

An Out Look of the APC – Assessment of Professional Competence By an APC Assessor



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The aim of this article is to provide a brief view and goodness to APC Candidates to be successful in their assessments. The APC is a process by which most of the professional bodies seek to be satisfied those candidates who wish to become members of the institute are competent to practice as professional in their relevance field.

To demonstrate this competence, candidate must firstly go through a period of structured training. The objective of which is to show that the knowledge of theory gained primarily from accredited academic course has been complemented with practical experience. It is not only this but candidates have to prove his achievements of the required professional competencies through a process called final assessment interview.

The “Competence” is to have the ability to perform a task or a function. This ability can vary from being able to be an expert. A competence is also a statement of the capabilities required to perform a specific role and is based upon behaviours, knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is for this reason most of the Professional Institutions have their own assessment of competencies before they grant the professional membership with their respective institutions through an Assessment of Professional Competence, APC.

The competencies should generally have following three levels which are to be achieved by the candidates;

- Level 1** Knowledge and understanding of the subject area.
- Level 2** Application of knowledge /understanding (Use it practically on the ground).
- Level 3** Reasoned advice and/or depth of technical knowledge.

The supervisors, counsellors and the APC assessors will make the judgment as to whether candidates have achieved the required above levels of competence.

The APC is a process by which most of the Professional bodies seeks to be satisfied that candidates who wish to become members of the institute are competent to practice as a professionally qualified quantity surveyor. To demonstrate this competence, candidates must firstly go through a period of structured training. The objective of which is to show that the knowledge of theory gained primarily from QS education of either BSc(QS)/NCT(QS) in Sri Lanka or similar courses has been complemented with practical experience. It is not only this but candidates have to prove their professional competencies through a process called final assessment interview. This route for membership, APC, Assessment of Professional Competence, is generally common to most of the professional quantity surveying institutions.

In brief most of the APC therefore comprises in two parts:

1. A period of structured training. During this period candidates keeps;
 - “Records of Experience” gained in a daily diary form.
 - “Log Book” is a summary of experience of the diary under various competencies.

- “Records of Progress” against the various competencies.
 - “Professional Developments”, or CPD/LLL records for the minimum requirement stipulated by the respective institutions.
2. Final assessment interviews with a panel of three practitioners/assessors over a period of maximum one hour depend on the institution.

During this short period of one hour assessor will not be able to assess the whole range of competence of the candidate. Therefore, it is the duty of the supervisor/counsellor of the candidate to constantly test the competencies of the candidate. In the absence of constant monitoring of progress of the candidate during the structured training period by the supervisor /counsellor most of the candidates have not been able success in the whole APC process. If the counsellor is not confident on the progress of competencies and other areas of the structured training of the candidate shall be advised not to appear for the interviews until such time candidate is fit for the interview.

Competencies can generally be classified to two areas as follows;

1. **Mandatory competencies** - relate to personal, inter-personal, business and professional practice skills etc.
2. **Core competencies** – primary skill of the practice area of the candidate.

These classifications of the competencies may be varied from institute to institute. The standards or levels of competence that candidates are expected to satisfy may also vary from country to country and from institute to Institute.

The structured training is a key element in the APC process. The intention of this is to deliver and receive the training requirements over an agreed period and to the specified levels of competence.

The CPD, It is also important to have continuous professional development, CPD (or Life Long Learning, LLL) programmes as a part of the training period. Depending on the requirements of the institution the candidates have to maintain CPD log for a specific CPD hours fixed by the institution. CPD or LLL provide candidates with the opportunity of gaining Professional

Development, additional knowledge and skills that might not be available in their day to day training and working experience. It may be broadly defined as any activity which is aimed at maintaining or improving professional, technical and personal skills or knowledge. The studying of business management or law may consider as CPD to an extent. Candidates should give serious attention to have continuing professional development through out the structured training period. And it should not consider that at the end of APC it would be the end of CPD. It is a continuing process of the carrier of professionals. Professional development may involve a mix of formal training courses, distance learning programmes and structured reading. CPD or LLL should complement the candidate’s training and experience for:

- **Technical skills development** — linked to the core competencies.
- **Skills development** — linked to specific common competencies.
- **Professional practice skills development** — linked to those competencies associated with professional practice. The CPD/LLL will equally support to enhance the day to day knowledge of the practice in the industry.

It is important that professional development is planned and evaluated by candidates in discussion with their supervisor/counsellor. The candidate shall use CPD to improve his core competence areas or competences which have no much exposure at work place or competences which are lacking behind with candidate’s experience.

The Critical Analysis, a written report which gives a detailed breakdown and analysis of the critical issues of a project(s) with which the candidate has been personally involved during the training period. The objective is to allow candidates to demonstrate their problem solving skill and high standards of professional and technical knowledge. The conclusion of the report must contain a critique of the outcome and also careful consideration of the experience gained. It would give the overall picture of the candidate by analyzing in depth and in detailed of the report.

It is the general trend of the candidates to select two or more issues for the report. However, it could be one critical too. In many cases candidates are trying to select and analyze the contractual issues related to claims and disputes. In my opinion it is not always necessary to select

contractual issues for the report for critical analysis. As examples, it could be a simple issue related to variation, measurement, tendering, selection of tenderers, mode of payments, ambiguity in documents, pricing and correspondences etc. The issues like claims, settlements of disputes, arbitrations are interesting topics and writer-friendly to analyze critically. Other main objective of the report is not the number of issues described in the report by the candidates it is to demonstrate to what extent the candidate has been involved with the issues and how the candidates has handled the issues in his capacity. The logical and factual presentation of the issue(s) is the most important in the report. Using of many appendixes may confuse the reader of the report. Using of tables, graphs, graphics, photos etc. at the appropriate place of the report is more effective than adding several appendixes at the end of the report. This will enhance the readability of the report.

The critical analysis report would be the basis for the start of the interview. It will basically start to understand;

- Has the candidate identified the key issues?
- Have the options been considered and have good sound and logical reasons been given for those options rejected?
- Are the chosen solutions supported by reasoned judgment and has the candidate demonstrated sound problem solving skills?
- Does the critical analysis contain a conclusions together with an understanding of the lessons learned?
- Has the candidate demonstrated a high level of written communication skills in terms of spelling, grammar and presentation?

In this case, consideration would be given for those candidates their mother language different from English. However, candidates should not take for grant this opportunity. They should demonstrate the maximum proficiency of the language which they choose to sit for the APC.

- Has the candidate demonstrated satisfactory level of professional and technical skills contained in the report?

The Interview, the final assessment of the professional competence comprises with an interview. It will allow candidates to demonstrate their abilities against the various competencies that form the requirements of the

training period. This will assess by asking questions and setting oral problems. It allows candidates to demonstrate on their experience and their problem solving skill. During the interview it will explore whether the candidate is able to put theory into practice. The interviewer would not question outside of the candidate's actual training and experience. However, the objective of the APC is to consider whether a candidate is competent to practice as a chartered surveyor of the respective institute.

In the interview, it will consider the national and regional variations as they apply to the standards or benchmarks that have been expected by the Institute. In other words, it will consider at the interview how variations may relate to current issues and local practice.

The presentation skill of the candidate is a very vital part of the interview. The presentation can be made standing or sitting by using multimedia, notes, diagrams, flipcharts or any other means of presentation modes. The simple logic and tips for the presentation are;

- Prepare, plan and rehearse to maintain the time limitation. Over run of timing is a negative sign of the presentation.
- Structure the core of the report for presentation in simple language.
- Keep the link of all the sections of the report until end of the presentation.
- Maintain body language, level of the voice, eye contact, proper pronunciation, pauses at the correct place and correct time.
- Have a clear and simple conclusion.

Show your strong personality throughout the interview. This would have a very positive influence to the assessors as to judge future professional practice of the candidate on the ground.

In Conclusion, the skills gathered from whole process of the APC shall use for the self-marketing by the candidates demonstrating his or her "strong personality" at the interview with combination of "strong communication skills" coupled with knowledge of theory and professional competence with experience and practical background.

In brief it can be narrowed down to that the "Strong Personality and Communication skill" of the candidate is the success to the APC.