

# **Accreditation and Quality Assurance – mobility of Surveyors across International Professional Institutions.**

**Tim Goodhead, UK**

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## **SUMMARY**

This paper will analyse a method for investigating the quality assurance schemes in FIG Professional Member Institutions to determine the ability of surveyors to transfer between countries. The aim of the eventual research is to provide a guide for FIG members who may wish to operate in a different country from the one that they qualified in. There is a need to undertake a 'difference' analyses across international professional standards and then ascertain what supplementary training the Surveyor would require in order to operate internationally. The paper will take an initial case study of the UK and North America to provide a pilot for further research. Definitions of the profession of Surveying will be discussed as by their very nature this may provide a barrier against labour mobility between countries.

This paper relates directly to the work of Commission 2 Work Plan which has established a Working Group 2.4 – Accreditation and Quality Assurance. This working group, chaired by the author, is investigating cross border quality assurances in Surveying Education. One of the outputs from this group will be an information point on the FIG Web site to help and promote international professional mobility of FIG members. This paper represents the start of that work.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

FIG is a complex global surveying organisation with members who have national and international interests. The growth of surveying in different countries has, in the main, not been coordinated and as a result surveying professions can vary tremendously. There are common values making mutual recognition of skills possible but these values vary from country to country. The establishment of a common core curriculum on surveying training schemes is possible, but difficult due to the existence of a wide range of surveying sub-disciplines, although some areas such as ethics and sustainability stand out as areas where a common approach should be possible. This paper reviews issues relating to accreditation and quality assurance in relation to international mobility of labour, with regards to surveying services, in order to help develop a strategy for a Commission 2 working group. This working group is investigating a system, for helping surveyors cross international boundaries in supplying their services.

The aim of this paper is to develop a methodology of research that will assist in developing FIG and member policy on: academic accreditation of surveying education programmes and mutual recognition of surveying education degrees.

The objectives of the paper are:

- to provide an overview of the complex issues relating to accreditation and mutual recognition;
- to develop a methodology for researching and implementing a resource management system that will encourage mutual recognition of surveying degrees;
- to investigate the possibility of using the FIG website as a vehicle for retrieving information on the professional FIG members institutions quality assurance regulations, regarding ‘mobility of labour’.

## **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

FIG has been investigating mobility of labour and educational/training standards for some time. A task force on mutual recognition and qualifications has been created by FIG and has reported back (Enemark, 1999). The terms of reference were to: investigate existing regional agreements; develop guidelines for assuring competence; develop guidelines for establishing agreements and develop a concept and a framework for the implementation of threshold standards.

This task force was led by Prof. Stig Enemark who was until recently the President of FIG. Under his Presidency Prof. Stig Enemark developed a theme of Building the Capacity from 2007-2010 and this had the impact of improving co-operation between member institutions. Liberalising market services was a key objective and this led to the publication of FIG Publication No 27. (Enemark & Plimmer, 2002) There are already regional agreements between member institutions, that have built on the mutual recognition work of FIG, such as

the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) (Teo, 2004) which came into force on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2008. To encourage mutual recognition FIG has developed a website that illustrates the basis of recognition (Fédération Internationale des Géomètres [FIG], 2011).

Clearly FIG recognises the importance of mobility of labour and is promoting this through: encouraging communication; developing a methodology with its members; supporting professional member organisations; working with external organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The WTO has formulated an international agreement, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which commenced in January 1995 (Keller & Hofmann, 2002). The formulation of International agreements by FIG is a hugely complex task as there are already many powerful regional agreements in such organisations as the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) to name just two.

FIG Publication No 27 (Enemark & Plimmer, 2002) has provided a review of five regional case studies but regional level analyses can often be difficult when member institutions are also global institutions in their own right operating in areas of many recognition frameworks. As this publication points out a key to understanding some of these complex issues is understanding how professional surveyors qualify and how professional competence is assessed. At this point perhaps there is a conflict regarding the definition of surveyors as the term can mean different things in different countries.

Mutual recognition despite these complexities is a concept worth progressing for FIG but it is difficult to develop a set of common standards. This is something that other professions, particularly Medicine, are also grappling with as professional competence is a key global issue. This issue may eventually be resolved by legislation, agreements or possibly just market forces.

### **3. MOBILITY OF LABOUR**

Mutual recognition begs the question: recognition by who? Recognition can be at five levels: international organisations/institutions; regional organisations/institutions; national states; national institutions and FIG member institutions.

In the case of FIG all of these have a relevance but the easiest to progress is probably mutual recognition by its member organisations. There is of course a language barrier and this might promote agreements between countries of similar speaking peoples. The desired end result must be, despite cultural and language difficulties, the benchmarking of professional competence.

FIG Publication No 27 (Enemark & Plimmer, 2002) identifies three pre-conditions for managing the process of mutual recognition: an individual must be professionally qualified in the home country; a similar profession must exist in the host country and political will must be available to support the process. These are important concepts as they imply, that as Surveying definitions vary so much from country to country, mutual recognition may be something to aspire to but will probably never be completed in total. Although mutual recognition may never be achieved in its entirety there are some common values that could be promoted globally. There are some core values that might form the basis of a common

training curriculum such as: Ethics; Sustainability and possibly Geographical Information Systems.

To give an example of the scale of the challenge facing FIG in promoting mutual recognition and the subsequent mobility of labour in surveying services two countries are briefly reviewed below.

The United Kingdom (UK) is a 'union' between the countries England Scotland and Wales together with its provinces and protectorates. The profession of Surveying in the UK has developed around a number of professional institutions of which the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors [RICS], 2011a) is the largest. Established in the Victorian era it has evolved into a very broad based property profession concerned with land, property and construction, with over 17 types of surveyor existing under one umbrella. This development is partly reflected in the nature of the UK which is diverse and densely populated but also has a relatively recent history of extensive International influence. Chartered Surveyors do not have a licence but agree to a professional code and must prove professional competence.

The United States of America (USA) as a nation is much younger than the UK and has a different constitutional structure supporting a Federation of states, each having the possibility of instigating professional licences to practice. The definition of a Surveyor in the USA is linked to an engineering culture. Surveyors wishing to operate in the USA may be benchmarked by a technical engineering evaluation.

Valuation Surveyors in the USA would be regarded as part of a different profession – appraisers rather than the valuation surveyors found in the UK. This creates huge issues for mobility of labour as professional institutions vary so greatly according to professional culture and legislation.

#### **4. MOBILITY OF SURVEYING SERVICES**

Although transferability of surveying services between countries is difficult there are things that FIG could promote to advance mobility on a practical level. To offer services across national borders surveyors need knowledge of national systems. From a pragmatic standpoint FIG could be the centre of a knowledge bank of how Surveying operates globally and make this knowledge available for practicing surveyors.

A knowledge bank could be developed to contain the following three sets of data:

Country profile – develop a country profiler for all FIG members clearly illustrating the routes to qualifying as a Surveyor;

Data bank of mutual recognition - the FIG site already contains a mutual recognition site, this needs to be enhanced by a practical guide explaining how Surveyors can operate in different member countries;

Data bank of top up requirements – a data bank of top up qualifications is required to inform surveyors how they can convert their qualification to that of another institution.

The key to disseminating this knowledge might be a 'FIG Mobility Web Site'. This could be a professional FIG mobility site with a member page updated annually. Like all databases this will live or die by its currency.

In order to develop this knowledge bank data would have to be retrieved from FIG members. A suggest a draft template has been produced below for retrieval of data from FIG members. This draft template has been produced to promote discussion at the FIG working week in Morocco 2011. The author has based this template on the RICS for two reasons, firstly the author knows it well and secondly it is highly complex.

There are now numerous routes to membership of the RICS (RICS, 2011b):

Student membership- free and available to those on RICS accredited courses.

Graduate route – after completion of an accredited course a two year training period with an assessment of professional competence.

Academic route – available to academics teaching on accredited courses.

Senior Professional Route – 10 yrs of experience plus a relevant degree.

Application Routes – direct applications from professionals from other disciplines or related bodies.

Research Route – 5 years surveying experience, at least 2 years post PhD and to hold a senior industry position.

Associate Route – 5 pathways in with a mix of training and work based learning.

Because there are so many routes to membership this makes it very difficult to analyse and compare with other Institutions. These routes lead onto 17 broad fields:

**Arts and antiques** – valuation, sale, purchase and management of antiques, objets d'arts, and other fine arts.

**Building surveying** – building management and maintenance, design, refurbishments, insurance assessments, condition surveys, statutory approvals and defect diagnosis.

**Building control** – encompassing built environment issues such as building regulations, health and safety, disabled access, environment, energy efficiency, sound insulation and fire insulation.

**Commercial property** – real estate management, landlord and tenant representation, investment and finance appraisal, dispute resolution.

**Dispute resolution** – resolving real estate disputes, dispute avoidance, arbitration, adjudication, mediation and expert witness services.

**Environmental practice** – managing and assessing the impact of real estate and land use on the environment; sustainability, contamination, regeneration and land management.

**Facilities management** – building management and operations, performance-oriented service purchasing (procurement), and service management

**Geomatics** – collection, analysis, interpretation of spatial information, land and hydrographic surveying, mapping and positioning, boundaries and data management for study of phenomena such as earthquakes, flood-risk areas

**Management consultancy** – business property solutions, business management and practice, strategic advice, problem-solving including corporate and personal insolvency and turnaround management.

**Minerals and environmental management** – minerals extraction planning, valuation, rating and planning. Waste management, landfill and landfill tax, valuation, and licensing.

**Planning and development** – including real estate valuation, transport and infrastructure, marine and inland water resource management.

**Machinery and business assets** – management, valuation and sale of business assets and plant and machinery, depreciation advice, insurance, rating and tax.

**Project management** – planning and implementing development projects, team creation and management, implementing procedures and efficient handover of the finished project.

**Quantity Surveying and Construction** – commercial management of development and construction, estimating-costs, project cost and schedule controls, risk and contract management.

**Residential** – investment and development of public and private residential properties; agency, valuation, statutory negotiations and asset management.

**Rural** – managing and valuing rural land; agriculture, forestry and woodland, farm management, appraisal, access negotiations and environmental assessment.

**Valuation** – appraisal of land, real estate and businesses for sale, letting or investment; measurement, performance assessment, funding strategies and expert witness services.

An analyses of one FIG member FIG shows that it has approximately seven routes into an organisation that has seventeen 'types' of surveyor. Every FIG member professional institution is likely to have a different structure making mobility of labour across nations/institutions very difficult.

## 5. MOBILITY KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

It can be seen from the analyses of the RICS and the very simple comparison between the UK and the USA that mobility of labour between countries can meet many barriers. In practice the professional institutions offer a great deal of flexibility to allow new members to join their organisations. To promote mobility of labour it is proposed that FIG develop a 'Mobility' site on the FIG web site with a sub site for each member professional institution. This site would have to recognise that some institutions have regional and International identities as well as national identities.

In terms of the site there are a number of key issues that would form the basis of the template:

#### Types of Surveyor

- Land
- Property
- Construction

#### Membership routes

- Student
- Graduate
- Senior Professional
- Direct Application
- Technician
- Associate

#### Mutual recognition

- Institutions recognition agreements

#### Professional ‘top up requirements’

- Licence requirements
- Top up requirements required by institution to obtain licence or membership
- Continuing Professional Development Requirements
- Ethics Standards

#### Process for applying for membership or licence

- Contact details
- Fee

The full make up of this template needs further discussion to put it into context of the broader work of Commission 2. It would have to be something that every professional institution within FIG would be prepared to buy into. If it provides a useful service for their membership it is highly likely that they would.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The work that has already been undertaken by FIG on mutual recognition together with the ‘thumb nail’ sketches of the global surveying situation in this paper illustrate the relevance and need for further work in this area. The most obvious target at first sight is the development of a common FIG curriculum. Other than in the areas of ethics and sustainability, given the wide variance in Surveying practice this may be extremely difficult and in some cases impossible. The area of mutual recognition is perhaps much easier to

progress. There is a major opportunity to improve the mobility of surveyors globally through further development of practical and pragmatic systems to underpin the solid work already undertaken by FIG. This paper has been produced as a discussion paper for the FIG working group in FIG to aid the formulation of a work plan for a sub group of Commission 2.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Tim Goodhead BA MSc M Phil FIMarEST FRICS

A Chartered Surveyor and Marine Technologist that specialises in land, coastal and marine management currently working at the University of Portsmouth, England. Tim has had a longstanding interest in property and technology. He teaches on both the undergraduate and postgraduate RICS Property programmes. His specialisations include property management and development, coastal management and marine development. He has held a number of management positions within the University of Portsmouth including, Dean, Head of Department and Programme Area Director.

Tim's recent research activities include: coastal zone management, shipping management, maritime crime and coastal security, property management and development, waterfront development.



## CONTACTS

Tim Goodhead  
RICS/University of Portsmouth  
School of Civil Engineering and Surveying  
Portland Building  
Portland Street  
Portsmouth  
ENGLAND  
Tel. +44(0)23 9284 2939  
Email: [tim.goodhead@port.ac.uk](mailto:tim.goodhead@port.ac.uk)  
Web site: [www.port.ac.uk](http://www.port.ac.uk)