

## PME Webinars 2022

### Preparatory Notes for Session 4:

#### The Professional Interview & Support from the Institute

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### 1. Introduction

- a. The Professional Interview is the final element of the PME assessment process. Following the review of your written submission (including your Career Profile, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Work Record, Critical Analysis and Completed Professionalism Module), your Assessors may decide either to invite you to attend a Professional Interview or to refer your submission if they feel that it does not sufficiently meet the brief to warrant an invitation to Interview.
- b. Being invited to interview does not necessarily mean that your submission was judged as 'acceptable,' but simply that the Assessors have not identified any concerns within it that could not be addressed, rectified, or substantiated at the Interview.
- c. Applicants will be informed in writing (by post) of the outcome of their written submission in early October. Applicants who are being invited to Interview will be informed of the date and time of their interview at this point.
- d. The Professional Interviews are held in person in Edinburgh in early/mid-November and cannot be rearranged for another time unless in exceptional circumstances.
- e. The interview should last for approximately 45 minutes.
- f. Failure to attend will be treated as a failed application.

### 2. The Purpose of the Professional Interview

- a. The purpose of the interview is to allow applicants to:
  - correct or justify weak points in the PME submission

- elaborate and develop on the PME submission
  - demonstrate a wider professional competence and awareness
- b. Much of the questioning will be based on the Assessors' comments on your written work. In general, this will focus particularly, but not solely, on your Critical Analysis.
  - c. The questioning will be designed to provide you with the opportunity to explain, develop and expand upon your written submission and to demonstrate your wider professionalism as well as an understanding of the Institute's Code of Conduct.
  - d. The interviewers will seek to establish that you have a wide knowledge around your subject and that you are being proactive in developing yourself as a professional.
  - e. You will not be asked questions outside of your claimed areas of competency and there are no 'trick' questions.

### 3. The Selection of Assessors

- a. Members of the Examinations Board will appoint an interview panel of two Chartered Members, chosen where possible to reflect your areas of competence. Normally at least one of these interviewers will have been an Assessor of your PME submission.
- b. In most cases, the Interviewing assessors will be the same assessors that reviewed your written submission. If one (or both) cannot make it, the Exam Board will appoint a replacement assessor(s) with enough notice so they can review your submission and the notes provided by the original assessors and discuss your submission with the other assessor before the interview.
- c. **Moderation** - A Moderator will attend for part of most interviews but will not participate in the questioning. The Moderator's role is to ensure uniformity of assessment standards and, where requested, to provide advice to the interviewers over matters of procedure and interpretation.

### 4. What to Expect & How to Prepare

- a. This is a formal interview – the final hurdle to overcome to achieve chartered status. The Interview will be rigorous to ensure the ongoing integrity of the assessment process from start to finish. However, the assessors will do their best to put you at ease. The questions will be fair and there will be no attempt to trick you.
- b. The questions will be based on the assessors' comments on your written submission and will be designed to
  - Query points of factual accuracy
  - Seek clarification on confusing issues
  - Ask for further development of the logic
  - Explore your conclusions
- c. The Interview provides an opportunity to explain what you set out to do when embarking on PME and any difficulties or limitations you faced.

- d. The Institute understands that different employers will treat the PME process and their staff's professional development differently. Some employers have well-structured graduate programmes, others provide varying degrees of "on the job learning." All of this can be explored during your Interview.
- e. While every attempt is made to maintain a fixed standard of professional competence, the assessors realise that differing circumstances of employment or background will impact in various ways on the work an applicant can submit. The interview provides you with the chance to discuss these issues.
- f. The interviewers will also seek to establish that you have a wide knowledge of your subject and that you are being proactive in developing yourself as a professional.
- g. Expect questions on
  - Topical issues in your area of interest
  - What is meant by "professional"
  - The role of the Institute?
  - the Institute's Code of Conduct:

1. *Act with integrity - Always put the interests of your clients or others to whom you have a professional responsibility above your own and respect their confidentiality*
2. *Always provide a high standard of service*
3. *Treat others with respect*
4. *Take responsibility – Be accountable for all your actions*
5. *Act in a way that promotes trust in the profession*
6. *Have regard for sustainability throughout your work*

- h. Expect questions on how the Code of Conduct applies to your day-to-day work activities and your role as a professional. The code should be considered central to your professional life, as a source of ethical guidance, and as a guide to principles of good practice. What is professionalism? It is fair to say that it is the clear and consistent demonstration of the standards outlined here.
- i. **Health & Safety** - All professionals must have a solid awareness of how Health & Safety concerns apply to their jobs, so all applicants should expect to be questioned on Health & Safety in the context of their claimed Competency Areas. Where a Health & Safety competency is found within an area you claim in your Work Record, you are strongly advised to record hours against it and to consider how you might discuss this at the Interview. **However, at all times, the assessors will be careful to keep within your claimed area of competence.**
- j. If your job involves the operational management or supervision of any kind of tree work or related activity, you **must** have a solid awareness of Health & Safety legislation, even if it is only the "Management of Health & Safety at Work" legislation. If appropriate, make sure you are familiar with the work of FISA, and the best practice set out in their suite of Technical Guides. You also need to be sure that

you fully understand your specific roles and responsibilities as set out in the FISA document entitled “Managing Health & Safety in Forestry.”

- k. You will be given an opportunity at the end of the Interview to ask any questions or clarify/redeem any earlier answers that you are dissatisfied with.

## 5. The Outcome & What Happens Next

- a. After your interview is over, the assessors (with input from the Moderator) will discuss your Interview and reach a consensus about their recommendation to Council (the Institute’s Governing Body), either that you should be promoted to Professional Membership and awarded chartered status or that you should be referred to try again later.
- b. If, in the opinion of the Assessors, an applicant has shown exceptional ability, the Examinations Board may recommend to Council that they award a distinction, **the Hugh Miller Award of Excellence**.
- c. The Institute’s Council will make the final decision on the Examination Board’s recommendations in their December meeting. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their Professional Interview by post by the middle of December and should contact Member Services if they have not received their letter by Wednesday 14 December 2022. Applicants who are referred will receive details of the reasons that informed this decision in their letter.

## 6. Appeals & Resubmission

- a. There are considerable annual variances in the outcomes of the PME assessments and there are layers of safeguards in place to ensure the PME process remains robust, consistent, and fair year upon year. There are no annual caps or quotas – in theory, we could have a 100% promotion or referral rate in any given year.
- b. The decision to refer an applicant is never an easy one for an assessor to make and is never taken lightly. This decision must be reached by consensus of both assessors before it is passed to the moderators for consideration. If you are referred, that decision has been reached and agreed on by four of your peers – both assessors and both moderators, who will discuss the assessors’ decision-making processes concerning your assessment to ensure that the grounds for the recommendation for referral are reasonable, solid, and fair.
- c. So, if you do receive a referral, there are undoubtedly shortcomings in the PME submission. Where possible, you will be advised to address any issues identified within your submission and/or interview and to resubmit at an appropriate time.
- d. Applicants are given 3 attempts to complete PME within the 10 years allotted to Associate membership (15 years for those who joined as Associate membership before 2017).
- e. Applicants who resubmit will be required to follow the PME timetable and to pay the full examination fees unless otherwise instructed by the Examinations Board.

- f. Applicants who are referred may appeal the decision if they believe they can demonstrate that one of the following conditions applies to their case:
- that the assessors have given insufficient weight to extenuating circumstances;
  - that their performance was adversely affected by extenuating circumstances which they, for good reason, were unable to make known to the assessors;
  - that there was, in their view, a material administrative error at a stage in the assessment process, or that some material irregularities occurred; or
  - that the assessment procedure was not conducted in accordance with the Institute's Regulations and Bylaws.
- g. Appeals must be lodged in writing with The Secretariat of the Institute of Chartered Foresters at 59 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2JG within six weeks of the referral date. Full details of the appeals process are outlined in the guidance notes.

## 7. Accommodation of Special Needs & Extenuation Circumstances

- a. If you have dyslexia, disabilities or any special needs that might have a bearing on your performance during any part of the PME process, you are strongly advised to inform the Institute of this in writing when you register for PME.
- b. The Institute reserves the right to request documentation supporting an applicant's case where it is deemed necessary and will seek to accommodate any legitimate special needs wherever and whenever this is possible. All such information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

## 8. Examination Fees & Schedule

- a. The Institute's Examinations run annually with strict deadlines for registration, submission, and payment of examination fees.
- b. **Failure to meet any of these deadlines results in the applicant being removed from that year's Examinations Register and such individuals will have to wait until the following year before they could complete their submission.**
- c. The 2022 Examination fee for PME is £450.00, payable in two instalments:
- £200 at registration by 5pm on 1 June
  - £250 at submission by 5pm on 1 August.

The fees are reviewed and set by the Examinations Board each year at the conclusion of each Examination Process.

- d. To register for PME, you must identify a suitable verifier, submit a completed [PME1 Registration Form](#), and pay the first instalment of the assessment fee by 1 June.
- e. You then have until 5pm on 1 August to complete your PME submission (Career Profile, CPD, Work Record, Critical Analysis and Professionalism Module) through the online portal within the Members' Area of the Institute and pay the second instalment of the examination fee.

- You must upload your Critical Analysis to the PME Portal as a Word Document or PDF (8MB maximum file size).
  - You must also get **two** signed hard copies of your Critical Analysis and **one** signed printout of your Career Profile, CPD and Work Record using the **PRINT PME** function in portal to the Institute's Head Office (59 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2JG). These must be received by no later than 5pm on 1<sup>st</sup> August.
- f. Submissions that arrive after the deadline of 5pm on 1 August will not be considered. Similarly, if you fail to pay the second instalment of your fees by 5pm on 1 August, your submission will not be considered. If you need to be invoiced for the fees, please contact Member Services with reasonable notice. [Payment receipts can be provided on request.](#)

## 9. Support from the Institute

- a. Member Services is the main point of contact for your membership, including PME support:
- [Dr Stuart Glen, Member Services Director](#)
  - [Ben Summers-McKay, Member Services Manager](#)
  - [Dawn Elliot, Member Services Administrator](#) (payments, invoices, and receipts)
- b. We are here to help you get the most from your membership and to support you as you prepare for PME. Throughout your PME process, we will keep in regular contact and will send you regular reminders about deadlines and support sessions.
- c. We can advise you on the structure and approach to your PME submission and assist you to interpret the guidance. However, as members of the secretariat, it would be inappropriate for us to advise you on the specific content of your submission, which you should discuss with your verifier and/or colleagues – ideally ones who have completed PME in recent memory.
- d. We will, however, do our best to support you through the process and answer your questions or pass them to the Examinations Board if necessary.