

A Note on Thematic Experience Based Analysis

1. Introduction

This note has been prepared to provide APEAS Part 3 candidates with some additional information and advice on thematic Experience Based Analyses (EBA's). It is hoped that the note will prove helpful when you are deciding the subject of your EBA, undertaking the necessary research and consultation and writing your report.

2. The Choice of EBA

When first considering the EBA component you have to make a fundamental choice between doing an EBA based on a building project or on some theme from architectural practice. Some APEAS Practice Examiners have argued that an EBA based on a building project is the safer option as the issues and problems associated with this type of EBA tend to be more clearly defined than for a thematic EBA. Although it may be true that the risks involved in doing a thematic EBA are greater than for a building project EBA over the years APEAS examiners have assessed a number of excellent thematic EBAs, so it is possible to undertake this type of EBA with real confidence.

3. The Subject of a Thematic EBA

Success in a thematic EBA depends critically on the choice of subject. Get the subject wrong and it becomes very difficult to produce an EBA report of sufficient depth and quality to pass the EBA component (this is also true of a building project EBA).

When considering the subject of your EBA it is important to think about who will be reading your final report. The readers will include your mentor, two practice examiners and possibly an external examiner plus other colleagues in your office. Your mentor, the practice examiners and external examiner will be senior architects with a number of years of architectural experience. What will they expect from your choice of subject? The following list is essential:

- A subject choice that is based on some aspect of architectural practice and is of sufficient depth to write a meaningful report of 6000 words
- A subject in which the candidate has been actively involved in a professional capacity for a significant period of time

With regard to point 1 above it is important not to choose a subject that is too trivial and will not allow you to produce a report of 6000 words. On the other hand, it is important to avoid a subject that is too complex and would require a report that is in excess of 6000 words.

With reference to point 2 it cannot be emphasised enough that the subject of your EBA should be one in which you have been an active participant in over a significant period of time. The inclusion of Experience in the EBA title was designed to emphasise that an EBA must be based on some aspect of the candidate's own professional experience of architectural practice. Some candidates who have produced very good EBA reports have demonstrated their close involvement with the subject of their EBA by implementing some of the outcomes of their studies.

Whilst not required or always possible to do, it often enhances the readability of an EBA if the subject choice is topical and interesting.

In choosing your EBA subject it is important to consult with your mentor and PSA. Your mentor may have experience of previous candidates undertaking the EBA component: your PSA certainly will. Please remember that APEAS recommends the following procedure for the EBA component:

Experience Based Analysis

Stage 1: Title

Candidates should submit a brief statement to their Professional Studies Advisor suggesting a topic for their EBA report together with a working title for the report.

Stage 2: Synopsis

Candidates should submit a synopsis/outline to their Professional Studies Advisor indicating the form and scope of the proposed EBA and confirming its title.

Stage 3: Completed Study

The EBA report must be sent to APEAS with the other documents listed by the submission date.

It has been found that candidates who have ignored this procedure have often gone on to fail the EBA component.

4. The Importance of Critical Analysis

Critical Analysis is another aspect of the EBA component that cannot be emphasised too strongly. Analysis is included in the title EBA to stress the vital role that critical analysis plays in a successful EBA. In short, an EBA that has no, or too little, critical analysis will fail the Part 3 Examination. Guidance on what is meant by critical analysis can be found on the APEAS website (www.apeas.org.uk) in the Candidate Section.

One issue that is regularly raised by practice examiners with regard to EBAs is the reluctance on the part of some candidates to criticise their own employer's policies, procedures and practices. It is important to remember that critical analysis invariably involves identifying both the strengths and weaknesses (or advantages and disadvantages) in a given situation. Unless one is willing to recognise the weaknesses how will it be possible for improvements to be identified and implemented? It is important to remember that your EBA report will be kept in the strictest confidence by APEAS.

5. The EBA Report

It is very important to remember that it will be senior architectural professionals, acting as practice examiners, who will read and assess your report. What will they expect to see in your report? In general terms they will expect the following:

- A well written, well-structured report with minimal spelling and grammatical errors
- A clear explanation of the issue/problem that has been tackled in the EBA
- A clear and concise description of the methods used to investigate the issue/problem (e.g. what types of research have you conducted, which construction professionals and others have you consulted with regard to the problem/issue, which sources of information and guidance have you used to inform the development of your EBA etc.)
- Your findings
- Appropriate critical analysis (i.e. developing arguments and being willing to express professional opinions)
- Conclusions and recommendations

The importance of including a significant amount of critical analysis in your report has been emphasised under Section 4. The importance of including conclusions and recommendations in your EBA report cannot be over emphasised. A report which lacks conclusions and recommendations is of little value to your practice examiners and others who may read your report.

Further guidance on writing your EBA report is given in Chapter 4 of the Guide for Candidates which you will find on the APEAS website in the Candidate Section.