

Report on Professional Review Interview (PRI) Session 2009 for Chartered and Associate-Membership

Introduction

The Institution is committed to maintaining their standards and fully recognises the importance of assisting and supporting candidates in preparing for the PRI.

The Applications & Professional Review Panel has over 10 years of experience in the development and management of the PRI system and has produced an annual report highlighting the issues pertaining to the processing of applications and the arrangement of the Interviews that were experienced during 2009. It is hoped that candidates will find the report and the additional guidance helpful in avoiding potential pitfalls and enable candidates to produce a quality submission.

It is envisaged that the quality of submission will continue to improve over the years as candidates have access to additional and improved guidance documents. It is also hoped that there will be an increasing pool of experienced members who will be able to guide candidates through the IPD regulations and therefore candidates will identify and rectify problems prior to submitting the application.

The issues listed below are just a few of the matters discussed in the full report which may be downloaded from the Institution's website;

http://www.istructe.org/membership/already_a_member/IPD/Pages/default.aspx

Numbers applying

Associate-Membership

- 27 applications were received in the 2009 session. This compares with 32 in 2008.
- 5 candidates failed the Interview; this represents a pass rate of 81.48% which is in line with expectations.

Chartered Membership

- 454 applications were received in the 2009 session. This compares with 417 in 2008.
- 81 candidates failed the Interview; this represents a pass rate of 81.06% which is in line with expectations.

Minor Issues

- The Institution experienced minor delays in receiving applications due to the Royal Mail industrial action.

Although we recognise that the postal disruption experienced in 2009 may be a one-off occurrence it is clear that candidates are not preparing their submissions well in advance to allow for possible delays/extenuating circumstances. We generally recommend that candidates submit their applications at least two weeks ahead of the stipulated deadlines.

The deadlines for AM and CM candidates applying through the standard route are as follows:

- *Candidates residing in Hong Kong - 1st April of each year*
 - *Candidates residing outside Hong Kong - 1st September of each year*
- Some candidates failed to submit certified copies of their degree certificates. In the majority of those cases the candidate simply did not obtain the signature of a Supporter or independent party on the copy of the certificate to confirm that it was a true and authentic copy of the original.

However, in two cases the candidates actually signed the certificate themselves. In all cases the secretariat wrote to the candidates to request appropriately certified copies of the certificates.

- Some candidates did not submit the appropriate application fee/Professional Review Interview fee - although this was a considerable improvement on last year.

Please refer to the links below for details on the appropriate fees:

<http://www.istructe.org/membership/grades/Pages/Associate-Member.aspx>

<http://www.istructe.org/membership/grades/Pages/CharteredMember.aspx>

- Eleven candidates (applying for Chartered membership) did not obtain the Support of a Fellow of the Institution and their applications were therefore considered by the Applications and Professional Review Panel. The Panel agreed that eight of the eleven candidates should seek the requisite Supporters as the Panel considered their reasons for failing to secure appropriate support inadequate. The reasons given by the remaining three candidates – usually involving locations where the Institution does not have many or any members – were considered sufficient to allow the applications to progress.

It is a requirement that Chartered membership applications are supported by three members of the Institution holding the appropriate grade of membership. In situations where candidates do not know sufficient, appropriately qualified members a number of options can be explored. Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions on the website below:

<http://www.istructe.org/membership/Pages/Applications.aspx>

- A small number of candidates had previously been removed from the membership roll. Upon receipt of the M Form the secretariat were required to reinstate such members. This obviously creates a delay in processing the forms.

Such candidates should seek reinstatement at the earliest opportunity; preferably by 1st April.

- Seven candidates' academic qualifications were not accredited/recognised by the Institution and such candidates were therefore required to apply for an academic assessment before being allowed to apply for the PRI.

This creates problems for the branches/divisions as they plan for the PRI a year in advance and have to accommodate late submissions. Such candidates should submit their Graduate application (if not already a Graduate) by 1st April.

Major Issues

- A small number of candidates provided incorrect communication details on their application forms resulting in their submissions being sent to incorrect Branches/Divisions.
- A number of candidates did not inform secretariat of holidays or business commitments at the time of application.

This causes problems for branches/divisions in arranging and conducting late Interviews. We recommend that candidates keep their schedules open from mid October to December. Should this not be possible candidates must enclose a covering letter with their submission indicating the dates that they will be unavailable and we will try our best to accommodate them. We will of course notify candidates of their Interview date as soon as possible.

- In one case, a candidate applied but then moved without notifying HQ. This resulted in delays in arranging the Interview and the candidate was at risk of not being able to enter the Examination assuming success at Interview.
- A small number of candidates ticked that they had achieved a standard in a Core Objective below the minimum required. They were contacted by the secretariat to provide amended forms.

Ensure that you refer to/are using the most current [IPD Regulations](#) available on the website when preparing your application.

- Although the candidate's mentors had signed the form, many of the mentors had failed to write any supporting comments whatsoever. Although the mentors are under no obligation to write supporting comments the candidates were advised that the lack of mentor's comments was disappointing and did not help the Reviewers in forming a judgement on the candidate's ability.
- The two-page experience reports were occasionally very general and did not identify employers the candidates had worked for or the periods of employment. They were also on occasion far in excess of two-pages. The secretariat advised candidates to amend their experience reports if they did not contain sufficient details or if they were excessively long.
- Many of the IPD Final Report Forms were too general. Candidates were advised to resubmit revised forms showing HOW they have satisfied the Objective. Too many candidates failed to highlight specific projects they had worked on, or specific activities they had undertaken, which had allowed them to develop an appropriate Appreciation/Knowledge/Experience/Ability. A number of candidates chose to resubmit forms, though some did not.

Examples of completed IPD Final Report Forms can be found by clicking on the link below:

http://www.istructe.org/membership/already_a_member/IPD/Documents/IPD_Final_Report_Form_Examples.pdf

This document is generic and should be seen as guidance only and not prescriptive.

- A number of candidates applied through an inappropriate route and still seemed confused regarding the options available to them. Candidates were contacted to advise them of this misunderstanding and the vast majority of candidates resubmitted their applications.

There are three routes for demonstrating achievement of IPD:

- a) Individually Managed IPD - Where IPD is individually managed, each candidate is responsible for managing their own training with the assistance of a personal mentor.*
- b) Accredited Training Schemes - The Institution does not accredit company training schemes but candidates following comparable training schemes accredited by other bodies (e.g. ICE, HKIE) will be considered to be acceptable in meeting the IPD requirements of the Institution.*
- c) Retrospectively Collated IPD - There will be situations where candidates wishing to apply for membership have not followed either the individually managed route or a training scheme.*

For full descriptions of the routes please refer to pages 4 and 5 of the IPD regulations:

http://www.istructe.org/membership/Documents/IPD_ASSOCIATE_MEMBER.pdf

http://www.istructe.org/membership/Documents/IPD_CHARTERED_MEMBER.pdf

Summary

It should be noted that in previous years a significant number of these applications would have been returned to the candidates as they were incomplete/incorrect. The secretariat this year has made extensive efforts to advise candidates of deficiencies in their submissions and has given candidates every opportunity to address the problems and improve the quality of their application.

This will hopefully make the process of reviewing the candidates easier for the Reviewers and will show an improved level of service for our potential members. However, it should be noted that providing this level of service to candidates may delay the processing of forms.

For any further information relating to the PRI and Exam, please refer to the FAQ document on the website: <http://www.istructe.org/membership/Pages/FAQs.aspx>.

Commonly failed Core Objectives

Having undertaken a review of the Summary Report Forms (Interview notes) for candidates that failed the Interview, the following three Core Objectives were identified as the ones that candidates were failing most frequently. In order to highlight areas of common weakness, a brief report on each of these Objectives is given below. The details provided are for guidance only and should not be viewed as a comprehensive set of reasons for failure at the Interview.

2.1 – Conceptual Design

The Reviewer's stated that many failures in this Objective were due to the candidates being unable to adequately describe the full effects of alternative scheme designs and or/produce viable structural solutions; in some cases understanding of conceptual design was shallow and lacked sufficient breadth. Furthermore, some candidates were only involved with elements of the scheme and could not therefore demonstrate understanding of overall scheme designs.

2.2 – Analysis and Design

A number of candidates could not demonstrate understanding of the basic principles and were therefore unable to show ability in the analysis and design of structural forms. Some candidates were perceived to be over reliant on computer software and consequently could not elucidate design assumptions and limitations of the software they used.

2.5 – Construction Techniques

The Reviewers' main concern with this Objective was a lack of breadth of experience. Many candidates required more experience of dealing with site issues across a range of structures as their experience was limited to only a small number of specific structure.