Chief Examiner feedback: November 2016 Chartership exams

We are delighted to welcome 70 new Chartered members of the LI, after the LI held its November Chartership exams. 88 people in total took their Chartership exam - 84 Licentiate members, and four members trialling the Experienced Practitioner Route. The overall pass rate has increased from the May sessions, to 80%. Half the people who undertook the trial Experienced Practitioner Route have been awarded Chartered membership.

The Chartership exams give us an opportunity to reflect on what can help Licentiates as they go forward for the exam:

Development logs
Candidates are reminded that their quarterly development packs should be written concisely and reflectively, ensuring that entries link back to the syllabus. The development logs are not the same as revision notes, and shouldn't be treated as such.
Examiners generally focus on the previous two quarters when preparing for the exam. Candidates should be careful of using abbreviations when referring to projects, as this can be confusing for the examiners.
Spell-checking and proof-reading entries prior to submission is strongly advised, as this makes the entries easier to read, and gives the examiners a professional impression.

CVs
The examiners use the CVs to get an overview of each candidate. It is vital that candidates keep these up-to-date, using the LI's CV template. Generic practice CVs do not give the examiners the necessary level of detail about the candidate, and should not be used.

Theoretical knowledge
Examiners do not expect candidates to have direct experience in all areas of the syllabus, and theoretical knowledge and understanding is perfectly acceptable in some areas. However, a number of candidates had little knowledge or understanding beyond their immediate experience, and conveyed the message that they felt it unnecessary to investigate the whole syllabus more widely.

Licentiates are encouraged to gain knowledge and experience outside of their day-to-day work. This could include work shadowing, volunteering, or studying a project another landscape professional has been involved with. Licentiates are also encouraged to view the projects they are working on from other points of view, or hypothetical situations that could have occurred, such as a client requesting changes to an on-site project, or what to do if newts are on your site.
The more Licentiates engage in the active learning process, focusing on how their theoretical knowledge could be applied to real-life situations, the more rewarding a process they will find it. All practitioners are expected to reflect and learn from their practice, and the wider profession, and the Pathway to Chartership is the first step in this process.

Mentors

The amount of time and effort put in by mentors and supervisors to the progress of Licentiates is enormous, and hugely appreciated. New guidance and advice for mentors and supervisors is being developed, to better support these vital volunteers.

Mentors are reminded that giving their candidates an exaggerated high assessment of their knowledge and understanding can disadvantage them when it comes to preparing for the Chartership exam.

No candidates should be demoralised, and having a realistic understanding of which areas need to be improved is very helpful.

Areas of general weakness

Many candidates appeared to struggle with the links between the syllabus areas. The syllabus is not designed for each element to be studied in isolation, and should be considered holistically.

Candidates also seemed to have the least knowledge and understanding of:
- Forms of practice and the duties of employers
- Techniques for assessing the significance and context of landscapes and sites
- Methods of fee calculation, charging and tendering
- Contract administration
- Onsite controls and practical completion

Once again candidates who had actively engaged in study groups and mock exams were often better prepared for the Chartership exam

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Chief Examiners