

RIBA Principal Designer Register – Competence Criteria

May 2024



To evidence the competence for the duties and responsibilities under the role of principal designer, the below matrix supports the assessments requirements at all three stages i) test ii) written submission (CV and case studies) and iii) an interview (not applicable to the Domestic category). For a full list of these competences, see the RIBA Competence Criteria below.

As the Building Regulations' duties are new, evidence of competence should be based on skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours of equivalent roles and responsibilities in respect of the design and delivery of any project. Where 'principal designer' is referenced, consider the duties under CDM and the Building Regulations (as applicable).

The Regulations address additional competencies in respect of the duties of Principal Designer and 'organisational capability'. As we are assessing individual competence and not 'organisational competence', the references within to organisation, are for contextual understanding.

It is important that the organisational capability requirements are understood, where they have potential to impact or influence your individual ability to be appointed or to fulfil the duties under the Regulations.

The RIBA are offering three routes to the Principal Designer Register; domestic, general and higher-risk buildings (the PD HRB test in Stage 1 only applies to those working with higher-risk buildings, (HRB) where additional competence must be met). If applying for the Principal Designer Domestic assessment, ensure evidence is specific to projects undertaken for domestic clients (if clients are not domestic clients, you should apply for the General assessment). For PD HRB competence, ensure evidence includes direct experience with higher-risk buildings and reflects an understanding of the additional duties and responsibilities associated with the higher-risk building regime. Note that the competencies in the far left column, in orange, are relevant to higher-risk buildings only.

Behavioural competence criteria		Test (Theory)	CV Evidence (Experience)	Case Study Evidence (Experience in context)	General knowledge test on competence criteria (General knowledge test on competence criteria- not applicable to domestic category application assessments)
		Pass = 80%	Pass = Criteria Met	Pass = Met or Partial evidencing approach where no direct evidence	Pass = Met or Partial where development areas identified and development plan will support competence
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 2	Stage 3
B1	Evaluate the limits of their own competence and, if relevant, their organisations capability sufficient: a) not to take on a specific Principal Designer dutyholder role when the needs of the project in question are beyond the individual's competence and, if relevant, the organisations capability; and b) to ask for help from other appropriately competent persons when needs emerge during a project that can no longer be met by the individual's competence or, if relevant, the organisations capability.	n/a	CV should evidence the competence under which you (or your organisation) will have appropriate project experience to take on the duties of the principal designer under CDM & the Building Regulations. You should state all specifics of the project; the building typology, the work stages appointed under scope.	Written evidence must include the methods used to assess competence and capability for each project for which you are appointed either directly or within an organisation. As part of understanding your limits of competence, provide a development plan for areas or typologies of projects, that you have identified a need to develop and provide the plan in place to support your way to competence.	x

B2	Demonstrate the integrity to identify and report design work (for building work) that cannot conform to relevant requirements.	n/a	Not applicable (see right).	EITHER use a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions OR if you have not had occasion to decline design work, the applicant's approach to refuse an appointment.	x
B3	Demonstrate the integrity to voluntarily report safety occurrences where design work (for building work) cannot conform to applicable requirements.	n/a	Ensure the candidate's CV highlights the skills to meet this competence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
B4	Evaluate how to cooperate with all dutyholders in a way that achieves design work compliance, including by: a) assisting clients to provide information to dutyholders; and b) liaising with principal contractors to share relevant information, and having regard for the principal contractor's comments in relation to compliance.	n/a	Ensure the applicant's CV highlights the skills to meet this competence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
B5	Apply interpersonal communication skills to: a) encourage designers to perform their own duties, including to cooperate with other dutyholders; b) challenge designers to rework designs if design work shows either, or both: - insufficient evidence of compliance - insufficient design compliance c) challenge the principal contractor's comments if they compromise design work compliance.		Ensure the applicant's CV highlights the skills to meet this competence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
Legislative and regulatory framework competences		Test	CV Evidence	Case Study Evidence	Interview
L1	Applies the legislative and regulatory framework related to how designers and design work meet legal requirements (attention is drawn to the following legislation and regulations): a) Building Act 1984; b) Building Regulations 2010; c) Building Safety Act 2022; d) Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015).	n/a	Ensure the candidate's CV highlights the legislative frameworks they have worked with.	Domestic category applicants will need to evidence this within a case study. Other categories will be assessed via the Stage 3 interview.	x

L2	Apply understanding of the duties and behaviours required of Principal Designers.	x	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Domestic category applicants will need to evidence this within a case study. Other category applicants will be assessed via the stage 3 interview.	x
L3	Apply understanding of the purpose, structure and scope of the legislative and regulatory framework to appraising and challenging evidence of design work compliance.	x	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
L4	Understand how to find and apply information in the legislative and regulatory framework governing: a) how design work, including HRB design work (where relevant to your application), if built, is expected to comply with relevant and/ or applicable requirements (as applies generally and to HRBs respectively); and b) how Principal Designers and other dutyholders are expected to perform their duties, follow prescribed procedures, and comply with legislation, including when working on HRB design work.	x	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
L5	Analyse their understanding of the legislative and regulatory framework related to designing HRBs, including in relation to pre-scribed procedures and information.	x	Ensure the applicant's CV highlights their experience in respect of HRBs.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
L6	Evaluate duties of other BSA dutyholders in the context of HRB projects for the ways they could affect the BSA Principal Designer's duties and design work compliance by the designers.	x	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
Management competences		Test	CV Evidence	Case Study Evidence	Interview
M1	Evaluate and apply general principles of management to plan design work compliance, and to manage, monitor, and coordinate designers and design work in relation to compliance during the design phase. a) set the plan for achieving design work compliance b) control changes to the plan and monitor risks to design work c) co-ordinate designers' work related to achieving the plan d) liaise with the principal contractors about design work e) monitor progress against the plan through to the end of the design phase	n/a	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x

M2	Demonstrate understanding of how clients' project briefs, key performance indicators, programmes, designers' competence requirements, and, if relevant, their own organisational capability can affect design work compliance;	n/a	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
M3	Demonstrate understanding of how the scope of relevant insurances, the limitations of relevant warranties, the terms and conditions of appointments, and the allocation of risk in appointments and contracts can impact on design work compliance; Management competence;	n/a	Ensure the applicant's CV highlights their skills in respect of insurance provisions, warranties, appointment reviews and negotiation and contract management.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
M4	Create strategies for managing design work compliance;	n/a	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
M5	Apply understanding of how to manage the recording, maintenance and approval of evidence of design work compliance;	x	Where the applicant leads or supports the documenting of organisational processes and procedures this could be included within the CV.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
M6	Understand the effect of designers' duties and, in the context of a specific project, their contracted responsibilities;	n/a	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
M7	Analyse ways to identify and manage gaps in designers' competences, capabilities, or capacities sufficient to coordinate design work compliance;	n/a	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Refer to Behaviours (1)(2).	x
M8	Analyse how to monitor identified risks to compliance and control changes affecting design work compliance;	n/a	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
M9	Evaluate how to manage the process for achieving consensus from designers that coordinated design work is compliant.	n/a	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
M10	Evaluate and apply information management systems sufficient to carry out the Principal Designer duties.	n/a	Ensure the applicant's CV highlights their experience in respect of the RIBA Work Stages.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
M11	Evaluate the system of regulated procedures and information related to working on HRBs and their implications for the performance of the BSA Principal Designer's duties, including contributing to the golden thread of information, reporting safety occurrences to the Building Safety Regulator, and making competence and compliance declarations.	x	Ensure the applicant's CV highlights their experience in respect of HRBs.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x

M12	Evaluate ways to establish and maintain throughout the construction phase a system for inspecting HRB design work for safety occurrences and promptly reporting safety occurrences.	x	Ensure the applicant's CV highlights their experience in respect of HRBs.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
M13	Create ways to instruct BSA reporting persons about the system for mandatory safety occurrence reporting related to working on HRBs.	n/a	Ensure the applicant's CV highlights their experience in respect of HRBs.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
Technical framework competences		Test	CV Evidence	Case Study Evidence	Interview
T1	<p>Principal Designers shall be able to understand general principles of building design, general principles of construction, and the "core criteria for building safety" set out in BSI Flex 8670 sufficient to:</p> <p>a) appraise designers' evidence of design work compliance; b) manage the process for designers to achieve consensus that coordinated design work complies with relevant requirements; c) appraise Principal Contractors' comments affecting design work compliance.</p> <p>NOTE: The "core criteria for building safety" in BSI Flex 8670 are set out under the following headings:</p> <p>a) fire safety, structural safety, and public safety; b) managing building safety; c) knowledge management and communication; and d) buildings as systems, building systems, and construction products and materials.</p>	x	<p>Refer to Legislative and Regulatory Framework (1).</p> <p>Skills under (a)(b)(c) are evidenced above.</p>	<p>Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.</p> <p>REMEMBER: It is unlikely that any BSA Principal Designer could know all regulatory requirements in depth, but they should know enough about the overall system of such guidance and standards to be able to look up relevant information or to consult a specialist.</p>	x
T2	<p>Understand the purpose, structure and scope of technical guidance, and standards governing building design and construction compliance.</p> <p>NOTE: The large number and complexity of technical guides, codes of practice, and standards makes it unlikely that any Principal Designer could know their content in depth. However, Principal Designers should know enough about the overall system of such guidance and standards to be able to look up relevant information or to consult a specialist</p>	x	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	x

T3	Understand how to find and apply information in technical guidance, and standards sufficient to: a) appraise and challenge designers' evidence of design work compliance; b) manage design work compliance when different packages of design work are coordinated and when design work is coordinated with building work; c) contribute to identifying risks to compliance .	x	Finding and applying technical guidance must be covered in the case study detail, to evidence (a), (b) and (c).	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions.	x
T4	Evaluate the potential impact of identified risks on design work compliance.	n/a	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions (as also evidenced under Management).	x
T5	Understand general principles of construction sufficient to appraise Principal Contractors' comments about compliance.	n/a	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions (as also evidenced under Behaviours).	x
T6	Understand information management systems sufficient to arrange for the establishment and maintenance of ways to: a) record strategies for achieving design work compliance; b) manage the strategies; c) control changes affecting design work compliance. NOTE: <i>In controlling changes, Principal Designers should pay attention to all considerations, including the effect of changes on interdependent design features or strategies, and systems of quality assurance for works, services, products and materials, and their limitations.</i>	x	Not applicable, covered by other evidence.	Include a case study to identify applicant's relevant actions (as also evidenced under Management).	x

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