PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS RESEARCH NETWORK

RTPI Accreditation Policy & Procedures

Benchmarking Data Summary Report 2022

CONSULTANCY
Bespoke Services

CONTENTS

1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Introduction and background

This report was commissioned by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) - a leading membership organisation and a Chartered Institute responsible for maintaining professional standards and accrediting world-class planning courses nationally and internationally.

The Institute is undertaking a programme of review of its accreditation policies and procedures, looking at quality assurance and assessment models for qualifications, the delivery mechanisms, the content, and length of degree courses.

The Institute appointed PARN Bespoke Consultancy Services to support a wider 'Education Policy Review' by engaging with a series of stakeholders in 2022. This report is the culmination of that appointment, to feed into other research and information we are aware the Institute has commissioned and been developing over the course of the review programme.

Our work has three central themes that were identified to serve as the core focus of a research and analysis stage to the project:

1. **Learning Outcomes** - A look at learning outcomes and professional membership sector benchmarks and standards.

2. **Course Length** - The undergraduate/postgraduate span for accreditation most commonly found in other professional membership bodies and, where possible, those with a built environment remit.

3. **Types of Accreditation: criteria, process and guidelines -** The different routes to accreditation and to establish any areas of good practice or consensus across the professional membership sector. A consideration of RTPI procedures and course accreditation programmes against what is done elsewhere, again assessing sector benchmarks and standards.

Methods and definitions: we have taken professional accreditation to be broadly defined as either a statutory or professional body requirement for the accreditation of courses in higher education by a membership organisation or institute to enable a graduate to practice or to be registered to practice in the UK.

This report does not provide technical evaluation of practices of individual agencies themselves and it does not make direct recommendations for action.

Information contained in the following report has been derived from a number primary and secondary sources: desk research embracing a review of relevant accreditation documents supplied by the RTPI and also those pulled from PARN archives, followed by a number of

primary project phases; a benchmarking survey running across the professional body sector but with special emphasis placed on organisations with overlapping areas of activity and interest; focus group work with a number of key stakeholder groups and finally a full survey of RTPI membership. As appropriate, the survey results were supported with additional one-to-one interviews and case studies.

The initial benchmarking survey was conducted across the professional body sector. The survey was designed to cover many areas including relationship management, accreditation standards, overseas factors, accreditation reviews, entry levels to the profession, routes to accreditation and entry. A second survey went out to the full RTPI membership, the key driver here was the individual experience of the planning learning and accreditation process. Whilst it was not established as a full academic study and the response rate was lower than ideal for formal validity purposes, it served to furnish a greater understanding of member perception and understanding of the current processes.

These results were supplemented with focus group sessions aimed specifically at new entrants to the profession, and at employers, as well as detailed discussion with a number of representatives from Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) from the PARN database. The final stage of the project involved running two separate workshops with university personnel from RTPI-accredited Planning Schools. In this way the researchers were able to review the whole accreditation cycle from start to finish and consider different views and perspectives.

What is accreditation?
- ***The act of accrediting or the state of being accredited, especially the granting of approval to an institution of learning by an official review board after the school has met specific requirements.***
- ***The definition of accreditation means official recognition, or something that meets official standards***

Whilst not perhaps universally applied across the professional body sector, professional accreditation is widespread. It is a process by which a programme of study is in some way recognised as appropriate in preparing a prospective practitioner for their chosen profession. This widespread application creates something of a challenge for any analysis that seeks to draw on benchmarked data, because its plurality means there are many definitions in circulation, that includes how it is shaped and how it is applied. Some care is therefore needed when looking across the PSRB sector, including the built environment sector.

We would also note at the outset that there are two distinct strands of accreditation:
- Firstly, where it is taken to mean a form of qualifying status or individual registration that is awarded by a membership or regulatory body – this in short is a badge of 'fitness to practise'. In the RTPI's case this refers to the awarding of chartered status upon individuals.
- Secondly it can be taken to mean the related but distinct act of accrediting a teaching provision or a learning supplier which typically involves inspection and review of that provision through a visit or through regular scrutiny of learning materials and methods

– this in short is a badge of 'fitness to teach'. The review being undertaken by the RTPI, including this report, is focused on this second definition of accreditation.

What does accreditation do? There are several identifiable reasons for implementing accreditation, that are worth identifying:

1. It builds confidence amongst those who undertake training.
2. It facilitates independent external review.
3. It informs prospective employers acceptable standards have been achieved.
4. Conveys that the programme is relevant and reflects 'market' demand.
5. Instils credibility and trust amongst service users.
6. Can help to ensure mobility of qualifications.
7. Facilitates entry into the profession.

We are aware that a combination of these will inform any professional body or regulator in decisions around accreditation and its implementation. It is worth noting a more philosophical element, in terms of professions 'protecting' their stock of knowledge and policing boundaries. This is especially true where there is either direct competition for future practitioners or there is significant overlap with other professional areas of practice and discipline. We have previously researched the key principles for accreditation process (Routes and requirements for becoming professionally qualifies – PARN 2008). The key principles we identified are listed below.

- Remove any unjustifiable barriers to entry.
- Ensure no unreasonable demands for irrelevant qualifications or experience.
- Ensure no discrimination through any protected characteristic.
- Ensure fees are reasonable and affordable.
- Don't include unjustifiable time requirements.
- Ensure the process is valid and is relevant.
- Be consistent, fair and reasonable.
- Avoid any conflicts of interest and bias.
- Ensure an (independent) appeals process is in place.
- Ensure the process is both accountable and transparent (through its governance).

Structure of the report and project phases

The report is structured in two parts. Part 1 summarises each of the project phases and findings and provides conclusions and Part 2 provides a series of appendices presenting the data that was collected. The project phases are outlined as follows.

The first phase of the research was concerned with the analysis of the broader sector and provide a 'benchmark' for the RTPI to consider its own accreditation policy and processes. The survey ran between 15 February and 18 March 2022. It was sent to 413 UK-based professional bodies and returned responses from 54 professional bodies, representing a 13% response rate. Almost half of the survey respondents agreed to be contacted by PARN for a follow up interview. We interviewed eight and conducted a focus group activity with a further eight (all listed below).

- The Institute of Engineering Technology
- The Chartered Institute of Building
- The Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists
- The Archives & Records Association
- The Association for Nutrition
- The Pensions Management Institute
- The Royal Society of Biology
- The Institute of Physics
- The Landscape Institute
- The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
- The Association for Project Management
- The Institute of Food Science & Technology
- The Association of Corporate Treasurers
- The Royal Meteorological Society
- The Royal College of Occupational Therapists
- The Education & Training Foundation

In case study interviews we focused primarily on processes, relationships with providers, accreditation conditions, competency frameworks, and minimum qualifications for entry. We discerned **no difference in findings or approach** from the focus groups or interviews with the wider professional membership sector to those considered built environment institutes.

Survey results were supplemented with an analysis of professional bodies' accreditation policies and any other relevant documents. These materials were either provided by survey respondents themselves or by the RTPI or collected by PARN. This analysis focused on four areas: accreditation criteria; learning outcomes; use of terminology; references to quality assurance.

The second phase of the research was to conduct a survey of RTPI members.

The survey was conducted between 14 June and 21 August 2022. All RTPI members were consulted through RTPI bulletins and online and, in total, 167 full responses were recorded equating to approximately 1% of the professional membership. The survey concerned knowledge and skills and individual career experiences and covered the following topics:

- Individuals' current position within planning.
- Individuals' qualifications and time of graduation.
- The use of RTPI learning outcomes within individuals' planning education.
- The use of key skills and knowledge within individuals' planning career.
- Employers' recruitment requirements.

The third phase of the research was to conduct policy workshops and focus groups.

Workshops with representatives from Planning Schools in the UK were held on 8 July 2022. Fifteen academics from Planning Schools were recruited to participate and were split into two groups as follows:

Group 1- Ulster University, Cardiff University, University of Liverpool, Leeds Beckett University, University of Plymouth, University of Brighton, University of the West of England and UCL.

Group 2- Heriot-Watt University, University of Reading, University of Dundee, Oxford Brookes University, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, and University of Kent.

In both workshops, the following topics were discussed:

- The feasibility of flexibility in delivering the RTPI learning outcomes and the challenges surrounding this.
- Increasing planning student numbers, both national and international.
- The benefits and challenges regarding the RTPI's accreditation processes.
- Responses to the RTPI's monitoring procedures.

We facilitated a focus group discussion on 25 August 2022 with employers within the planning industry. Five volunteered from the survey, or through recent feedback to the RTPI on the policy review. Within this group, we discussed the following themes:

- How prepared new planning graduates are when entering the workforce.
- Supporting graduates in developing their planning career.
- Cooperation between employers, universities and RTPI to prepare planning graduates.
- The recruitment and retention of planning graduates.

A further session was conducted on 9 September 2022 with RTPI members who were identified as early career planners; individuals were Licentiates or Student members of RTPI. Eight participated in total and subjects discussed included:

- The use of planning skills and knowledge gained from education in the workplace.
- Their experiences within planning education.
- The learning needs of planners in the workplace, with emphasis on core skills.

The findings from the three phases of research are presented throughout the report.

Professional bodies

Initial (desk) research: Most professional bodies engage with an accreditation process and these processes follow a similar pattern despite differences in terms of the range and level of guidance advanced.

Accreditation across the sector: We were able to note how varied accreditation delivery was across the sector with whole providers, departments/schools, individual qualifications or simply as units within related disciplines. This was not unfamiliar territory *(PARN research 2018 – QQI Report Dublin)*.

Managing relationships with providers: Using a simple policy document or contract, most professional bodies tend to assume the role of a critical friend, helping their providers meet required standards. These documents typically lay out the roles and responsibilities for both/all parties, although other mechanisms were also employed such as groups and forums to help with direct engagement between professional body and provider. This latter mechanism appeared to offer a greater degree of 'best practice sharing' and collegiate problem solving. Most professional membership bodies operate a combination of these two approaches.

Criteria for Accreditation: Given the wide sweep of respondents that took part in the research, we were not surprised to find an equally wide sweep of criteria for inclusion in accreditation. These included:

- Those directing, designing, and delivering qualifications.
- Content of qualifications.
- Students studying qualifications.
- Provider of qualifications.
- Quality assurance mechanisms.

Within these generic criteria areas, the research team were able to identify certain recurring accreditation standards that were required of providers:

i. Those directing qualifications have a demonstrable understanding of the subject matter.
ii. Those delivering programmes undertake CPD.
iii. Promotion of profession and attendant careers embedded within programme content.
iv. Promotion of organisational membership within programme content.
v. Integrated practical element within programme.
vi. Established student feedback (sought and acted upon).
vii. Provider is committed to supporting (and promoting) accredited programmes.
viii. Sufficient staffing, facilities, and resources for effective delivery.
ix. Policies in place to ensure equal access.
x. Submission of specified data returns to the accrediting organisation and/or commissioner.

Over 80% of respondents had these specific criteria requirements in place and we can also note that usually, these were required rather than encouraged. However, it should also be noted the two underlined requirements (ii and iv) are not as clear within the RTPI accreditation policy at present, compared to the benchmarking survey.

We went on to examine these in a little more depth by analysing the three most common mandated conditions, and here we can note that all three do appear within the RTPI 'Effective Planning School' Criteria document:

- Sufficient staffing, facilities, and resources for effective delivery.
- Those directing provision have demonstrable engagement in the subject areas.
- Commitment to supporting and promoting accredited qualifications.

There were several other criteria areas emerging from the sector survey that do not appear within the RTPI set of criteria, in particular staff support and having a code of ethics embedded within the programme content.

Whilst there were other criteria included within the RTPI remit that were less common across the sector, namely:

- Involvement of practitioners in research.
- Support for students in finding work.
- Local community links for qualification providers.

Accreditation and programme design considerations: Analysis of supporting materials and documentation suggested several commonalities, for example a general requirement for both student and external practitioner involvement in curriculum design in some way (often using internal and external validation processes).

All professional bodies provided a basic framework or checklist of criteria that illustrates what is required, and usually highlights the key learning outcomes. These vary from subject specific areas of study to more generic skills and disciplines related to practical experience and ethical and behavioural training.

Nevertheless, the research team did not identify any professional body that mandated a set of criteria as a rigid curriculum requirement. Generally, knowledge based frameworks were preferred however we also note a small number of organisations did take a balanced approach between professional skills and practical/academic knowledge. Several organisations did mention the Quality Assurance Authority, noting how it can strengthen the reliability of accreditation and helps to remove some elements of regulatory burden.

Undergraduate programmes tended to place focus on knowledge and learning around core professional competencies whilst post graduate programmes offered greater depth in some areas and might introduce specialist areas of study, often included as foundations for leadership and innovation. The greatest contrast between learning at level 6 and level 7

appears to have been around ethics, while the focus on general business skills appear to rest with level 5 entry qualifications[1].

The emphasis on ethical elements is an area very much still under consideration with some professional membership bodies placing an almost central importance whilst others prefer to focus on more practical areas. Overall the value of a workable ethical framework was frequently cited.

With regards the **cycle of accreditation** for delivery, most schemes cover an initial period of five years (56%) or three years (26%) with annual reviews.

In terms of **entry level qualifications**, examples ranged from complete reliance on experience or Approved Prior Learning through to a strictly applied minimum entry level requirement. However, it was apparent that level 6 was the most regular level (35%) used as a minimum entry point followed by level 4 (20%) and level 7 (20%). The distribution of academic, practical, and ethical elements was fairly even across the set standards, but the higher levels tended to have a higher degree of academic requirement.

What is interesting, in benchmarking terms at least, is the RTPI 'qualifying time' (leading to Chartership) appears to be on the high side when compared with other level 7 entry professional membership bodies. If the Institute decides it is not possible or appropriate to formalise a new option for the minimum level of education entry i.e. accepting some level 6 degrees, there may be other ways to alter the qualifying time. This may involve the introduction of on the job, elements after graduation or additional requirements for the CPD requirement for new practitioners. This would likely require significant changes to the APC process however.

We did not record any professional bodies that felt their entry requirement was too long although we can also note that many felt there had been plenty of debate around the level of that requirement in previous internal reviews. Modes of study also varied across the sector; distance learning proving especially prevalent (72%). That said, regardless of the mode of study, we note that pretty much all provisions remained subject to the same quality assurance processes.

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[1] Detail on the different qualification levels of education attainment used within the UK (England, Wales and N.Ireland) can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels Scotland has a similar model: https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Guide_to_Scottish_Qualifications.pdf

University providers

We looked to examine Planning Schools' thoughts and perceptions around existing university level planning provision, and exploring options or opportunities for new modes of delivery.

Length of courses: Some concern was evident against an extended summer teaching programme, albeit this is not something that has previously been proposed by the RTPI, in the context of shortening degree timescales. Comments noted that approaches had to choose between 'oven ready' planners and fast-tracked degrees. The current parameters or study routes were, it was felt by some, already quite complex and adding more options and changing core standards would only serve to amplify present challenges.

Student conversion or progression: Conversely there was near universal agreement that more qualifying students was a valuable aspiration and that there was an important need to 'get to' students prior to university attendance because there was simply not enough awareness of planning as 'an option'. Regarding how this might work, many suggested it could be facilitated by the RTPI who could perhaps offer additional career talks, or even open days – it was clear that the Planning Schools saw this activity as one for the Institute and not for themselves.

There was general agreement that the RTPI was far more engaged with its students than other built environment institutes such as RICS (with which it does compete for attention on a significant number of dual accredited degree courses). One respondent flagged miscommunication between planning schools and the RTPI around the importance and value of the things they were learning and how these applied to their chosen career. Without a substantial level of understood relevance, the profession would not enjoy the full realisation of potential new entrants, not through a lack of awareness but through a lack of understanding of what and why learning was structured and how this dovetailed into the requirements of the profession.

There was a call for better integration of the RTPI into the programmes with higher interaction and visibility of the Institute at universities which may address questions from the university providers over student profession as new entrants into the planning profession. This was suggested to be achieved by including the RTPI's code of ethics within one of the taught modules perhaps with a mandated sign up for students.

Process improvements: There was a general call for fewer 'check ins' and monitoring of programme delivery. With this, a reduction in the paperwork and a more informal approach, were felt to be worth exploring. High degrees of complexity were frequently advanced whilst the phrase 'streamline' was frequently applied to the current RTPI accreditation and partnership processes. Ending on a more positive note, universities felt that they could continue to grow successfully under the RTPI's guidance, but they would like more freedom to develop and adapt courses within the current guidelines. This should be encouraged although it is not clear from these discussions what resource input would be needed to achieve this from either the university sector or RTPI staff and practitioners.

RTPI Members

A lower than hoped response rate indicates a low level of engagement with the subject area, which is not uncommon for professional members however it is not clear why. We suspect, for some members, accreditation may no longer feel to be an area of personal concern. This is a useful learning point and could perhaps be used to help promote a renewed emphasis on accreditation and its importance to the institute.

That notwithstanding, the survey provided a useful data set for analysis while noting survey limited sample. Most respondents worked in England, an even split between local govt central govt and private practice, were white and that there was an even split between male and female. It was clear most planning education by the respondents had been completed through an RTPI accredited planning degree, but we should also note around one quarter of these were also accredited by another professional body (most frequently RICS).

Practical knowledge gaps: In terms of member reflections and views on the inputs and outputs of accredited planning degrees, we met a level of disparity between learned knowledge and practical workplace skills. Areas that were felt to be lacking included: development management, decision making, negotiating skills, interdisciplinary communications, professional standards and ethics, planning law and climate and financial acumen.

There was certainly a general feeling that there was an over emphasis on knowledge, sometimes referred to as planning theory, that was not required in the workplace. As a result, there was a call for a balanced approach and it was noted there were subjects that naturally fit in this remit, such as; spatial planning, environmental management, ethics and planning process, rights and representation in planning, public engagement, community involvement, urban design and self-reflection.

As for the corollary, there were several areas that many felt were needed in pursuit of their role but were not taught in their planning degree. This was especially true during the early years of their careers. Areas included: planning law, levels of planning, digital master and strategic planning and again a more general call for more practice and less theory or at least a better balance between the two.

Core skills and CPD: The most important areas of knowledge that were felt to be 'core' for planners were, in order of importance: local planning (84%), planning law (84%), development management (83%), community engagement (81%) and sustainable development (80%). Respondents also noted areas they wished to learn more via CPD, again in order of importance, were - climate change (42%), energy (42%), development finance and viability (40%), economic development (37%) and IT/digital (37%). We can note here a much lower level of consensus.

The survey went on to ask what professional (soft) skills were most useful for their planning roles. Here the top six all scored highly and included: communication, report writing, problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, and strategic thinking, There was little difference

in the selection of professional skills across the different grades of membership. There was also little overlap in terms of the selection of professional skills via CPD however, with the top scores being: coaching, procurement, recruitment, management and the media.

Graduate knowledge and skills: Within the membership group we were also able to identify a subgroup of those who employed other planners (employers). Encouragingly, when we asked this group about the skills and knowledge, most areas were rated as fair or better. However, we should note that planning law was rated as weak and development management rated as weak to fair.

Other comments that were prevalent through the member survey worth noting here were:
- The APC is seen as a barrier to the profession and there should be more routes and non-standard routes to becoming a planner. It was felt that organisations such as RICS had fewer barriers and more routes into the profession.
- Because of what was seen as a general shortage of planning graduates, employers were resorting to training non planning graduates. In this vein, there were calls for RTPI to partner with industry (sector) bodies to support a programme of upskilling future planning staff. The Institute launched an apprenticeship programme in support of just this point in 2019. There were a few notes made about the need for the institute to engage in a national planning career promotion programme.
- The structure of the accredited planning degree was also flagged up as an issue by members. A review of content without undermining professional integrity and a 'hard look' at what needs to be delivered through academia and what should be delivered within the workforce or by RTPI through CPD guidance - with an expected outcome favouring an increase in vocational training.

Early career planners

This mixed group (some early career planners had been in post several years whilst we also had some pre-qualifying students) noted how there was a pressing need to deliver more practical elements within the education route to becoming a professional planner. Indeed, this sentiment led one delegate to suppose that they had learnt more in the first three weeks in their new role than they had learnt in all the time doing their Master's planning degree.

Practical knowledge gaps: Elsewhere in the research, we became aware of this notion of relevance to the workplace and how the formal qualification links with the day-to-day practice of being a planner. There was a clear sentiment from students and graduates that they were there to learn the practice of planning, not just to discuss and to analyse it. One delegate said they '*kept thinking about what they had learnt from uni (sic) that is useful for what I do and often I am quite baffled to be honest*'. In making this case, communication skills were raised as paramount but the opportunity to practise communication skills specific to planning scenarios was absent in some formal learning environments, according to the group.

Placements: Solutions were advanced and favour was given to placements of various types, for example a six-week placement with an accompanying assignment delivered in the final (undergraduate or postgraduate) degree year. It was noted that this enabled knowledge to be applied and reinforced closer to the time it was imparted. Another suggestion was a full year internship, but some were concerned it would have a high level of drop out if the learning programme did not meet either the student or employer expectations.

Professional skills: Coupled with this observation, the group also flagged up 'soft' skills that they felt should be introduced during planning education, when learning to become a practitioner. These included negotiating skills, customer service and problem-solving skills and more generally emotional intelligence. Further solutions included increasing the number of group and collaborative projects which could really help develop project management skills as well as negotiating and communication skills.

The session concluded with a discussion around how planning was multi-facetted, and it was almost impossible to cover everything in 12 months in a 'conversion' Master's qualification.

Employers and managers

Engagement with employers, and those managing planners, was conducted via a semi-structured group interview alongside findings from the member survey. Respondents were first asked how well prepared they felt new graduates were upon entry to the profession. There were several diverse views, but several areas where a good level of consensus was evident.

Professional skills: Report writing skills were identified as lacking and in need of improvement: it was suggested new entrants' approach such a task like writing an essay rather than understanding the different audiences and objectives in a professional context.

This group also highlighted a general lack of knowledge around the role and function of planning committees and the distinction between planning officers and committee members. This led some to remark on a lack of practical experience to prepare graduates for the world of work, and that those who had had some work experience prior to graduation were much more employable. It was suggested there was real value in creating the space for 'real world' experience of exposure to the planning process and all its facets within the academic programme, in some way. The group noted a lack of independent thought when it came to decision making and looking for solutions.

Graduate knowledge and skills: Areas such as spatial planning and planning development were flagged as good examples of graduated being prepared for the workplace. However, it was also observed that these aspects can easily be picked up without degree level input and learning access. High quality IT and tech skills of graduates were noted favourably.

Placements: Developing the idea of collaboration, we went on to explore some aspects of partnership working in practice. There was a call for greater co-production and a need for training to be able to give prospective practitioners a glimpse of 'how the other half live' - a three-month 'sabbatical' being one suggestion. All delegates agreed that placements needed to be integrated and much more commonplace because the imparting of practical knowledge was imperative. However employers were underfunded and were finding it increasingly difficult to offer university-level skill training.

Promotion of the profession: There was also considerable agreement around the issue of publicity and the promotion of career opportunities at an early stage. Examples included 'Lab in a Lorry' and 'The Lego Challenge'. Minecraft, SimCity and Civilisation would appear to be interesting to help gameify the introduction of planning to a younger audience, according to the group.

Employers felt the RTPI should be '*shouting from the rooftops*' and using every possible resource to promote planning as a key profession around sustainability, and not to be eclipsed by other professions nor be seen in a negative light by the public.

Support for graduates: Finally, we set a question asking about employer support for graduates. Many noted that they pay RTPI membership fees however, generally, local authorities cannot afford to do this. Some promote the offer of 25% tax relief for individuals. Mentoring and coaching for the APC, and mentoring for those who would wish to become mentors themselves, was mentioned by several attendees. Additionally, a buddy system was provided by some employers which gave graduates the chance to ask questions outside the workplace without the risk of 'embarrassment'. Others noted how they work with the RTPI to deliver appropriate in-house training where it is necessary, although it can be resource intensive.

There was mention of the provision of networking events by employers across all sectors, specifically for graduates, so they can access opportunities available to them. This is something that could be in collaboration with, and supported by, universities who have access to planning students and in turn should have well developed communication routes to help promote joint events.

CONCLUSIONS

During our research, we were constantly surprised to discover a variety of examples of good practice across the professional membership sector. Such diversity suggests the accreditation landscape is complex and offers a plurality of models. Providing thematic analysis across the three areas of focus, we report the following conclusions.

1. Learning outcomes

- Generally, professional membership bodies use a largely knowledge-based accreditation framework, with some skills-based set of competencies and behavioural or ethical learning.
- RTPI members felt courses delivered the following essential elements: spatial planning, environmental management, ethics and planning decisions, community rights and representation in planning, public engagement, involving communities in planning, urban design, and self-reflection.
- Early career planners noted that programmes lacked important 'day to day' planning experience.
- Feedback from members indicated areas not covered in enough detail: development management processes and determining a planning application, decision making, negotiating skills, ethics, professional standards, planning law and interdisciplinary communications.
- Employers felt that the strength of the current regime was good on knowledge of: spatial planning and development planning; material considerations; communication skills; IT and tech skills. But reported areas of weakness as: report writing skills and presentation; real-world experience; decision-making; critical analysis.
- Universities felt that the RTPI was too focused on outcomes and did not place enough emphasis on content. More freedom around curriculum design and delivery was requested.

For consideration:
a) PARN proposes that RTPI content on professional ethics and the code of conduct is embedded within programme content.
b) We also propose that the Institute considers ways to encourage an emphasis on planning theory is integrated with planning practice to support graduates successfully moving into their first (or next) job and becoming a Licentiate.
c) The Institute may also wish to explore agreeing a set of modules common in all planning degrees to serve as the foundation of knowledge and skills that will help graduates prepare for employment. This might also recognise that, where appropriate, a multidisciplinary approach can assist graduates in understanding planning's place in society and amongst related professions.

2. Course length

- Level 6 (undergraduate degree level) was the most common minimum entry level to full membership to professional bodies within the sample. On average, the minimum level of qualification required to become a full member took 2.7 years to complete on a full-time basis (noting the inclusion of diploma level in some sectors). Overall, across the sector a three-year course is considered adequate for entry to the sector profession.
- Generally, it appeared that the RTPI Learning Objectives were seen as difficult to deliver within a one-year Master's programme.
- There were accompanying suggestions that courses should only aim to cover introductory elements of the discipline rather than the broad compass currently attempted. Specialisation may not always be prudent and there was more merit in producing the 'complete' generic planner rather than the specialist.
- University concerns about changes (increase or reduction in minimum course length) arose from a concern about extra work and any move away from traditional academic years. The likely effects could require a need for further teaching and challenges around fitting all the required elements into a truncated programme.
- Low retention rate of students moving from undergraduate to postgraduate degrees (or in some instances exiting at year three of a four-year degree) was a concern and needed addressing. It was noted that often at this point students move away to finish their degree elsewhere or take up RICS membership. It is clear that RICS uses a three-year course to lock in their prospective new entrants to the profession and is able to do this ahead of the RTPI.
- Learning gained from a CIOB case study also supports three-year course accreditation.
- The introduction of new routes to professional status to the Institute could help reduce or resolve issues around clarity and access and could also help create a more resilient and dynamic set of partnerships between all stakeholders.

For consideration:
a) PARN proposes to the Institute that a minimum taught length for a fully-accredited undergraduate degree of three years should be considered.
b) We would suggest more input from the planning industry to provide in course placements and work experience.
c) The Institute may wish to consider a reinforced CPD programme in tandem with any changes to academic input.

3. Types of accreditation: criteria, process and guidelines

- The RTPI's current requirements of providers and approach to accreditation and assessment process is generally aligned to other professional/regulatory bodies. However, criteria commonly identified across the sector which did not seem to appear explicit in RTPI policy, including guidelines that academic staff delivering accredited qualifications are expected to undertake CPD in the discipline subject.
- The inclusion of teaching on the RTPI Code of Ethics/Conduct, promotion of the RTPI membership to students and diversity of modes of study stand out as benefiting from some degree of formalising.
- Conversely, while there were several criteria around research activity in the RTPI's policy, this area was not as commonly used as an accreditation criterion by others. This emphasis on research was quite uncommon.
- We can note that all accrediting bodies require submission of material covering module descriptors, student handbooks, and external examiner reports, on their first approach.
- All organisations were required to accommodate a visit to their facilities where a review panel would consult programme leadership teams, teaching staff and students. A requirement to have at least one member of academic teaching staff to be a member of the professional body was very common. Many professional bodies have various expectations in terms of professional membership (between 50% and 70%) and teaching staff were required to demonstrate a level of personal development (CPD).
- PARN research finds that around 56% of the sector state that their accreditation remains in place for five years. Around one quarter issue three-year validations whilst just 7% work on a one-year cycle. This relates to full formal renewals of accreditation, rather than less informal, on-going review points.
- The overwhelming feedback from early career planners was that courses should be preparing individuals for practice, identifying action plans, i.e., what could be done, how it should be done, and how it can benefit the concerned parties and not about theory.
- Planning employers felt that work placements should be incorporated as part of core planning education to improve practical knowledge and to implement knowledge to real life experiences.
- Some universities noted that they had struggled to fit all the required learning outcomes within their degree programme. One university included a career and professional ethics course in its third year, that had a high practitioner involvement. Another had mandatory completion of RTPI's ethics e-learning module. We can also note requests for more consistency from the Institute with guidance and templates.
- Universities would prefer fewer check-ins and a lighter touch with the emphasis perhaps on more informal contact. It was suggested that there should be a move away from scrutiny-based monitoring assessments; annual 'scrutinization' for some was not beneficial, with claims they did not need to be 'tested' so regularly or so rigorously.

- A call for the continued developmental approach, reducing the length of current assessment documentation and amount of required paperwork, was made. A review period of between eighteen months and three years was advanced.
- A one-year informal check-in is however, quite common across the professional/regulatory body sector therefore we would suggest informal communications conducted in this way can be considered good practice.

For consideration:
a) The current RTPI policy does not seek to impose and tie the hands of the learning agents but rather to allow innovation and encourage each supplier to play to their individual strengths and place these within a defined outcomes arena. This has perhaps resulted in an over emphasis on academic content at the expense of practical experience. This may help to signpost how any reduction from four years study at undergraduate level might evolve relatively smoothly.
b) PARN proposes to the Institute that increased time between accreditation reviews of planning schools and utilising the potential of online reviews/check-ins should be considered.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The variety of models employed across, and within, the accreditation marketplace, whilst initially all working towards achieving the same ends, can mean benchmarking and identifying good practice can become difficult. The extent of this diversity was surprising. However, accreditation is unlike continuing professional development or lifelong learning in this regard. It does not present as a homogenous professional body activity, although we know from PARN's research archive that accreditation intrinsically is almost universally applied. So, some care is needed in identifying interesting practice and examining potential applications. It seems likely that the RTPI accreditation landscape has evolved in a way that fits the needs of the organisation, whilst nevertheless seeking to achieve similar outcomes as other sister organisations.

We were surprised and somewhat disappointed by the poor return of the member survey. Whilst it was never intended to be an academic questionnaire with high levels of significance, response rates nevertheless suggest a low engagement level. We might conclude that the level relates to the subject matter rather than with the RTPI itself. More positively, we did find that there was general agreement across stakeholder focus groups that the RTPI was far better at engaging with students than other built environment professional bodies.

More generally within the analysis, we were able to discern a feeling that there may be too much emphasis on building the knowledge base at the expense of developing workplace skills and experience. This need not be an 'either or' paradigm and indeed such comments, where they were recorded, were usually tempered with notions of balance and better integration. We can conclude, again from the PARN research archive, that this balance is a common problem for most membership-focused professional, regulatory and statutory bodies (PSRBs). It is particularly acute where there is a high degree of professionalism. Developing a good knowledge base within the individual practitioner is not, and never can be, the equivalent of

creating an 'oven ready' professional. To do that, some real-life experience is an essential ingredient. The balance then, is all about where that real-life experience gets delivered and how it is imparted. In support of this, the call for more and better placement opportunities was regularly noted.

This idea of better and more efficient integration was echoed again when discussions around planning practice and planning theory were discussed. We believe that the RTPI could be better at getting closer to the providers and their programme content. Ways to achieve this emerged as we predicted. They included the integration of both ethical and conduct codes specifically set by the RTPI and seen as formal 'RTPI branded' requirements – equally applicable across the sector for all new students. In this way perhaps, the individual complying with these RTPI codes of professional practice will feel they are on route to becoming a member.

In similar vein, we should also note the recurrent theme for 'core learning' to draw in soft skills as essential to becoming an effective practitioner. These are not skills forever tied to the planning profession and inevitably will be found within a range of different professions. It suggests one area where benchmarking can yield some useful and directly transferable models of activity.

Course length was frequently discussed and surveyed with a wide variety of responses and views. It would be too easy to say that this is an area that requires further work. But the PARN team came away from this exercise in the firm belief that a shortened course length would be advantageous. Any proposals for change developed by the RTPI could be bolstered by existing, or additional, CPD programmes for new practitioners, including a focus on reflective practice, before tapering and allowing for the real-life experience of work to fill in. **In short, we feel that the sooner potential planners start planning, the better planners they will become.**

Such an approach could have a good impact both on the accreditation marketplace and recruitment. It might, in part, redress the balance and level of 'competition' from those other PSRBs who occupy similar academic spaces in the built environment. The current situation of absorbing graduate (i.e. new entrant) practitioners directly from a range of joint programmes means students have a choice of professional recognition at an early stage of their career, and may elect to follow other routes into the built environment. This does not necessarily have to be viewed as an issue with accreditation policy and procedures for planning education, given the multi-disciplinary nature of the sector as a whole. However, it could mean – as we felt when reviewing the material and responses from many of the stakeholders that we spoke to and surveyed – that planning, at times, unfortunately loses out.

2. DATA COLLECTION

APPENDIX A: BENCHMARKING WITH PROFESIONAL, STATUTORY & REGULATORY BODIES

Respondents' profile

We opened this survey of Professional, Statutory & Regulations Bodies (PSRBs) by asking a number of questions related to the organisation.

Legend: ■ Business ■ Engineering ■ Health ■ Other ■ No reply
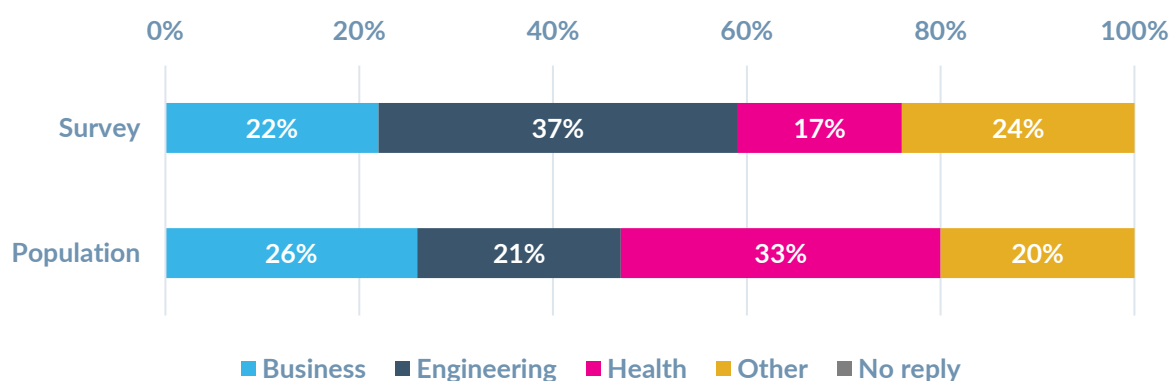
Base:
Survey 54
Population 504

The Engineering sector was over-represented among survey respondents albeit planning and the built environment would fall within this grouping.

The breakdown of size of survey respondents is presented as the total figure as well as number of student members and number of fully qualified members.

Range of members within organisations

	Total number of members	Number of student members	Number of fully qualified (professional/practitioner) members
Min	310	0	195
Mean	26,130	5,511	14,839
Median	8,520	1,261	3,800
Max	162,000	70,000	142,000
Base	54	47	47

The average returns were 26.1k total members, 5.5k student members and 14.8k fully qualified members. The medians were much lower on all three metrics, indicating presence of

professional membership bodies that are substantially larger than most of the sample and this is also reflected in the diagram below.

Total number of members
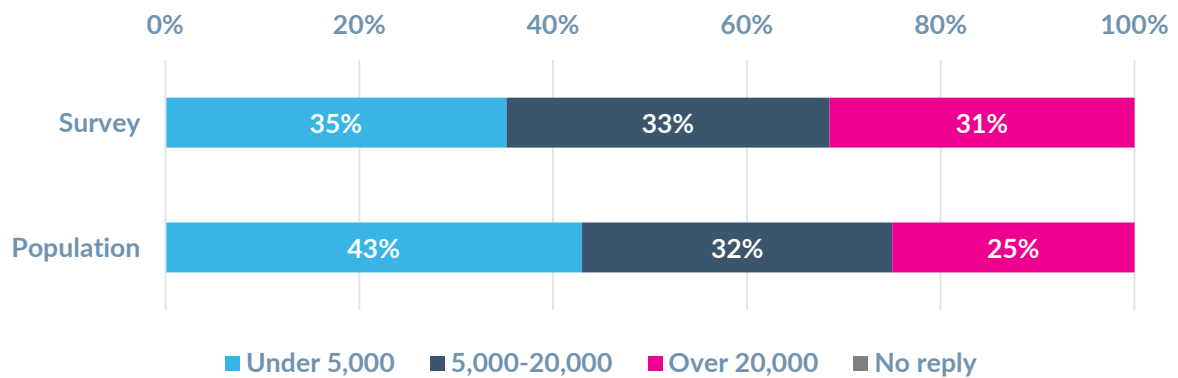
Base:
Survey 54
Population 253

Overall the survey profile is comparable with the PSRB sector as a whole.

We note that small professional bodies (with under 5k members) were slightly underrepresented among survey respondents. We note that the RTPI has circa 27,000 members of which circa 15,000 are Chartered (recognised as fully qualified) professionals.

Accreditation activity

We went on to ask 'how many PSRBs accredit qualifications, at what level was the accreditation undertaken and whether any accredited outside of the UK'.

Categories of accreditation within a Higher Education institution
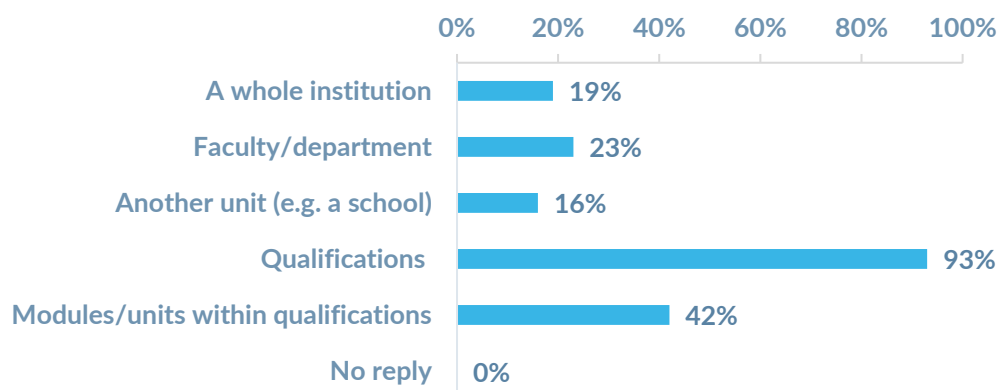
Base: 43

Out of 54 survey respondents, 43 (80%) did accredit qualifications. The majority of those that accredited qualifications (28 respondents, 65%) did so both in the UK and overseas. Just 15

respondents (35%) accredited in the UK only. The diagram above indicates the range of ways that respondents recognise Higher Education products and services.

Accrediting a qualification was by far the most common finding (40 respondents, 93%). Accrediting modules/units within qualifications was the next most common practice (18 respondents, 42%). Ten (23%) accredited a faculty/department, eight (19%) accredited a whole institution and seven (16%) accredited a unit other than a faculty/department that is responsible for delivering accredited qualifications.

Just over half (22 respondents) accredited at a single point typically at qualification level. Nine (21%) accredited in two categories, typically at the levels of a qualification and modules/units within qualifications. The remainder recognised university provision in more than two categories of accreditation.

We noted that the RTPI currently accredits at qualification and at a (lower level) unit other than faculty/department responsible for delivery of planning courses, but this is not consistently defined and dependent on individual university circumstances and corporate structures.

In terms of the number of providers of qualifications that a PSRB accredits, the results are shown below for both in the UK and overseas.

	Number of accredited providers in the UK	Number of accredited providers outside of the UK
Min	4	1
Mean	56	23
Median	34	10
Max	500	137
Base	39	26

As expected, the volume of accreditation within the UK was higher than that outside of the UK. On average, professional bodies accredited 56 providers in the UK and 23 outside of the UK. Respective medians were 34 and ten.

Accreditation status

The survey asked 'how long is accreditation valid for' and the results can be seen in the next chart.
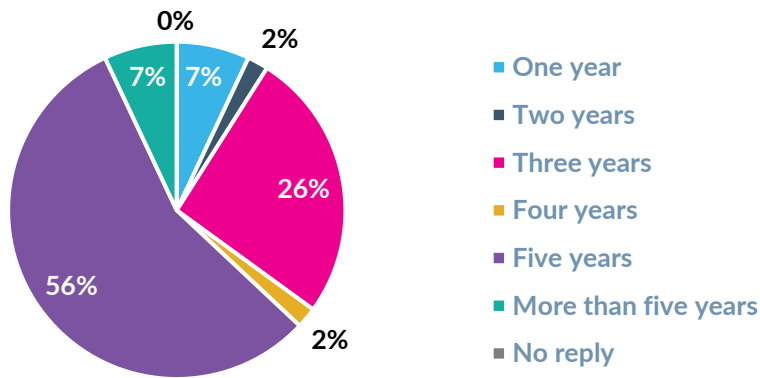
The most common length of the accreditation period was five years, with 56% of respondents stating so. Three years followed next (26%). As show in the chart below, the vast majority of respondents (93%) felt that the current period of accreditation was 'just right'.
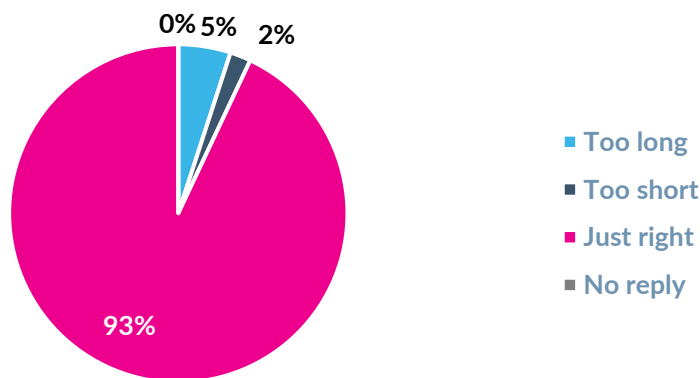
Re-accreditation

For most, the process for re-accreditation was a repeat of the accreditation process (65%, out of 43 respondents). For the remainder, the process for re-accreditation was described as a 'cut down version' of the accreditation process involving learning points, updates, and feedback.

Resources for accreditation

We wanted to explore whether there were sufficient resources, both at professional bodies and accredited providers, to meet the demands of the accreditation and re-accreditation processes.

Chart (top):

Statement	1=Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5=Strongly agree	No reply
There is sufficient resource at your organisation to meet the demands of the accreditation process	7%	21%	19%	40%	14%	
There is sufficient resource at providers to meet the demands of the accreditation process		12%	33%	49%	7%	
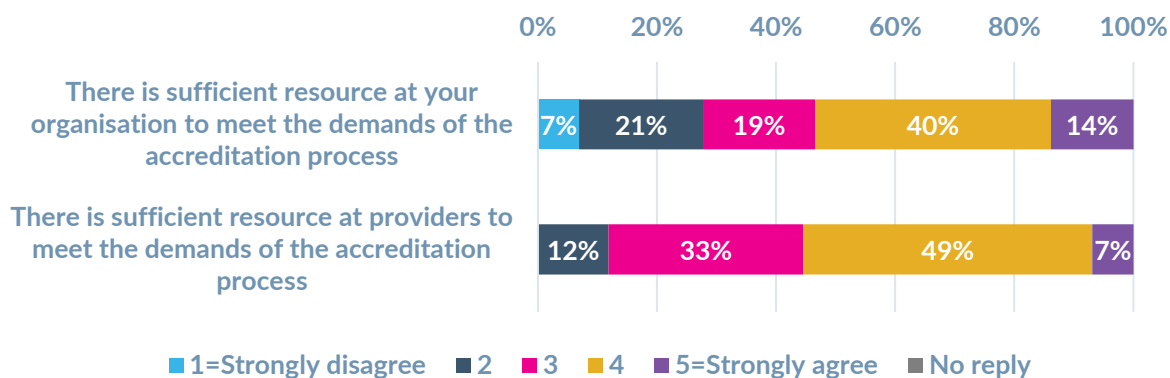
Base: 43

The average ratings for both statements leant towards agreement.

The average rating for the first statement ('There is sufficient resource at your organisation to meet the demands of the accreditation process') was 3.3.

The second statement ('There is sufficient resource at providers to meet the demands of the re-accreditation process') received an average rating of 3.5.

Results for resourcing the re-accreditation process were very similar, with average ratings being 3.4 and 3.5 for the two statements respectively, as illustrated below.
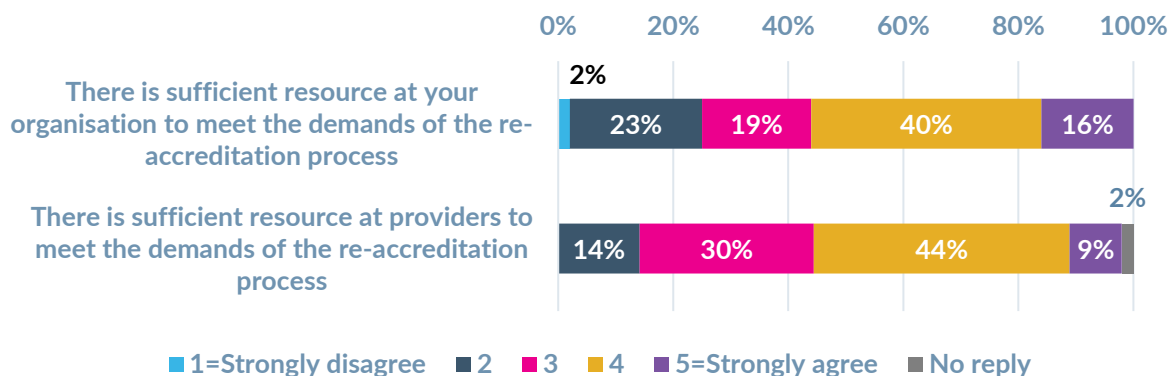

Chart (bottom):

Statement	1=Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5=Strongly agree	No reply
There is sufficient resource at your organisation to meet the demands of the re-accreditation process	2%	23%	19%	40%	16%	
There is sufficient resource at providers to meet the demands of the re-accreditation process		14%	30%	44%	9%	2%

Base: 43

Accreditation processes

We started by asking 'which of the following are in place to manage the relationship between your organisation and accredited providers/providers of accredited qualifications'. The results are presented in the following diagram.
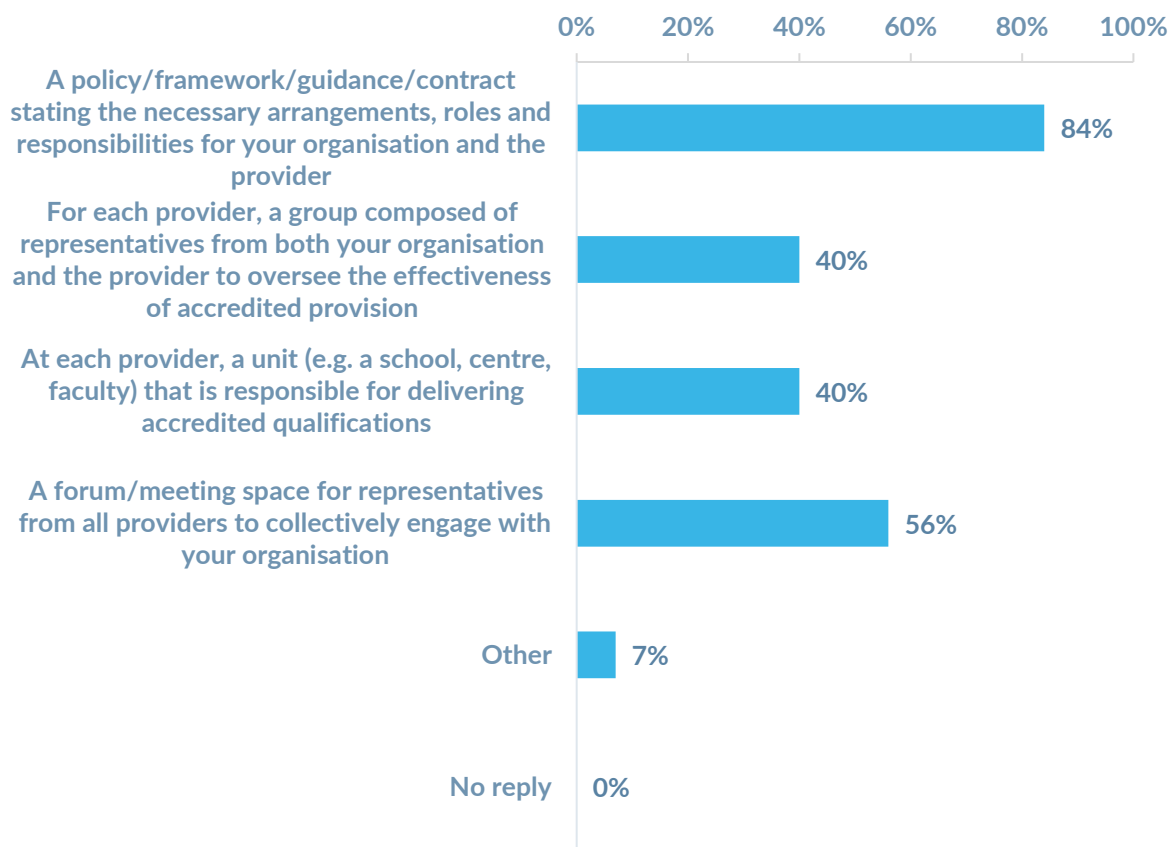
Base: 43

A policy or similar document - stating the necessary arrangements, roles, and responsibilities for both the professional body and the provider - was the most common mechanism (84% of respondent). A forum or similar for all providers to collectively engage with the professional body was also popular (56%). 40% of respondents utilised an accreditation 'group/committee' comprising of representatives from the professional body and the provider and/or a unit that handles delivering accredited qualifications.

Commonly a combination of two or three of these mechanisms was used (37% and 30% of respondents respectively). 23% used only one mechanism while 9% used all four.

The process that the RTPI currently undertakes includes all these approaches.

Three respondents selected 'Other' and provided some further insight into how they managed the relationship with accredited providers. One noted that - in addition to a policy document and a forum for representatives from all providers to engage with their professional body - they also had 'Accreditation Committees' comprised only of representatives from accredited providers. Another told us that they had a policy document but also ran online conferences for overseas accredited providers. The third respondent - in addition to having a unit at each provider responsible for delivering accredited qualifications and a forum for representatives from all providers to engage with their professional body - also had networks for '*directors of teaching and learning, admissions officers and staff ... to engage with and disseminate good practice*'.

With regards relationship management, overwhelmingly, professional bodies took a partnership approach, acting as a critical friend, helping meet standards and providing support to those providers that do not, as opposed to taking a pass/fail approach and acting as an auditor. The respective proportions were 30 (70%) acting as a critical friend and 13 (30%) acting as an auditor.

We are aware that the RTPI adopts a partnership approach.

For the 17 respondents who, at each provider, indicated they operated a group/committee comprising of representatives from the professional body and the provider, we asked What duties does this group perform?

This is the approach taken by the RTPI.

Accreditation duties of the PSRB accreditation mechanism
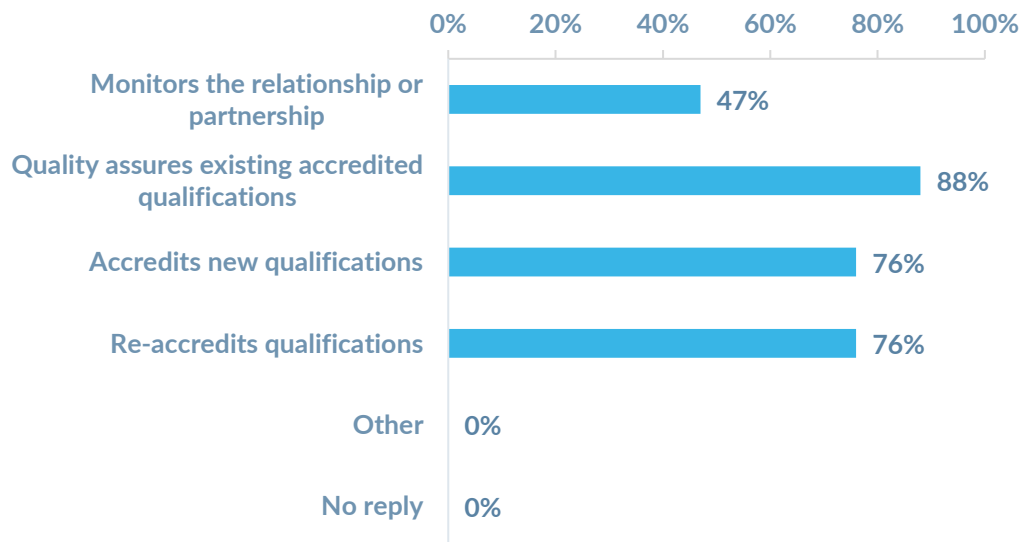
Base: 17

Quality assurance of existing qualifications was the most common function of the accreditation group/committee with 88% of respondents stating so. This was followed closely by accreditation and re-accreditation of qualifications (76% each). Less than a half (47%) of respondents indicated that this group monitored the relationship between the provider and the professional body.

Composition of the accreditation group/committee
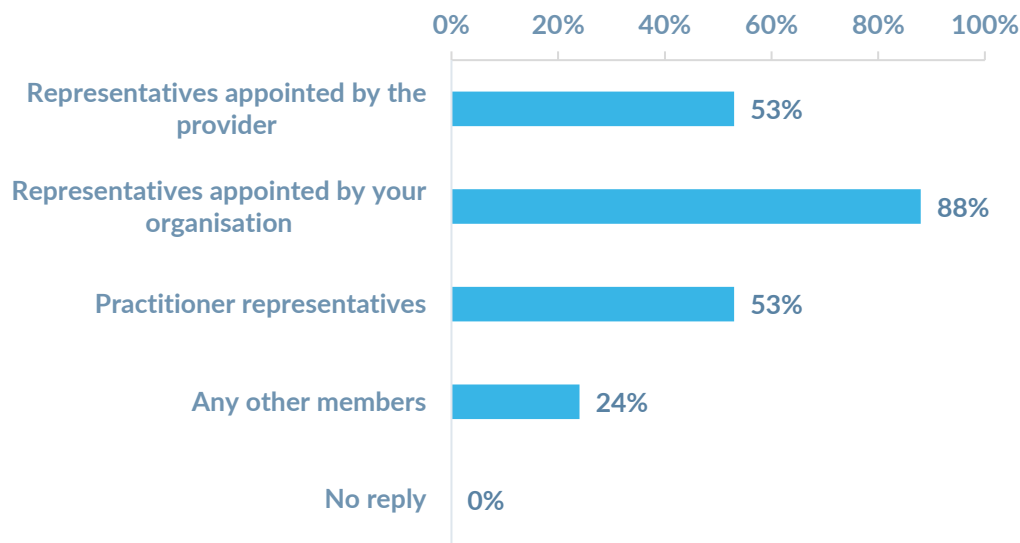
Base: 17

Composite findings are as follows: Five respondents (29%) presented with the composition comparable to the RTPI in that they had representatives from the professional body, the provider <u>and</u> external academic and practitioner representatives on this group. Three (18%) had this group composed of professional body and provider representatives. Over half of respondents (nine, 53%) indicated that the accreditation group did not include representatives from either the professional body or the provider.

Numbers of accreditation representatives/volunteers

	Representatives appointed by the provider	Representatives appointed by your organisation	Practitioner representatives	Any other members
Min	2	1	1	1
Mean	3	3	2	2
Median	2	2	1	2
Max	5	5	5	3
Base	3	8	5	2

Where representatives from the provider were involved in this group, on average three of them were present. Similarly, where professional body representatives were on this group, on average three of them were involved. On average, two practitioner representatives and two others (e.g., academics) sat on the accreditation group. We also found that representatives from the provider of accredited qualifications included:

- Senior Management, mentioned by two respondents
- Head of Department, Head of Faculty, Manager, Programme Manager, Programme Leader, Course Leader, and Senior Lecturer, cited once each

Looking at representatives from PSRBs bodies, the following education or membership roles were included:

- Head (4), including Head of Qualifications and Membership, Head of Education and Head of Registration and Training
- Director (3), including Programme Director and Director of Lifelong Learning
- Manager (4), including Qualifications Manager, Education Manager and Workforce Development Manager
- Company Partner (1)
- Full members of the professional body (1)

Timings and frequency for accreditation meetings
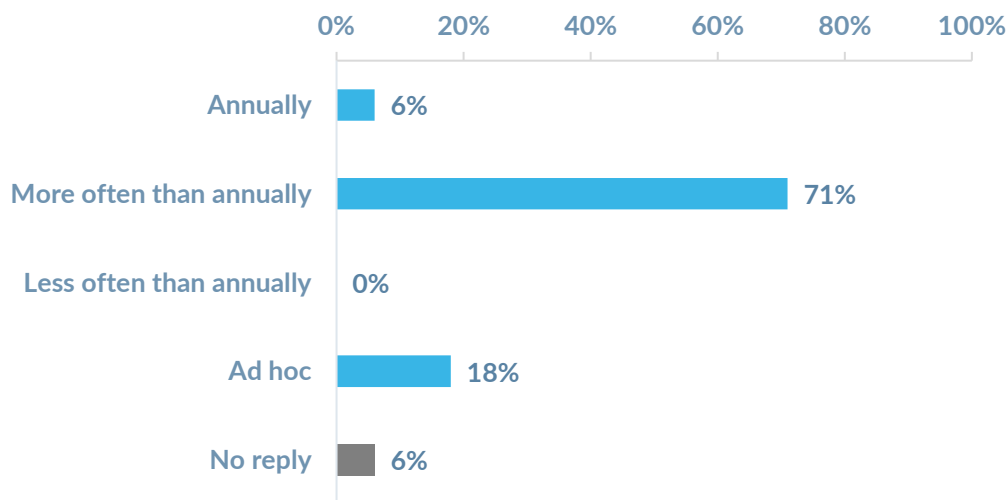
Base: 17

By far the most common frequency was to meet several times a year (71%). A quarter of these groups met on an ad hoc bases and only 6% met annually. No respondent indicated that the group met less often than once a year. Most respondents (88%) felt their approach to the frequency of meetings was 'just right' as shown in the chart below.

Base: 17

Commonly, the meetings were held in a hybrid mode (combination of online and in person), with 65% of respondents telling us so. 35% held these meetings online only. None of the 17 respondents held these meeting only in person. Most respondents (82%) felt that that level of commitment was 'just right' as shown in the chart below.
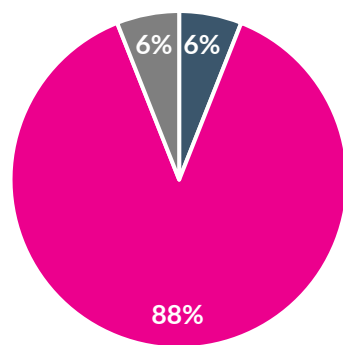
■ **Too high** ■ **Too low** ■ **Just right** ■ **No reply**
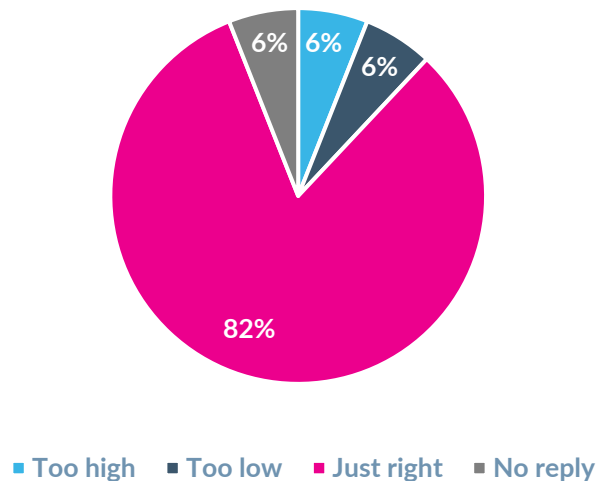
Base: 17

About the unit (e.g., a school, centre, faculty) that delivers accredited qualifications

For the 17 respondents who, at each provider, had a unit responsible for delivering accredited qualifications, we asked How do you typically describe the unit at the provider that delivers accredited qualifications? A wide range of names was used, with two respondents telling us the names also varied by provider.

Findings show that the 'accreditation subject unit' can be termed in the following manner, as part of these corporate structures:

- Department (x3 respondents)
- School (x3)
- Programme Team (x2)
- Faculty (x2)
- Division (x1)
- Accredited Teaching Centre (x1)
- Course Centre (x1)

We also wanted to find out the location of the unit within the academic provider, and size.

Unit name	Where lies
Programme Team	Either within a single department or across different schools
	Within a single department
Department	Either single or multiple
Department, School, Division (varies by provider)	Mainly within a single department
Department or School (varies by provider)	Mainly within a single department
Faculty	Within a single department
	Either within a single department or across different departments
Accredited teaching centre	Mainly within a single department
School	Within a single department
Course Centre	Within a single department

Typically, where the 'accreditation subject unit' was located varied from provider to provider. For example, it could lie within a single department at one accredited provider and across departments or schools at another.

We are aware this a similar position to the RTPI and its current Planning Schools.

Four respondents told us that this unit was always located within a single department.

The size of these units ranged significantly between, and within, PSRBs. The average number of accredited qualifications delivered by a unit was 3, but it varied from 1 to 10.

Accreditation conditions

We asked 'which of the following criteria do providers and qualifications need to meet in order to be accredited by your organisation'.

A list of 28 criteria was presented, based on the information that the RTPI currently uses and augmented with information from the desk-top analysis conducted on other PSRB accreditation procedures. Respondents were invited to select whether each was required, or advised, or was not used as an accreditation criterion at their organisation. The criteria listed in the table concerned the following areas:

- Those directing, designing and delivering accredited qualifications
- Content of accredited qualifications
- Students studying accredited qualifications
- Provider of accredited qualification
- Quality assurance/audit of accredited qualifications

	Yes, this is required	Yes, this is advised	No, this is not a criterion	Don't know	No reply	Base
Those directing accredited qualifications have demonstrable engagement in the subject matter*	79%	14%	7%	0%	0%	43
Those directing accredited qualifications are fully qualified (professional/practitioner) members of your organisation	26%	33%	40%	0%	2%	43
Some of the academic staff delivering accredited qualifications are fully qualified (professional/practitioner) members of your organisation*	35%	37%	26%	2%	0%	43
Academic staff delivering accredited qualifications undertake CPD	35%	47%	14%	2%	2%	43
Involvement of practitioners in the design and delivery of some content within accredited qualifications*	33%	35%	33%	0%	0%	43
Some of such practitioners are fully qualified (professional/practitioner) members of your organisation*	19%	40%	35%	5%	2%	43
Involvement of practitioners in research*	5%	26%	67%	0%	2%	43
Employer input into the content of accredited qualifications	33%	30%	35%	0%	2%	43
Inclusion of your organisation's Code of Ethics/Conduct into accredited qualifications	40%	23%	37%	0%	0%	43
Promotion of the profession and careers within it to students studying accredited qualifications*	49%	35%	12%	0%	5%	43
Promotion of membership of your organisation to students studying accredited qualifications	40%	49%	12%	0%	0%	43
Practical element is an integral part of accredited qualifications*	49%	35%	12%	2%	2%	43
Accredited qualifications are available in a variety of modes of study (e.g., in-person, distance, etc)	21%	40%	37%	0%	2%	43
Students studying accredited qualifications are supported with finding work experience*	12%	30%	49%	7%	2%	43

Students studying accredited qualifications are prepared for the world of work*	44%	28%	21%	5%	2%	43
Students' views and feedback on accredited qualifications is looked for and acted on*	56%	33%	9%	0%	2%	43
Support is in place to integrate international students studying accredited qualifications*	26%	21%	47%	5%	2%	43
Provider is evidently committed to supporting accredited qualifications*	72%	21%	0%	2%	5%	43
There is sufficient staffing, facilities and resources for the delivery of accredited qualifications*	88%	9%	0%	0%	2%	43
There are policies to ensure equal access to accredited qualifications*	67%	21%	7%	2%	2%	43
Diversity in staff*	26%	40%	30%	5%	0%	43
Support for staff	44%	33%	19%	2%	2%	43
Provider of accredited qualifications has links with local communities*	14%	35%	40%	7%	5%	43
Production and dissemination of research*	16%	28%	49%	5%	2%	43
Links between research and practice*	19%	33%	42%	5%	2%	43
Accredited qualifications are audited externally*	53%	14%	21%	7%	5%	43
External examiner reports are available for your organisation to examine*	67%	12%	19%	0%	2%	43
Submission of specified data returns by the provider to your organisation*	67%	14%	14%	2%	2%	43
Other	12%	0%	5%	16%	67%	43

*Features among RTPI 'Effective Planning School' criteria

Results: The ten most frequent criteria (as defined by a cumulative % of professional bodies that require and advise them) that professional bodies stipulated providers and qualifications needed to meet in order to be accredited are marked in blue font. These criteria were in place at over 80% of survey respondents. They were commonly a requirement, rather than something that was advised.

Marked in green font are criteria that were selected by 60% to 80% of survey respondents. Again, they were typically a requirement. Four criteria, however, were more commonly advised than required:

- Diversity in staff
- Accredited qualifications are available in a variety of modes of study (e.g., in-person, distance, etc)

And, with a much smaller differential between being needed and being advised:

- Involvement of practitioners in the design and delivery of some content within accredited qualifications
- Some of the academic staff delivering accredited qualifications are fully qualified (professional/practitioner) members of your organisation

The rest of the criteria (marked in black text in the table) were in place at 30% to 60% of survey respondents and were commonly advised rather than required. The only exception here was 'Support is in place to integrate international students studying accredited qualifications', which was more commonly a requirement rather than something that is advised.

Several criteria, while common in the sector, were not directly in place at RTPI, in our view:

- Academic staff delivering accredited qualifications undertake CPD
- Promotion of membership of your organisation to students studying accredited qualifications
- Employer input into the content of accredited qualifications
- Inclusion of your organisation's Code of Ethics/Conduct into accredited qualifications
- Accredited qualifications are available in a variety of modes of study (e.g., in-person, distance, etc)
- Support for staff, e.g., entry grade or part time staff

Three of them in particular; the inclusion of the RTPI Code of Ethics/Conduct, the promotion of RTPI membership to students and diversity of modes of study stood out as worth formalising. Conversely, while there were several criteria around 'research output' within the RTPI's current accreditation policy requirements. However, this area was not as commonly used as an accreditation criterion within the wider PSRB sector. Equivalents of the following areas were also uncommon in the sector:

- An up-to-date and clear Statement of Educational Philosophy focusing on the distinctive characteristics of the Planning School.
- There is a core recognisable planning team that forms the Planning School.

A subsequent review of policy material supplied by the survey respondents, and further external assessment across the sector, allowed for document analysis across 24 PSRB accrediting bodies. We performed two strains of investigation, the first covered accreditation conditions. Here, we assessed conditions for providers and faculties, schools or departments, teaching staff, and qualifications. Our second line of enquiry covered several topics, this included an analysis of types of learning outcomes, references to the Quality Assurance Authority (QAA), and terminological differences between undergraduate and postgraduate criteria.

1. Accreditation conditions

Accrediting bodies require a paper submission upon their first approach. The submission's contents varied significantly by organisation, some common examples include module descriptors, student handbooks, and external examiner reports. Several organisations explicitly say specific conditions that the provider must follow within their frameworks. The

most common example concerned the level of programme interaction with employers. Seven organisations required their schools to have a combination of formal and informal contacts with employers and staff in the workforce to ensure that the programme best prepares students for employment.

Several other examples of conditions were cited here, though were not as universally shared, for example: regular updates on student records (x3), ensuring students are introduced to the professional body accrediting the programme (x2), vivid and accessible policies on entry requirements (x2), appropriate use of the professional body's logo on relevant materials (x1), employer cooperation to organise placements for students (x1), expectation for the providers to voluntarily and regularly review their programme (aims, learning outcomes, content, strategies, assessments, etc.) (x1), and allowing students to participate in the programme's decision-making process (x1).

All organisations required the 'accreditation subject unit' to accommodate a visit to their facilities where a review panel would consult programme leadership teams, teaching staff and students. Three organisations expected their providers to submit to annual monitoring, with each expecting updates on any changes to the programme from the last year to be reported. Seven organisations listed the requirement that students and external practitioners should be involved in the design of the course and assist in its development.

Many of these PSRBs set conditions for the staff teaching and organising the programme. The most frequently listed requirement for staff was to have at least one member of staff to be a member of the professional body (x9). Non-member academic staff were expected to work towards Chartered Status or a related professional position. A requirement for a proportion of professionally recognised academic teaching or research staff per provider was seen across the research with some PRSBs expecting between 50-70%. Staff were also required to display a level of personal continuing professional development (CPD) to shape the programme, ensuring it is '*underpinned by competent, research-informed teaching.*'

Staff teaching composition was also expected to have practitioners, who would be involved in shaping the programme's design, offer placements, and give talks to students. External examiners were expected to consist of either academics or practitioners. Additionally, the position of 'Programme Director' appeared to be heavily regulated (x7): they must be a chartered individual, they must have extensive experience in delivering accredited degrees, they must be able to clearly outline their strategy in relation to the leadership and co-ordination of the programme, and whilst acting with autonomy that enables them to lead the programme, they should frequently consult the programme's stakeholders to enable open debate surrounding the progression and development of the course.

The final set of conditions we identified were aimed at the qualifications themselves. Unsurprisingly, all accrediting bodies provided a form of qualification guideline, either in the form of a framework, checklist, criteria, or list of learning outcomes. Areas that were covered in these documents consisted of the following: subject specific in content, overviews of modules, discourse into the types of knowledge covered, types of generic skills, course methodologies, practical experiences, formats for projects, group activities and research, ethical or behavioural training, and adherence to the accrediting body's ethical code. No

organisation stated at any point, that these guidelines should be followed exactly, rather they are to help providers design their programmes.

All accrediting bodies provided explicit conditions concerning entry and credit requirements, assessment criteria, total number of teaching/learning hours, guidance on protection against plagiarism, the expected form of teaching (i.e., distance learning, campus education, hybrid approach), student to staff ratios, sustainability, and the required percentage of the programme's focus on knowledge and skills, respectively.

A small number of organisations (x3) explicitly stated that programme levels should appropriately correspond to the body's membership grades. This condition subsequently reinforced entry requirements and proficiency required. Here, the provider should adjust their programmes to ensure they support the expectations for individuals from the organisation; for example, Master's degrees should direct and support their students to attain and prepare for Chartered status. Finally, the title of the award or qualification must reflect the level of students' achievement and represent the true nature of the technical professional field.

2. Other topics

Learning Outcomes

Three overarching categories were found in frameworks for learning outcomes shared by respondents: knowledge led, skills based, and behavioural/ethical centred. The organisations broadly displayed a balance between knowledge and skills-based learning outcomes. However, eleven appeared to be predominantly knowledge led frameworks. Three frameworks were primarily skills based. One organisation's learning outcomes were formally described differently depending on the level; undergraduate outcomes were more knowledge based while postgraduate outcomes were slightly more skills based. Only one organisation was led in part by a behavioural or ethical learning outcome position, though skills were given equal weighting in their framework. A different organisation placed significant emphasis on their code of professional ethics.

Quality Assurance Authority (QAA)

The QAA subject benchmarks were referenced directly by over half (13) organisations. Only one organisation used their subject benchmark directly as their accreditation framework's learning outcomes. Four directly quoted sections from their relevant QAA subject benchmark, usually the introductory statement. Meanwhile, five discussed what the QAA was and how their framework had been influenced or governed by it. Through these references, the accrediting body displays its support for the national benchmark, but also illustrates how organisations design their own criteria. Three organisations also explained why they referred to the QAA, these include the general academic community supporting the QAA, it strengthens the reliability of the accreditation practice, and to some extent removes regulatory burden.

Terminology for undergraduate and postgraduate accreditation

Eight of the accrediting bodies recognised both undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, minimising the pool of results. Three displayed no discrepancies within their accreditation framework. While not always clear, the remaining five presented some identifiable differences in the way organisations organised their qualification guidelines.

In general, it appeared that undergraduate programmes were more focused on knowledge and 'learning the basics' and core elements of their profession. Postgraduate programmes, moreover, were more varied, studying in greater depth particular aspects of their specialism and broader elements of their discipline. For postgraduates, the degree is intended to supply a foundation for leadership and innovation, thus they are expected to be more aware of and adhere to professional standards.

One organisation explicitly said their postgraduate qualifications should have a different, specified, number of credits reserved for non-technical learning (40/180), illustrating how level 7 qualifications should be more independent, allowing learners to adopt a broader range of enhanced skills. Equally, for another organisation, their undergraduate qualifications received more requirements, focusing on standardising knowledge and introducing skills to students. The increased number of criteria for undergraduate qualifications suggest the regulation of level 6 qualifications is more imperative as they operate as the foundation for the profession and future CPD.

Three organisations treated their learning objectives separately with postgraduate courses being much more 'fine-tuned' towards specialisms. For one accreditor, the level 7 qualifications received an enhanced criteria in place of the subject benchmarks used for undergraduate qualifications. For another, the postgraduate qualification framework is a different structure with unique learning outcomes and distinct criteria. If so, good practice was to provide clear guidance containing both levels of qualifications in one table, to explicitly illustrate the different expectations and requirements for each.

One organisation had significantly reduced its regulation for level 7 qualifications. Postgraduate courses were expected to '*operate on a discrete and autonomous basis*.' Continuing, the accreditor stated largescale '*conjoint teaching*' was inappropriate for these programmes. Overall, there appears to be a notable acceptance for such courses to be designed with a more hands-off approach, permitting distance learning that would not be desirable in undergraduate courses.

Accreditation of overseas providers and qualifications

We asked the 28 respondents that stated they accredited overseas: Is the accreditation process for overseas providers and qualifications different to that for the UK ones? Commonly, there were no differences between accreditation processes for UK and overseas providers and qualifications (86%). Four respondents (14%), however, noted that these processes were different. We asked three follow up questions.

1. The key differences to accreditation were that the applying institution needed to already have some form of official recognition, for example by a regulatory body for

their sector in their respective country. Wording of criteria is altered to fit different education systems and the accreditation process takes longer than domestic applications.

2. The challenge noted was that of adapting to local contexts, which can be very different from the UK, for example in terms of quality assurance practices, comparability of educational levels, rules and regulations, culture, language, and facilities. It was also noted it could be difficult to travel overseas and that recruiting assessors could also be problematic.

3. Resolutions to these challenges included adapting their accreditation process to suit local contexts and instigating pre-meetings for new overseas accreditations before accepting applications. Making use of local support and resources, such as recruiting local assessors, was also suggested.

Policy reviews and outcomes

The survey found that 74% of PSRBs had recently conducted its own review of accreditation policy and procedures and 26% did not. The main outcomes of these reviews had some recurring themes:

- general updates to the overall process and framework (x4)
- revisions to accreditation criteria, so that they were *'fit for purpose'* (x7)
- fostering the improvement of the learning environment (x2)
- improved equality, inclusion, and diversity (x2)
- additional guidance notes for criteria, ensuring that information was clear (x2),
- developing learning outcomes in line with competency frameworks (x3)
- moving towards a competency basis (x3), moving from *'merely compliance (pass/fail) to engagement and continual enhancement of provision'*
- responding to the Covid pandemic, by introducing virtual meetings or simplifying their accreditation process to improve applications and communication (x7)

The following areas, whilst no less significant, were only mentioned once:

- Implementation of light touch process with focus on risk
- To map to new requirements for professional membership and a license to practise
- Introduce sanctions to programmes that do not meet all accreditation requirements
- Questions on whether exams should form a mandatory part or not
- More focus on climate emergency

Most respondents (60%) expected to review their policy again in the near future. The core focus of those reviews remained open however specific examples that were volunteered included:

- To continue self-assessments of learning outcomes
- To ensuring learning outcomes map effectively to the profession's competency framework, ensuring the needs of the employers are addressed

- To ensure expectations are up to date with current methods and best practice, and ensuring the current framework is fit for purpose
- To establish more involvement within course content, again to ensure courses continue to meet industry requirements
- To tighten up the accreditation process to offer greater transparency within their industry.
- To improve management and co-ordination with providers and *'inspire ideas and keep things progressing'*.
- To investigate international interest in accreditation within its field.

Qualifications for Membership

Respondents were asked What is the minimum level of qualification that is required in order to become a fully qualified (professional/practitioner) member of your organisation? They were provided with a definition of qualification levels[2] and were presented with the following levels to choose from:

- Level 4 (e.g., certificate of higher education (CertHE), higher apprenticeship, higher national certificate (HNC)) or equivalent
- Level 5 (e.g., diploma of higher education (DipHE), foundation degree, higher national diploma (HND)) or equivalent
- Level 6 (e.g., degree apprenticeship, degree with honours, graduate certificate) or equivalent
- Level 7 (e.g., integrated master's degree, level 7 award, level 7 certificate) or equivalent
- Level 8 (e.g., doctorate, level 8 award, level 8 certificate) or equivalent

Level 4 Level 5 Level 6 Level 7 Level 8 No reply

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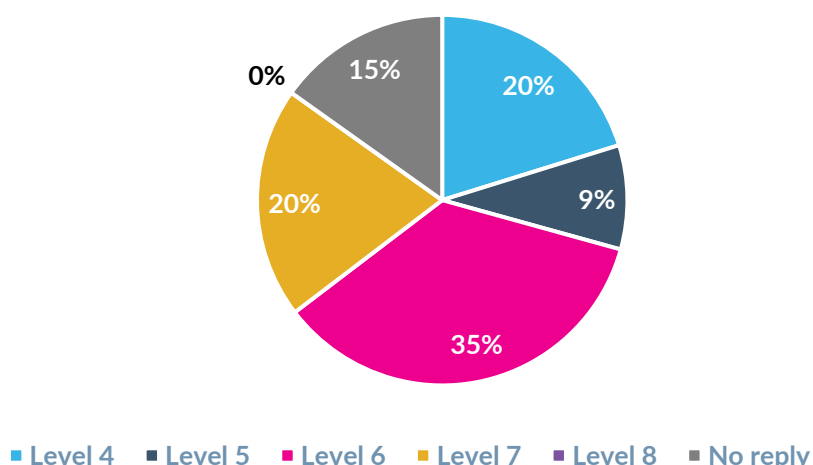
[2] Goverement definitions and terminology: http://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels

Level 6 was the most common minimum entry level to full membership, with 35% of respondents indicating this was the case. Levels 4 and 7 followed (20% each).

It is worth pointing out that while this question was presented as single choice (i.e., respondents could only select one level – we asked them to select the minimum level), in practice there are typically multiple entry routes to full membership, some of them not requiring a qualification (e.g., membership through experience). Two of the respondents who did not answer this question left a comment to this effect:

'There is no minimum level of qualification. It used to be Level 7. However, a few years ago we moved to a more inclusive approach based on our competency framework. In order to gain professional registration, members must demonstrate levels of competence. They are more likely to do this more quickly with an accredited Level 7 qualification, but that is the only advantage offered by an accredited level 7 qualification. Members with related undergrad/post grad qualifications, as well as those with Level 4 or below, can still qualify for professional registration. It will depend on their career path, years' experience, etc.'

'There is no minimum educational requirement to be a professional member. The requirement is passing the training course or proving ability through an accreditation route.'

It is also common that a qualification is not the only requirement for full membership. A number of years of experience and/or passing professional body's assessment can also be required.
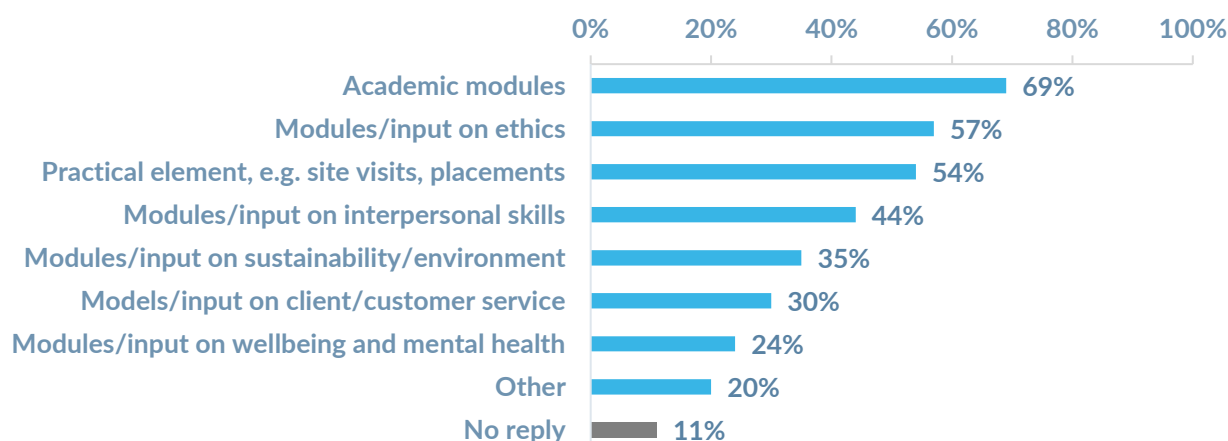
The level of entry

■ Too high ■ Too low ■ Just right ■ No reply
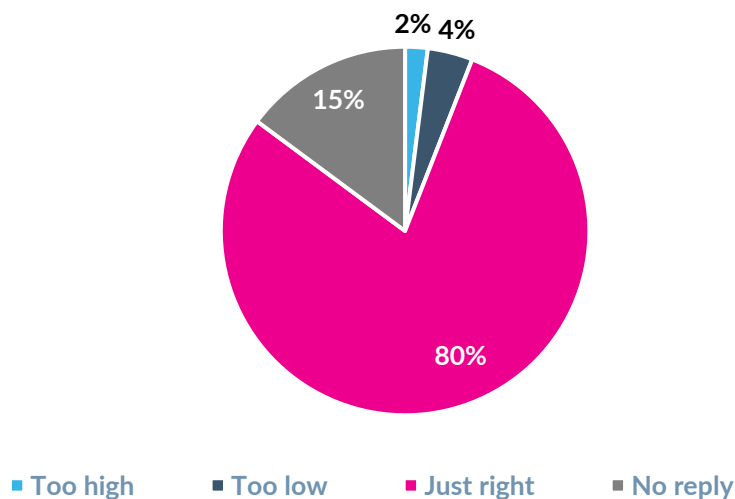
The majority (80%) felt that the minimum entry level currently in place was right. Two respondents had minimum entry level at Level 4 (both though this level was too low) and one had minimum entry level at Level 6 and thought this level was too high.

Base: 54

At 69%, academic modules topped the list. Ethics and practical elements were also common (57% and 54% respectively).

In order to see how these elements might vary depending on the level of qualification, we cross tabulated this question with the question about minimum level of qualification required for full membership. The results are presented in the table below.

		What is the minimum level of qualification that is required in order to become a fully qualified (professional/practitioner) member of your organisation?			
		Level 4	**Level 5**	**Level 6**	**Level 7**
Which of the following do qualifications for entry as a fully qualified (professional/practitioner) member of your organisation include?	**Academic modules**	54%	60%	68%	91%
	Practical element, e.g., site visits, placements, lab work	54%	40%	53%	55%
	Modules/input on interpersonal skills	38%	80%	47%	45%
	Modules/input on ethics	54%	80%	63%	55%
	Modules/input on wellbeing and mental health	15%	40%	26%	9%
	Modules/input on sustainability/environment	31%	60%	32%	45%
	Models/input on client/customer service	46%	80%	11%	18%
	Other	23%	-	32%	9%
	No reply	15%	20%	11%	-
	Base	13	5	19	11

As expected, academic modules were far more prevalent in Level 7 qualifications than in Level 4 to Level 6 ones. Level 5 qualifications, however, were the ones that most commonly

included all other elements (e.g., interpersonal skills, ethics, client service), bar the practical one.

Length of entry qualifications and membership

We used the survey to explore how long do minimum level qualifications for entry to full membership take, whether their duration is appropriate and, if not, what duration would be right.

	All	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
Min	0.75	1	1	0.75	1
Mean	2.7	2.1	1.8	3.0	3.1
Median	3.0	1.1	1.5	3.5	3.3
Max	5	5	3	5	5
Base	31	6	4	11	10

On average, it took 2.7 years to complete the education route on a full-time basis. The median duration was similar, at three years. As expected, this length of time varied depending on the level, with Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications taking around two years on average, while Level 6 and Level 7 qualifications taking around three years on average.

While most respondents measured duration in years, two did so in learning hours and days. One of them had a Level 4 qualification that took 130 learning hours to complete and the other had a Level 7 qualification that took 5 full days of training.
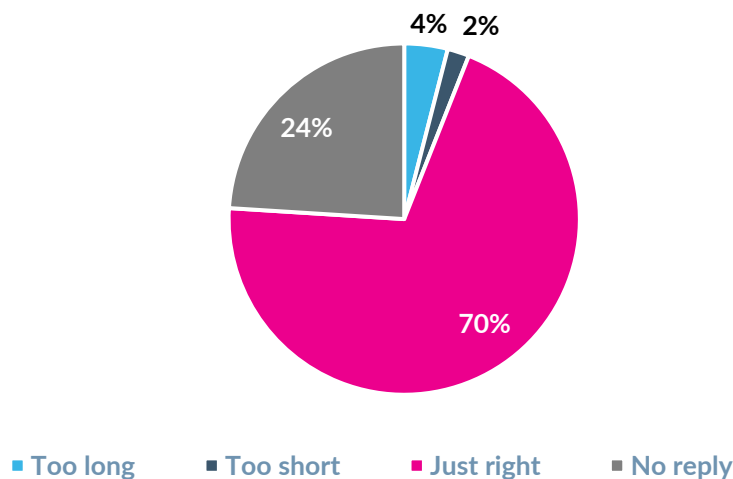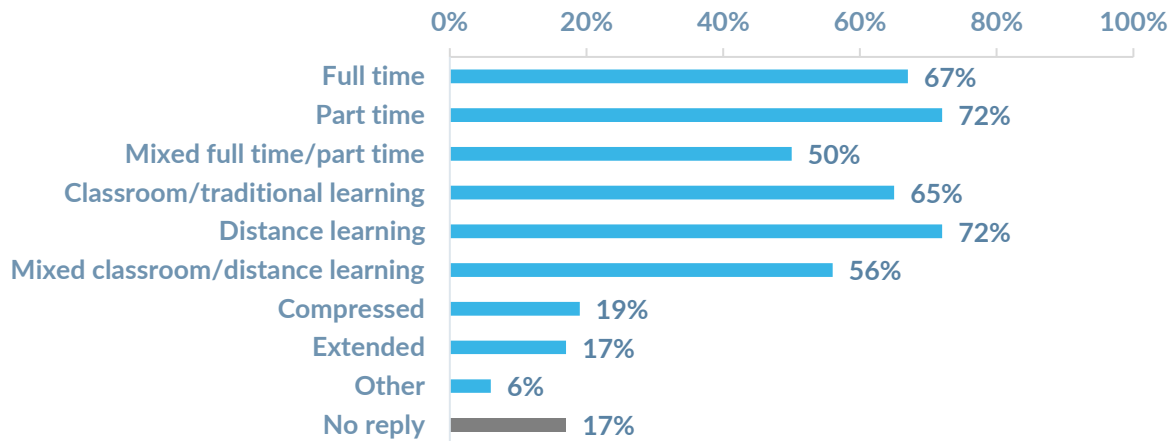

Base: 54

The majority (70%) of respondents thought this duration was just right, but 4% (two respondents) felt that their minimum level qualification took too long and 2% (one respondent) felt it was too short. However 24% did not answer this question. The feedback commentary included points such as:

- Level 6 qualification currently taking up to five years to complete was too long. Right duration would be three years.
- Level 7 qualification currently taking five years to complete was too long. Right duration would be four years.
- Level 7 qualification currently taking 5 full days of training was too short. Right duration would be six months, with an opportunity to imbed learning into the workplace.

Modes of study

Base: 54

A wide variety of modes of study was available, with part time and distance learning being particularly prevalent (72% for both). 67% and 65% of respondents respectively told us their minimum entry level qualifications were available in full time and classroom modes. Mixed classroom/distance learning and mixed full time/part time option was available at 56% and 50% of respondents respectively. Compressed and extended modes of study were far less common, with 19% and 17% of respondents identifying them respectively. 6% (three respondents) selected 'Other' and explained that they also offered online learning.

21 PSRBs told us that accredited qualifications available in non-standard modes of study were subject to the same quality assurance processes and accreditation conditions as standard ones (e.g., full time classroom based). As one respondent put it: *'They are subject to the same accreditation requirements and same scrutiny. Quality is not dependent on mode of delivery or the number of face-to-face contact hours.'*

By far the most common quality assurance mechanism was assessment of feedback from various stakeholders, including students (x8 respondents), employers (x2), sector representatives (x1), external examiners (x1), programme team (x3) and senior management team (x1). Six respondents told us that quality was evidenced through meeting accreditation criteria or learning outcomes, or through demonstrating relevance to professional body's competency framework, and annual reporting by the provider or visits.

Curriculum of accredited qualifications
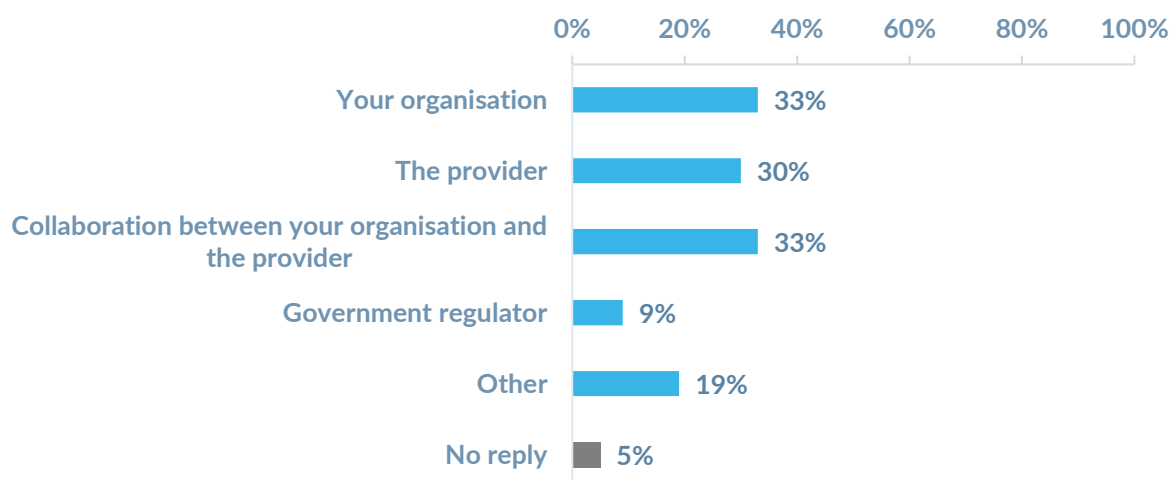
Base: 43

There was a fairly equal split between the number of respondents telling us that the professional body defined the curriculum, that the provider defined the curriculum and that this was done in collaboration between the two, with about a third selecting each of these options. Some indicated that a government regulator was also involved in defining the curriculum. Examples of the extent of the PSRB involvement in defining the curriculum, included:

- Professional body defines core competencies to be covered and provider designs qualification content to deliver them
- Professional body may request amendments to the qualification content if requirements are not met
- Professional body governs accreditation criteria

Some noted that the curriculum was informed by a combination of regulatory requirements, professional standards, and QAA subject benchmark curriculum.

A majority of respondent felt PSRB involvement in curriculum design was 'just right' however, as shown in the chart below, while two thirds responded that training providers (academic or other) would like the professional body to be as prescriptive on the curriculum of accredited qualifications as they currently were, a proportion (19%) indicated that providers would like professional bodies to be more prescriptive and a further 9% told us providers would like professional bodies to be less prescriptive.
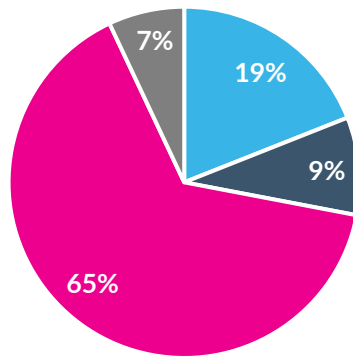
■ More prescriptive ■ Less prescriptive ■ As prescriptive ■ No reply

Base: 43

Progression to Membership

Student membership
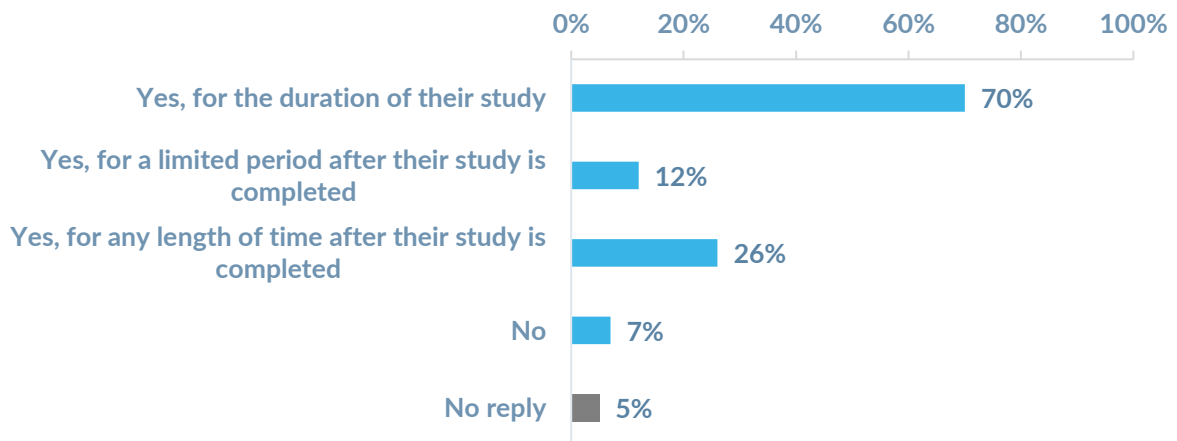
Base: 43

By far the most common practice in the sector was to allow students enrolled on qualifications accredited by the professional body to be members of that professional body. Only 7% of respondents did not allow this.

Professional body membership could be permitted for the duration of the accredited qualification, for a limited time following its completion, for an unlimited time following its completion, <u>or</u> for a combination of these. Survey responses returned the following results. Most commonly (51%) membership was allowed for the duration of study only. 12% allowed membership for the duration of the study and for any length of time after. 14% allowed membership for any length of time following completion of an accredited qualification. 7% allowed membership for the duration of study and a limited time after and 5% allowed

membership for a limited time after study is completed. The member grades that students would be eligible for, during and on completion of their studies, is summarised in the chart below.
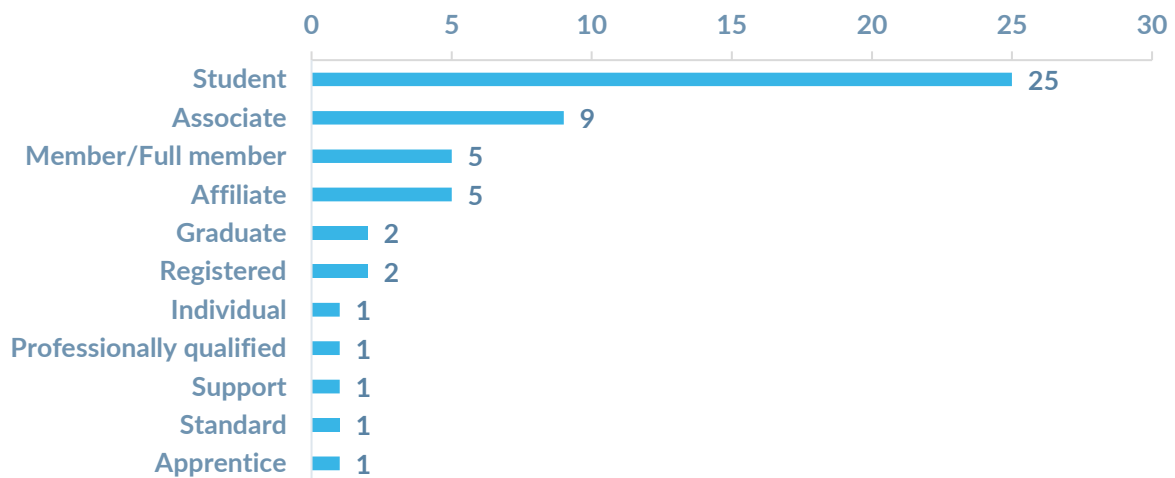
Depending on the definition by each professional membership body, Student or Associate membership was clearly preferred.

- Three respondents noted that Associate grade was for those currently studying, while two told us it was for those who graduated.
- Two respondents noted that Affiliate grade was for those who completed their accredited qualification while one noted it was for those currently studying.
- Two respondents noted that Member/Full Member grade was available to those post study and none noted it was available to those currently studying.

On completion of their studies, students are often eligible to become a fully qualified (professional/practitioner) member and most organisations require additional experience or assessment, as noted in the diagram overleaf.

The additional experience or assessment could be achieved as follows:

- Relevant work experience (x14 respondents) including:
  - o Three specified that they required three years of relevant work experience.
  - o Three noted that work experience was evidenced by a work experience portfolio.
  - o Two noted experience was assessed through a Professional Review.
- Initial and Continuing Professional Development (x5) including:
  - o One required evidence of targeted competence development through work experience.
  - o One required 35 hours of professional learning a year.
  - o One required a commitment to CPD.
  - o One required that candidates were mentored.
- Professional registration (x3).
- Sign up to the PSRB Code of Ethics (x1).
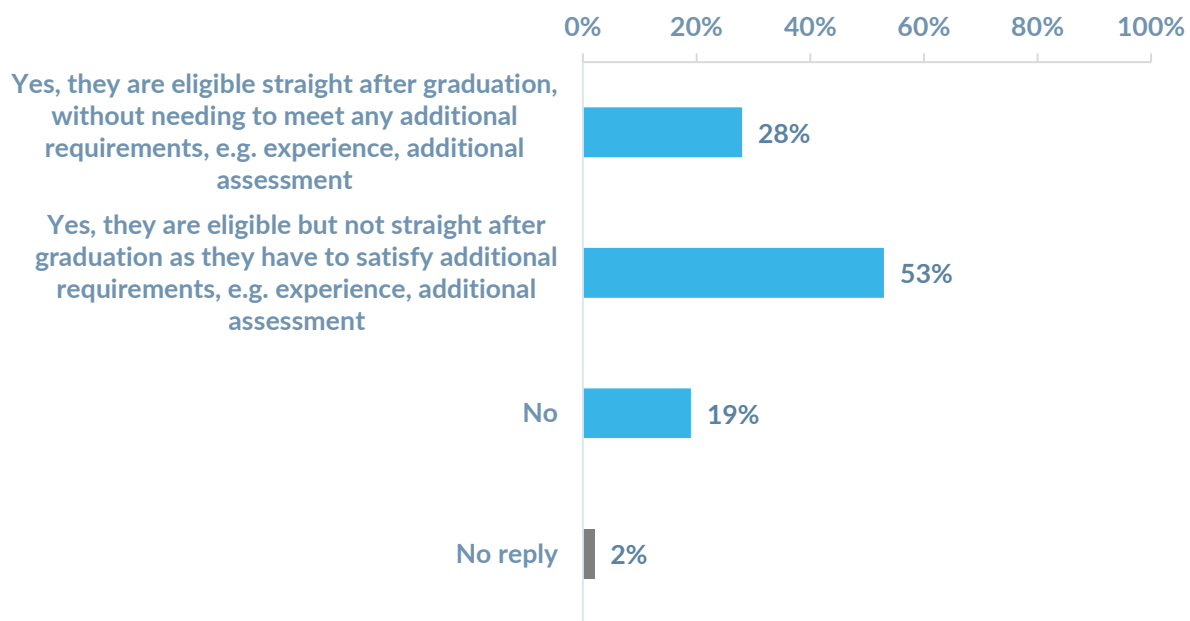
Base: 43

APPENDIX B: WORKSHOPS WITH PLANNING SCHOOLS

We held two workshops with academics from a total of 15 Planning Schools to explore their current thoughts and opinions on the RTPI's accreditation policy and their views on planning within education. This is a composite summary of the evidence and information gathered.

Discussions began with an exploration into the idea of a flexible policy, specifically on delivering RTPI Learning Outcomes. Here, we wished to uncover academic opinions on the current accreditation approach and input into potential change and improvements and rational for this feedback, thus opening the discussion to understand what challenges Planning Schools currently face.

It was expressed that any changes should be made with caution. To many, the call for flexibility on learning outcomes and education delivery was considered a '*big ask*.' It was agreed that universities are already working with '*complex parameters in terms of timescales, ability to change programs and all the internal challenges that are faced,*' thus, significant changes in expectation and scale could add to this difficult context.

One university commented they were surprised they had not taken up the flexibility already; however, they quickly added that such a transition would come with risk. '*If the rest of the planning school community isn't moving in that direction, to sort of step out of line without confidence that that will actually prove an attractive offer and start dismantling what is a strong program and how they respected program;*' as such, the university would not consider adopting more flexibility at present. It was expressed there should be consensus amongst the universities on the matter before such an action was taken by the RTPI.

Both groups felt that expanding planning courses, particularly into summer, would be problematic. Reasons behind this concerned both staff and student bodies. For teaching staff, it would naturally increase their workload, consequently reducing their personal research opportunities. Meanwhile for administrative staff, the expanded teaching terms would cause logistical issues as exam boards and progression awards are almost always organised for the summer, thus alienating the universities' mandatory graduation rules. Furthermore, the increase of credits would make organising the course structure more cumbersome as it would require redividing modules across an extended period.

Alternatively, the idea of reducing courses was discussed. Queries primarily concerned an increased workload for students and staff and reorganising credit distribution and content. It was added that all universities would find it challenging to include all required content in a briefer period time scale, in addition to satisfying the RTPI's standards for accreditation.

Overall, responding to changes in course length, it was concluded the current structure is sufficient as it is developmental, appropriately educating students with the necessary knowledge and skills required for a planning career. One individual suggested a '*fear of the unknown*' would largely deter many universities from changing. Three universities noted the concept of a planning degree was not entirely popular amongst students entering university, thus any changes to the status quo could be damaging for its reputation. Nevertheless, two

universities admitted they struggled to fit all the required learning outcomes within its degree. Another university representative added that learning outcomes were simultaneously insufficient for a full accredited qualification.

A further suggestion from one representative was '*reviewing the rule that a year of experience must be post-licentiate*' may support flexible models. It was proposed that students could study their master's flexibly over three years. Despite the suggestion, it stimulated little debate.

A broader question was then posed on how Planning Schools can increase the number of students studying, and completing, a planning degree. All universities stated they wanted more students in their planning schools. To increase their numbers, several ideas were suggested.

Firstly, most respondents agreed that increasing engagement with students before university was imperative. Many stated the concepts of planning and what it means, as well as planning degrees themselves, are not entirely transparent to students. There is difficulty in increasing the interest and familiarity of planning within secondary schools due to the lack of planning in A-levels or Highers.

Two universities wished to improve their open day representation of their planning school with the aim to provide more resonance and connections with students, demonstrating what planning involves. This is designed to respond to the lack of tailored promotion of planning within universities and the wider community. Improved displays of contemporary and relevant examples of work that students produce to enhance understanding was considered useful. Increased marketing output and advancing the visibility of the profession was also considered to advance student interest.

Alternative approaches to improving student familiarity and engagement with planning also included using stronger, more comprehensive degree titles to increase the broadness and attractiveness of planning degrees. This was also applied to dual accredited degrees, whereby it would be made clearer what planning elements are involved within the degree. Such action comes in response from one university's internal research, suggesting that students want more diversity and clarity within module options and training within programmes. Moreover, there was also a call from two universities to improve their planning school's inclusivity.

One representative suggested that connections to planning can be made even sooner than secondary school, explaining how video games such as Minecraft, City Skyline, and Sim City all include core planning mechanics in their gameplay. Therefore, they could be used to cater to a specific market of individuals who play these games who may wish to replicate their interest in design in their career.

Altogether, the consensus of the groups showed stronger targeting towards students prior to university was the key approach to increasing student participation in planning schools. By addressing the issues surrounding the lack of knowledge around planning, universities expect better future engagement.

In terms of how universities maximise their students' engagement with RTPI during their studies, many of the earlier ideas returned, including entering colleges and giving talks on planning and exploring the RTPI's role in the profession. Such talks included career talks, early open day presentations, introducing RTPI with guest speakers, having employers and young planners give talks on their experiences.

Universities aimed to increase their students (and future students) awareness of the RTPI's APC, which for one university was to be built into the course itself; this is hoped to help students with the next steps in their career and development. Bringing in practitioners and representatives of RTPI to universities was also suggested to this end.

Within the modules taught by planning schools, two universities linked RTPI and career development into the curriculum for example, a career and professional ethics course in third year that has high practitioner involvement, or making it mandatory for students to complete RTPI's ethics e-learning module. Four universities made comments about how they were trying to increase vocational teaching, placements, and work experience to support students' practical development and help students engage with future employers.

Ultimately, half of the representatives agreed that there needed to be an increased or strengthened relationship between the RTPI and students; it is important that the Institute be clear on the scope of the planning school and take a more physical involvement in the school itself. One representative explained that whilst universities are actively making efforts to produce planners, they are not sure on what they are doing to ensure students understand the significance of what they learn. One representative explained that most of its connections come from its alumni network and not through the RTPI, thus agreed that there are missing links within communication. Nevertheless, three universities did agree that RTPI was better at engaging universities compared to other built environment institutions such as RICS, and clearly show signs of wanting to be engaged with students.

The workshops then turned to discussing benefits and challenges regarding delivery of RTPI accreditation procedures.

Two benefits were raised when discussing university's experiences of delivering RTPI accreditation procedures; the value of status that RTPI accreditation brings to the university, the course, and its teaching staff, and the value of quality assurance. However, several issues were raised with regards to delivering RTPI's expectations.

Firstly, one individual wanted more consistency from the Institute. They explained they had difficulty getting courses accredited. They would design a course, inspired by another accredited course, yet despite the other's status, the new course does not get accredited, thus hoped for better clarity and uniformity.

Three universities were concerned about students changing degrees or courses. The overall structure of current and potentially future planning degrees, particularly the different lengths of degrees may result in students struggling to adapt to different courses should they move. It was suggested students on courses of different lengths would struggle to enter a new course as the two will be at different places with regards to knowledge base. As such, the lack of interconnectivity made by changing degree lengths could increase student dropout as students may not be comfortable with either. Whilst a potentially hypothetical scenario, the anxiety is no less real and should be considered when reassessing any potential changes to the structure of RTPI accreditation and planning degrees themselves.

Continuing this dialogue, another pair of speakers explained they have experienced a legacy of low retention rates from undergraduate to postgraduate degrees (or in some instances four-year degrees, with students leaving after their third). This was reinforced by a third individual who described getting students to complete their planning degree, to then go on to become a member at RTPI, as a perennial issue. In these instances, students may move away to finish their degree at another university or move towards RICS membership. Regardless,

the issues are compounded when universities easily lose track of former students after graduation. Although described as a matter employer handle, they rarely find students entering the RTPI as members when they do keep track of their movements. Such a problem can be discerned as lack of communication between employers, universities, and RTPI.

Perhaps one of the biggest talking points during this part of the discussion concerned the regularity of RTPI's monitoring. The consensus from both groups indicated universities would prefer fewer check-ins overall, though one group agreed it would base this conclusion on what type of checks were made, i.e., they desired informal rather than formal checks.

The primary complaint about formal check-ins was that there were too many of them and were largely time consuming. Universities complained about the amount of paperwork required which made the process significantly more tedious, with one university protesting they had to present the same document on multiple occasions in short time. Further criticism extended to the concept of monitoring being rather onerous. One individual claimed their check-ins proved to be nothing more than accreditation or reaccreditation exercises. As a result, they believed they were not being effectively regulated.

Despite these grievances, many universities were willing to provide alternatives to the status quo. In one group, the decision to move away from scrutiny-based assessments were received positively. They explained that annual scrutinization was not beneficial, claiming they did not need to be tested so regularly and rigorously. Equally, they were opposed to the idea of quinquennial reviews, as they were too laborious and needed great, unnecessary preparation. A developmental approach was approved by the group, calling for more freedom to develop their courses within the guidelines, reducing the rigidity of the current assessment, and reducing the amount of mandatory paperwork. In proposing this novel approach, they recommended that reviews be conducted between a period of eighteen months to three years periodically.

Should RTPI introduce this change or not, the universities remained confident they could still achieve success within RTPI's expectations thanks to their clear guidance and structure. Thus, universities undeniably find great value from being accredited by RTPI as it provides them with appropriate guidelines and effective quality assurance. Although the process of monitoring is inconvenient from their perspective, they do not deny that it provides them much benefit and support, thus all universities considered their partnership with RTPI as advantageous.

Finally, there was just enough time to consider some thoughts on international planning students. Comments included: one organisation stated they have seen a growth in international students recently while another organisation stated that virtually no international members end up joining RTPI as they just want to do a UK Master's and returning to their country of origin to continue their career.

APPENDIX C: SURVEY OF RTPI MEMBERS

Career in planning

We opened the survey with general demographic questions.

	Survey
Chartered Town Planner (MRTPI)	71%
Fellow (FRTPI)	5%
Associate (AssocRTPI)	1%
Legal Associate (LARTPI)	
RTPI Licentiate	7%
RTPI Student member	7%
RTPI Affiliate member	2%
Retired RTPI member	1%
Not an RTPI member	5%
Other	2%
Base	167

Chartered Town Planners (MRTPI), comprised 71% of the overall respondents. This was expected as they are largest represented group within RTPI. Generally, to ensure results are drawn from as adequate a response base as possible, certain membership grades will only be analysed in more detail if they have over five responses.

Current employment status

Base: 167

As shown in the diagram above, there were three major areas of employment: 26% each were employed in either a private consultancy firm, or local authority, while 22% worked for

a central or regional government or government agency. Academia and independent/self-employed positions were represented in size, at 8% and 7% respectively.

No respondents expressed they were currently unemployed, however one individual did state, when responding 'other' that they were currently on a career break.

The 'other' areas not in the prescribed categories were:

- Housing Developer / Housebuilder (private/public)
- 3rd sector/charity/social enterprise sector/NGO
- Parish Council

Employment location
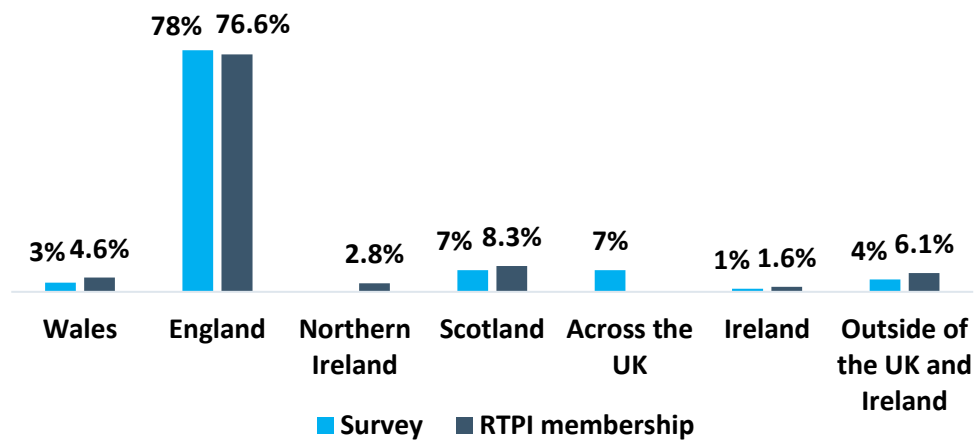
Base: Survey, 167; RTPI membership, approx. 27,000

In response to this question, the proportion and split is similar to the current figures recorded by the RTPI and while the response rate overall is considered low, does provide a level of confidence.

Planning education

Academic study

An overwhelming majority of respondents (81%) stated they had studied an RTPI-accredited planning degree. Adding in the 5% of individuals are currently studying planning shows the respondents interaction with RTPI-accredited qualifications is high.

Alongside this, another 8% of respondents expressed they had completed a planning degree albeit not accredited by the RTPI.
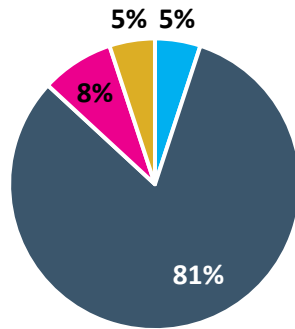
- ■ I am currently studying an RTPI accredited planning degree
- ■ I studied an RTPI accredited planning degree
- ■ I studied a planning degree that was not accredited by the RTPI
- ■ I am not/did not study planning

Base: 167

Place of study
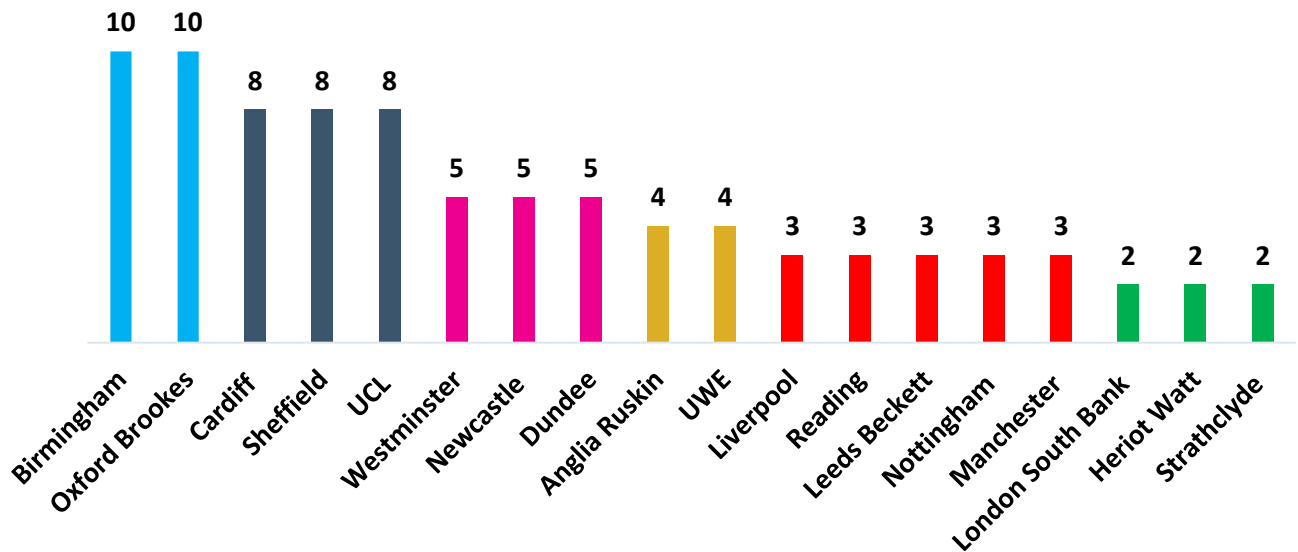
Base: 88

The graph above shows the breadth of places that respondents studied their planning qualifications, of which the most popular for planning degrees appeared to be the University of Birmingham and Oxford Brookes University. The location of all these universities demonstrates the wide scope and healthy coverage of planning education available across the UK.

The following universities were cited once each by respondents, Coventry University, Sheffield Hallam University, Queens University Belfast, Liverpool John Moores University,

University of Kent, Leeds University, University of Sunderland, University of Brighton, University of Plymouth, Kingston University and the University of Bath. Universities from outside the UK were also cited: University of Auckland, University of Technology Kingston, and University of South Africa.

Course title

Course	Count
Town and country Planning	35
Town and Regional Planning	9
Spatial Planning	9
Urban and Regional Planning	4
Civic Design	3
Planning environment and development	3
Geography and Planning	2
International Planning	2
Architecture	2
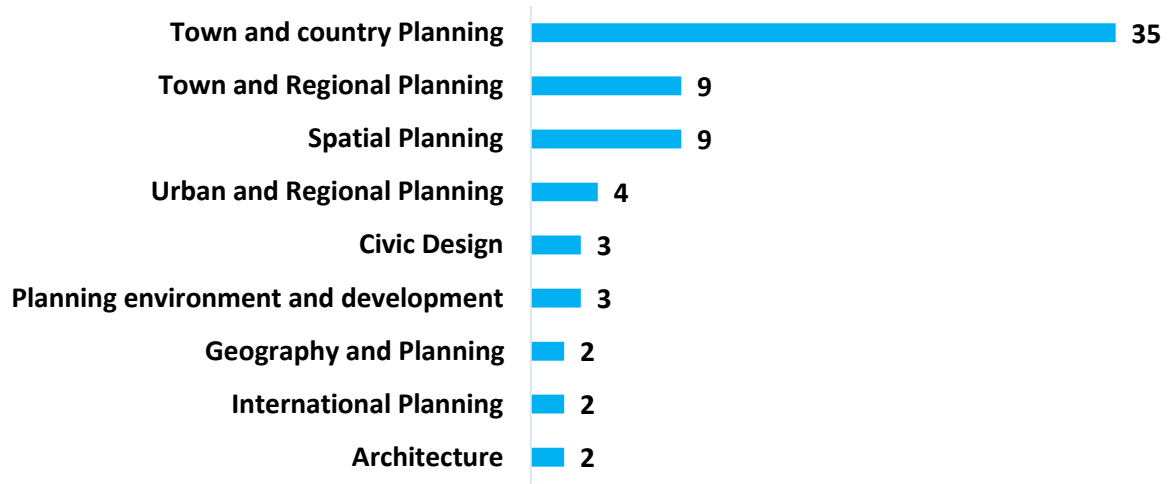
Base: 158

In terms of the course title or focus, there is some clear overlap. This may in part be due to the varying levels of qualifications presented; these included BA, BSc, MPlan, MA, MSc, and Diploma. These have been excluded from the analysis to indicate the emphasis on content and topic. The similarity in titles could suggest a level of uniformity amongst university faculties on what they consider to be the core element of the planning degree. 'Planning' is reference in most of the titles.

Graduation date

Pie chart values: 1%, 3%, 1%, 29%, 66%

Legend:
- Undergrad (BA, BSc, MPLan)
- Postgraduate (MA, MSc)
- PhD
- Diploma
- No reply
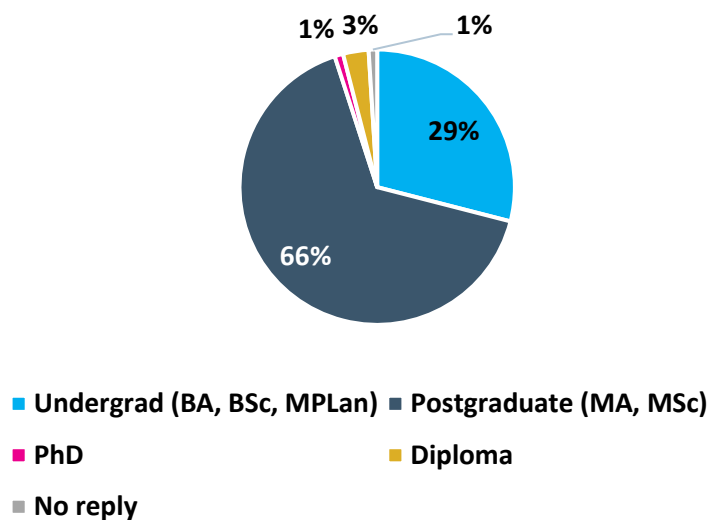
Base: 158

The response underlines an aspect of planning education, that a significant proportion is currently conducted at postgraduate level, echoed in 66% of the response. 30% of respondents had completed an undergraduate planning degree.

Undergraduate qualifications
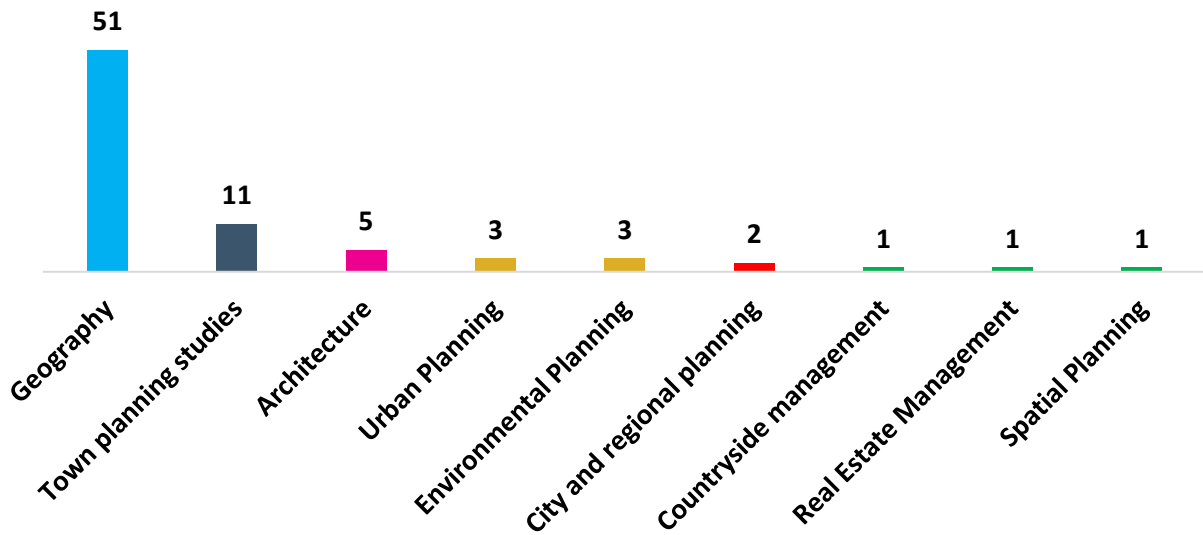
Base: 94

The results illustrate that a good proportion of individuals (54%) indicated they studied geography at undergraduate level. This is transitionally considered a 'feeder' course into planning. Some participated in a joint honour alongside Geography, namely:

- Urban and regional planning x3
- Environmental management x2
- Economics x2
- Natural Hazards
- Geology
- English
- Psychology

A further selection of degrees, unrelated to traditional planning education, were cited: History x2, History of Art x2, International Politics (and Military History) x2, Sociology x2, English Literature x2, Genetics, Economics, German, Health science.

Dual accreditation

Yes ■ No ■ Don't know ■ No reply
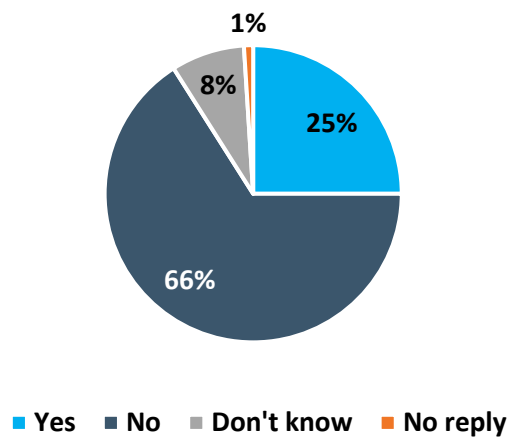
25% of respondents expressed their planning degree was accredited by another professional body. The following list illustrates those alternate accrediting bodies:

- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) x21
- Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) x3
- Irish Planning Institute (IPI) x2
- The South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN) x2
- Landscape Institute x1
- Royal Geographical Society (RGS) x1
- Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM3) x1
- Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors x1

University taught planning knowledge and skills

Table 1 shows responses to the question of 'what planning knowledge and skills has your planning education quipped you with, and which are/were useful in your planning job'. Overall, these results indicate many well-established planning knowledge and skills are appropriately covered in planning degrees in reasonable detail.

While not necessarily 'balanced' completely, the following areas of planning are introduced, and to a slightly lesser extent focused in detail, within planning education: spatial planning, environmental management, ethics and planning decisions, community rights and representation in planning, public engagement, involving communities in planning, urban design, and self-reflection.

	My planning degree introduced this	My planning degree covered this in depth	This is essential in my planning job	This is useful in my planning job	No reply
Planning law	64%	15%	62%	26%	3%
Local plans and policy making	64%	23%	73%	19%	3%
Development management process and planning consents	53%	14%	73%	20%	3%
Planning theory and arguments for and against spatial planning	28%	69%	20%	43%	3%
Spatial planning in different contexts and scales	32%	57%	34%	35%	5%
Land use and environmental management	50%	18%	36%	32%	15%
Ethics and planning decisions	54%	36%	45%	34%	-
Climate change and planning for built and natural environment	45%	23%	57%	28%	8%
Concepts and debates around community rights and representation in the development process	39%	38%	35%	45%	11%
Development finance and economics	57%	15%	51%	32%	9%
Effective public participation and engagement in planning processes	45%	35%	57%	30%	7%
Inclusive planning and involvement of different communities	41%	26%	45%	38%	15%
Urban design and planning the public realm	41%	49%	47%	35%	7%
Research, analysis, appraisal and evaluation skills	39%	49%	59%	19%	4%
Decision making skills	39%	11%	73%	15%	11%
Interdisciplinary communication and collaboration	36%	15%	68%	15%	12%
Negotiation and mediation skills	30%	14%	73%	19%	8%
Upholding professional standards and ethical behaviours	45%	30%	66%	19%	8%
Critical reflection as a planning professional	43%	36%	45%	36%	8%

Base: 74

Table 1 – planning knowledge and skills* taught at university

summarised from the RTPI's current learning outcomes criteria.

On the other hand, the following knowledge, and skills, whilst considered essential to planning, do not appear to be covered in as much detail as might be required for future planners.

- Development management can be identified as having the one of the largest disparities between detailed coverage in education and importance in employment, with a difference of 59%.
- Decision making can also be identified, with a difference based on a similar comparison of 62%.
- Negotiation skills, interdisciplinary communication and professional standards and ethics were all considered under-represented.
- Planning law and local planning were considered essential but lacking in substantial coverage.
- Knowledge on climate change and finance skills, while considered less important in the workplace were also generally understated within planning education.

We can segment the results for two professional membership categories, Chartered Planners (base of 53) and Licentiates (base of 11).

Chartered Planners: Generally indicative of the wider results, however one notable difference with 'local planning' considered a higher priority.

Licentiates: Generally also indicative of the wider results. However Licentiates reported a lower coverage of environmental management and a higher coverage of ethics at an introductory level.

The general trends for those who completed an RTPI-accredited degree also mirrored the observations from the general results.

Planning knowledge or skills necessary for early careers

Yes ■ **No** ■ **No Reply**
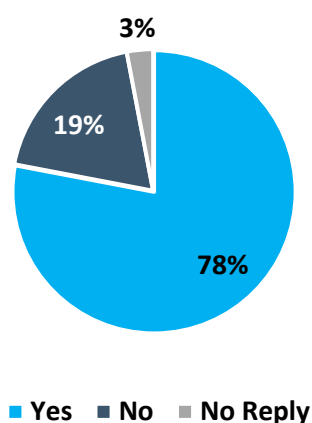
Base: 74

A high percentage of respondents (78%) felt there were core elements of planning that could be added or covered in more detail in planning degrees. Suggestions were:

- Determining a planning application x18 (what are they for, what do you need, case studies, how do you prepare and submit them)
- Management processes (development management) x15
- Planning law x10
- Policy making and interpretation x9
- Different levels of planning (regional, national, etc x7
- Project management (interdisciplinary approaches) x6
- IT skills and related packages (GIS, Autocad, consultation portals) x5
- Communication and basic knowledge with/of other disciplines (for example architecture) x4
- Collaboration with other types of planning employees x4
- Finances and viability x4
- Decision-making x4,
- Climate change x3
- Design and Architecture x3
- Negotiation skills x2
- Waste management x2
- Ecology and land surveyance x2
- Conflict resolution x2
- Digital planning x2
- Specialist interactions
- Archaeology
- Analytical thinking
- Case presentation
- Gender mainstreaming
- Business development
- Key terminology
- Leadership skills
- Inclusivity and diversity
- Critical thinking
- Student engagement with RTPI (committee meetings)
- Being able to attend examination meetings
- Tracking live planning applications
- Attending public hearings or public inquiries

This poignant reflection sums up the wider theme running through these responses: *'My planning degree did not explain what different jobs Planners can have (i.e., local authority, both development management and policy, private consultancy etc.). Further, it did not equip anyone for the day-to-day role that Planners actually undertake in any of these roles... The majority of information taught at university is theory or history, neither of which are particularly useful when gaining a role in the industry'.*

Another comment summaries the view on planning theory: '*the degree taught me very little in terms of knowledge and skills I actually needed to do a job in the planning world. It was much more theoretical and academic than contextualised and real life'.*

The debate between theoretical and practical elements was a common point: '*courses have moved on very little,*' with too much emphasis on academia and insufficient focus on practical planning. Instead '*Planners need to witness what a town planner does day to day in the UK because it is very different from what is taught*'. The inclusion of practical elements would '*support early careers and improve effectiveness of academic courses*' and the quality of graduates.

However, it was acknowledged that there needed to be a balance between the two approaches and that the teaching of planning theory should not be removed, but reshaped to ensure ample opportunities for practical aspects to be introduced.

A suggestion for introducing 'mandatory placements' was considered an important opportunity to apply academic learning before entering the workforce to gain insight into how to make planning applications.

Apprenticeships were also seen to increase the practical experiences before entering their career, however, much of the conversation concerned how it needed supporting as a genuine route towards chartership at the RTPI.

A final two separate comments highlighted other key points within the debate:

- That it is '*absolutely critical not to undermine the teaching of core planning in universities i.e., the why and how of planning: much should then be learned on the job during licentiateship and CPD*'; and
- There is a need for '*greater understanding of the "bigger picture" and the reality of planning… Understanding of when changes to a scheme are necessary and to better differentiate between personal preferences and what actually is necessary planning amendments for better urban design skills etc.*'

Views on the profession

For the final element of the survey, we asked a two-part question: 'on the following areas of practical planning knowledge and skills, in your experience and career to date, which areas do you consider core to being a Chartered Town Planner and which are areas do you wish to learn more on via CPD'. The results are presented in a series of graphs.

Career knowledge

Graph 1: This graph illustrates the top five most popular results for the overall response for the question concerning 'knowledge considered core for Chartered Town Planners'. These areas have then been applied to the pre-identified groups to illustrate potential differences across segmented categories of RTPI membership.

Overall, the areas considered most crucial to planning to the collective respondents were local planning and planning law, with 84%. Development management, followed with 83%, community engagement registered 81% and sustainable development gained 80%.

When assessing the top two areas by membership grades, there are some changes. Addressing Chartered members first, given they represent the largest group, it is unsurprising their average sits around the same as the total average in both instances. Chartered members' average was higher for each knowledge base, 3% more in local planning and 5% in planning law.

Interestingly, student and licentiate views were visibly different from the average. Only 14% of students believed local planning was a core element of planning, 70% lower than the average. Licentiate meanwhile was 11% below. Concerning planning law, the sizeable differences were reversed, only 45% of licentiates valued planning law as integral, whereas 70% students valued it highly. Fellows displayed a strong conviction towards the two areas, with all respondents stating it was core to planning.

Breaking the results down by year of graduation, the results mirrored the overall average though those who graduated before 2004 noticeably placed more significance on local planning and planning law than those who graduated after 2004. In both instances, individuals who graduated after 2004 appeared on average to place less importance than the overall average.

The third highest overall result concerned development management at 83%. Generally, all membership grades expressed a high level of engagement with this area of knowledge, with students and licentiates considering it slightly less important than most. Students and licentiates much like before, also considered community engagement and public involvement less significant than the average, with only 16% and 45% respectively. Licentiates also did not consider sustainable development to be absolutely imperative for planners.

CPD knowledge

Graph 2: This graph illustrates the top five highest responses for the overall response for knowledge that individuals 'wished to learn through CPD'. These areas have then been applied to the pre-identified groups to illustrate potential differences across segmented categories of RTPI membership.

Overall, climate change and energy were the two areas of knowledge that respondents on average wished to learn more about via CPD at 42% each. This was followed by development finance and viability at 40% and economic development and IT skills at 37% each. Chartered Town Planners aligned with the overall data.

Student responses were higher than the other membership grades except for climate change. The area they wished to learn the most about concerned development finances and viability at 60%. Fellows appeared to deviate from the norm, perhaps suggesting that due to their high level of experience, they do not believe they need to acquire more knowledge on these subjects. There is a noticeable divide between the graduation periods.

Graph 1: Career knowledge (Top five most popular results for knowledge considered core for Chartered Town Planners). Bases: Overall, 166; Chartered, 118; Student, 10; Licentiate, 11; Fellows, 8; In or before 2004, 74; After 2004, 74

Local plans/local development plans
- Overall: 84%
- Chartered: 87%
- Student: 14%
- Licentiate: 73%
- Fellow: 100%
- In or before 2004: 88%
- After 2004: 80%

Planning law
- Overall: 84%
- Chartered: 89%
- Student: 70%
- Licentiate: 45%
- Fellow: 100%
- In or before 2004: 93%
- After 2004: 77%

Development management/control
- Overall: 83%
- Chartered: 89%
- Student: 70%
- Licentiate: 73%
- Fellow: 88%
- In or before 2004: 89%
- After 2004: 81%

Community engagement/Public involvement
- Overall: 81%
- Chartered: 87%
- Student: 16%
- Licentiate: 45%
- Fellow: 88%
- In or before 2004: 88%
- After 2004: 77%

Sustainable development
- Overall: 80%
- Chartered: 86%
- Student: 70%
- Licentiate: 36%
- Fellow: 75%
- In or before 2004: 89%
- After 2004: 74%

Legend: ■ Overall ■ Chartered ■ Student ■ Licentiate ■ Fellow ■ In or before 2004 ■ After 2004

Graph 2: CPD knowledge (Top five highest responses for knowledge that individuals wished to learn through CPD). *Bases: Overall, 166; Chartered, 118; Student, 10; Licentiate, 11; Fellows, 8; In or before 2004, 74; After 2004, 74*

Climate Change
- Overall: 42%
- Chartered: 42%
- Student: 40%
- Licentiate: 55%
- Fellow: 25%
- In or before 2004: 27%
- After 2004: 54%

Energy
- Overall: 42%
- Chartered: 43%
- Student: 50%
- Licentiate: 36%
- Fellow: 25%
- In or before 2004: 36%
- After 2004: 49%

Development finance/viability
- Overall: 40%
- Chartered: 36%
- Student: 60%
- Licentiate: 45%
- Fellow: 38%
- In or before 2004: 23%
- After 2004: 51%

Economic development
- Overall: 37%
- Chartered: 37%
- Student: 40%
- Licentiate: 45%
- Fellow: 12%
- In or before 2004: 24%
- After 2004: 51%

IT/digital (BIM, CAD, GIS)
- Overall: 37%
- Chartered: 36%
- Student: 50%
- Licentiate: 36%
- Fellow: 12%
- In or before 2004: 24%
- After 2004: 47%

Legend: Overall, Chartered, Student, Licentiate, Fellow, In or before 2004, After 2004

Career skills

Graph 3- This graph illustrates the top six highest responses for the overall response for skills considered 'important for Chartered Town Planners'. These areas have then been applied to the pre-identified groups to illustrate potential differences across segmented categories of RTPI membership.
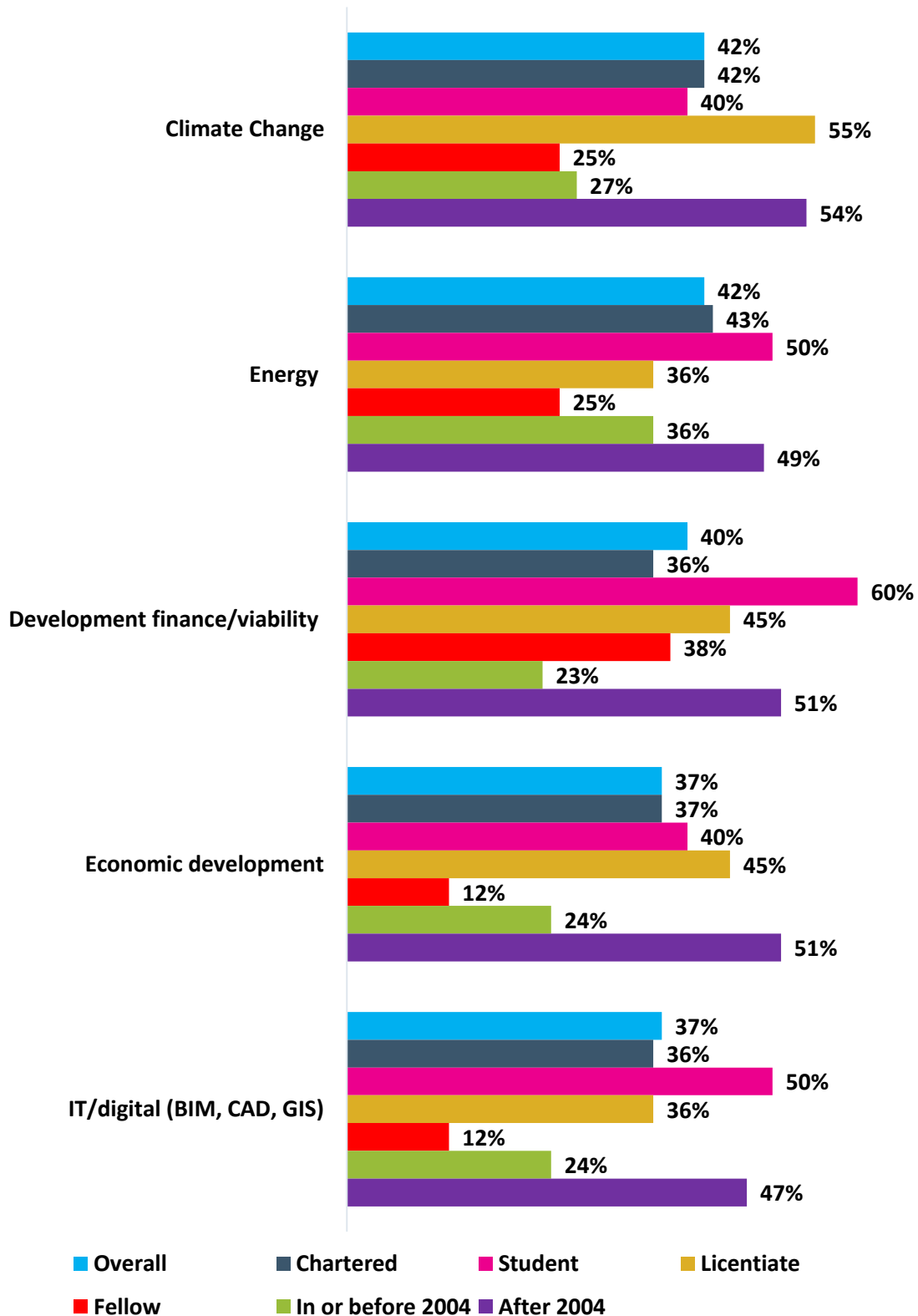
Overall, the most important skills prescribed in the survey was communication skills at 83%, followed by writing skills at 80%, problem solving at 75%, decision making at 74%, and conflict resolution and strategic thinking at 73%. Generally there is a relatively balanced spread of averages when breaking results down by membership grade, and graduation date.

CPD skills

Graph 4: This graph illustrates the top five highest responses for the overall response for skills individuals 'wish to learn through CPD'. These areas have then been applied to the pre-identified groups to illustrate potential differences across segmented categories of RTPI membership.

Overall, the most popular skills that respondents were interested in learning were coaching and mentoring, at 40%, followed by procurement and contracting, and recruitment and interviewing both registered 34%. Chartered Planners aligned with the overall results.

Students however, deviated from the other results and appear more actively interested in acquiring new skills. Procurement and contracting and media training were most popular out of the top five results, with nearly double the percentage at 60% each.

Licentiates, meanwhile, were less interested in learning skills. The skill that Licentiates were most interested in concerned coaching and mentoring, at 26%. Alongside Licentiates, Fellows also registered low interest in the prescribed skills but as previously discussed, their position would suggest that they are already proficient in these areas.

Results split by graduation date showed little difference except for coaching and mentoring, with 45% of 'after 2004' graduates wishing to learn more through CPD.

Graph 3: Career skills (Top six highest responses for skills important for Chartered Town Planners). *Bases: Overall, 166; Chartered, 118; Student, 10; Licentiate, 11; Fellows, 8; In or before 2004, 74; After 2004, 74*

Communication skills, including public speaking
- Overall: 83%
- Chartered: 88%
- Student: 70%
- Licentiate: 73%
- Fellow: 100%
- In or before 2004: 92%
- After 2004: 76%

Writing skills
- Overall: 80%
- Chartered: 83%
- Student: 70%
- Licentiate: 73%
- Fellow: 100%
- In or before 2004: 89%
- After 2004: 70%

Problem solving
- Overall: 75%
- Chartered: 81%
- Student: 70%
- Licentiate: 73%
- Fellow: 88%
- In or before 2004: 86%
- After 2004: 69%

Decision-making
- Overall: 74%
- Chartered: 77%
- Student: 70%
- Licentiate: 73%
- Fellow: 88%
- In or before 2004: 81%
- After 2004: 69%

Mediation, negotiation, conflict resolution
- Overall: 73%
- Chartered: 81%
- Student: 70%
- Licentiate: 64%
- Fellow: 62%
- In or before 2004: 82%
- After 2004: 66%

Strategic thinking
- Overall: 73%
- Chartered: 80%
- Student: 60%
- Licentiate: 64%
- Fellow: 88%
- In or before 2004: 82%
- After 2004: 68%

Legend: Overall, Chartered, Student, Licentiate, Fellow, In or before 2004, After 2004

Career skills (Top five highest responses for skills individuals wish to learn through CPD). *Bases: Overall, 166; Chartered, 118; Student, 10; Licentiate, 11; Fellows, 8; In or before 2004, 74; After 2004, 74*

Coaching and mentoring
- Overall: 40%
- Chartered: 40%
- Student: 50%
- Licentiate: 36%
- Fellow: 25%
- In or before 2004: 32%
- After 2004: 45%

Procurement and contracting
- Overall: 34%
- Chartered: 35%
- Student: 60%
- Licentiate: 18%
- Fellow: 12%
- In or before 2004: 34%
- After 2004: 34%

Recruitment and Interviewing
- Overall: 34%
- Chartered: 37%
- Student: 50%
- Licentiate: 27%
- Fellow: 12%
- In or before 2004: 32%
- After 2004: 35%

Management – staff/teams
- Overall: 33%
- Chartered: 36%
- Student: 30%
- Licentiate: 18%
- Fellow: 12%
- In or before 2004: 30%
- After 2004: 35%

Media training
- Overall: 33%
- Chartered: 34%
- Student: 60%
- Licentiate: 27%
- Fellow: 12%
- In or before 2004: 30%
- After 2004: 30%

Legend: ■ Overall ■ Chartered ■ Student ■ Licentiate ■ Fellow ■ In or before 2004 ■ After 2004

Graduate skills

■ Yes ■ No ■ No reply

Base: 166

The survey moved to a final question about graduate skills and found a good number of respondents (40%) had managed planning graduates recently, having done so in the past five years, illustrated in the chart above. These members indicated the quality of a series of prescribed knowledge or skills of graduates via a scale and the top results are shown in the table below.

Skills/Knowledge	Overall Response
Design appreciation	Fair (59%)
Planning law	Weak (59%)
Conservation of the built and natural environment	Fair (55%)
Development management	Weak/Fair (44%/45%)
Report writing	Fair (62%)
Verbal skills	Fair (59%)
Professional responsibilities	Fair (42%)
Written skills	Fair (59%)
Planning system as a whole	Fair 53%)
Plan and policy making	Fair (53%)
Numeracy skills	Fair (70%)
Openness to new learning	Strong (64%)
IT skills	Strong (71%)
General office skills	Fair (47%)

Base: 66

Most employers ranked most the skills as fair, around the 50%-60% mark. This would indicate that recent graduates are able to offer display some knowledge or skill in these categories but are not considered completely competent. Somewhat positively, only two areas were considered weak by employer standards, however these areas were considered core to being a planner. Planning law and development management, also identified as core elements

through the survey, were areas judged as not satisfactory. Two areas were considered strong, IT skills and a willingness to learn.

Additional comments – skills shortages

The overall theme that arose from this final free text box concerned entry into the planning profession. Some members called for a '*complete refresh*' with younger generations being seen as modern role models. A Student member who had recently gone through a career change suggested that the RTPI should take more time attracting prospective students. Others described the term '*Young Planners*' as too limiting and disenfranchising.

The '*massive shortage*' of current planning graduates was raised. One Chartered member explained their company's recent graduate recruitment scheme targeted candidates without an undergraduate degree in Planning. This is a legitimate route to the profession, but these graduates can sometimes display slightly limited knowledge of the broader scope of the planning profession. Others noted this involved recruiting graduates that did not have the complete background in planning, and placed an onus on employers to provide further training, consequently draining resources. It was considered prudent that a change in promoting the profession could potentially increase recruitment numbers and enrolments on accredited programmes.

A separate group of individuals expressed a different approach that concerned the present structure of accredited planning degrees and there could be an over-emphasis of the value of postgraduate education. One academic respondent believed that three-year undergraduate planning degrees can sometimes have a greater opportunity to teach the necessary knowledge, skills and preparation than a single year postgraduate course. Some practitioners also asserted the academic requirement for planners could be reduced to three years. It was suggested anecdotally by others that fewer students opt to self-fund their fourth year and with RICS providing a shorter and simpler model for entry into their membership, RTPI's routes appear less appealing. On the other hand, it was suggested by another practitioner that a four-year undergraduate course produces '*more well-rounded and multiskilled planner*', when compared to courses that add in a nine-month postgraduate degree.

Others expressed support any changes to accreditation conditions but they '*must not devalue or undermine the core integrity of the profession, both from an academic and practice-based perspective*'. One Fellow voiced support for an approach that '*reviewed ways in which the course content and emphasis can be improved for what is, after all, a vocational subject which should include more vocational training*'. A further suggestion that the RTPI should encourage funding for councils to administer graduate schemes as a different way to improve the recruitment of new graduates within the current climate.

One non-member enquired whether the profession could form a partnership with leading industry specialists, such as LETI to support the upskilling of planning officers. Others asked that the RTPI '*take a strong lead*' on promoting the profession to attract more interest in planning.

There is some demand for RTPI to diversify their approach to expanding the sector with new routes to appeal to a wider range of specialist planners. This discourse was extended further

with a discussion on the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) process currently operating at RTPI. A number of respondents noted the lack of diversity of experience within planning. They invited planners to consider *"who is not represented in the room' and how to reach out to those voices.* They worried that without this approach, the profession may '*appear out of date and out of touch*'. For some, the current routes to RTPI membership are not inclusive, citing that the requirement of a 'degree' to enter the profession is not clearly justified.

Some comments concerned devolved Nations, specifically Scotland and numbers of accredited planning degrees. Encouragement of apprenticeships across the UK was also requested.

APPENDIX D: EARLY CAREER FOCUS GROUP

Eight individuals (Licentiates or Student Members of the RTPI) provided insight through a focus group session. This is a composite summary of the evidence and information gathered.

All respondents had completed or were completing their RTPI-accredited studies after the introduction of RTPI's current education strategy in 2003. Three individuals completed their degrees in 2019, thus experiencing some Covid impact while two participants finished their studies during Covid, in 2020 and 2021. The remaining three participants had completed their degrees earlier (2018 and 2010). Respondents had studied for a postgraduate Master's at UCL, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sheffield, Liverpool University. One completed the integrated four-year undergraduate MPlan qualification (University of West England). Three individuals had completed undergraduate degrees in geography.

Reflecting on the question, did your planning studies prepare you for your first planning job after graduation, it became clear that planning degrees were considered 'generic'. They did not appear to provide sufficient detail on several key aspects of planning. There was consensus that planning degrees lacked some important relevance to day-to-day experiences in planning such as site appraisals. One participant stated '*you probably learn more in the first two or three weeks of that kind of role than you do studying the Masters'*.

More positively however, there was an indication that degrees did seem to cover the planning system, specifically local and council level, and covered neighbourhood planning and planning policy in detail.

While it was acknowledged that planning degrees covered a variety of topics, one individual stated planning education is more about '*giving planners the right understanding of the moral compass of being a planner'*. Indeed, several commented that communication skills, despite being important for planning professionals, was neglected in their degree. For many, there was a noticeable gap between 'how much you learn' and 'how much you needed to know' and instead of a degree based in ideals and theory, it should be about preparing individuals for practice, identifying 'action plans' i.e., what could be done, how it should be done, and how it can benefit the relevant parties, interest group, client or customer.

The alternative view expressed by one participant, having been taught a smaller range of topics, they believed it was better to have a foundation of knowledge rather than limited understanding of a wealth of specialist subjects. The group recognised that many people do not know what area of planning they will end up in, thus, to lay the foundation would pose a larger advantage. It is impossible to cover all planning topics effectively in twelve months so it should at the very least cover the rudimentary elements of the discipline.

One individual explained that an important element of their planning degree concerned a six-week placement which gave a great deal of context and practical experience. Taking place

into the final year of the degree, if appropriately timed it was more helpful to have a stronger knowledge of planning which could be applied to the relevant context.

Participants were asked about their learning experiences. There was consensus that planning degrees were, at times, far too conceptual. Whilst the participants recognised the importance of theory, they believed the degree should teach them about the practice, rather than only talk about it. With this, all participants expressed there were not enough practical elements in the course, having to learn these in employment. Good practice in university provision included a 'mock public inquiry' that featured a strong consultancy element and allowed students to work in realistic scenarios.

A series of other examples were provided to strengthen the quality of planning degrees: the teaching of project management skills, better use of external speakers as they provided personal experiences and a wealth of knowledge, a call for interdisciplinary interaction between related subjects such as architecture and politics, more site visits to provide context to the knowledge students learn in classrooms, internships and placements if employers can resource them fully.

A call for more versatile examination, again via practical elements or reports, which are more regularly seen day-to-day by planners was also discussed. Likewise, group work would be more beneficial to have students with different interests or from different disciplines work with planners and to blend full time and part time students in group work. One participant described it would be counterintuitive to not, as they felt they '*learned the most from friends on the course [who were] already working in planning... it meant that I could directly ask them what they did in their day-to-day job, and they gave a very practical sort of spin on things'*. By introducing variety into the degree, students can '*see projects from quite different view... in the same way that in planning, you're dealing with stakeholders from different areas.*

Other additions to planning degrees included: the use of short, online, courses to catch up on topics that were not covered in sufficient detail on the course; and inclusivity and awareness to learn and address current issues, particularly concerning vulnerable groups.

With regards professional skills required in the workplace, that should perhaps be covered in planning degrees, the group suggested the following. As previously stated, project management was considered important, while all participants stated that soft skills were key to successfully operate as a planner. The following skills were presented as necessary: communication skills; emotional intelligence; problem solving; engaging communities; customer service; managing expectations; time management; team work (the importance of being able to not only work with colleagues, but ask them for help and support when needed); and networking skills considered very important in a post-Covid world; with hybrid and virtual employment, if opportunity to learn on the job from peers is reducing. One individual remarked, '*you learn so much just from hearing and from talking to those around you, it's super important*'.

Planning specific skills also featured, including economics, legislation, and an understanding of related fields e.g. architecture, design, environmental studies, politics, and heritage.

Lastly, the participants all agreed that to become a successful planner, one must possess a positive, enthusiastic, and imaginative attitude towards their work, being able to take on a multitude of challenges. They must also have a constant desire to learn beyond their planning degrees. It was recommended that new employees should attend talks and network regularly to constantly increase their knowledge of planning.

APPENDIX E: PLANNING EMPLOYERS FOCUS GROUP

A small selection of employers of professional planners were convened to gain insight into the perspectives of those who have managed recent graduates. The five participants were asked to illustrate how well recent planning graduates are prepared for employment. This is a composite summary of the evidence and information gathered.

Strengths
- Knowledge of spatial planning and development planning- Considered good; it was judged important for graduates to realise the significance of both, which was largely achieved.
- Foundational knowledge of planning- Considered very important; it was noted policy knowledge was inconsistent (suggested as an integral part of the basics of planning). Rather critically, one individual noted that fundamental planning knowledge can be picked up easily without a degree level education, thus stated it was crucial for graduates to not be limited in their understanding of policy, strategy, and sustainability.
- Material considerations- Graduates were considered well versed in this area, highlighting their experience with different applications, but gained 'on the job'.
- Communication Skills- Participants suggested they were fair though one individual expressed that it is something that should be introduced early in education and then expanded upon in employment.
- IT and tech skills- This was considered excellent and the biggest strength of recent graduates. However, despite this positive perception, one individual remarked that in some cases, graduates are educated so highly that underfunded areas of planning (notably the public sector), cannot afford the latest technology thus, graduates may require training on older programmes, which can drain staff time and resources.

Weaknesses
- The academic perspective- One individual complained the current state of planning education is too academic in mindset. This can cause several issues within the workplace, forcing employers to expend additional time and resources to train graduates the following areas:
- Report writing skills and presentation- Considered very poor, graduates approach reports as if they were essays, shaping the style, length and general appropriateness of the work. Graduates were reported to lack succinctness in their writing, which was considered necessary when factoring planning audiences (who often don't have the time to read large reports).
- Real world experiences- All respondents expressed graduates did not receive enough practical education, nor experience working or studying in the field. Whilst they acknowledged this would be difficult for universities to organise, the employers remained firm that it would be greatly enriching for students.

All agreed graduates who have had experience during or post-graduation are much more employable. Indeed, due to a lack of these experiences, one individual expressed concern that they recently had to recruit graduates from other disciplines due to the lack of appropriately educated graduate planners.

- <u>Knowledge on civics</u>- Two participants stated that graduates lacked this form of understanding. Within this category they included understanding of the roles of planning committees and the differences between planning officers and committee members.
- <u>Decision-making and Independence</u>- Two individuals noted they had experienced graduates lacking in confidence and the ability to appropriately weigh up decisions, and consequently were unable to think for themselves.
- <u>Scope of understanding</u>- Two employers noted that graduates were often not fully acquainted with the entirety of planning and its application when employed.

Views, however, were mixed and the group debated a number of points in particular the length of (postgraduate) planning degrees. One was worried that, with many students only studying planning at postgraduate level, nine months was insufficient. Another used their own experiences to illustrate that the current structure did not hinder strong career progression. A further reflection: shared anecdotal feedback from a young colleague who recently entered employment '*you enter the workforce very unprepared*'.

Following this debate, we enquired what employers' thought should be the next steps in countering these concerns. We therefore asked participants how they believed universities, the RTPI, and other employers should work together to produce sufficiently prepared graduates.

Firstly, participants believed work placements should be incorporated as core planning education. It was indicated this would improve practical knowledge and apply their knowledge to real-life experiences.

The second area that received much discussion was the promotion of planning as a career and a call for a revival of planning's public image with emphasis on planning's ability to help solve major societal issues, especially housing. In promoting the profession, the RTPI was acknowledged as the leading body. However some participants feared that the discipline was being pushed out by other, more popular subjects such as architecture and geography. The RTPI therefore, should emphasise planning's versatility, as the sector is losing talent to other, more well-received, disciplines. Approaching younger individuals about planning was identified as a popular method. Introducing the discipline to younger audiences via school visits. The RTPI could provide relatable content for appropriate age groups to help foster a solid foundation of familiarity with planning. Participants stressed the importance of implementing real life connections to planning, video games such as Minecraft and Sim City being two examples.

Strategically, individuals also suggested the RTPI should help increase interactions between planning schools and large, national, and smaller, local, authorities and consultancies. By bridging the gap, it should serve to increase mutual understanding between them. In addition

to supporting collaboration between universities and employers, as there '*needs to be real collaboration and co-production between the universities and the local authorities or the firms that are near them*'. The suggestion involved exchanging graduates for a period of three months to show them '*how the other half live*', diversifying young planners' experiences.

The group also suggested the RTPI should encourage universities to include more practical planning work and vocational experiences. The group identified a reluctance from universities to approach employers to give talks and provide training opportunities because universities do not want to be shown up by the amount of valuable education that employers could provide students. There was unsubstantiated evidence of universities '*dumbing down*' planning degrees, for example co-teaching and sharing of too many modules with other disciplines, which was causing issues for employers; again, this drained resources and time to train graduates for their work needs. In contrast, it was noted by some that a multidisciplinary approach would assist graduates in understanding planning's place in society and amongst related professions. Employers called for the RTPI to reach an agreement with planning schools on providing basic modules that are common in all planning degrees and serve as the foundation of knowledge and skills that will help graduates prepare for employment. Six modules might be sufficient for a three- or four-year course. Module topics considered necessary included project management, case studies and real-life situations, and liaising (both with private and public contexts).

Improving and standardising planning degrees was considered necessary for the improvement of graduates when entering employment. It was considered important for planning to improve its public image, thus advertising its strengths and value to the public was recommended. Furthermore, expanding people's conceptual understanding of planning was equally necessary, and with employers working with universities to ensure secondary school students are aware of the discipline.

Lastly, we asked participants what they were doing to support graduates in developing their planning career. A common response was paying individuals' fees, including training, membership, or APC costs. However, as one participant from a local authority explained, they were not financially stable enough to provide this support; but offered a 25% tax relief for their new employees. The burden of chargeable CPD provided by the RTPI was also noted in the context of financial limitations of new graduates and some companies to provide cheaper training alternatives, which they may not be able to fund.

Another popular action taken by employers to support graduates was to offer mentoring and coaching. This came in the form of helping individuals work towards their APC, providing career guidance, personal training, and allowing newcomers to ask questions they may not feel confident directing to management. One organisation encouraged its younger employees to join Planning Aid Scotland (PAS), which supports graduates and provides experience in community engagement.

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- The Landscape Institute
- The Institute of Engineering Technology

Other Professional Associations:
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- Institute of Food Science & Technology
- Association of Corporate Treasurers
- Royal Meteorological Society
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