



Cadastral Surveyors Licensing Board
of New Zealand

Certificate of Competency Assessment Framework Review

Update for Surveying Community – February 2024

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

- 1.1. The Certificate of Competency Assessment Framework Consultation Document was released to the cadastral surveying profession and key stakeholders in late July 2023. This was followed by a well-attended online webinar to discuss the proposal in more detail on 23 August 2023, including a broadcast Q&A with a written record.
- 1.2. The consultation period closed on 30 September 2023 and 19 submissions were received from a mixture of individuals (graduates and LCSs), surveying companies, professional bodies, LINZ and academics.
- 1.3. Most of the submissions supported the direction the Board was taking with the framework and the overall four-step sequential process outlined in the consultation document. The submissions were constructive and were targeted at specific parts of the framework where we had sought feedback, or where respondents wanted to make comments.
- 1.4. The Board was very grateful for the valuable submissions that were made and thanks those who took the time to respond.
- 1.5. A sub-committee of the Board went through the submissions in detail and prepared a draft final version, along with a document outlining the important themes and issues arising from the feedback. These documents were considered at a full Board meeting in November 2023 and decisions confirmed.
- 1.6. A second online webinar updating stakeholders was undertaken on 11 December 2023.
- 1.7. The draft framework document was sent to the executive and Examinations Chair of Survey and Spatial NZ in December 2023 for their review. Their further feedback was sought because they are the current provider of the assessment process on behalf of the Board.

2. Final Version of the Framework

- 2.1. The final version of the competency assessment framework, dated February 2024, is now available for the surveying community and it accompanies this update. It is the best reflection of the Board's thinking at this stage in the review process. However, the Board understands that there may be further minor amendments to the framework once the detailed implementation is determined.
- 2.2. This update seeks to inform the surveying community of the key changes to the framework from the initial consultation document and explain the rationale behind those decisions.

B. MAIN POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

3. Independence of Board

- 3.1. Several comments were received affirming the Board's intention to own the assessment framework and clearly unlink it from the S+SNZ admissions process. Some submitters believed that the Board should engage the Assessment Panel members directly without having a third-party involved. On the other hand, the S+SNZ submissions re-affirmed their desire to be involved in the future and to provide any assistance required to undertake the detailed implementation.
- 3.2. The Board has taken steps in the final document to ensure that there are clear lines of demarcation in the roles between the Board, Assessment Panel, and any third-party provider. The Examinations Coordinator will be the main conduit of communication for applicants, and this role will be created and funded by the Board. The Board has the right to confirm Assessment Panel member appointments and approve fees charged to applicants, as well as a responsibility to undertake audits of the process. Nevertheless, the Board does not have the resources or experience to undertake the assessment of applicants. The Board believes the option of engaging a third-party to provide the Assessment Panel can work well for all concerned if the correct checks and balances are utilised.

4. Register of Applicants

- 4.1. There was universal support for the Register of Applicants for the reasons outlined in the discussion document. More than one respondent suggested that it could be set up immediately and independently from the implementation of the rest of the framework, so that direct communication between the Board and potential applicants could occur soon.
- 4.2. The Board is investigating the possibility of implementing this part of the framework earlier. It is important that information on the register can seamlessly connect to the rest of the digital infrastructure for the framework. It will be compulsory for applicants to join the register when they wish to undertake the competency assessment journey. However, there will be benefits for applicants in joining the register earlier so that they receive important communications about the framework. There is no intention to charge for joining the register.

5. Testing Competencies

- 5.1. Many submitters stated there needs to be more clarity around how the different stages of the framework will test the different competencies. Some of the individual competencies in Schedule 1 of the Standards are hard to demonstrate in a portfolio of experience, a challenge, or an interview.
- 5.2. While the Board understands that the different stages combine to offer a wholistic assessment of the applicant, it is aware that more detail is needed around this issue. Developing guidance material is one of the important next steps. This will include writing the Professional Experience Guideline, establishing the format of the Professional Challenge and formalising expectations for the Professional Interview. This information will be communicated with the surveying community and potential applicants as it is developed.

6. Regularity

- 6.1. The Board sought specific feedback on how often the parts of the framework should be offered each year, with our default position in the consultation document being "at least once a year". Most respondents preferred twice a year if resourcing would allow or if demand required it.
- 6.2. With the requirement to pass each stage sequentially, the Board believes that each stage should be offered regularly enough so that any applicant who fails a stage does not have to wait an unreasonable period to try again. This needs to be balanced with the workload involved for the Assessment Panel in undertaking each stage, particularly the Professional Challenge. The compromise position stated in the final document is that each stage is offered "at least once (preferably twice) per year".
- 6.3. The final document also requires the critical dates and locations for each stage to be clearly known and published 12 months in advance. Having clear dates is important to enable applicants to plan their progress through their portfolio, as well as enabling them to set aside future dates for the challenge and interview.

7. Timeframes Between Stages

- 7.1. More clarity was requested about the timeframes between the stages to allow sufficient time for the applicant and Assessment Panel members to prepare for and complete one stage before preparing for the next one. There are two elements to consider in the timeframes between stages.
- 7.2. The first relates to when the Assessment Panel offers the next sequential stage, for example, between the submission of the portfolio and the challenge, and then between the challenge and the interview. The Board expects these timeframes to be a matter of months, but it is too early yet to commit to a set period. This will become clearer as the detailed implementation is designed, but for now it is specified as “as soon as practical (to be confirmed)”.
- 7.3. The second relates to when the applicant sits the next sequential stage. The expectation of the Board is that most applicants will want to progress through each stage reasonably quickly once they have their portfolio accepted. However, flexibility is also required around the expectations for an applicant to complete the overall process due to factors such as illness or having children. Some applicants may not pass a stage, such as the challenge or interview, and so will need time to prepare for and sit a future one. The final document therefore stipulates a maximum period of two years between the acceptance of the portfolio and passing the challenge, and another two years between passing the challenge and completing the interview, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

8. Progressive Submission of Portfolio of Experience

- 8.1. Several respondents thought this was a good idea in principle, while some were concerned about how much extra work this might generate for the Assessment Panel.
- 8.2. The Board has decided to remove this option from the final document because of the potential for extra work for the Examinations Coordinator and Assessment Panel. Time and effort will be better spent on establishing a guideline that provides clear direction on the experience required, while allowing flexibility for the projects submitted to prove proficiency in the competencies. Applicants still needing clarification can contact the Examinations Coordinator.

9. Professional Challenge

- 9.1. This is the component of the framework that will potentially be the most difficult to establish with concerns about the potential workload for the Assessment Panel. Many respondents liked the concept in principle. Some respondents saw good value in the current cadastral law exam and wanted to ensure that the future Professional Challenge includes components that test NZ cadastral laws and the Surveyor General's Rules.
- 9.2. The Board understands that significant work will need to be done to craft the format of the challenge. Advice will be sought from the current S+SNZ examiners and those in the surveying community with experience in this area.

10. Professional Interview

- 10.1. There was general support for this aspect of the framework as a good way of confirming the competency of the applicants. There was also support for the different format suggested with three interviewers. Having interviews in different locations or with different interviewers raised concerns about a consistent application of the framework. However, this must be balanced with the needs of sharing the workload between the Assessment Panel members and making the process accessible for applicants.
- 10.2. The Board will engage with the current S+SNZ assessors on the detail of the interview format as it determines how it will operate under the new framework.

11. Assessment Panel

- 11.1. As indicated earlier, some respondents suggested that the Assessment Panel should be established directly by the Board and not involve a third-party provider.
- 11.2. The Board has taken steps in the final document to ensure that there are clear lines of demarcation in the roles between the Board, Assessment Panel, and any third-party provider (refer to paragraph 3.2 above).

- 11.3. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the roles of the Assessment Panel are not unreasonably burdensome and that the members are appropriately recompensed for their time.

12. Examinations Coordinator

- 12.1. There was strong support for the role with many submitters stating that it should be independent of the Assessment Panel or any third party. The role should be funded and appointed by the Board. The Young Professionals group within S+SNZ see this as an important role to improve communication with the applicants. Comments were also made that the role should be a mix of administration and technical surveying ability to provide guidance on the Portfolio of Experience and answer applicant questions.
- 12.2. The final document clarifies that this role will be created and funded by the Board. It will involve a mix of technical surveying and administration skills and be the main conduit of communication with the applicants. The Board sees this role as important in ensuring consistent advice is given to the applicants to minimise confusion, and to reduce the workload for Assessment Panel members.

13. Sponsoring Licensed Cadastral Surveyor

- 13.1. While there was support in principle for this role, there was also a requirement for more clarity. Many respondents questioned what implications there would be if the Assessment Panel disagreed with the Sponsoring LCS's subjective attestation about the proficiency of an applicant. The attestation could also create a conflict of interest if the Sponsoring LCS was a manager or employer of the applicant.
- 13.2. The Board decided to remove this aspect of the framework from the final document. Ultimately it is the applicant who is being assessed for proficiency in the competencies and any attestations would only form part of the overall evidence. The Board believes that the absence of this attestation would not make the applicant less proficient.
- 13.3. The attestations from the applicants and the Supervising Licensed Cadastral Surveyor(s) that accompany the Portfolio of Experience are still included in the final document. This is because they confirm the details of the experience gained.

14. Costs

- 14.1. There was general agreement that the direct costs of the assessment should be borne by the applicants. However, the level of those costs needs to strike the right balance between ensuring that they don't become a barrier to the applicants, while also reimbursing the senior practitioners involved in the Assessment Panel to a reasonable level. There were also questions during the webinar about how the funding of the indirect costs of the process (e.g. Examinations Coordinator) would be done.
- 14.2. It is too early to state what the final fees to be charged to applicants will be for each stage of the framework, but this will be communicated in advance once more details about the implementation are known. The Board expects that it will carry the costs of administering the framework, which will result in an increase in the licensing fees charged annually to all licensed cadastral surveyors (the main income stream for the Board). The Board believes this is appropriate given its responsibilities under the Cadastral Survey Act 2002.

15. Transitional Provisions

- 15.1. Clear communication is of course paramount for all parties, with a notice period of between 12 – 24 months suggested by some parties. Some submitters preferred that the two frameworks do not operate in parallel but rather that the existing one would stop as the new one starts, to avoid confusion and minimise costs.
- 15.2. The transitional provisions do not form part of the final document. However, these will be communicated clearly to the surveying community as the detailed implementation is designed. The Board is mindful not to disadvantage those applicants who are well-advanced under the current framework, for example, by not recognising a pass in the cadastral law exam as contributing towards the Professional Challenge.

16. Confidentiality

- 16.1. A submission queried how the notes made by the Assessment Panel members on the applicant's portfolio will be managed, because they may need to be kept for some time until the applicant has passed the Professional Interview. The Professional Challenge results may also need to be retained to help inform the

interview. This information, personal to the applicant, will need to be held confidentially and may need to be made available to the applicant in the event of a challenge or review of any decisions made by the Assessment Panel.

- 16.2. The Board treats the privacy of information held about LCSs or applicants seriously and is mindful of its responsibilities under the Privacy Act 2020. The Board will work with their IT provider to ensure the information is retrievable by only the appropriate parties until such time as it is not needed any more.

17. Continuing Professional Development

- 17.1. Some respondents suggested that applicants undertake compulsory CPD events on topics that align with the competencies during their period of practical experience, or perhaps mini on-line modules on cadastral law and the Surveyor General's Rules.
- 17.2. These ideas have merit, but the training of applicants is not a function of the Board specified under the Cadastral Survey Act 2002. Collaboration with the School of Surveying or professional institutes could be explored in the future, where these entities could create CPD or training events that are endorsed by the Board, but this would be something outside the assessment framework.

C. NEXT STEPS

18. Implementation of Competency Framework

- 18.1. Work can now begin on 'fleshing out' the details of the different stages of the framework in collaboration with a consultant, IT provider, S+SNZ executive and the current assessors and examiners. Other people or entities will be consulted as the need arises.
- 18.2. The Board will continue to provide updates to the surveying community on the progress of the new framework. In the meantime, questions can be directed in the first instance to the Board Secretary secretary@cslb.org.nz