

Harmonization of Standards and Processes for Entry to the Surveying Profession Progress Report - September 2007

Background

A National Forum on Harmonization of Standards and Processes for Entry to the Surveying Profession was sponsored by the Canadian Council of Land Surveyors (CCLS) in March 2004 in Winnipeg. One impetus for the forum was the Canadian surveyors' associations' mutual recognition agreement on labour mobility under the Agreement on Internal Trade, which includes the following as section 4.4:

FURTHER, we agree that all associations will continue to work towards the harmonization of academic qualifications.

The forum was attended by representatives of all CCLS member associations and was chaired and facilitated by CCLS. A full report of the proceedings and its findings was published by CCLS and is posted on the web site at <http://www.ccls-ccag.ca/natlbofe.htm>

The three key findings of the forum included issues surrounding the first point of contact with potential new surveyors, academic requirements for surveyors, and the articling process. While the primary theme was harmonization of entry requirements, it was agreed throughout the forum that a end result of harmonization would be a clearer, more transparent system of qualification that would facilitate the development of new surveyors.

The substantive end product of the forum was a series of six resolutions that were taken back to the associations for consideration. The resolutions were subsequently presented to the associations and were generally adopted at the association council level.

As association resolutions, the responsibility for implementation lies at the association level. This report will outline the progress made to date on the specific initiatives undertaken by the CCLS in support of the resolutions adopted by the member associations.

Summary of Progress and Next Steps

Of the six resolutions from the national forum, CCLS work on three are complete, two are very close and need only the final edit and circulation of the output documentation, and one has been divided into two phases with one complete and the second underway.

Resolution No. 1 - National Exemption Study – output is a series of process documents and recommendation to the boards of examiners. These are in their final phase of editing and will be circulated before the end of 2007

Resolution No. 2 - Not Looking Beyond the Degree – this was a recommendation for a policy review to take place the association level which was done.

Resolution No. 3 – Harmonization of Certificates of Completion– this was a recommendation for a policy review to take place the association level which was done.

Resolution No. 4 - Major Review of Curricula - A major review of the existing syllabus has been completed. Recommendations have been provided to the boards of examiners. Reduction of variations in board requirements have been recommended and are in the

hands of the Boards themselves. A second phase of the initiative is underway to look at the academic requirements from first principles make recommendations for syllabus changes, both content and structure. This is a significant efforts and will move forward over he next six to eight months.

Resolution No. 5 - Streamlining the Equivalency Process (Licensing by way of the ACLS exams) – output is a common candidates handbook for use of the boards of examiners and associations. It is in the final phase of editing and will be circulated before the end of 2007. If adopted it will be posted on a page of the CCLS web site for access from all association and board sites.

Resolution No. 6 - Articling Standards - This was a recommendation for action to take place at the association level. CCLS provided benchmark data by surveying association web sites for articling information availability and clarity. A follow-up survey is planned.

Detailed Progress Report

Resolution No. 1 - National Exemption Study

WHEREAS CCLS recognizes the need to provide clear information to potential candidates considering entry into the Geomatics profession, including courses available and exemptions available,

BE IT RESOLVED that CCLS, in concert with its associations, initiate a national study of programs and courses at post-secondary institutions in Canada, with a view to developing a nationally accepted education evaluation matrix which would be endorsed and used by the participating boards of examiners; and that CCLS investigate possible external sources of funding for such a study before proposing any cost sharing approach to its members.

Completed:

- After consideration by the CCLS Board Champions for Harmonization and the task force on Harmonization Resolution #4, it was agreed that a national exemption study would be costly, complicated, and the data difficult to maintain, and therefore should be reframed as an initiative to develop a comprehensive and nationally recognized process for academic institutions to apply for and maintain recognition of their course(s).
- The Resolution #4 task force outlined a process whereby institutions would be actively encouraged, through the boards of examiners and the associations, to apply for and maintain exemptions. The regional boards of examiners would adopt a common process for the applications, share the application and evaluation materials, and where possible, come to a common decision on recognition of a course.
- A consultant has been hired to, among other resolution #4 related tasks, develop the process and documentation further for consideration of the boards of examiners and associations.

- The consultant's work is complete. It provides an outline of the process and templates for applications and renewals of equivalencies.

Next Steps:

- The Resolution #4 Task Force will undertake a final review of the consultant's work.
- CCLS will then be circulated to the regional boards of examiners and associations for consideration.
- CCLS will facilitate the adoption of the process through the associations.
- The associations and their regional boards of examiners will implement and administer the process.

Resolution No. 2 - Not Looking Beyond the Degree

WHEREAS the CCLS accredits programs containing cadastral components, and not institutions, and

WHEREAS the four western provinces recently considered resolutions calling upon the WCBELS to issue certificates of completion to all graduates of U of C and UNB geomatics engineering programs, and

WHEREAS the implementation of these resolutions will cause other boards of examiners to look behind certificates of completion issued by the WCBE, and

WHEREAS these resolutions may jeopardize the cadastral chairs at U of C and UNB,

BE IT RESOLVED that this national forum, through CCLS, recommend to the four western provinces that they repeal the said resolutions.

Completed:

- The four western provinces reconsidered the issues and repealed the resolutions.
- University of Calgary and University of New Brunswick have completed the CCLS evaluation process and received accreditations related to the relevant programs.

Next Steps:

- None

Resolution No. 3 – Harmonization of Certificates of Completion

In the spirit of continued work towards harmonization as agreed to in the MRA,

BE IT RESOLVED that all provincial associations that are currently involved in regional boards of examiners, be strongly encouraged to require certificates of completion.

Completed:

- The resolution was adopted by those associations which were considering removing the requirement for certificates of completion.

Next Steps:

- None

Resolution No. 4 - Major Review of Curricula

BE IT RESOLVED all associations support, as a priority, a major review of the Common Core Syllabus under co-ordination of Board of Examiners Co-ordinating Committee of CCLS.

The review should consider:

- making the syllabus more clear and transparent to potential students,
- being more specific in listing the relevant references, and
- describing required learning outcomes for each examination.

Completed:

- A CCLS task force, with representatives from the regional boards of examiners and several universities, was formed.
- A two-day meeting of the task force was hosted by CCLS in April 2005.
- A detailed report, including a series of twenty-two recommendations and various action items, was produced.
- A consultant was hired to coordinate implementation of the recommendations and the deliverables have been received
- A second face-to-face meeting was held to review the deliverables in detail and make revisions.
- Work is substantially complete on the following items:
 - Learning outcomes and study guide material for all syllabus I and II items,
 - A common candidates handbook,
 - Developing common process for granting equivalencies to educational institutions for courses,
 - Developing communication and cooperation processes for boards of examiners in granting exemptions to candidates, and
 - Hiring of a consultant to coordinate and document much of the work outlined above.
- Work is ongoing on the following items:
 - Making syllabus I and II common for the APBELS, CBEPS
 - A detailed comparison and movement towards commonality between syllabus I and II and AOLS academic requirements,
 - The acceptance of a syllabus III for any regional specific requirements,
 - Communication with OAGQ for information purposes,

Next Steps:

- The CCLS will circulate the resulting work to stakeholders (associations, boards of examiners, institutions as required) for review,
- CCLS will facilitate the adoption of the process through the associations, and
- The associations and their regional boards of examiners will implement and administer the process.

Resolution No. 5 - Streamlining the Equivalency Process (Licensing by way of the ACLS exams)

BE IT RESOLVED that the associations consider adopting a number of initiatives to support students who are working toward a certificate of completion including:

- offering a low cost category of membership or affiliation which would allow the students,
 - to receive mailings from the association,
 - to receive free or discounted admission to association seminars, and
 - to potentially participate on committees,
- building a library of reference materials for loan to students,
- supporting the development of a mentoring process which can respond to questions from students about the content of the syllabus,
- supporting development of a handbook for students who wish to get a certificate of completion without completing a university degree, and
- supporting a policy of allowing students to write common core syllabus examinations before completing their diploma/degree.

Completed:

- The resolution was presented to and adopted by the associations.
- The Resolution #4 task force has substantially completed the development of a common candidate's handbook including learning outcomes and study guide.
- The CCLS has communicated with associations to encourage their work on the other suggested strategies in resolution #5.

Next Steps:

- The common candidates' handbook, including learning outcomes and study guide, will be finalized and circulated to the Boards of Examiners for adoption, and posted on a common Web site for ease of access.

Resolution No. 6 - Articling Standards

BE IT RESOLVED all associations consider the following recommendations.

- Each association have an articling handbook that:
 - describes the process/timelines,
 - includes forms,
 - describes time requirements, and

- describes assignments.
- Each associations develop a package for distribution to prospective students that describes the process of becoming a land surveyor (which would include a description of articling process).
- Associations make these materials easily available in hard copy and digitally.
- Associations agree to share these materials.

Associations are further encouraged to review their articling requirements once the other initiatives are completed with a view to harmonization of articling standards.

(With respect to this resolution, a wide-ranging discussion took place at the national forum regarding the articling process. It became clear very early on in the discussions that there was little consistency amongst the provinces. The Forum recognized that the gap between the provinces may be too wide and that complete harmonization may not be achievable at this time given the need to focus on other priorities. Notwithstanding this reality, the Forum recognized the need to ensure the articling process was transparent.)

Completed:

- The resolution was presented to and adopted by the associations.
- In February 2006 CCLS office staff Ria van der Veen undertook a survey of the websites of individual associations to analyse how “user-friendly” they were for prospective students.
- The results have been passed on to the Associations. For that report, please see <http://www.ccls-ccag.ca/memberfiles.htm#harmonization> and link to “Articling Process Research”
- The CCLS will communicate with associations to encourage their work on the suggested strategies in resolution #6.

Next Steps:

- The CCLS will continue to encourage associations in their work on the suggested strategies in resolution #6 by undertaking a follow-up survey of association web sites and communicating the results to the associations.