



DISTINCTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS

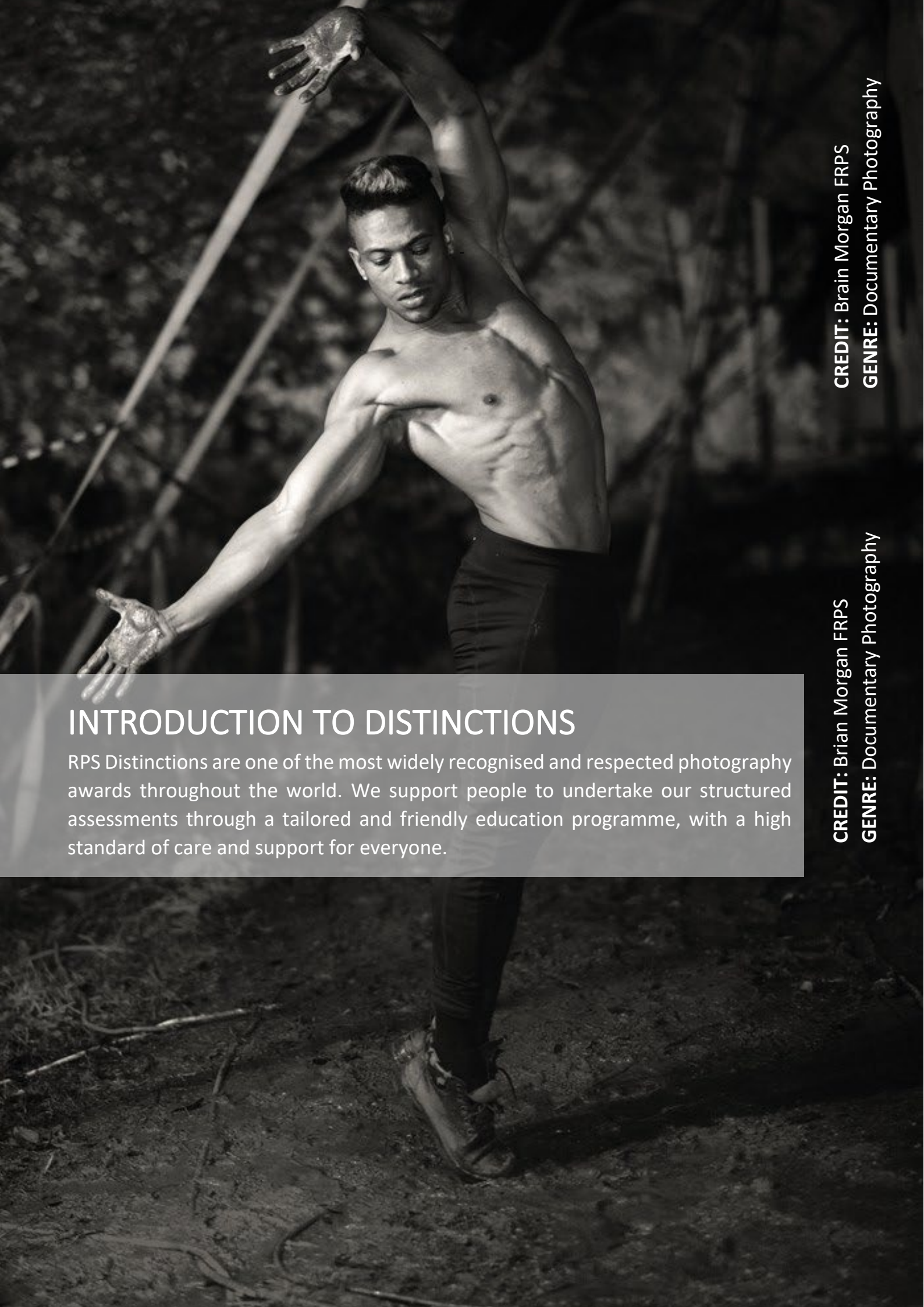
A GUIDE ON HOW TO APPLY

CREDIT: Qasim Syed ARPS
GENRE: Natural History Photography

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INTRODUCTION TO DISTINCTIONS

RPS Distinctions are one of the most widely recognised and respected photography awards throughout the world. We support people to undertake our structured assessments through a tailored and friendly education programme, with a high standard of care and support for everyone.

CREDIT: Brian Morgan FRPS

GENRE: Documentary Photography

CREDIT: Brian Morgan FRPS

GENRE: Documentary Photography

In defining the objects of the RPS, the Charter states:

The objects of The Society are to educate members of the public by increasing their knowledge and understanding of Photography and in doing so to promote the highest standards of achievement in Photography in order to encourage public appreciation of Photography.

In this Charter 'Photography' shall mean the Art or Science of the recording of light or other radiation on any medium on which an image is produced or from which any image may by any means be produced.

The Royal Photographic Society's Distinctions are recognised as some of the most prestigious in the world.

Distinctions offer all the opportunity to develop their own ability and understanding of photography by applying for one of the three levels.

There are three levels of Distinctions – **Licentiate**, **Associate** and **Fellowship**. Should you be awarded a Distinction, you are entitled to use the Distinction while you remain a member of the RPS.

Applying for our Distinctions takes you on a personal journey, exploring not just “technical competence” but how you want to develop as a photographer, how others react to your work, and what we want to say as a photographer. Therefore, we ask for a body of work that shows not just the content of the images but also the intent of the photographer. Essentially, photography has a purpose, and that is to explain, challenge, inspire and tell stories. Our distinctions make us better photographers in that sense, telling our own stories

LICENTIATE

For those who have started their photographic journey. An open and approachable level for those to develop their competence in camera work, visual awareness, technical quality and presentation.

ASSOCIATE

Photographers who want to submit a body of work that demonstrates a high technical competence and comprehensive knowledge of their chosen genre, that also shows an individual approach.

FELLOWSHIP

Photographers working at the highest level in their chosen field, with a distinctive body of work.

LICENTIATE

There are no restrictions on the subject matter when applying for this level. A Panel of Associate or Fellowship members of the RPS assesses your submission.

ASSOCIATE AND FELLOWSHIP

Submissions are assessed by genres. Assessors are Fellows of the RPS or, in particular circumstances, external advisors may be consulted.

The RPS uses Genres within the distinctions process to ensure that Applicants and the RPS have the reassurance and confidence that a submission is assessed by those Assessors with the appropriate understanding, knowledge and experience to effectively evaluate a particular submission. Genres are the name given to the pathway within the overall educational structure and process to achieving a distinction.

THE GENRE PANELS AND DEFINITIONS

APPLIED PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography which has been produced for an intended purpose, utilising a stated output.

CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography that communicates a visual realisation of a stated argument, idea or concept.

DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography which communicates a clear narrative through visual literacy.

FILM

The work can be created in any moving image format including film, video, and digital media.

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography that illustrates and interprets earth's habitats, from the remotest wilderness to urban environs.

NATURAL HISTORY PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography which illustrates an element of the natural world with in an unrestricted, uncultivated and untamed environment.

PHOTOBOOKS

A concept-led book that uses Photography as a medium or visual communication in its own right.

RESEARCH

This Panel encompasses research in the arts & sciences of photography. It also looks at how photography is considered, how its history is recorded and preserved, how photography is taught and how it is understood in its own terms and as part of wider visual and artistic culture.

SCIENCE

Scientific and medical imaging, medical photography or other related discipline by the submission of a portfolio.

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography which communicates a sense of place.

VISUAL ART PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography which communicates a creative vision.

The definitions above are what the Associate & Fellowship Panel Members are looking for within your body of work.

For the full information regarding Genres, Criteria and Requirements, please read the Licentiate, Associate or Fellowship Requirements Guide.

HOW TO APPLY

Consider the three level's available to you, find out what each level is asking, its' Criteria and Requirements. You need to ask yourself, which one is most suitable for you. To help you decide there are many resources; including Guides, Example submissions to view, Events and Journal articles, and of course you can contact the Distinctions Team at distinctions@rps.org.

Once you have decided on the Level and the Genre Panel (if appropriate) book an assessment date.

- Check the website for availability and dates.
- Download, complete and return to us the relevant Booking Form.
(On receipt and successful processing, you will receive a confirmation email and a Submission Details Form).
- Read the instructions and information within the confirmation email regarding the next steps of your submission and assessment.
- All submissions must be received at least 21 days prior to the assessment date. Submissions received after the 21 day deadline will not be assessed.
(If the Booking Form or Submission is incomplete you will be contacted by a member of the Distinctions Team.)
- Applicants can submit more than one application per assessment. All submissions must be booked separately and must be different bodies of work.

GENERAL TERMS OF APPLYING

- If a submission is incomplete, the assessment will not take place. Please read the guides to the individual Level Requirements.
- Images from a previously successful submission are not permitted for use in any subsequent submissions at any level.
- The applicant must own the copyright to, and be the creator of, all the photographic and creative elements in a submission.
- Third-party images may only be used in the following Genres: Research, Film & Photobooks
- All assessments are assessed in front of an audience.
- At each level the submission must be a new body of work. Individual images may not be used in multiple submissions to different levels.
- All assessments that are assessed in front of an audience are carried out anonymously, with the applicants name only being announced after a successful assessment.
- Qualifications and Distinctions are awarded to members of the Society, although non-members can apply, it is agreed that on the conditions of the by-laws that membership is taken up by the applicant on the success of an application or submission.
- The RPS reserves the right to request the original file, of an image used in a submission.



DISTINCTIONS: THE PROCESS AND FORMATS

ASSESSMENT DAYS: HOW YOUR WORK IS ASSESSED

The day begins with a welcome from the Distinctions Team and a brief introduction from the Chair. Each submission is assessed by a Panel consisting of a Chair and a minimum of three Assessors. Submissions are assessed anonymously; only the Chair and Distinctions Team are aware of the applicant's name. Submissions are assessed against the published criteria for the appropriate Level and Genre.

LICENTIATE: PRINT

Valid until: March 2024

- The prints are displayed as per the presentation layout; in a maximum of three rows. The assessors initially view the submission, followed by a detailed examination of the images.
- The Chair will ask for initial vote, Assessors will show either a red or green card. The Chair will ask two of Assessors to convey their views and any concerns regarding the submission referring to the Criteria.
- The Chair will ask the remaining Assessors for any further comments.
- The Chair will give a summary of the comments made.
- A final vote is taken, and the decision is made. If successful, the applicants name will be announced, and if not successful the assessors will write down the reasons why they cannot award the submission.
- The Chair will summarise the reasons for the outcome.
- All unsuccessful applicants will receive a feedback letter giving the reasons why they were not successful within 28 days from the date of the assessment. However, there may be occasions where this is surpassed due to circumstances out of our control i.e. illness.

LICENTIATE: DIGITAL

- The images are displayed in numeric order, and the whole submission is displayed twice.
- The Presentation Layout is then left on the screen while a decision is made.
- The Chair will ask for initial vote, Assessors will show either a red or green card. The Chair will ask two of Assessors to convey their views and any concerns regarding the submission referring to the Criteria.
- The Chair will ask the remaining Assessors for any further comments.
- The Chair will give a summary of the comments made.
- A final vote is taken, and the decision is made. If successful, the applicants name will be announced, and if not successful the assessors will write down the reasons why they cannot award the submission.
- The Chair will summarise the reasons for the outcome.
- All unsuccessful applicants will receive a feedback letter giving the reasons why they were not successful within 28 days from the date of the assessment. However, there may be occasions where this is surpassed due to circumstances out of our control i.e. illness.

LICENTIATE: BOOK

Valid until: March 2024

- Books are viewed by the Assessors and the assessment procedure is in-line with a Print assessment, except books are not displayed to an audience.

ASSOCIATE: PRINT

- The Prints are displayed as per the presentation layout; in a maximum of three rows and the Statement of Intent is read out. The assessors initially view the portfolio as a whole, followed by a detailed examination of the images.
- The Chair will ask for initial vote, Assessors will show either a red or green card. The Chair will ask two of Assessors to convey their views and any concerns regarding the submission referring to the Criteria.
- The Chair will ask the remaining Assessors for any further comments.
- The Chair will give a summary of the comments made.
- A final vote is taken, and the decision is made. If successful, the applicants name will be announced, and if not successful the assessors will write down the reasons why they cannot award the submission.
- The Chair will summarise the reasons for the outcome.
- All unsuccessful applicants will receive a feedback letter giving the reasons why they were not successful within 28 days from the date of the assessment. However, there may be occasions where this is surpassed due to circumstances out of our control i.e. illness.

ASSOCIATE: DIGITAL

- The images are displayed in numeric order and the statement is read out, then the whole portfolio is displayed twice.
- The Presentation Layout is then left on the screen while a decision is made.
- The Chair will ask for initial vote, Assessors will show either a red or green card. The Chair will ask two of Assessors to convey their views and any concerns regarding the submission referring to the Criteria.
- The Chair will ask the remaining Assessors for any further comments.
- The Chair will give a summary of the comments made.
- A final vote is taken, and the decision is made. If successful, the applicants name will be announced, and if not successful the assessors will write down the reasons why they cannot award the submission.
- The Chair will summarise the reasons for the outcome.
- All unsuccessful applicants will receive a feedback letter giving the reasons why they were not successful within 28 days from the date of the assessment. However, there may be occasions where this is surpassed due to circumstances out of our control i.e. illness.

ASSOCIATE: BOOK

- Books are viewed by the Assessors and the assessment procedure is in-line with a Print assessment, except books are not displayed to an audience.

FELLOWSHIP: PRINT

- The Prints are displayed as per the presentation layout; in a maximum of three rows and the Statement of Intent is read out. The assessors initially view the submission as a whole, followed by a detailed examination of the images.
- The Chair will ask for initial vote, Assessors will show either a red or green card. The Chair will ask two of Assessors to convey their views and any concerns regarding the submission referring to the Criteria.
- The Chair will ask the remaining Assessors for any further comments.
- The Chair will give a summary of the comments made.
- A final vote is taken, and the decision is made. If successful, the applicants name will be announced, and if not successful the assessors will write down the reasons why they cannot award the submission.
- The Chair will summarise the reasons for the outcome.
- All unsuccessful applicants will receive a feedback letter giving the reasons why they were not successful within 28 days from the date of the assessment. However, there may be occasions where this is surpassed due to circumstances out of our control i.e. illness.

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- The Presentation Layout is then left on the screen while a decision is made.
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- The Chair will ask the remaining Assessors for any further comments.
- The Chair will give a summary of the comments made.
- A final vote is taken, and the decision is made. If successful, the applicants name will be announced, and if not successful the assessors will write down the reasons why they cannot award the submission.
- The Chair will summarise the reasons for the outcome.
- All unsuccessful applicants will receive a feedback letter giving the reasons why they were not successful within 28 days from the date of the assessment. However, there may be occasions where this is surpassed due to circumstances out of our control i.e. illness.

FELLOWSHIP: BOOK

- Books are viewed by the Assessors and the assessment procedure is in-line with a Print assessment, except books are not displayed to an audience.



DISTINCTIONS: THE PROCESS AND FORMATS

NOTIFICATION OF RESULT & ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

SUCCESSFUL SUBMISSIONS - A submission that fulfils the criteria

The Chair will announce that the submission has been awarded a Distinction, the applicant will also receive an email notifying them of the outcome. Applicants will receive a letter of confirmation and a Certificate under the Seal of The Society; signed by the President. They will also receive a lapel badge and a digital file containing the Distinction emblem which can be used on personal stationery and website. Names of successful applicants will be listed within the RPS Journal.

Applicants are entitled – and encouraged – to use the post nominals LRPS/ARPS/FRPS after their name whilst remaining a current member of the RPS.

UNSUCCESSFUL SUBMISSIONS - A submission that does not fulfil the criteria

The Chair will announce that the submission has been unsuccessful, the applicant will also receive an email notifying them of the outcome.

The applicants name remains anonymous.

All applicants will receive a feedback letter giving the reasons why they were not successful within 28 days from the date of the assessment. However, there may be occasions where this is surpassed due to circumstances out of our control i.e. illness.

Please note that if an applicant for Associate or Fellowship is unsuccessful, they are not permitted to resubmit the same submission to another Genre.

RESUBMISSION - A submission that does not fulfil the criteria

A Resubmission is offered by the Chair for applicants who have demonstrated that they have the necessary skills to address the concerns noted within the feedback.

The Chair will announce that the submission has not been successful, but the applicant will be invited to make a resubmission. The applicant will also receive an email notifying them of the outcome.

The applicants name remains anonymous.

All applicants will receive a feedback letter giving the reasons why they were not successful within 28 days from the date of the assessment. However, there may be occasions where this is surpassed due to circumstances out of our control i.e. illness.

Please note that if an applicant for Associate or Fellowship is offered a resubmission, they are not permitted to resubmit the same submission to another Genre.

There is no time limit to make a resubmission but we would recommend within 2 years as a guideline.

EXEMPTION APPLICATION

Applicants will be notified of the outcome by email. Successful Applicants will receive a letter of confirmation and a Certificate under the Seal of The Society; signed by the President. You will also receive a lapel badge and a digital file containing the Distinction emblem which can be used on your personal stationery. Names of successful applicants will be listed within the RPS Journal.

You are entitled – and encouraged – to use the post nominals LRPS / ARPS after your name whilst remaining a current member of the RPS.

RESEARCH APPLICATION

All Applicants will be notified by the Distinctions Manager regarding the outcome of their submission.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES QUALIFICATION

All Applicants will be notified by the Distinctions Manager regarding the outcome of their submission.

IMAGING SCIENCE QUALIFICATION

All Applicants will be notified by the Distinctions Manager regarding the outcome of their submission.



DISTINCTIONS: THE PRACTICALITIES

THIS SECTION SETS OUT THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF
APPLYING FOR A DISTINCTION

CREDIT: Kyle Tallett FRPS
GENRE: Fine Art Photography

THE SUBMISSION

PRINT

When you are sending your submission, please make sure that:

- your prints are packed away in numeric order. On the back of each print you must include your name and the print number.
- You ensure two copies of your presentation layout, statement of intent* and Submission Details Form are enclosed.
- Your name must not be shown on the front of any of the prints. Failure to adhere to this requirement may result in your submission being postponed.
- It is securely packed. Please do not use any materials to pack your portfolio that may contaminate or damage your prints.
- Your portfolio box is clearly labelled.
- The parcel must arrive at least 21 days prior to the assessment date. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that it arrives on time.
- You will receive an email confirmation from the distinctions department when your submission has been received at RPS House – Bristol.
- You must also include a digital copy of your images, Presentation Layout & Statement of Intent* as well as the final prints.

*ARPS & FRPS

DIGITAL

- When you're ready to send your images, please send them via the following link: distinctions.wetransfer.com
Also ensuring that you include two copies of your presentation layout, statement of intent* and Submission Details Form.
- Please ensure your digital files are correctly numbered in the order in which they should be projected i.e. 01.jpg, 02.jpg etc.
- Your name must not be visible in any digital image and must not be included in the file name.
- Your digital files must arrive at least 21 days prior to the assessment date. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that they arrive on time.
- You will receive an email confirmation from the distinctions department when your submission has been received.

*ARPS & FRPS

BOOK

When you are sending your Books, please make sure that:

- It is securely packed. Please do not use any packing materials that may contaminate or damage your books.
- You ensure a copy of your statement of intent* and Submission Details Form are enclosed.
- The Applicants name must not appear on the submission.
- Your portfolio box is clearly labelled.
- The parcel must arrive at least 21 days prior to the assessment date. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that it arrives on time.
- You will receive an email confirmation from the distinctions department when your submission has been received at RPS House – Bristol.
- You must also include a digital copy, Statement of Intent* as well as the final printed book.

*ARPS & FRPS

OVERSEAS PARCELS

- Import duties, taxes, and charges are the applicants' responsibility.
 - Please check with your country's customs office to determine what these additional costs will be prior to sending your portfolio.
- Please attach the portfolio label provided on the front of your parcel. You will be notified by email when we receive your portfolio.
- The RPS will not take responsibility for paying import fees and will not accept parcels requiring additional payments. Applicants will be required to pay any outstanding customs charges.
- Note – it may cost more to have your prints returned than to reprint them; Please state if you do not wish them to be returned. If prints or digital files are not to be returned, the RPS may retain them for educational purposes, otherwise they will be destroyed.
- If you have requested for your portfolio to be returned, please ensure we have valid credit card details, as payment will be taken on receipt of the courier invoice.

PERSONAL DELIVERY AND COLLECTION

You may deliver your submission to us at RPS House, Bristol, during the following working days:

Monday	10am – 4pm
Tuesday	10am – 4pm
Wednesday	10am – 4pm
Thursday	10am – 4pm
Friday	10am – 4pm

If you wish to collect your submission on the day of the assessment or after, you should state this on your Booking Form by ticking *PERSONAL COLLECTION*.

To collect your submission at a later date – during office hours – please contact the Distinctions Department. [distinctions@rps.org] We require at least two working days' notice for collection.

FEES

- For current fees, please visit our website and booking forms.

RETURNING YOUR PORTFOLIO

- Please see the *Booking Form* for details.
- Personal collection – please see “personal delivery and collection” above.
- If you have requested your portfolio to be returned, please ensure we have valid credit card details.
- All reasonable care will be taken with your submission, but the RPS will not be responsible for any loss or damage whilst in its care or in transit. By submitting your *Booking Form*, you agree to these terms.
- If you have requested non-Return of your portfolio, we will retain it for up to one month, after which it will be disposed of.

RETENTION OF PORTFOLIOS

On occasion the RPS would like to retain submissions beyond the date of assessment to promote The RPS and its Distinctions. You will be notified via email with further details if we would like to retain your submission.

CANCELLATION/DEFERRALS

After submitting your *Booking Form*, if for any reason you are unable to send your submission or need to make other changes, please e-mail distinctions@rps.org

- Any cancellations or change requests must be made via e-mail. If you cancel/defer within 21 days of your assessment date you will be fully charged for the assessment. We are unable to offer a refund or deferral.
- You can request once only to cancel/defer 22 days or more prior to your assessment, without any charge, but all future requests will incur a £25 administration charge.
- The RPS is unable to refund any cancellation or offer a transfer to another event if the attendee does not notify the Distinctions Department by e-mail 21 days prior to the event start date. email distinctions@rps.org
- The RPS reserves the right to cancel any event 7 days prior to its start date, or less than 24 hours due to adverse weather conditions or extraordinary circumstances beyond its control. All attendees are advised to check hotel and travel cancellation/refund policies, as the RPS is unable to offer compensation for any loss.

APPEALS & COMPLAINTS

For appeals or complaints please contact Andy Moore, Distinctions Manager at andy@rps.org for details.



WHERE TO GET ADVICE ON YOUR SUBMISSION

CREDIT: James Kelly LRPS

There are a number of ways in which you can obtain official guidance when working towards applying for a Distinction.

- The website has examples of successful applications (www.rps.org/qualifications)
- Attend a Licentiate, Associate or Fellowship Advisory Day.
 - These are organised throughout the UK, with web advisory sessions for overseas members. These are led by Assessors who review potential submissions brought on the day. (see below).
- Attend an Assessment.
 - These are open to all who want to watch, whether or not your submission is being assessed. Dates and locations of assessments are available online. please contact the Distinctions Department to register your interest in attending as a spectator.
- You are recommended only to obtain advice from a current Assessor who will be aware of the current criteria and requirements.

ADVISORY DAYS

Distinctions Advisory days are educational events and provide an opportunity for anyone working towards a Distinction to receive informed advice from Assessors of the appropriate Distinctions Panel. You will see successful submissions and have the opportunity to receive comments on your own work, and to hear comments on work by others attending throughout the day. Many people attend initially as an observer to begin to understand what is required, and the differences between the different Genres and Levels.

- The applicant should bring a working submission, plus a maximum of 5 spare images.
- Prints should be mounted but not framed, and to the actual size that the applicant intends to submit.
- The advice given will depend on the portfolio seen on the day and the advice from an assessor is guidance only. It is the responsibility of the applicant to make the final decision on which images to put forward for assessment
- At the assessment there will minimum of three Assessors who may view your portfolio differently. Individual Assessors can only give advice and cannot guarantee success.
- Fellowship Advisory days are held at venues throughout the UK. We advise only attending two Fellowship Advisory Days per a submission.
- Distinctions Advisory Days are organised by Overseas Chapters and certain regions may consider Licentiate, Associate and Fellowship applications in all Genres.
- Genre Advisory days – open to everyone who has an interest within the Genre. These events are held in conjunction with the Special Interest Groups.

ONE2ONE ONLINE REVIEW

Members only can receive one2one advice using online software. Please visit the website for more information.