

Improving the Articling System – An Explanation of the “Essential Areas of Knowledge”

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About 9 years ago I began talking about the advantages our profession could reap if we revised our articling process to be more in line with other competing professions. Since that time I have more than once muttered the word “EEK” to myself as this initiative took shape and especially when I began to realize what a monumental task this would be.

Little did I know that the new acronym “EAK” would become a part of the semantics of this new system. The entire improved system is dependent upon identifying the Essential Areas of Knowledge – the E.A.K.’s – required to reach a professional level. A list of 10 Essential Areas of Knowledge has been identified through a process that included consultation with members from all sectors and from across the province. The list is by no means all inclusive, but it certainly covers the big ticket items and will ensure that there will NOT be a dilution of knowledge or skills as students advance through the new articling process.

At the outset, the Academic and Experience Requirements Committee (AERC) is focussing on the cadastral stream, but it is our intention to replicate the process for each of the other disciplines.

The cadastral E.A.K.’s are listed as follows:

1. Research

Outcomes: The AERC is looking to ensure that cadastral candidates have a solid knowledge of the sources of research, both historical and modern, that are required to offer a competent opinion on a boundary retracement.

2. Retracing Boundaries.

Outcomes: Cadastral surveyors hold the exclusive right to offer opinions on boundary retracements. It is the single most important role that we play. We need to ensure that the cadastral candidates have solid background knowledge in the case law that is to be applied, as well as the ability to properly apply this case law to the individual boundary retracements.

3. Water Boundaries / Natural Boundaries

Outcomes: The AERC would like to ensure that cadastral students understand the different types of natural boundaries and are competent to offer opinions on the location of natural boundaries.

4. Adverse Possession

Outcomes: Cadastral students should have a basic knowledge of adverse possession and be able to determine when possession may mark a boundary and when possession is adverse. They must understand that adverse possession is a title issue and the domain (once identified by a surveyor) of a lawyer.

5. Roads and Easements

Outcomes: The AERC would like to ensure that cadastral students have a firm knowledge of the origins of roads and easements, how that origin affects boundary establishment of a road or easement. The historical background of a road or easement is essential in determining the extent, and the evidence/research required to retrace the boundary of a road or easement.

6. Descriptions

Outcomes: The AERC would like to ensure that cadastral students can interpret the various forms of legal descriptions and work to resolve issues created by poor descriptions. Boundary descriptions will often dictate what evidence can and cannot be used in boundary retracements and students must be able to identify the evidence they should use when completing boundary surveys.

7. Ethics and professionalism

Outcomes: Students will understand the importance of ethics within the profession and act accordingly in their professional lives. Protection of the public interest must be recognized and maintained.

8. Business practices

Outcomes: The cadastral student will understand the basics of business practices as well as how to offer good communication between surveyor and client, surveyor and surveyor, and surveyor and other professionals.

9. Application of survey methods from the Surveys Act

Outcomes: The AERC wants to ensure that cadastral students are aware of the statutory methods of re-establishing lost lot corners, concession corners or township corners as set out in the Surveys Act.

10. Projections, datums, reference systems

Outcomes: The AERC wants to ensure that all students understand the requirements and best practices for geo-referencing plans.

The Academic and Experience Requirements Committee has also identified three specific Acts that need some attention during the articling process; the Condominium Act, the Planning Act and the Mining Act. The AERC will be ensuring that students gain some exposure to these Acts during the articling process.

The AERC is in the process of identifying subject matter (SM) experts for each of the E.A.K.'s and these SM experts will be available to answer questions from any articling student. Ultimately the student may need some advice or assistance in an area that the articling surveyor may not have a lot of experience. The ability to contact a SM expert will ensure that all students have access for help with all of the E.A.K.'s. There will also be a section on our new Learning Management System (a website for our articling students) that will include each Essential Area of Knowledge, together with links to contact the SM expert, a question and answer forum, resource materials for that E.A.K., a "Frequently Asked Questions" forum, and an assignment that will offer credit for that E.A.K.

With this new emphasis on E.A.K.'s we will have to get used to some new phrases in the industry. I have assembled

a small glossary of terms that will become commonplace in our profession.



EAK Weak – you (the Articling Student) still have a lot to learn.

EAK Streak – a term used to celebrate an especially progressive period of time where the student gains credit for several E.A.K.'s in a short period of time.

EAK Freak – a term of endearment for that overly enthusiastic member of the AERC.

EAK Week – a seven day push to gain credit for one E.A.K.

EAK Geek – a term of endearment for our dedicated group of subject matter experts.

As always, the AERC will be pleased to hear your views on the planned improvements to the articling process; you can reach me at crystal.cranch@ibwsurveyors.com for further discussion.

