

# Our evolving expertise

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**The skills required of a quantity surveyor have changed markedly over the past three decades. Rachel Titley looks at the aptitudes we need today ? and tomorrow**

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Just over 30 years ago I walked into a university lecture room, and the lecturer informed us that to be a good surveyor we needed to be able to do four things: drink, smoke, play golf and play squash. To do all 4 would be ideal, but 3 would suffice.

At the time, a shiny-faced 18-year-old, I wondered what this had to do with the technical course I'd signed up to. Surely these were not the only skills I would need?

Traditionally, a quantity surveyor was just that ? a quantifier and valuer of construction works. This simply demanded numeracy, an attention to detail, a knowledge of construction methods and the ability to 'colour in within the lines'.

The modern quantity surveyor, however, has become much more than this, as demonstrated by terms such as cost manager, commercial manager, cost engineer and cost analyst by which we are known in the UK and the around the world.

Our traditional core skills remain relevant, but we have adapted and evolved. We have become more proactive and added wider commercial management skills. We consider the whole project lifecycle, advise and strategise with clients at earlier phases of schemes, perform project and programme management, and use new technologies and standards.

## Fresh technology

As we enter the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we are seeing new technologies prompt significant change. The amount of digital information being generated, both in construction projects and the wider world, requires an understanding of data management and manipulation. At this year's [RICS World Built Environment Forum](#) Ann Bentley, Global Board Director at [Rider Levett Bucknall](#) , said that new roles may need to be created for professionals who can act as interpreters between technology and construction. Indeed, [Kier](#) is one major contractor that has hired its first cohort of digital construction apprentices in response to this development.

Building information modelling and intelligent software will eventually take measurement and quantification out of the quantity surveyor's everyday skill set. However, the need to interpret, assess and influence the inputs to and outputs from the design team will remain; as will the adage 'garbage in, garbage out'.

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Commercial management of the design process remains key, and the ability to carry out optioneering with computer models using real-time information allows us to offer better value to our clients and profits for our firms.

If we don't respond to these changes, the risk to the future of quantity surveying is immense. Professions such as accountancy have always seen opportunities to widen their offerings into construction, and even Google's parent firm Alphabet has entered the market with its [Sidewalk Labs project](#) in Toronto. The competition to respond to and embrace these changes is increasing.

## **Exam revision**

How quantity surveying skills are assessed has also evolved. Three decades ago, we would take an RICS Test of Professional Competence, a 2-day, scenario-based paper exam sat in our own office. Now, candidates are judged by a more rounded [Assessment of Professional Competence \(APC\)](#) with a written submission addressing specific competencies, a case study, CPD, ethics and a one-hour face-to-face presentation and interview.

RICS has recognised that its competencies need constant review and the latest exercise is now complete, with the changes in effect since 1 August. The new pathways guides and details of the changes can be found at [www.rics.org/apc](http://www.rics.org/apc). Mandatory competencies have been amended to reflect that the softer skills needed wider definitions. 'Teamworking' is renamed 'Diversity, inclusion and teamworking', and a new competency, 'Inclusive environments', has been introduced. New technical competencies such as 'Open data' and 'Smart cities and intelligent buildings' have also been added to other surveying pathways, and will surely be added to quantity surveying in the future.

I think that we will continue to use the skills of the past alongside those of the future. But if that same lecturer were standing in front of this year's freshers and told them which 4 skills they needed, what would they be?

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## **Further information**

- Related competencies include: [Quantity surveying and construction](#)
- This feature was taken from the [RICS Construction journal](#) (September/October 2018)
- Related categories include: [APC Pathways](#)