



It's not simply a case of ticking boxes, says Alpesh Patel, who takes us through a step by step account of how to get the most out of supervisory meetings

## Getting through the APC

It is just as vital to concentrate on the role of the APC supervisor as the candidate. Recent coverage on the course concludes that there needs to be more effort on the part of the supervisor to transfer knowledge to the candidate (Lottery Exam, *QS News*, 16 August). However, I am always hearing that supervisors are busy people.

Yet with the average annual pass rate across the UK at 60%, something needs to be done to ensure candidates are on the right side of these statistics.

Can we use the supervisor's valuable time more efficiently? Certainly, but not by discussing the pedantic of what experience goes in which competency box in the diary or logbook.

### Supervisors take note...

One of my main roles as an APC coach is to challenge and interrogate the knowledge that candidates have gained and fill in the gaps by using reflective and simulation techniques.

Through meetings and research, candidates reflect on past work, or perhaps work they are planning. They provide background information on the project, the client's requirements, tasks they personally undertook (as well as those they did not undertake) and what situations they found themselves in, drawing upon one key issue or a problem at a time. All of the options available to generate a solution to the issue or problem in question are discussed, to see how candidates analyse those options available against the client's requirements.

This process confirms both what they already know and what they do not know, ensuring the full breadth of the RICS requirements of the profession (in terms of the competencies) are met in readiness for the final professional interview.

However, situations which can hinder effective supervision exist:

■ For supervisors who are "set in their own way", working with the candidate can be difficult. There is the challenge of their putting aside the time, the challenge of using their coaching or skills (an art that not all Qs can perform readily and easily) and also a major problem exists if they do not actually possess the technical knowledge. This latter issue can

arise if a supervisor has "pet" or "preferred options" ingrained in them, or are out of touch because they have moved up the career ladder and spend most of their time dealing with management issues.

A candidate needs to feel challenged. Part of getting through the APC is mind over matter and a lot of motivation from the supervisor is needed.

The candidate will then have a sense of purpose of proceeding to the final assessment

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more confidently and undoubtedly perform better on their employers' fee-earning work. The "bottom line" profits will still be realised, but through some investment in the supervisors' valuable time. It will also aid with staff retention to no end.

■ On route, the supervisor and candidate will face a dilemma over the specialist type of projects the candidate deals with on a daily basis (for example, civils, retail, commercial, leisure, housing, rail or water). Business pressures, however, mean the candidate is often pigeonholed into business units or sectors, and the projects they deal with have their own preferred ways (sometimes dictated by the client, often by the candidate's senior partner), so certain options are already predetermined, leaving the candidate unable to gain the full breadth of experience needed. Remember, it is not necessarily the type of projects that matter – it is the application of core QS processes, procedures, skills, methods and techniques to projects which is

important. The underlying basis of any professional is to be able to rattle out all conceivable options for their clients, across the entire spectrum of their professional service offering, so candidates must be "stretched" to think about all of them.

Let us think of it more drastically. If the candidate fails to offer all the conceivable options (unintentionally) to a client and the client sues for professional negligence, and the court then appoints an expert witness to offer advice on all possible options, it will be revealed that there were other obvious options that should have been considered and it was reasonable that a candidate should have known them. One would expect nothing less from one's own doctor, accountant or financial advisor on all the options available in respect of their offerings.

**Alpesh Patel is director of APC Coach. For more information, visit [www.apccoach.com](http://www.apccoach.com)**

If you are taking the APC, or are a supervisor, we would like to hear your experiences/problems. Send your emails to: [mparsons@cmpinformation.com](mailto:mparsons@cmpinformation.com) (all letters will be treated in confidence)

