

Seeking FRPS Advice A Survey of Thames Valley Members

Mark Buckley-Sharp ARPS
Regional Organiser, Thames Valley
February 2010

Introduction

It was recently decided that the advisory days (distinctions workshops), as usually held in regions, should no longer be used to give advice for FRPS. Instead, there should be separate workshops for FRPS advice. FRPS workshops have already been held, or are advertised, in at least three regions.

A survey has been made to determine the demand for places at such FRPS workshops from Thames Valley members. By extrapolation, the survey indicates the overall demand.

Fellowship

The Fellowship is the highest distinctions level in the Society. It is granted for personal excellence, and the standard is carefully guarded.

The annual report for 2008 shows that in the four years 2005-2008, an average of about 100 applications were made for FRPS, of which an average of about 15 were successful. The same report expresses the aim of increasing the pass rate (although this is a global statement across all distinction levels). Better advice for, and preparation by, the applicants might achieve this aim. Improving FRPS advice by making it separate from the usual process seems sensible.

There may be two effects of better FRPS advice. A decrease in applications, and an increase in the number of successes. For example, a doubling of the pass rate from 15% to 30% is more like to come as 24 successes from 72 applications, than as 30 successes from 100 applications.

FRPS Workshops

The workshops already held have used a small group of 10-12 people with an advisor. As this is a new format, we do not know how many such workshops would be needed to meet demand. In particular, it was suggested that regions cooperate to hold workshops spread around UK. But the total number of workshops required per year is not known.

Thames Valley Survey

Thames Valley has just over 1000 members, which is approximately 10% of the Society's membership.

Within Thames Valley, there are 198 with ARPS (excluding Imaging Science ARPS), and of those, 122 have e-mail addresses which are permitted for a broadcast message. These 122 were circulated.

Addressees were asked to respond if they were currently working towards FRPS in prints, and would be interested in a workshop within the next 2 years.

Note: Prints is the only realistic medium for FRPS in still images. FRPS cannot be obtained in projected digital, and slides are effectively obsolete. Audio-Visual and Moving Image advice should probably be covered by their Specialist Groups. Research etc. will usually involve an academic supervisor, and is too specific for a workshop.

There were 27 responses:

- 5 from those not currently working towards FRPS may be ignored.
- 9 said that they are actively working towards FRPS now.
- 6 said that FRPS is a future aim.
- 6 said that an FRPS workshop is of interest but did not give their timescale.
- 1 said that FRPS is an aim but probably via the academic route.

In scaling up a survey of this size and with this number of responses, all estimates should be allowed an error of $\pm 20\%$. Estimates also assume that Thames Valley (TH) is representative of the Society as a whole, and that all e-mails in the broadcast were received and read.

Approximately 1 in 6 of those with ARPS have FRPS in prints as an aim (21 of 122). There is also a small interest in Research. Interest in Audio-Visual and Moving Image is not quantified.

The Society may have approximately 2000 members with ARPS (200 in TH x10). Scaled from the survey, maybe 34 members in Thames Valley and around 340 members of the Society are considering FRPS. Given the timescale of preparation involved, this would be compatible with the reported 100 applications average per year.

Workshops Provision

34 people could not be accommodated in one FRPS workshop, and there are two factors increasing the demand further.

- The timescale of preparation may mean that one person wants to come to more than one workshop.
- Members apply to our workshops from outside the TH region, although this will balance with other regions.

It would seem necessary for each large region to hold one FRPS workshop per year, even if smaller regions combine or hold workshops less frequently.

Applicant Contribution

Even with best advice, working towards FRPS will always involve a substantial investment in time and effort. Applicants should expect to spend time and money on their preparation. Besides workshops, they should attend the Fellowship panels showing in Bath as a routine.