

SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS (ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS BELOW)

1. The public interest is upheld when a majority of people agree with the planning decision.
 - a) True
 - b) False
2. If you are compelled to be a witness in a hearing on a planning matter you cannot provide evidence that contradicts the position taken by your employer.
 - a) True
 - b) False
3. As a public sector planner working on policy development for the downtown, you can provide paid planning advice to a developer in a neighbourhood 10 kilometres from the downtown but in the same municipality in which you work.
 - a) True
 - b) False
4. Registered Professional Planners must practice in accordance with professional standards. Which one of the following statements about our professional standards is NOT ACCURATE?
 - a) Professional standards help the public be assured the practice of planning is professional, accountable and ethical.
 - b) Professional standards are consistent and will not change over time.
 - c) Professional standards serve as a guide to the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to practice planning.
5. You are a planner working in the private sector and utilize open data downloaded from the municipal open data portal to determine recent development applications for a client on the surrounding context of their project site. A month later, a new client requests that you compile information on a site in the next city block of the same municipality. You use the open data source and build from the previous file to compile recent development applications within a 10-block radius. Does your use of this data for both clients result in a breach of the professional code to respect your clients' right to confidentiality?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
6. You are working as a consultant for a non-profit housing organization with a small budget. They want a minor variance on a semi-detached house for a small addition in the backyard. Coincidentally, you have recently helped write a similar application for an identical house in the same neighbourhood. To save your client money, you submit the report verbatim but with a new address, but you don't tell them. Have you upheld your obligation to your client?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

7. The CIP Code of Professional Conduct is the _____ standard of conduct for registered professional planners. Select the correct word/phrase to fill in the blank.
 - a) suggested
 - b) required
 - c) minimum
 - d) maximum

8. You are a private sector planner arranging for a community meeting regarding a planning project. You learn that the date available to most key players falls on a religious holiday not relevant to the key stakeholders. Should you reschedule the meeting to ensure the holiday can be respected?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

9. You are a huge fan of your local professional hockey team, whose tickets are very expensive. Lucky you—the corporation that owns the franchise hires you as a consultant to advise on where they should locate their new practice facility. There are three potential sites, two of which might be contentious in your community. The corporation offers you a driver to visit the three sites and, at the end of the site-visit day, they offer you free tickets for a game that evening in the corporate box. Can you ethically accept these tickets?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

10. You are scouting a location for an upcoming public meeting with a focus on millennials in cities. You notice the bathrooms in the facility are not accessible for people using mobility devices. Which of the following actions is the **least** acceptable as a professional planner?
 - a) Ruling out this venue.
 - b) Asking the public to signal in advance if they have mobility concerns.
 - c) Renting it because your target community is young.
 - d) Recruiting others to help participants navigate the accessibility challenges.

11. The Planning Act in your province requires that the official notice for mandatory public meetings be placed in the “newspaper of record.” You think this requirement is old-fashioned, ineffective and a waste of money. Today, planners have the option to:
 - (1) place an ad in the newspaper of record;
 - (2) use social media to e-blast the public meeting; or
 - (3) use bulk mail to send meeting notices to all residents.Which is the best course of action according to the Code of Professional Conduct?
 - a) (1), (2) and (3)
 - b) (1) and (3)
 - c) (1) and (2)
 - d) (1)

12. You are an urban planner for a large metropolitan area. Council has asked licensing and standards staff to craft a new policy that would, in part, restrict the ability of homeowners to operate a short-term rental property in the city. As a member of the planning department, you are not directly involved in the file, but you own a short-term rental that would be rendered illegal under the proposed regulations. How do you best uphold the Code of Professional Conduct?
- Transfer ownership to your spouse/partner.
 - Sell the property.
 - Notify your supervisor of a potential conflict of interest.
 - Provide your planning opinion but ask that the report to council not reference you as a source.
13. The provincial government in the province in which you are working has released new planning reforms through a parliamentary bill that will come into force in one week's time. You are in the process of preparing a planning justification report for your client's development application. Some, but not all, of the new planning provisions will affect your planning justification. Your client has requested that the development application be submitted as soon as possible; i.e., three days before the new bill comes into force. In the opinions provided in your planning justification report, you should:
- Ignore the new legislation and provincial policies as they are not yet in force.
 - Ignore the current legislation and provincial policies as they will not be in force once the application is processed.
 - Refer to both sets of policies and their implications for the proposed development.
 - Advise your client to wait until the new legislation is in place and have no regard for the current legislation.
14. You are a public sector planner for a small municipality, and responsible for updating the Official Plan for the first time in decades. There are two competing visions for how the municipality should develop in the future. After some initial consultation, you begin to notice views primarily split between residents and businesses. As you work to develop a plan in the public interest, what is your next best step?
- Engage in more consultation with the residents to better understand their views, as they are best able to help you identify the public interest.
 - Seek council direction on which of the two visions they prefer before submitting your draft plan.
 - Ignore both perspectives and find your own middle ground in developing a draft plan and consult again.
 - Attempt to integrate elements of both visions into an Official Plan and consult again.
15. You are the lead on the development of an official plan amendment for an underdeveloped part of the municipality. Your proposed approach to the area's redevelopment is being contested by other planners in your office, but you feel strongly that your approach is in the public interest. How do you resolve this?
- Move forward as planned. You have no obligation to convince other planners that you are right.
 - Recognize there are multiple public interests and planning is about picking the best one.
 - Escalate the matter to your director and seek their direction in choosing among the competing perspectives of you and your colleagues.
 - Revisit the evidence you have collected that has informed your position and decide if any new information is required to move forward.

16. In your work as a rural municipal planner, a developer presents a proposal for a 200-acre windfarm to be located in an emerging wine-growing region. Council asks you to write a report evaluating the proposal. You have significant experience working with farmers and grape growers but your knowledge of windfarms is limited to what you've read on twitter and articles in your PTIA publication. What should you do?
- a) Provide your opinion on the basis of your current experience and knowledge.
 - b) Begin consulting with grape-growing farmers because their views inform the public interest.
 - c) Hire a consulting planning who has experience with windfarms in rural settings.
 - d) Co-host a public meeting with a local environmental organization to explore the potential of windfarms for your community.

SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS - ANSWERS WITH EXPLANATIONS

1. The public interest is upheld when a majority of people agree with the planning decision.

- a) True
- b) False

Correct Answer: b)

Rationale:

The planner's obligation to the public interest is to provide independent professional opinion. The opinion on whether the public interest is served is assessed from a number of perspectives and information: technical information such as Official Plans and Zoning By-laws; feedback from the public; feedback from commenting agencies; feedback from members of council; and the issue or application itself. The public interest is not a democratic vote nor is it a majority rule perspective. The public interest is determined by weighing the factors and information before the planner, who makes a recommendation on what the public interest is.

2. If you are compelled to be a witness in a hearing on a planning matter you cannot provide evidence that contradicts the position taken by your employer

- a) True
- b) False

Correct Answer: b)

Rationale:

Please refer to the reading OMB Case – City of Stoney Creek in the supplemental readings. The planner's responsibility is to provide independent professional opinion. Once the opinion has been provided, should your employer choose a different position, the planner's obligation is to represent the opinion they prepared. Note the following from the decision:

“A professional person such as a planner as evidence his (sic) honest opinion on the matters on which he has expertise. His evidence is not to be fettered or limited by himself, fear of his employer or contrary instructions received from any person or organization.” (page 3 of decision)

3. As a public sector planner working on policy development for the downtown, you can provide paid planning advice to a developer in a neighbourhood 10 kilometres from the downtown but in the same municipality in which you work.

- a) True
- b) False

Correct Answer: b)

Rationale:

Consider your responsibility to your employer. Consider the jurisdiction or geographical area where you are practicing. If you are employed or are consulting within a given jurisdiction, you

must not give professional planning advice, or what would be deemed to be planning advice to others within the same jurisdiction without disclosure of potential conflicts.

Section 2.8 of the Code states that a planner shall “not, as an employee of a public agency, give professional planning advice for compensation to a private client or employer within the jurisdiction of the public agency without disclosure to the agency and written consent;”

4. Registered Professional Planners must practice in accordance with professional standards. Which one of the following statements about our professional standards is NOT ACCURATE?
- a) Professional standards help the public be assured the practice of planning is professional, accountable and ethical.
 - b) Professional standards are consistent and will not change over time.
 - c) Professional standards serve as a guide to the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to practice planning.

Correct Answer: B)

Rationale:

New issues, theories, and approaches will arise and professionals must stay current through learning opportunities, readings, and professional development opportunities during the course of their career. It is a necessary to stay current and understand that standards are not consistent and will eventually change over time or our understanding of them will evolve over time.

5. You are a planner working in the private sector and utilize open data downloaded from the municipal open data portal to determine recent development applications for a client on the surrounding context of their project site. A month later, a new client requests that you compile information on a site in the next city block of the same municipality. You use the open data source and build from the previous file to compile recent development applications within a 10-block radius. Does your use of this data for both clients result in a breach of the professional code to respect your clients’ right to confidentiality?
- a) Yes
 - b) No

Correct Answer: b)

Rationale:

You are using open data on the first application which is publicly accessible to all – the data is not proprietary. You have built your first client’s application on the basis of the open data. The first application now provides “surrounding context” for the second application. The first application and the second application will both be publicly available data and information. You are not breaching your clients’ right to confidentiality.

6. You are working as a consultant for a non-profit housing organization with a small budget. They want a minor variance on a semi-detached house for a small addition in the backyard. Coincidentally, you have recently helped write a similar application for an identical house in the same neighbourhood. To save your client money, you submit the report verbatim but with a new address, but you don’t tell them. Have you upheld your obligation to your client?
- a) Yes
 - b) No

Correct Answer: b)

Rationale:

Section 3.7 of the Code of Conduct requires members to submit documents prepared or checked by the member. Section 2.2 of the Code of Conduct requires planners to use appropriate preparations and render planning services with diligence. Changing an address from the first report is not rendering planning services with diligence – while the application may be the same, the planning context (Official Plan, Zoning) may differ. Site context may differ. Road access may differ. Diligence requires reviewing all of this and more to ensure that the independent professional opinion is rendered after diligent work and preparation has been completed.

Also read the City of Ottawa OMB Case and note page 16 where the Board Member specifically comments that “appropriate background studies were not carried out and there was no proper basis upon which he could support his (*sic*) opinions.” Planners must do the appropriate preparation, background research, understand the options, and render an opinion. This can only be done through the use of the enabling competencies and sound planning practice.

7. The CIP Code of Professional Conduct is the _____ standard of conduct for registered professional planners. Select the correct word/phrase to fill in the blank.
- a) suggested
 - b) required
 - c) minimum
 - d) maximum

Correct Answer: c)

Rationale:

CIP’s Code of Professional Conduct, and your PTIA Code of Conduct, are minimum expectations for conduct of professional planners. At times issues in complying with the Code of Conduct will be black and white; most ethical issues fall in the gray area. Please review the “Dear Dilemma” articles in the additional readings package. These examples are real life issues planners have faced where the appropriate conduct is not necessarily clear. The “minimum” answer is to ensure that at all times planners are working at a high ethical standard of professional practice. Planners provide independent professional opinion and in so doing their conduct must ensure their actions comply with the Code of Conduct.

8. You are a private sector planner arranging for a community meeting regarding a planning project. You learn that the date available to most key players falls on a religious holiday not relevant to the key stakeholders. Should you reschedule the meeting to ensure the holiday can be respected?
- a) Yes
 - b) No

Correct Answer: a)

Rationale:

The changing nature of Canada means that there are more diverse communities in all parts of our country. Section 1.1 of the Code of Conduct requires planners to complete their work in a manner that respects the diversity of the public. In this case, holding the public meeting on a religious holiday does not respect the diversity of the public. While it may not be the majority of the key players; it is respecting diversity and upholding the Code to reschedule to ensure the holiday is respected.

9. You are a huge fan of your local professional hockey team, whose tickets are very expensive. Lucky you—the corporation that owns the franchise hires you as a consultant to advise on where they should locate their new practice facility. There are three potential sites, two of which might be contentious in your community. The corporation offers you a driver to visit the three sites and, at the end of the site-visit day, they offer you free tickets for a game that evening in the corporate box. Can you ethically accept these tickets?
- a) Yes
 - b) No

Correct Answer: b)

Rationale:

Having a driver escort you on a site visit to assess various sites would fall within the acceptable range of services to be provided by a client to a consulting planner. Accepting free tickets to a sports game from a client would constitute accepting a gift. A planner is expected to make an independent professional opinion. Accepting gifts from a client may cloud your opinion, may cast doubt on individual integrity, or the integrity of the profession.

Section 2.7 of the Code requires planners to “not offer or accept any financial or other inducements, including prospective employment, that could, or appear to, influence or affect professional opportunities or planning advice;” Even the appearance of a conflict of interest is an issue.

10. You are scouting a location for an upcoming public meeting with a focus on millennials in cities. You notice the bathrooms in the facility are not accessible for people using mobility devices. Which of the following actions is the **least** acceptable as a professional planner?
- a) Ruling out this venue.
 - b) Asking the public to signal in advance if they have mobility concerns.
 - c) Renting it because your target community is young.
 - d) Recruiting others to help participants navigate the accessibility challenges.

Correct Answer: c)

Rationale:

Section 1.1 of the Code requires planners to respect the diversity of the public. Having a public meeting in a location that has inaccessible bathrooms means persons with physical disabilities will be disadvantaged from all others. The correct answer is c) because the least appropriate option is to proceed with using this venue based on one demographic group.

11. The Planning Act in your province requires that the official notice for mandatory public meetings be placed in the “newspaper of record.” You think this requirement is old-fashioned, ineffective and a waste of money. Today, planners have the option to:
- (1) place an ad in the newspaper of record;
 - (2) use social media to e-blast the public meeting; or
 - (3) use bulk mail to send meeting notices to all residents.
- Which is the best course of action according to the Code of Professional Conduct?
- a) (1), (2) and (3)
 - b) (1) and (3)
 - c) (1) and (2)
 - d) (1)

Correct Answer: a)

Rationale:

It is the planner's responsibility to follow the current law. If legislation requires a minimum standard, that standard must be followed. Additional or higher standards may be optional, or may even be advisable. Ensure that the applicable legislation is followed, and that any minimum standards are addressed when recommending or deciding on a course of action.

If a law, regulation or bylaw appears to be outdated, that is a separate issue. Formal processes exist to update laws, regulations official plans and bylaws.

12. You are an urban planner for a large metropolitan area. Council has asked licensing and standards staff to craft a new policy that would, in part, restrict the ability of homeowners to operate a short-term rental property in the city. As a member of the planning department, you are not directly involved in the file, but you own a short-term rental that would be rendered illegal under the proposed regulations. How do you best uphold the Code of Professional Conduct?
- a) Transfer ownership to your spouse/partner.
 - b) Sell the property.
 - c) Notify your supervisor of a potential conflict of interest.
 - d) Provide your planning opinion but ask that the report to council not reference you as a source.

Correct Answer: C)

Rationale:

You must disclose the issue to your supervisor in writing. It is important that you identify potential or real conflicts of interest as soon as you become aware of the issue. It would be important that you refrain from discussing your property with the staff preparing the by-law so there is no perception of influence.

13. The provincial government in the province in which you are working has released new planning reforms through a parliamentary bill that will come into force in one week's time. You are in the process of preparing a planning justification report for your client's development application. Some, but not all, of the new planning provisions will affect your planning justification. Your client has requested that the development application be submitted as soon as possible; i.e., three days before the new bill comes into force. In the opinions provided in your planning justification report, you should:
- a) Ignore the new legislation and provincial policies as they are not yet in force.
 - b) Ignore the current legislation and provincial policies as they will not be in force once the application is processed.
 - c) Refer to both sets of policies and their implications for the proposed development.
 - d) Advise your client to wait until the new legislation is in place and have no regard for the current legislation.

Correct Answer: c)

Rationale:

As a professional you must provide all information required to make a decision. By providing both sets of policies and regulations, along with their risks and implications, you are ensuring all decisions involving your clients proposal are based on open and transparent information.

14. You are a public sector planner for a small municipality, and responsible for updating the Official Plan for the first time in decades. There are two competing visions for how the municipality should develop in the future. After some initial consultation, you begin to notice views primarily split between residents and businesses. As you work to develop a plan in the public interest, what is your next best step?
- a) Engage in more consultation with the residents to better understand their views, as they are best able to help you identify the public interest.
 - b) Seek council direction on which of the two visions they prefer before submitting your draft plan.
 - c) Ignore both perspectives and find your own middle ground in developing a draft plan and consult again.
 - d) Attempt to integrate elements of both visions into an Official Plan and consult again.

Correct Answer: d)

Rationale:

To provide full, clear and accurate information on planning matters to decision-makers and members of the public you will need to prepare a recommendation that respects the diversity, needs, values and aspirations of all the public and encourage discussion on these matters. Ignoring information provided by certain stakeholder groups would allow decisions to be made on inaccurate facts.

15. You are the lead on the development of an official plan amendment for an underdeveloped part of the municipality. Your proposed approach to the area's redevelopment is being contested by other planners in your office, but you feel strongly that your approach is in the public interest. How do you resolve this?
- a) Move forward as planned. You have no obligation to convince other planners that you are right.
 - b) Recognize there are multiple public interests and planning is about picking the best one.
 - c) Escalate the matter to your director and seek their direction in choosing among the competing perspectives of you and your colleagues.
 - d) Revisit the evidence you have collected that has informed your position and decide if any new information is required to move forward.

Correct Answer: d)

Rationale:

Planners must consider a variety of issues and concerns in addressing the public interest. If other planners in your office feel strongly about an approach, they may have expertise or past work experience that is informing their opinion. They may be providing you with valuable insights that are worth consideration prior to moving forward or to recommending a course of action.

Section 3.4 of the Code requires planners to “act toward other Members and colleagues in a spirit of fairness and consideration...”

16. In your work as a rural municipal planner, a developer presents a proposal for a 200-acre windfarm to be located in an emerging wine-growing region. Council asks you to write a report evaluating the proposal. You have significant experience working with farmers and grape growers but your knowledge of windfarms is limited to what you've read on twitter and articles in your PTIA publication. What should you do?
- a) Provide your opinion on the basis of your current experience and knowledge.
 - b) Begin consulting with grape-growing farmers because their views inform the public interest.
 - c) Hire a consulting planning who has experience with windfarms in rural settings.

- d) Co-host a public meeting with a local environmental organization to explore the potential of windfarms for your community.

Correct Answer: C)

Rationale:

Planners are rarely competent in every area of planning practice. It is important that you acknowledge areas of planning practice where you lack expertise. In this example, by hiring a consultant with expertise in wind farming, you will be able to ensure that you are providing the facts and information pertinent to the application and as a result you will provide a better service to your municipality.