

# Prepare The Way For Change!

By Bob Halliday, Chair Academic and Experience Requirements Committee (AERC)

This article is a summary of a presentation made to the AOLS membership in Feb 2013 at the AGM.

AERC is revising the processes for recognizing student academic qualifications and for the Articling experience. We have been told that young people are very aware of the difficulty of the training expectations and that this has become a disincentive to them for considering joining our profession. Apparently there is less concern with the length of Articles than there is with the amount of work along the way and the uncertainty about reaching the final goal. We are hoping to give the students better value for the time put in, and greater certainty of achieving the desired outcome, which is to receive their commission as an Ontario Land Surveyor.

## Academic Evaluation and entrance to Articles:

The past process required a student to submit transcripts of their academic achievements for evaluation. Typically if a student had graduated from a Canadian University in a geomatics program they would pretty much get credited for all of the geomatics subjects required of AOLS. The only time they would have a shortfall would for instance be if they had not taken a course in Satellite Geodesy, perhaps because their degree was so old that the subject was not being offered then, or for some reason they had chosen not to take the subject. A tabulation would be done to see which courses were missing. A very straight forward one for one process would be used and a list of missing courses could be generated and passed on to the student.

We recognized that many candidates had partial credits, especially with respect to Internationally trained candidates, and that asking them to take an entire course when they were only missing one or two topics within a course was a hardship, so as part of a program sponsored by Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration we have developed another route, using a competency based assessment. This will essentially allow us to say that we can recognize a student's GPS course from a particular program for what it is, and just require that the student provides proof of their knowledge of whatever was missing when we compared that course to the full stated requirement for Satellite Geodesy. A "Learning Contract" can then be drawn up which specifies the particular portions of Satellite Geodesy the student still needs to learn, perhaps which sources of training will be acceptable, with a commitment that completion of the additional training plus their existing course qualification will equate to the full course. This provides certainty for the student as well as for AERC. We commit to recognizing their effort, and we get the comfort of knowing that the combination of the sources of education will give the student sufficient background.

The authority of the AERC has been revised under O. Reg. 1026. With this new power we could technically take someone

who is a recognized expert in their chosen field of Land Surveying, and upon application and review, give them full status as an OLS without any examinations or articling period. In reality there are probably very few individuals who would receive this kind of full automatic acceptance of their experience, but there may be a few. Of greater relevance is the fact that we can quite readily take someone with many years of high level experience and give them recognition for some or all of their experience. We haven't yet worked out all of the details, but I suspect that they will be asked to submit a portfolio of their work with actual examples and an indication of the level of their involvement.

## Relationship between the Surveyor and the Articling Student:

The present Articling process involves the signing of an Articling agreement between the student and the surveyor who is taking on the student. The intention has always been that the surveyor will provide training and the opportunity to obtain actual work experience to the student. In exchange the student promises to work faithfully for the surveyor, and in most cases the surveyor is hoping to end up with a new surveyor on staff, and in many cases views the student as part of the surveyor's succession planning.

Under the present system, each student has a monitor who is essentially a liaison between the student and AERC. The monitor receives quarterly Work Reports, reviews them, comments on the Reports and keeps track of the time credits the student accumulates. Once the time requirements and other assignments have been met the monitor signs off, indicating that in his or her opinion the student is now ready to write their professional exam.

Unfortunately, AERC believes that over time, much of the responsibility for ensuring the quality of experience the student receives has fallen to the monitor, rather than the surveyor. In some cases it appears that the surveyor may not be reviewing the quarterly report being submitted by his or her student. This is of great concern to AERC, and we are hoping to turn this around by making some significant changes.

Under the proposed changes, AERC monitors will not be assigned to students. Instead, the surveyor will be required to submit a number of more detailed reports than is presently required including a summary of the categories of work experience the student has obtained, along with an indication of how the surveyor plans to achieve experience in the missing categories. In preparing these reports the surveyor will be very aware of how the student is progressing, and will be expected to put plans in place to keep the student moving forward. Presently it seems that exposure to the required variety of work experience is a low priority for some firms. In

these cases it seems that if the student doesn't get the experience there is little concern and less willingness to take steps to help the student make up the shortfall. Ultimately the responsibility for the student's preparedness and competency will lie with the articling surveyor and the student.

The Articling agreement will be strengthened and clarified to make very plain the expectations of AERC and ultimately of AOLS. The format may be similar to the "Learning Contract" where a very detailed list of each aspect of the expected training will be signed by the surveyor and student. The surveyor will then be required to sign off on each aspect of the contract as their student proceeds, with a final signature required when the surveyor believes that the student is ready to write the professional exam.

To help recognize the surveyor's level of involvement, there will be CPD credits allowed for those surveyors who have Articling students: we are presently thinking of 12 per year (one per month), out of a total of 22 per year as required under professional activities that support the profession.

### **The Articling Process:**

The student is required to obtain 225 days of experience at the party chief level, another 113 days of field experience at the non-party chief level (which generally means activities not specifically related to cadastral surveying) as well as 113 days in office activities including some client contact, estimating, title searching and project research. The student is required to submit quarterly work reports, a Field Notes Assignment, to attend a three day Lecture course and has to write and pass (with a minimum mark of 65%) a Statutes Exam and a Professional Exam.

The Statutes and Professional exams will remain. We are very close to having an on-line, on-demand Statutes Exam. Also, the required lengths of experience will probably remain, although there have been discussions ranging from shortening the overall time required by one year to extending it by one year. We are very aware that we are in direct competition with the engineering field for students, and are trying

to make sure that we don't place ourselves at a disadvantage for recruitment.

A list of 'core' survey experience is being finalized, and in one way or another, every student will be required to experience each during the Articles. If they get exposure through the projects done in their office then fine. If the area of experience is not available through their surveyor's practice, rotation to another branch office or another firm will be encouraged. Failing any of these options, sample projects under each of these categories will be available through AOLS. Once their Articles have been completed, the student will be required to submit a single final report of no more than 10 pages summarizing how they have met the various experience requirements. To assist Surveyors and Articling Students throughout the articling period, the AERC is proposing to enlist "Mentors", OLS members who will volunteer to help any student deal with a topic in which the Mentor is considered an expert, or at least more knowledgeable than their average colleagues.

### **Surveyors for the future:**

The AERC is carrying out a comprehensive and substantial overhaul of the processes for assessing the academic and experience requirements for a candidate to become an Ontario Land Surveyor. It is expected that these changes will be implemented over the next six months for a roll out in early 2014. If you have questions or suggestions for our work under this strategic initiative we would be pleased to hear from you:

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