Surveying isn’t really one career – it’s a term that covers a range of different jobs that have certain skills in common. Depending on the branch, surveyors may advise on issues ranging from the environment or disabled access to buildings through to rural conservation or the restoration of historic buildings. They may value land and buildings, livestock, antiques and fine art. They may measure and record features for map-making or advise on mining projects or marine resources. Surveyors usually specialise in one type of surveying. Services fall into two main categories: those relating to property and those relating to resources.

There’s usually a demand for skilled surveyors, although this depends on the branch of the profession you’re in, the economy and market needs.

Surveying: property
- **General practice (commercial and residential property)** – the valuation of land, buildings and other property, such as art and antiques, and the management of property.
- **Quantity surveying** deals with the costs and financial management of construction projects – from residential housing to major civil engineering projects.
- **Building surveying** is the assessment, maintenance and development of existing buildings and new construction work.
- **Rural property surveying** is concerned with the management and development of the countryside. It includes land agency, rural estate management and agricultural surveying.

Surveying: resources
- **Geomatic (land and hydrographic or geospatial) surveying** includes the measurement and recording of land features; the choice of sites for major constructions, such as buildings or bridges; and the charting of seas, estuaries, harbours, rivers, lakes and the seabed itself.
- **Planning and development surveyors** advise on the viability and planning of building projects and their implications on the environment.
- **Marine resource management** involves charting and assessing marine-based environments, such as the sea bed, coastal areas and shipping lanes.
- **Minerals and environmental surveying** covers all aspects of mining, including the initial mapping and valuation of the mine, planning for mining operations and the restoration of sites when extraction is complete.

**What it takes**
Surveyors must have:
- practical problem-solving skills
- an analytical and logical approach to their work
good communication, negotiation and teamworking skills.

Education and training

With appropriate training and experience, it is possible to gain professional status as a chartered surveyor. This may be beneficial for career progression. There are a number of professional bodies covering careers in surveying, each with their own entry requirements. Which body you choose can depend on a variety of factors, including the branch of surveying in which you intend to specialise. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) is the principal body representing surveyors.

To qualify as a chartered surveyor with RICS, for example, you need an RICS-accredited degree or a postgraduate qualification. As well as full-time and sandwich courses, distance-learning and part-time courses are available, aimed at those in related employment. Degree and postgraduate course subjects range from building or quantity surveying through to environmental planning. You must then complete a period of structured training in employment before undertaking the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC).

To gain entry to a degree course, you need A levels or equivalent qualifications, plus supporting GCSEs. Entry requirements for accredited postgraduate courses vary; some require a relevant first degree, while others accept applicants whose first degree is in an unrelated subject.

If you take a relevant HNC/D or foundation degree, you can top up your qualification to an accredited degree through further study.

Adults: There are Access courses for those without the normal entry qualifications for higher education courses.

Pay and prospects

Graduates start on a salary of around £23,000 a year; once fully qualified, surveyors earn around £35-40,000 – much more with experience and responsibility. There are opportunities for promotion to senior management positions or partnerships in private practice. Many surveyors become self-employed and some spend time working abroad.

Other entry routes

Support staff, such as surveying technicians and assistant surveyors, work alongside chartered surveyors, providing assistance, support and specialist knowledge. Routes to qualification include gaining a relevant foundation degree, HNC/D or other work-related qualification. Support staff with the necessary qualifications can become RICS associate members by undertaking a period of training in employment, followed by an assessment by RICS. It’s possible for qualified RICS associate members to progress to managerial posts and, with further study and experience, to chartered surveyor status.

A course in construction and the built environment, such as an Advanced Diploma (available in some schools and colleges in England), can provide a relevant background for entry to work supporting chartered surveyors. Four GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent) including maths, English and science may be required for entry to such courses. Advanced Level Apprenticeships in surveying, leading to qualifications at level 3, are available – young people should contact their local Connexions/careers service for information about opportunities. The Chartered Surveyors Training Trust offers a limited number of Advanced Level Apprenticeships aimed at disadvantaged young people. Contact the Trust, listed below, to find out more about the programme and entry requirements.

For further information

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) – tel: 0870 333 1600. www.rics.org/careers
For accredited courses, see: www.ricscourses.org
The Chartered Institute of Building – tel: 01344 630700. www.ciob.org.uk
CITB-ConstructionSkills – to get through to your area office in England, tel: 0844 844 0046 and in Wales, tel: 01656 655226. Area office contact details and lots of information about careers, training and qualifications can be found on: www.bconstructive.co.uk

Other leaflets in this series that may interest you

BB 02 Construction: technical work and management
BB 09 Civil engineering
BB 10 Engineering construction
BC 01 Working in auctions
BC 03 Estate agency work
BC 04 Working in housing
BC 06 Surveying: property
BC 07 Surveying: resources
BC 08 Planning

Seek advice if you meet discrimination due to age, disability, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

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