



CANADIAN INSTITUTE  
OF PLANNERS

INSTITUT CANADIEN  
DES URBANISTES

*Shaping our Communities  
Sustaining Canada's Future* || *Bâtir nos communautés  
Pour un Canada viable*

# Planning for the Future

*The planning profession is changing*

## Questions and Answers for Planning Students

*Note: The questions from this document were a result of collaboration from the University of Toronto, Ryerson University and York University students who attended a CIP student representative session at the University of Toronto on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011.*



There are two main routes to registered professional planner status for students in Canada: one for applicants that have graduated from an accredited planning program – and one for applicants that have graduated from a non-accredited program (usually a degree other than planning); The questions below respond specifically to the accredited route, as we assume that this will be more relevant (but we can provide information on the other route if you wish as well).

There are also FAQs on both the CIP and OPPI websites that anticipate questions including those that may be of special interest to students. The FAQs can be found at:

[www.planningincanada.ca/FAQ.php](http://www.planningincanada.ca/FAQ.php) and at [http://www.ontarioplanners.on.ca/content/planningfuture/Your\\_PFF\\_Questions\\_September\\_October\\_Journal\\_article.pdf](http://www.ontarioplanners.on.ca/content/planningfuture/Your_PFF_Questions_September_October_Journal_article.pdf)

## **1. New requirements for work experience**

### *a. How do you record your work experience? How will CIP monitor your work experience?*

In order to become a Candidate member (formerly known as a provisional member), the applicant must be employed in planning. The applicant submits an application which includes official transcripts, proof of graduation, proof of employment in planning, and an application fee to the Professional Standards Board (PSB) for assessment. Admission to Candidate membership through the provincial/regional CIP Affiliate (e.g., OPPI, PIBC, API, etc.) will follow the assessment by the PSB.

Once admitted as a Candidate member, the candidate must complete two years of responsible professional planning experience (RPPE). There is also a requirement to complete and document 12 months of mentoring with a Registered (Full) member. The mentoring can be completed during the same period of time as the professional planning experience. (Subsequent to the experience & mentoring requirements, there will be a requirement to complete the Course on Ethics & Professionalism and the Professional Exam).

The Administrative Task Force is currently preparing draft documentation including guidelines, forms and manuals to be provided to applicants and candidates to assist them in completing and filing the necessary documentation. The PSB will be the primary administrative “clearing-house” for the filing of applications and other application process-related materials for application to candidate and registered status. The completed forms will require sign off by the mentor (to document mentoring period) and a sponsor (to document planning experience).

### *b. Does work experience have to be ongoing/concurrent? (i.e., can a break be taken in the 2-year timeline of recording work experience?)*

The 2-year requirement is cumulative – so the sum of the recorded time must be 2 years in total but it needn't be continuous.

### *c. What work qualifies? What does not qualify? What counts as “planning” experience?*

The two years of recorded planning experience must be obtained in a planning environment and evaluated and accepted as meeting the definition of responsible professional planning experience

(RPPE). It is recognized that planning is a diverse, multi-disciplinary field, and each job, or Candidate's experience is unique. Currently, in its by-law, CIP defines RPPE as:  
"Work comprising analysis, projection, design or program development which specifically requires consideration of the inter-relationships of space and time among resources, facilities and activities and:

- a) which expresses this consideration in a manner to influence the disposition of land or the allocation of resources, facilities or services,
- b) which shows a specific relationship to public policies or programs for controlling or influencing the development of communities,
- c) which comprises a substantive component of initiative, judgment, substantial involvement and personal accountability or definition or preparation of significant elements of the program of work."

Candidates will also be asked to familiarize themselves with the updated professional competencies (functional competencies and enabling competencies), and link their documented planning experience to the competencies where applicable. This will be covered in the administrative forms and documentation provided for Candidates.

*d. Do you have to work for an MCIP, RPP for it to qualify?*

The short answer is no; Candidates could be working in any kind of planning role/environment, regardless of the status of their employer. However, work experience submitted by a Candidate as RPPE must be signed and validated by a "sponsor" who is a Registered Member (i.e., MCIP / RPP) and has been a Registered Member for at least 3 years. The sponsor would be a member who is not your direct supervisor/employer. The Mentor (who is a separate individual from the Sponsor) can be, but does not have to be, a member who is the Candidate's supervisor or colleague.

*e. What about international experience? How is that qualified as work experience?*

International experience may be included as RPPE if the candidate is employed and appropriately validated by a Sponsor like any other experience. The administrative details for how international work experience is still being worked on, but such experience will be scrutinized on a case-by-case basis to ensure it meets the requirements for RPPE.

*f. Does the work experience have to be at a full-time job? If so, what qualifies as full-time? What about part-time?*

The requirements for work experience are equivalent to full-time work; however the time allocated as work experience is cumulative and need not be undertaken on a full-time or continuous basis. So, for example, working half-time in a planning position, doing valid professional planning work for one year, can still be submitted and counted, but would be validated as equal to six months of full-time experience.

*g. Can a student include their work terms as part of the requirements for work experience? What about non-school related employment?*

As long as the work experience is undertaken after the completion of at least an undergraduate degree, and qualifies as RPPE, work experience gained as an applicant may qualify. Although each case is unique, it should be noted that typically work undertaken during short-term student or co-op positions often does not qualify as RPPE, due to the nature of the work and level of responsibility in such positions. However, the one year mentorship period may only begin once Candidate membership status has been attained.

## **2. What is the Mentorship program?**

The Mentorship program is meant to ensure a period (1 year minimum) of semi-regular, direct or “face-to-face” contact between Candidates and experienced professional Registered Members (Mentors), in a structured way, to cover key topics – such as professionalism, ethics, the public interest, professional competencies, etc. – before they continue on to the Professional Exam. The documentation including forms and guides for Mentors and Candidates are currently being prepared. These will give both candidates and mentors detailed information on what is expected of both parties. The mentorship period is recorded. A detailed description of the mentorship program and the proposed roles of the candidate, mentor and sponsor can be found on the CIP website at [www.planningincanada.ca](http://www.planningincanada.ca) within the Certification Standards for the Profession Task Force Report. Below is a summary of the program.

*a. What does the program entail?*

Over a one year period, the Mentor and the Candidate will engage in a professional exchange of experiences and knowledge to enhance and guide the candidate’s understanding of professionalism, and ethical responsibilities towards the profession, colleagues, and the public interest. The mentor and the candidate will also work to ensure that the candidate has achieved an acceptable level and range of competencies according to the Competency Standards established by the Institute. When the Mentorship period ends, the Mentor and Candidate will complete an evaluation form with a record of the meetings held and an assessment of the Candidate’s readiness to write the professional examination.

*b. How are you matched with a mentor?*

The candidate will select a Mentor of his or her choice. The Mentor must have been a Registered Member for at least 3 years. The Mentor can be the direct supervisor or colleague of the candidate. If a candidate member has made every effort but is unable to find a Mentor, the provincial/regional CIP Affiliate will assist in matching a candidate with a registered member.

*c. What are the benefits?*

Benefits of the mentorship program include:

- It establishes a close professional one to one relationship between a candidate member and a registered member over the period of a year
- An opportunity to share work experiences and discuss issues of interest to both
- An opportunity for registered members to share their experiences and knowledge with new members in a meaningful way

- An opportunity for candidate members to seek guidance on issues they are facing in their work environment and topics that are of mutual interest
- To enrich and enhance both the mentor's and the candidate's working and professional experience as planners.
- Mentors time will be eligible for Continuing Professional Development credits.

*d. Can you work for a mentor and have it qualify as work experience?*

Yes – as long as it meets the definition of RPPE.

*e. How are the mentoring and work experience timelines going to be counted? (i.e., are they concurrent or separate years of experience?)*

The one year of Mentorship can run concurrent to (at the same time as) the period when the Candidate is accumulating her/his experience (RPPE). Appropriate documentation and assessment of both is still required.

**3. Why the switch to candidate member?**

*a. Is it merely a change in name from Provisional member?*

Yes, it is really just a change in wording to offer greater clarity that such individuals are “candidates” for full or Registered Membership.

*b. What is the status of your position in OPPI (or CIP) as a candidate member compared to a provisional member?*

The basic service benefits (publications, participation in events, etc...) received from CIP and the provincial/regional Affiliates and membership status will be essentially unchanged from the current arrangement for Provisional members.

*c. Are the fees going to be different?*

Membership fees will remain as they currently are, subject to normal annual review and adjustment by CIP and the provincial/regional Affiliates. The PSB and/or provincial/regional Affiliates will also collect one-time administrative or processing fees for the submission & evaluation of applications, for the registering for the Professionalism & Ethics Course, for taking the Exam, etc. – similar to current application/processing/exam fees.

*d. Do candidate members get a chance to vote on OPPI initiatives? Do candidate members get a chance to vote on CIP initiatives?*

As noted previously, the rights & privileges of Candidate members will remain the same as they are now for “Provisional” members. Currently, provisional members may vote for CIP bylaw changes/elections as well as at the affiliate level.

#### **4. Are the ethics courses mandatory if similar courses are covered in an accredited University?**

Yes. The Professionalism & Ethics Course and Professional Exam will be a requirement for all Candidate members, prior to admission as a Registered Member. They will be different from, and in addition to, ethics and professionalism covered in any academic program.

#### **5. What will Accredited University programs look like?**

Accredited programs will have their own program specializations just as they do now. Accredited programs will be required to meet core competencies that have been established by CIP and vetted through an Accreditation Program Committee of the newly established Professional Standards Board.

##### *a. Will there be enough variability to offer a larger breadth of planning programs across the nation? (i.e., social planning, environmental planning, urban design, transportation planning, etc.)*

The updated accreditation program will certainly continue to allow for diversity and innovation and will still allow any program to develop its own particular niche or strengths, in addition to the core planning elements of any program.

##### *b. What are the minimum standards for Universities?*

The final details of the requirements for accreditation of university programs are still being worked out – and they will not take effect right away, as they will be “phased in” over a period of up to nine years. But essentially they will require each program to cover a basic range of core planning competencies and topics in their courses/curriculum; require a certain number of planning professionals on faculty; and require that the program be academically and administratively distinct within the university as a whole.

#### **6. What is the rough timeline for implementing the changes through PFF?**

##### *a. Will current students, graduating either in 2011 or 2012, be given a choice of graduating by the current standards and the new standards under PFF?*

The exact implementation date for the new standards/requirements depends upon the ratification of enabling bylaw amendments by CIP’s membership, subject to a membership vote occurring this spring, and subject to any bylaw amendments and membership votes as may be required by Affiliates. However, all new standards for membership are to be in effect within three years of passing the by-laws.

#### **7. What is a “related” degree and how will it be assessed under the new standards?**

Under the new standards, there will be no differentiation between a degree that is “related” or “unrelated” to planning. The applicant will either hold a degree from an accredited planning program or he/she will not. Applicants that do not hold degrees from an accredited program will be required to apply through a route called “Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition” (PLAR). Under this route, candidates’ qualifications are assessed by the Professional Standards Board.