20 Top Tips for starting and finishing your APC

by Jon Lever FRICS

1 Become a member of RICS
   Before you are eligible to start your APC, you can sign up for free Student Membership of RICS and receive a membership number which gives you instant access to the RICS web site which contains a wealth of knowledge and other membership services. When you start the APC your status will change to ‘Trainee Surveyor’.

2 Understand the APC process
   Get the RICS APC Guides from www.rics.org. Make sure that you have read and fully understand them as about a quarter of the candidates I have assessed have in part been referred because they don't properly understand the APC process. You should be reading them at least once every 3 to 4 months. Candidates from outside the UK also need to check the differences in the APC for their world region, see the RICS web site for details.

Extra help
FREE APC Timeline Wallchart
FREE APC Update
myAPC Diary
APC Masterclass, The APC Explained
APC Masterclass, The Professional Experience Route Explained

3 Get a relevant job
   You can only start your APC if you are employed in a relevant surveying role, gaining the experience expected for the pathway you intend to follow. It is also beneficial if your employer is committed and willing to provide you with a Structured Training Plan. RICS Training Advisors (RTA) can assist and advise employers regarding any aspect of the APC process. Find your RTA at www.rics.org.

Extra help
DeLever APC Structured Training Programme for employers
RICS provides a recruitment service

4 Get a supervisor and counsellor
   Depending on your APC route, you will need a supervisor and/or a counsellor to mentor you through the APC process. Whilst it is vitally important for you to take responsibility for your APC and career, a supervisor and/or counsellor should advise, guide and support you. Make sure they have the relevant, up to date APC Guides and that they are aware of their role and responsibilities. They should be supporting you with guiding you towards the correct experience, monitoring your progress and signing off your competency achievement.

Extra help
Your RICS regional office, RTAs, APC Mentors, RICS matrics
myAPC Diary - saves over 60% of APC admin
APC Masterclass - The APC Process Explained
APC Masterclass - Professional Experience Route (PER) Explained

5 Understand the competencies
   At the final assessment you will need to demonstrate to the assessors that your full and detailed understanding (Level1) of each declared competency has enabled you to seek out and gain experience (Level 2) and the opportunity to advise (Level 3). The APC Guides provide explanation of the competency requirements / options for each pathway. Your supervisor and counsellor should help you interpret each competency and discuss the experience available to help you achieve your competency goals. If you have questions about the specific competencies that you and/or your supervisor and counsellor are unsure about then you could contact and discuss your queries with an RICS APC Mentor from your pathway.

Extra help
Details of APC Mentors can be found on the RICS web site
APC Masterclass - The APC Process Explained
APC Masterclass - Professional Experience Route (PER) Explained
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6 Understand the Levels
Unfortunately most the candidates I meet do not understand the competency levels:
Level 1 - This is all about LEARNING. Do not try and define the competency or regurgitate the APC Pathway guide text, as so many candidates seem to do! Remember you are trying to demonstrate to the assessors that you have reviewed the requirements in the APC Pathway guide with your supervisor and counsellor, and have researched, undertaken and achieved the required learning. Also, remember not to talk about your project experience examples in this level, unless you wish to refer to the learning you have reinforced through your experience.
Level 2 - This is all about DOING. This needs to be a focused description of the depth and breadth of your experience and one or two (if you can fit it into the word count) examples of your experience relevant to this competency.
Level 3 - This is all about ADVISING. This needs to be a description of the depth and breadth of your experience and specifically where you have been advising clients, colleagues and anyone else of relevance. Remember, the ability to advise effectively comes from having had a large amount of varied experience, relevant to your declared competencies.
Extra help
myAPC Diary - saves over 60% of APC admin
APC Masterclass - The APC Explained
APC Masterclass - Professional Experience Route Explained

7 Get stuck in
The APC is your career so you need to take control and get stuck in. Far too often I hear candidates expecting to be offered everything when it is really much better for the candidate to drive the process forward. You should continuously be seeking opportunities for developing your knowledge, experience and that offer Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
Extra help
myAPC Diary - saves over 60% of APC admin
FREE APC Timeline Wallchart
FREE APC Update

8 Keep your documentation up to date
As the APC is based on your competency experience it is hard to know whether you are on track if your diary and log book are not up to date. It is a good idea to write up your diary and log book weekly, including a detailed description regarding your experience. We suggest writing a sentence or two for each diary entry, sufficient to remind you about what you were doing. This will help you identify any competency experience where you are deficient. Don’t forget to maintain regular communication with your employer so you can discuss ways to tailor your experience to fill the gaps. Your diary is an important document and may be requested by your APC assessment panel, so make sure you keep it up to date.
Extra help
myAPC Diary - saves over 60% of APC admin

9 Get involved with the RICS
It is important that you get involved with the RICS for your APC development as well as building up contacts. Good networking opportunities can be found at RICS events and RICS matrices. Don’t forget, you will be able to record this sort of activity on the most part as CPD.
Extra help
See www.rics.org/matrics for more information or RICS matrices groups.

10 Record your Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
You need to achieve a minimum of 48 hours CPD for Graduate routes 1 and 2, or 20 hours for Graduate route 3 and Professional Experience in every 12 months of recorded experience. Read the APC Candidate’s Guide to fully understand how to record your CPD, including how to allocate formal and informal CPD against each entry.
Extra help
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APC Masterclass - The APC Explained
APC Masterclass - Professional Experience Route (PER) Explained

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11 Choose a suitable project / topic for your Case Study
The Case Study has the opportunity to effectively showcase the key elements of your competency knowledge and experience. The project/topic you base it on should be broad enough to demonstrate that you have the depth and breadth of experience required for your declared competencies. Your Case Study will become the basis of your Final Assessment ten minute presentation and the assessors will take time to read and question you on it.

Extra help
The APC Candidate’s Guide describes what your Case Study should include and suggests relevant section headings. Also see the DeLever Case Study template
APC Masterclass - The Case Study

12 Write your Case Study in good time
Give yourself sufficient time to produce the Case Study. Based upon a 24 month APC training process, I suggest starting the outline and draft of your Case Study at about month 15 and having a final draft by month 18. Discuss it with your supervisor and counsellor each step of the way. Ask at least ten people (try and make sure three of them are not surveyors) to read it over for you and comment, well before the Pre-submission deadline. This will help you to remove any technical errors and ensure that it is a clear, logical read, that it flows and is professionally presented.

Extra help
APC Masterclass - The Case Study
APC Timeline Wallchart - FREE

13 Only attempt the APC Final Assessment if you are ready
When you are eligible to sit your APC Final Assessment don’t just fill in your application and hope for the best, just because you have done the minimum period of training time. Also, don’t be pressured into ‘having a go’ if you don’t feel ready. Remember the final assessment is about competence, not time served. For example, what takes you 3 months to achieve may take another 6 months due to the quality of experience on offer. So, don’t rush and if you have not had the experience, don’t assume you can talk your way around it at the assessment! Invariably you will not get through the Final Assessment if you have not had the full breadth and depth of experience.

Talk it over with your supervisor and counsellor and ask yourself “Do I feel ready?”. If you decide to defer the Final Assessment, please make sure you inform the RICS in good time. If you do not and they are expecting you to attend, you may be classed as not having shown up and may have to pay again to sit your Final Assessment next time.

Extra help
Final Assessment and Competency Revision Workshop
APC Masterclass - The Final Assessment

14 Get your Submission Documentation right first time
Make sure you have collated all of the required submission information; see the check lists available in the RICS template. The RICS will only accept your submission documents between specific dates, these are potentially different depending upon your pathway and world region. Submission is your first opportunity to impress the Final Assessment panel, so make sure you get it right. Once you send your documentation to the RICS you cannot get it back to correct any mistakes. If your submission documentation is poorly produced then you will have a much harder job at Final Assessment to convince the panel that you are professional enough and ready to be a Chartered Surveyor.

Extra help
Final Assessment and Competency Revision Workshop
APC Masterclass - The Submission documents – get yours right

15 Preparing your presentation
Once your Case Study is finished you should focus on developing your 10 minute presentation. I have seen a number of candidates present something different from their Case Study at the final assessment; you will be referred if you do this. If you bring a flipchart or handouts they should look professional. Your notes should be detailed enough to be a useful prompt, but not a script that you read to the assessors. A vital part of your preparation is practice to polish your performance and get your timings right.

Extra help
Final Assessment and Competency Revision Workshop
APC Masterclass - The Final Assessment
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16 Delivering your presentation
You will be required to deliver your ten minute Case Study presentation at the beginning of the Final Assessment Interview. You will be expected to deliver an excellent and professional presentation, with well-produced verbal communication, top quality visual aids (if you are using any) good eye contact, good body language, clarity of thought and structure, professional and polite delivery and ensuring you can demonstrate top quality skill and awareness of the needs of your audience. So often candidates don’t do well here so here is your chance to excel and stand out from the crowd.

Extra help
Final Assessment and Competency Revision Workshop
APC Masterclass - The Final Assessment
Final Assessment Interview

17 Preparing for the Final Assessment day
Sitting the final assessment is stressful, understanding what to expect will help. It is a good idea to visit the assessment centre beforehand and test such things as journey time and parking. You cannot be late for the final assessment! Prepare a checklist so that when you get nervous on the day you don’t forget anything. Absolutely anything in your submission documents can be the basis of questioning during your interview, so make sure you put in the preparation time and regularly review your declared competencies and submission documents.

Extra help
Final Assessment and Competency Revision Workshop
Mock Interview
APC Masterclass - The Final Assessment
Final Assessment Interview

18 Structure of the final assessment
At the assessment centre you must first register with the RICS reception administrators who will direct you to the waiting room. When it’s time, you will be asked to go to your interview room. Usually there are three assessors including the chairman, but there may only be two. The chairman explains the assessment process and then you deliver your presentation, followed by 5 to 10 minutes of questions on your Case Study and presentation. Then 30 minutes of knowledge and experience based questions focussing on your declared competencies. Finally, the chairman covers the RICS Rules of Conduct and Ethics, these can also appear throughout the assessment. At the end of the assessment the chairman will give you the opportunity for any last comments and, if appropriate, revisits any questions that were passed over during the interview. The RICS informs you of the assessment result at a later date.

Extra help
APC Masterclass - The Final Assessment
Final Assessment Interview
Mock Interview

19 Final Assessment questioning
Over the years I have trained over 5,000 RICS members to be APC assessors and chairmen. Part of the training focuses on the issue of competency based questioning. The assessors are expected to provide candidates with clear, concise questions relating to their competency knowledge and experience. You will be asked to explain your understanding, experience, advice and actions and give opinions and generally explain how you would undertake your business professionally. Make sure you have plenty of competency experience project examples to discuss with the assessors. Remember anything you have included in your submission documents could be the basis for a question at the final assessment.

Extra help
Final Assessment and Competency Revision Workshop
Mock Interview
APC Masterclass - The Final Assessment
Final Assessment Interview

20 RICS Rules of Conduct & Ethics
The RICS Rules of Conduct and Global Ethical Standards are paramount to maintaining RICS standards. They set out the requirements of the RICS to ensure that Chartered Surveyors maintain an accountable level of professionalism and service. The Rules of Conduct and Ethics are one of the key areas of APC knowledge and experience that if you get wrong at the final assessment you will be referred. Make sure you have the latest version and discuss the Rules of Conduct and Ethics with your supervisor and counsellor at your 3 monthly meetings; you can probably record this as ‘formal learning’ in your CPD.

Extra help
See www.rics.org/regulation and www.rics.org/ethics
Final Assessment and Competency Revision Workshop
Mock Interview
APC Masterclass - Rule of Conduct
APC Masterclass - Professional Ethics
APC Masterclass - The Final Assessment