

# Licentiate Criteria & Guidance

THE **RPS**  
ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY





The Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain was founded in 1853 and soon after received Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Victoria and HRH Prince Albert. The Society was first incorporated in 1895 and later, in 2004, was incorporated under Royal Charter granted by HM Queen Elizabeth II.

The RPS is a Registered Charity and, under provision of its Charter, the Objects of the Society are *"to educate members of the public by increasing their knowledge and understanding of photography and in so doing to promote the highest standards of achievement in photography in order to encourage public appreciation of photography."*

The award of *Distinctions* qualifications (Licentiate, Associate and Fellowship) signify achievement in the art or science of photography. The award of the *Chartered Photographer* designation signifies the highest level of professional standing within the profession of photography. The criteria for the award of *Distinctions* and for the award of the *Chartered Photographer* designation are governed by Regulations issued by the RPS Board of Trustees (the 'Council') under advice from the RPS Distinctions Manager.

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# Regulations

## LRPS Criteria & Guidance

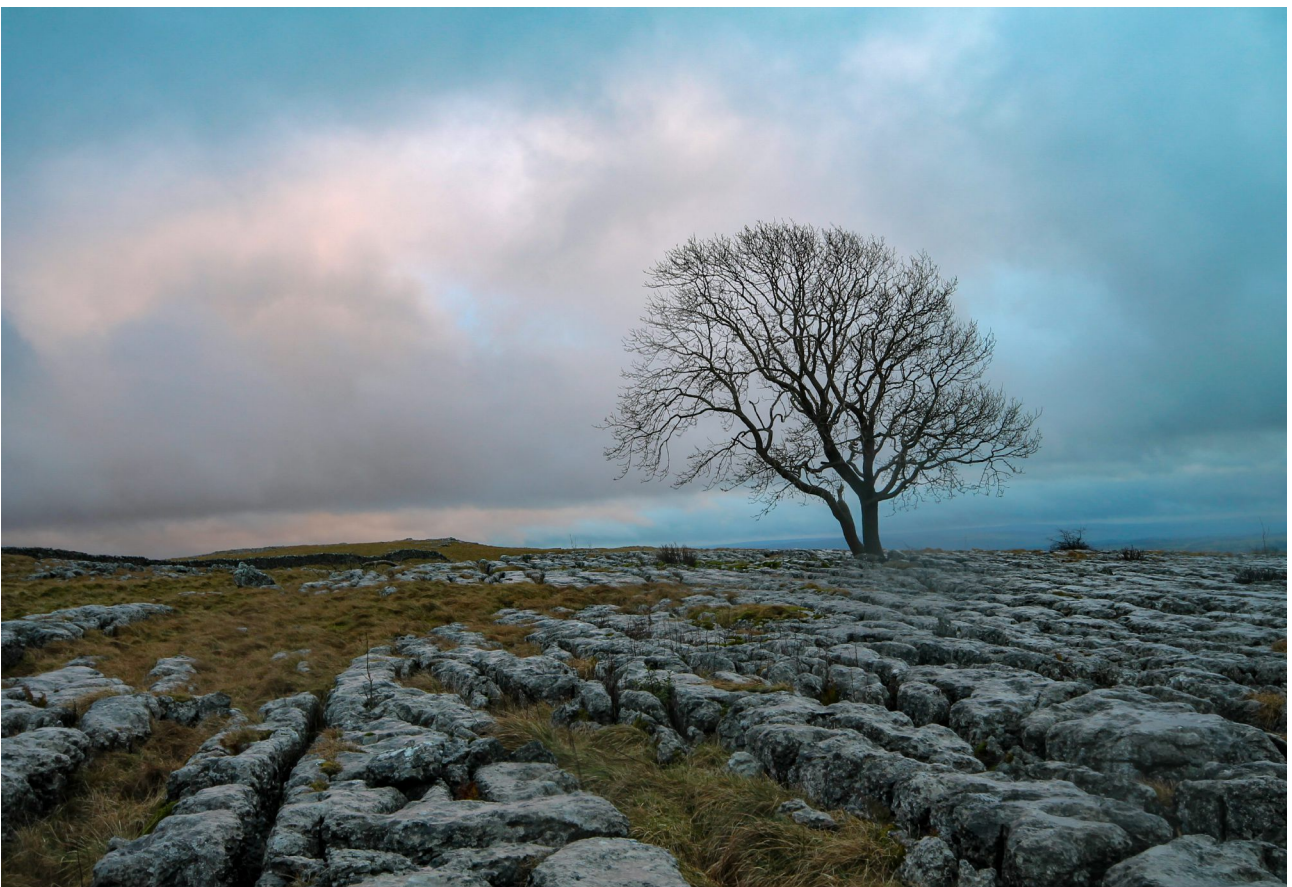
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## Contents

*Click on the page number to go direct to that section*

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
Number of Images	6
Assessment Criteria	7
<b>Criterion A Guidance TECHNICAL</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Overall Quality	8
2. Correct Exposure (and the 'Exposure Triangle')	8
3. Point of Focus and Depth of Field	8
4. Colour Balance (White Balance)	9
5. Noise or Grain	9
6. Compression	9
7. Post-Processing	9
7.1. Colour correction (white balance)	9
7.2. Colour enhancement (saturation and vibrance)	9
7.3. Contrast control (and 'curves')	10
7.4. Exposure correction	10
7.5. Dodging and burning (localised exposure correction)	10
7.6. Sharpening	12
7.7. Noise reduction	12
7.8. Healing and cloning	12
7.9. Creative effects and conversions	13
7.10. Increased resolution	13
<b>Criterion B Guidance ARTISTIC</b>	<b>14</b>
8. Composition	14
9. Viewpoint	15
10. Lighting	15
11. Colour	15
12. Monochrome	16
13. Gestalt	16
13.1. Closure	16
13.2. Proximity	16
13.3. Similarity	16
13.4. Continuity	16
13.5. Figure-Ground	18
13.6. Symmetry	18
13.7. Common Fate	18
14. Decisive Moment	18

<b>Criterion C Guidance COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>C(a) Visual Narrative</b>	<b>20</b>
15. Intent	20
16. Creativity	20
17. Empathy	22
<b>C(b) Presentation</b>	<b>22</b>
18. Balanced and Cohesive Portfolio	22
18.1. Balance	22
18.2. Cohesion	23
18.3. Aspect Ratio	23
19. Diverse Range of Skills and Techniques	23
19.1. Technical Skills	23
19.2. Composition Techniques	25
19.3. Creative Vision	25
19.4. Technical Experimentation	25
19.5. Adaptability and Problem-Solving	25
20. Appropriate and Beneficial Application of Skills and Techniques	25
20.1. Contextual Relevance	25
20.2. Technical Proficiency	26
20.3. Creative Expression	26
20.4. Adaptability and Problem-Solving	26
20.5. Ethical Considerations	26
<b>Assessment Process and Scoring</b>	<b>28</b>
Assessment Score Descriptors	28
Moderation	29
Notification of Results	29
A note on the use of Artificial Intelligence	30
<b>Additional Resources</b>	<b>31</b>

## Introduction

In 1972, the Licentiate Distinction was introduced to serve as a benchmark of achievement and a testament to a photographer's commitment to their own development. The award of the Licentiate Distinction recognises **technical** excellence (Criterion A), **artistic** vision (Criterion B), and the ability to **communicate** a story or 'narrative' (Criterion C) in each image; evidenced through a carefully curated portfolio of images. Consequently, Licentiate assessors will review portfolios against criteria under each of these three headings. While this guidance document can help you evaluate your photographs and your portfolio before submitting for Licentiate assessment, there is really no substitute to discussing the suitability of your images with a Licentiate Assessor at an Advisory Day or in a one2one meeting.

## Number of Images

The **portfolio** to be submitted for assessment at Licentiate comprises **10 digital images**, ordered and presented in a specific way, of the photographer's own choosing, that demonstrates the technical skills and artistic vision of the photographer. Each of the photographs must not only showcase proficiency in the art and craft of photography but may also evoke emotion and engage the viewer on a deeper level.



Ian Byers LRPS

## Assessment Criteria

Your portfolio will be assessed against the following criteria.

These criteria **apply to all 10 images** in your portfolio.

The references in square brackets [ ] refer to Guidance Notes in this document.

### Criterion A TECHNICAL (Camerawork)

*Your portfolio must demonstrate effective application of the following:*

- 1.1 point of focus and depth of field [3]
- 1.2 choice of ISO, shutter speed and aperture [2]
- 1.3 sharpness in relation to the subject matter [1] [7.6] [7.10]
- 1.4 level of exposure with control of highlight/shadow detail and tonal range [1] [2] [6] [7.3] [7.4] [7.5] [7.7]
- 1.5 colour rendition, if applicable [4] [7.1] [7.2]
- 1.6 use of manipulation or post-production techniques (if applicable) [5] [7.8] [7.9]

### Criterion B ARTISTIC (Visual Awareness)

*Your portfolio must illustrate your understanding of:*

- 2.1 how to use light in photography (natural and/or artificial) [10]
- 2.2 composition and design [8] [13]
- 2.3 viewpoints and an awareness of distracting backgrounds [9]
- 2.4 the use of colour or monochrome in relation to the image [11] [12]
- 2.5 decisive moment, if applicable [14]

### Criterion C COMMUNICATION (Visual Narrative and Presentation)

#### 3(a) Visual Narrative

*Your portfolio must evidence:*

- 3.1 clarity of intent [15]
- 3.2 imagination and creativity to convey a mood, message, or idea [16]
- 3.3 understanding and empathy with the subject matter [17]

#### 3(b) Presentation

*Your portfolio must be presented in such a way that it:*

- 3.4 provides a balanced and cohesive presentation [18]
- 3.5 evidences a diverse range of artistic, technical, and photographic techniques [19] [20]

## Criterion A Guidance      TECHNICAL

Technical aspects (**camerawork**) of a photograph directly influence the overall quality, clarity, and effectiveness of the image. Each image in your portfolio will be assessed for appropriate and necessary application of the following technical aspects:

### 1. Overall Quality

Technical aspects such as resolution, sharpness, and dynamic range affect the overall quality of the image. A high-resolution, sharp image with a wide dynamic range generally looks better and can convey more detail than a low-resolution, blurry image.

### 2. Correct Exposure (and the 'Exposure Triangle')

Judgement of the **correct exposure** - a combination of aperture (f/number), shutter speed, and ISO (together forming the 'exposure triangle') - ensures the image has the right balance of brightness and darkness, allowing viewers to clearly see the subject and details. Overexposure (causing 'blown-out' highlights) or underexposure (causing 'blocked' shadows) may lose important details, appear washed out or too dark.

An important consideration for choice of aperture is **depth of field**. A small aperture (eg f/11 or f/22) will increase the depth of field in an image, while a large aperture (eg f/1.4 or f/2) will decrease the depth of field and allow control of differential focus. Selection of an appropriate **shutter speed** is often necessary to freeze action or introduce intentional blur. A short shutter speed (eg 1/250 or 1/500 second) will help to 'freeze' action and reduce 'camera shake' if a tripod or other support is not being used), while a longer shutter speed (eg 1/8 or 1/15 second) will show movement and can suggest motion and speed.

Choosing the correct exposure settings from the 'exposure triangle' affords the photographer great creative control in addition to ensuring a technically 'correct' exposure.

### 3. Point of Focus and Depth of Field

Selection of the point of optimum focus and the use of 'differential focus' (by using a wide aperture giving shallow depth of field) directs the viewer's attention to the subject of the photograph. Incorrect focus can greatly reduce the impact of a photograph and detract from the intended story or narrative of the image.



#### **4. Colour Balance (White Balance)**

Correct and accurate colour reproduction (white balance) in a photograph ensures the colours of the subject and context appear natural and true to life. While incorrect colour balance can cause an image to look unnatural or unappealing, mis-matched or adjusted colour balance can be used for artistic effect.

#### **5. Noise or Grain**

Managing digital noise (or film grain) in the image helps to ensure the optimum clarity of subject representation. The compromise between taking a photograph in a low-light situation and the consequential increase in digital noise (or film grain) is a decision the photographer must make on an image-by-image basis.

#### **6. Compression**

The choice of file format (RAW, TIF, JPG) and compression settings (High, Medium, Low for compressed formats) affect the overall quality and flexibility of the image. Lossy compression formats (eg "Low Quality JPG") can degrade image quality by introducing 'compression artefacts' that reduce the clarity and 'smoothness' of the colours and tonal range. Lossless formats (eg "RAW" or "Uncompressed TIF") preserve image integrity. A high quality JPG file is perfectly adequate for assessment purposes.

#### **7. Post-Processing**

Photographic post-production techniques are important tools for the photographer. They are used to enhance and manipulate digital photographs after they have been captured.

Post-production techniques can easily be 'over-used' or incorrectly applied so assessors will look for appropriate use and control of any post-production techniques. Some of the most commonly used techniques include:

##### **7.1. Colour correction (white balance)**

This is a technique to ensure that the colours in an image appear accurate and natural. The primary goal of colour correction is to remove any unwanted colour casts caused by the lighting conditions that existed at the time of image capture.

##### **7.2. Colour enhancement (saturation and vibrance)**

This is a technique used to intensify or modify the colours in an image to achieve a desired visual effect. While both saturation and vibrance adjustments enhance colours, they work in slightly different ways and serve different purposes:

**Saturation** adjustment increases or decreases the intensity of all colours in an image uniformly. Increasing saturation makes colours more vibrant and vivid, while decreasing saturation desaturates colours, making them appear more muted or grayscale.

**Vibrance** adjustment targets the less-saturated colours in an image while protecting skin tones and already well-saturated colours from becoming oversaturated. It increases the saturation of less-saturated colours more than already saturated colours, which can provide a more balanced and natural-looking enhancement.

### 7.3. Contrast control (and 'curves')

The 'curves tool' in image editing software applications allows the photographer to manipulate the brightness and contrast of different tonal regions within the image, including highlights, midtones, and shadows, by modifying the 'input' (original) tonal value to a new 'output' tonal value.

### 7.4. Exposure correction

This is the technique of adjusting the overall brightness or darkness of an image to correct underexposed or overexposed images and achieve a more balanced and visually pleasing result. If the original exposure is too far from 'optimal' then it can be impossible to achieve detail in the highlights or shadows, even with post-production exposure correction.

### 7.5. Dodging and burning (localised exposure correction)

These are traditional darkroom techniques that have been adapted for digital photography post-production. These techniques involve selectively lightening (dodging) or darkening (burning) specific areas of an image to enhance its overall appearance:

**Dodging** involves selectively lightening specific areas of an image to bring out details or to adjust the overall exposure. The technique is named after the process of shielding parts of an image from light during the analogue printing process in a darkroom.

**Burning** involves selectively darkening specific areas of an image to add depth, drama, or emphasis. The technique is named after the process of providing more exposure to parts of an image during the analogue printing process in a darkroom.



## 7.6. Sharpening

This is a valuable technique in digital photography post-production for enhancing detail, improving visual impact, and preparing images for printing or digital display. When applied appropriately, sharpening can significantly enhance the overall image quality and clarity. However, it is very easy to 'over-sharpen' so it is important to exercise restraint and avoid over-sharpening which can lead to halos and artefacts, increased noise, an unnatural appearance and loss of fine detail. Over-sharpening is a very common mistake in digital post-production.

## 7.7. Noise reduction

Noise reduction is a technique used to reduce or remove the unwanted granular or speckling artefacts (known as noise) usually occurring in images captured in low-light conditions or at a high ISO setting. Noise reduction can 'smooth out' the appearance of the image and improve overall image quality. However, the use of noise reduction does have drawbacks so should be done with care. Aggressive noise reduction can result in loss of detail, loss of sharpness, an artificial or unnatural appearance, and colour shift. As with over-sharpening, excessive noise reduction is a very common mistake in digital post-production.

## 7.8. Healing and cloning

These are two techniques used to remove or repair imperfections in an image, such as dust spots, blemishes, distractions, or unwanted objects. While both techniques serve a similar purpose, they differ in their approach and application:

**Healing** involves using a Healing tool to automatically sample nearby pixels and blend them seamlessly with the area being corrected. This results in a smooth transition that preserves texture and detail.

**Cloning** involves manually copying pixels from one part of the image and pasting them over the area being corrected using a Clone Stamp tool. This technique requires the user to manually select a source area and clone it onto the target area.

Very few digital images do not require at least some 'retouching' of defects using healing or cloning, even if only for the removal of dust spots. However, when using these techniques it is important to ensure the effect is 'invisible' by, for example, softening the edges of the source sample to the target area.

## 7.9. Creative effects and conversions

There are a variety of techniques that can be used to significantly alter the appearance of an image for artistic or stylistic purposes. Remember that simply applying a creative effect or conversion will not necessarily make a 'poor' image into a 'great' or even a 'good' image. For the best outcome, it is usually necessary to have a pre-visualisation of the effect or conversion you want to achieve before taking the photograph, rather than simply hoping to improve a photograph after it is taken.

Some of the more common techniques include:

- Black and white conversion
- Selective colouring
- Sepia or colour toning
- Vignetting

## 7.10. Increased resolution

This is the process of 'upsampling' an image to a higher resolution than its original capture resolution, a technique that some artificial intelligence applications can achieve with great success. It is also known as "rezzing-up" and is typically used to prepare images for large-format printing, create high-quality prints, or match the resolution requirements of specific output devices or platforms. While increasing the resolution can offer certain benefits, there are also potential pitfalls to consider including loss of sharpness, artefacts, and increased file size.



Alistair How LRPS

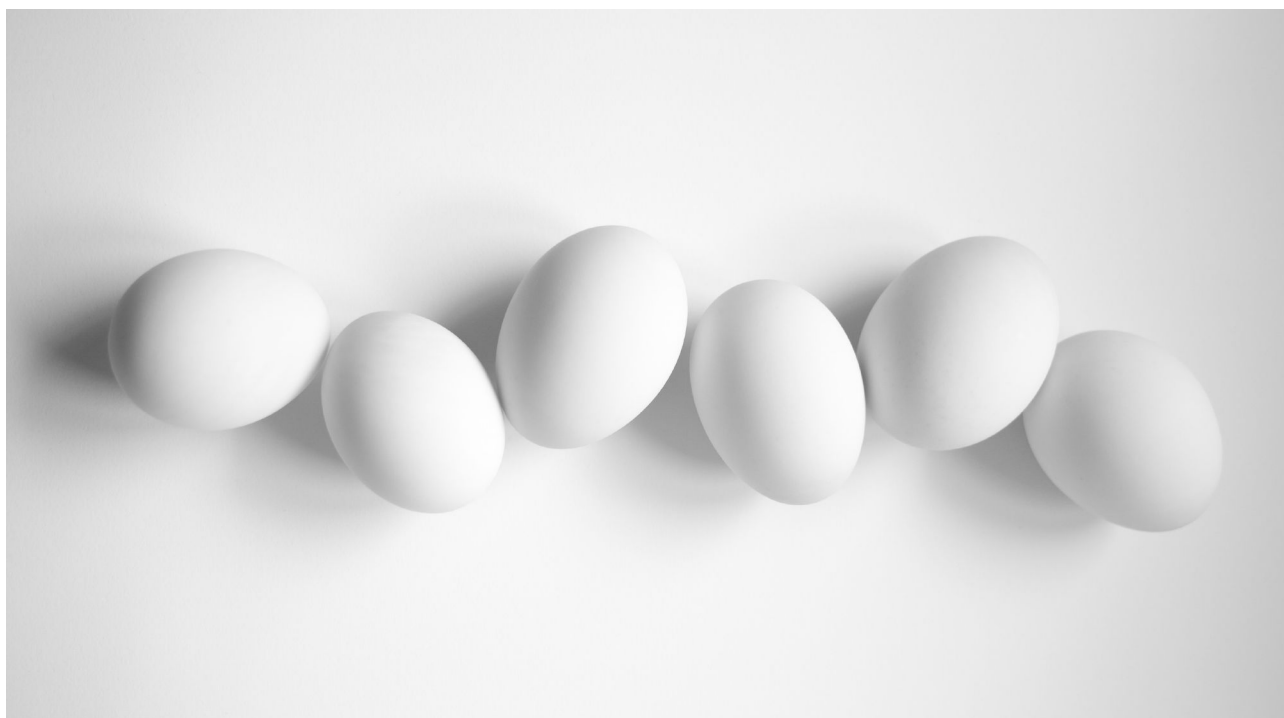
## Criterion B Guidance      ARTISTIC

The artistry of photography (**visual awareness**) is demonstrated by the ability of a photographer to apply their actual visual experiences and their knowledge of the principles of visual perception to the craft of photography. Artistry is fundamental to photography as it underpins every aspect of the photographic process, from composition and lighting to storytelling and the more abstract concept of 'creativity'.

Assessment of the artistry or visual awareness demonstrated in a photograph considers the photographer's perception and understanding of the visual elements of a scene and, ultimately, the photograph. The elements that must be demonstrated include:

### 8. Composition

In photography, the 'rules' of composition are not strict rules to be followed rigidly but are guidelines or principles that can help photographers create visually appealing and engaging images. These rules are based on principles of art and design and, while they can be helpful, they are not absolute and can be broken or modified to suit the photographer's artistic vision. The rules extend beyond the well-known 'rule of thirds', 'golden ratio', 'Fibonacci spiral' and 'leading lines', to involve considerations such as the placement of the main subject, the use of lines, shapes, and patterns, and the framing, perspective, and overall visual balance of the image.



Sally Kitchingman LRPS

## 9. Viewpoint

This is the position or angle from which the photographer has chosen to capture the scene. The viewpoint can significantly influence the composition and visual narrative of an image. It includes considerations such as the height of the camera above or below the subject, the angle of view, and the distance of the camera from the subject. Selecting an appropriate viewpoint allows the photographer to control the framing, emphasise certain elements, and convey a specific message. Experimenting with different viewpoints, whether shooting from a low angle, bird's-eye view, or at eye level, to enhance your ability to present diverse and engaging visual stories.

## 10. Lighting

Lighting is one of the most critical aspects of photography, as it directly influences the mood, atmosphere, and overall visual impact of the image. Understanding different lighting conditions and techniques allows photographers to effectively manipulate light to achieve their desired creative vision. This includes considerations such as the quality, direction, intensity, colour temperature, and contrast of light. Whether using natural light or artificial lighting sources, mastery of lighting techniques enables the photographer to enhance textures, reveal details, create the perception of depth and dimension, and evoke specific emotions in their images.

## 11. Colour

Colour in photography is a powerful visual element that conveys mood, emotion, and atmosphere. Understanding the principles of colour theory - including complementary, analogous, and monochromatic colour schemes - enables photographers to make intentional and impactful colour choices. Whether using colour to evoke warmth, coolness, harmony, or contrast, a thoughtful approach to colour in photography enhances the visual experience of the photographer.

Colour psychology explores the psychological effects of colours on human emotions and behaviour. Different colours can evoke different emotional responses in viewers. For example, warm colours like reds and oranges can evoke feelings of excitement or passion, while cool colours like blues and greens can evoke feelings of calmness or relaxation. The correct application of colour psychology to the photograph of a particular scene or subject can really help a photograph to achieve its narrative or story objective.

## 12. Monochrome

Monochrome (black-and-white) photography challenges photographers to rely on strong compositional techniques, creative lighting, and precise tonal control to convey their intended message or evoke a particular mood. This is not simply the process of 'stripping colour out' of an image but requires of the photographer a very disciplined approach that explores the interplay of light and shadow, contrast, and texture, resulting in visually striking and evocative images.

Toning is a versatile and creative tool that allows photographers to add depth, mood, and artistic flair to black-and-white images. Whether using traditional chemical techniques (in analogue 'wet chemistry' photography) or digital editing software, toning offers many possibilities for artistic expression and creative experimentation. Popular toning effects include sepia, selenium, and gold. The suitability of any particular toning effect to a black-and-white image will depend on the subject and the creative intent.

## 13. Gestalt

Design principles encompass a broad range of concepts and theories that guide the creation of visual compositions, including but not limited to Gestalt principles. While Gestalt principles are certainly a significant aspect of design, they represent just one framework within the broader context of design principles. Derived from Gestalt psychology, they describe how humans perceive and organise visual elements into meaningful patterns and structures. These principles include:

### 13.1. Closure

The tendency to perceive incomplete or fragmented visual elements as complete and whole.

### 13.2. Proximity

The tendency to perceive objects that are close to each other as forming a group or pattern.

### 13.3. Similarity

The tendency to perceive objects that are similar in appearance as belonging to the same group or category.

### 13.4. Continuity

The tendency to perceive continuous and smooth lines or patterns even if they are interrupted or intersected.





### 13.5. Figure-Ground

The tendency to perceive objects as either figures (foreground) or ground (background) depending on their contrast and relationship with surrounding elements.

### 13.6. Symmetry

The tendency to perceive symmetrical objects as more visually appealing and balanced.

### 13.7. Common Fate

The tendency to perceive objects that move in the same direction as belonging to the same group or pattern.



Christine Holt LRPS

## 14. Decisive Moment

Coined by renowned documentary photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, the “decisive moment” in photography refers to capturing an instant that encapsulates the essence of a scene or subject. It involves anticipating and timing the shot to freeze a moment of peak action, emotion, or significance. Recognising the decisive moment requires a keen sense of observation, quick reflexes, and an understanding of the narrative unfolding within the frame.



## Criterion C Guidance      COMMUNICATION

While most photographers understand and accept the importance of **technical** skill (Criterion A) and **artistic** skill (Criterion B), the those new to photography may not fully appreciate the importance of presentation to effective **communication** (Criterion C).

All photographs **communicate** a narrative or story through the photographer's application of the craft of photography to deliver on their **intent, creativity, and empathy** with the subject. Effective **presentation** completes the artistic vision of the photographer, ensuring their images are presented in a way that aligns with their creative intent and aesthetic.

One of the important educational ambitions of the Licentiate Distinction is to encourage photographers to consider the ways in which communication and presentation **support the visual narrative** (Criterion C(a)) and how this is greatly influenced by the **form of presentation** (Criterion C(b)). Consequently, these two criteria are assessed together.

It is important for applicants to appreciate that the skills developed in this aspect of creating work for a Licentiate portfolio are an essential prerequisite for success at Associate and Fellowship.

### C(a) Visual Narrative

Under this criterion, Assessors will be looking for how the three elements of **intent, creativity, and empathy** are applied to make a photograph that goes beyond the mere visual representation of a subject to become a powerful storytelling tool. Such photographs have the ability to evoke emotions, provoke thought, and inspire action, leaving a lasting impact on the viewer. Under this criterion assessors will consider:

#### 15. Intent

Before capturing an image, a photographer should have a clear understanding of the story they want to tell or the narrative they want to convey. This clarity of intent guides all aspects of the photographic process, from choosing the subject and framing the shot to selecting the appropriate settings and editing or post-producing the final image.

#### 16. Creativity

Creativity is essential for transforming a concept or idea into a visually engaging and emotionally resonant photograph. Creativity also involves thinking differently and finding innovative approaches to storytelling. This may include using symbolism, metaphor, juxtaposition, abstraction, or other artistic devices to convey deeper layers of meaning within the image.



## 17. Empathy

Empathy with the subject is crucial for capturing authentic and emotionally compelling photographs. It allows photographers to establish a genuine connection with their subject, enabling them to capture intimate moments, genuine expressions, and subtle nuances that convey the subject's story and evoke empathy from the viewer.

## C(b) Presentation

Presentation acts as the supporting framework for the visual narrative or story conveyed within each individual photograph *and* within the entire portfolio of work. It serves as a vehicle for enhancing the communication of the photographer's message and provides a platform for the portfolio to be displayed. It sets the context and mood for the viewing experience, complementing the content of the images and enhancing the potential of the portfolio to be an informative and meaningful experience for the viewer.

A well-presented portfolio creates an immersive experience for the viewer, facilitating a deeper understanding and emotional connection with the communicated story or narrative. Our Assessors will consider how intent, creativity and empathy with the subject are demonstrated across the portfolio of 10 images such that the photographer is presenting a **balanced** and **cohesive** portfolio displaying a diverse range of photographic **skills** and **techniques** that are applied **appropriately** and **beneficially** to the images presented in the portfolio.

## 18. Balanced and Cohesive Portfolio

A balanced and cohesive portfolio not only showcases the photographer's technical skills and artistic vision but also demonstrates their ability to curate a compelling narrative or visual story that resonates with the viewer. It reflects thoughtful selection and editing to present a cohesive body of work that leaves a lasting impression with the viewer. These principles include:

### 18.1. Balance

A balanced portfolio includes images that demonstrate proficiency and versatility across different genres of photography; for example portraits, landscapes, abstract, still life, ensuring representation across various subjects. The portfolio should also have a balanced distribution of images in the panel or sequence in terms of colour, composition, lighting, and visual impact, creating a harmonious overall presentation.

## 18.2. Cohesion

A cohesive portfolio exhibits a unified aesthetic or theme that ties the collection together, creating a sense of continuity and consistency across the images. Cohesion can be achieved through consistent use of photographic style, editing techniques, colour palette, mood, or storytelling approach.

While individual images may share common visual elements and subject matter, to avoid repetition they must show a variety of approach.

## 18.3. Aspect Ratio

Choice of the appropriate aspect ratio (the relationship between the height and width of a photograph) is an important creative consideration for a photographer. Rather than be restricted to the film or digital sensor aspect ratio, the photographer might consider 'cropping' the image to influence how the subject is framed and perceived, and how the narrative intent is interpreted, by the viewer.

When presenting panels of photographs, the aspect ratio of each image should be chosen to ensure a balanced, cohesive, and compelling presentation, maintaining visual harmony.

An effective presentation of photographs at Licentiate may share common visual elements and subject matter, but to avoid repetition and demonstrate appropriate application of the medium of photography to the subject/s, the images may utilise different aspect ratios.

## 19. Diverse Range of Skills and Techniques

A diverse range of skills and techniques in photography enables photographers to effectively express their artistic vision, explore creative possibilities, and adapt to a wide range of photographic situations and subjects. It empowers them to push boundaries, innovate, and continuously evolve their craft to create impactful and meaningful images.

### 19.1. Technical Skills

Mastery of cameracraft, including understanding and manipulating settings such as aperture, shutter speed, ISO, focus modes, and white balance to achieve desired results. Proficiency in lighting techniques, including natural light, artificial light sources, and modifiers such as reflectors, diffusers, and flashes. Knowledge of post-processing software and techniques for editing and enhancing images, including colour correction, exposure adjustments, retouching, and creative effects.





### **19.2. Composition Techniques**

Understanding and application of compositional and Gestalt principles such to create visually engaging and impactful images. Experimentation with different framing and cropping techniques to enhance the composition and visual storytelling of photographs.

### **19.3. Creative Vision**

Ability to conceptualise and execute creative ideas, themes, or concepts through photography, including storytelling, conceptual photography, and experimental techniques. Exploration of diverse genres and styles of photography, such as portraiture, landscape, street photography, documentary, fine art, abstract, macro, and experimental photography.

### **19.4. Technical Experimentation**

Willingness to experiment with unconventional or innovative photographic techniques, equipment, and processes to achieve unique and creative results. This could extend to the exploration of alternative photographic processes, such as analogue film photography, alternative printing methods, or digital manipulation, to expand technical skills and creative possibilities.

### **19.5. Adaptability and Problem-Solving**

Ability to adapt to various shooting conditions, environments, and subjects while employing appropriate technical skills and techniques to overcome challenges and capture compelling images. Effective problem-solving skills to troubleshoot technical issues, optimise camera settings, and adjust shooting techniques in real-time to achieve desired results.

## **20. Appropriate and Beneficial Application of Skills and Techniques**

The appropriate and beneficial application of skills and techniques in photography involves using photographic knowledge, technical abilities, and creative approaches in a manner that serves the intended purpose and enhances the quality of the final images. There are five areas in which this application can be assessed:

### **20.1. Contextual Relevance**

Applying skills and techniques appropriately means understanding the specific context in which a photograph will be created and ensuring that the chosen techniques align with the desired outcome. For example, in portrait photography, different lighting setups, posing techniques, and post-processing approaches are required for a more formal portrait objective than to a contemporary or environmental portrait ambition.

## **20.2. Technically Proficiency**

Beneficial application of skills involves using technical knowledge and expertise to achieve the desired results effectively and efficiently. This includes mastering camera settings, understanding exposure, utilising lighting techniques, and employing post-processing tools to enhance image quality while eliminating technical errors or limitations.

## **20.3. Creative Expression**

Creative techniques can be used to better express artistic vision and evoke emotions in the viewer. Applicants are encouraged to experiment with composition, perspective, framing, and visual storytelling techniques to create visually compelling and emotionally resonant photographs in new ways that avoid predictability and cliché.

## **20.4. Adaptability and Problem-Solving**

Photography, whether pursued as an enthusiast, a fine artist, or as a professional, can be unpredictable and challenging. A successful photographer will be able to demonstrate their ability to adapt techniques to different shooting conditions, environments, and subjects, as well as solving technical challenges effectively. This requires flexibility, creativity, and resourcefulness in utilising available tools and techniques to overcome obstacles and capture impactful images under various circumstances.

## **20.5. Ethical Considerations**

In addition to the technical and creative aspects of the application of skills and techniques to photography, there is also a requirement to apply ethical considerations including a respect for subjects' privacy, any cultural sensitivities, and in many genres, a truthfulness in image representation. Ensuring ethical conduct in photography enhances the photographer's reputation and contributes to the overall positive impact of their work and of the wider artistic practice of photography.



## Assessment Process and Scoring

The anonymised applications will be assessed, independently, by **three** Assessors drawn from the pool of Licentiate Assessors (formerly known as the 'RPS Licentiate Panel').

Each of the three Assessors will review and score the Portfolio, awarding a **maximum of 6 points** against **each** of the four Criteria:

- A** Technical: **camerawork**
- B** Artistic: **visual awareness**
- C(a)** Visual Narrative: **intent, creativity, empathy**
- C(b)** Presentation: with particular emphasis on **balance** and **cohesion** of the Portfolio

The **maximum** total score for an assessed portfolio is therefore **72 points** (aggregated from a maximum of 24 points from each of the three Assessors).

For an Applicant to be awarded the Licentiate Distinction, their Portfolio must achieve a **minimum of 12 points** under **each** of the four Criteria with **each** of the three Assessors awarding a **minimum of 4 points** against each Criterion.

For the avoidance of doubt, if a Portfolio is awarded **3 or fewer points** by **any** Assessor against **any** Criterion, the application will be unsuccessful unless the conditions described under 'Moderation' apply (see page 29).

### Assessment Score Descriptors

The following score descriptors shall apply to the assessment of the portfolio. Score descriptors shown in **blue type** recognise the PASS mark (of 4 points or more)\* required for each of the four Criteria:

Score **1 point** if the portfolio **fails** to demonstrate **most** criteria

Score **2 points** if the portfolio **barely** demonstrates **most** criteria

Score **3 points** if the portfolio **minimally** demonstrates **most** criteria

Score **4 points** if the portfolio **adequately** demonstrates **all** criteria

Score **5 points** if the portfolio **clearly** demonstrates **all** criteria

Score **6 points** if the portfolio **convincingly** demonstrates **all** criteria

\* note that to attain a PASS for each of the Criteria will require a **minimum 4 points** to be awarded by **each** of the three Assessors.

## Moderation

If there exists a situation where a Portfolio is awarded **3 or fewer points** by **any** Assessor against **any** Criterion but achieves **an aggregated total of 12 or more points** against each Criterion, the Portfolio will be automatically sent for review by **two** Moderators (being Licentiate Assessors not involved in the original assessment, or other some other qualified person familiar with the assessment process and experienced in the assessment of photographic work).

If a Portfolio has been unsuccessful due to receiving a score of **3 or fewer points by one Assessor** against any Criteria while scoring **4 or more points by both other Assessors** against the same Criteria, the RPS Distinctions Manager reserves the right to send the Portfolio for Moderation.

Under either of the two situations described above, Moderators will remark the Portfolio following the scoring regime described above, noting that the **maximum** score for a portfolio shall under Moderation be **48 points** (aggregated from a maximum of 24 points from each of the two Moderators).

For an Applicant to be awarded the Licentiate Distinction, their Portfolio must achieve under Moderation a **minimum of 8 points** against each of the four Criteria with **both** of the Moderators awarding a **minimum of 4 points** against each Criterion. For the avoidance of doubt, if a Portfolio is awarded **3 or fewer points** by **either** Moderator against **any** of the four Criteria, the application will be unsuccessful.

**The assessment score awarded by the Moderators is final and may not be appealed.**

## Notification of Results

All applicants will be notified of the final results within approximately 6 weeks of the closing date. On rare occasions, for example due to illness or other exceptional or unforeseen circumstance, this timeframe might be exceeded.



The RPS Licentiate emblem

### **A note on the use of Artificial Intelligence**

The purpose of the RPS Distinctions is to assess and recognise the achievement of a photographer not the ability of an artificial intelligence (AI) application to mimic a photograph or to contribute to the work of a photographer.

Consequently, any image or any element of an image made using a generative AI feature within an image editing application is not permitted in any portfolio submitted for a RPS Distinctions assessment. If an image or any element of an image is conclusively proved to have been made using generative AI, the entire submission of images will be disqualified from assessment. If this is subsequent to the award of a Distinction for that submission of images, the Distinction shall be revoked and the certificate and emblem must be returned to the RPS.

If the use of generative AI by an applicant is proved beyond reasonable doubt, the applicant will be barred from submitting any further work for assessment for a Distinction for a period of not less than five years from the date upon which the use of generative AI was proved. The RPS Distinctions Manager reserves the right to request, at any time, a copy of any original or intermediate image files, including but not limited to camera RAW files, if deemed necessary by the assessors.

## Additional Resources

### General

- Hill, S. 'Framing Creativity' in *RPS Journal*, **164** No1, Jan-Mar 2024, pp96-105
- Hill, S. 'Learning to Navigate Your Photographic Journey' in *RPS Journal*, **164** No2, Apr-Jun 2024, pp212-217
- Koch, R. (ed) *Photobox: The Essential Collection - 250 Images You Need to See*, Thames & Hudson, 2016
- Marien, M.W. *100 Ideas that Changed Photography*, Laurence King Publishing, 2012
- Mulligan, T. & Wooters, D. *1000 Photo Icons*, Taschen, 1999
- Padley, G. *Look At This If You Love Great Photography*, Ivy Press, Quarto Group, 2021

### Technical

- Bliss, E. & Langford, M. *Langford's Advanced Photography*, Routledge, 2011
- Carroll, H. *Read This if You Want to take Great Photographs*, Laurence King, 2023
- Daly, T. *The Fundamentals of Digital Photography*, Routledge, 2013
- Greig, R. (ed) *The Complete Beginners Guide to Photography*, Sons Books, 2019
- Langford, M. & Fox, A. & Sawn Smith, R. *Langford's Basic Photography*, Routledge, 2015
- Taylor, D (ed) *The Advanced Photography Guide*, DK, 2018

### Artistic

- Albers, J. *Interaction of Colour*, Yale University Press, 1963 (1st edition), 2013 (4th edition)
- Arnheim, R. *Art and Visual Perception*, University of California Press, 1974
- Badger, G. *The Genius of Photography*, Quadrille, 2007
- Barnbaum, B. *The Art of Photography* (2nd rev ed), Rocky Nook, 2017
- Katz D. *Gestalt Psychology*, Methuen's Manual of Modern Psychology **II**, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1951
- Turn, D. with Jay, B. *On Being a Photographer*, Lenswork Publishing, 2007

### Visual Narrative and Presentation

- Christ, S. (ed) *The Contact Sheet*, AMMO Books LLC, 2012
- Hill, P. & Cooper T. *Dialogue with Photography*, Thames & Hudson, 1979
- Holleley, D. *Photo-Editing and Presentation*, Clarallen, 2009
- Jeffrey, I. *How to Read a Photograph*, Thames & Hudson, 2008
- Moriarty C. *Photographers on the Art of Photography*, ACC Art Books, 2021
- Patterson, F. *Photography and the Art of Seeing* (4th ed), Firefly Books, 2012

### Online Resources

The RPS Distinctions Department, in collaboration with the RPS Education and RPS Exhibition departments, is constantly developing courses, workshops, and other opportunities to deliver learning against all of the Licentiate criteria. Links to these resources are updated as they become available. Please refer to the relevant pages of the RPS website and our social media accounts for further information and availability.



[rps.org/distinctions](https://rps.org/distinctions)