

Topic: Qualification and entry to the profession

Introduction and background

Entry standards and processes for all grades of membership are critical to ensuring confidence in the profession. They provide the gateway to membership, ensuring individuals have the right knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours at the point of entry.

To maintain trust and confidence in the competence and standards of our professionals, we must ensure that:

1. skills and competencies are relevant to industry, employers, and the public
2. routes to entry are attractive and accessible
3. assessment standards are fair, transparent, rigorous, and properly controlled, and
4. education and training supports competencies required at entry and for lifelong learning.

The current process for assessing knowledge, skills and experience for MRICS, AssocRICS, and FRICS includes the following activities:

- accreditation of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes at partner universities
- ensuring our 22 technical pathways, 123 competencies and 18 Chartered Designations are up-to-date
- ensuring eligibility requirements are appropriate for a diverse and inclusive profession supporting people from all backgrounds, experiences and at different career stages into membership
- reviewing and evaluating routes to membership from similar organisations, including those with whom we have arrangements with, to ensure consistent standards of entry and
- ensuring the policies and procedures for c.7,000 assessments that take place each year are applied consistently and stand up to external scrutiny.

Lifelong learning is increasingly important as RICS professionals recognise the need to maintain, develop and enhance competencies throughout their careers. Technology and the role of data in our sector is also evolving at a rapid pace, diminishing the importance of some traditional professional roles and creating demand for new specialisms. These drivers of change mean we must review and evaluate our education and qualifications frameworks to ensure they remain relevant now and in the future.

Competence

As technology enables the profession to move up the value chain, we know that technology, data, and sustainability competencies – and non-technical competencies such as resilience, emotional intelligence, and the ability to collaborate – will become more important. These changes mean 'entry' qualifications are unlikely to provide the necessary skills and competencies that will be needed throughout a member's career; some of the knowledge and skills used today will be obsolete. We will review pathways and competencies, and review our CPD model, to ensure they remain relevant and competent.

The ethics assessment, which all members are required to pass, will be revised in 2021 and will support the revised Rules of Conduct once they are approved. The new assessment will continue to be an online multiple-choice exam. It will include new content contextualised for professionals working in land/rural, built environment/construction, and valuation sectors.

Complexity of routes to entry

We know that the number of pathways, assessment types, and chartered designations is confusing for candidates, members and employers.

The introduction of apprenticeships and Technical-levels (T-Levels) in the UK have created new routes to professional qualification and supported those into the profession who otherwise may not have chosen a career in the natural and built environment. However, we can do more to ensure our entry routes can better reflect different education backgrounds and work experiences.

The changing roles of our professionals is evident in the structure of apprenticeships and how they lead to professional qualification as an Associate (AssocRICS) and MRICS. However, the 'bridge' between AssocRICS and MRICS is complex and, for many, difficult to achieve.

For all routes to professional qualification, the focus should be on the outcomes of a rigorous and robust assessment and, while still important, should not be weighted towards prior education or training.

Consistent assessment standards

The summative MRICS final assessment interview approach is increasingly out of step with best practice, is subjective, and relies significantly on members to volunteer their time to support the assessment process. We must ensure assessment outcomes are valid, reliable and consistent. Members volunteer considerable time and effort to support the assessment processes; however, providing training and support to assessors, and ensuring there are enough available assessors to assess each candidate, is increasingly difficult as more candidates come forward for assessment and work requirements limit assessor availability.

A modular, stepped approach to assessment could address these challenges, and at the same time improve candidates' experience of the assessment process. Reviewing assessment methods will ensure assessments are fair and valid; and that assessment outcomes are consistent across pathways, assessment routes, and countries.

Changing approaches to education and training

Traditional, 'career-path' routes to professional qualification are increasingly questioned and challenged. In some countries, employers and school-leavers are questioning the value of a standalone degree course compared to structured learning and qualification while employed. The industry is developing a broader and deeper requirement for professionally qualified individuals rather than simply qualifications aimed at the higher, traditional 'professional' end of the range.

One of the most-used routes to professional qualification is the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) after graduation from an accredited degree. We apply strict criteria to

accredit undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. In January 2019 we announced new requirements that education programmes are required to be accredited.

As universities have adapted to online learning and new ways of delivering education content, we are reviewing the criteria and requirements we use to accredit university degree programmes. We will also consider how we work with universities that aren't accredited to promote careers in the natural and built environment, and how we charge for university accreditation in some countries.

Particular attention should be given to how we support candidates in the early stages of their professional qualification/APC. This could focus on inductions/introductions to the assessment requirements, and professional and technical competency training. These training programmes could also support members once they have qualified with their professional development, for example in emerging areas of practise, important legal developments, or management and leadership in the built environment.

Questions

1. Should entry to RICS membership continue to require sign-off/assessment of:
 - a) prior education?
 - b) a period of relevant, 'signed-off' training?
 - c) a fit and proper person requirement, including ethics assessment?
 - d) a robust and valid assessment of technical competence?
2. Should accreditation of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes continue to provide exemptions for graduates from the professional qualification requirements?
3. Does the MRICS assessment interview provide trust and confidence in a consistently high standard of qualified entrants to the profession, globally across all markets and specialisms?
4. Should there be a greater alignment and better progression process between AssocRICS and MRICS?
5. Does the number of pathways and competencies reflect current practise?

If you ticked 'no' please explain:



6. Does the number of pathways and competencies create unnecessary complexity in the assessment process?

If you ticked 'no' please explain: (*Free text*)

7. In the APC, should the Counsellor:
 - a) sign off technical and professional competence prior to assessment? (Yes/No)
 - b) provide information and guidance on the assessment requirements? (Yes/No)
8. Should new methods of assessment be considered that allow candidates to 'bank' competency achievement in a modular way during the assessment process?
9. Should RICS focus on setting and assessing competencies *only*, or set and assess competencies, and provide training to candidates to support their competency development?
10. Should knowledge and competency training align to a recognised, national qualifications framework?
11. Are there any other comments you wish to make that will help in our review of education and qualifications frameworks?
12. Do you give RICS permission to publish your responses?

Where possible, please respond in English through our [iconsult platform](#). If you would prefer to respond in another language please email any completed forms to review2021@rics.org