

# Experience is a key element in exam success

**E**xperience cannot be studied, it has to be lived. Demonstrating experience is not difficult – you just have to relate what you have done in the past. A person with fairly wide experience will not have any problem revealing their experience.

Two new experience exams, developed by the Appraisal Institute of Canada (AIC), have been in use for some months, and, so far, (many) the majority of Candidates have had no difficulty achieving passing marks. These exams contain no trick questions, but they require Candidates to have a reasonable breadth and depth of experience.

Breadth is the range of different assignment types to which a Candidate has been exposed. This does not mean that you must have experience in all types of property, but rather that your experience covers different types of situations, in which the reason for the assignment varies. For example, almost any type of property could prompt an assignment for which the motivating reason varied from an interest in the current market value as a test of reasonableness of a purchase offer, to questions of debt financing, litigation, dispute settlement, assessment and fairness of assessment, expropriation, and even income tax disputes. As a Candidate, you need to ensure that your mentor provides you with opportunities to gain exposure to and experience with a diverse breadth of experience. Candidates disadvantaged by a too-limited scope of work may fail the exam. Those who have gained experience doing assignments for a variety of reasons likely will find the exams straightforward.

Depth is exactly that: the degree to which a Candidate has undertaken an assignment. One key element in undertaking a task is to determine the level of research and analysis required to complete it. Candidates working for an assessment authority need to be efficient in completing work on large



numbers of properties. Any of these properties could see a challenge from a property owner, though, and, should that happen, the depth of research required likely will make the task of responding to an appeal much more complex. Private sector Candidates encounter similar scenarios in completing their assignments. Research and analysis, therefore, do not always entail pulling out all the stops to complete the assignment, but sometimes they do. As with breadth, Candidates likely will be successful if their mentors provide opportunities to complete a range of tasks. Some will be routine in terms of the degree of research necessary. However, to be better prepared, both for the exams and real life assignments, Candidates also need exposure to those more complex situations. Mentors thus have a responsibility to provide varied assignments, including some for which the research and analysis required take considerable time.

The first of the two exams is written, and sessions are held at a university exam centre up to six times a year. This exam features two sections. The long-answer questions, four from which you choose one to answer, are all real life examples, and a successful answer must demonstrate how you would complete this assignment. The short-answer questions relate to your actual experience: from several choices, you will answer three questions, adapting these to your own experience. In this respect, Candidates must ensure that they provide sufficient information for the marker to verify the authenticity of the experience related.

The oral exams differ in that they relate entirely to your *own* experience: all of the questions are designed so that every Candidate will be able to provide an answer. Listen to the questions. If you do not understand one, ask that it be repeated. Take your time, relax, and provide your best example relating your experience to the situation described in each question.

Luck is not an element of either exam, so I will not say good luck. Rather, everyone has the opportunity to pass these exams if their experience has prepared them. Success depends on your experience and on your ability to communicate your answer to the examiners. It also depends on your mentor. Make sure you discuss with them the types of experience you are having, and especially those areas of work where you may still require exposure. If you are concerned that your experience may not yet have sufficient breadth or depth, you may be right and your exam results may confirm this. 📌

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