

## **Harmonization of Standards and Processes for Entry to the Surveying Profession Progress Report - September 2006**

### **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. Many factors lead to the national forum. Several years previously discussions originating with the regional boards of examiners and the CCLS Board of Examiners Co-ordinating Committee (BECC) resulted first in closer ties and co-operation between four regional boards and then the discussions about a national board of examiners. A second major contributing factor is 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 emphasis of the CCLS strategy surrounding these issues was on providing a process that would lead to committed and informed participation of the associations, focused discussion, and work towards a national consensus. The specific outcomes came from the forum itself.

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. With respect to the first issue, it was determined that the focus on attracting new surveyors should be through a public awareness campaign, and that this was outside the jurisdiction of the forum. The CCLS Public Awareness initiative picked up this issue and progress is reported separately. Strategies were explored to address the academic requirements and articling process issues and six resolutions were passed by the forum for the consideration of the associations. While the theme of the resolutions is harmonization of entry requirements, it was agreed throughout the forum that a by product of harmonization would be a clearer, more transparent system of qualification that would facilitate the development of new surveyors.

There were several options available to the Associations when considering the six resolutions. These included disagreeing, agreeing in principle or recommending changes or alternative strategies to address the issues; stating specific priorities of the association related to the issues or strategies; committing to support, either in general terms or with specific resources of the association such as existing committees, experts within the association, or funds; and others. This process was designed as a continuation of the consensus building begun at the forum itself to ensure that there is Association support of any resulting initiatives and expenditure of resources.

The resolutions were subsequently presented to the associations and were generally adopted at the association council 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.

**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.

**Next Steps:**

- The consultant should complete the work in late 2006 and provide an outline of the process and templates for applications and renewals of equivalencies.
- 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.
- Work was started on the following items:
  - Learning outcomes and study guide material for all syllabus I and II items,
  - A common candidates handbook,
  - Making syllabus I and II common for the APBELS, BECLS and WCBELS,
  - 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,
  - Common process for granting equivalencies to educational institutions for courses,
  - 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.

**Next Steps:**

- The task force will continue to work with consultant as outlined above,
- 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 begun the development of a common candidate's handbook including learning outcomes and study guide.

**Next Steps:**

- The Resolution #4 task force will complete the common candidates' handbook including learning outcomes and study guide.
- The CCLS will communicate with associations to encourage their work on the other suggested strategies in resolution #5.

**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”

**Next Steps:**

- The CCLS will communicate with associations to encourage their work on the suggested strategies in resolution #6.