

Variety act

9 November 2017

Alex Charlesworth describes the many different career paths in building surveying, with help from fellow members of the professional group board

A day in the life of a building surveyor is never the same as the day before or the day after. It is both exciting and rewarding, and can make for a fascinating career. It suits individuals who enjoy travelling, problem-solving and working in property, as well as spending time in the office. It is sociable, and involves meeting people from all walks of life. Variety is guaranteed.

You can join the profession by gaining a degree in building surveying. There are different schemes, including full- or part-time undergraduate degrees, or postgraduate entry schemes. There is also an opportunity to join through an employer's apprentice scheme.

All entry schemes require experience on the job, and once sufficient experience has been obtained ? at least 24 months of work after a full-time degree ? candidates sit the [Assessment of Professional Competence \(APC\)](#) to become chartered building surveyors.

Building surveyors often describe themselves as "doctors of buildings". And just as doctors can specialise in many different fields, you have many different career paths open to you as a chartered building surveyor (see Figure 1).

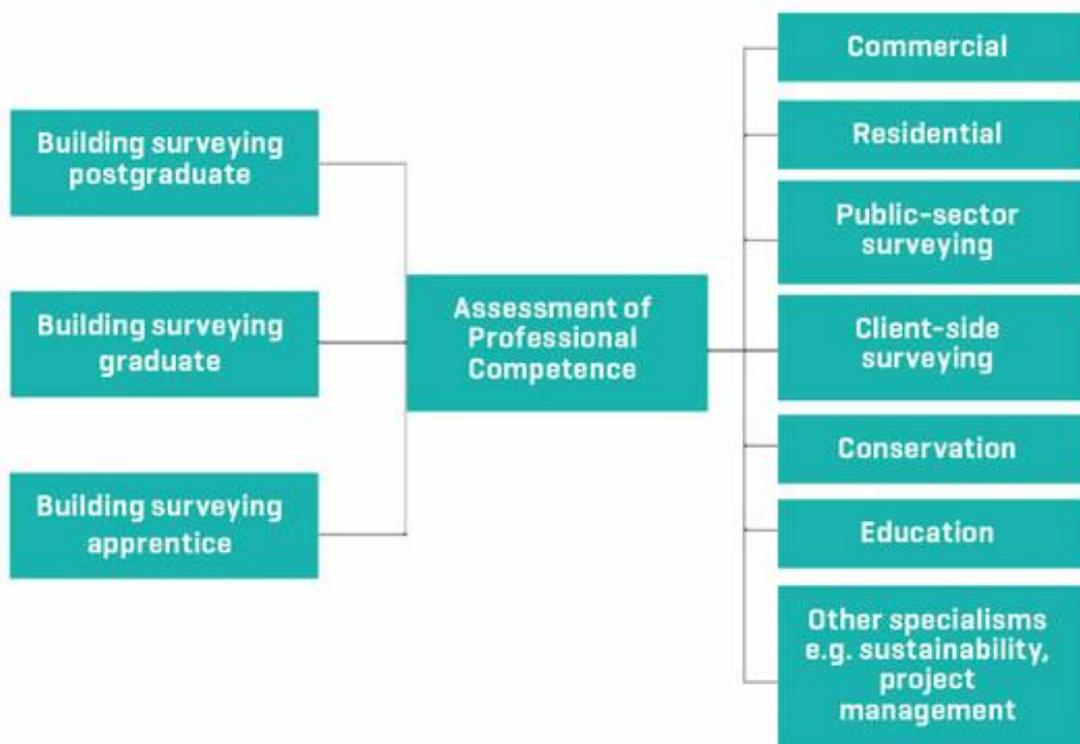


Figure 1: Routes into a building surveying career

The paths shown are far from comprehensive: there are, for instance, routes into sustainability and project management. However, whether you choose to specialise or not, as a chartered building surveyor you are guaranteed variety in any working day. It is an exciting profession, and I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone considering a career in real estate.

Alex Charlesworth is Chairman of the [Building Surveying Professional Group](#)

Residential

The residential sector is often wrongly regarded as the sole preserve of reactive maintenance repairs and quick surveys for homebuyers.

However, there are numerous organisations with residential portfolios as part of their estate that require niche sectors where a residential specialism is required. Specialising in modern issues such as flood risk, retrofits of occupied buildings, mixed commercial and residential property in market towns, and dispute resolution of bespoke designs all fall easily into the skill sets of building surveyors who have the breadth of knowledge to provide value to clients.

Residential surveying lends itself perfectly to those looking to move into consultancy work, away from large commercial surveying practices.

Geoff Hunt MRICS is a chartered building surveyor at [Geoffrey Hunt Building Surveying Services Ltd](#)

Education

With 26 accredited building surveying degrees in the UK, becoming a lecturer in higher education is another option for surveyors. There are two main ways you can join a university department. The first is through the study and research route, and the second is a practice-based route.

The work of a lecturer itself is very varied, and you have the opportunity to shape the future profession, which makes it exciting and hugely rewarding.

Dr Kevin Thomas MRICS is Associate Dean (International) in the [School of Science, Engineering & Design at Teesside University](#)

Commercial

If you work in commercial property, you will have many different clients in a host of different sectors; from occupiers, investors and the public sector to developers. Properties themselves include office, industrial, retail and high-end residential premises.

Commercial building surveyors track investor and occupier requirements and provide services at each of the four stages of a property's lifecycle: development, acquisition, occupation and sale. There are, therefore, opportunities to work on all kinds of commercial property.

An investor is concerned about issues affecting the value of their property for the duration of their intended investment, while an occupier is concerned about issues and costs before, during and at the end of their lease; building surveying aligns services with the client's needs.

Surveyors must know how commercial buildings are constructed, be able to investigate and identify defects ? the process of building pathology ? and understand the legal and regulatory standards that govern the property sector. Services provided are many, and include repair and maintenance, building surveys, refurbishment, lease repair and reinstatement liability ? known as dilapidations ? negotiating dilapidations settlements, and monitoring construction projects.

The range of clients, properties, sectors, locations and services with which commercial building surveyors work are very diverse.

Alex Charlesworth FRICS is Head of London Building Consultancy at [Cushman & Wakefield](#)

Public sector

The public sector is responsible for commissioning and undertaking annual programmes of work worth billions of pounds. Employment in a practice with public-sector clients or directly in local or central government can offer unique career progression, with training opportunities from apprenticeships to day release for degrees and APC final qualification. Practices can vary in size from the very small, with just a few employees, to large businesses employing more than 100 surveyors.

The work is often varied, with projects and tasks covering the whole range of services, including condition and lifecycle surveys, contract administration, project management, asset management, defect analysis, planned maintenance and sustainability. The wide range of public buildings includes housing, schools, libraries, museums, colleges, universities, civic buildings and hospitals ? so as well as the good career development opportunities, you will have the reward of keeping vital public services open and safe for business every day.

Many public-sector practices offer a multidisciplinary experience, giving you the chance to work on a daily basis not only with colleagues across the surveying professions but also with engineers, architects, building control surveyors and interior designers, as well as environmental, health and safety, construction, landscape, arboricultural and development experts.

Anthony Walker FRICS is a director at [Trident](#)

Client-side surveying

The term "client-side building surveyor" can be difficult to define as there is such a wide variety of client organisations, each of which has differing attitudes towards the role of in-house technical expertise.

At one end of the spectrum is the client-side building surveyor who has a strategic oversight role for the specific business, managing the teams of external consultants routinely instructed by the client so as to ensure consistency between the business's own needs and the consultants' briefs.

In another scenario, a client will use a team of in-house building surveyors to undertake maintenance of an occupational estate to project management of investment-driven construction projects, ensuring there is a dedicated resource and reducing the level of external consultant fees.

Working for a client organisation has its benefits. It involves dynamic challenges and a varied but intense workload, because colleagues invariably look to you as the technical property expert to help fulfil the business objectives.

In my experience, it is a hugely rewarding role. It exposes a building surveyor to the wider real-estate market and beyond, with a level of autonomy and responsibility seldom found in private- or public-sector practices.

Ben Lilley MRICS is Associate Director, Real Estate Project Management, at [Aviva Investors](#)

Conservation

In building conservation, protective regimes in the UK, such as the [Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#) , and internationally, such as [World Heritage Site](#) designation, mean that clients are after experts who have both post-qualification training and experience.

Most building surveyors will get some experience of historic buildings at university, and many will have protected structures in their portfolio in practice. Some go on to attend the [RICS Building Conservation Summer School](#) , and acquire specialist CPD, a postgraduate qualification and ? eventually ? the RICS [Certified Historic Building Professional accreditation](#) .

It is free to join the [RICS Building Conservation Forum](#) , which brings together conservation practitioners from a wide range of construction, conservator and architectural history backgrounds. This offers a supportive community of like-minded people, which effectively operates as a peer mentor group.

The forum also helps specialists to influence policy and define best practice, working with non-governmental organisations to conserve and showcase our precious cultural heritage.

Lynda Jubb FRICS is Director at [Jubb and Jubb](#)

Further information

- This feature is taken from the RICS [Building surveying journal](#) (October/November 2017)
- Related categories include: [Building surveying](#) ; [Residential](#) ; [Commercial property](#) ; [Conservation](#)