

Distinctions Procedure: Panel Membership Selection and Training

Approved by Council: November 2015

Review Date: 26th May 2016

Scope

The Distinction Advisory Board will be responsible to Council for the management of the Distinction Panels and their membership. All activity in relation to the membership of these panels will be reported to Council, who will have the final approval on any decision taken by the Distinctions Advisory Board.

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DP001	Distinctions Procedure: Fellowship Board
DP002	Distinctions Procedure: Panel Assessments
DP003	Guidelines for Distinctions Advisory and Review Days
DP004	Distinctions and Qualifications Information (see website)
DP009	Distinctions: Roles and Responsibilities
DP010	Distinctions Procedure: Referral
MP008	Volunteer Policy
MF003	Expenses Claim Form



Panel Membership Selection

1. Distinction Panel Membership Approval and Invitation

1.1. Every two years when a new President and Council are elected the Distinctions Advisory Board will examine the constitution of all the Distinctions Panels and recommend the necessary changes they see fit. Once the final membership of all the Distinctions Panels is agreed by the Distinctions Advisory Board this will be reported to Council for their approval. This will normally be done in the November / December immediately following The Society elections. Amendments may be made in this manner at any time.

1.2. Period of service: Panel membership may be renewed every two years for up to a maximum normally of eight years, after which there must be a break of at least two years before that Panel member can be invited back on the Panel. The maximum term as Chairman is normally six years. In individual cases Council may make exceptions to these rules but only where there is a clearly justified case for doing so. A Panel member may serve on more than one Panel and a Chairman may also serve as an ordinary member on another Panel. Gradual changes are made in Panel membership which helps to ensure that standards are maintained and current attitudes and opinion are represented.

1.3 Following approval by Council, Panel members who are being reappointed will receive a letter of invitation, signed by the President, to serve for 2 years together with all relevant Society Documents, together with The Society volunteer agreement. A reply and a signed agreement to the process and procedures will be required. If any chair or panel member does not agree with a new process and procedures introduced midterm, they must inform the Distinctions manager, who will advise the DAB.

2. Appointment of new members

It will be the role of the Distinctions Advisory Board to manage the nomination and appointment of new Distinction Panel members and report their decision to Council for final approval.

The appointment of Distinction Panel membership is a sensitive matter and one of the most important aspects of The Royal Photographic Society. For a member to be invited to join such a panel is perhaps, the ultimate accolade in as much as they are seen by their peers as a worthy person to assess at the highest photographic standards and represent The Society in awarding its distinctions.

Accordingly the election of any person to a distinction panel and all matter relating to such election must be handled with the utmost tact and confidentiality. It is important that any person who is invited to partake in the procedure understands that acceptance onto a panel is not automatic and at any time both The Society and the candidate can terminate the procedure. The candidate must also be aware that whilst the Distinctions Advisory Board manages the process it will be for Council to give final approval.

There will be **no additional fee**

3. Panel Member Requirements

Distinction Panel membership is only open to fully paid up members with the necessary distinction of The Royal Photographic Society. For membership of the Licentiate Panel a candidate must be an Associate, Fellow or Hon Fellow of The Society. For membership of the specialist panels who adjudicate at Associate and Fellowship levels the candidate must hold a Fellowship or Hon Fellowship. In exceptional cases the Distinctions Advisory Board can call up other experts in specialist fields, who may or may not be members to assist in the assessment procedure. Any such action will require the support of Council.



4. Nomination of new panel members

Normally new panel members will be recommended by the panel chairs or members of the Distinction Advisory Board who have the necessary experience and knowledge of the suitability of candidates. However consideration will be given to any other nominations that come from within The Royal Photographic Society.

Any such nomination must be made without the candidate's knowledge and at no time must such information be transmitted to the candidate prior to discussion by the Distinctions Advisory Board. Under normal circumstances a member cannot nominate themselves for Panel membership.

5. Consideration by the Distinctions Advisory Board

Once a candidate's name is put forward to the Distinctions Advisory Board for consideration it will fall, into one of three categories:

5.1. A candidate who has previously been a member of a Distinctions Panel: the Distinctions Advisory Board will discuss the candidate's performance and assess if he/she should be invited to join a panel. If approved by the Distinctions Advisory Board it will not be necessary to obtain a *Curriculum vitae* for the candidate and once the Distinctions Advisory Board have decided on which panel that candidate will sit the name can be forwarded to Council for approval.

5.2. A candidate who is known to Distinctions Advisory Board members:

5.2.1. If from personal knowledge that candidate is considered unsuitable for panel membership then that will be the end of the matter and the candidate will be removed from consideration.

5.2.2. If from personal knowledge that candidate is considered suitable for panel membership once the Distinctions Advisory Board have decided on which panel that candidate will sit the name can be forwarded to Council for approval to them being invited to submit a *Curriculum vitae*.

5.3. A candidate who is not known to Distinctions Advisory Board members and who merits further investigation as to their suitability: The Distinctions Advisory Board will decide if the applicant may be suitable for membership of a panel. At this stage they can delay such a decision so that the Chair of the Distinctions Advisory Board can consult with the person recommending the candidate in order that more information is forthcoming. In such a case that nomination will be held over to a subsequent meeting of the Distinctions Advisory Board. In the event that that the Distinctions Advisory Board are satisfied the candidate is worthy of consideration for panel membership and have decided on which panel that candidate will sit the name can be forwarded to Council for approval to them being invited to submit a *Curriculum vitae*.

5.4. All decisions for new panel members will be agreed at the Distinctions Advisory Board meetings and then recommendations will go to Council for ratification.

6. Procedure prior to Panel Membership Training Programme:

6.1. Submission of candidates name by the DAB to Council.

6.2. Following approval by Council he/she will be invited to submit a *Curriculum vitae* which will be examined by the Distinctions Advisory Board. These *Curriculum vitae* should be circulated the members of the Distinctions Advisory Board and the respective chair of the Distinctions Panel.



6.3. If satisfactory The Distinctions Manager or other person delegated by Council will write to the candidate inviting the candidate to attend an Introduction to Distinctions Day and undertake the Panel Member Training programme. It will be made clear to the candidate that the invitation is to allow The Royal Photographic Society to make an assessment of his/her suitability for membership and to allow the candidate to understand the working of the distinctions system and what is required from a panel member. It will also be made quite clear to the candidate that such an invitation is no guarantee that they will be appointed to a panel. Likewise a candidate can decide that panel membership is not for them and withdraw if they so desire.

Panel Membership Training

7. Introduction

The purpose of this induction and training procedure is to enable the prospective Assessment Panel members to better understand the processes and responsibilities of becoming a distinctions assessor for The Royal Photographic Society. It will also enable The Society to have clear evidence that the prospective Assessment Panel members are suitable for such a role. At the conclusion of the Induction and training, reports will be submitted to the Distinctions Advisory Board by the Panel Chairs together with a report from the Distinctions Advisory Board Moderator (If present) as to the suitability of the prospective Assessment Panel member to be elected a distinction panel member. The Distinctions Advisory Board will make the decision whether the prospective Assessment Panel member will be invited to become a panel member and submit their recommendation to the Council for final approval.

The policy of The Society is that panel members should, where possible, assess at Licentiate level before joining one of the specialist Associate and Fellowship panels. In this way they will have a good grounding in both standards and procedures. In some circumstances the Distinctions Advisory Board may decide that a direct invitation to join the Associate and Fellowship assessment panel is the correct course of action. This route is particularly important when the candidate brings specialist knowledge that is required for assessing in a particular category.

Panel members moving from the Licentiate to the Associate and Fellowship assessment panels will be required to attend the Assessment Day training programme.

Panel members transferring from another Associate and Fellowship assessment panel or returning after an absence of no more than 4 years will not be required to undertake the training programme but will be expected to make themselves fully aware of current procedures and practices.

In exceptional cases the Distinctions Advisory Board may amend this process if deemed necessary, and inform council of the reasons.

8. Training Protocols for New Panel Members

There will be two distinct parts to the training of new panel members and everyone will be required to complete both aspects unless the Distinctions Advisory Board direct otherwise. All prospective Assessment Panel members will first attend an Induction Day followed by attendance and participation at two separate assessments of the panel to which they are invited.

9. Panel Training - Induction Days

9.1 Objectives:

1. To standardise training of potential new panel members so that they clearly understand what is expected of them.
2. To enable The Society to ascertain that potential panel members are suitable to serve as a Panel member.
3. To ensure that new panel members understand the standard required and how to measure success and failure within the criteria set out in the Distinctions Guidance.



4. To ensure that potential panel members understand the commitment required of them and that they positively accept that commitment.

9.2 Content:

During an Induction Day it is the role of The Society to inform prospective panel members of their roles and responsibilities as expected of them when they become a member of the Distinctions Assessment process. The following points will be covered:

- Introduction to The Royal Photographic Society and its Distinctions.
- Introduction to and explanation of the Distinctions Department role.
- Introduction to the various levels of distinctions.
- The role of the Distinctions Advisory Board and assessment panels.
- Outline of the role and responsibilities of panel members at assessments and also in regard to Advisory days and giving advice on a one to one basis.
- Outline of the required standards at each level of distinction.
- Introduction to the Distinctions Procedures and Guidelines
- Outline of the procedures regarding expenses and accommodation.
- All attendees are provided with relevant Society Documents prior to attending.

Part of Induction day will be given over to showing the prospective panel members the standards set by The Royal Photographic Society distinctions at all levels. This will be done by showing examples of successful image led applications at all three levels.

In addition, all of the trainee panel members will be asked to assess a number of Licentiate applications. They will be introduced to the assessment sheets and given clear advice on its use. It is felt that this is an invaluable process that allows prospective panel members a way of learning how to assess and analyse an image. It is therefore very useful to understand the Licentiate assessment process before going on to Associate and Fellowship assessments.

The assessment process will be discussed in detail. Examples of pass and fail portfolios will be available to give attendees an opportunity to assess panels and gain experience under guidance. The procedure to be followed for the referral process and resubmissions will be explained.

Trainee panel members will be shown how to complete sheets so that in the event of failure the Chairman is in no doubt as to why the panel is deemed to have failed. Failed candidates need good feedback as to **why** they were not successful. The failed section needs to be circled clearly and relevant problems underlined in the criteria box, with substandard images clearly identified in the comments box. If **most** images are below standard it is easier to identify those images that are promising and hence indicate that the remaining images need to be of similar quality, thus giving positive and encouraging rather than negative feedback.

Examples of Associate and Fellowship portfolios will also be displayed to illustrate the standards required as laid down in the applicant's guidance notes, and the particular requirements of the different categories. It will be explained that the decisions at Associate and Fellowship panels are by done by a show of coloured cards, indicating whether they the panel members view. The referral and resubmission process will be discussed.

It will be explained that if an assessor has helped an applicant on a one-to-one basis or advised on an Advisory Day, they must discreetly indicate this to the Chair so they are not asked to be the first to comment, although if called upon they can comment and are at liberty to mention any advice they have given. In all instances they are entitled to vote.

Questions may be asked throughout the day.



10. Panel Training – Assessment

A potential panel member will be expected to make every effort to attend two panel assessments as soon as possible after an Introduction to Distinctions Day, whilst the initial training is still fresh in their minds. The two attendances must be in two parts and must be at separate panel assessments. Often an attendance may be for more than one day particularly at the busy panels such as Pictorial, Creative and Applied. This is important because the prospective panel member will be required to be present at the assessment at both Associate and Fellowship level.

Prior to attending an assessment as a trainee they must sign the Volunteer Policy Agreement (MP008 Appendix 1)

A trainee must learn the process and the standards and also to have the courage of their convictions and not be led by other panel members.

10.1 Assessment with an Audience:

When attending the first day the trainee panel member will be introduced to the group at the initial briefing and to the audience by the Panel Chair. Trainee panel members will normally sit in the second row. Whilst it is appreciated that too many people looking at panels can be difficult, becoming a panel member is in essence an apprenticeship: the only way to learn is through inclusion. The Chair and panel members must ensure that they facilitate this for the trainee panel member. Normally no more than two prospective panel members will attend on any one day, if there are more than the Distinctions Department must agree this with the Panel Chair and make arrangements for a member of the Distinctions Advisory Board or other senior assessor to assist. Other guests observing may not be permitted to get up and view the panel, but to view only from the audience. In the event there are more than two prospective panel members present then they will take turns to inspect the work at the display as directed.

10.2 Licentiate Assessment:

On the first morning of the first day's attendance the trainee will be assigned a mentor, either the Moderator or senior panel member and will be required to observe. He will be allowed to inspect the images at the easel but is there to listen only. In the afternoon of the first day trainees should be given assessment sheets and, with a mentor, complete assessments with guidance. The Chair should ask a trainee panel member to get up and speak at least twice and this should normally be done when the application is not too complicated. This not only gives the trainee some experience but also offers Panel Chairs an opportunity to assess the ability of the trainee panel members.

On a second training day a trainee panel member should be included in assessing and making comments with the assistance of a mentor. Their results will not be included in final decision, but compared with panel members' results as guidance.

10.3 Associate Assessment:

Those who have sat on Licentiate panels will probably find the transition to Associate an easier step; they will be aware of the Licentiate standard, how to analyse and appraise. They must, however be aware that Associate standard has to be considerably higher to meet the criteria as set out in the guidelines. As with the Licentiate panel they will be required to attend two separate panel assessments and are required to be present at the assessment at both Associate and Fellowship level.

On the first morning of the first day's attendance the trainee will be assigned a mentor, either the Moderator or Senior panel member and will be required to observe. He will be allowed to inspect the images at the easel but is there to listen only. In the afternoon of the first day trainees should be given assessment sheets and, with their mentor, complete feedback forms with guidance. The Chair should ask a trainee panel member to get up and speak at least twice and this should normally be done when



the application is not too complicated. This not only gives the trainee some experience but also offers Panel Chairs an opportunity to assess the ability of the trainee panel members.

On the second attendance the trainee panel member should be given the coloured marking cards and with a mentor, indicate their decisions. The Chair should ask a trainee to get up and speak at least twice and this should normally be done when the application is not too complicated. This not only gives the trainee some experience but also offers Chairs an opportunity to assess the ability of the trainee panel member

On a second training day a trainee should be included in voting and making comments with the assistance of a mentor. Their votes will not be included in the final assessments, but compared with panel members' results as guidance.

10.4 Fellowship Assessment:

As Fellowship applications are assessed in camera, discussion with trainees is easier. A prospective panel member needs to understand how to recognise progression and to be sure that the applicant has succeeded in communicating in line with their intentions as set out in their Statement of Intent. A trainee panel member will observe but will be required to vote and speak as directed by the Panel Chair. Their votes will not be included as part of the assessment but the Chair will be able to observe the confidence of the trainee and their ability to assess the complexities of Fellowship requirements. A trainee panel member should be asked to complete the comment form; this will assist the Chair to see if the trainee understands both the standard required and the process undertaken.

11. Report by Panel Chair

At the completion of the two day assessment training the Panel Chair and the Distinctions Advisory Board Moderator will discuss with the trainee panel member their views on the performance. At this stage it is imperative that direct and honest feedback is given. Both should also indicate to the prospective panel member if they will recommend their appointment as a panel member. If they are not going to recommend the prospective panel member they must indicate clearly reasons why. If they are going to recommend the trainee panel member they must inform him/her that the final decision on the appointment is with the Distinctions Advisory Board and Council and that their appointment cannot be guaranteed.

Both the Panel Chair and Distinctions Advisory Board Moderator must inform the Distinctions Advisory Board of their views in writing as soon as possible. Their comments and recommendation will be included in their panel reports to the Distinctions Advisory Board. Normally the appointment of new panel members is discussed at the next Distinctions Advisory Board meeting; however in exceptional cases this may be expedited.

No panel member can be appointed without the approval of Council.

12. Documentation Following Approval by Council

A letter of invitation to sit on the Panel for the current Council term, or remains thereof, will be sent to the new Panel Member by the Distinctions Manager, signed by the President. It will require confirmation of acceptance, understanding of all documents received through training and a completed Volunteer Policy agreement form (MP008).



Appendix 1

Panel Member Nomination form for 2016

Appendix 2

Statement of Confidentiality

The deliberations of this board / committee / panel are confidential and by being part of that group its membership of the day, be they observer or serving member, both individually and collectively, agree to that confidentiality. It is acknowledged that while part of the process can be in public, other parts of the process are private and confidential and should remain so.

