

Distinctions Procedure: Roles and Responsibilities (The Distinctions Department are currently rewriting and updating this document. Publishing date: February 2019)

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Scope

The distinctions of The Royal Photographic Society are administered and delivered by a number of boards, panels and individuals who each have a clearly defined role in achieving a clearly recognised standard that is coherent, consistent and fair. The roles of each of these boards, panels and individuals, in respect to the delivery of their role in delivery of the Royal Photographic Society distinctions programme are outlined in this document.

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Associated Documents: DP001; DP002; DP003; DP004; DP010; DP011; MP008; MF003

1. The Distinction Advisory Board

The Distinctions Advisory Board, appointed by Council, is tasked with overseeing the delivery of all distinctions activity on behalf of The Society. It consists of the most experienced members of The Society who have a wide knowledge and understanding of the distinctions standard, processes and administration. The membership of the Board also includes external academics in order that The Society can be aware of current educational practice. The Distinctions Manager is Secretary to the Board.



The Distinctions Advisory Board is responsible for formulating The Society's distinction processes and reports directly to Council with its recommendations. It is the Council of The Society that make the final decision on implementation of all aspects of the Distinctions policy.

The following are its primary, but not exclusive roles:

- To set the requirements and standard of the distinctions.
- Management and appointment of assessors.
- Management and moderation of the assessment process.
- Management of advice to candidates.
- Management of feedback to applicants.
- Promotion of the distinctions to members and non-members.
- Recommendation and advice to Council.
- Development of distinction standards and delivery.
- Management of complaints procedures.

2. Distinctions Chairs Committee

All Panel Chairs (or deputy in the Chair's absence) meet to discuss, advise and influence policies and issues relevant to the Distinctions processes. The meeting is chaired by the Chair of the DAB or the President. The Distinctions Manager acts as secretary to the committee.

Meetings are normally held once a year. Items for discussion must be notified at least 21 days in advance so that appropriate briefing material can be circulated if necessary.

3. Panel Moderators

The Distinctions Advisory Board has the responsibility for moderating delivery and standards of the distinction assessment, ensuring that they are both consistent and in line with the requirements. The Distinctions Advisory Board will appoint moderators in order that they can be confident on behalf of The Society that the assessments are conducted professionally, fairly and in line with the current standards and procedures. The role of the moderator at each level of assessment is laid out below.

3.1 For All Panels:

- To work closely with the panel chair and Distinctions staff to ensure a professional delivery of the assessment process.
- To ensure the procedures laid down by The Society for the assessment process are followed
- To ensure that all decisions of the panel are consistent and in line with the requirements.
- To ensure that panel members conduct themselves in accordance with the requirements of The Society.



- To apprise the panel Chair and the members of any changes to procedures or requirements.
- To immediately bring to the notice of the Distinctions Advisory Board Chair any irregularities or concerns in regard to the decision of the panel.
- To report to the Distinctions Advisory Board on the assessment.
- To confirm on behalf of the Distinctions Advisory Board approval of successful applications
- To raise any concerns on events at the debrief meeting to ensure that the panel chair and panel members are fully aware of any concerns or problems.
- To report to the Distinctions Advisory Board any concerns raised by the assessment team

3.2: Additionally for Associate and Fellowship Assessments

In the case of a panel being submitted into the incorrect category at either Associate or Fellowship level the moderator can if he considers it necessary forward this to the DAB for assessment (after advising the Chair). This route will only be considered if the panel in which the application is to be transferred has already sat in the current round of assessments and if the Panel to which it was submitted has not taken a vote. This route is followed to save undue delay in the assessment of the submitted panel.

3.3: Additionally for Fellowship Assessments

At Fellowship level it is **not** the role of the moderator to intervene on the decisions of the panel as this is the role of the Fellowship Board. The Moderator can and should discuss decisions with the panel chair if there are concerns. However the panel chair has the final say of the Panel on the forwarding of applications to the Fellowship Board. In addition to this, the Moderator can bring forward to the Fellowship Board any application that in his opinion may require further discussion, the Moderator should clearly explain the reasons why this decision has been made.

To retain an applicant's anonymity Moderators who sit on the Fellowship board, should not normally know the name of Fellowship applicants.

4. Licentiate Assessment Panel

It is the role of The Licentiate Assessment Panel to consider all applications for Licentiate submitted to The Society with the exception of those in the Multi-Media, Research, Education and Application of Photography and Imaging Science categories. All exemption applications for Licentiate will be managed by the Distinctions Department on behalf of the Distinctions Advisory Board and Education Committee. The Licentiate Assessment Panel will undertake the following:

- To assess each submitted application impartially and against the standards that has been set out by The Society.
- To conduct themselves in a professional manner.
- To complete an assessment sheet in accordance with the requirements set out in the Distinction guidelines documentation and add comments to assist in any feedback.



- To be available to offer personal feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
- To bring to the attention of the Panel Chair any matters of concern or irregularities pertaining to any application or assessment.
- To ensure that when they have given advice and guidance to any applicant the Panel Chair is informed discretely in regard to the extent of that advice and guidance.

The Panel Chair does have the authority to overrule any decision of the panel if he considers such action in the best interest of The Society. In such cases the Distinctions Advisory Board must be notified. The Panel chair must explain the reason for the decision to the panel members and moderator.

5. Associate and Fellowship Assessment Panels

5.1 Associate Panels

5.1.1. At Associate level the Assessment Panel has two distinct roles, firstly to ensure that the application meets the requirements set by The Society for that specialist category and secondly to assess whether it is worthy of consideration for an Associate. It is the role of The Associate Assessment Panels to consider all applications for Associate submitted to The Society with the exception of those in the area of Imaging Science and Creative Industries Qualifications. All exemption applications for Associate will be managed by the Distinctions Department on behalf of the Distinctions Advisory Board and Education Committee.

5.1.2. The Panel Chair does have the authority to overrule any decision of the panel if he considers such action in the best interest of The Society. In such cases the Distinctions Advisory Board must be notified. The Panel chair must explain the reason for the decision to the panel members and moderator.

5.2 Fellowship Panels

5.2.1. It is the role of the Fellowship Assessment Panels to consider all applications for Fellowship submitted to The Society with the exception of those in Research, Education and Application of Photography and Imaging Science and Creative Industries Qualifications categories.

5.2.2. At Fellowship level the Assessment Panel has two distinct roles, firstly to ensure that the application meets the requirements set by The Society for that specialist category and secondly to assess whether it is worthy of consideration for a Fellowship. If both of these aspects are met then the application can be forwarded to the Fellowship Board if agreed upon by a majority of those making the assessment. The Panel Chair does have the authority to overrule any decision of the panel if he considers such action in the best interest of The Society. In such cases the Fellowship Board must be notified. The Panel chair must explain the reason for the decision to the panel members and moderator.

5.2.3 In regard to image led applications in Imaging Science all recommended applications have to be forwarded to the Fellowship Board for moderation.

5.3 The Associate and Fellowship Assessment Panels will undertake the following:



- To assess each submitted application impartially and against the standards set out by The Society. To conduct themselves in a professional manner.
- To complete the assessment procedures in accordance with the requirements set out in the Distinction documentation.
- To complete clear and concise feedback in the case of all unsuccessful applications.
- To be available to offer personal feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
- To bring to the attention of the Panel Chair any matters of concern or irregularities concerning any application or assessment.
- To ensure that when they have given advice and guidance to any applicant the Panel Chair is informed in regard to the extent of that advice and guidance.

6. The Fellowship Board

The role of the Fellowship Board is to ensure consistent levels of achievement are maintained across all the specialist categories. The Society can be confident the Fellowship Board will ensure that the standard requirements at the highest level are equally applied irrespective of the specialist route followed by the applicant.

(See DP001: Fellowship Board Procedure)

7. Panel Chairs

The Chairs of Royal Photographic Society Distinction Assessment Panels have an important part to play in the continued high class delivery of The Society's distinction programme. This includes the management of the assessment process and the maintenance of the standards set over many years. Panel Chairs play a major part in ensuring that the reputation for a fair and consistent standard is maintained. To this end the Panel Chairs are charged with the following roles and responsibilities which they are expected to follow in undertaking the important task of leading distinctions assessments.

- To manage the assessment process on behalf of The Society in accordance with the requirements laid down by the Distinctions Advisory Board (see DP002), ensuring that the assessment is conducted in a fair and proper manner. To that end all Panel Chairs are responsible for all of the decisions made by the panel and have the authority to overrule the panel at any time.
- To ensure that panel members conduct themselves in accordance with the guidance laid down by The Society. To manage the performance of individual panel members and to raise any issues with them and where necessary notify any concerns to the Distinctions Advisory Board.
- Panel Chairs agree to support and promote the agreed processes relating to the distinctions assessment. These include, but are not exclusive to, the role of the panel chair, voting procedures, conduct of panel members during assessments, standard of dress and appearance, the role of the Distinctions Advisory Board Moderator and the Fellowship Board.



- To manage the feedback given to unsuccessful applicants and ensure that it is completed within 28 working days.
- To work with, and support initiatives by the Distinctions Advisory Board including, but not exclusive to, working closely with the Distinctions Advisory Board Moderator, supporting the process of assessment, including the Fellowship Board, submitting reports on assessments and maintaining continued liaison with the Distinction Manager.
- To represent their respective panel at the Fellowship Board twice a year (not Licentiate).
- Attending a Distinctions Chair's Committee meeting once a year.

8. Panel Members

Members of distinction assessment panels have a very important responsibility in representing The Royal Photographic Society in one of the most important aspects of its role as an educational charity. The Society has worked hard to establish an internationally recognised reputation for the standard, delivery and fairness of its distinctions programmes. All panel members are expected to conduct themselves appropriately in order to support, promote and maintain the reputation of The Society and its distinctions. The role of all assessment panel members carries with it certain responsibilities and these are set out below.

- All assessments are to be conducted with a fair and unbiased decision based solely on the merits of the application, in accordance with the requirements and processes set down by The Society in the procedural documentation for the management of the distinctions process.
- The proceedings at an assessment are confidential and whilst parts are held with an audience it has to be understood that certain aspects of the deliberations are not to be discussed outside of that forum, these include, but are not exclusive to, discussion between panel members, how panel members vote, any other discussion relating to the process and if known by a panel member, the identity of any applicant (Appendix 1).
- Panel members agree to support and promote the agreed processes relating to the distinctions assessment. These include, but are not exclusive to, the role of the panel chair, voting procedures, conduct of panel members during assessments, standard of dress and appearance, the role of the Distinctions Advisory Board Moderator and the Fellowship Board.
- Panel members are expected to support the chair in giving adequate and accurate feedback in order to support all applicants that are unsuccessful. It has to be understood that all feedback can be made available by The Society to failed applicants on request, although the names of the panel members will be removed.
- When a panel member has offered advice to an applicant the panel member is required to inform the Panel Chair of that fact. Where advice has been made at an Advisory Day the panel member will be able to play a full part in the decision and if required bring to the attention of other panel members any information pertinent to the assessment. In the case of one to one advice then they will conduct the assessment in accordance with the wishes of the panel chair. This does not mean they have to be excluded from the voting.



- To make themselves available to support the Distinctions Advisory sessions organised by the Society

The Society affords all panel members the opportunity to attend one other distinctions assessment panel per calendar year in order for them to broaden their knowledge of the standards and processes. To this end The Society agrees to reimburse expenses in accordance to the standard rate provided attendance has been agreed and confirmed by the Distinctions Manager.

9. Giving Advice

Advice may be given at Advisory Days, Review Days, via online advice on a one to one basis.

Except for online advice, a duplicate Advice Form (Appendix 2) (from 2016) must be completed.

Except at an Advisory Day, the names of those receiving advice should remain confidential.

9.1. When a Distinction panel or board member offers advice to a potential applicant they will do so in a clear and honest manner and to the best of their ability. It is important that applicants are not given false expectations as this only leads to disappointment. It is far better for that advice to err on the side of caution. It is also the responsibility of any panel member to make an applicant aware that they are only being offered one opinion and that success cannot be guaranteed. The final decision is taken by the assessment panel as a whole and the majority view might differ. It is also important that panel members do not offer advice outside of their specialist panel and if such occasion arises it is best to ask the applicant to contact the Distinction Department in order that they can be put in touch with a panel member in the particular specialist area. When any panel member offers one to one advice to an applicant they must inform the Distinction Department of this in order that they can manage this aspect of the distinctions procedure.

9.2. Panel members are expected to support The Society distinctions process by assisting where possible at Distinction Advisory days, giving online distinctions advice and any other distinctions advice and assistance that The Society may require. (It is understood that not every panel member is in a position to assist in this area, however every panel member should support and promote the aim of The Society as an educational charity and promote its distinction programme and processes.)



Appendix 1

Advisory Days Statement

Text to be read out and provided to attendees at Advisory Days

Advice given by Panel Members on Attaining a Distinction

Distinctions are awarded by Council on the recommendations of Panels of experts in the given disciplines. Typically each Panel consists of a Chair and five Panel members.

The Panels do not always agree unanimously on a submission. It therefore follows that the advice given by an individual Panel member may not be that of the majority.

ALL advice and a recommendation to submit are given on the understanding that they are the personal opinions of the Panel member present and may not reflect the majority view.

It is possible that in a marginal situation a Panel member may give advice to submit and then, after discussion with the other members of the Panel, may vote against the submission on the adjudication day.

Similarly, advice to submit in a particular discipline is given on the same basis.

The Society makes every effort to give applicants the best possible chance of success while also ensuring that consistent standards are maintained. For this reason a submission may be referred from one expert Panel to another if this is considered appropriate.

- The advice we give is our personal opinion.
- When the Panel members meet they may not agree with us.
- At the Panel meeting we may change our opinion after hearing the views of our colleagues.
- We shall be honest and we want to help.
- If your work is below the standard required we shall say so, it's not in your interest or ours to give false hope.
- Do ask questions.
- Do listen carefully, and if you are not sure please ask for clarification.
- Do not record or take photographs; also do not post about any image on which advice is given on Social media sites.
- You will be provided with a summary of the advice in writing.
- Our aim today is to give you the best chance of being successful, by giving advice to the best of our knowledge.

Appendix 2

New Advice Form to follow when approved

