

## RIBA Chartered Practice

Accreditation Criteria and Standards

Standards and Enforcement Procedures

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Updated October 2019

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## Accreditation Criteria and Standards

In order to qualify as an RIBA Chartered Practice, the practice as a whole in any one country, or a definable architectural practice business unit within a multi-functional organisation, which wishes to register must pay the annual subscription fee and declare its compliance with the following criteria. In order to retain the accreditation and benefits of an RIBA Chartered Practice these criteria and standards must be continuously maintained. Explanatory notes for each of these criteria are provided on subsequent pages.

1. The practice is a **full-time architects' business, or, a definable architectural practice business unit within a multi-functional organisation**, with responsibility to ensure all practice information submitted to the RIBA is up to date and accurate.
2. At least **one of the full-time principals** (Director or Partner) in the architects' practice must be a **Chartered Member** of the RIBA.
3. **All architectural work** must be under the personal supervision of an **RIBA Chartered Architect** and arrangements in place to ensure work is covered in the event of their absence.
4. RIBA Chartered Practices must meet a quality assurance standard of staff bound by a relevant code of conduct. This is based on a **minimum of 1:8 staff** being **Chartered Members of the RIBA**
5. The **practice and all employees** must **conduct themselves** in accordance with the **Code of Practice for Chartered Practices**.
6. The practice must **operate a management system** to ensure that **architects** in this office adhere to the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct and **comply with Continuing Professional Development obligations**.
7. The practice must hold **Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII)** cover appropriate for the work undertaken by the practice, or an equivalent form of insurance if operating outside of the UK.
8. The practice must operate a **Quality Management System**, relevant to the size of practice.
9. The practice must ensure that an appropriate **Health & Safety Policy** is in place and operational.
10. The practice must ensure that an appropriate **Environmental Management Policy** is in place and operational.
11. The practice must operate an **Employment Policy** which addresses the requirements of the **RIBA Chartered Practice Employment Policy Guide**.
12. The practice must ensure that an appropriate **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy** is in place and operational.

13. **The practice, if a business registered and located in the UK, is required to make a return of the annual RIBA Business Benchmarking Survey.**

To become a RIBA Chartered Practice, a practice must:

- demonstrate compliance with the criteria 1 – 13 above;
- complete and return annually the **RIBA Chartered Practice declaration** of compliance signed by a RIBA Chartered Architect principal (Director or Partner) of the practice, and
- pay the annual subscription fee.

NB. The RIBA Chartered Architect principal of the practice (Director or Partner) who signs the **RIBA Chartered Practice declaration** on behalf of the practice holds the prime responsibility for meeting the criteria, and accepts that should the architects' office cease to meet all of the above criteria that the office will be removed from the RIBA Register of Chartered Practices and that no refund will be due.

### Explanatory notes

#### **Application / Accreditation and annual subscription**

The accreditation period for all RIBA Chartered Practices is over a calendar period of 1 January to 31 December.

Practices with more than one office in any one country should submit staff headcount, member data and declaration of compliance for the business as a whole. The annual subscription for inclusion in the register of RIBA Chartered Practices depends upon the total number of all employees and therefore band.

When calculating the Chartered Practice band: full-time staff = 1 person, part-time = 0.5, with totals rounded up to the nearest whole number (e.g. 5.5 staff = band 3. See Staff ratios – summary table on page 5 below).

A separate and definable architectural practice business unit within a multi-functional organisation (for example an architects' department in a local authority or an architectural services unit in a multi-disciplinary practice) may apply for RIBA Chartered Practice accreditation, where at least one of the executive managers or Directors responsible for the management of the business unit are a Chartered Member of the RIBA. Please contact RIBA Membership Development on +44 (0)207 307 3686 email: [membership.development@riba.org](mailto:membership.development@riba.org) to discuss compliance under these terms.

**Staff** include directors, partners, professional, technical and administrative staff and students **directly employed by** the practice on a full-time (i.e. working at the practice for more than 25 hours per week) and part-time (i.e. between 5 and 25 hours per week) basis.

Staff does **not** include any sub-contracted staff such as consultants or, temporary staff employed through agencies

### **RIBA Chartered Practice declaration**

The Director or Partner who signs the RIBA Chartered Practice declaration must be an RIBA Chartered Architect employed by the practice on a permanent full-time basis.

### **Compliance and Monitoring**

The RIBA will monitor compliance when processing the annual application form. An audit of 5% of all RIBA Chartered Practices against some or all the accreditation criteria will be held during the course of the subscription period.

Details of any changes affecting compliance with the current criteria must immediately be reported in writing to the RIBA Director of Membership. The RIBA Chartered Practice will be given 20 working days to provide satisfactory evidence that full compliance has been restored. Failure to provide such evidence could result in the RIBA Chartered Practice forfeiting its membership of the scheme (see section entitled 'Monitoring for Compliance' for details).

### **Staff ratios (Criteria 4)**

In accordance with **criterion 4**, the following information must be supplied:

- **Names and RIBA Membership numbers** of all RIBA Chartered Architects in the architect's practice.
- **Number of all staff employed** in the architect's practice.

The following information should be supplied to assist with the administration of the application or renewal:

- **Names and RIBA Membership numbers** of all RIBA Associate Members and RIBA Affiliate Members in the architect's practice.
- **Names and registration numbers** of all Registered Architects in the architect's practice.

Staff ratios and Bands – summary table

Bands	Total no of staff	Minimum number of
		RIBA Chartered Members
Band 1	1	1
Band 2	2-5	1
Band 3	6-8	1
Band 4	9-10	2
	11-16	2
	17-24	3
	25	4
Band 5	26-30	4
	31-32	4
	33-40	5
	41-48	6
	49-50	7
Band 6	51-56	7
	57-60	8
	61-64	8
	65-70	9
	71-72	9
	73-80	10
	81-88	11
	89-90	12
	91-96	12
	97-100	13
	101-104	13
	105-110	14
	111-112	14
	113-120	15
	121-128	16
	129-130	17
	131-136	17
	137-140	18
	141-144	18
	145-150	19
	150+	1 in 8

## **Code of Practice for Chartered Practices (Criterion 5)**

As part of their membership undertaking, Chartered Practices are bound by the RIBA Code of Practice for Chartered Practices.

The Code sets out and explains the standards of professional conduct and practice that the RIBA requires of RIBA Chartered Practices.

This Code comprises:

- three principles of professional conduct and practice (Honesty/Integrity, Competence, and Relationships)
- professional values that support those principles

The Code of Practice has recently been [reviewed and overhauled](#). The new Code is effective from 1 May 2019. For facts and issues which pre-date this document, please see the previous Code which was effective from January 2017 until 1 May 2019.

The Disciplinary Procedures have also been amended and updated and are effective from 8 April 2019.

The code and other associated documents can be downloaded from the RIBA website at: <https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/code-of-practice-for-chartered-practices#available-resources>

## **Staff training and CPD (Criterion 6)**

It is a requirement for RIBA Chartered Practices to provide the opportunity for all staff members (not just RIBA Chartered Members) to undertake CPD.

RIBA Chartered Members are required to do at least 35 hours of CPD each year, with 20 of those hours coming from the RIBA's prescribed CPD Core Curriculum for CPD. This means we expect at least two hours for each of the ten topics. Our view of what counts as CPD, however, is very liberal, and encompasses scores of possible activities, structured and informal.

Most people get all their 35 required hours from the RIBA CPD Core Curriculum, and in fact, many people exceed the requirement. The remainder of the required 35 hours, if there are any left, can come from other subjects relevant to their own CPD needs.

CPD can be provided by a mixture of:

- Structured CPD (structured CPD is learning in which an external course leader; teacher or tutor has provided learning aims and outcomes. This can be face-to-face, distance or online).
- Informal CPD (informal activities are normally self-directed and are often free.)

For further information and guidance on meeting CPD requirements please visit: [www.architecture.com/RIBA/CPD](http://www.architecture.com/RIBA/CPD)

## Professional Indemnity Insurance (Criterion 7)

Appropriate Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) cover is required for every practice applying to become a RIBA Chartered Practice, in accordance with the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct guidelines. For UK based practices the insurance cover must also comply with the Architects Registration Board's (ARB) guidelines for PII.

Practices operating outside of the UK are required to have an equivalent form of insurance policy in place.

Practices must have at least one month's cover to run under their current PII policy when applying to join and at point of renewal of the RIBA Chartered Practice Scheme. Details of the PII policy provider, policy number, level of cover and policy renewal date must be supplied on the application form.

Information about PII minimum requirements, including limit of indemnity and run-off cover, are also available from the ARB website at <http://www.arb.org.uk/professional-indemnity-insurance>

The RIBA Insurance Agency has developed PII policies specifically to meet the different insurance requirements of architectural practices of all sizes. For further details please call +44 (0)20 7234 4025 or visit [www.architectspi.com](http://www.architectspi.com).

## Quality Management System (Criterion 8)

RIBA Chartered Practices must confirm that an appropriate formalised Quality Management System (QMS) is in place and properly utilised. All quality management systems must provide for the establishment of a clear design leadership structure for each project, ensuring that the design work is the ultimate responsibility of an RIBA Chartered Architect.

Quality Management System requirements for different-sized practices:

- **Small practices** (up to 10 staff) are required to prepare a Project Quality Plan (PQP) for each project. RIBA Chartered Practice contacts can access a PQP within the RIBA Chartered Practice Quality Management System via the [RIBA Chartered Practice Toolbox](#). If a practice considers it appropriate, it may develop a QMS adopting a wider range of documentation and procedures to suit its individual needs.
- **Medium practices** (11 to 50 staff) are required to operate a Quality Management System that covers all project and practice procedures. This may be achieved by using the RIBA Chartered Practice Quality Management System in full which is freely available via the [RIBA Chartered Practice Toolbox](#) – Chartered Practice contacts can access this via their member log in and password.
- **Large practices** (51+ staff) are required to adopt an externally certified ISO 9001:2015 **Quality Management System** or be working towards having one.

This could be based on a system developed from the RIBA Chartered Practice Quality Management System or another system

The RIBA Chartered Practice Quality Management System has been developed to follow the International Standard ISO 9001:2015. Using this system does not guarantee certification but may help towards it.

### **Health and Safety Policy (Criterion 9)**

RIBA Chartered Practices must set out their health and safety policy in writing and apply it to all employees in both the workplace and on-site visits. The policy should set out how the practice manages health and safety and should identify who does what, when and how. RIBA Chartered Practices must also operate health and safety risk management in their project work.

For practices with over 5 staff, a person must be nominated and qualified to be responsible for health and safety matters, the maintenance of the health and safety policy and its communication to all staff. Provision must be made within the practice for adequate health and safety training for all staff. This could include attendance on courses which provide CSCS cards enabling access to construction sites.

The RIBA provides a generic Health and Safety Policy Template for guidance, based on the general needs of a typical architects' practice.

The RIBA Health and Safety Policy Template is available as part of the [RIBA Chartered Practice Toolbox](#).

Access to advice on health and safety is available to RIBA Chartered Practices through a [comprehensive online and telephone consultancy service](#) offered by Croner.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publishes guidance on health and safety in the business context at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/business/getting-started.htm>. A leaflet entitled, 'An introduction to health and safety', which provides a model Health and Safety policy statement, and a template that can be used to record the significant risk assessment findings can be downloaded from this site. The HSE Infoline on 0845 345 0055 also provides access to health and safety information, expert advice and guidance.

### **Environmental Management Policy (Criterion 10)**

RIBA Chartered Practices are required to have a formalised written Environmental Management policy in place. The RIBA Environmental Management Policy Guide is available as part of the [RIBA Chartered Practice Toolbox](#).

### **Employment Policy (Criterion 11)**

RIBA Chartered Practices are required to have a formal written employment policy in place. This criterion is applicable for all practices that employ staff.



A policy must cover the requirements within the recently updated RIBA Chartered Practice Employment Policy Guide, available as part of the [RIBA Chartered Practice Toolbox](#).

In the UK all employees have statutory rights: the RIBA Chartered Practice Employment Policy Guide is based on these rights, and contains a checklist to ensure your practice meets the policy requirements. Under UK legislation there are further requirements for employers which can be found online at [www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people](http://www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people).

The RIBA requires Chartered Practices based outside the UK to follow the same employment policy as UK Chartered Practices, however, where national legislation conflicts with this policy, you should follow your national legislation.

### **The Living Wage Employment Policy**

The RIBA's dual remit is to "champion better buildings, communities and the environment through architecture and our members" as well as to provide "standards, training, support and recognition" for those members. This includes representing and protecting the interests of its members, the first membership level being for students of architecture. Following a review of student earnings in 2012 the RIBA made paying The Living Wage to students working towards PEDR a requirement of Chartered Practice accreditation.

To ensure that all members of staff working for an RIBA Chartered Practice earn a wage that meets the costs of living, not just the government minimum wage, the RIBA has changed its Chartered Practice employment policy requirements.

**From 1 January 2018**, RIBA Chartered Practices operating in the UK are required to pay at least the Real Living Wage, as defined by the [Living Wage Foundation](#), to all staff, including freelance staff and students. The requirement will mean that the lowest paid staff in Chartered Practices, not just architectural staff, will receive a salary that at the very least meets the average cost of living as defined by independent research.

The updated RIBA Chartered Practice Employment Policy Guide includes a checklist of all requirements. This document can be downloaded from the [Chartered Practice Toolbox](#), please log in with your Chartered Practice details or request the Toolbox from RIBA [Membership Services](#).

The Real Living wage is set by the Living Wage Foundation and has 2 rates: UK and London. For more information please visit the Living Wage Foundation website: [www.livingwage.org.uk](http://www.livingwage.org.uk)

In April 2016 the government introduced a higher minimum wage rate for all staff over 25 years of age inspired by the Living Wage campaign - even calling it the 'national living wage'. However, the government's 'national living wage' is not calculated according to what employees and their families need to live. This 'national living wage' is listed on the Living Wage Foundation's website but only to show the difference between it and the Real Living Wage.

Chartered Practices that do not pay all staff at least the Real Living Wage are required to notify the RIBA immediately by emailing [Membership Services](#).

### **Equality Diversity and Inclusion (Criterion 13)**

RIBA Chartered Practices are required to operate an appropriate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. To support and guide you in achieving these standards, the RIBA has developed a Chartered Practice Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Guide – this document can be downloaded from the [Chartered Practice Toolbox](#).

### **Employment and Human Resources helpline**

Access to advice on employment and HR areas such as payroll and employment legislation is available to all RIBA Chartered Practices through a comprehensive online and telephone consultancy service offered by Croner.

### **Business Benchmarking Survey (Criterion 14)**

The RIBA Business Benchmarking survey is now an established feature of the RIBA Chartered Practice accreditation scheme, providing invaluable insights into the business performance of your practice. The timing aligns with the usual end of the financial accounting year.

## **Standards and Enforcement Procedures**

- 1. Maintaining Standards for the RIBA Chartered Practice register**
  - 1.1 It is essential to maintain the value of RIBA Chartered Practice status as a quality mark of architectural practice both for clients and for architects. Practices that fail to meet the required accreditation criteria and standards cannot become or remain an RIBA Chartered Practice. The forfeiture of RIBA Chartered Practice status will be administered by the RIBA Membership Department and a members' RIBA Chartered Practice Panel (see sections 5- 10). This will be separate from the disciplinary procedure for professional misconduct.
- 2. Becoming an RIBA Chartered Practice**
  - 2.1 All practices will have to meet the agreed accreditation criteria for an RIBA Chartered Practice before being entered on the RIBA Chartered Practice register. Only currently registered RIBA Chartered Practices will be able to describe and promote themselves as an RIBA Chartered Practice and enjoy the benefits of the RIBA Chartered Practice scheme for the licensed year of registration. Applications will be checked by the RIBA Membership Services team and any queries or disputes will be decided by the RIBA Director of Membership.
- 3. Annual Renewal as an RIBA Chartered Practice**
  - 3.1 All RIBA Chartered Practices will have to re-apply annually to continue in the RIBA Chartered Practice scheme. Practices will not be eligible to continue as a RIBA Chartered Practice if they:
    - a) have ceased to meet the current accreditation criteria, or
    - b) make a false or incorrect statement on the application form (see below),

3.2 If an RIBA Chartered Practice applying for annual renewal is the subject of a complaint (see section 8), re-registration may be deferred until the complaint has been resolved.

3.3 If a principal of an RIBA Chartered Practice applying for annual renewal is the subject of a professional misconduct complaint currently being investigated under RIBA Professional Conduct Procedures, the RIBA Head of Professional Standards may advise the RIBA Director of Membership that re-registration should be suspended until the disciplinary procedures have been concluded (see section below on suspensions and temporary withdrawals). If the Professional Conduct Hearings Panel imposes a sanction on the principal, it may also recommend to the RIBA Director of Membership that the practice's registration as an RIBA Chartered Practice is forfeited in the applied-for registration year.

#### **4. False Applications**

4.1 Untruthful statements or declarations regarding compliance with the RIBA Chartered Practice criteria may be treated as a breach of the Code of Professional Conduct (Principle 1 – integrity) and the RIBA Director of Membership may refer the signatory/ies of an untruthful declaration to the RIBA Head of Professional Standards for investigation under the RIBA Professional Conduct Procedures.

#### **5. Changes in Circumstances – consequences of ceasing to meet the criteria**

5.1 If the circumstances of an RIBA Chartered Practice change during the course of the registration year to the extent that the practice ceases to be compliant with the accreditation criteria, the practice must immediately report the change to the RIBA Director of Membership. The practice must explain what steps are being taken to re-establish compliance, or declare that compliance will no longer be possible.

5.2 Where compliance is no longer possible, the practice must resign from the scheme.

5.3 If compliance can be re-established within three months the RIBA Director of Membership may:

- a) at his or her discretion, permit the practice to continue in the scheme until compliance is re-established by an agreed date, or
- b) suspend the practice from the scheme until it again meets the accreditation criteria.

5.4 If a practice, after re-establishing compliance within the accreditation criteria subsequently ceases to be compliant within the course of the following registration year, the practice will be suspended from the scheme for a period of one full registration year.

5.5 If a suspended practice is unable to re-establish compliance within three months, the practice will forfeit membership of the RIBA Chartered Practice Scheme.

#### **6. Temporary Loss of Scheme Entitlements**

6.1 A practice which is suspended from the RIBA Chartered Practice Scheme will

lose its rights to the Scheme's benefits (including the title 'RIBA Chartered Practice', and the bespoke site signboard) for the duration of the exclusion. All Scheme benefits may be resumed when RIBA Chartered Practice status is restored. If a practice is found to have persisted with its use of the bespoke site signboard and the RIBA Chartered Practice title and crest (or has used any other scheme benefits) during a period of exclusion, the RIBA Director of Membership may refer that practice's principal(s) to the RIBA Head of Professional Standards for investigation under the RIBA Professional Conduct Procedures.

## **7. Monitoring for Compliance**

7.1 The RIBA Membership Services team will monitor all practices' compliance with the current accreditation criteria when processing the annual application form and by checking a random sample (approximately 5%) of RIBA Chartered Practices during the course of the registration year.

7.2 Any RIBA Chartered Practice found not to be fully compliant with the current accreditation criteria will be:

- a) informed in writing by the RIBA Director of Membership of the details of the non-compliance and given appropriate notice (20 working days) to provide satisfactory evidence that full compliance has been restored, and
- b) asked to explain why the practice failed to notify the RIBA Director of Membership of its change in circumstances.

7.3 If, by the given deadline, the practice has failed to submit satisfactory evidence that it has already re-established compliance, or will shortly be able to, it will forfeit its membership of the RIBA Chartered Practice Scheme. Where the practice is able to provide an acceptable assurance regarding the future re-establishment of compliance, the provisions in sections 5 and 6 above will apply.

## **8. Complaints about RIBA Chartered Practices**

8.1 Any complaint against an RIBA Chartered Practice should be referred in writing to the [RIBA Professional Standards team](#).

8.2 As per the RIBA Chartered Practice Employment Policy Guide, all staff employed by RIBA Chartered Practices must have 'the right not to suffer detriment or dismissal for 'blowing the whistle' on a matter of public concern (malpractice) at the workplace, or on any requirements of RIBA Chartered Practices.'

8.3 The RIBA encourages staff to report their practice to the RIBA if they believe any RIBA Chartered Practice requirements are not being followed or to the appropriate authorities for any matters of public concern.

## **9. Appeals**

9.1 A practice will have the right to appeal to the RIBA Chartered Practice Panel against a decision to reject an.

## **10. RIBA Chartered Practice Panel**

10.1 The RIBA Chartered Practice Panel shall consider appeals against decisions to reject or discontinue RIBA Chartered Practice status.

The panel shall comprise:

- RIBA Vice-President Membership (Chair)
- RIBA Vice-President Practice
- non-executive, non-architect Directors of a RIBA Board
- 1 RIBA Council Member of either Nations and Regions Committee or Practice Committee.

10.2 The panel shall be nominated by the RIBA Nominations Committee and elected by Council. The decisions of the RIBA Chartered Practice Panel are final. There will only be a right of appeal to the RIBA Council against a breach of procedures of the RIBA Chartered Practice Panel.

## **11. Misrepresentation of an RIBA Chartered Practice**

11.1 Any practice which relinquishes or forfeits its RIBA Chartered Practice status must immediately cease to describe or promote itself as an RIBA Chartered Practice from the notified date of forfeiture. This will include the removal of any RIBA Chartered Practice insignia or registration number from all practice promotional materials, letterheads, web-sites, signboards etc. Any ineligible practice which uses RIBA Chartered Practice insignia or purports to be an RIBA Chartered Practice shall be liable for prosecution for misrepresentation and the Directors or Partners of the offending practice who are RIBA members may be in breach of the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct and disciplinary procedures may be taken against them.

11.2 A copy of the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct is included as an can be downloaded from the RIBA website at <https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/code-of-professional-conduct>

## **12. RIBA Chartered Practice Directories**

12.1 The RIBA will publish paper and electronic annual directories of RIBA Chartered Practices. There will be a prominent disclaimer in all of these directories advising that RIBA Chartered Practices appearing in the directory were valid and compliant at the time of publication and only for the annual period of the directory. The online web-based directory <https://find-an-architect.architecture.com/FAAHome.aspx> will be kept up- to-date with new joiners added immediately. It is the responsibility of all practitioners to keep their practice entry and project profiles as current as possible. In all paper directories, readers will be invited to check the updated records of the online directory.

## **13. Publication, review and update of quality control, accreditation and complaint procedures for RIBA Chartered Practices**

13.1 The RIBA will annually review the accreditation criteria and the quality control, complaint and forfeiture procedures for the RIBA Chartered Practice Register, and these will made available in the RIBA Chartered Practice manual at the start of each annual registration period.

## Contacts

For further information about the scheme, current RIBA Chartered Practices should contact:

### **RIBA Membership Services**

Tel: +44 (0)20 7307 3800

Email: [membership.services@riba.org](mailto:membership.services@riba.org)

(Please quote your practice registration or RIBA Membership number)

### **RIBA Information Centre**

Tel: +44 (0)20 7307 3600

Email: [info@riba.org](mailto:info@riba.org)

(Please quote your practice registration or RIBA Membership number)

For information about applying to become an RIBA Chartered Practice, please contact:

### **RIBA Membership Development**

Tel: +44 (0)20 7307 3686

Email: [membership.development@riba.org](mailto:membership.development@riba.org)