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20 January 2026

The Secretary
Cadastral Surveyors Licensing Board of New Zealand
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Dear Phil

S+SNZ Professional Examinations October 2025 – Summary and Review

The latest round of Professional Examinations were held in Wellington over six days from Monday 13 October – Wednesday 15 October 2025 and Monday 20 October – Wednesday 23 October 2025.

This round of interviews was significant in that it was the final round to be conducted in the current format, before the new Competency Assessment Framework (CAF) is introduced by the Cadastral Surveyors Licensing Board in 2026. I am pleased to report that most of the current examiners have agreed to continue their roles under the CAF, so a high level of consistency will be maintained under the new system.

Examination Results and Statistics

A total of 35 candidates applied for this round. This compares with 21 in April 2025, 23 in October 2024, 16 in April 2024 and 12 in October 2023. This was the highest number of candidates the examinations panel has seen in recent times for one intake, the previous highest number was 28. The average number of applicants applying for each round over the past five years is 19.

All 35 candidates were vetted and then invited to be interviewed. Of these, 26 candidates were considered to be a pass and have been awarded a certificate of competency. The remaining 9 candidates were issued with requisition letters requiring them to submit further evidence to the satisfaction of the relevant examiners before they could be considered to be a pass. No candidates were failed and required to resit the examinations.

Analysing the requisitions by each of the five disciplines, 3 candidates were requisitioned in cadastral, 4 were requisitioned in geodetic, 3 were requisitioned in spatial measurement and 3 were requisitioned in engineering. No candidates received requisitions in the planning discipline. Five candidates received a requisition in one subject (being cadastral, spatial and engineering) while three candidates received requisitions in two subjects. 26% of candidates received at least one requisition, lower than the average of 31% over the last 8 rounds of interviews since April 2022. Cadastral, Spatial and Geodetic remain the most consistently requisitioned disciplines over this time period.

Examinations Panel Members

The high number of candidates meant that the panel had to be split into two teams and we conducted the examinations over two weeks. Each examiner had responsibility for vetting, reading and assessing submissions then interviewing 17 or 18 candidates over three full days. I would like to personally thank the following people for the huge commitment of time this entails:

Merryn Maguire from Bonisch in Christchurch (Cadastral)
Todd Airey from Baseline Group in Christchurch (Spatial Measurement)
John Cochrane from Davis Ogilvie in Christchurch (Spatial Measurement)
Rachelle Winefield from Land Information NZ in Wellington (Geodetic)
Richard Harrison from Global Survey in Christchurch (Geodetic)
Phil Rhodes formerly from Hutt City Council now Greater Wellington Regional Council (Engineering)
Dion Mead from Orogen in Wellington (Engineering)
James Hook from Envivo in Auckland (Planning)
Mark Dyer from Hauraki District Council (Planning)

I would also like to acknowledge three of these examiners that have now finished up their service on the panel.

Phil Rhodes has been a dedicated member of the panel examining the engineering discipline for the last six years. His friendly and relaxed style always helped to settle candidates nerves and his valuable contributions to the sometimes robust panel conversations will always be appreciated. I wish Phil all the best for the next chapter in his career.

James Hook has been a member of the panel for the past three years and has been examining in the planning discipline. Always thoughtful and considered during interviews and panel discussions, he had a very clear understanding of the important role of a licensed surveyor within our planning landscape. Thank you James for being an integral part of the examiner team.

Richard Harrison has been examining candidates in the geodetic discipline for the past five years. His technical expertise in this field meant that candidates had to be on their game, but his friendly approach meant that they could relax and not feel too nervous. I will always appreciate Richard’s commitment to the examinations process despite having to balance this with a heavy workload in his professional career.

The high number of applicants for this round also meant that a previous engineering examiner Dion Mead had to be brought in to assist at short notice. I am very grateful to Dion for committing a significant amount time away from running his local Wellington business to bolster the team. His broad experience across all of the

subjects being examined meant that he provided great insight into the panel discussions.

Awards

The Percy Dyett Award for the best engineering candidate has now been transferred to the S+SNZ Certifications Framework for members seeking the Certified Professional Engineering Surveyor (CPES) and Certified Professional Land Development Engineer (CPLDE) qualifications. This award is no longer considered by the examinations panel.

The Maurice Crompton-Smith Memorial Prize remains available to be awarded at the discretion of the panel. This is awarded to the best overall candidate and is considered across two rounds of interviews starting in October and finishing in April. A decision on this award will therefore be made at the conclusion of the April interviews.

Comments from examiners

Overall the examinations panel were very pleased with the standard of the candidates for this round of interviews, particularly considering the high number attending. Requisitions could be readily resolved with the provision of further information by the candidates.

In the **cadastral** interviews, the examiners found that there continued to be some deficiencies in water boundary survey knowledge. Licensed surveyors working in New Zealand are almost certainly going to encounter water boundaries on a fairly regular basis due to our extensive coastlines, rivers and lakes. A good working knowledge of this aspect of cadastral surveying is essential for candidates seeking a license.

The cadastral examiners were pleased to see improvements in the area of quality assurance, keeping in mind that ineffective QA is an area that causes the majority of requisitions of cadastral datasets in NZ.

Looking to the future, candidates are reminded to submit all relevant supporting documents with their reports so that the assessors don’t have to go searching for these themselves. Several candidates were sent RFIs upon their submissions this time around asking for copies of approved survey datasets they were referring to in their evidence. Using photographs and other graphical tools can be very useful in helping to demonstrate competency.

The **spatial measurement** examiners report that this round of professional examinations showed greater focus by the candidates on the importance of acknowledging, showing and referring to encumbrances on spatial datasets.

While candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the limitations of the various methods used in spatial measurement, the understanding of the effect from those limitations can have on the ultimate accuracy of their datasets was often lacking. QA and auditing of datasets is still an ongoing issue with presented datasets, candidates need to ensure they are included in the process of auditing datasets prior to sending to clients to build their understanding of the full process of QA.

The **geodetic** examiners comment that the networks provided as evidence by the candidates will need to show a robust network geometry that proves the internal

integrity of the observations, and demonstrates the practical measures required to achieve the number of independent observations and occupations that are necessary for a robust adjustment. Past interviews have demonstrated that candidates who make the effort to observe a well-constructed network, more clearly understand, and can discuss their methodology at the interview.

It is expected that candidates are comfortable in their understanding of underlying geodetic principles and application of horizontal and vertical datums, projections, scale factors, GNSS error sources and least squares principles.

The **planning** examiners report that most candidates interviewed well and demonstrated suitable knowledge of the planning process as it applies to their developing roles as surveyors.

Candidates seemed to fall into two groups – a cohort that was highly knowledgeable on planning processes and a second group that had only sufficient knowledge to demonstrate the CSLB competencies.

The planning projects submitted were generally of good quality and assisted the candidate in demonstrating their planning knowledge and capability in terms of the CSLB competencies. Some projects better aligned to the competencies than others.

Common issues identified included:

- A narrow band of experience from a high proportion of candidates focussed on scheme plans, s223 and s224 RMA processes only.

- Limited understanding of the broader context of how New Zealand's land administration systems (survey, tenure, resource management) integrate and function together.

- Gaps in knowledge of planning instruments, such as the impact of national policy statements, environmental standards, and regional plans on land subdivision.

- An inability to articulate the broader considerations for subdivision, including the design of rights, restrictions, and responsibilities in response to legislative/regulatory requirements. Rather the emphasis was on engineering/urban design. It was noted that several candidates did not make the connection between infrastructure and rights/tenure e.g. designs with stormwater services not addressed by easements or correct reserve types.

- Difficulty in explaining the pros and cons of subdivision options e.g. including ownership and management of common areas in medium-density developments or applying restrictions to achieve public-good outcomes, for example: natural hazard mitigation.

Overall, the planning examiners would like to see more evidence of candidates:

a) applying core planning and regulatory knowledge to practical problems they encounter in their professional practice;

b) demonstrating application of that knowledge within the planning projects submitted.

‘Subdivision design’ was largely seen as a land development engineering/urban design function and not the design of rights, restrictions and responsibilities to sustain that built form. There is an apparent disconnect between the cadastre and planning/engineering – which is the fundamental role of surveyors to add value to the consenting processes.

The **engineering** examiners noted that the majority of candidates did not submit engineering projects this round, which was due to a mix of reasons, including:

- No suitable project that ticked all the boxes in the Annual Circular.
- Any suitable project was not going to be finished in time, and they wanted to apply for a license before the changeover to the new CSLB regime.
- In accordance with the Annual Circular, they did not need it to become an LCS.

The exposure to engineering knowledge is reducing because there is now a pathway to becoming an LCS without intense engineering exposure, only land development engineering principles as they relate to cadastral surveying.

Some candidates demonstrated fantastic knowledge of all engineering elements and have clearly been exposed to this discipline, and with a project would have easily passed. Others lacked basic knowledge and understanding of engineering elements, including where to source design standards, QA requirements of the contractor, and basic things to look out for when supervising construction activities which is of concern.

Candidates did not understand the limitations of not having the engineering competency.

As a profession, we have traditionally considered licensed cadastral surveyors to be very competent in engineering-related matters to support land development. With the approach now changing only to understand the land development matters that impact the cadastre, our industry-based knowledge of engineering elements will naturally drop over time unless additional engineering experience and qualifications are undertaken.

Conclusion

The October 2025 professional examinations saw the highest number of candidates in recent memory, likely due to the imminent regime change as the CSLB transitions into its new Competency Assessment Framework in 2026. It was pleasing to see a high percentage of candidates submitting high quality evidence of their competency and being awarded a pass in the examinations. We congratulate these candidates and wish them all the best as they embark on the next steps in their careers.

Looking to the future, the S+SNZ examinations panel remains committed to maintaining a high professional standard of competency for candidates seeking a New Zealand surveyors license. There continues to be a strong relationship between S+SNZ and the CSLB and we continue to foster this relationship with members

working alongside the Board to build and implement the new assessment framework. We look forward to reviewing submissions from the pilot candidates then seeing them progress along the new licensing pathway.

Yours sincerely

Kris Gough
S+SNZ Examinations Panel Chair

Andrew Blackman
S+SNZ President