

Information for prospective candidates on routes into Planning and becoming a Chartered Town Planner

Introduction

There are multiple routes that you can take into Planning and to become a chartered town planner. You can study town planning or relevant subjects at [university](#), or develop your skills through work experience or [apprenticeship training](#).

How to become a Planner

Study at University

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) works in partnership with various universities to develop and accredit professional planning qualifications to put graduates on track to become a Chartered Town Planner. We value the RTPI's professional status, and Town Planning is in the top three university subjects for students finding employment within six months of graduation. Courses can also be called Urban and Regional Planning, City Planning or Spatial Planning.

Please refer to the "[Study at University](#)" page on the RTPI website for a list of all RTPI fully accredited and partially accredited courses at all available institutions.

Depending on the course completed, you will then obtain the relevant RTPI membership and pathway to become a chartered town planner.

Complete an apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a real job with training which enables apprentices to work (and earn a salary) and study simultaneously and can be a first step to a career in town planning and Membership of the RTPI. A Degree Apprenticeship is a professional route through a series of university level modules.

There are two RTPI apprenticeship options:

1. **Chartered Town Planner Degree** (Level 7) – this is degree level and includes an RTPI accredited qualification and professional membership on completion.
2. Town Planning Assistant (Level 4) – for a career as an assistant planner or technical officer.

At Lichfields we offer the **Chartered Town Planner degree apprenticeship**, which enables an apprentice to study for a fully accredited RTPI qualification and undertake work-based learning to become a Chartered Town Planner on successful completion.

This pathway has two possible entry points and will typically take 3-6 years to complete, depending on prior qualifications.

1. Entry point 1 requirements: A Levels / Level 3 Apprenticeship
2. Entry point 2 requirements: Prior learning at degree level

Apprentices will be assessed through a Professional Discussion and the Degree Apprenticeship Assessment of Professional Competence (DA-APC).

Apprentices work in the office four days and attend university 1 day per week (other study leave may be required for field trips etc). The course is funded via the Apprenticeship Levy.

Please refer to the "[Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship](#)" page on the RTPI website for further details, and the "[Apprenticeship training providers](#)" page for a list of locations that currently offer this level apprenticeship.

Currently, at Lichfields, we do not advertise apprenticeship opportunities externally, rather we hold discussions following our summer internship programme with relevant candidates.

RTPI Memberships

There are various types of membership to suit various career stages and education backgrounds from Student to Retired members. Please refer to the "[Apply](#)" page on the RTPI website for further information on different membership types and how and when to apply.

Routes to Chartered Membership and Assessments of Professional Competence

There are multiple ways to enter the profession, therefore the RTPI offer four competency-based routes to Chartered membership based on your experience and we continue to support staff with these at Lichfields. To qualify as a Chartered Town Planner an Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) will need to be completed. The APC assesses candidates' experience and competence and requires them to show that they meet the high standards required for Chartered membership.

Please refer to the "[Routes to Chartered Membership](#)" page on the RTPI website for further information. For ease, we have also provided some detail on these below.

Licentiate

Licentiate membership is for those graduating with fully RTPI accredited qualifications. Those graduating with partially accredited qualifications must complete a relevant accredited 'top-up' qualification to proceed down this route i.e. those completing a spatial-only degree must follow this with a specialist qualification; those completing specialist-only degrees must then 'top-up' their learning with a further qualification.

This route requires the completion of a Licentiate Assessment of Professional Competence (L-APC) to qualify as a chartered town planner. To be eligible to submit an L-APC application candidates must:

- Have a fully RTPI accredited qualification
- Be a current registered Licentiate member of the RTPI
- Have a minimum of two years' professional planning experience (full-time equivalent); at least one year of this experience must be gained whilst registered as a Licentiate.

It would take a minimum of 2-3 years to complete this route and achieve MRTPI.

Associate

Those who don't have a fully accredited RTPI qualification, and/or do not wish to complete a relevant accredited 'top-up' qualification, can proceed down the Associate route to becoming a Chartered Town Planner.

To be eligible to submit an application for Associate membership candidates must:

- have a minimum of 2-7 years' experience engaged with planning (full-time equivalent). The exact amount required varies according to educational background and qualification as follows:
 - Planning degree (partially RTPI accredited) - 2 years' experience required
 - Planning degree (non-RTPI accredited) - 2 years' experience required
 - Non-planning degree - 3 years' experience required
 - Other - 7 years' experience required

Up to 1 year of this experience may have been gained before completing the relevant qualification; the remainder must be gained after the qualification.

This route also requires the completion of an Associate Assessment of Professional Competence (A-APC). To be eligible to submit an A-APC application candidates must:

- be a current registered Associate member of the RTPI
- have a minimum of 2 years' professional planning experience (full-time equivalent); all of which has been gained whilst registered as an Associate.

It would take a minimum of 4-5 years to complete this route and achieve MRTPI. Candidates would work full time for 2 years before applying for Associate membership (which includes a written submission), then a further 2 years of experience before submitting their A-APC.

Experienced Practitioner APC

The EP-APC is a direct route to becoming a Chartered Town Planner for planners with extensive experience. It provides a way for experienced planners, including those who gained qualifications and experience outside the UK, to become Chartered Town Planners. Built environment professionals who have been working in and alongside planners for an extended period – such as architects and surveyors – may also be able to apply through this route.

To be eligible to submit your EP-APC application candidates must:

- have a minimum of 5-10 years' professional planning experience (full-time equivalent) all gained after the qualification was obtained. The exact amount required varies according to your educational background and qualification, as shown below.
 - Planning degree (fully or partially RTPI accredited) - experience required 5 years
 - Planning degree (non-RTPI accredited) - experience required 5 years
 - Non-planning degree - experience required 6 years
 - Other - experience required 10 years

Degree Apprenticeship Assessment of Professional Competence (DA-APC)

The Degree Apprenticeship End Point Assessment is the final assessment required to achieve the apprenticeship certificate and enables an apprentice to become a Chartered Town Planner whilst gaining practical experience in the workplace. As part of this scheme, apprentices complete a Degree Apprenticeship Assessment of Professional Competence (DA-APC).

To be eligible to submit an End Point Assessment application candidates must:

- be an apprentice registered on the Chartered Town Planner Degree Apprenticeship

- have met the gateway requirements: Level 2 English and Maths, and an RTPI accredited qualification
- have at least 12 months recorded in the Reflective Journal
- be a current registered Licentiate (apprentice) of the RTPI
- have 2 - 5 years' experience with a minimum of 20% of-the-job training.

Support with your APC at Lichfields

At Lichfields we present an 'Introduction to the APC' session at our Graduate Induction Day and deliver a practical workshop on 'preparing for your APC submission and assessment' which is built into the graduate development programme. We also offer a mentoring programme to support you throughout the process and at the point of submission.

Recruitment programmes at Lichfields

Graduate

Our graduate recruitment programme typically opens in Autumn each year with the view to recruiting candidates who are in their final year of studying a fully accredited RTPI qualification. This would enable you to proceed down the Licentiate route. There may be strong candidates identified who are studying partially accredited RTPI qualifications, who can still be recruited but would likely need to proceed down the Associate route to chartership.

Successful candidates would be offered a role as Graduate Planner to typically start in Autumn of the following year.

Summer internship programme

Our summer internship recruitment programme typically opens at the start of each year with the view to recruiting candidates for a four-week internship over the summer period. There is flexibility on the duration of the internship, depending on what is most suitable for the hiring office.

Candidates are typically second year (or third year for Scotland courses) undergraduate degree students of planning, geography, economics or other planning-related subjects. Those that are not studying towards an RTPI or RICS accredited degree are referred to as non-cognates.

Depending on the candidates' situation with regards to study and any personal plans, successful candidates (e.g. from the 2024/5 recruitment programme) could be offered a role as Graduate Planner to start in:

- Autumn 2025/6 if they have made no decision on what RTPI path to follow, and they could proceed down the Associate or complete an apprenticeship.
- Autumn 2026/7 if they are wanting to complete further study of their own accord (e.g. RTPI accredited masters) and proceed down the Licentiate route.