

BACKGROUNDER:**DATED JANUARY 26, 2009, UPDATED MARCH 8, 2009****FOR: CCLS DIRECTORS' INTERIM MEETING JANUARY 31, FEBRUARY 1, 2009****PROPOSED CORE & OPTION SYLLABUS**<http://www.ccls-ccag.ca/harmonization-syllabus.htm>

This backgrounder is intended to outline what has been done leading up to and including the recommendation of a new Core & Option Syllabus, and what needs to be done by the Boards of Examiners and Associations in order complete the process.

Recommendation:

That the CCLS Board considers what role, if any, CCLS will take in the work needed to complete the implementation of the Core & Option Syllabus.

The Background:

The harmonization initiative began with the national harmonization forum of March 2004 in Winnipeg, which was preceded by the national board of examiners proposal of 2002/2003. The forum was a national discussion of association representatives facilitated by CCLS. Six resolutions from the forum were adopted by the associations. Each resolution reflected a different aspect of harmonizing entry requirements and making the process of becoming a surveyor more transparent, streamlined, and consistent across the country without lowering standards.

A thorough examination of the academic requirements for the profession was the subject of one resolution. The starting point for the review of academic standards was the syllabus used by WCBELS and ACLS BE and the very similar syllabus used by APBELS. A syllabus review task force was formed by CCLS and as groundwork for the in depth review, this task force completed the following work:

- Reviewed the WCBELS/ACLS BE (now CBEPS) syllabus, the APBELS syllabus and proposed refinements to update and synchronize the two, creating a Joint Boards Syllabus.
- Investigated OAGQ and AERC academic requirements in relation to the Joint Boards Syllabus.
- Contracted special examiners to create learning outcomes and study guides for the syllabus.
- Created process documents for the Boards to cooperatively and systematically:
 - review of candidates applying for exemption from syllabus requirements,
 - encourage and review post secondary institution applications for courses to be deemed equivalent to syllabus requirements,
 - share and maintain lists of courses that have been granted equivalent status to syllabus requirements, and
 - work under a memorandum of understanding related to the above.
- Created a candidate's handbook called 'A Guide to becoming a Professional Surveyor in Canada' which outlines the process, requirements, and authoritative bodies for the information of a candidate in any jurisdiction and contains the joint board's syllabus including learning outcomes and study guides.

With this groundwork to bring about as much harmonization, communication and jurisdictional cooperation as possible with the current academic requirements essentially complete, the in depth syllabus review was undertaken.

What Has Been Done - The Core & Option Syllabus:

The group that reviewed the current syllabus and developed the outline for the proposed Core & Options Syllabus was essentially both a Syllabus Review Task Force and also the BECC (Board of Examiners Coordinating Committee) under recently revised terms of reference. The participants included representatives of CCLS, AOLS, CBEPS, APBELS, University of Calgary, University of New Brunswick, York University, BCIT. Representatives from OAGQ, Laval University and Ryerson University could not attend but were sent all of the proceedings.

The following principles guided the syllabus review process:

- The syllabus is and will be used for multiple purposes including:
 - the technical diploma/syllabus examination candidate stream,
 - the full degree program candidate stream through the accreditation process, and
 - more frequently in the future, as a measure of foreign trained professionals.
- A university baccalaureate degree is the academic baseline.
- The overriding objective is to examine the academic standards bar to ensure it is the correct bar; not to lower the bar but to adjust it for current conditions.
- An individual does not know today what or where they will practice tomorrow and so needs to have a solid background knowledge as a basis for lifelong learning.
- What current surveyors need to survive is not the best yardstick for what tomorrow's surveyors will need to thrive.

The question to frame the review was, “An individual needs a certain body of knowledge in order to practice as a competent professional surveyor. What is that body of knowledge?”

The structure chosen for the syllabus includes core subject areas that must be covered by all candidates, and optional subject areas that can be chosen by the individual candidate in order to complete the academic qualifications. The core and options structure provides flexibility to candidates and coverage for the many technologies and subject areas within the profession. In order to maintain the current academic standards (i.e. not lower the bar) the total number of syllabus items (core and options) that would be required of a candidate, would remain thirteen.

There was also considerable discussion of what an option schedule implied. Would the options schedule allow for differences in regional requirements? How would options be administered? Would each certificate of authorization have the added detail of listing the options that were completed by the individual? Would this be significantly different or more onerous than the current requirement to review the transcript of an individual to be sure they had taken the required program options within an accredited degree program?

While these specific questions were not conclusively answered, and some differences of opinion remained, the discussion did conclude that policies and processes to handle a core and options syllabus structure could be worked out and would not be significantly more onerous than the current system with its regional variations and course specific program accreditations.

The content of each syllabus item is reflected in the “Proposed Syllabus” document noted above. While considerable effort was put into providing comprehensive item descriptions, and some work on corresponding learning outcome was done, a full review of learning outcomes, texts and references, prerequisites etc is still required.

What Is Being Done Now - Adoption of the Core & Option Syllabus:

The work being done by the Syllabus Review Task Force and the Board of Examiners Coordinating Committee was to support and assist the Boards of Examiners in the work they are mandated to do by the Associations. It is the Associations themselves that have legislated responsibility to set entry requirements for their members. While all Associations, with the exception of the OAGQ, have agreed

in principle with the Core & Options Syllabus, the task force believes, and CBEPS has confirmed, that the change needs to be adopted at the association level.

The exact process followed depends on the jurisdiction i.e. APBELS, CBEPS, AERC or OAGQ, and how the associations themselves decide to deal with the recommendations.

This has been outlined to all associations, including OAGQ, in a joint letter from CCLS and CBEPS dated January 5, 2009 (see Letter to Associations noted above) and replies are being communicated to CBEPS and CCLS.

At this time, CCLS has received notice of the adoption the syllabus from the majority of the associations, and has contacted the remainder of the associations for a reply. A funding application is being considered by HRSDC and may provide the resources needed to implement the syllabus in 2009.

What Needs to be Done:

The following work needs to be done to actually implement the syllabus. It is a substantial amount of work and federal funding is being sought by CCLS to help get it done in a reasonable time frame. Even with full funding it will take at least one year. Without funding, reliance on volunteer expertise and time will result in a much longer process.

Detailed Syllabus Work:

Detailed work on each syllabus item will be needed. It is suggested that this is work for subject matter specialists represented by the CBEPS special examiners. The work is substantial and will require more than the small honourarium provided by CCLS in the last round of similar work. The work will include:

- A detailed review of the item descriptions,
- A critique of the description of pre-examination studies with increased detail,
- A review of texts and references,
- Rewriting of learning outcomes and study guides.

Consultation with Post Secondary Institutions:

A review of the currently accredited post secondary programs will need to take place and a transition period and process established once the syllabus is ready to implement. The institutions will also be consulted in developing the details around the syllabus items to ensure that the transition will consider the interests of the candidates, the profession, and the institutions.

Process and Policy Considerations:

There are a number of process and or policy considerations that need to be worked through including:

- a. The proposal currently has five items in the options schedule. Consideration needs to be give as to which of these items will have parallel syllabus examinations provided through CBEPS.
- b. There was a discussion of how to qualify the ‘other’ options described as ‘post secondary advanced geomatics courses as approved by relevant body (CBEPS, APBELS, AERC, OAGQ-BE).’ It was suggested that there may be a system of pre-approval of options. There needs to be policy built around acceptable options with input from APBELS, CBEPS, AERC and OAGQ.
- c. There is a conflict/disconnect between the processes for accreditation of university programs and the process for granting equivalencies to courses and exemptions to candidates who do not complete an accredited program. This is not a new situation and has existed as long as the two processes have existed. There is disconnect between the statement that profession requires a degree and availability of an alternate route outside of a degree program. Again this is not a new situation. It was recommended that further discussion take place at the Board, Association and Task Force level.