

The LRPS Distinction

A Very Unofficial Guide

Disclaimer Notice

Please note that the views and observations herein set out have in no way been endorsed by the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) or any other official body.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors.

You must refer to the official documentation for the most up to date criteria.

This is often updated, so keep *your* documentation up to date.

If you have any specific queries the 'RPS Distinctions ****Official Group****' Facebook page is a good place to start.



12 July 2024

15.3abc

“If you've done 6 impossible things this morning,
why not round it off with breakfast at Milliways,
the Restaurant at the End of the Universe?”

— Douglas Adams, ‘The Restaurant at the End of the Universe’

“Judges shouldn’t have to work to enjoy the images”

— Paul Wilkinson

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RPS Distinctions

Introduction

When looking at the possibility of achieving a RPS distinction, there seems to be a certain mystique about the process, which has prompted this a set of notes which I hope will help others.

These notes have been put together after many visits to various advisory days, assessments and other research, with the aim of giving readers a starter for 10 on how to proceed, should you wish to do so.

These are given in good faith, but ultimately **advice from RPS qualified assessors must be sought before entering a panel for a distinction, either at a RPS advisory day or with an official One2One session.**

Do not rely too much on friends / family / social media to give advice. Being successful in camera club competitions is not necessarily a good guide as to how your images can be assembled into a cohesive panel.

In the past the RPS tried to encourage print submissions, and these notes were originally slanted towards prints, rather than digital images. As of April 2024, **only** digital images will be accepted by the RPS for the LRPS.

What is a Distinction?

The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) has three levels of distinctions which are:

- Licentiate, the LRPS — consisting of a panel of 10 images
- Associate, the ARPS — consisting of a panel of 15 images and a 'Statement of Intent' (SoI)
- Fellowship, the FRPS — consisting of a panel of 20 or 21 images (authors choice) and a SoI

On successful completion, the holder is entitled to use the distinction post-nominal letters, **providing they remain members of the Society**. A lapse in membership may mean a loss of the award.

Briefly, all the distinctions require a balanced, cohesive body of work with a strong element of design to them.

The differences then become one of an increasing standard of craft, technical requirement, and artistic vision.

- The LRPS requires you to show a variety of approach and techniques, with no repetition.
- The ARPS requires a body of work, based on one of the nine genres, that are of a **high standard** and accompanied by written **Statement of Intent (SoI)**.
- The FRPS is the highest level of Distinction. It requires a **distinctive** and cohesive body of work, again accompanied by a written **Statement of Intent**. The genres available are the same as for the ARPS.
- There are nine different genres to choose from, such as Travel, Landscape, Natural History, and Visual Arts to name just four. Some of these genres have additional requirements. (See the RPS website for latest information, as these genres and requirements change from time to time).

Total Number of Distinctions Awarded

Total Number of Distinctions Awarded in 2020 (2021 AGM)

The 2021 membership of the RPS was approximately 10,655, including 1,338 international members.

- Approx. 3175 members hold an LRPS distinction (5% international)
- Approx. 2249 members hold an ARPS distinction (15% international)
- Approx. 587 members hold an FRPS distinction (20% international) with 190 holding Hon FRPS.
- In 2020: 675 panels were submitted for assessment, totalling over 10,000 images.

Total Number of Distinctions Awarded in 2021 (2022 AGM)

The 2022 membership of the RPS was approximately 10,249, including 1,275 international members.

- Approx. 3091 members hold an LRPS distinction
- Approx. 2239 members hold an ARPS distinction
- Approx. 663 members hold an FRPS distinction with 204 holding Hon FRPS.
- In 2021: 741 panels were submitted for assessment, totalling over 10,400 images.

Total Number of Distinctions Awarded in 2022 (2023 AGM)

The 2023 membership of the RPS is approximately 10,016.

- Approx. Xxxx members hold an LRPS distinction (Not given this year)
- Approx. Xxxx members hold an ARPS distinction (Not given this year)
- Approx. Xxxx members hold an FRPS distinction with xxx holding Hon FRPS.
- In 2022: 593 panels were submitted for assessment.

Changes in the Distinctions Process

Changes in Distinctions Process (Jan 2021)

With every panel submitted, a layout plan has to be included as part of the submission. In January 2021, changes were announced regarding the layout of distinctions, mainly affecting the digital submissions.

For prints the old 'Hanging Plans' are now referred to as 'Presentation Layouts – Print Format', but the method of laying out the prints has not changed, other than the name of the templates used.

For digital submissions, the old method (dubbed 'Images for Screen') required that images must follow a sequence rather than a fixed layout as per prints. This has now been changed to allow a choice of either a sequence, as before, or a fixed layout, as for prints. These are referred to as 'Presentation Layouts – Digital Format'. If you require your images to be viewed as a sequence choose the template 'ONE row of 10 images'.

The current presentation layout templates are available on the RPS Distinctions webpage.

Book submissions have also changed, and the number of images included is now the same as for Prints and Digital. Books now require a **minimum** of 10 images for Licentiate (previously 20), 15 images for Associate (previously 30) and 20 images for Fellowship (previously 40). Adding more images than the minimum stated is acceptable, but all images in the book must meet the criteria for that particular distinction.

Changes in LRPS Distinctions Process (Oct 2023 / Jan 2024)

The RPS has announced that the LRPS will be Digital **only** from the 1st April 2024. This will mean no more prints or book submissions.

It is claimed that it will make the process easier. In reality it is probably a recognition that many photographers have stopped making prints, as well as a cost saving measure by the RPS.

Members entering a submission can choose to design the overall layout in either 1, 2 or 3 rows. How the images are laid out is an individual choice, and it is not mandatory to use one of the RPS templates. The digital format reduces the flexibility on how a panel is laid out, and some of the more creative layouts do not really fit the digital format.

In all cases, the assessors will look for evidence of a well-designed presentation, that is cohesive and balanced.

As of Apr 2024, the details of the digital applications has still to be finalised and should be published in May summer 2024.

Changes in LRPS Distinctions Process (April / May 2024)

News expected soon...

What is a Panel or ‘Presentation Layout’?

The panel, or ‘Presentation Layout’, (previously named the ‘Hanging Plan’), is a body of work that is **balanced** and **cohesive**, forming a united whole. The layout should show an obvious structure, with a large element of design to it, rather than a random collection of favourite images.

When it is viewed as a complete unit, the whole must be greater than the parts.

Each image must harmonise with other images within the panel, generally by having a balance of structure, tones, colour harmony, and aspect ratios. Often this is achieved by pairing images, either across the panel horizontally and / or vertically. Generally, a panel with a symmetric shape is ideal. (See later for examples).

Note that images do NOT have to be ‘competition winners’ in their own right, but must be part of the ‘balanced structure’ or, in the case of A & F panels, the chosen theme. Some images may seem quite banal, but can work well in the framework of a panel. However, weak images will be commented upon, so a **consistent** standard must be maintained throughout.

In order to start your peregrination towards a distinction, the first job is to gather sufficient images that are all of the very best quality. A 3×ratio of images selected to the number of images required in a panel is a good starting point. So for an ‘L’ panel of 10 images – start with about 30 images of the very highest quality. An F panel of 21 images would require some 60 images or more to choose from!

This will give a good basis for choosing the variety of images required.

Quality comes first, panelling later!

**If you cannot find enough images to make a panel,
then you are not ready to apply!**

Comparison with a Normal Camera Club Panel Competition

In any **Camera Club** panel competition of, say, 3—7 images, a judge will be looking for three key attributes:

- Consistent performance & quality across all images. Having one weak image out of a field of strong images, means the weak image will stick out like a sore thumb, and visa versa.
- How well is the panel laid out? For example – do the end images look inwards? Is there a natural central core to the panel?
- Is the story consistent across the panel? (Not so important for the L panel).

A Brief Word on ‘Statements of Intent’ or Sol’s

- Explains the aims and objectives.
- Images that do not appear as part of the SoI will be assessed appropriately.
- Stated aims or objectives in the SoI that do not appear in the panel will also be assessed appropriately
- Do not include any technical information.
- 150 words, but 300 For Contemporary

Why do a Distinction?

There is no doubt that creating a successful panel takes much time and expense – so why do it?

Some of the reasons given are:

- The process of putting a panel together will make you a better photographer.
- Your panel will be assessed against a published set of criteria, laid down by the RPS, and if successful will mean you have reached a certain standard and be accepted and recognised as a Licentiate of the RPS. This is different to entering a normal competition, where you are competing with others and being judged by a panel of judges who award scores in order to rank images in a given order.
- The distinction letters may be used after your name, provided you are a member of the RPS.

The Distinction Assessment Process (Digital)

- For each assessment, there are between 3 and 5 assessors plus a Chairman. Three is a quorum.
- The Chairman has a casting vote when required, such as an even split in the vote.
- At RPS House, the assessors are seated along the front row of the auditorium approximately 3.75m (12ft) from the 4×2.25m (13×7½ft) screen.
- The images are projected twice, at full size for 7 seconds.
- The ‘presentation layout’ is then projected and assessors are asked for their first vote, which is taken by raising a red or green card, visible only to the Chairman.
- Initially, two assessors are invited to talk about the panel, possibly including one assessor who raised red card and one a green card. Assessors stand in front of the screen to give their comments.
- Comments will include how well the images have fulfilled the criteria or not, as the case maybe.
- Further comments are invited from the other assessors, before the chairman sums up the opinions. (Assessors are encouraged to listen to other views and change their mind if swayed by the discussion).
- The assessors may refer to a copy of the ‘presentation layout’ which you supply with the submission.
- A second vote is taken.
- The chairman immediately announces the result. Either the name of the successful candidate is read out and awarded the distinction immediately, or the reasons for not making a recommendation are summed up by the chairman. Often a re-submission will be allowed. The unsuccessful candidate’s name is not revealed.
- Assessors do not know the candidates name, the chairman only receives that information after the vote.
- **Print assessments (A / F):**
- A similar procedure applies to prints, which are displayed according to the layout plan, on the three rails of the display wall.
- Assessors will examine prints very closely, often taking them off the racks for a closer look.

Notes:

- Normally, assessments run for two days, but sometimes assessments may be completed in a day, even if scheduled for two days.
- The projector used has a resolution of 4096 x 2400, but the maximum resolution of any digital image is now set at 3840×2160 pixels. Lower resolution images will appear smaller on screen, surrounded by a black border.
- As of May 2024, we do not know if the LRPS distinctions will continue to be held at RPS House or if the assessors will be working from home on their own computers. The current perception is that the assessors will be working from home in the future, but to date they have been held at RPS House.

You don't fail a distinction, you are just not recommended!

Distinction Pass Rates (updated with 2023 Annual Report figures)

In the past, the general advice from assessors was to enter print based panels rather than digital sequences, as there was a higher chance of a successful recommendation. However, this is no longer the case.

In 2020 the individual pass rates for each distinction were:

- For Licentiate distinctions, 179 candidates were successful (60% pass rate).
- For Associate distinctions, 131 candidates were successful (52% pass rate).
- For Fellowship distinctions, 24 candidates were successful (22% pass rate).
- One2One interviews totalled 376 (2021)

According to the 2021 Annual Report, a total of 675 assessments were carried out, with a 51% pass rate overall.

In 2021 the individual pass rates for each distinction were:

- For Licentiate distinctions, 240 candidates were successful (73% pass rate).
- For Associate distinctions, 157 candidates were successful (59% pass rate).
- For Fellowship distinctions, 67 candidates were successful (44% pass rate).
- One2One interviews totalled 631 (2022).

According to the 2022 Annual Report, a total of 741 assessments were carried out, with a 63% pass rate overall.

In 2022 the individual pass rates for each distinction were:

- For Licentiate distinctions, 148 candidates were successful (55% pass rate).
- For Associate distinctions, 88 candidates were successful (50% pass rate).
- For Fellowship distinctions, 46 candidates were successful (30% pass rate).
- One2One interviews totalled 400 (2023).

According to the 2023 Annual Report, a total of 593 assessments were carried out, with a 48% pass rate.

Distinction Costs

On top of the cost of producing the images and perhaps printing them, there is a submission fee for each assessment.

Currently (May 2024) they are:

- LRPS £85
- ARPS £120
- FRPS £170

- One-2-One £
- Membership Fee £

Concessionary fees are available.

Advisory Days

Attending Advisory Days

Advisory days are generally run by the RPS regional organisers themselves, rather than the RPS direct.

Prior to submitting a panel for examination, it is **strongly** advised that candidates attend one of these advisory days, first as an observer, then later, to have their work critiqued. Advisory days can be booked in any region if you are willing to travel, although virtual advisory's are becoming more common. There is no limit on the number of advisory days you may attend.

Alternatively, it is now possible to attend a live assessment as an observer via Zoom, (see the RPS website for details). The only disadvantage is that A & F print panels will appear to be very small on Zoom and individual photographs cannot be seen in any detail. With digital images, these are shown full screen in a sequence.

Additionally, candidates can book a 40 minute 'one2one' portfolio review with an RPS advisor, but note there is a maximum of two 'one2one' sessions for the same panel. These sessions are only available to current RPS members and cost £40 at time of writing. **It is advised to book 'one2one' sessions a minimum of 6 weeks before any pre-booked assessment.**

In both cases, candidates will receive expert **advice** on their panels from qualified individuals who are up to date with the latest rules and criteria. Your panel plus 5 spares are required, allowing the assessor to offer advice on alternative layouts.

Attending an advisory day as an **observer** is especially valuable for anyone just embarking on a distinction. From my observations at several advisory days, many of the candidates would have achieved far more out of the day if they had attended as an observer beforehand.

Each advisory day generally starts with a display of a successful print panel of a very high standard. This is available for close viewing before the main event starts. This allows the 'senses' to tune into the required standard.

Do ensure you have read the current Official Criteria for your panel. They may ask questions on it!

The assessors are very honest in their assessments, giving good advice on a range of issues.

For example, at one assessment, one candidate had not done any post processing at all, using JPEG's direct from the camera, and was adamant that everything had to be done in camera. It was clear that no preparatory work for the event had been done beforehand. The assessors comments were direct and very much to the point, and indicated that post processing was expected as part of the assessment. Remember, this is all done in front of a large audience of participants and observers!

All panels must be accompanied by a 'presentation layout' containing thumbnail images indicating how the images are laid out. For in person advisories a printed 'presentation layout' will be required.

It was emphasised that gimmicky or old techniques will not impress, and assessors will drill down beneath any special effects to the underlying image. The pictorial content of the image must be of the required standard to begin with, and that any 'special effect' must be used to enhance the message.

For L panels, it is probably best to avoid effects such as **extreme** HDR, infra-red, major cut and paste, texture overlays and backgrounds, unless done to a very high standard. In other words, avoid anything that might raise questions in the assessors minds.

It should be stressed that the assessors at the **actual** RPS examination are the final arbiters on your panel.

Advisory days and 'one2one' sessions are in place to help improve your chances of success, they are not a guarantee of success.

Spare Images for Advisory days

At assessment days you are required to supply several spare images. The number of spares required seems to vary – anything from 5 to 10. These are used to swap out weak images and help to rearrange the panel. One tip from an advisory day was to take both monochrome and colour versions of images to give a choice.

Suggested Plan for Attending LRPS Advisories & Assessments

- Attend a real RPS assessment day, as an observer, via Zoom.
- Attend a minimum of one advisory day as an observer.
- Prepare a panel, and presentation layout.
- Attend an advisory assessment day with your own panel, including at least 5 spare images.
- Book a ‘one2one’ session for a final review, if you are a member.
- After heeding all the advice, book the real assessment.

If intending to pursue an A or F panel, then a ‘one2one’ session early on maybe helpful in clarifying ideas and the SoI and suggest ways forward, before attending a 2nd one prior to submission.

Typical RPS Statement often read out on an Advisory Day

The Panel experts do not always agree unanimously on a submission. It therefore follows that the advice given by any individual Panel member may not be that of the majority, but the advice given today is based on the criteria and not personal preferences.

All comments made today are the opinion of one person, given their extensive experience and knowledge of the distinctions process, however, you should remember that the final assessment will be based on the results of the assessors opinions and discussion. Ultimately it is the applicants / photographer’s responsibility to meet the criteria of the assessment, and for those applying at Associate / Fellowship level, they must present a body of work which best reflects their own statement of intent.

The advisor will suggest one of the following on your images:

- Ready for submission (but this does not guarantee you success)
- Ready for Submission with minor alterations
- Not ready, but a suitable basis for a submission with more work
- Not ready, but a suitable basis for submission with a lot more work
- Unsuitable for submission and unlikely to fulfil requirements
- Does not show progression from previous level of Distinction

The advisor will make a record of what they have recommended on the ‘record of advice’ form and give you a copy for you to sign and keep. It is possible a Panel member may give advice to submit and then, after discussion with the other panel members, may vote against the submission on the assessment day. Similarly, advice to submit in a category is given on the same basis.

The Society makes every effort to give applicants the best possible chance of success while also ensuring that consistent standards are maintained.

In summary:

- We do our best to help you prepare for a submission
- On the assessment day, we may change our opinion after hearing the views of other panel members
- We shall be honest and if your work is below the standard required, we shall say so
- PLEASE ask questions; PLEASE listen carefully
- PLEASE do not take video and photographs (except of your own panel)

Preparing Digital Images for a Distinction

Up to Dec 2020, PDI's had to be organised as a **sequence**, with the flow of images being a very important consideration in the assessment, however, the traditional 'print presentation' layout may now be used.

The sequencing layout may still be used if required, although the sequencing approach can cause some confusion as how to make the sequence 'flow'. (See later)

Appropriate templates for the image layout can be downloaded from the RPS website or can be created by yourself, noting that you are limited to a maximum of three rows. Choosing to have your panel shown as one row is equivalent to the sequence approach noted above.

For digital images, the equipment used at the Bristol HQ is a very high quality 4096×2400 projector, which may amplify any imperfections in a digital image. (Search for 'RPS Bristol auditorium' to see images of the hall).

However, it is likely that the L panels will not be assessed at the Bristol HQ in the future, but will be done via Zoom using the assessors home equipment. (We await updates during Summer 2024)

From 1st Sept 2022 the **maximum** image size was reduced to 3840×2160 pixels (W×H). This is the same resolution as any UHD monitor, giving an aspect ratio of 16:9. It is recommended that images should not be smaller than 1920×1080 pixels (W×H). Equivalent to a FHD monitor.

A typical resolution of a good quality 27 inch photographic monitor may only be 2560x1440.

At home, any PDI's will need to be reviewed at 100% on a good quality **calibrated** monitor or projector. For some monitors an image at 100% may be larger than the size of the screen.

A mockup of the panel on the computer is an invaluable tool for testing the panel layout and composition.

- The advantage of digital is the ease of handling via computer and the cost advantage.
- The disadvantage is that your monitor **must** be calibrated to ensure assessors see the images as you originally intended.
- In addition, assessors don't see the overall panel as a whole except as a presentation layout on screen, which tends to lose the 'wow' factor of a full print panel.

Technical Requirements for Digital Images for Projection

- Digital Images should fit within a maximum pixel dimension of 3840×2160 (W×H).
- Images with dimensions smaller than the ideal size quoted above, will be projected at 1:1 and appear on screen smaller than a full size image will. The area surrounding the image will be shown as black.
- The minimum pixel dimensions is 1920×1080. This is the same aspect ratio as the full size image.
- Images must be in RGB mode (including monochrome images) within the sRGB colour space.
- Save as a JPEG format at the highest quality (100%)
- For the avoidance of doubt the 'PPI' (Pixels Per Inch) of an image has no effect on a projected image and is not considered at the assessment, which is purely based on how an image looks on screen. The DPI/PPI setting within a digital photo has no bearing on the digital image quality! However, if your software insists on a figure, use 300 ppi. See reference below.¹
- Note that in a portrait format, images will appear smaller, as they take up less screen space, and may have a slightly reduced impact, however, the assessors take this into account.
- Low resolution images with any technical issues will have them emphasised when viewed on a large screen, e.g. noise, banding, jaggy / zig-zag lines and edges, rather than the desired smooth edges and transitions.
- At assessment, images are displayed for 7 seconds each, viewed in a sequence, twice. Thereafter, the assessors refer to the on screen presentation layout, except where they want to discuss a particular image which can then be displayed in full. **Images cannot be reviewed as a sequence a third time.**
- Assessors are not supposed to pixel peep or look at the meta data!
- If any images have very dark edges to them, it is recommended that a thin (1–3 pixel wide) mid grey key line is added to **all** the images for consistency and cohesion across the panel. (NB mid grey – not white!). Do NOT use a key line around just the images that are dark.
- Some images that have a lot of white space, can be difficult to view on screen, due the amount of glare.
- It is difficult to retain deep blacks on a projector due to the nature of transmitted light. (Although this is not necessarily a problem in practise, according to one assessor).

Digital Image Preparation – Quick Reference Checklist

Attribute	Required	Notes
File Type	JPEG/JPG	Not JPEG 2000, JFIF, JPE, HEIC, TIFF, PSD, PNG etc, etc
File Naming	01.jpg 02.jpg 03.jpg etc	Two digits with the '.jpg' extension NOT o1.jpg, or O1.jpg etc. Numeric digits only! 10 files for LRPS, (15 files for ARPS, 20 or 21 files for FRPS)
Maximum Image Resolution (UHD)	3840 × 2160	Images to fit in a box, not wider than 3840 pixels AND not taller than 2160 pixels This maximum is an aspect ratio of 16 x 9 or 1.777'
Minimum Image Resolution (FHD)	1920 × 1080	Images smaller than the maximum will be projected at 1:1 and will be smaller than full screen. A black background fills the rest of the screen.
JPEG Image Quality	Maximum	Set at 100% in Capture One, Lightroom etc. Set at 12 in Photoshop
Colour Space	RGB	Do not use any other colour space such as Greyscale, CMYK, Lab...
Embedded Color Profile	sRGB	Do not use any other profile such as AdobeRGB, ProPhoto RGB...
'Resolution' (PPI)	Any	PPI is totally irrelevant for digital images and any embedded PPI is ignored. (Use the standard 300 PPI if needed).

Table based on an original table by Dr Ian Wilson ARPS

¹ <http://www.rideau-info.com/photos/mythdpi.html>

Image Flow for 1 Row Panels (was 'sequencing')

- Sequencing of images is only required if this is the way you intend to present the images using the 1 row layout. Otherwise use the normal 2 / 3 row panel style layouts.
- Do ensure that you use the correct panel template, otherwise, if you accidentally use one of the 'panel layout' templates, it will be assessed as a panel, not as a sequence, with the inevitable result it may not pass.
- Think in terms of how the images flow together. Flow is an important ingredient of the sequence.
- The flow can be based on colour, subject matter, tone, framing, brightness, etc, etc.
- Consider grouping colours and monochrome in blocks. Maybe red tones, then monochromes followed by blue tones.
- The flow can be used to tell a simple story. A bike moving left to right, followed by a bridge, would suggest the cyclist is about to ride over the bridge, or an image of dog moving towards a second image of an alligator with its mouth open...
- The images could, for example, be used as a metaphor to reveal a hidden meaning.
- Avoid jarring transitions during a sequence, e.g. going from a landscape format to portrait and back to landscape format again in a short space of the sequence. Rather, group different formats together, providing the story holds up that is.
- The normal concept of a subject looking in or out of the image frame at the ends of a row is not really relevant here, but adjacent images should still be considered carefully.
- Finish with a full stop image, such as a sunset, or a night scene for example.
This applies to some extent with a normal 2 or 3 row panel as well.
- For a sequence, ask a non photographer to look at the sequence flow to see if it works on them:-)

Manipulating Panels on a Computer

When dealing with a panel of images on a computer, it is useful to be able to move images around to create different arrangements. There are a number of ways that this can be done depending, to some extent, on your operating system and how deep your pocket is.

- Download the RPS templates. This may need Adobe Acrobat Reader to work properly, or you can make your own templates.
- On a Mac, Pages or Keynote apps are useful tools
- Likewise Powerpoint or similar can be used. Place small images on a single page and shuffle until you are crosseyed:-)
- In LightRoom try:
 - Putting images into a Library collection, where they can be moved around. These can then be printed out for reference.
 - Try images in Survey mode. Select images and navigate to View > Survey.
 - Set up a print module template
- In Photoshop try:
 - Using different layers, with one image per layer. Then shuffle until satisfied.
This becomes useful when checking for colour balance and tonality across images.
- In Adobe Bridge use the facilities to create rows of images.
- Other editing packages such as Affinity Photo, DXO PhotoLab, etc will have similar facilities.
- One of the very best methods is to print your images as 5x7 prints (or similar) and sort them on a table, or pin them on a wall for a few days and move them around as the mood takes you.

Take photos of each iteration.

The LRPS Distinction

LRPS Introduction

Up to this point, most of the advice can be applied to all the distinctions. Now we concentrate on the 'L' panel.

An 'L' panel does not have to follow any sort of theme or particular genre, unlike the A & F panels which must fall into one of the specified genres.

There is no restrictions on subject matter, and you only have to show a wide range of photographic skills and techniques, with good quality images throughout. However, repetition of similar images should be avoided. You don't want to repeat the same exercise 10 times! In fact, no more than two images should be similar and even then there should be some distinguishing differences between them.

There is no requirement to photograph 10 **different** genres or subjects.

There is no requirement to choose a single theme for the LRPS, but if choosing to do so, ensure that you can show your photographic skills and that you can handle a camera. The downside of choosing a theme, is that you are potentially putting yourself in a straight jacket.

One needs a variety of **approaches**, not necessarily a variety of subject matter or genres.

Consider the 'L' panel as the equivalent of an advanced driving test. Are you safe to carry a camera? Can you use it in all lighting conditions? Can you control the focus and depth of field? Do you have a seeing eye?

One way to look at creating a panel, is to consider how you would go about setting up an exhibition of your work. How would you structure the exhibition? Perhaps, start out with a simple theme, using key words, or a couple of key images. The aim is to find a structure that has a **visual** appeal, based on similarities found in the colour, tonality, or emotion of the images.

Think about setting up your own project to capture high quality images. Allow plenty of time for revision and development. Five or six months perhaps?

Note that an image that does well in a club competition does not necessarily mean it will make a successful panel image, although it is probably indicative that the quality is OK.

The RPS is no longer so quite so obsessed at the 'L' level with technical matters and very minor errors are tolerated provided it does not spoil the enjoyment of the image, and displays good camera craft. (e.g. slight chromatic aberration in the lens – not the photographers fault). A good test is: can the faults be seen at a normal viewing distance. Content is King! However, see later sections on the many and varied concerns raised by assessors!

One example of a successful panel, shown at an advisory day, consisted of small mounted monochrome images, all of people. The all important variety was achieved by shooting different people, in different situations and lighting, with both children and adults.

In another example, a balanced panel of large, very high quality images of birds, was not recommended, because there was an insufficient variety of images. When all the pictures are visually alike, of similar subjects, taken with the same technique and lighting, the assessors will assume that you can only use one lens, with one technique.

It is generally recommended that you shoot in RAW. Whilst this is not essential, it gives significantly more control over the processing.

You need to prove you are not a one-trick pony.
You only have 10 images to impress the assessors,
don't waste the opportunity to do so.
You must reference the criteria extensively.
Print them out and carry them with you.

Official Licentiate Criteria

Licentiate panels are assessed against the criteria as published on the RPS website

The criteria is made up of four components consisting of:

- CAMERA WORK AND TECHNICAL QUALITY
- VISUAL AWARENESS
- COMMUNICATION
- OVERALL IMPRESSION

The guide lines and criteria can be downloaded from here (when published):

<https://rps.org/qualifications/lrps/>

Templates can be downloaded from here:

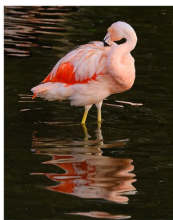
<https://rps.org/qualifications/lrps/presentation-layouts/lrps-presentation-layouts-digital-format/>

An update is due very soon – refer to the website for more information. (Summer 2024)

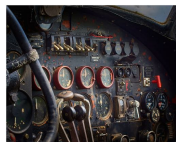
*** These Key Guidelines are a must read documents ***

THE RPS
ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

LRPS
Hanging Plan



01



02



03



04



05



06



07



08



09



10

Applicant Name			
Assessment Date		Membership Number	

Example 'presentation layout / hanging plan (old style)'

What the Criteria Really Means:

The key essential is to demonstrate an understanding of your camera controls, that you can use composition effectively and that you can work in a variety of lighting conditions.

A personal style or a story is not necessary at this stage, but it will be remarked upon favourably if you do.

Ideally, each image should reflect at least one of the main criteria. Not all criteria need to be included.

Camera Work and Technical Quality

- This includes both camera craft and technical skills used to control the image, such as:
 - The use of different points of view, such as high or low viewpoints.
 - The choice of lens used, from wide angle to telephoto and anything between.
 - A well focussed image that is sharp where it needs to be sharp. i.e. the main focal point should be sharp.
 - A definite point of focus. The focal point needs to be clear to the viewer.
 - The use of wide and narrow apertures, showing appropriate depths of field.
 - The use of slow and fast shutter speeds, to show movement, as appropriate.
 - To show the management of different lighting conditions, such as night, flash, indoor & normal daylight.
- Good contrast and evidence of tonal control
- Highlight and shadow details are visible
- Absence of digital defects – post processing problems – over sharpening, chromatic aberration, colour casts or halos. No evidence of digital manipulation, often shown by repeated patterns in the cloning.
- Gentle processing. Post processing does not make a bad image better.
- Suitable cropping of the image, bearing in mind the aspect ratios and overall panel layout.

Visual Awareness (Good Seeing)

- **What do you want the assessor to see? Why did you take the photo?**
- Photos should be beyond a ‘snapshot’. They don’t have to be award winning, but they do have to show some photographer input and be of consistent quality across the panel.
- The ability to see image designs and distractions at the taking stage. e.g. intrusive or ill-suited backgrounds.
- Effective composition and design, without any distracting elements.
- Demonstrate the use of different light, and show an understanding of its effect on mood and texture. e.g. natural light, back lit, night or blue hour conditions, flash images etc.
- Lighting should be suitable for the subject, e.g. an image of a soft flower taken in harsh sunlight may not be the applicable, when the subject demands soft subdued lighting.
- Dramatic light is often found on the edges of storms, due to the contrast between bright and dark, warm and cool, appealing to some of our primitive senses.
- Aim for images where the background adds to the story or has been minimised to enhance the subject.
- Edit all the images in a consistent manner.
- Show a good understanding of colour by using cool and warm colours together. Buy a colour wheel!
- Natural history images should have natural colours and not be over saturated in an attempt to make it more dramatic. (Greens especially can be a problem).
- Use of varied shutter speeds to catch the moment, or enhance motion.
- When an image has an obviously shallow depth of field, the ‘out of focus’ parts should complement the ‘in focus’ subject area. E.g. a very out of focus background with no contextual information vs: a softly focused background, that gives a stronger context to the subject.
- Use of different viewpoints. (Get high, get low, get close, get clean!)
- There needs to be space within images for a subject to breathe, but not so much space that it diminishes the message.
- Monochrome: Is the image suited to a monochrome treatment?

Communication (a reaction / connection / message / story / emotion)

- Choose subjects and compositions that draw the eye in. They are looking for ‘clarity of intent’, so be very clear what you want the assessors to concentrate on, with no distractions.
- They are looking for input from the photographer, not just a photo of an iconic location. i.e. personalise your pictures. (So avoid images of, say, the Eiffel tower – unless it’s truly a unique view!)
- What does the image say about you as a photographer?
- Use of imagination, creativity and personal input.
- Use of mood, ideas, and a narrative.
- Capturing the decisive or peaking moment.
- Show empathy with the subject and convey an understanding of how the subject feels.
e.g. a portrait with the subject looking directly into the camera helps gives a direct connection.

Overall Impression / Presentation

- Now that prints are no longer used for the LRPS, a large element of the presentation aspects has been eliminated, however, it is still important to get the digital presentation right.
- Recall that the ‘presentation layout’ is considered to be the 11th image, so ensure that all the images work together **visually**.
- Aim for a balanced, cohesive set of images, with no major colour or tonal clashes between pairs or in a row.
- Balance colour tones across the panel, match the shapes, point the subjects into the centre.
- There is no right or wrong image to include, but images should be made, rather than just taken.
- Choose a variety of images and approaches using different subjects, along with different techniques to showcase your versatility. Normally, there should be no more than two of the same style, and even these two should show a marked difference in either technique or lighting.
- Ensure that the post processing has been done well and consistently.
- **Don’t give the assessors anything to question – be clear cut – leave no doubt in their minds.**
This includes the use of post processing techniques. Doubt leads to a discussion, which may raise questions about other images in the panel, which may not be to your benefit.

LRPS Assessment Outcomes

- Either you are recommended or not recommended.
- Sometimes a resubmission may be offered if the Chair of Assessors can see potential for future improvement in a few of the images.
- A resubmission may be given if a few images have, for example, noise, a colour cast or printer banding.

Image Quality Improvements

Over the years the quality of images has risen dramatically, and images taken 10 or 15 years ago may not fare well in today’s distinctions. This is true for all levels of distinction, particularly for nature type images.

The relentless advances in camera and post processing technologies has been at the forefront of this rise in technical quality.

Particularly with the newer cameras, with their image stabilisation technologies, in-built bracketing and stacking software, along with subject detection abilities that are now becoming the norm.

Common Reasons for a 'Not Recommended' Decision

Camera Work and Technical Quality

A very common area for a 'Not Recommended' result

This becomes an almost forensic scrutiny of your images – ensure they are of the best quality.

- ***Unsuitable Point of Focus: (V. hot on this)***
 - Subject not in focus, e.g nose of a dog in focus, but the eyes are not, unless the nose is the subject!
 - Eyes **must** be sharp, (but see above!)
- ***Unsuitable depth of field (DoF):***
 - Wrong aperture chosen, either not enough DoF (e.g. macro subjects not in focus), or no separation from background (too much DoF).
- ***Lack of critical sharpness, even if focus appears OK:***
 - Often the result of subject movement or camera shake, perhaps due to a slow shutter speed.
 - Over enlarging a small part of an image and a subsequent loss of definition and DoF.
 - Using a wide aperture (e.g. $f/1.8$), and the point of focus not accurate enough.
 - Use of very high f numbers (e.g. $f/22$) resulting in diffraction, softening the whole image.
 - Possibly using lens or in-body stabilisation when fixed on a tripod.
- ***Poor Exposure Control:***
 - Under / over exposed, blown highlights, or blocked / muddy shadows.
 - A very noisy image taken on a bright day may point to poor camera craft, (unnecessarily high ISO).
- ***Lack of highlight detail; over controlled highlights; blown highlights: (a very common problem)***
 - The highlight police are called in and the offending highlights are jumped on immediately!
 - However, images of the sun, street lamps, specular highlights are generally forgiven, but **must** not detract from the subject or message.
 - The reason this is often commented upon is that blown highlights are huge distractions and reduce the enjoyment of the image, but also points to the fact that exposure has not been properly controlled, which is part of the criteria.
 - Take care not to reduce highlights in post to the extent that they turn grey, which looks much worse.
 - *Adding some colour into the highlights can help disguise the blown highlight, whilst some careful cloning with a very soft brush at 50% opacity can sometimes save the day. Use of a mask or levels in post can be useful in controlling the upper and lower limits for both projection & printing (say 5 to 250).*
 - A blown highlight is equivalent to a blown chance of passing!
- ***Lack of shadow detail:***
 - Not quite as heinous as blown highlights, but detail is still required in the shadows. Some assessors may not like silhouettes, as there will be no detail in the blacks. Additionally 'film noir' portraits may raise concerns if there is no separation with a black background, (but would probably be OK at A/F).
- ***Lack of tonal range:***
 - Images that look flat, or muddy, particularly with monochrome will be of concern. At the other end, soot & whitewash images may not be seen as complying with the criteria, (but would probably be OK at A/F)
- ***Poor colour management:***
 - Over saturation, or unnatural colours, (particularly with greens & skin tones).
 - Greens (grass) can often be true to form, but still look unnatural in an image – adjust to maintain a natural look, unless for artistic purposes. Note: greens tend to absorb light, and need light to shine though.

- Skin tones: ensure that hands / necks / collar bones etc match the facial skin. (Perhaps the result of make up foundation on the face, but not on the hands or neck?). e.g. a face that has a peachy complexion, with hands that are blue / purple maybe a distraction.
- Colour casts: A colour cast is caused by a coloured tint in the direct lighting source or by a reflected ambient light. (See the Technical section on the causes of colour casts)
- Dubious colour grading e.g. very prominent colours in highlights / shadows.
- Inappropriate or wrong white balance, which can easily be corrected with RAW images. White balance is more difficult to correct if JPEGs are used.
- **Contains processing faults / digital defects / evidence of digital manipulation such as:**
 - JPEG compression artefacts evident. (Indicated by small square blocks all over the image, slightly washed-out colours, loss of texture, poor edge definition, especially on text or sharp edges).
 - Image resolution too low, leading to pixelation, where individual pixels appear, leaving jagged edges thus degrading the image to below the required standard. Often caused by over enlargement / over cropping (typically seen with insect / bird images).
 - **Over sharpening and / or over use of clarity, leading to fringing & halos.** This is a common problem. Learn how to remove halos! (See Sharpening & Noise).
 - Over controlled highlights
 - Over smoothed or sharpened skin tones.
 - Chromatic aberration, chroma and luminance noise. (See Sharpening & Noise)
 - Banding: This appears in areas like a clear sky. It's the result of a gradual colour transition over a large plain area, where there are insufficient colours available in the file to make a smooth transition. Often happens in compressed files such as JPEGs.
Try to use a 16bit/channel mode rather than an 8bit/channel mode.
 - Obvious or repetitious cloning, e.g. the same part cloned more than once, creating an unnatural pattern or just poorly done. Careful blending may be required. Tip: Clone from areas outside of the cropped area.
 - The use of a graduated filter that is overdone, (real or software) e.g. using a hard edged filter on an unsuitable subject.
 - Adding a false blur or other small element in post must follow the laws of physics.
 - Similarly, avoid having two planes of focus, maintain the laws of physics, unless for artistic effect.
 - Adding textures in post: care should be taken that they don't interfere with the subject or dominate the image. The lighting on the texture should match the subject lighting.
 - Manipulating an image to the point that it is very difficult to see if the underlying photo meets the criteria.
 - Dust spots caused by dirty sensor or other artefacts, (v. noticeable in skies). Occasionally, very small natural bright spots in an image may be seen as detrimental to the subject and should also be removed. e.g. very small bright specular reflections, which may be confused with dust spots, e.g. stones in tarmac.
 - Horizons: check the horizon is level! Particularly if the notional horizon is only slightly off. Consider how an image will be perceived by the assessors, you may know your subject is going uphill, but a casual viewer may not. You need to make sure any tilt is obviously intentional.
 - Verticals: Should be vertical unless it's a creative decision. When cropping, maintain the vertical in the middle of the frame as the key vertical. Tip: If you can see the ground, straighten the verticals.
 - Symmetry: ensure an image that is symmetric, **really** is symmetric in the frame.

Visual Awareness (Good seeing)

- **Poor use of light**
 - Drab, flat lighting
- **Poor composition and design**
 - Poor lens choice. Lens choice should compliment the image. For example a wide angle lens will make objects close to the lens grow (e.g. a portrait where hands or even a nose may become enormous, or converging verticals will be exaggerated).
- **Unsuitable viewpoint**
 - A portrait with a very low viewpoint may lose its appeal if looking up the subject's nose!
- **Unsuitable backgrounds and distractions**
 - Large amount of white sky or a large amount of blue sky (death of a photo – blue is a primary colour)
 - Busy or cluttered backgrounds or bright, out of focus colours in background
 - Distractions in an image, (visual debris!)
 - Cropping something close to the edge. It should be either in or out. Do a Border Patrol!
- **Poor use of colour / monochrome such as:**
 - Over-saturation – a tendency to over saturate to make colours pop and attempting to add drama, making the image seem over processed and fake. Too much colour in a photo can distract the viewer.
 - Incorrect white balance.
 - Colours that look flat.
 - Monochrome – generally use a full range of tones, but there are exceptions, such as in foggy conditions.
- **Poor use of manipulation / post production (See also Camera Work And Technical Quality above)**
 - Overuse of vignettes: these should be hardly noticeable. Look at the thumbnail images, and if it's noticeable in the thumbnail, then it's over done.

Communication & Composition (Connection)

- **Lacks clarity of intent / no point of interest such as:**
 - The viewer is not sure where to look or there is no point of interest. May have too much empty space.
 - Too many other distractions in the image, attention must be wholly on the subject.
 - Avoid the 'I'm in a box' cropping of a bird / animal. Give subjects some breathing room.
 - Large areas that do not contribute to an image. (Not the same as negative space that adds to the mood of an image – generally a calm mood).
- **Lacking imagination and creativity:**
 - Lacking in subject matter.
 - Snapshots.
- **Little understanding and empathy with subject:**
 - Having empathy means that you can feel and share the emotions of another person, so the image must display a degree of emotion in the first place.
 - If you want to know what others are thinking or feeling, simply mimic their body language.
 - In a portrait, eyes looking through the camera lens adds to the empathy and connection to the subject.
- **Decisive moment poorly captured:**
 - You may have caught a moment, but does it tell the right story to the viewer.
 - Is the timing too early or too late? Has it caught the 'peaking moment'.
 - Decisive moments may include: shafts of light, critical action (peaking moment), weather, interactions, nature.

- **Composition:**
 - All the usual composition guidelines apply, but some comments are noted below.
 - Too much empty space, overuse of negative space?
 - Reversal of an image is acceptable, but not with any text showing. Take care when reversing an iconic location, which is probably not ideal, but has been done to good effect in the past. Clearly, it depends on the location.
 - Juxtaposition of images in a panel that may jar the senses: e.g. two very high quality studio portraits adjacent to one soft portrait, perhaps taken in low light and high ISO, may raise concerns with the consequential comparison of the soft image with the other two. Move to a different position or find a replacement.
- **Portraits:**
 - both eyes should be sharp, preferably with a catchlight, but generally want the whole face to be in focus. Two catchlights in each eye may not be liked. The lighting and background must be sympathetic to the subject. Generally eyes should be off the image middle line, usually above it.
 - skin tones must be correct – hands and facial tones should match. Avoid an orange-peel plasticky look.
 - avoid random digits appearing out of nowhere.
 - avoid stray hairs, especially if using a back light or a hair light.
 - For portraits, the background should be sympathetic with the subject. A white background with a dark subject may not be sympathetic.
 - Faces should generally be brighter than other parts of bare skin.
 - Use of a red filter to remove the red colour from skin will also takes the red out of any lips which may not be desirable.

Overall Impression (Presentation)

- ***Lacking attention to detail (All the above & below really!)***
- ***Unbalanced and not Cohesive***
 - Panel lacks consistency and cohesion, or the images are not ordered correctly.
 - Using a slightly sub standard image to ‘make up the numbers’.
 - A mix of images with one particular image standing out and, therefore, looking out of place.
 - A whole panel that displays only one technique and / or similar lighting conditions.
 - Inconsistency of tonal / colour ranges between photographs in a panel row or column.
- ***Lacking variety of skills, technique or approach***
 - Lacking in consistency and / or subject matter.
 - Repetition: more than two similar images may be seen as repetition. Images, however good, that display similar subject matter, technique and lighting are essentially the same picture and add nothing to the panel. Even the two similar images must show some variation in technique or lighting between them.
 - Repetition: note that it is acceptable to use the same person in several portrait images provided the image styles are radically different.
- ***Poor selection, editing and presentation***
 - Just one image with very clear technical faults or poor composition will be quickly noticed and commented on by the assessor, and raise a red flag with the other assessors, who will then look for similar faults in the other images.
 - Presentation not up to standard.

Creating a Successful 'L' panel

Thoughts on LRPS Subject Matter

- Take care when photographing iconic subjects that are very familiar. They have to be of the highest quality, and preferably taken from a different perspective.
- Similarly, colours of familiar subjects have to be rendered correctly, otherwise they will be criticised, because the subject is so familiar and the colours well known – we all know skin tones and shades of green.
- Be more imaginative than the usual clichés, such as photos of the sun, close-ups of flowers, mice on teasels, bearded men in costume, and sweet 'chocolate box' scenes. If you do create them, ensure the subject is fabulous.
- The RPS is not hugely keen on images taken at paid photo workshops with well known setups, (sometimes known as 'pay & display' images), where the lighting and setup are pre-organised for the photographer. Typical examples being aircrew under a Lancaster wing, close encounters on a railway station, or harvest mice on a teasel. The assessors' eyes will probably glaze over, but they are acceptable for an L panel. Note that sitting in a commercial hide for days should not be considered as a 'pay & display' scenario.
- Architecture – these images should have the verticals corrected, except when it is obvious the converging verticals are for artistic effect.
- ICM – Intentional Camera Movement. There is no problem using ICM, as it shows some artistic interpretation. However, ICM is not so easy to do well and requires much practice.
- Panning – An alternative way to demonstrate movement, where the main subject remains sharp, but the background is blurred. Requires much practise! Watch the horizontals & verticals. Avoid horizontal lines going through the subjects' eyes for instance.
- One advantage of including images such as an abstract, or a still life, is that the colours within the image can be changed to balance other images in the panel, (e.g. coloured pencils can be matched to another image).
- Dragon flies / insects – expect to see them sharp, wing tip to wing tip. (See the note on Image Quality Improvements)
- Butterflies – at least one antenna should be sharp and preferably sharp wing tip to wing tip.
- Fungi – requires a high degree of quality to be successful, unless the obvious intention is to be pictorial.
- Monochrome nature images are less usual, but can be used successfully with the right conditions or subjects. (Zebras work well!)
- Each RPS A & F genre has its own rules, but these don't apply to L panels, so zoo pictures and manipulation of images is acceptable.
- Note that **L** images **cannot** be re-used in subsequent **A** or **F** panels. Similarly for **A** images in an **F** panel.

What is the 11th Image?

- Often talked about at advisory days is the concept of the '11th image'.
- This is simply a **visually** pleasing arrangement of images that balances the shape and content of the panel, along with a balance of colour tones within the panel. The panel becomes a single composition in its own right, the whole is then greater than the parts. A mini visual exhibition.
- Think about the whole panel as an individual image, and treat it as a separate entity.
 - Think about how the balance of colours and tones in each image match, and how do they contribute to the look of the panel?
 - Do the aspect ratios and image sizes balance across the panel?
 - Does the panel have symmetry and order?
 - Do the weightings of each individual image balance across the panel?
- It is not a requirement for every image to be an award winning image, but they must all be of a good **consistent** standard and **must** all fit the criteria.

Initial Image Selection

- The first job is to gather about 30 photos that are all of the very best quality. Selecting only the highest quality images is a good defensive strategy and gives a good basis for choosing the image variety required.
- *When exporting jpegs for examination, have due regard for the required image resolution of 3840×2160 pixels. Images below the minimum of 1920 × 1080 should be rejected. Larger images may lose detail.*
- Keep the requirements in mind when selecting images though. e.g. a selection of slow & fast shutter speeds.
- You don't have to demonstrate all the LRPS requirements in one photo.
- In choosing images, and if your editing software is capable, harness the power of the cataloguing system to look for images with small or large apertures, and similarly for images with slow or fast shutter speeds.
- Carefully consider each and every image chosen to see what criteria it fulfils. Check for artefacts on the computer by just enlarging them. (See checklist table at the end)
- The aspect ratio and sizing of all the images must be consistent. No more than 3 different aspect ratios.
- Scrutinise each and every image in detail for minor faults, dust spots, and check the image borders, etc etc. It might be a favourite picture, but if the main subject is even slightly out of focus – ditch it!!
- Ensure that each technique used is obviously done with intent. e.g. slow or fast shutter speeds etc, etc.
- Don't go too far back in your catalogue when selecting images, as early pictures may not be up to the required standard, as, hopefully, your skills have improved over time. Don't rely on Photoshop to fix them. (See also the note on Image Quality Improvements).

Quality comes first – Panelling later!

More on Image Selection

- The assessors like the end images to balance, by having the subjects looking inwards to the centre. This applies even with inanimate subjects, whose shapes often lead the eye to one side or the other, or up and down in the panel. Hence, where possible, outside images must look to the centre, lower images lead the eye up, and higher images down.
- Balance is important both in visual weight, image shape (square, landscape, portrait) colour and tones. If one image looks too heavy or too bright compared to the rest, it's probably in the wrong place or must be swapped out for another image.
- Pay attention to the colours and themes and how they complement each other.
- Put your best images in the centre of the rows. Then try to balance images either side of this central one. At the end of the row, the image should stop the eye and bring the gaze back to the panel of images. Assessors maintain that the images arranged together like this make up the 11th image.
- Using 'portrait' format images at either end as bookends works well.
- It is perfectly acceptable to flip an image so that it fits into the panel – but not if the image includes any text, logo, watch, or clock. Small details like wedding rings on fingers, musicians playing instruments or ball room dancers may also give the game away. However, in some cases, iconic landmarks have been flipped quite successfully.
- It is also acceptable to stretch an image slightly in order to make it fit a desired aspect ratio. Use with care!
- Pictures of other artwork (statues or buildings etc) are OK, provided you have added something to the image, either by including a different element, point of view, or by showing the artwork in a different light (literately!). In other words, don't be lazy when taking the photo. (At A & F level these would probably be not acceptable unless justified in the Statement of Intent and show a high degree of photographer input).
- Soot and whitewash images don't work well in 'L' panels, as they want to see you hold the highlights and shadows. This technique should be OK for A & F panels, where it would be considered artistic.
- Mixing monochrome with colour images is often suggested in order to blend them together, rather than a row of monochrome and a row of colour, giving the impression of two different photographers.

- However, different views have been expressed on mixing monochrome with colour images. One assessor suggested it's not always a good idea, whilst another thought it works better than having a row of monochrome and a row of colour. Ultimately, does the choice work visually, and is balance achieved within the panel?
- Assessors tend to 'read the panel' left-to-right and will look most critically at images on the right hand side. In psychology, this is known as the position effect: research indicates that people show a marked preference for items on the right side of a display.
- Any oddities in an 'L' panel are assumed to be accidental and the panel may not succeed, whereas in an A / F panel, that same oddity will be assumed to be deliberate, and therefore artistic, e.g. sloping horizons (dutch tilt) if obviously justified. This includes colour grading, as the assumption is that you don't fully understand colour balance.
In other words, if it could be interpreted as mistake, then it will be regarded as a mistake.
- Within reason, the age of your image doesn't matter and the assessors won't know. Be aware that older images may not have the technical or other qualities required, simply because the more pictures you take the better you get at taking them. Probably best to keep any image search to the last 10 years or so. See the earlier note on Image Quality Improvements.
- Images of books make a good bookend or finish with a sunset:-)

Some 'Do Nots' for image selection

- Avoid images next to each other that jar the senses, e.g. a dark portrait with a white background next to another image that has a very dark background.
- Avoid images that are very dark overall, with very little detail in the shadows.
- Avoid composites – unless you are very skilled. Any joins must look perfect at normal viewing distances.
- Avoid adding something that might be controversial, which may lead the assessors to disagree. Don't leave any doubt in the assessors mind or do anything that makes them ask questions about your work.
- Avoid repetition. If one image is very similar to another, it does not tell the assessor anything more about you as a photographer. A maximum of 2 very similar images are generally allowed, but ensure the images are distinctive enough by using different lighting and / or view points.
- Don't try to build a panel exclusively around one or more favourite pictures, as they may not be suitable or work together as a coherent panel. Put them on your wall if you like them so much!
- When using pro models for portraits, avoid using the same face in several pictures. This becomes acceptable if the images styles between them are very radically different.
- Over saturation is a bugbear for some images – particularly if they have a strong and vivid colour content, (indigenous costumes, for example).
- Watch out for any loss of detail in parts of an image that are over saturated. It is possible to 'burn-out' one of the colour channels, with the consequent loss of detail in that colour channel.
- A very strong background colour may not be not favoured, particularly if it is a dominant or primary colour. Landscapes with over strong skies did not seem to do well either.

Laying Out a Panel

- The panel of 10 images is not a random selection, it should be a carefully designed, coherent body of work, arranged in either two or three rows, or as a one row sequence.
- Think of each accompanying 'presentation plan' as a single composition and approach the design of it accordingly and plan how the eye will move through the panel. Try to lead the eye from one row to the next for instance. e.g. A top row may have lots of sky showing while the bottom row may have water showing.
- Ask yourself: "Are there any parts that lead into or out of the panel?"
- The overall composition of the panel is therefore stronger if it is well thought out, and creates a flow, which encourages the viewer to journey through the images.
- The images can be arranged in any way you want, but they must balance harmoniously, particularly in tonality and in colour.

Basic Layout Tips – not hard and fast rules

- **Choosing a 1 row sequence:**

- It is possible to use one row, but the images must ‘flow’ in a sequence, (see previous remarks).

- **Choosing the traditional 2×5 rows:**

- The 2×5 row panel is a compact arrangement and lends itself easily to the 11th image effect.
- Rows which contains an odd number of images all have a centre image. Centre images can be used to pivot the panel and may be used to hold an image that does not fit comfortably elsewhere in the panel.
- Two rows of 5 images allows for the two centre pictures to act together to ‘key’ the rest of the panel.
- The rows may be themed, with one row of (say) nature and the other row of (say) landscape, but they must still make a coherent whole, and **must** show that all important variety of technique.

- **Choosing 3 Rows:**

- Three row panels are often successful, but some have suggested that the 3 row panel is not as cohesive as a 2 row panel.
- Three rows does give the ability to theme each row, either with sets of different tonalities or with a set of graphic / dynamic images. Note that with three rows, you only get 2 central images.

For example:

<i>top row:</i>	sky images;	portraits;	Red theme
<i>middle row:</i>	land images;	landscapes;	Blue theme
<i>bottom row:</i>	water based images;	wildlife;	Green theme

- Some advisors suggest that 2 very dark images in the centre of a 3, 4, 3 layout, may not be as cohesive.
- These are just guidelines to help the thought processes. e.g. In one FRPS three row panel, which became much darker towards the prime central image, was justified because it was prison theme.

- **Working in Rows**

- Generally, place darker images on the bottom row and lighter images on the top. (Mid tone images in the middle, if a three row layout).
- Assessors like colour themes along a row, e.g. images across the top row which all have a red theme.
- Consider placing serene, softly-lit images on the top row, with more graphic images on the bottom.
- Consider placing images with lots of sky on the top row, whilst the bottom row maybe water themed.
- Ideally, images at the end of a row should stop the eye and lead the viewers eye back into the panel.

- **Work in Pairs**

- Think in pairs when choosing pictures – ask: what will go with this picture, especially tonally?
- **Aspect ratios and images sizes should match across pairs and fit within the panel as a whole.**
- Images at either end of a panel should be ‘looking into’ the panel.
- Lower end images should lead the eye up, and upper end images lead the eye down.
- The subject matter can be different, and tonal matching can be varied in different parts of the image e.g. a blue subject in one image and a blue sky in its opposite pair.
- When looking at a pair of images, consider the relative scales of the two subjects in the images. e.g. a very tight close up of a cats head :vs: a more traditional ¾ portrait of a person, may not fit together.

- **Central images usually consist of strong images that:**

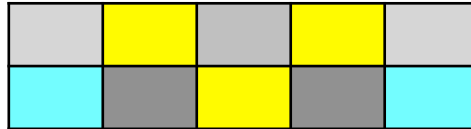
- look out of the panel (toward the viewer)
- have centrally placed subjects in the image frame, often in a square format.
- are a symmetrical subject, rather than an off centre design.
- are strong images, such as portraits.
- are two central images acting together to ‘key’ the rest of the panel.
- are square images, which often do well, and which adds variety to the panel.
- consist of images that do not fit comfortably elsewhere in the panel.

- **Work in Shapes**

- Create shapes within the panel, e.g. a 'W' of portrait orientated, or monochrome images.

General Tips on using Monochrome Images in a Panel

- Distributing monochrome images within a panel of otherwise colour photographs can be a challenge.
- Monochrome is all about the light and tonality, which must be seen to shine though.
- Mono images should all have consistent tonality & quality.
- Mono images should all have a good range of tones, where the subject stands out from the background and the image has a good sense of depth.
- Toning images is acceptable, but consider toning all the images to maintain constancy in the panel. The exception might be to only tone the central image, provided it enhances the image.
- Monochrome is challenging to do well. A simple conversion from a colour image is not good enough. Processing of raw images to monochrome will require the use of the HSL sliders and possibly something like Nik Silver Efex Pro to make the most of subject.
- Avoid the temptation to use colour popping, unless for strong artistic reasons, (particularly at A / F level).
- Incorporating only one monochrome print in a sea of colour does not always sit well, as it tends to unbalance the overall cohesion. Including one B&W **simply for the sake of variety** might backfire. There is a danger that the assessors might think that you have run out of colour images! In practise this does not seem to be a problem as long as the monochrome images has been placed carefully in the panel.
- Generally, a pair of mono's is a minimum, however one monochrome in the centre position can work very well.
- Mono PDI's may not look as good as a print, particularly with regard to the depth of black tones. (difference between reflective and transmitted light). The RPS does not seem unduly concerned about this.
- Mixing up colour and monochrome images can work well, rather than a more traditional one row of monochrome and one row of colour.



Example of a monochrome 'W' pattern within a panel. Note the darker tones on the bottom row.

Suggested Method for Building a Print Panel

Building your panel takes a lot of time, but there is some logic to it all.

Assuming a two row panel, follow the list below:

- Print a large selection of your best images at A6 / 5×7 / 6×4, even if intending on a digital submission.
- Discard anything with blown highlights. Really!
- Identify any images that are suitable for the panel centre position. These act as anchors for the panel or row.
- Generally put the best / strongest image (S+) at the top centre position #3. Similarly, position #8 is a slot that can accept a strong (S) or a difficult to match picture, providing that the overall tonal range and colour fits with the rest of the panel. Both are good places to put square or different aspect ratio images.
- As we normally read left to right and top to bottom, it follows that #1 also needs to be strong image (S) and convince the assessors they are looking at a great panel. Image #10 should also be strong, so that the assessors ends on a high.
- Find pairs of similar images that can go either side of the centre images to keep the panel balanced at position 2 & 4 and 7 & 9 (Panel 1). Alternatively, try balancing images 2 & 7 and 4 & 9 (Panel 2), or 4 & 7 and 2 & 9 (Panel 3).
- **Row ends:** the image should stop the eye and bring the gaze back into the panel. Ensure that portraits look inwards and lead-in lines direct the view into the panel. Useful if darker in tone.
- If mixing landscape and portrait images, ensure that these are also balanced in pairs within the panel.
- Creating a checkerboard arrangement can also work.
- There will be a lot of shuffling of images around, a bit like a jigsaw, to see if they fit into a cohesive pattern.
- Mock up your panel on screen – see earlier.
- Sometimes three rows work best for the coherence of the panel, in which case use that layout.
- Be prepared to discard your most favourite image!!! Put it on the wall at home!
- Avoid an image that has superior quality compared to the others, as it may show up as an inconsistency in the panel, and cast the rest in a bad light. Similarly if one image is below par.
- View images at 100% on screen and check for faults in the images. (For prints: buy a magnifying glass to help you check for printing faults – yes really!).

S →	2	S+	4	←
→	7	S	9	← S

Panel 1

S →	2	S+	4	←
→	7	S	9	← S

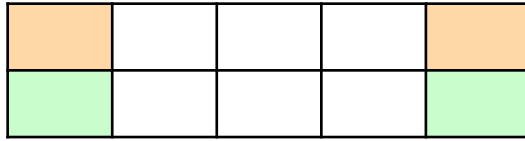
Panel 2

S →	2	S+	4	←
→	7	S	9	← S

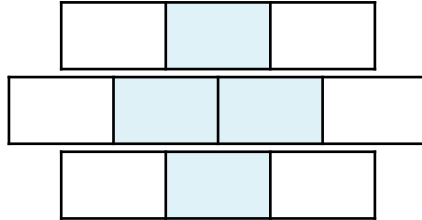
Panel

Creating Coherence in a Panel

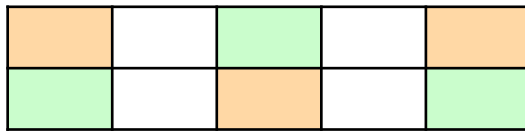
Below are some diagrams that try to illustrate how a panel might be balanced by using tone and colour.



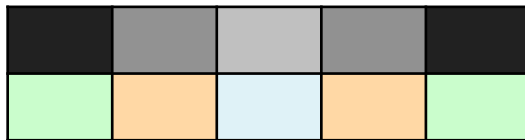
Arrangement showing two pairs of images with autumnal and green backgrounds



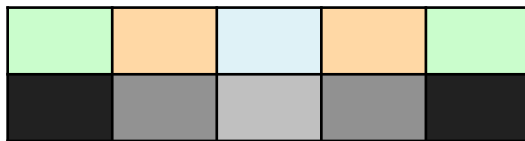
Arrangement showing images with blue backgrounds



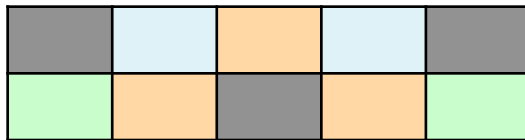
Making W patterns in the panel



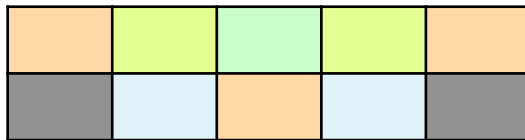
Mixing B & W & colour images (This one can make a panel look top heavy)



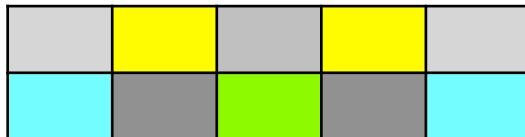
Mixing B & W & colour images
(Darker images on the bottom are often preferred)



Mixing B & W & colour images
(Often a recommended way of adding B&W images. Note the 'V' shape)



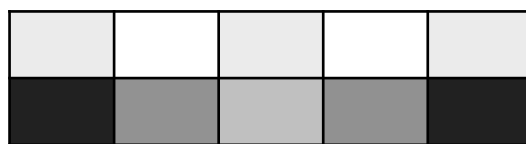
Mixing B & W & colour images



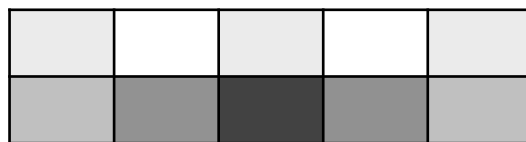
Mixing B & W & colour images. Note the 'W' shape

Tonality

Below are some diagrams that try to illustrate how a panel might be balanced by using just tones.



Low Key Images on the bottom



Low Key Images on the bottom



A progression of tonality (Good for a sequence)

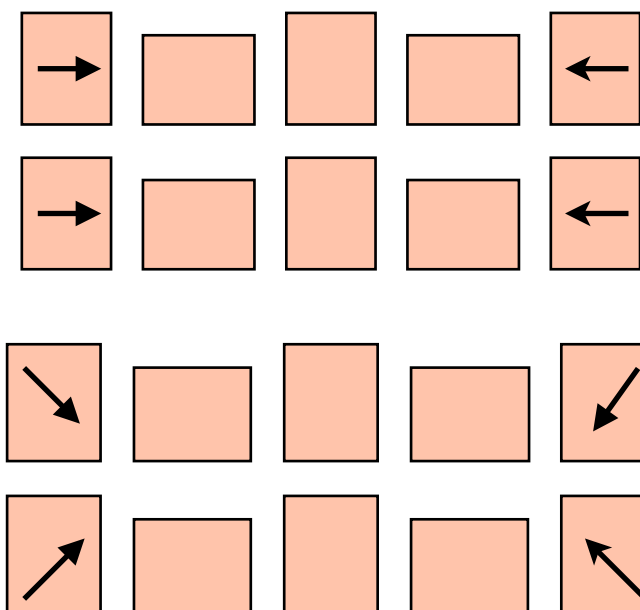
Typical LRPS Panel Layouts

For an L panel a two row format was often favoured, and these diagrams give an indication of how they may be arranged, giving an overall outline of the panel using 50x40cm mount boards. The arrows indicate how the book end images may be looking in.

At one advisory, the assessor talked about left and right handed pictures. He was referring to the perspective in an image and which side of the panel an image should go.

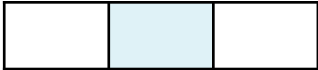
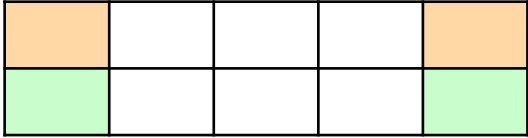
In this instance the outer images (say a pier) gives an eye line that goes up the ramp, and across the middle images and down the ramp the other side, and vice versa.

A similar effect, but the other way round can be arranged, but the above method was thought to be a better arrangement.

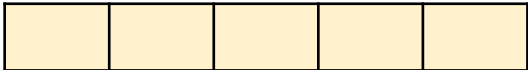
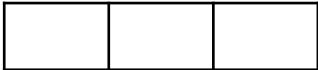


Other arrangements are possible:

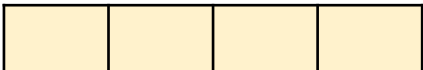
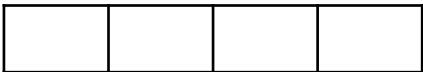
1									10
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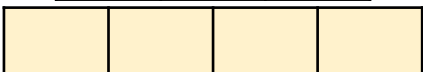
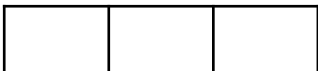
Three Row Arrangement



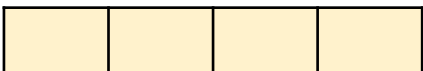
Three Row Arrangement



Three Row Arrangement



Three Row Arrangement



Three Row Arrangement

Version Control and a Warning

Before sending in your entry, do check that you are sending in the correct photos and not one of your spares by mistake. Ensure you have a robust version control system in place for your final selection of images.

Check for other errors, omissions and the correct paperwork. Once it has been entered, it is difficult to change and may be assessed as it arrives at Bristol HQ.

Where Next...

Once you have passed your LRPS, where next?

For the RPS, the ARPS & FRPS are the next levels to aim for, but both require significant and consistent bodies of work accompanied by a formal written 'statement of intent', laying out the aims and objectives of the panel.

As every armchair detective knows, the A & F distinctions require motive, means and opportunity!

The next level is a huge step up in commitment and quality of work required.

Over the years the standard of photographic images have risen enormously, helped to a large extent by the fast paced developments in camera technology. Images from A panels from 10 or 20 years ago, may even struggle with the current L panel standards.

However, the very best advice given to those achieving success at LRPS, is relax and just to enjoy the achievement.

Criteria Summaries

Licentiate Criteria in Brief			
Camera Work and Technical Quality	Visual Awareness	Communication	Overall Impression
Correct point of focus with appropriate depth of field .	Create a mood / atmosphere / impact by using the light .	Show clarity of intent. Is there a clear point of interest ? What do want the assessor to look at?	A balanced and cohesive set of images, that work together.
Sharp where it needs to be sharp.	Composition and a sense of design Ensure all the visual elements work together. Point the viewers' attention where intended.	Show some imagination and creativity to convey a mood, message or an idea. Develop a 'seeing eye'.	Correct resolution for digital.
Correct exposure with appropriate control of highlight / shadow detail and tonal range . Mood control What is correct exposure?	Appropriate choice of viewpoint (PoV) An awareness of distracting backgrounds. (Get high, get low, get close, get clean) Use of different focal lengths. (PoV cannot be changed in post)	Show an understanding and share the feelings of the subject.	A variety of approach. Show a range of different photographic skills and techniques have been used. Repetition of similar images must be avoided. A maximum of 2 similar images for balance is just acceptable, but a change of lighting or PoV would be appreciated.
Correct colour depiction and management .	Use of colour / monochrome .	Show the decisive or peaking moment .	Show clearly that much thought has been given to the layout, selection and editing of images.
No processing faults or digital defects .	Post-production techniques. Manipulation should add value to an images. Post-processing must be technically appropriate.		Attention to detail.

Image Checklist (Resolution 3840 × 2160 – Min of 1980 × 1080)

Image No	Camera Work & Technical Quality		Visual Awareness	Communication	Overall Impression	Total Ticks
	Shutter Speed Aperture Depth of Field Suitable Sharpness Camera Shake Over - Enlargement?	Exposure. Highlight & Shadow Detail. Tonal Range. Colour Control. Processing Faults / Digital Defects	Use of Light (Atmosphere / Mood / Impact) Color / Monochrome Composition / Design Post-Production Viewpoint / Backgrounds	Clarity of Intent Point of Interest Imagination / Creativity Mood / Message / Idea Subject Empathy / Understanding Decisive Moment	Balance / Cohesion Variety of Approach Selection & Editing Layout Presentation (Print)	
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
Sp 1						
Sp 2						
Sp 3						
Sp 4						
Sp 5						

Notes: Add a tick for each attribute displayed prominently in each image.
 Add the number of ticks into the Total Ticks column.
 Suggest a min of 10 ticks for each image, 15 ticks would be better.
 One from each section would be a minimum with some recommending 8 of the criteria as a minimum.

Criteria Quick Checklists

Technical: Quick Checklist:

- Correct point of focus (e.g. on the eyes for portraits / animals).
- Appropriate sharpness (but not over sharpened). (See section on Sharpening & Noise).
- No visible noise unless intended. (See section on Sharpening & Noise).
- No visible signs of post processing (e.g. halos, Ready-brek / crunchy look, hair that looks like needles, repetitive cloning). You should not be able to see the joins!
- No chromatic aberration, colour casts or halos.
- Saturation realistic? (Unless for obvious artistic intent)
- Accurate natural colour, especially for skin tones & greens, e.g. grass / leaves etc.
- No distracting elements or overly bright areas in the composition, especially in the background / foreground. Large out of focus areas in the foreground are not encouraged.
- Generally, avoid harsh light which may lead to blown highlights or very deep shadows with no detail.
- Keep detail in highlights and shadows (burnt out highlights will guarantee a 'not recommended' decision). Specular highlights are OK. Don't expect detail in the sun if captured, although it may be worth adding some extra colour.
- Use of flash – is it realistic? – fill-in flash well handled? – does it match elsewhere in the panel?
- Aspect ratios should balance across the panel. i.e. in pairs, stretch the image if required. Not more than three different aspect ratios is recommended (One may be a square perhaps).
- Balanced colours across pairs, but not necessarily subjects, e.g. a green frog paired with green pencils.
- No banding in the image. Beware of poor cloning techniques.

Variety of Approach: Quick Checklist:

- Capturing the decisive or peaking moment (Use of shutter speed).
- Showing movement by freezing or blurring motion (Use of shutter speed).
- Large & narrow depth of field (Use of aperture).
- Wide angle & telephoto shots (Choice of different focal lengths to control perspective)
Note: it is not necessary to have a large selection of lenses, a kit zoom lens would be sufficient.
- Appropriate use of ISO (noise).
- Lighting variety: early or evening lighting, a night scene, artificial light, flash (Use of light).
- Positioning of the subject according to the light source (Use of light).
- Different viewpoints including the unusual. Avoid using the same camera height for every shot.
- Close up / Macro images.
- Use of colour.
- Different subjects (large, small, moving, still).
- Processing (Use of colour, monochrome, composite).

Composition and Seeing: Quick Checklist:

- Engagement with subject? (Portrait - subject looking through the lens – eyes should be sharp)
- Over enlarged subject in the frame?
- Vignettes should not be noticeable – beware of one image with a vignette – it may not balance.

Presentation: Quick Checklist:

- Should be a cohesive and balanced panel.
- There is no requirement to satisfy every one of the criteria in each image. One from each section would be a minimum with some recommending 8 of the criteria as a minimum. There are no hard and fast rules here.
- In brief: they are looking for Technical quality, evidence of seeing, and panel cohesion.

Technical Notes

Two technical aspects that come up in nearly every assessment are Sharpness and Noise. The following notes may help in understanding the problem.

Sharpening

- There are three types of sharpening:
 - **Capture sharpening:** generally done automatically, on import, during the RAW conversion process. This is required due to the softening of the image by the filters used over the camera sensor.
 - **Creative sharpening:** The authors personal taste. Used to enhance detail, or to draw the viewer's attention to the subject. Often seen as a forlorn attempt to compensate for out of focus images (not a good method). Use sharpening selectively and sparingly.
 - **Output sharpening:** Used when exporting an image to compensate for scaling effects or when printing an image to compensate for loss of detail due to ink bleed. For prints, the expected viewing distant should be considered. For digital images, they should be sharpened according to their intended use.
- **Sharpening should not be obvious!** Rarely do assessors say "This image needs to be sharpened".
- Sharpening is relative to the images size – it's not a one fit all exercise. So sharpen after cropping and probably as a final step.
- Only sharpen bits that need sharpening, so sharpen selectively, **and only where there is detail.** e.g eyes in a portrait, (Rembrandt style). In landscapes, for example, sharpening the foreground may be appropriate, the mid ground with less sharpening, but not the sky, or the background. (Keep the aerial perspective).
- Creative sharpening should not really be required for high megapixel cameras, and any sharpening that is done has to be sympathetic to the subject.
- Out of camera JPEG files are automatically sharpened and compressed with some data loss. (Some newer cameras are using a higher quality JPEG format with have a larger bit depth giving more colours).
- **Over-sharpening: the assessors will almost certainly comment on any over-sharpening.**
 - **Over-sharpening** leads to white lines or halos around any edges and a crunchy crystal like granularity, both of which look unnatural. Look particularly between the branches of trees which often gives the game away.
 - Often seen with insect or macro shots. Fur / hair can look like needles.
 - Specular highlights may appear to be an over sharpening artefact. This might be true if the specular's are created when, say, photographing material with a metal thread, or stone with flecks of mica embedded. Ask yourself if they add to the image or have become a distraction.
 - Note: halos may also be due to a poor projector or due to or some other processing effects.
- **Output sharpening for printing (include for completeness):**
 - You must consider the paper type, resolution, and viewing distance.
 - Sharpening is something of a doubled edged sword, as it improves the overall look of an image while simultaneously destroying some fine detail.
 - As viewing distance increases, fine detail becomes less visible to the naked eye, therefore more sharpening can be used. Hence, prints viewed at close quarters require less sharpening than prints that are viewed from a distance.
 - Large prints tend to show any unwanted artefacts from over sharpening and other defects too.
 - Matt papers often need slightly more sharpening than glossy or lustre papers to achieve the same apparent sharpness, since the ink bleeds a little more on matt papers.
 - An image that appears hopelessly over sharpened on a monitor can look ideal when printed on an inkjet printer!
 - The only reliable way to evaluate print sharpening is to sharpen the image, print it, and check the print!

Digital Noise

- **What is noise?**
 - Noise is universal – it's all around us. It reduces detail and softens an image.
 - It shows prominently in dark shadow areas, in smooth even colours and tones, in soft, out of focus, and low contrast areas of a subject.
 - Heavily cropped images also suffer noise in low contrast or smooth areas.
 - Consider noise as a form of unwanted detail, and this detail stands out well against any smooth background where other detail is lacking.
 - This is not the same as the old film grain, which is often used as an artistic choice.
 - Noise acts as a barrier to the seeing experience of the image.
- **Three Sources of Noise**
 - **Pattern Noise (Hot Pixel):** Appears when there is a high ambient temperature or the camera sensor overheats (long exposures ≈ 30 sec +). Manifests itself as hot pixels, which tend to appear in same place on the sensor.
 - **Random Noise:** This is about separating the real signal from the noise. It appears in low light conditions, or when image is underexposed or with high ISOs.
 - **Electronic Noise:** From the camera itself, due to poor design, such as poor heat shielding. May appear as banding or other patterns.
- **Chroma and Luminance noise**
 - Chroma noise affects the colour of pixels.
 - Chanel Noise (RGB) affects different three colour channels. Blue is more susceptible to noise, Green less susceptible to noise.
 - Luminance noise affects the brightness of pixels.
 - Chroma and luminance noise is especially noticeable in skies and shadows.
- **In camera Noise Reduction:**
 - **Pattern Noise:** long exposure noise reduction mode (Dark frame). This doubles the exposure time.
 - **Random Noise:** built in software can be used, but possibly better done in post.
- **Mitigating Noise:**
 - **The first step is to add light** (Flash, wide aperture, longer exposure – use a tripod)
 - Expose to the right, ensure no clipping of highlights. This lifts the shadows where noise is most noticeable, and improves the signal to noise ratio in those areas.
 - Use a low ISO. ISO = gain. As ISO increases so does noise. Dynamic range & saturation decreases.
 - Larger depth of field. Sharp images show less noise.
 - Note: cropping an image taken at 200mm :vs: one taken at 500mm, to achieve the same subject size creates more noise in the cropped image.
 - Shooting against a dark background can show noise if the ISO is high. Move position to shoot against a brighter or textured background or against an artificial screen.
 - Noise averaging – via stacking (often used for star shots)
 - Noise averaging – via HDR techniques (Exposure bracketing of + / - 2 or 3 stops)
 - A assessor might wonder why an image, taken in bright sunshine, has a very noisy sky, likely due to a very high ISO. This will raise a question about the poor choice of camera controls!
 - Avoid noisy backgrounds, which spoils the natural feel of a picture. Try noise suppression software. (DXO PureRaw, the DXO Nik collection, Topaz, LR, PS etc, etc)
(DXO is often recommended as it removes noise during demosaicing, which is advantageous).
 - Noise reduction should only be done on areas where there is little detail, again selectively.

General Processing Tips

- Be gentle with the processing, there is a tendency to over use the sliders, especially the saturation!
- There is no requirement to be able to use advanced editing techniques at LRPS level, such as available with photoshop or other high end post processing editors.
- Cropping – there is no requirement to stick to the cameras native aspect ratio, but image sizes should normally balance in pairs. It is perfectly acceptable to stretch an image slightly to make it fit the aspect ratio required. Restrict the number of different aspect ratios to a maximum of three within a panel.
- If an image can't be straightened with the normal perspective tools, you may be able to use the distortion tool to correct one side of the image (say).
- Avoid sharpening and de-noising the same parts of the image, as the effects will cancel out.
- Best advice is to use selective sharpening rather than sharpen the whole image. Noise reduction should be done in the noisy areas and not everywhere. The two should be done separately as 2 different layers (in Capture One, for example, or use the Nik collection Dfine module). Alternatively use DXOPureRaw at the beginning of the workflow.
- Note the difference between commercial and inkjet processes (dot gain) and how sharpening works.

Fog

At one advisory day, one image was of a foggy landscape and the comment was that it was too grey and dull. Fog, we were told, should be white. The assessors referred to Irene Froy who processes foggy pictures in Photoshop by pulling the image through a white layer.

Colour Control – Causes of a Colour Cast

A colour cast is caused by a coloured tint in the direct lighting source or by a reflected ambient light.

- Poor quality ND filters
- Reflection of a particularly strong colour in or outside the scene bouncing light onto the subjects in the scene.
- Haze in the atmosphere can also introduces a colour cast, especially where landscapes are concerned. Haze typically introduces a blue cast but can be seen as a natural effect if it is modest.
- At high ISO's, where there is more noise in one colour channel compared with the other two, may impart a noticeable colour cast.
- Photographs taken with mixed light sources (daylight together with indoor lighting)

Control of highlights and shadow detail – notes:

- An opportunity for an applicant to show off a number of camera craft skills
- 'Correct' exposure in the criteria should be perhaps renamed 'Exposure Control' as it is not always easy to define what is 'correct'.
- At assessment they look for the appropriateness of highlight / shadow control through exposure in relation to the subject being photographed.

Gestalt Psychology – Extract from The Six Principles

- **Similarity** – objects that share the same visual characteristics such as colour, size, shape, tone, texture etc., are seen as belonging together. This is similar to proximity, but the objects don't have to be close together in this case. Any similarities throughout an image help tie it together. E.g. where a similar colour ties the foreground, mid-ground and sky together. Pattern images rely on this effect and there is a pleasure in seeing the odd one out in a pattern. The aim is to create a harmonious blend of tones and shapes. Diptychs / triptychs often use similarity to show they belong together. We mentally group together parts on an image when they have similarities.

Eyes — Where do they look first?

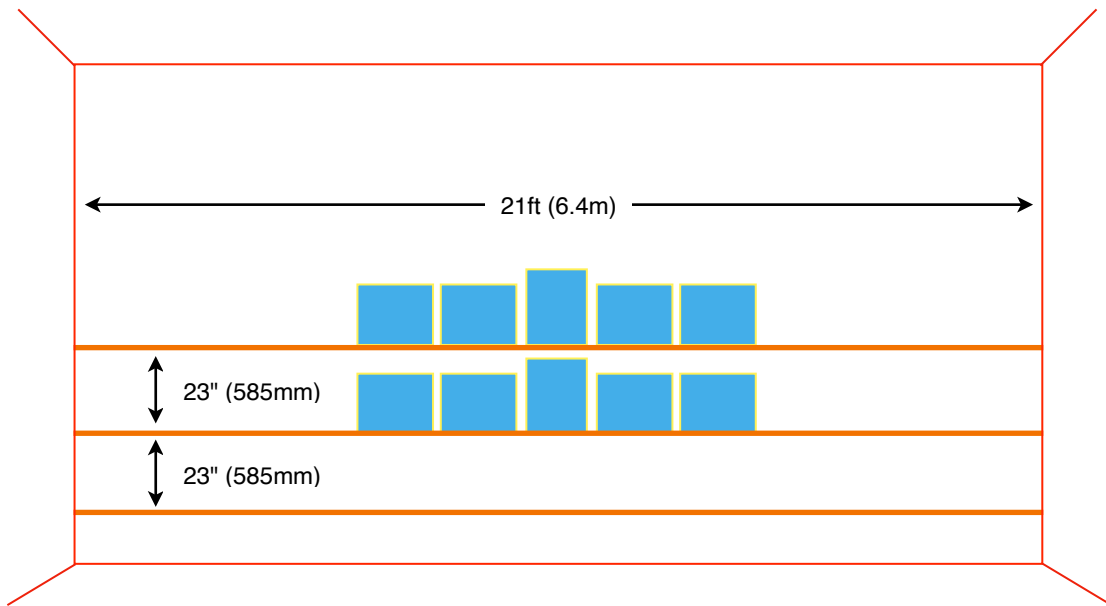
- Drawn mainly to 4 major elements;
 - The Area of Highest Contrast (hence reason for highlights in a subjects eyes)
 - The Brightest Element in the frame (It's the highest contrast)
 - The Most Saturated Colours, particularly strong warm colours, whereas cool colours recede, (not B&W)
 - The Human Face
- In addition:
 - Areas of Sharp focus
 - Strong lines (real and implied), textures, shapes.
- We are also drawn to parts of an image that resonate with our own life experiences such as:
 - Any text, such as street signs (which are generally designed to specifically stand out)
 - Faces and figures. (The brain will often see faces in patterns).
 - Hands in a portrait.
- A photographers job is to guide the viewer though the image by creating a hierarchy.
- **The eye moves from patterns it recognises first, from light to dark, from high contrast to low, very sharp to soft, in focus to blur, high saturation to low saturation.**

In general, the cues that guide people's eyes when looking at a visual scene include:

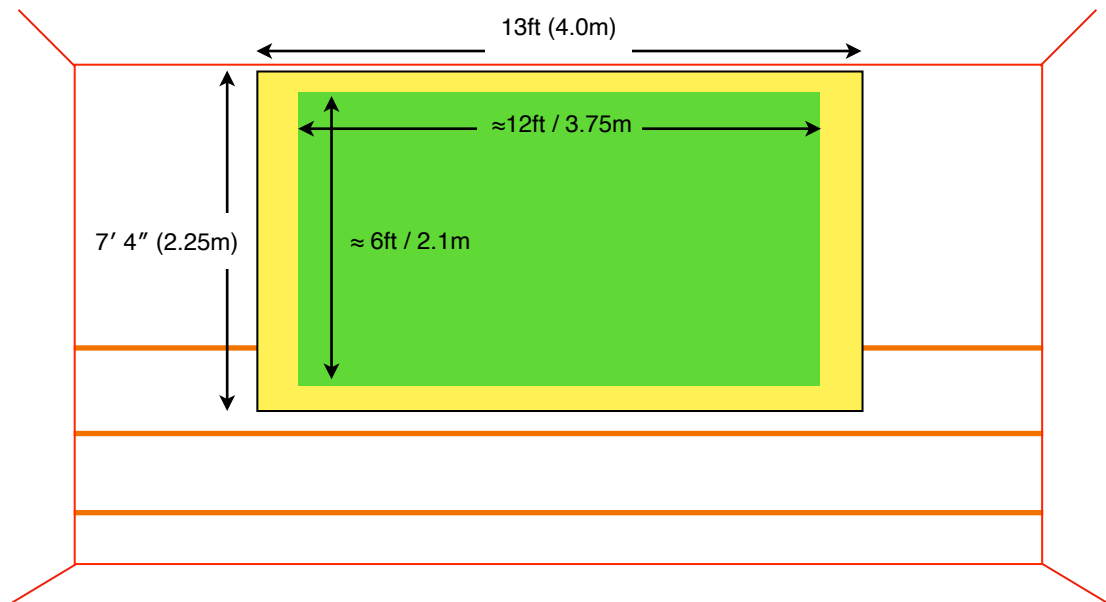
- **Size:** The mind will perceive images that appear larger as closer and part of the figure. Images that appear smaller will seem farther away and will be seen as being part of the background.
- **Blurriness:** Objects in focus draws your attention first, while those that are fuzzy will draw your attention last. The in-focus objects in the foreground are often distinct and crisp, instantly drawing the eyes of the viewer to them. Those things that appear blurry or hazy draw less attention as they immediately appear to be in the background.
- **Contrast of Value:** Value here is the relative lightness or darkness of a colour. A contrast in value is what's responsible for separating objects in space.
- **Contrast:** is a major factor where high contrast objects tend to draw the viewers attention first before low contrast objects.

RPS House Print Display Area and Screen

The sketch below shows the display area with 500×400mm mounts added to provide a sense of scale.



- The maximum length of the display rails in the auditorium is **21ft (6.4m)**.
- There are a maximum of **three** display rails which can be used for a panel.
- The maximum height between the rails is **23" (585mm)**.
- Panel members sit on the first row of seats which are approximately **12¼ft (3.75m)** from the display.



- The screen for digital images is approximately 4×2.25m (13×7½ft) with a 16:9 aspect ratio, (shown in yellow).
- A 3840×2160px image (shown as green) is projected on to the screen with an approximate size of 12×6ft (3.75×2.1m).

Digital Image Preparation – Quick Reference Checklist

Attribute	Required	Notes
File Type	JPEG/JPG	Not JPEG 2000, JFIF, JPE, HEIC, TIFF, PSD, PNG etc, etc
File Naming	01.jpg 02.jpg 03.jpg etc	Two digits with the ‘.jpg’ extension NOT o1.jpg, or O1.jpg etc. Numeric digits only! 10 files for LRPS, (15 files for ARPS, 20 or 21 files for FRPS)
Maximum Image Resolution (UHD)	3840 × 2160	Images to fit in a box, not wider than 3840 pixels AND not taller than 2160 pixels This maximum is an aspect ratio of 16 x 9 or 1.777’
Minimum Image Resolution (FHD)	1920 × 1080	Images smaller than the maximum will be projected at 1:1 and will be smaller than full screen. A black background fills the rest of the screen.
JPEG Image Quality	Maximum	Set at 100% in Capture One, Lightroom etc. Set at 12 in Photoshop
Colour Space	RGB	Do not use any other colour space such as Greyscale, CMYK, Lab...
Embedded Color Profile	sRGB	Do not use any other profile such as AdobeRGB, ProPhoto RGB...
‘Resolution’ (PPI)	Any	PPI is totally irrelevant for digital images and any embedded PPI is ignored. (Use the standard 300 PPI if needed).

Table based on an original table by Dr Ian Wilson ARPS

Image Aspect Ratio’s

Using the RPS maximum screen resolution, here are the maximum pixel dimensions for each aspect ratio:

Image Format	Required Pixel Dimension	No of Pixels	Aspect Ratio
Square image	2160× 2160	4,665,600	1.00
5×4 – landscape	2700× 2160	5,832,000	1.25
4×3 – landscape	2880× 2160	6,220,800	1.33’
4×3 – portrait	1620× 2160	3,499,200	1.33’
7×5 – landscape	3024× 2160	6,531,840	1.40
7×5 – portrait	1543× 2160	3,332,880	1.40
3×2 – landscape	3240× 2160	6,998,400	1.50
3×2 – portrait	1440× 2160	3,110,400	1.50
8×5 – landscape	3500× 2160	7,560,000	1.62 (Golden ratio = 1.618)
16×9 – landscape	3840×2160	8,294,400	1.77’ RPS Max. Resolution (UHD-monitors / TVs)
256×135 – landscape	3840 ×2020	7,756,800	1.90 (Videography format)
2×1 (16×8) – landscape	3840 ×1920	7,372,800	2.00 (Typical panorama format)

Notes: the vertical height is the limiting factor with any aspect ratio less than 1.77 (bold type).

Calculations based on similar calculations by Dr Ian Wilson ARPS

Approximate Monitor Viewing Distances – Quick Reference Checklist

Screen Viewing distance: To mimic the assessors viewpoint, assuming a UHD (3840×2160) resolution monitor, enlarge images on screen to 100% (1:1) and view the image at:

- 700mm (27in) for a 32in monitor.
- 600mm (23in) for a 27in monitor.
- 530mm (21in) for a 24in monitor.
- Note that assessors are approximately 3.8m (≈12.5ft) from the RPS projection screen.
- With a smaller resolution monitor and at 100% image size you will not see the whole image.

Screen Size	Multiplier With RPS Screen	Viewing Distance	
		(Mm)	(In)
55	3.1	1220	48
48	3.5	1060	42
42	4.0	930	37
40	4.2	885	35
34.2	5.0	760	30
31.5	5.4	700	27
27	6.3	600	23
24.1	7.0	530	21
Applies to UHD 2160p monitors – for FHD 1080p screens: use double the viewing distance (all images at 1:1)			
UHD = Ultra High Definition, a display resolution of 3840 x 2160 pixels (4k). FHD (1080p) = Full High Definition, a display resolution of 1920 x 1080 pixels.			
Based on similar calculations by Dr Ian Wilson ARPS			

Common Monitor Resolutions

Type	Resolution	Aspect Ratio	Pixels
FHD	1920 × 1080	16:9	2,073,600
UW-FHD	2560 × 1080	21:9	2,764,800
WQHD	2560 × 1440	16:9	3,686,400
4K UHD-1	3840 × 2160	16:9	8,294,400

Useful YouTube videos

- Dr Ian Wilson - Digital Image Preparation
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIRdWCJOFfI>
- Lancaster Photographic Society: Caroline Preece on the LRPS:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBtqyI1kc3E>
- A LRPS Advisory Panel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n88j7TMRGDY>
- A LRPS Advisory Panel:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wrXjc_VeNA
- RPS Digital Imaging videos:
<https://www.youtube.com/c/rpsdigitalimaging>

Useful Links

- DIG magazine DIGIT
<https://rps.org/groups/digital-imaging/di-publications/di-online/>
<https://rps.org/di/digit-archive>
- RPS Distinctions Accolade magazine search
<https://issuu.com/search?q=rps%20accolade>

Example LRPS ‘Hanging plans’

Many of the older successful panels are no longer on the RPS website, but they can be found on the ‘Wayback Machine’. This is one link that will find several panels to examine for inspiration.

However, do take into account that the standard of photography has been increasing year on year, and some images from the past may not pass the test today.

It has been recently noted that A & F panel images from 10 or more years ago may not be acceptable today.

This is mainly due to the quality and ability of today's cameras compared with cameras from the past decade.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20171111003224/http://www.rps.org/distinctions/distinction-successes/lrps-galleries>

Fin