

**HKIA / ARB Professional Assessment 2012**  
**Paper 1 - Statutory Controls in Building Works**  
**Examiners' Report**

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**STRUCTURE OF PAPER**

Paper 1 was an open-book examination comprising multiple-choice and short-essay questions.

The MC section had 40 multiple-choice questions. Each MC question carried 2 marks. The passing mark was set at 65%.

Candidates needed to answer 1 compulsory short-essay question and 2 out of 3 other short-essay questions. The compulsory question carried 30 marks and the other two questions each carried 15 marks. The passing mark was set at 50%.

Questions on all topics, as detailed in the syllabus of PA Handbook, included:

- (a) Buildings Ordinance
- (b) Submission of plans to the Building Authority
- (c) Other related Ordinances and Codes of Practice

The questions were set to test candidates' knowledge, skills and maturity to handle their day-to-day work as an Architect.

**ASSESSMENT OBSERVATIONS**

**FOR THE WHOLE PAPER**

329 candidates took Paper 1 and 124 candidates (37.69%) passed.

**FOR MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

210 candidates (63.83%) passed the part of MC questions.

**FOR SHORT-ESSAY QUESTIONS**

65 candidates (19.76%) passed the part of short-essay questions. Performance of candidates in each of the short-essay questions is evaluated below.

**Question 1 (Compulsory)**

85 candidates (25.84%) passed this question.

The front part of the question is a rather straight forward scenario to test candidates' knowledge on development intensity control integrated under Town Plan, Buildings Ordinance (site classification, building height with respect to plot ratio..... etc.) and lease restrictions.

However, majority of the candidates could not obtain a passing score on this part which reflected their poor understanding on the general principle of control and common knowledge on lands matter. The common mistakes were :-

- (1) General lack of understanding on lane requirements for domestic building (Building Planning Reg. 28(1)) in relationship to effective site area (Building Planning Reg.

23(2)(a) and APP73) inclusion into plot ratio calculation.

- (2) Wrong concept in interpretation of building height with respect to maximum permissible plot ratio. Many candidates read the building height of non-domestic and domestic portion separately such that the maximum non-domestic PR is 5 for a composite building over 61m which is fundamentally wrong.
- (3) Fail to correlate the height restriction imposed in the Town Plan and the mean street level of the lowest streets does affect the overall building height and thus the maximum plot ratio.
- (4) Fail to realize that two lots (A and B) cannot be combined if the abutting strip of land has been surrendered as public lane.

Apart, it was rather surprising to observe that quite a number of candidates even mixed up the lease modification with Town Planning Permission, SBD exemption with Hotel Concession or even absolute building height to height limit with reference to principle datum (mpd).

In conclusion, the question was poorly attempted in general. Only a handful few of candidates proved themselves acquired up to standard of the statutory knowledge and careful enough to read and interpret the question correctly.

### **Question 2**

247 candidates attempted this question and 26 (10.53%) passed.

This question requires the candidates to explain how development intensity, building height and building bulk are controlled under the two Ordinances and the Lease Conditions, and to discuss why they are separately controlled as well as the pros and cons of separate control.

In general, the candidates' performance in this question was unsatisfactory. Though most candidates were able to list some ways of control under the two Ordinances, only a few could mention the variations in restrictions for different leases. Further, only some candidates could explain how modifications and deviations from the provisions are handled. Regarding the reasons for separate control, only a few could point out that the three regimes had different objectives and discuss what those objectives were, and none could give the historical reason for separate control. Most candidates also failed to correctly identify the pros and cons of separate control.

There was also a general lack of adequate explanation and discussion that this type of question calls for.

### **Question 3**

212 candidates attempted this question and 112 (52.83%) passed.

The question is "Explain the development process for a re-development project starting from submission of demolition plans for the Building Authority's approval to the obtaining of an Occupation Permit. Use a flow chart to show the sequence of events and the likely critical path together with the relevant statutory time frames to illustrate your answer. Your

advice may be limited to matters under the Buildings Ordinance (BO) and allied regulations as your client will separately seek expert advice on planning and land matters.

The following are observed from the answer scripts :

- (1) The question requires the candidates to use a flow chart to demonstrate their understanding of the “re-development process” by presenting the “sequence of events”, the likely critical path” with “relevant time frames”. Apparently some candidates spent much time in creating the flow chart or critical path diagram without properly inputting the requisite contents to illustrate the re-development process.
- (2) The question mentions “from submission of demolition plans to the obtaining of an Occupation Permit”. Some answers have detailed subscriptions on the demolition process and OP application process only but not much contents regarding the sequence of events between demolition and OP.
- (3) Quite a number of answers still contain planning and land matters.
- (4) The question relates to a re-development project but description of A&A process appears in some of the answers.

It is believed that those candidates having actual working experience in the re-development process would have advantages in answering this question as knowledge of this nature may not be directly acquired from the books.

The main reasons of failing this question may be

- (1) inadequate time allowed for this question
- (2) answers without sufficient details to illustrate the candidates’ understanding of the re-development process.
- (3) contents of answer not corresponding to the question, implying those candidates do not really understand the question or did not spend time to understand the question before answering.

#### **Question 4**

172 candidates attempted this question and 57 (33.14%) passed.

This question consists of five parts, each carrying 2.5 marks. The topics are summarized below :

- (1) Definition of Unauthorized Building Works
- (2) Referring to an unauthorized roof structure,
  - (a) Statutory order
  - (b) Warning notice
  - (c) Advisory letter
  - (d) Pre-notice / Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme
  - (e) Water seepage causing nuisance to neighbours

Since very few of the candidates managed to discuss the topics in depths, satisfactory marks are awarded for answers covering the essential points, regardless of development of argument or citing of examples. This was particularly so with sub-question A, for which two marks were given straight away if the answer mentioned “built without approval and consent from the Building Authority” or the like.

Overall, the candidates' performance was not up to expectation, for graduates who have worked in an office for two or more years. Judging from some of the few better performing candidates, the topics obviously had been covered in one or more of the seminars and one could easily pass the test through studying only.

As it turned out, the subject of "advisory letter" proved exceptionally elusive and more than half of the candidates could not provide an acceptable answer.

The next difficult one was 'pre-notification' and most had a very confused idea of what 'Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme' is about, mixing it up with enforced inspection by the Buildings Department.

The topic of water seepage attracted answers that were confused with statutory order, without any clear definition of the flat owner's liability towards neighbours and incorporated owners.

The part on statutory order was relatively easy, with many candidates correctly identifying the owner's obligation to demolish the UBW and Buildings Department's right to remove and recover cost if order is not complied with.

And lastly, many candidates correctly associated 'warning notice' with its being registered in the land lease. Here again, most failed to explain how the process works and what follow-up actions the Buildings Department may take.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- (a) Attend the lecture series, seminars, conferences and workshops arranged by HKIA and other tertiary institutes or professional institutes. Be familiar with the materials and topics covered.
- (b) Get on-job experience in particular areas of interest.
- (c) If the candidates do not have on-job exposures as mentioned in (b) above, reading or discussion on what other colleagues have done would help.
- (d) Keep abreast of the times ---- through reading, and use of audio, video or internet resources.

Paper 1 Subject Panel Chair

**HKIA / ARB Professional Assessment 2012**  
**Paper 2: Building Contracts, Professional Practice, Professional Conduct,**  
**Conditions of Agreements and Scale of Charges**  
**Examiners' Report**

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## **STRUCTURE OF PAPER**

Paper 2 is an open-book examination comprising multiple-choice and short-essay questions.

The MC section had 80 multiple-choice questions. Each MC question carries 1 mark. The passing mark was set at 65%.

Candidates needed to answer 1 out of 2 short-essay questions for Part A Professional Practice, Code of Professional Conducts and Conditions of Agreement and 2 out of 4 short-essay questions for Part B Building Contract. Questions for Part A each carried 20 marks while questions for Part B Building Contract each carried 15 marks. The passing mark was set at 50%.

## **ASSESSMENT OBSERVATIONS**

### **FOR WHOLE PAPER**

307 candidates took Paper 2. After reviewing marginal cases, 174 candidates (56.68%) passed.

### **FOR MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

204 candidates passed (66.45%); the mean is 65.3 marks out of 100, and standard deviation 11.4%, is commented on by HKEAA as "of comparable difficulty with appropriate levels of difficulty."

### **FOR SHORT-ESSAY QUESTIONS**

144 candidates passed (46.91%). Passing rates of the short-essay questions are as follows:

SQ Part A - Q1 – 43.75% (91 out of 208 candidates)

SQ Part A - Q2 – 68.04% (66 out of 97 candidates)

SQ Part B - Q1 – 36.69% (62 out of 169 candidates)

SQ Part B - Q2 – 67.74% (168 out of 248 candidates)

SQ Part B - Q3 – 64.75% (90 out of 139 candidates)

SQ Part B - Q4 – 64.10% (25 out of 39 candidates)

### **Question A1**

The question consisted of four parts, carrying a total of 20 marks distributed as follows:  
(1) (a) 5 marks, (1) (b) 5 marks, (2) 5 marks and (3) 5 marks.

General observations:

In part (1) (a), few candidates mentioned the additional liability on the architect's part when sub-consultants are appointed by the architect instead of the client. In part (1) (b), many were not aware that the architect is allowed to take up interior design services under Part 4 of the HKIA Agreement. Average score for (1) (a) was higher than (1) (b).

The score for part (2) was above average.

The answers for part (3) were disappointing, reflecting a general lack of understanding of the architect's duty and liability:

1. Many candidates failed to realise that they could identify obvious structural elements from the RSE's drawings.
2. Some concluded that since there were no regular co-ordination meetings with the RSE, the matter concerned, i.e. roof feature, was never reviewed.
3. Many assumed that they would have discharged their duty once the problem was reported to client.
4. Some concluded it was the contractor's fault.

In future lectures, the topic on "duty and liability" should preferably include the architect's relationship with sub-consultants, under different types of consultancy agreement.

### **Question B1**

In Question B1 (1), quite a number of candidates answered on management contracting or design-and-build arrangement instead of addressing the relationship between main contract and sub-contract, showing that they were answering on something that they knew instead of what the question asked for.

B1 (2) was generally well answered by the candidates, although, as always, there were some surprises and some poor answers.

### **Question B2**

In Question B2 (1), the candidates generally answered well. B2 (2) effectively differentiated the good performers from the average ones.

### **Question B3**

The question was fairly based on material covered in my lecture(s) and the candidates would be expected to be familiar with the issues raised as part of the question and therefore provide suitable answers.

The percentage of candidates gaining more than 50% in marks was approximately 65%. This was considerably lower than in respect of a question set in the previous year.

As a general observation there were a limited number of “excellent” answers, a large number of “good” answers and a significant number of “poor” answers.

It is being observed that a majority of candidates could provide answers to some elements of the question.

## **Question B4**

Findings and observations:

1. Twenty-five out of 39 candidates achieved 8 or above, out of 15 marks, representing a 64% passing rate.
2. Most of those who scored less than 8 did not answer all the three sub-questions.
3. Sub-question 1 asked the candidates to identify the applicable contract sub-clause for extension of time and explain the rationale behind its financial implication. Some candidates could neither identify the sub-clause nor the relationship between EOT, LD, VO and their cost implications.
4. Sub-question 2 asked for an analysis of the circumstances and subsequent formulation of recommendations. Very few candidates managed to cover the overall project objectives and some quickly jumped to a conclusion that was narrowly focused on procedural matters, such as when to submit first and second notices for EOT, which were irrelevant.
5. Sub-question 3 was a general question as to how the architect exercises cost control. Surprisingly, a considerable number of candidates could not express in their own words what they already knew about the topic. Some candidates suggested exercising the “design-and-build” option, but this was not relevant to the circumstances in question. A few candidates mentioned delay recovery measures but could not identify what exactly they were. A number of candidates just wrote down the procedures without realising they were unrelated to the overall project objectives.
6. It is noted that some candidates could write in clear and simple English.

Paper 2 Subject Panel Chair

**HKIA / ARB Professional Assessment 2012**  
**Paper 4 – Building Services and Environmental Controls**  
**Examiners' Report**

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## **STRUCTURE OF PAPER**

Paper 4 was an open-book examination comprising multiple-choice questions only. The paper consists of 60 multiple choice questions. The passing mark is set as 65%.

Questions were simple in wording and straightforward format, and questions with combination choices were avoided as far as practicable. Topics tested as detailed in the syllabus (viz. Basic Principles, Sustainable Design & Environmental Issues, HVAC & Heating, Fire Services, Plumbing & Drainage, Electrical, Acoustics and Miscellaneous aspects) were included with emphases as described below:-

1. Different disciplines for building services (both the fundamental and real-life applications that a practicing architect should know);
2. Issues concerning hygiene, human comfort and acoustics;
3. Greater emphases are put in recent years, on the non-services matters related to sustainable design and environmental issues.

Candidates were also tested on knowledge that spans across the building services disciplines and on the energy conservation and sustainable designs. All in all, the questions were set to test the candidates' knowledge, skills and maturity to handle day-to-day works as an Architect.

As in the previous years, quite a significant portion of the paper was based on re-used questions. The intention of including re-used questions is to encourage candidates to study more thoroughly similar topics that appeared in the past papers for better knowledge enrichment.

## **ASSESSMENT OBSERVATIONS**

This was the first year in which Paper 4 allowed 3 attempts per year, with assessments held in March, June and September respectively (rather than one-off at the year-end as before). The "mean mark" this year was 65.8%, which was much better than that of last year at 56.9%, probably because of the fact that more time could have been allowed for the candidates to study. As in previous years, particular focus on non-services matters related to environmental issues was made in the lecture series, and the recommended reading list was extended to include literature on the topics. However, similar to previous years the candidates' weakest part was still in the questions on the Environmental aspects. As before, candidates performed better on the academic-based questions (i.e. theory, fundamentals and basic knowledge that were taught at universities or found in literature) and were generally weaker on job-based questions (i.e. those practical knowledge gained from architectural practice and its real-life application).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CANDIDATES**

Broadening the candidates' exposure is the key to success. On top of the literatures and the recommended reading list, the following means would also assist in broadening the enhancing the candidates' knowledge in the area:-



- i. Attend the Paper 4 lecture series and related seminars, conferences and workshops arranged by HKIA and other tertiary institutes or professional institutes.
- ii. Get on-job experience, closer coordination with Building and Environmental Consultants in the design development stage of projects.
- iii. Keep abreast of the times and have hands-on experience on OTTV, IAQ, BEAM Plus or other environmental assessment schemes.
- iv. If the candidates do not have on-job exposures as mentioned in (ii) and (iii) above, reading of documentation on the work done by other teammates would also help.
- v. Take initiative to go through specifications, material and equipment submissions, shop drawings, method statements etc. even though they are typically within the scope of work of the Building Services Engineer.

Paper 4 Subject Panel Chair

**HKIA / ARB Professional Assessment 2012**  
**Paper 5 Building Materials and Technology**  
**Examiners' Report**

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**STRUCTURE OF PAPER**

Paper 5 was an open-book examination comprising multiple-choice questions only. The paper consists of 60 multiple choice questions. The passing mark is set as 65%. The questions are set at a very similar format and variety in each examination. The paper was set for three assessments in 2012 for the months of March, June and September.

The contents of the paper include the different trades of construction regarding materials and technology, actual practices including working procedures and detailing as well as law related construction questions such as the Building Ordinance and Regulations, PNAP, Codes of Practices, etc. Questions with diagrams were set so that more than one question can be out of it. Generally, the questions are quite straight forward and all based on Hong Kong local practices.

**ASSESSMENT OBSERVATIONS**

The respectively passing rates for the three assessments are quite high: 90.09%, 85.38% and 90.00%. This may be due to the students having familiarized with the mode of the questions set in previous years though only a small part of the questions have been repeated. Several questions are considered easy with high score by the students.

**OUTLOOK FOR COMING YEAR 2013**

A possible change or fresh look at the paper may be needed such as re-forming the panel with new members to set more fresh questions as the scope of the paper can be vast. Yet the simplicity of the format of the paper can be kept and more diagram-related questions can be welcomed. Similarity in the standard for the three papers in the same year will be beneficial to candidates.

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CANDIDATES**

1. Recommended list of reference is a good basis for study.
2. Detail drawings like the external walls, roofs, floor construction etc. are useful for the knowledge of construction.
3. Keep updates of the latest legal requirements such as practice notes and codes of practices.
4. An insight to the reasons of why a material is used will be preferred to just remembering the materials listed in a component.

Paper 5 Subject Panel Chair

**1. THE QUESTION**

The test case is a residential development in an urban site, which abuts three roads on the east, north and west, and adjoins a residential site on the south.

The task is to produce a preliminary master layout plan to accommodate 4 Prototype A residential blocks, 2 Prototype B residential blocks, a clubhouse, car parking spaces, and loading / unloading bays. A private street is required within the site through the permitted ingress / egress points connecting two of the abutting roads.

It is specified that the design shall comply with the building separation, street setbacks and green coverage requirements in accordance with the Sustainable Building Design (SBD) Guidelines (PNAP APP-152), and that the car park shall be so designed to be exempted from GFA calculations.

The candidates are expected to demonstrate their competence in coming up with a sensible site arrangement that generally meets the statutory requirements and the design brief.

**2. ANSWER SCRIPTS**

Given the generous site area, a considerable number of layout variations are possible. The panel observes a wide range of design approach in response to the design brief and the site.

While the panel is generally satisfied with the performance standard this year, a lack of understanding of the SBD requirements, which are new to the Site Design Paper, is observed. Such new requirements inevitably increase the level of difficulty of the paper, and this probably explains a slightly lower passing rate this year as compared with the last few years.

**3. KEY INDICATORS**

The preliminary master layout plan of each answer script was carefully scrutinised by the assessment panel, which did not look for perfect design solutions and absolute compliance with the regulations, but a sensible approach and reasonable execution of site planning with general understanding of the statutory requirements.

The following key indicators are specific to the Paper this year, revealing the competence of the candidates in their sensibility, level of technical knowledge, understanding of statutory control, and skill of implementation:

- (a) General compliance with development parameters – maximising development potential, compliance with permitted site coverage and building height limit, compliance with SBD requirements.
- (b) General compliance with the brief – provision of private street, clubhouse, car park, and loading / unloading bays as required.
- (c) General compliance with major statutory requirements – prescribed windows, EVA, ingress / egress points, etc.
- (d) Sensibility in disposition of blocking to exploit views and to avoid major overlooking.
- (e) Sensibility in the arranging vehicular and pedestrian circulation, demonstrated by internal roads and pedestrian paths, car park, drop off, loading / unloading provisions and access to each component.
- (f) Sensibility in the provision of open space, which could be conveniently enjoyed by the residents but appropriately segregated from the internal roads and car park.

#### 4. WEAKNESSES

The following principle weaknesses are observed:

- (a) Non-compliance with SBD requirements – A considerable number of answer scripts fail to demonstrate a clear understanding of the basic requirements of the SBD Guidelines, despite that the three major aspects (building separation, street setbacks, and green coverage) are specifically mentioned in the question. For example, in many cases, providing a podium more than 60m long but failing to demonstrate compliance with the Projected Façade Length (LP) and Permeability (P) reveals the misunderstanding of the building separation requirement.
- (b) Non-compliance with prescribed window requirements – Quite a number of answer scripts demonstrate the compliance with the SBD requirements at the expense of the prescribed window requirements, thus revealing the candidates' inability to produce a balanced solution as far as statutory compliance is concerned. In some cases, the positioning of the blocks abutting the adjoining lot boundary on the south renders non-compliance with the prescribed window requirements, which is also considered as a major non-conformity.
- (c) Insensible disposition – Insensible array of building blocks resulting in major overlooking and non-user-friendly / unusable leftover space is observed in quite a number of answer scripts, despite of the generous site area available. In cases of severe overlooking and irrational spatial relationship among the blocks, which is substantially below reasons, they are considered as major non-conformity.
- (d) Non-compliance with brief requirements of private street – Some candidates' carelessness in comprehending the brief has led to common non-compliances such as negligence of the permitted ingress / egress points, failure in connecting Road A and Road B, and even non-provision of the required private street.
- (e) Insensible car parking provision – Above-ground covered car parks, which are accountable for GFA, contravene with the brief requirement and is thus not acceptable. Some other answer scripts propose open car parks that occupy a substantial portion of the open area, and the spatial quality and the efficiency of site utilization is compromised.
- (f) Insensible internal road planning – The provision of internal roads shall be optimised. Grossly over provision in some answer scripts results in fragmented open space and numerous pedestrian crossings, which are spatially and functionally undesirable. In some other cases, under-provision of internal roads has led to inadequate provision of drop off and loading / unloading provisions for each block, and is also considered as unreasonable planning.
- (g) Non-compliance with EVA requirements – Some common non-compliances include substandard hammerheads and turning circles for fire engines, and inadequate coverage of building facades, demonstrating the candidates' lack of clear understanding of the EVA requirements. In some other cases, excessive internal roads serving as EVA are provided where the buildings can easily reached from the public roads; this also demonstrates the candidates' poor concept of EVA and insensible road planning.
- (h) Failure to maximise development potential – Although there has been great improvement in this aspect over the past few years, it is still observed in a few answer scripts this year that the provided GFA of the residential blocks is considerably below the maximum permitted GFA by a considerable margin. This is considered a major non-conformity.

**HKIA / ARB Professional Assessment 2012**  
**Paper 7 – Building Design**  
**Examiners' Report**

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**The Paper**

From 2012 onward, the Paper has been simplified to a single 6 hours paper that focuses on testing candidates' ability on Building Design only. The former Paper 7a on Construction Details and Documentation has been omitted.

This year's Paper aims to examine the candidates' competence in the design of a Multi-Professional Institutes Complex. The site is an urban site with flat topography bounded by two roads on the south and on the west respectively, a residential development to the north, and a park to the east.

The design brief mainly requires the provisions of accommodation for four independent professional institutes, and shared common facilities including an exhibition area and a lecture theatre.

For simplicity sake, provision of loading/unloading space and vehicular parking are not required within the site. Site vehicular access is also not required. However candidates are asked to provide a vehicular drop-off area along the footpath of Road B.

In view of the reduction in answering time from 8 hours as in the past years to 6 hours from this year onward, submission requirements are also streamlined to plans and section only. 3 Dimensional illustration and calculations are not required.

**The Answer Scripts**

The Subject Panel agrees that the design brief and the site constraints are relatively straightforward as compared to previous years. It is noted that the performance of the candidates are better than that of previous years.

**Key Indicators**

The detailed layout of each paper was scrutinized carefully jointly by the assessment panel. The Panel was not looking for brilliant architectural design, but a sensible design solution that could meet the design brief, respect the site constraints and in general compliance with the buildings regulations.

The Panel looked into the following key indicators that can reveal the competence of the candidates in their design sensibility, level of technical knowledge and skill of implementation:

- a) General compliance with development parameters – including permitted site coverage and building height;
- b) General compliance with major statutory requirements – including prescribed windows, fire escape and EVA.
- c) General compliance with specific site constraints – including provision of offsite drop-off area.

- d) Workability of the Lecture Theatre – including configuration, column layout, circulation and relationship with the reception area;
- e) Sensibility in arrangement of main entrance, horizontal and vertical circulation, access to major functional spaces; and
- f) Sensibility in the design of structural grid, floor-to-floor height and disposition of building services spaces.

### **The Weaknesses**

The major weaknesses observed this year includes:

- a) Sensitivity in site constraints –
  - Non-provision of open space adjacent to Main Entrance;
- b) Building Structure -
  - Inappropriate structural design and structural span;
  - Inadequate floor to floor height;
  - Insensitive integration of large span and short span structures;
- c) Design and Planning
  - Poor disposition of the four institutions as separate entities;
  - Poor definition of entrance;
  - Poor integration of different functions;
  - Poor sense of scale – lifts, stairs, corridors are often grossly oversized or undersized;
  - Poor lift arrangement;
  - Poor location of mechanical rooms;
- d) Lecture Theatre
  - Poor relationship with reception area;
  - Poor sense of scale;
  - Poor accessibility;
- e) Statutory Compliance
  - Non-compliance of means of escape;
  - Non-compliance of EVA.

## **STRUCTURE OF PAPER**

Candidate has to provide a one-page synopsis and go on to complete a 20-page report. The Professional Assessment Handbook details the topics requirement and report format. The passing mark is set at 50%.

## **ASSESSMENT OBSERVATIONS**

168 out of 211 candidates passed the Paper. The passing rate is 80%. A new software to check plagiarism had been put on trial this year and was found useful. 11 candidates failed this paper due to high percentage of copying found. Next year full checking will be adopted.

The main issue with this paper continues to be for the increasing numbers of candidates to find suitable projects to study. This is the second year a requirement to research a special topic is introduced. It is generally agreed that the case study remains a useful tool through which graduates can learn about the essential elements of contract administration, even though the projects they are handling in the office may not give them sufficient exposure to the entire range of practical issues. Passing rates are usually high and it is not seen as a major source of anxiety for candidates.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CANDIDATES**

Carefully study and analyze available information on the project and talk to the project team to get a thorough understanding, then write the report to cover what has been learned. High emphasis is put on candidate's own appraisal of the various issues and problems relating to the project. Special topic study gives candidates opportunity to research in depth a topic of interest. Students may continue to use previous reports as format and contents template but have to refrain from copying multiple sentences and paragraphs, which will be readily detected by the new software.

Paper 8 Subject Panel Chair

## **STRUCTURE OF PAPER**

This paper is a 30-minute interview conducted primarily in English and each candidate is interviewed by a panel consists of three interviewers. New policy is imposed that Cantonese could be used for technical terms and for supplementary purpose with the permission of the Chairperson of the Panel of Interviewers.

This is also the first time testing candidates on their Case Study reports in the Professional Interview. Interviewers reminded the candidates that their case study report is also used as a referencing material in the interview. Candidates may choose projects not handled by themselves and Interviewers are reminded to cross reference with the candidates' logbooks.

Interviewers are advised to make sure the candidates have digested the followings in doing their Case Study reports:

- a) Statutory Control
- b) Cost Control
- c) Time Control
- d) Safety
- e) Quality Control
- f) Design Quality Control
- a) Building Contracts

Candidates' professional maturity and adequacy of the practical experience as recorded in the Logbook are assessed by the interviewers. Questions may cover topics related to Buildings Ordinance, Building Regulations, other related ordinances and Codes of Practice, construction knowledge, Building Contract and Contract Administration and Professional Ethics. Candidates' confidence in answering questions is also looked for by interviewers.

## **ASSESSMENT OBSERVATIONS**

114 out of a total of 154 candidates (74.03%) passed the paper in the March 2013 attempt (for PA2012), which had shown a slight drop in the passing rate compared with the 80% passing rate (132 out of a total of 165 candidates) in PA2011.

From the report of Interviewers on failed candidates, most candidates were lack in knowledge on Building Contract and Building Ordinance. The candidates were also lack of confidence and general knowledge; and were not well prepared for the Interview. The weaknesses may be attributed to their lack of practical experience on local projects.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CANDIDATES**

1. To reinforce his/her understanding of a project selected for case study, a candidate is recommended to instead of just reporting to his/her advisor what have been done during the period of review, discuss regularly with the advisor of what he/she has observed in the case study and to consult the advisor the rationale behind certain solutions to various problems.



2. To assimilate section 40 of the Buildings Ordinance. It's astonishing to note that some candidates consider that an AP carries all statutory responsibilities in a project, and that's what they perceive as the difference between an Architect and an AP.

Paper 9 Subject Panel Chair