

# Winning trust

24 May 2018

## Peter Bolton King explains why RICS is investigating what risks members? professional reputations face in a changing world

---

Professional standards provide confidence. Without them, inconsistency, lack of transparency, poor conduct and incompetence can only lead to mistrust, confusion and greater risks when trying to make decisions, large or small.

A lack of quality standards means that individuals, companies, investors, governments and of course society can suffer, bringing sometimes severe, or even fatal, consequences.

Businesses increasingly look to function in a range of different markets and, in many cases, are desperate for standardisation. Standards, both technical and behavioural, help to make things simpler and more efficient.

## Standards

To overcome these issues, you will be aware that RICS has been leading the discussion about, consultation on and publication of global international standards in valuation ([IVS](#)), property measurement ([IPMS](#)), construction measurement ([ICMS](#)), land measurement (ILMS) and ethics ([IES](#)). We also have a range of RICS standards and guidance of a technical nature covering a wide variety of topics.

*Does technical knowledge on its own make a professional or is there more to it than that?*

However, does technical knowledge on its own make a professional or is there more to it than that? What do professionals and the public think? To find out how the market regards our standards, RICS recently undertook independent research.

## Findings

You will be pleased to know that, on the whole, the research showed that RICS members are seen to act professionally and are considered to have a similar status to accountants, engineers and other professions, with a good reputation in both in the UK and beyond.

However, there is no guarantee this will always be the case, so it is important we are vigilant about future risks. The question we therefore wanted to answer was: what could fundamentally undermine the professional reputation of RICS members?

The research quite clearly highlighted the following potential risks.

- **Commercial pressures:** the need to meet clients' requirements with increasing time pressures and costs can mean cutting corners is sometimes the only way to get the job done.
- **The rise of multidisciplinary global consultancy practices:** this do-everything approach brings with it a tougher commercial environment. There's also a risk of conflicts of interest if such practices don't have the appropriate, ethical, information barriers in place.
- **The range of services provided by RICS professionals:** these can often change after surveyors have qualified in a particular field; for instance, commercial property professionals end up working in financial services, and building surveyors become sustainability consultants. The challenge is to ensure they have the right skills for the area in which they are working.
- **The limits of competence:** it is important to be aware of when it is appropriate to send junior staff on jobs, and when greater supervision is needed. RICS professionals also need to understand the limits of their own competence.
- **Technology is making services more widely available:** this can make work more challenging, because relying on technology means we can lose our professional judgement. It also means that unqualified people can carry out more and more tasks. The property and construction industry is increasingly relying on unregulated technology for key decisions.
- **Global expansion:** as RICS develops around the world, it can be difficult to maintain standards across diverse cultures ? we need to be globally and locally relevant at the same time.
- **CPD:** there needs to be a clearer understanding and monitoring of CPD requirements to help RICS professionals keep learning throughout their careers.

## What happens next?

Following market feedback and the recent research, it is clear that professionalism is much more than technical knowledge, although this is clearly a vital element.

The risk areas outlined in the research indicate the need to give further consideration to such matters as conflicts of interest, ethics and conduct, competence, professionalism, indemnity, client money, and anti-money laundering, bribery and corruption measures, plus data handling and cyber crime, where professionals are increasingly at risk.

A new [Conflicts of interest professional statement](#) was mandatory from 1 January. We will now proceed to consult with our professionals and the market, at a global level, on the other non-technical areas mentioned above. This will enable more comprehensive risk analysis and, over the next year, could result in further guidance, training products and mandatory professional statements.

RICS will therefore be developing this standards programme to mitigate the above risks to professionalism. If you would like to find out more, or get involved, please contact me.

Peter Bolton King is [RICS Global Director of Professionalism and Ethics](#)

## Further information

- [Conflicts of interest professional statement](#)
- This feature was taken from [RICS Property journal](#) (May/June 2018)
- Related categories: [Ethics and professional conduct](#)