correct pathway. Your candidates can only choose one pathway and the candidate must choose the pathway relevant to their current job role.

The pathway is relevant throughout the assessment and once a candidate becomes qualified. If successful at the final assessment interview the candidate will be awarded with their pathway's designation. A suite of pathway guides is available to support you and the candidate through their assessment. These guides help to put individual competencies into the context of the candidate's surveying area and provide sector-specific guidance. You can download the pathway guide you will need at [rics.org/pathway](https://rics.org/pathway)

## APC structured candidates

APC structured candidates will complete 12 or 24 months' structured training before progressing to the final assessment interview. The structured training is in place to enable the candidate to demonstrate how they have gained the skills and abilities needed to perform specific tasks or functions as required by the competencies for their pathway.

### Your role

Your role as a counsellor is to plan the training programme, monitor the progress and guide the candidate throughout their training period. Candidates, or their employer, may also choose to appoint a supervisor, ideally selecting someone who has day-to-day responsibility for them and knows their work well. In such cases, you, the candidate and the supervisor should all work in partnership.

Supervisor guidance is available on the next page.

### Your approach

Candidates need to gain experience that can be used to demonstrate the competencies. Your approach should be to plan their development and review their progress as they work towards preparing their submissions.

### Your activities

- Read the relevant candidate guide and chosen pathway guide.
- Help the candidate choose the appropriate pathway and competencies on enrolment.
- Support, guide and encourage the candidate.
- Plan and monitor their continuing professional development (CPD).
- Discuss whether they need additional experience or training and agree who will organise it and how they will gain it.
- At quarterly reviews use both their diary and logbook to assess them against their competencies and review their overall progress. Judge what competencies they have achieved and when.
- At mid-year reviews work with your candidate to update the summary of experience template and review the logbook. Liaise with the candidate, and the supervisor if they have one, and agree progress and focus for the coming months.
- Discuss the topic for their case study. What project have they worked on in the last 24 months that best demonstrates their analytical ability and ability to give sound professional advice?
- Advise and guide your candidate to help them in preparing for the final assessment presentation and interview.
- Check all the relevant documentation is included in the final assessment submissions.
- Conduct a mock interview to help them prepare for the type of questions they may get asked.

## Supervisor guidance

It is best practice to appoint a supervisor for APC structured candidates. Some counsellors may also be the supervisor for their candidates.

If you are appointed as a supervisor, you will need to complete the following tasks/activities to support your candidate through to their assessment:

- Read the relevant candidate guide and chosen pathway guide
- Help the candidate choose appropriate competencies on enrolment
- Support, guide and encourage the candidate
- Plan their continuing professional development – CPD
- Give guidance on how to capture their experience in a diary to transfer into their summary of experience and log book
- Regularly review the log book. Are the competency references correct? Are they claiming too many days or not enough?
- Help the candidate interpret the competencies to ensure that they receive credit for all activities carried out
- Assess your candidate against the competencies every three months, updating their summary of experience template and log book
- At the halfway point, review progress with the counsellor and the candidate
- With the counsellor, assess whether the candidate has achieved the competency requirements of their specific pathway and has all the relevant evidence for the final assessment submissions
- Support and guide the candidate on the case study layout and topic. Read it with them a number of times to guide them. Make sure they check it for grammatical and spelling errors
- Prior to final assessment, discuss the candidate's progress and readiness with the counsellor. Complete the summary of experience
- If the candidate has been referred, agree a plan of action that will allow the candidate to remedy the deficient areas as identified in their referral report. Work closely with them to help them build confidence and understand the reasons for the referral.

## Assessing progress

A key element of any supporting role is the assessment of your candidate's progress against the chosen pathway competencies. Your in-depth knowledge and understanding of these competencies is therefore vital to the successful management of the training period. The competency-based approach, while still assessing what people know, also assesses what they can do. You have to ensure that your candidate not only has the knowledge and understanding but can also put this into practice.

If you are the candidate's manager you will already be doing much of what is required to assess them, using similar skills to those for appraising staff:

- be aware of how they are performing in day-to-day activities, assessing competencies such as working in a team, problem solving and working to deadlines
- look at work they have produced, learning more about their technical and professional knowledge and understanding
- ask questions about why they chose a particular approach, exploring their knowledge and understanding – this will help in developing their case studies and prepare them for their interview
- ask about the wider implications of their work, testing their understanding of the whole work environment.

From this you can begin to form a judgement of how well they are doing. The point at which they are competent, to level 2, is when you are confident that they can carry out an activity without supervision to a standard that is acceptable to you and for level 3, that they are able to give sound professional advice.

Candidates need guidance and support to get the most out of their training programme. This is particularly important where you have reviewed their progress and have decided they are not yet competent. The candidate requires clear guidance on where they need to develop. They may not realise there is a problem and miss out on a learning opportunity. These issues should be dealt with at the three/six monthly reviews.

## APC prelim candidates

APC Prelim candidates will be able to prepare their submissions as soon as they enrol. An independent review of their submission is required to determine if they have provided suitable evidence to be assessed at interview. However, it should not be assumed that candidates can be approved in all competencies immediately, either for preliminary review or final assessment.

### Your role

Your role as a counsellor is to ensure they have suitable experience to demonstrate achievement of the required levels in the selected competencies for their pathway. You may not have personal knowledge of the candidate's experience in all the chosen competencies as they may have achieved some of them a number of years ago, and possibly in a different job. As a counsellor, you must gain knowledge of the candidate's work: this knowledge may be built up through discussion and questioning with the candidate and any previous employers (where possible).

### Your approach

Candidates need to understand how they can apply their experience to the competencies and establish if they need to enhance any of their experience. Your approach should be to review their experience and plan any development before they begin to prepare their submissions.

### Your activities

- Discuss the candidate's career, relevant experience, chosen pathway and the most appropriate competencies that reflect the work that the candidate does in their day-to-day environment.
- With your candidate review their self-assessment against the core and optional competencies for their chosen pathway.
- Agree the most appropriate way of gaining the necessary experience where any competency shortfalls are identified.
- Discuss the candidate's continuing professional development (CPD) activities during the last 12 months and agree a plan for future CPD.
- Regularly meet to review their progress against all the competencies and the development of their submission documents.
- Discuss the topic for their case study. What project have they worked on in the last 24 months that best demonstrates their analytical ability and ability to give sound professional advice?
- Before they submit for their preliminary review, ensure you are confident in the candidate's skills and ability and that their submission meets the stated requirements.
- Advise and guide your candidate to help them in preparing for the final assessment presentation and interview.
- Check all the relevant documentation is included in the final assessment submissions.
- Conduct a mock interview to help them prepare for the type of questions they may get asked.

## Senior Professional and Specialist candidates

Senior Professional and Specialist candidates will be able to prepare their submissions as soon as they enrol. Their profile is reviewed to confirm they have the appropriate experience for the assessment. However, it should not be assumed that candidates can be approved for final assessment in all competencies immediately.

### Your role

Your role as a counsellor is to ensure they have suitable experience to demonstrate achievement of the required levels in the selected competencies for their pathway. You may not have personal knowledge of the candidate's experience in all the chosen competencies as they may have achieved some of them a number of years ago, and possibly in a different job. As a counsellor, you must gain knowledge of the candidate's work: this knowledge may be built up through discussion and questioning with the candidate and any previous employers (where possible).

### Your approach

Candidates need to understand how they can apply their experience to the competencies. They are likely to have the evidence to support them in the final assessment interview but may need support to present this within the competency framework. Your approach should be on a peer-to-peer basis, advising them on identifying appropriate evidence to prepare their submissions.

### Your activities

- Discuss the candidate's career, relevant experience, chosen pathway and the most appropriate competencies that reflect the candidate's position and day-to-day work environment.
- Review the candidate's experience in relation to the senior or specialist competency requirements.
- Discuss the candidate's continuing professional development (CPD) activities during the last 12 months and any planned CPD.
- Regularly meet to review their progress against all the competencies and the development of their submission documents.
- Discuss the topics for their case studies. What projects have they worked on in the last three years' that best demonstrate their analytical ability and ability to give sound professional advice?
- Advise and guide your candidate to help them in preparing for the final assessment presentation and interview.
- Check all the relevant documentation is included in the final assessment submissions.
- Conduct a mock interview to help them prepare for the type of questions they may get asked.

## Preparing for final assessment

It is the responsibility of the counsellor to ensure that the candidate is competent in all the required areas and to the required levels before applying for the final assessment. Candidates must not come forward for final assessment too early – this is the most common reason for candidates being referred.

The final assessment interview is primarily competency based and your candidate will need specific skills for this. It is extremely important that you plan this with the candidate, ensure that they have a good working and well-rounded knowledge of their APC pathway, RICS ethics and standards as well as detailed experience of the core and selected optional competencies. As part of your preparation time ensure you support your candidate with the softer skills too. Good interview techniques and presentation skills are as important as the technical skills.

### Ethics module

All candidates are also required to successfully complete the RICS online ethics module prior to final assessment. This is made up of three elements:

1. The ethical standards and what they mean
2. Real life ethical scenarios that members have faced
3. A 20 question multiple choice test.

### Judging the evidence

Think about the type of evidence that will best demonstrate your candidate's competence [for example reports, valuations, correspondence]. Base your decisions on actual evidence of work produced rather than their ability to talk about what they do. Competency-based assessment is about the candidate being able to operate under normal work pressures, such as interruptions and tight deadlines. It is also about having interpersonal skills, communication and being part of a team. The best way to judge this is to observe them in their normal working day if possible or through detailed discussions. Be objective in your assessments and give your candidate honest and reasoned advice.

The main ways to assess candidates are:

- Observation in the natural course of your work and theirs
- Examination of their work, asking them questions about their work and the decisions they make
- Speaking to other people who know their work for confirmation of their abilities.

When looking at the work produced by your candidate, find out what they did themselves and which aspects were done by teamwork, leadership, management or delegation. The following questions will help determine whether they have met the competencies or not.

- Is the work they have produced relevant to the competencies they are claiming?
- Is it sufficient? Are you sure they could do this again in similar circumstances?
- Are they drawing upon current experience? If the examples they are using are not current, can they still complete the task accurately and professionally?

For some of the competencies, you should have enough recent knowledge of your candidate's work to be able to judge from personal experience. However, they may tell you that some of the competencies were achieved in the past, perhaps ten years ago or more. For these competencies, you will have to form a judgement based on your discussions with them – you may feel you have to ask some probing questions to assure yourself that the candidate's experience is of sufficiently high quality and is using current practices and legislation.

The candidate must be competent in all the required competencies to the required levels before applying for final assessment. If you use a variety of assessment methods and get to know their work over a period of time you will be able to make a sound judgement.

You should test your candidate on the progressive levels of competency and rehearse with them the 10-minute presentation they will have to deliver at the final assessment interview.

## Submission standards

RICS stands for the highest standards of professionalism. A candidate's submissions for interview must reflect this. Unsatisfactory submissions give a severe disadvantage and greatly reduce the chances of success at interview; RICS will not proceed with the interview unless you as the candidate's counsellor are satisfied that the candidate has reached the necessary levels of competence and that the documents presented for final assessment are of suitable quality.

## Your declaration as a counsellor

Your candidate cannot apply for final assessment until you have certified that, in your opinion, they have reached a level of proficiency that justifies attending the final assessment.

When you approve a candidate as ready for the final assessment interview in the Assessment Resource Centre (ARC), you are confirming that not only can the candidate do the task in their current organisation but, allowing for minor differences, could also do so in another organisation. Most importantly, you are confirming that you consider this candidate to be suitable to become a chartered surveyor who will uphold the rigorous standards of RICS. You are signing a declaration in your capacity as an RICS member and as such you are bound by the RICS ethical principles and rules of conduct.

## Supporting the referred candidate

Your support and guidance will be of great importance to a referred candidate. Ask them to write a few notes about their experience in relation to the interview and the referral report contents. When you meet, adopt a counselling style of interview.

Help them understand the outcome of the assessment and accept the reality of the situation. They must take ownership of the outcome and either accept the result and not seek to blame anyone else or [if you feel that there are grounds for an appeal] provide you with evidence to support an appeal.

You and your candidate must agree how to address the deficiencies identified in the referral report. Take the time to do this thoroughly, both you and your candidate need to be confident that you have a plan that will help them to gain any further experience and development necessary to reach the standard required when they reapply.

To be eligible for re-assessment candidates should:

- complete some further relevant professional experience
- continue to complete their CPD
- resubmit or update their case study or prepare a new case study [or case studies]
- update any other elements of their submission.

The candidate will attend another final assessment interview in the normal manner. A holistic approach will be taken and the candidate will be reassessed on all the requirements of the assessment including all the competencies required for their chosen pathway.



## Confidence through professional standards

RICS promotes and enforces the highest professional qualifications and standards in the valuation, development and management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our name positive change in the built and natural environments.

### Americas

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