



The OPS Distinctions Handbook

Issue 1.6

Open Photographic Society
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1 Introduction

This handbook has been written to assist photographers who intend to apply for one of the Open Photographic Society's awards or distinctions. It describes the awards and distinctions available, explains the requirements for each one and how to prepare an application, and sets out details of the assessment process, result notification, appeals process and certificates.

2 Introduction to Awards and Distinctions

The Society acknowledges photographic excellence with four awards - the Certificate of Merit and three formal distinctions. These are:

- The Certificate of Merit;
- The Licentiateship (LOPS);
- The Associateship (AOPS);
- The Fellowship (FOPS) - applicants must have previously been awarded an Associate-level distinction by a recognized photographic institution.

Detailed information relating to each award may be found in the following pages, or by visiting the website's FAQ section.

A photographer who is awarded one of the Society's distinctions may use the relevant letters (LOPS, AOPS or FOPS) after his or her name throughout life. No subsequent fees or subscriptions are payable. An award of the Certificate of Merit does not incorporate the right to use any letters after a successful candidate's name. Note that an applicant must be under the age of 18 on the relevant date of assessment to make an application for a Certificate of Merit, and must also provide evidence of consent via the Certificate of Merit Consent Form.

3 Getting Started

Potential award or distinction applicants should begin by emailing the Society's Distinctions Office to request an application reference number. These reference numbers allow the Society to track individual applicants and their on-line applications and fee payments, and give advanced notice of the potential number of applicants. They also provide applicants with access to the necessary on-line application forms in a more secure environment. It is not possible to make an award or distinction application without first requesting an application reference number via email. Neither is it possible to use the Society's dedicated image file upload facility without first logging in as a registered user of the website. Log-in details are provided when an applicant requests an application reference number.

Requesting an application reference number from the Society does not in any way commit a potential applicant to making an application or paying an associated fee.

4 Language

All award and distinction applications, including statements of objectives and any other comments or supporting evidence, must be submitted to the Society using the English language. Applications submitted in other languages will be rejected.

5 The Application Process

5.1 Who Can Apply for a Distinction?

The Open Photographic Society is open to anyone, amateur or professional, who has an interest in photography. The Distinction Programme is similarly open to anyone who wishes to make an application. The Society has no formal membership list so there is no requirement to become a member or pay a subscription as is the case with other photographic societies.

Please note that:

- Anyone under the age of 18 may apply for a Certificate of Merit;
- Anyone over the age of 18 may apply for a Licentiate'ship;
- Anyone over the age of 18 may apply for an Associateship;
- Fellowship applicants must be over the age of 18 years and must have previously been awarded an Associateship (or an equivalent or higher-level distinction or qualification) by OPS or a recognized photographic institution such as:
 - The Royal Photographic Society (RPS)
 - The British Institute of Professional Photographers (BIPP)
 - The Society of Wedding and Portrait Photographers (SWPP)

- The Australian Photographic Society (APS)
- The Photographic Society of New Zealand (PSNZ)
- The Photographic Society of America (PSA)

If in doubt about distinctions regarded by the Society as the equivalent of those listed above, please email us for clarification.

5.2 Preparing for a Distinction Application

It is important to plan an application for a distinction well ahead of the assessment dates. Sequences and panels of images of the qualities required for the various distinctions cannot be created and prepared without the expenditure of considerable time and effort.

Please check that your computer monitor is correctly calibrated. Submitted images will be viewed and assessed on equipment that is regularly calibrated and no allowance can be made for incorrect colour balance. A grey scale is included in our website article on monitor calibration. Basic colour calibration can be checked using our website monitor colour calibration chart.

5.3 Application Reference Numbers

An early step in preparing for any award or distinction application is to contact the Society's Distinctions Office by email (distinctions@openphotographicsociety.org) and request an application reference number. These numbers allow the Society to track applicants and their on-line applications and fee payments, and give the Society advanced notice of the potential number of applicants. Each reference number is supplied with the log-in details required to access the dedicated files upload facility and the necessary on-line application forms. Applicants cannot apply for an award or distinction until an application reference number has been requested and received (by email) from the Society.

Requesting an application reference number from the Society does not in any way commit a potential applicant to making an application or paying an associated fee.

5.4 Exemptions

There are no general exemptions for any of the Society's awards or distinctions. The only way to obtain an OPS award or distinction is to submit an appropriate panel of images. However, Fellowship (FOPS) applicants, who must have previously gained an Associateship or higher-level distinction (or equivalent qualification) from a recognized photographic institution, may provide evidence of such a distinction or qualification as an alternative to achieving the Society's Associateship (AOPS) distinction. Supporting evidence is submitted via the appropriate fields of the on-line Distinction Application Form, and by attaching a scanned copy of the relevant certificate(s) to the application form (see the final field). The Society reserves the right to check such evidence with the relevant institution.

5.5 Evidence Checks

The Society reserves the right to check details submitted as part of distinction applications with the relevant authorities and institutions. Such checks may, at the Society's discretion, be carried out prior to or following assessments. Applicants submitting misleading or false information may have their application rejected. They may also be disqualified from future assessments.

5.6 Recognized Distinctions and Qualifications

The following distinctions and qualifications are accepted by the Society as equivalents of its Associateship (AOPS) when applying for a Fellowship (FOPS):

- Associate of the British Institute of Professional Photographers (ABIPP);
- Associate of the Royal Photographic Society (ARPS);
- Associate of the Photographic Society of New Zealand (APSNZ);
- Associate of the Australian Photographic Society (AAPS);
- Associate of the Master Photographers Association (AMPA);

- BA or MA degree in Photography (From a UK university only).

Candidates who have been awarded one of the above distinctions or qualifications, or a higher-level distinction (such as FBIPP, FRPS etc) may apply directly for a Fellowship (FOPS) distinction without first being awarded the Society's Associateship (AOPS). In such circumstances, evidence of the existing distinction or qualification must be attached to a candidate's Distinction Application Form (ie a scanned copy of the relevant certificate). Note that none of the above distinctions or qualifications automatically qualifies a candidate for the award of the Society's Associateship (AOPS) distinction. Note also that the Society reserves the right to check the details of certificates submitted as evidence with the issuing organizations and institutions.

Other comparable distinctions may be acceptable to the Society. Please contact our Distinctions Office with any relevant queries.

5.7 The Application Process

The application process has been made as simple as possible. The basic stages are as follows:

- Decide which distinction is appropriate (Fellowship applicants must have previously been awarded an Associateship, or an equivalent or higher-level distinction, by OPS or one of the recognized photographic institutions. Where this is the case, and the applicant wishes to apply for an exemption, evidence of the relevant distinction(s) or qualification(s) must be attached to the final field of the on-line Distinction Application Form. Scanned copies of relevant certificates are normally acceptable.)
- Assemble the required number of images in the specified format, and create a display plan or sequence (not required for a Certificate of Merit). A display plan should take the form of an additional image, and a display sequence is determined by ascending numerical filenames (eg initials_01.jpg, initials_02.jpg etc or familyname_01.jpg, familyname_02.jpg etc).
- Request a Distinction Application Reference Number by emailing the Society's Distinctions Office. This provides access to the necessary on-line forms and dedicated files upload facility.

- Pay the relevant application fee via the OPS on-line shop using a credit/debit card or *Paypal* - no *Paypal* account is required. Be sure to quote the Application Reference Number when making a payment;
- Complete the on-line Distinction Application Form, including attached files as required. Note that applicants must not attach their evidence (sequence or panel images) to the on-line Distinctions Application Form. Sequence or panel images should be uploaded separately, preferably using the dedicated file upload facility.
- Applicants under the age of 18 years on the date of the relevant assessment must arrange for the on-line Certificate of Merit Consent Form to be completed and submitted to the Society by a parent, guardian or responsible adult;
- Send all the image files to the Society's Distinctions Office) using our dedicated file upload facility (available only when logged in as a registered user), or as email attachments mailed to distinctions@openphotographicsociety.org.

Please note that incomplete or late applications, and those for which appropriate fees have not been paid, cannot be considered. We recommend that submissions are not left to the last possible day as this period may be busy.

5.8 Fees

Standard fees for award and distinction assessments are quoted on the relevant page of the website. Fees must be paid via *Paypal* or credit/debit card through the Society's on-line shop. It is not necessary for applicants to have a *Paypal* account. Note that the relevant Application Reference Number, obtained from the Society by email, should be quoted in the appropriate notes field at checkout when making a payment.

Award and distinction fees are not normally refundable. Fees received by the Society for award or distinction applications which remain incomplete at the closing date and time will not be refunded. However,

if the relevant application is later completed it will be assessed free of charge at the next scheduled assessment.

5.9 Application and Assessment Timetable

Award and distinction assessments normally take place within seven days of the published assessment date for the relevant applications. These dates are shown in the Distinctions Calendar on the website. The period over which distinctions are assessed is dependent upon the number of complete and valid applications received. The assessment process begins on the specified date and continues until all applications have been assessed. Consequently, where a large number of applications are received, some may not be assessed on the first assessment day.

5.10 The Distinctions Calendar

A calendar showing all the relevant award and distinction dates may be found on the website. These dates may be changed at the sole discretion of the Society, and without prior notice.

5.11 Distinction Categories

Images submitted as part of Associateship (AOPS) or Fellowship (FOPS) applications must fall into one of the accepted categories listed below. Please also be sure to read the relevant category criteria.

- Portraiture - images of people;
- Wedding - an account of a wedding, or of two or three different weddings (no more than three different weddings may be incorporated into a single panel);
- Travel - an account of a journey, place, community, area, region or country conveying the feeling or essence of the location(s);
- Visual Art - images taken for pictorial purposes.

Other categories may be added by the Society in the future as resources allow.

Each application can be made in only one category. A single set of images cannot therefore be considered, for example, under the criteria for both travel and visual art. The category criteria should be read carefully to ensure that the most appropriate category has been selected before an application is made.

5.12 Statement of Objectives

A statement of objectives must be made by Associateship and Fellowship applicants to introduce the work submitted, but is not required for Certificate of Merit or Licentiate applications. The statement should be concise and written using simple English likely to be understood by anyone. Technical or flowery language should be avoided.

A statement of objectives may be used to explain the context of the images, why they were created and what the photographer set out to achieve. Descriptions of individual images and technical details are of little importance and should be avoided wherever possible. The statement will be considered carefully during an assessment, and should reflect the simple reality of the photography undertaken rather than make claims not supported by the work.

The maximum length of a statement of objectives is 250 words, although shorter statements are preferred.

5.13 Image File Formats

- All images (including monochrome submissions) must be in 8-bit RGB mode, and in the sRGB colour space.
- The larger dimension of each image must be 1,600 pixels - eg 1,600 x 1,067 pixels, 1,600 x 800 pixels, or 1,600 x 1,600 pixels for square images. The pixels per inch (ppi) setting for files is unimportant.
- Files must be saved as the highest-quality JPEGs (quality 10 to 12). No allowance is made for compression artifacts. A typical file size is normally in the range of 2-3 MB.

- The file names must be, or must incorporate, sequential two digit numbers, starting at 01, followed by the extent (.jpg) - ie : initials_01.jpg, initials_02.jpg, initials_03.jpg etc so that the files sort in the relevant order. The applicant's family name may also be included – eg johnson_01.jpg etc. Where a panel layout image is submitted, the image file should be of a similar size and format and the panel images should be numbered sequentially, row by row, from top left to bottom right. File names should be as for a sequential submission. The panel layout image should be named “panel_layout.jpg” and may feature any appropriate aspect ratio.
- Full details of how to upload images using our dedicated file upload facility can be found in the Submissions section of the website.

5.14 Submission of Award and Distinction Images

Photographers wishing to submit images to the Society as part of an award or distinction application should normally do so using our dedicated file upload facility (available only to logged-in registered users), or email attachments directed to the Distinctions Office. CDs and DVDs are no longer accepted. Please note that all submitted images are eventually deleted from the Society's computers and media when they are no longer required by the Society. No images are returned to the submitting photographers. However, images may remain in the Society's website backups for some time. All correspondence is handled by email.

Submission of images as part of award or distinction applications is regarded as granting permission to publish the material on the Society's website should the award or distinction application be successful. Authors submitting images for awards and distinctions must own the sole copyright of all images. Photographers submitting images of people should ensure that they are in possession of appropriate model release authority where this is required. The Society cannot accept any responsibility for the publication of images for which the author does not have sole copyright or appropriate model release.

Images should be in highest-quality JPEG format (quality 10 to 12) and sized in accordance with the relevant criteria for distinctions. Please note that the Society's standards of acceptance apply to all website images.

5.15 Uploading Image Files

Evidence files (panel or sequence images) may be transferred to the Society in two different ways. These are:

- via our dedicated file upload facility (at bottom left of distinction application website pages when logged in); or
- as several email attachments.

Note that panel or sequence images must not be attached to the on-line Award and Distinction Application Form.

The Society's dedicated file upload facility is the preferred method for transferring images - both for the applicant and the Society. Note that this facility is available only to logged-in registered users. Files may be transferred one at a time or as a group. Uploads are relatively fast and also reliable. Each uploaded file is limited to 6MB. A 6MB file upload generally completes in a period of a few seconds. Note that files cannot be overwritten once uploaded, so make sure everything is in order before uploading.

Email service providers may limit the size of attached files to about 4 – 10 MB although the maximum acceptable size varies with a number of service-related factors. In general, only one image file should be attached to each email. Please ensure that the relevant Distinction Application Reference Number is included in emails sent to the Society's Distinctions Office.

5.16 General Checklist

Every award application must include:

- A Distinction Application Reference Number;
- A completed on-line Distinctions Application Form – do not attach evidence files (sequence or panel images);

- The appropriate number of images (8, 10, 15 or 20) in the correct (1,600 pixels maximum, JPEG, RGB mode, 8-bit, sRGB) electronic form;
- An additional image showing the panel layout where applicable. Where this is not provided, images will be considered as a sequence determined by the ascending numerical order of filenames;
- Evidence of the consent of a responsible adult for applicants for a Certificate of Merit (who must be under the age of 18). This consent should be recorded by completing and submitting the Certificate of Merit Consent Form;
- In the case of Associateship and Fellowship applications, a statement of objectives provided via the appropriate field of the on-line application form;
- Where relevant, an exemption request made via the appropriate field of the Distinctions Application Form - scanned copies of relevant certificate(s) attached to the Distinctions Application Form.
- Payment of the appropriate fee via the Society's on-line shop;
- Delivery of all the necessary material (and evidence images) to the Society by the relevant cut-off date (see the website Distinctions Calendar).

6 Assessment

6.1 The Assessment

Each assessment is led by a suitably experienced photographer who has been awarded a Fellowship-level distinction (such as FBIPP, FRPS etc) by a recognized photographic institution, or who holds an equivalent qualification. He or she is supported by other experienced and suitably qualified photographers as required. The names and contact details of the assessors are not disclosed.

6.2 The Assessment Process

The Society is an on-line only organization and has no meeting rooms. Assessors may be widely spread over numerous areas or countries. All award and distinction assessments are consequently held in camera, the images and other necessary details being sent electronically to assessors as required. Appeals are also considered in camera.

Each image within a panel or sequence is assessed according to the relevant criteria, and the cohesion and effectiveness of the overall panel or sequence is also assessed. Candidates falling short of the expected standards in any part of the assessment process are declared unsuccessful. Those meeting or exceeding the relevant criteria and standards are awarded the appropriate certificate or distinction.

Assessments and appeals are led by an experienced Fellowship-level photographer supported by other suitably qualified photographers as required. The names of assessors are not disclosed.

The result of an assessment is sent to the relevant candidate by email. Successful candidates receive only notification of their award and the relevant certificate in electronic form (PDF). Unsuccessful candidates receive an emailed summary of the reasons for refusing their application.

6.3 Result Notification

The results of Certificate of Merit and distinction assessments are normally emailed to candidates within seven days of the conclusion of the relevant assessment process. Successful candidates receive simple English language notification of their success. An English language certificate is emailed to such candidates as soon as possible after the completion of the assessment process. Unsuccessful candidates receive an English language emailed notification of their result together with a brief statement summarizing the reasons the assessors were not satisfied that the required criteria and standards had been demonstrated. No further correspondence regarding an assessment or the declared result is permitted.

6.4 Certificates

Successful candidates will be sent an electronic certificate verifying that they have satisfied the standards of the relevant award or distinction assessment. The certificates are A4 size and stored in PDF format, and can be printed locally as required.

A blank Licentiatehip certificate is shown on the website.

6.5 Appeals

Unsuccessful candidates may appeal their result within 14 days of being informed of the decision. Appeals are handled in much the same way as the original assessment. They may be considered, at the sole discretion of the Society, by the same or different assessors.

The panel of images is reconsidered from first principles with no reference to the original report. If the application is refused at appeal, no further appeal is available. However, the candidate is free to submit a new application at a later date, and to appeal subsequent unsuccessful applications. Note that subsequent applications must incorporate at least one new image relative to previous unsuccessful applications or appeals. However, in most cases, more changes may be advisable.

The result of an appeal is normally sent to the relevant candidate by email within seven days of completion of the appeal process. Brief reasons for the result will be provided, but no other communication with the applicant regarding an appeal will be entertained. The decision of the Society will be final. A charge is made for the appeal process.

7 Category Criteria

7.1 Portraiture

A portrait is an image of a person - animal and other non-human likenesses are not accepted. Images of masked people are also likely to be rejected. To qualify as a portrait, a person must be the primary subject in a picture. Consequently, an environmental portrait featuring a distant person or nude in a vast landscape is likely to be rejected.

A good portrait is very difficult to define but might be described as a likeness of a person in which personal characteristics, personality, circumstances, mood and atmosphere are effectively communicated. It brings the viewer uncannily close to a real human being. Its impact and immediacy are such that little seems to stand between the observer and the subject. Indeed, the image approaches reality. Many factors contribute to success including composition, environment, beautiful light, form, texture, mood, atmosphere, vitality and communication.

Portraits can be created in a studio or in a less controlled environment indoors or outdoors. Wedding images may be included up to a maximum of three images per panel. Associateship and Fellowship panels must demonstrate a range of photographic approaches and abilities, so a submission consisting exclusively of head shots would be unlikely to be successful. Candidates should also avoid the repeated use of similar compositions, and use of the same subject in more than one image.

7.2 Wedding

The majority of wedding images could be described as portraits but a separate and rather specialized category is used for wedding images because of the particular environment in which wedding photographers work. Weddings proceed at a rapid pace and photographers must be capable of handling people tactfully and efficiently whilst under constant pressure. With this background they must create large numbers of images that are of a consistently high standard, both artistically and technically, in a variety of indoor and outdoor environments. The pictures must also satisfy the requirements of the bride and groom and tell the story of the day.

Wedding images are assessed against the constantly evolving standards of the industry, and numerous traditional groups of guests posed in a formal manner are unlikely to lead to success. All submitted wedding images must have been taken at real weddings. Pictures not taken at real weddings, such as those created using models in ideal locations or free from time pressures, are not accepted.

A panel of wedding images can comprise images from a maximum of three weddings. Where more than one wedding is featured, the

presentation of the panel should make clear where the boundaries of each wedding lie.

7.3 Travel

A travel submission should have an identifiable focus or theme relating to a place, community, event, area or nation. Alternatively, it might relate to a particular journey through a region or nation. The geographical region, and its size, is relatively unimportant and no credit is given for portraying exotic locations. A good set of local pictures may well be more acceptable than pictures of a lesser quality from the far side of the world. However, the geographical scope should be defined in a statement of objectives. A random collection of excellent travel images from all over the globe, and with no particular connection, would be unlikely to be acceptable.

An introductory statement of objectives should explain the focus or theme, and the panel of images should convey an appropriate “spirit of place”. This is an elusive concept that is difficult to define. Nevertheless, the word “place” means much more than geographical location. It incorporates elements of culture, history, architecture, local customs, people, community spirit and general atmosphere and environment.

The chosen subject or theme should be visually explored as thoroughly as possible using varied images incorporating typical and unusual features or characteristics as well as subjects of particular importance or interest. The panel or sequence should demonstrate an imaginative approach and a significant degree of individual application and interpretation.

Applicants should aim to get among the action, get involved and see the subject from a variety of perspectives. The photographer’s contribution is an important element of success.

In general, manipulation of images is not permitted. However, minor defects, litter etc may be removed provided the reality of images is not altered.

7.4 Visual Art

OPS visual art panels or sequences must be based upon a single subject theme or story, and evidence of a personal style or vision should be apparent.

There is no restriction of subject matter in this broad category, but the panel of images should provide a focused, cohesive and personal approach to the chosen subject. The panel, and choice and treatment of subject matter, should reveal complete mastery of the subject. Variety of subject matter is not a requirement in itself, but the panel should incorporate a range of work conveying some measure of mood, atmosphere, emotion or meaning that encourages viewers to consider the underlying story.

8 The Certificate of Merit

8.1 Introduction

The Society's Certificate of Merit represents a first step, for young people, towards the achievement of a formal distinction. Applicants must be under the age of 18 on the date of the relevant assessment.

8.2 Requirements

Applicants must be under the age of 18 years at the published date of the relevant assessment. Confirmation of age must be submitted to the Society by a parent, guardian or responsible adult via the on-line Certificate of Merit Consent Form. Applications not supported by a completed consent form cannot be assessed by the Society.

The applicant must complete the on-line Distinction Application Form and submit it to the Society by the relevant closing date shown in the on-line Distinctions Calendar. No statement of objectives is required.

A Certificate of Merit application must consist of eight images in electronic format, and optionally a ninth image showing the panel layout. Where no panel layout is provided, the images will be viewed as a sequence in ascending numerical filename order. The files may be transferred to the Society in one of the following ways:

- Files uploaded using our dedicated files upload facility (accessible only when logged in to the site);
- Files sent as email attachments to our Distinctions Office. To limit the size of email messages, each image may have to be attached to a separate message.

The images submitted may be of any subject.

Note that evidence files (sequence or panel images) must not be attached to the on-line Award and Distinction Application Form.

8.3 Criteria

Certificate of Merit applications are assessed with reference to a number of different criteria, primarily technical quality, photographic technique, perception, presentation and photographer's contribution. Successful applications must score the relevant pass mark when assessed against the following criteria:

Technical Quality

- Framing, masking and colour management;
- Image processing and tonal control; and
- Removal of spots, dust and digital processing artifacts.

Photographic Technique

- Viewpoint and lighting;
- Focus, depth of field, aperture, shutter speed and exposure; and
- Control of highlights and shadows, image density and colour.

Perception

- Understanding and use of light, colour, mood, line, shape and texture;
- Image design, viewpoint, composition and cropping; and
- Control of background.

Presentation

- Overall impression, variety of approach;
- Selection of images; and
- Editing and attention to detail.

Photographer's Contribution

- Photographer's contribution, and understanding of subject;
- Communication of basic information, story, emotion, mood, and ideas;
- Creativity, imagination and ability to capture the moment; and
- Choice of medium (colour, monochrome etc).

8.4 Certificate of Merit Checklist

All applicants must:

- be under the age of 18 years on the relevant published date of assessment;
- submit a completed on-line Distinction Application Form. Note that evidence files (sequence or panel images) must not be attached to the on-line Distinction Application Form.
- ensure that an on-line Certificate of Merit Consent Form is completed and submitted on their behalf by a parent, guardian or responsible adult;
- submit eight images in the appropriate format (1,600 pixels maximum, JPEG, RGB mode, 8-bit, sRGB). These should not be attached to the on-line Distinction Application Form;
- optionally, submit a ninth image in similar format if the pictures are to be viewed as a panel; and
- pay the required fee via the Society's on-line shop.

All of the above submissions must be received by the Society by 2359 GMT on the closing date for applications as stated in the on-line Distinctions Calendar.

9 The Licentiateship (LOPS)

9.1 Introduction

The Licentiateship (LOPS) is the first level in the Society's formal distinction programme, and is available to anyone over the age of 18 years. Be sure to read and understand the requirements, application process and criteria before submitting an application.

The Licentiateship is appropriate for photographers who have not previously obtained a photographic distinction, and typically allows competent and experienced workers to gain recognition for their work. The standards required are reasonably high but anyone with a good grasp of the technical and compositional aspects of photographic technique should find the distinction achievable. Photographers are expected to satisfy the assessors that the submitted images have been captured, processed and presented with an appropriate degree of involvement, care and attention to detail.

Applicants must have personally created all images submitted to the Society, and must hold the sole copyright of each and every image. Images of people must be supported by model release forms where these are necessary.

9.2 Requirements

Licentiateship applicants must be over the age of 18 years on the date of the relevant assessment. A Licentiateship application must consist of ten images in electronic format. Optionally, an eleventh image may be used to illustrate the layout plan for a ten-image panel, and should have dimensions comparable with the other images. However, the aspect ratio may vary as required. Where no layout image is submitted, the files will be viewed as a sequence in ascending numerical filename order. The files may be transferred to the Society in one of the following ways:

- Files uploaded using our dedicated files upload facility (accessible only when logged in to the website);

- Files sent as email attachments to our Distinctions Office. To limit the size of email messages, each image may have to be attached to a separate message.

Note that evidence files (sequence or panel images) must not be attached to the on-line Award and Distinction Application Form.

All Licentiateship applicants must submit to the Society a completed on-line Distinction Application Form. No statement of objectives is required.

The images submitted may be of any subject or subjects. Ten images of a similar nature, perhaps ten landscapes, can make an excellent panel. It is also possible to incorporate more than one category of image in a single panel, although candidates are advised to limit their submission to two or three subjects to maximize the cohesion of their panel. For example, a panel might consist of five landscapes and five portraits, or perhaps three landscapes, three portraits and four natural history images. Images of ten quite different subjects would be acceptable only if the overall panel demonstrated sufficient cohesion. All ten images can of course also fall within one category.

Images can be colour, monochrome, duotone etc, and the different media can also be mixed within a single panel - perhaps five colour images and five monochrome images. However, in these circumstances, applicants should consider carefully how the panel should be displayed and whether it exhibits sufficient cohesion.

9.3 Criteria

Licentiateship applications are assessed with reference to a number of different criteria, primarily technical quality, photographic technique, perception, presentation and photographer's contribution. Successful applications must score the relevant pass mark in each of the sections below and also achieve an overall pass-mark. The overall pass mark is greater than the sum of the minimum pass marks for individual images and sections.

Technical Quality

- Framing, masking and colour management;

- Image processing and tonal control; and
- Removal of defects, spots, dust and digital processing artifacts.

Photographic Technique

- Viewpoint and lighting;
- Focus, depth of field, aperture, shutter speed and exposure;
- Control of highlights and shadows, image density and colour.

Perception

- Understanding and use of light, colour, mood, line, shape and texture;
- Image design, viewpoint, composition and cropping; and
- Control of background.

Presentation

- Overall impression, variety of approach and cohesion;
- Selection of images, and panel layout or sequencing of images; and
- Editing and attention to detail.

Photographer's Contribution

- Photographer's contribution, and understanding of subject;
- Communication of basic information, story, emotion, mood, and ideas;
- Creativity, imagination and ability to capture the moment; and
- Choice of medium (colour, monochrome etc)

9.4 Licentiate's Checklist

All applicants must:

- be over the age of 18 years on the relevant published date of assessment;

- submit a completed on-line Distinction Application Form;
- submit ten images in the appropriate electronic format (1,600 pixels maximum, JPEG, RGB mode, 8-bit, sRGB);
- optionally, submit an eleventh image in similar format if the pictures are to be viewed as a panel; and
- pay the required fee via the Society's on-line shop.

All of the above submissions must be received by the Society by 2359 GMT on the closing date for applications as stated on the Distinctions Calendar.

10 The Associateship (AOPS)

10.1 Introduction

The Associateship (AOPS) is the second or intermediate level in the Society's distinction programme. Be sure to read and understand the requirements, application process and criteria before submitting an application.

The Associateship is appropriate for those who have considerable experience in a particular field, and represents a significant challenge for accomplished photographers. The standards required are very high, and a significant step up on those required for a successful Licentiateship application, but nevertheless achievable for active and developing photographers. The expectation at Associateship level is that a photographer should demonstrate not only a high standard of technical control appropriate to his or her chosen subject, but also obvious creativity and an identifiable personal style. A successful candidate must also demonstrate his or her flair for, and understanding of, the chosen subject.

Applicants must have personally created all images submitted to the Society, and must hold the sole copyright for each and every image. Images of people should be supported by model release forms where necessary. All applicants must be over the age of 18 years on the date of the assessment.

10.2 Requirements

Associateship applicants must be over the age of 18 years on the relevant assessment date. An Associateship application must consist of fifteen images in electronic format. A sixteenth image may be used to illustrate the layout plan for a fifteen-image panel, and should have dimensions comparable with the other images. However, the aspect ratio of this image may vary as required to present the panel layout. Where no layout image is submitted, the files will be viewed as a sequence in ascending numerical filename order.

The files may be transferred to the Society in one of the following ways:

- Files uploaded using our dedicated file upload facility (accessible only when logged in to the website);
- Files sent as email attachments to our Distinctions Office. To limit the size of email messages, each image may have to be attached to a separate message.

Note that evidence files (sequence or panel images) must not be attached to the on-line Award and Distinction Application Form.

The fifteen images submitted must fall into one of the accepted categories, and a statement of objectives must be made via the appropriate field of a completed on-line Distinction Application Form. Images can be colour, monochrome, duotone etc, but the different media cannot be mixed within a single panel. Applicants should consider carefully how the panel should be displayed and whether it exhibits sufficient cohesion.

The appropriate fees must be paid via the Society's on-line shop prior to the cut-off date given in the on-line Distinctions Calendar.

10.3 Associateship Statement of Objectives

All Associateship applications must include a concise statement of the photographer's objectives. This is an opportunity to explain to those who assess the work the context and purpose of the images.

In general, it is best to keep the statement brief and to the point, and to use plain and simple English language that is readily understood by

everyone. Stated objectives should refer to the panel or sequence of images as a whole rather than to individual images. Technical explanations of how images were created are not required.

The statement may be up to 250 words in length although shorter submissions are preferred. In many cases, a few sentences should suffice. It should be submitted via the appropriate field on the Distinctions Application Form.

10.4 Criteria

Associateship applications are assessed with reference to a number of different criteria, primarily the photographer's stated objectives, technical competence, presentation, artistic contribution and content, originality and imagination, communication and cohesion. Successful applications must score the relevant pass mark in each of the sections below and also achieve an overall pass-mark. The overall pass mark is greater than the sum of the minimum pass marks for individual images and sections.

The following criteria are used for all Associateship applications. More specific criteria and requirements may be included in the relevant category description.

Statement of Objectives

- Were the photographer's stated objectives met by the panel or sequence of images submitted?

Technical Competence

- Evidence of the competent use of appropriate equipment;
- Consistent control of exposure, contrast and colour balance;
- Appropriate control of highlight and shadow detail; and
- Effective use of focus and depth of field.

Presentation

- A generally high standard of presentation should be apparent;
- Images must be free from marks, blemishes etc; and

- The images should be varied and demonstrate a range of approaches to the subject. Repetition is not allowed, so two (or more) very similar images may be unacceptable.

Artistic Contribution and Content

- A good understanding of composition, design and form should be apparent; and
- Appropriate use of lighting and viewpoint must be demonstrated.

Originality and Imagination

- Evidence of originality in presenting the subject. Well-worn, repetitive approaches are unlikely to be successful; and
- Evidence of personal engagement or involvement with the subject(s).

Communication

- The panel should meet objectives stated in the associated supporting statement;
- The photographic style should be consistent throughout the panel; and
- The images should communicate mood, atmosphere or emotion where appropriate.

Cohesion

- The images should be displayed in an appropriate manner and the panel should be visually balanced; and
- Each image should have a supportive role in the panel.

10.5 Associateship Checklist

All applicants must:

- be over the age of 18 years on the relevant published date of assessment;

- submit a completed on-line Distinction Application Form, including a statement of objectives;
- submit fifteen images in the appropriate electronic format (1,600 pixels maximum, JPEG, RGB mode, 8-bit, sRGB);
- submit a sixteenth image in a similar format if the pictures are to be viewed as a panel; and
- pay the required fee via the Society's on-line shop.

Note that evidence files (sequence or panel images) must not be attached to the on-line Award and Distinction Application Form.

All of the above submissions must be received by the Society by 2359 GMT on the closing date for applications as stated in the on-line Distinctions Calendar.

11 The Fellowship (FOPS)

11.1 Introduction

The Fellowship (FOPS) is the third and highest level in the Society's distinction programme. Be sure to read and understand the requirements, application process and criteria before submitting an application.

The Fellowship is awarded to photographers who can demonstrate in-depth experience and exceptional ability in a particular field of photography, combined with a studied and creative approach to their subjects. The standards required are extremely high and by no means easy to achieve. Technical excellence is a prerequisite for all applications. A successful Fellowship application normally represents a huge amount of effort invested over a significant period of time. The expectation is that a photographer should demonstrate not only exceptional ability and the highest standards in all aspects of their work, but also a readily recognizable personal style and a deep understanding and emotional involvement with the chosen subject.

11.2 Requirements

Fellowship applicants must be over the age of 18 years on the date of the relevant assessment. A Fellowship application must consist of twenty images in electronic format. Optionally, a twenty-first image may be used to illustrate the layout plan for a twenty-image panel, and should have dimensions comparable with the other images. However, the aspect ratio of this image may vary as required to present the panel layout. Where no panel layout is provided, the images are viewed as a sequence in ascending numerical filename order.

The files may be transferred to the Society in one of the following ways:

- Files uploaded using our dedicated file upload facility (accessible only when logged in to the site);
- Files sent as email attachments to our Distinctions Office. To limit the size of email messages, each image may have to be attached to a separate message.

Note that evidence files (sequence or panel images) must not be attached to the on-line Award and Distinction Application Form.

The twenty images submitted must fall into one of the accepted categories, and a statement of objectives must be made via the appropriate field of a completed on-line Distinction Application Form. Images can be colour, monochrome, duotone etc, but the different media cannot be mixed within a single panel. Applicants should consider carefully how the panel should be displayed and whether it exhibits sufficient cohesion.

The appropriate fee must be paid via the Society's on-line shop prior to the cut-off date given in the on-line Distinctions Calendar.

11.3 Fellowship Statement of Objectives

All Fellowship applications must include a concise statement of the photographer's objectives. This is an opportunity to explain to those who assess the work the context and purpose of the images, and the particular meaning, atmosphere and feeling the photographer sought to capture.

In general, it is best to keep the statement brief and to the point, and to use plain and simple English language that is readily understood by everyone. Stated objectives should refer to the panel or sequence of images as a whole rather than to individual images. Technical explanations of how images were created are not required.

The statement may be up to 250 words in length although shorter submissions are preferred. In many cases, two or three sentences should suffice. It should be submitted via the appropriate field on the on-line Distinctions Application Form.

11.4 Criteria

Fellowship applications are assessed with reference to a number of different criteria, primarily the statement of objectives, artistic contribution and content, originality and imagination, communication and cohesion, and uniformity of excellence. Technical quality and excellent presentation are a pre-requisite for all applications at this level. Successful applications must score the relevant pass mark in each of the sections below and also achieve an overall pass-mark. The overall pass mark is greater than the sum of the minimum pass marks for individual images and sections.

The following criteria are used for all Fellowship applications. More specific criteria and requirements may be included in the relevant category description.

Statement of Objectives

- Were the photographer's stated objectives met by the panel or sequence of images submitted?

Artistic Contribution and Content

- An exceptional understanding of composition, design and form should be apparent; and
- Beautiful lighting must be in evidence.

Originality and Imagination

- Originality in presenting the subject is particularly important. Well-worn, repetitive approaches are unlikely to be successful; and
- Evidence of personal engagement or involvement with the subject(s), and of in-depth knowledge of the subject(s).

Communication

- The panel should meet objectives stated in the associated supporting statement;
- Photographic style and excellence should be consistent throughout the panel or sequence; and
- The images should communicate mood, atmosphere or emotion where appropriate.

Cohesion

- The images should be displayed in an appropriate manner and the panel or sequence should be visually balanced; and
- Each image should have a supportive role images in the panel or sequence.

Excellence

- Excellence should be apparent in every image, and in every aspect of each image. Good or competent images are not sufficient at Fellowship level; and
- The photographer must demonstrate feeling for the subject(s) portrayed, as well as interest and knowledge.

11.5 Fellowship Checklist

All applicants must:

- be over the age of 18 years on the relevant published date of assessment;
- have previously been awarded an Associateship-level distinction (or equivalent) by a recognized organization or institution;

- submit a completed on-line Distinction Application Form, including a statement of objectives;
- submit twenty images in the appropriate electronic format (1,600 pixels maximum, JPEG, RGB mode, 8-bit, sRGB);
- optionally, submit a twenty-first image in similar format if the pictures are to be viewed as a panel; and
- pay the required fee via the Society's on-line shop.

Note that evidence files (sequence or panel images) must not be attached to the on-line Award and Distinction Application Form.

All of the above submissions must be received by the Society by 2359 GMT on the closing date for applications as stated in the Distinctions Calendar.

12 Support

12.1 Website

Please refer to the information available on the website before contacting the Society. All the information required to prepare and submit an award or distinction application is available under the "Distinctions" menu. The site search engine can also be used to find particular information.

The on-line language translation facility, available via the selection box at the top-right of all website pages, provides automated translation of text in to any of 58 languages. Please be aware that such translations are likely to be less than perfect.

12.2 Advice and Guidance

General advice and guidance on the preparation of evidence suitable for an award or distinction application can be obtained by reading all the associated articles in the relevant section of the Society's website, or by contacting the Society's Distinctions Office by email. However, the Society is unable to comments on specific images or other particular elements of evidence.

The best way to gain an understanding of the requirements for each award or distinction, and the associated standards expected, is to spend time reviewing successful image sequences and panels. Work of a comparable level, submitted successfully to any of the numerous photographic societies and organizations offering distinction programmes, may be informative. Relevant galleries may be found by searching the internet using terms such as “distinction”, “photographic”, “associateship”, “panel” etc.

The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) is well-known for its very successful programme of distinction advisory days where expert photographers in the relevant fields speak about the detailed requirements for RPS distinctions. Potential distinction applicants are also encouraged to display their work for constructive critical comment. However, bear in mind that while the standards of acceptance adopted for the photographic distinction programmes offered by various organizations may be very similar, the detailed submission requirements and categorizations of work may be somewhat different. Be sure to read the relevant published guidance very carefully prior to making a submission.

12.3 Image Evaluations

Images may be submitted to the Society for evaluation and comment by an experienced photographer. Details of this service may be found in the Photography/Development section of the website. A nominal charge is made for the evaluation service and payment may be made via the Society’s on-line shop.

The feedback provided (via email) to the authors of evaluated images is objective and independent, and in many cases incorporates constructive criticism and suggestions for improving images. Although the feedback is not specifically tailored for distinction applicants, comments of this nature may prove extremely useful. The names of evaluators are not disclosed.

12.4 FAQ

The FAQ section of the website provides answers to some of the most commonly asked questions. Please refer to this section before contacting the Society.

12.5 Help Desk

Please bear in mind that the Open Photographic Society is an on-line only organization. Individual support for distinction applicants is therefore available only by emailing the Society's Distinctions Office.

Please read the information available on the Society's website and in the FAQs section before emailing the Distinctions Office. We will endeavour to answer email enquiries as soon as possible.

12.6 Contacts

- Distinctions Office: distinctions@openphotographicsociety.org
- Administration: admin@openphotographicsociety.org
- Shop: shop@openphotographicsociety.org
- Submissions: submissions@openphotographicsociety.org

13 Terms and Conditions

Award and distinction applications and all associated images, evidence, information and fees, must be received by the Society by 2359 GMT on the specified published closing date. The relevant dates are shown in the on-line Distinctions Calendar.

Fees received by the Society for award or distinction applications which remain incomplete at the closing date and time will not be refunded. However, if the relevant application is later completed it will be assessed free of charge at the next scheduled assessment.

Applicants for the Certificate of Merit must be under the age of 18 years at the relevant date of assessment, and must provide evidence of the consent of a parent, guardian or responsible adult via the Certificate of Merit Consent Form.

Applicants for Licentiate, Associateship and Fellowship must be over the age of 18 years at the date of the relevant assessment.

Applicants requesting an Associateship exemption must submit to the Society scanned image(s) of the relevant certificate(s) or other supporting evidence.

Assessments will be led by an experienced photographer qualified at Fellowship level - ie FBIPP, FRPS, FAPS or equivalent, supported by other suitably experienced photographers as required. The names and contact details of assessors are not disclosed to applicants.

No correspondence, either with applicants prior to assessments or regarding any comments or decisions made during assessments, will be entertained. The results of the assessments will be sent to the relevant applicants by email within seven days of the completion of the assessment process.

Unsuccessful candidates may appeal their result up to 14 days after notification of the result by the Society. The decision of the Society will be final. A charge is made by the Society for handling appeals.

All reasonable care will be taken of submitted material, but the Society cannot accept responsibility for damage or loss of material either in its care or in transit. Applicants are strongly advised to ensure that a duplicate copy of all submitted material is maintained.

No submitted material is returned to applicants. Images sent to the Society via dedicated upload or emails may be retained for purposes such as the maintenance of standards, but will eventually be destroyed.

The Society reserves the right to display on its website (at www.openphotographicsociety.org) images (and panels, part panels, sequences or part sequences of images) submitted as part of successful award or distinction applications. Displayed images will normally be created by re-sampling the original submitted images to produce smaller images suitable for website use. No watermark will be added. The copyright of any displayed images (or panels, part panels, sequences or part sequences) displayed on the website remains with the author and will be acknowledged. The Society cannot be held responsible for copyright violations arising from images being copied from its website.

The Society reserves the right to check evidence submitted as part of distinction applications, including exemption requests, with the relevant authorities or institutions. Applications including misleading or false evidence will be rejected and the relevant applicant may, at the discretion of the Society, be refused further opportunities to apply for awards or distinctions. Under such circumstances, fees cannot be refunded.

The Society reserves the right to re-schedule, postpone or cancel, without prior notice, any scheduled award or distinction assessment. Where the number of applications received exceeds those that can be handled by available resources in a single assessment period, additional assessments may be scheduled. Exceptionally, the assessment of some panels may be delayed until the following scheduled assessment.

The Society reserves the right to make changes to these Terms and Conditions at any time and without prior notice.