

Report on Professional Review Interview (PRI) Session 2013 for Chartered, Associate-Membership and Technician.

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 undertaken during 2013. It is hoped that candidates will find the report and the additional guidance helpful in avoiding potential pitfalls and enable candidates to produce an appropriate submission.

The quality of submissions has improved over recent years as candidates have access to additional and improved guidance documents which has led to a reduction in the number of problems encountered when processing applications. It is worth noting that the publication of likely interview dates appears to have had a positive effect on both candidates and the regional groups as both are now able to focus on a select few dates and can therefore plan their time more effectively.

It is 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.

Numbers applying

Technician membership

- 17 applications were received in the 2013 session.
- 1 candidate failed the interview; this represents a pass rate of 94.1%.

Associate-Membership

- 24 applications were received in the 2013 session.
- 2 candidates failed the Interview; this represents a pass rate of 91.7%.

Chartered membership

- 378 applications were received in the 2013 session.
- 82 candidates failed the Interview; this represents a pass rate of 78.3%.

Commonly identified problems

- A significant number of candidates failed to sign the application form. In these cases the candidates were contacted to request the signed application form causing delays in processing and disseminating the applications.
- Some candidates failed to submit certified copies of their qualification certificates when applying for Graduate/Student-Employed membership at the same time as Chartered, Associate-membership or Technician membership.
- There have been occasions where qualification certificates have been submitted but the candidate 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.
- Although the candidate's mentors signed the form, many of the mentors failed to write any supporting comments whatsoever.

Although mentors are under no obligation to write supporting comments the lack of mentor's comments was disappointing and did not help the reviewers in forming a judgement on the candidate's ability. Mentors are encouraged to visit our Mentoring page on the website for general guidance, etc. - www.istructe.org/careers-and-development/mentoring

- Two-page experience reports were 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.
- A significant number of supporters are lapsed causing delays in processing/releasing results whilst the candidates find new supporters.
- Some candidates applying for 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 in the majority of these cases 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 candidates – usually involving locations where the Institution does not have many or any members – were considered sufficient to allow the applications to progress.
- Similarly, some candidates obtained the signatures of members of other institutions, e.g. ICE. In both cases this meant staff had to contact candidates to request appropriate signatures and hence delays in processing applications occurred.

It is a requirement when applying to any grade of professional membership that applications are supported by members of the Institution holding the appropriate grade(s) of membership. In situations where candidates do not know sufficient, appropriately qualified members they should contact their regional group for advice and assistance.

- A small number of candidates had previously been removed from the membership roll. Upon receipt of the application form the secretariat were required to contact such members with details of how to reinstate their membership. This obviously creates a delay in processing the forms.

Such candidates should seek reinstatement at the earliest opportunity; preferably by 1 April of the year in which they wish to apply.

- Several 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 Regional Groups as they plan for the PRI a year in advance and have to accommodate late submissions. Such candidates should submit their Graduate/Student-Employed application (if not already a Graduate/Student-Employed) by 1 January the year in which they wish to apply for Hong Kong candidates and 1 April of the year in which they wish to apply for the rest of the world candidates.

- A number of inappropriate portfolios were submitted, either in terms of size or content. Often reviewers will contact candidates and request alterations; many candidates do so without causing problems, some are more intransigent. Regardless, this causes delays and increases the workload of the reviewers unnecessarily as candidates could avoid these problems if they followed the (extensive) guidelines properly.

The current portfolio guidance is within the IPD regulations for each grade of professional membership. The guidance stipulates that the portfolio must not exceed 40 mm depth (single-sided) or 25 mm depth (double-sided).

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 continues to make 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.

Commonly failed core objectives

Having undertaken a review of the summary report forms (interview notes) for candidates that failed the interview, the following four 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 reviewers 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 only had an awareness of elements of the scheme and could not therefore demonstrate understanding of overall scheme designs. Too often candidates are working under supervision which should not be the case with Ability level objectives.

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. As with conceptual design, candidates are often still supervised rather than working independently.

2.3 – Materials

Reviewers indicated that some candidates lacked depth of ability with respect to particular materials or breadth of knowledge across the range of traditional materials (timber, masonry, steel and concrete). There was also concern with regard to candidate's ability to coordinate/specify materials generally.

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 and/or areas as their experience was limited to only a small number of specific structures or issues.