

Continuous Training for Chartered Surveyors

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Keywords:

SUMMARY

The Ordre des Geometres Experts has decided that its members should follow 40 hours of permanent training per annum. In order to facilitate the implementation of this regulation, the Ordre has organized in 2005, and for the first time, a summer university attended by about 600 surveyors. This successful initiative should be renewed every two years.

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1. OVERVIEW

Whereas it was still conceivable in the 1950s, that following an initial training period culminating in a diploma, an aspiring expert, whoever he or she might be, could exercise his or her profession building solely on experience, this is no longer the case.

The increasingly rapid evolution of techniques, the accumulation of laws and regulations, the constant expansion of fields of activity, the multiplication of exchanges, all mean that initial training, however comprehensive, and working experience, are no longer sufficient for experts to be competent in all fields of their activity, a duty that they have to their clients and the different professionals they work with.

As a result, in the second half of the 20th century, the notion of continuous training developed.

Concerning the profession of Chartered Surveying, this problem arose much earlier.

Information technology, as tools of support and simplification, entered into the profession far earlier than was the case for notaries, lawyers or even architects. To take the French example, in the 1970s, the Order created a structure, the CNETGEF (National Centre of Technical Studies for Chartered Surveyors), to train our colleagues who started getting equipped in the infancy of the binary system with computers, as well as testing the earliest software programmes.

Furthermore, whilst our urban planning code, in the 1960s, was a small document in comparison with the old civil code, it has grown so much that it has become bloated and unreadable, and each government has tried, unfortunately in vain, to drastically reduce its size.

Finally, the activities of most of our colleagues after the war, was limited to drawing up cadastral plans, calculating rent, and dividing up parcels. It was only later on, that they became involved in land management, the generalization of lots, extending the co-ownership system, followed by large-scale land planning of the territory, wide-ranging urban planning operations, volume divisions, urban planning and geographic information systems.

2. THE ROLE OF THE ORDER IN CONTINUOUS TRAINING

- A reminder of the texts

The law of the 7th May 1946 which created the *Ordre des Géomètres Experts* (Order of Chartered Surveyors), its decree applications, as well as its rules of procedures which specified its role in terms of training.

Thus, section 17 of the law, stipulates that the Upper Council “watches over discipline and professional improvement”.

Thus, section 47 of the decree of 31st May 1996, prescribes that “the chartered surveyor must maintain and perfect his or her professional knowledge”.

The role of the Order is to make sure that its members are competent in their field.

Obviously, these skills are checked at as soon as someone becomes a member of the Order, but they are also regularly monitored during the professional activity of the members of the Order.

It is the Regional Councils which apply the good practices as laid down by the Order, more generally by periodical controls of the firms and more specifically when customers lodge complaints or express surprise at certain practices adopted by chartered surveyors.

Certain specific activities such as technical diagnosis audits relating to the presence of lead or asbestos in buildings, or consultancy or real estate management are subject to prior special training which is also controlled by the Regional Councils.

3. IMPLEMENTING THE OBLIGATION FOR CONTINUOUS TRAINING

The Higher Council made continuous training obligatory for all chartered surveyors in a decree adopted in March 1998.

The minimum amount imposed by the Order is 40 hours per year. These 40 hours are analysed over a period of 3 years. Every three years, the Chartered Surveyor must prove that he or she has had 120 hours of continuous training.

These 120 hours can be part of a follow-up of training sessions organised by the Order or other county or regional professional bodies, or additional university training, or specialisations in a given field, but always within the scope of competence of a chartered surveyor or for improving the management of firms. They can also consist of training leading to certifications from the Order or parallel organisations. (For example: certification of the Order for technical audits of buildings, certification of the Public Office of Qualification in Urban Planning, etc...).

In order to propose training programmes, the Order created a National Commission with the following objective:

- to propose themes and teachers
- to evaluate the proposed training programmes

- to show the different training programmes on the Order's website, mentioning their dates, locations, the teachers involved, the content and the fact that this training is validated by the Order, or in the process of being validated.

Some training, in key fields, has been rendered compulsory by the Order, such as:

- continuous training on demarcation in 2002
- continuous training on insurance and risks in 2005
- training on digital cadastral mapping in 2006

It is not the role of the commission to carry out controls of the training programmes. This is carried out by the Regional Councils who are free to apply sanctions when members are under the required level of training hours.

As with any disciplinary decision of the Regional Councils, any member who is accused of not carrying out the required number of hours of continuous training, can appeal to the Higher Council.

4. SUMMER UNIVERSITY FOR CHARTERED SURVEYORS

4.1 The Principle

In order to raise the awareness of chartered surveyors on continuous training, the Higher Council office decided to try out a new concept for the first time in 2005. This was inspired by what French notaries have been doing for several years.

The idea was to organise periodically, in one single location, several days of training programmes, either a half-day or a full day based around several themes.

The advantages are the following:

- people are better trained if they are absent from the office for several days, as they are no longer focused on their work.
- remaining several days in one single location enables people to exchange their experiences and to better communicate with colleagues from other regions.
- as a lot of chartered surveyors are present, this enables the Higher Council, outside of the lessons, to talk about the problems facing the profession, and give information about ongoing actions, on policies to be implemented.
- the cost for each chartered surveyor is obviously lower than if he or she had to travel several times a year for shorter periods.
- there is a friendly atmosphere which encourages people to meet up with colleagues they have not seen for a while.
- it is a method of uniting the profession and reinforcing the esprit de corps,
- it is easier to monitor the continuous training.

4.2 The Example of the 2005 Summer University

For the first event of this type we wanted to create a programme which was not too varied in terms of themes nor too long in duration.

Therefore, the University took place over three days, on the 28th, 29th and 30th of June, in the premises of one of the three schools which train French chartered surveyors, the EGST (Superior College of Chartered Surveyors and Topographers) in Mans, and we offered 19 training themes divided in the following manner:

Theme	Duration	Teachers	n°	Respe.	Pgm e.	Nbre participants	Nb of sessions
Transfer/trade-in of a firm	½ day	INTERFIMO	F1	DD	X	46	2
Communication and sales approach	½ day	X. CHEVILLOTTE	F2	AF	X	18	4
Local Urban-Planning maps and communal maps	1 day	X. PRIGENT or C. BARNERON	F3	AF	X	120	1
Landscape approach in urban planning operations	1 day	P. ROTIVAL	F4	DD	X	46	3
Participation for railways and networks	½ day	G. GRILLON, C. GELU	F5	AF	X	120	1
Land division and density management	½ day	F. BOURDON	F6	AF	X	18	4
Co-ownership - initiation	½ day	G. CIBOIT	F7	GR		46	2
Co-ownership – case study	½ day	G. CIBOIT, Notary	F8	GR		18	4
Volume division	½ day	J-F. DALBIN	F9	GR	X	46	2
Real Estate evaluating	1 day	P. MALAQUIN, M. VAN ICKER	F10	AF		120	1
GNSS and RGF93 (new French mapping referencing system) techniques	½ day	J. BERTERRECHE, M. MOREL (ESGT)	F11	MR		130	1
Digital DA cameras	½ day	F. BELLANGER	F12	AF	X	18	4
Easement	1 day	F. MAZUYER	F13	FM	X	46	2
Demarcation	1 day	P. RIGAUD	F14	FM	X	95	1
Financial reporting	½ day	J-M. ZELLER	F15	DD		18	2
Running a firm	½ day	P. REVERDY	F16	DD	X	18	3
Real estate consultancy approaches	1 day	ICH (Institute of Economic and Legal studies applied to building and housing) Nantes	F17	CEF		95	1
Engineering: criteria choices in selecting offers	½ day	Representative of the Ministry of Equipment	F18	DD		18	2
Real estate fiscal policy	½ day	Notary	F19	FM		120	1

The above table shows the diversity of themes on offer, (legal, technical, running a firm), half of the speakers were chartered surveyor specialists, the other half included university professors, lawyers, notaries, etc...

The training programme lasted either a half a day or a full day, with some of them lasting two days. Depending on the themes, space was limited to between 20 and 80 people.

The workshops were open to chartered surveyors, to executive employees and trainee chartered surveyors.

Several teachers from the surveyor technical schools asked whether it would be possible for them to take part in certain workshops.

4.3 Assessing the 2005 Summer University

It was a success and brought together more than 400 participants over three days from all over France.

A survey showed that 46% of the participants were present for the whole three days, proof of the interest in this type of course.

We also discovered that a lot of the chartered surveyors who came to the University for training had never attended an Order of Chartered Surveyors congress.

Some of the workshops had to refuse subscriptions because they were overbooked.

Evaluation forms were distributed to each participant for each training programme, which enabled us to monitor the quality of the trainers and the teaching tools as well as the interest given to the themes that were offered.

The evaluation scorecards were processed and showed a very favourable appreciation as well as a good homogeneity between the different themes.

The survey which was carried at the end of the course showed that 96% of the participants who replied to the survey would like to return for future Universities.

85% of the recorded replies were favourable to the renewal of the workshop themes planned during the first summer university.

Other suggested themes concerned as much legal aspects (land rights, urban-planning rights, real estate rights, etc...) as technical ones (topography, geographic information, engineering, diagnostic audits, etc...). The aspects relating to corporate management (social dialogue, marketing, management, etc...) arrived in second place.

The great majority had a preference for a three-day course as this would result in them achieving 21 hours of the 40 hours a year which must be justified by each chartered surveyor.

A high proportion of the replies (62%) were in favour of a biannual rhythm for the summer universities.

Parallel to the training and during the whole duration of the Summer University, an exhibition of professional equipment was held in the same building, informing the participants of new techniques. Participants visited the exhibition either between two lessons or after the lessons.

In the exhibitors' opinion, they had far more visitors than during the exhibitions organised during the Order's congresses.

4.4 The Future of the Summer University – Developing the Concept

Following the success of the 2005 University we have decided to continue this event on a long-term basis and to find ways of improving it.

In order not to be in competition with the biannual congresses of the Order, we plan, in the short term, to organise universities every two years in those years we are not holding a congress.

The experience and the surveys carried out after the event have incited us to renew the experience of holding it over three days, and to retain the most interesting themes and to add other workshops.

The workshops should, as much as possible, be divided into several levels: “initiation” and “experienced”.

One of our objectives is to invite foreign chartered surveyors and students, especially French speakers, to the Universities.

The universities will never be able to fully complete the compulsory number of annual hours of continuous training, but the objective is that they can cover half the needs on key themes.

The other half could be carried out in the regions, on more specific themes, with smaller workshops, and be flexible enough to be able to rapidly implement training if a new law, or new provisions require priority training.

5. CONCLUSION

In a world where globalisation is becoming more and more an issue and with the growing complexity of our professional practices, our professions will only continue if their members have a high level of skills.

This inevitably involves a high level of initial training but also by a high-quality permanent continuous training.

The duty of the professional organisations is to implement and to monitor this training.

It seems important to us in the near future to achieve harmonisation of the European studies for chartered surveyors, whether this concerns the number of years of initial training or its content.

In this perspective, and with the aim of achieving a common European platform for the profession, the concept of universities could possibly be a solution which would enable European chartered surveyors to progressively acquire the same type and same level of know-how.

Who better than the CLGE to drive this new approach?

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