

# Talk the talk

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**Communication and negotiation is a mandatory competency for building surveying, and Ewan Craig, a speaker at RICS' annual It's Your APC conference, offers guidance**

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Communication and negotiation is key to working with others successfully, and should be clearly demonstrated in building surveying practice. It will take many guises when providing technical services; selecting and using appropriate communication is part of this skill, enabling all parties to have a clear understanding of the situation and also enhancing the other competencies.

Examples relating to the technical competencies include the following.

- [Building pathology](#) : evident in ascertaining and clarifying the brief, gaining further information from people on site, carrying out research into the issue and then relaying the findings to the client in a way they can easily understand.
- [Conservation and restoration](#) : the Communication and negotiation competency can be seen in identifying and selecting appropriate means of informal and formal communication with, for instance, the supporting grant bodies and amenity societies involved in the refurbishment of a heritage property.

## The levels

The requirements for this competency by level are as follows.

### At Level 1

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of effective oral, written, graphic and presentation skills including the methods and techniques that are appropriate to specific situations.

### At Level 2

Provide evidence of practical application of oral, written, graphic and presentation skills that are appropriate in a variety of situations, specifically including where negotiation is involved.

### At Level 3

Provide evidence of evaluation of your communication in a variety of situations.

The competency is only required to Level 2 on the building surveying pathway, so Level 3 is not shown in the pathway guide.

You should be familiar with the communication and negotiation issues in your submission documents, and be ready to address questions on them and on related matters.

## Questions

Actual questions are based on the candidate's experience, which should be at Level 2 but could exceed this. Two examples are given below.

### **Would you please explain your communication and negotiation with the residents, contractor and housing manager on the quality of the maintenance service and works to portfolio C?**

*This question is aimed at Level 2 candidates. The answer should explain pertinent issues to support your application of knowledge.*

This was a routine check on the work and services of the Measured Term Contractor (MTC). I received the brief and confirmed this in writing with the client. I arranged an appointment by telephone with them and the MTC to view the latter's documentation, which I then confirmed by email. I also contacted the residents concerned, by telephone, to arrange access, from a randomly selected sample of MTC-invoiced jobs for those particular properties.

I confirmed the appointment by email, or in writing where email was unavailable, with each resident. I did have to negotiate possible appointments with the residents to try to ensure they were conducted with efficiency. When visiting each property, I discussed the maintenance service with the resident and gleaned their views, using neutral questioning to remove bias.

I also obtained information from the housing manager on their opinion of the service with a more technically focused set of questions, through meetings and telephone calls. I spoke directly with the MTC staff to clarify and gain supporting information. I prepared a written report, which was then emailed to the client, covering quality, value, process and customer issues in an agreed format. I discussed the report by telephone with the client and confirmed the conversation by email with them.

### **Could you briefly describe your approach to communication and negotiation for the final design of the extension to house B?**

The domestic client had instructed the practice to design and specify an extension to their house. The final design followed the written confirmation of the instruction, development of the brief and the initial designs. I found plans and 3D sketches to be the most effective way to present and discuss the extension design at client meetings as the client found these easier to visualise. They wanted some changes that would have increased the costs significantly, and I discussed these carefully with them, balancing their priorities with the budgets. The final design was confirmed as a set of printed plans and 3D sketches with the client.

## Care

Given the time constraints of the APC, your answer should be brief but comprehensive. Care should be taken to demonstrate your own skills, abilities and knowledge to the assessors.

**Ewan Craig is an APC assessor and Associate with [Ridge and Partners LLP](#)**

## Further information

- Details on the APC pathway guide for building surveyors are on the [rics website](#)

and on [isurv](#)

- This feature is taken from the [RICS Building surveying journal](#) (July/August 2017)
- Related categories: [My APC \(Candidates\)](#)