



All degrees welcome

Whatever your first degree, you can do a conversion course and become a fully qualified quantity or building surveyor in just two years.

When you consider the many benefits of a career in quantity or building surveying – involvement in high-profile projects, the chance to work abroad and a generous starting salary, it's no wonder graduates from non-surveying degrees (commonly called non-cognates) are eager to join the industry. Many universities offer conversion courses and some larger employers will even sponsor committed graduates through their study. Francesca Cotwal, HR recruitment officer, and Andy Mountain, projects director at Franklin + Andrews both agree there are significant opportunities for non-cognate graduates. 'Entering the industry at postgraduate level shows a conscious choice to become a surveyor and it's generally a well researched decision,' Francesca explains. 'Non-cognates can really add value to clients as they are able to see things from a different perspective,' Andy adds.

The conversion course – a variety of study options

The first step to becoming a surveyor is to do a conversion degree. The Royal Institution of Chartered

Surveyors (RICS) is the professional body that monitors standards and training in surveying. The *RICS careers prospectus of surveying education* lists all the undergraduate courses on offer in the UK and is a good place to start your research. It's important that you choose a RICS accredited course because, like lawyers and accountants, surveyors need to achieve a professional qualification called the APC in order to become a chartered surveyor. See pages 15–17 for more information.

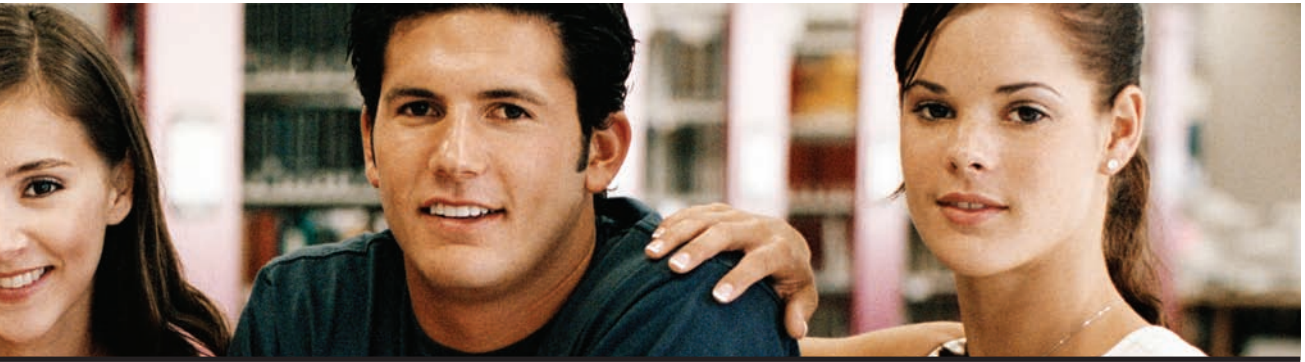
Easier than ever before

In the past it was hard to make the jump to a career in either quantity surveying or building surveying because the job required a three or even four-year degree. Now you can study full or part time, or by distance learning and if you work towards your APC at the same time, you can potentially take the fast-track to become a chartered surveyor in just two years – quicker than you would imagine. Full-time conversion courses usually last one year and provide the essential grounding in surveying. Part time and distance learning equivalents usually last two years. Postgraduate course fees are never cheap so you might consider

working while you study part time. Some employers will sponsor you through your course so do your research before deciding to apply. Another option is to speak to your bank about the professional studies loan facilities they have available.

Demonstrate your commitment

Changing your career is no easy feat; it takes determination and courage. There is a great deal of technical training to complete and to succeed you will need a good degree and heaps of drive and ambition. However, the industry welcomes non-cognates for their skills, knowledge and alternative perspective so if you show your dedication and drive you stand an excellent chance of finding an employer to support you through the conversion. Some graduates worry that they will be at a disadvantage not having followed the traditional route but this isn't necessarily the case. 'Initially non-cognates may struggle with the technical terminology,' says Francesca. 'However, with encouragement and support this is quickly resolved.' It seems good technical knowledge is very important but other skills are equally valued in the industry.



‘A key attribute of an outstanding surveyor is their interpersonal skills,’ Andy continues. ‘Non-cognates can sometimes be better communicators, which helps them interface with the client.’

The rewards and opportunities of a career in surveying are definitely worth the effort but whichever career path you choose, whether it’s quantity surveying or building surveying, you need to find out what it’s all about and what the work involves. The best way to do this is to get some work experience. It may help you decide if surveying is for

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you, and if you create a good impression it could even help you gain a permanent post for when you qualify. ‘Research the industry thoroughly before deciding to do a conversion course,’ advises Francesca. ‘Decide why you want to join the industry and demonstrate ▶

CONVERTING TO QUANTITY SURVEYING

‘Studying via distance learning’



Rodrigo Martinez

JOB TITLE Quantity surveyor

EMPLOYER Franklin + Andrews

DEGREE BA business and European studies, Manchester Metropolitan University (1997)

My background

After completing my studies, I worked in a procurement and contracts administration role for an American construction company based in the UK. I then joined a cost consultancy where I had more exposure to cost management on projects. During this time I worked very closely with cost consultants whose work in estimating, budgeting, and controlling costs really interested me. I decided that I wanted to become a quantity surveyor and my colleagues suggested that I take a conversion course at the College of Estate Management. Upon completion of this course I will extend my studies to attain the University of Reading MSc in surveying.

The conversion course

The graduate development programme is distance learning so I’m really looking forward to the flexibility. It is structured on a self-study basis so I will need to complete about 14 hours a week, setting aside five hours to apply my learning in a work-based situation. I will continue to work with my employer during my studies and have recently been seconded to work as part of the commercial team on the East London Line rail project.

Words of wisdom

Anyone considering a change of career direction should start as early as possible. Work experience is really important so try to enrol on a graduate training programme as your employer will then sponsor you and support you through the conversion process.



that you know what is involved when you make applications.’ Many of the firms in TARGET *Quantity Surveying & Building Surveying* offer work experience; see the article on page 49 for more information on how to secure a placement.

Just the beginning

Completing the course is only the beginning. Following successful completion of your conversion course (or during, if you’re studying part time), you will need to start to work towards your APC. For more

“ FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF YOUR CONVERSION COURSE YOU WILL NEED TO WORK TOWARDS YOUR APC. ”

information on the APC, see pages 15–17. The beauty of surveying is that you can specialise in many different areas of work drawing on what you learned in your first degree so nothing will be wasted. For details of which employers welcome applications from non-cognates, see the A–Z directory of employers’ profiles on pages 59–93. ■

Further information

RICS accredit over 400 courses at around 100 universities worldwide. To find a course that suits you

visit [rics.org/courses](https://www.rics.org/courses) or request a copy of the RICS prospectus from the contact centre via contactrics@rics.org or 0870 333 1600.



CHANGING CAREER

‘Fully qualified in just two years’



Adam Kerfoot

JOB TITLE Quantity surveyor

EMPLOYER MaitlandQS

DEGREE BSc business management, University of Sheffield (2003)

My background

After I graduated I started work as a recruitment consultant. My dad was a quantity surveyor and my uncle was a project manager, so I had worked on building sites during my summer holidays. I decided I wanted to work in the construction industry in a business-oriented role, so I researched RICS-accredited MSc courses in quantity surveying. I spoke to many construction companies and eventually was offered four interviews with employers willing to sponsor graduates through the conversion course. My work experience helped me to demonstrate my knowledge and commitment to the course, and my current employer was willing to invest time and money into my development.

The course

I studied for my MSc via distance learning which comprised four modules per year. For each module I had one day with a lecturer and all other studying was self-taught. After 12 weeks I sat an exam for that module and handed in coursework. I worked towards my professional qualification (APC) at the same time which was an incredible amount of work but I knew that if I was motivated and dedicated I would be a fully qualified surveyor in two years.

Words of wisdom

Don’t be disheartened by rejection. It can be really tough to find an employer who will sponsor you but there are a lot of employers out there willing to help a graduate through the necessary training to become a quantity surveyor.