



Education for Everyone

Invitation to Tender

Independent Facilitator for
Consultation and Engagement Phases

April 2024

1. Introduction

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the UK's leading planning body for spatial, sustainable, and inclusive planning and is the largest planning institute in Europe, with over 27,000 members. The RTPI is:

- A membership organisation and a Chartered Institute responsible for maintaining professional standards and accrediting world class planning courses nationally and internationally.
- A charity whose charitable purpose is to advance the science and art of planning (including town and country and spatial planning) for the benefit of the public.
- A learned society.

It is the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB¹) for Chartered Town Planners in the UK, and for its members working in Ireland and internationally.

The [RTPI Corporate Strategy 2020-2030](#) committed the Institute to undertake Education for Everyone². The scope for this programme of work is:

- Undertake a detailed review to broaden access to the pathways into chartered membership, to reach out to attract diverse talent, which will include reviewing the time taken, the delivery mechanisms and the content of courses.
- Review the existing model of entry and learning outcome requirements for accredited planning schools to ensure it fits our new, more inclusive and reactive model, seeking to accredit future planning schools that support delivery of our vision and missions.
- Broaden planning education requirements to enable a wider pool of experts working in related built environment disciplines to become chartered professional planners.

This work supports implementation of the [RTPI's CHANGE action plan](#) and the Institute's vision "to be, and promote the planning profession to be, as diverse as the communities it represents, to act inclusively, treating everyone fairly and seeking to provide a culture which delivers the best outcomes for the diverse society in which and for whom we work."

We are now **looking to appoint an independent facilitator** (individual consultant or organisation) to support the project team and to deliver consultation and listening exercises for Education for Everyone 'Part 2'. This is an important step as we approach the final stages of policy development.

¹ PSRBs engage with the Higher Education (HE) sector through the approval, recognition and accreditation of HE programmes. They provide membership services and promote the interests of people working in professions. They accredit or endorse programmes and courses that meet professional standards, provide a route through to the professions, or are recognised by employers.

² See page 23 of the RTPI Corporate Strategy.

2. Background to the project

The last time the Institute reviewed its education strategies in full was 2003 when the RTPI Education Commission recommended significant changes to both initial planning education and the membership qualifications framework. This saw the introduction of a new two-part degree ‘accreditation’ process, followed by a practical work experience submission (the Assessment of Professional Competence, or APC) leading to the professional ‘qualification’ of Chartered Town Planner. The context for initial planning education, the profession at large and the RTPI has changed significantly since then, including the introduction of apprenticeships, increasing student fees and costs, changing multidisciplinary academic practice, and planning reform and skills.

UK Subject Benchmark Statement

It is the case that the majority of the planning degrees that the Institute accredits are guided by the [Subject Benchmark Statement on Town And Country Planning](#). This defines the academic standards that can be expected of a graduate and describes the nature of the subject for the purposes of undergraduate and, in part, postgraduate provision. It was updated and re-published by the UK Quality Assurance Agency in April 2024.

Education Commission 2003

In 2003, the RTPI Education Commission concluded that the underlying discipline should be termed ‘spatial planning’, the essential idea of which, for higher education and planning practice, is *“critical thinking about space and place as the basis for action or intervention”*. It suggested that the Institute *“specifies and validates an educational, training and qualifications framework that provides an adequate and flexible basis for the supply of an effective cadre of professional planners”* both in the UK and, where appropriate, globally.

The resulting accreditation policy for planning degrees, as set out in the RTPI’s Policy Statement for Initial Planning Education, underlines this point. Procedures and criteria for the quality assurance of planning courses and assessment of universities to be recognised as an ‘Effective Planning School’ are set out in the RTPI Partnership Guide and RTPI Guide to Accreditation.

In addition both the Corporate Strategy and CHANGE action plan are key drivers to broaden educational access into the profession.

The project’s **working assumption** is that the goals and benchmark agreed in 2003 remain valid:

- A broad policy goal *“to seek to ensure that the educational framework has the minimum barriers to entry for those who start without a firm commitment to planning; and that it attracts mid-career entrants, thus promoting maximum inclusivity, opportunity and flexibility”*.
- That the RTPI’s role in initial planning education is to *“provide indicative guidance rather than prescriptive course content criteria and identify emerging areas of intellectual debate and practice that planning education should address.”*

- That *“the educational benchmark for qualification for full membership of the RTPI should be a Masters level qualification.”*

At the time the Commission suggested that initial planning education consisted of:

- *“an understanding of what spatial planning is, and the skills which underpin it - based on both a grasp of the theory of the relationships between social, economic and environmental issues.... and how that theory translates into spatial action.... this understanding has global applicability, whatever the different cultural and economic circumstances.”*
- *“an in-depth understanding of an area of specialism within spatial planning. By specialism we mean a particular area of knowledge within spatial planning.,,, 'Regeneration', 'development management', 'urban design' and 'planning research' are examples of the scale of the categories implied.”*

This approach was adopted so that studying both these elements together in one degree, or in separate qualifications, was then the gateway to the APC: *“an assessment of professional competence, i.e. 'fitness to practice', reflecting the ability to apply the knowledge and skills acquired through initial education and continuing studies, demonstrated through structured experience and assessed reflection in the workplace.”*

Education for Everyone - aims and objectives

The Institute wishes to consider whether its current approach to initial planning education is fit for purpose and whether any changes to accreditation might be appropriate. The longer term outcomes from this review should be that a broader range of students and diversity of graduates from different subjects and areas of expertise are attracted to and eligible for planning education and professional membership.

In revisiting the conclusions from the 2003 review, we are looking at **ways to increase the number of students studying planning** at existing accredited, or future accredited, universities in the UK, Ireland and globally. This could mean an increase in the number of planning courses the RTPI accredits, or recognises, for access to one of its professional membership classes, alongside options to ensure enrolled students complete a fully accredited degree programme.

Any changes must not unnecessarily disrupt existing good provision by university partners. Implementation and transition of any structural changes will need to be considered as part of our response to the project. This includes the relationship with and linkage to employers with graduates moving into planning practice and mentored work experience to complete the eligibility requirements and competencies for the APC.

As part of this process therefore, it is crucial to review emerging proposals and implications with as many stakeholders as possible, and see what they think, hence within the project plan we have set a significant period of time for engagement and consultation on proposals for change. The [RTPI Education for Everyone online hub](#) provides all current information for RTPI members and stakeholders including:

- the [reasoning and scope for the programme](#) and the requirements for Part 2 of the work;

- the [links between the APC and Initial Planning Education](#) and that elements of the 'APC review' and the Education Policy Review (EPR) have now been brought together in Part 2;
- the [background to the APC review](#);
- the [background to the EPR](#); and
- the [Oversight Group purpose and Part 1 diagnostic recommendations](#).

3. Commissioning requirements

Deliverables and outputs

The project team has been conducting quantitative analysis of the flow of planning students and professionals through the education and career structure.

In addition, Part 2 of the project requires the blending of qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand the different perspectives, and motivations, of current planning students, graduates (APC candidates), universities, employers and RTPI members. We wish to ensure this next stage of activity allows stakeholders to be involved collectively and hear each other's perspectives, alongside the views of their own community.

Therefore, the independent facilitator will be expected to engage with a broad range of planning-related stakeholders to ensure sufficient engagement and advice is gained from across the education sector and address any resistance to considering opportunities to broaden access to and appeal of planning education.

The independent facilitator will hold at least two events e.g. workshops with the Planning Schools Forum (PSF)³. Attendance is also likely to be required at two standing committee meetings and at one RTPI Partnership & Accreditation Panel meeting. Hybrid options could be possible.

A key output from the review will be revisions to the RTPI's [Policy Statement for Initial Planning Education](#). The elements that make up this statement will be subject to discussion with relevant standing committees and consultation across the RTPI membership and with education stakeholders.

In summary, we are seeking a consultant to act as an independent facilitator and work with the project team on an engagement strategy. The independent facilitator will lead the gathering and analysis of feedback on a series of proposals being developed by the project team, with guidance and sign-off from the Board of Trustees, taking account of evidence and information from Part 1 of the project.

³ As stated in its terms of reference, the [Planning Schools Forum](#) (PSF) represents all planning schools accredited by the RTPI but is independent of the RTPI. It provides a collective voice for the community of planning schools, both accredited and not, and promotes the values of planning education, regarding teaching and research, as collectively agreed by PSF members.

Skills required

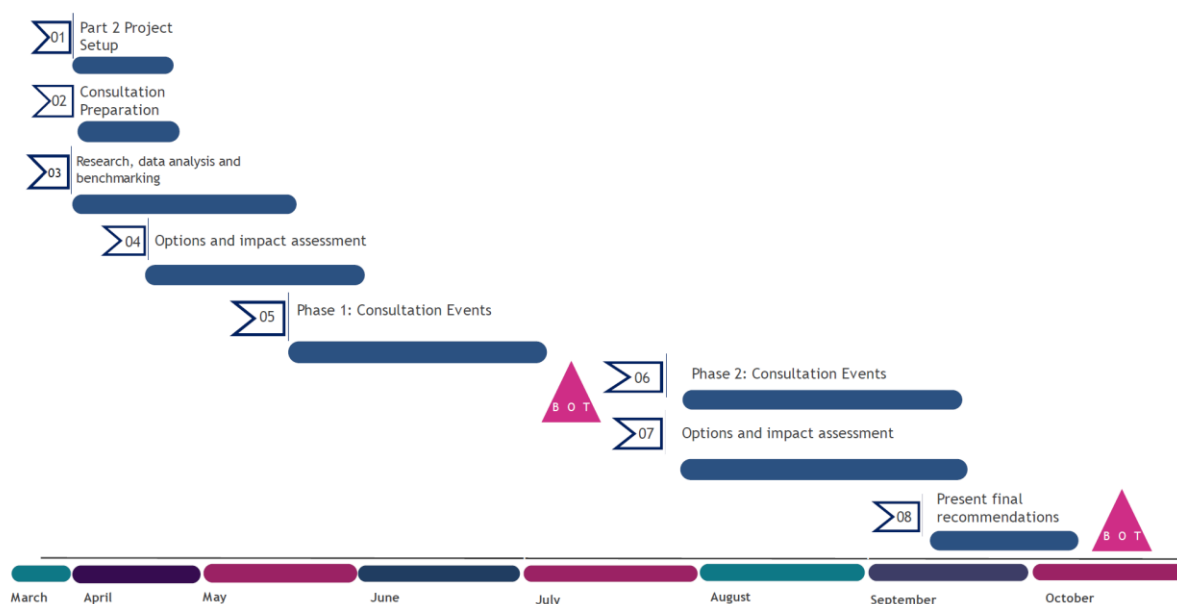
Ideally, we are looking for an independent facilitator (individual consultant or organisation) with the following attributes:

- Experience of carrying out listening and engagement exercises for a PSRB or third sector professional membership body undertaking similar types of policy development and consultation projects with its members and stakeholders.
- Experience of carrying out qualitative and quantitative research including, but not limited to, surveys and focus groups for a PSRB or third sector professional membership body.
- Good understanding of PSRB accreditation and/or other quality assurance processes.
- Ability to adapt communication style to suit different audiences.
- Ability to synthesise and understand multiple sources of complex information, and presenting it with visual clarity.
- Good understanding of the UK higher education sector.
- Experience of engaging with senior-level academics.
- Ability to prioritise workload and meet deadlines consistently.

Expected timescale

We wish to appoint a consultant by 31st May 2024. Part 2 of the Education for Everyone project formally commenced in March and the project team is working to the strategic timeline below.

This tender covers the Engagement and Consultation Phases 1 and 2. Our strategy includes: the RTPI General Assembly (event) 19th June, a proposed PSF symposium (event) w/c 12th August, the PSF annual meeting (event) w/c 2nd September.



Budget

In the region of £50-70,000 excl. VAT.

Intellectual property

The RTPI will retain ownership of all work and outputs produced for this project. All project material gathered, records, notes and other information will be the property of the RTPI.

Potential or perceived conflicts of interest

Bids from consultants and organisations both outside and/or inside of the planning profession are welcomed. Tenderers are asked to explain in their bid how they will ensure impartiality during the project and remain independent of the current ways of working of the RTPI's Initial Planning Education and APC arrangements.

4. Submission of tender

Material required

- (a) A covering letter of no more than four pages of A4 that sets out:
 - a. Statement of skills and experience relevant to the project.
 - b. Proposed actions and methods to meet deliverables and outputs sought.
 - c. Agreement to the timetable and conditions within this brief.
 - d. How the supplier can best meet the RTPI's [climate action](#) and CHANGE objectives.
 - e. Total cost (fixed price) to complete the work and broken down in stages against the deliverables where appropriate, including any payment terms.
- (b) The CV(s) of the consultant(s) proposed to undertake this commission.

Closing date

By 9am Thursday 9th May to educationreview@rtpi.org.uk

Answers will be provided to questions received about the tender before 10am Tuesday 7th May. They will be collated, anonymised and published online by 5pm Tuesday 7th May.

Interviews expected to be held on 16th May. The panel is likely to be: Sue Bridge, 2023 RTPI President and Chair of the Oversight Group for the project; Andrew Close, RTPI Director of Education & Profession; and Abi Field, Project Manager for Education for Everyone Part 2.