Collaboration Between Professional Surveying Institutions: Enabling a Joint Chartered Civil Engineering Surveyor (CCES) Designation through RICS–CICES Partnership

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SUMMARY

This paper documents the recent strategic collaboration between the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors (CICES) to enable a joint Chartered Civil Engineering Surveyor (CCES) designation for dual members. It centres the initiative within the histories and core practice domains of both institutions and describes the governance and technical work undertaken since 2024 by a joint Working Group. The paper outlines the recognition of professional qualifications (RPQ) alignment, proposed eligibility and assessment models, and the competency mapping that underpins CCES across geospatial engineering and commercial management. It also summarises prior cross-institution collaboration, including the Survey Liaison Group (with The Survey Association), cross-endorsement of professional geospatial guidance and standards, and co-sponsorship of the GEO Business conference. The collaboration aims to strengthen professional mobility, raise standards, and better reflect the multi-disciplinary reality of civil engineering surveying.

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1. Introduction

Civil engineering surveying increasingly spans geospatial engineering, commercial management and digital delivery across complex infrastructure. Professional identity and recognition must therefore evolve to reflect this multi-disciplinary practice. In 2024, RICS and CICES brought together a joint Working Group to explore renewed mechanisms for qualification alignment, culminating in access to a joint Chartered Civil Engineering Surveyor (CCES) designation for dual members. This paper reports on the background, objectives, and progress of that collaboration.

The structure of the paper is: (i) to document the governance and technical pathway taken by the Working Group; (ii) to set this work in the broader historical and institutional context of RICS and CICES; and (iii) to demonstrate how previous collaboration—through shared standards work, joint client guidance and sector events—has prepared the ground for formal recognition and a more coherent professional landscape.

2. Institutional context and histories

RICS was founded in 1868 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1881, and today operates as a global professional body for the development and management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Its chartered members practise under independently regulated standards across more than 140 countries. Over more than 150 years RICS has developed and maintained global standards and qualifications, with a strong public-interest mandate.

CICES began life in 1969 (as the Association of Surveyors in Civil Engineering), became a registered educational charity in 1992, and received its Royal Charter in 2009. It is the leading international professional institution focused on specialists in geospatial engineering and commercial management within civil engineering. CICES' membership and competency system enables specialisms spanning land and engineering surveying, hydrography, photogrammetry and remote sensing, GIS, utilities and subsurface mapping, quantity surveying, estimating, planning, cost engineering, procurement engineering, project management and construction law.

Both institutions therefore share complementary remits across the land, construction and infrastructure sectors: RICS with global breadth, independent regulation and cross-sector

standards; CICES with deep disciplinary focus on civil engineering geospatial and commercial specialisms.

3. Core practice sectors and competency architectures

RICS structures professional entry via pathways and competencies aligned to sector practice (e.g. Geospatial Surveying, Quantity Surveying and Construction, Project Management, Land and Resources). CICES organises competency frameworks around two divisions—Geospatial Engineering and Commercial Management—with both core and specialist options. Mapping between these architectures underpins the proposed CCES eligibility model.

For geospatial practice, shared themes include spatial data management, referencing and control, data quality and risk, geospatial ICT, cartography and mapping, and applied engineering surveying (including utilities/subsurface mapping and hydrography). For commercial practice, shared themes include contract strategy and administration, commercial governance, estimating and cost engineering, planning and programme, and construction law. The alignment identified a series of robust combinations that evidence the broad and deep competence expected of a Chartered Civil Engineering Surveyor.

4. RICS–CICES collaboration: from MoU to a joint CCES pathway

RICS and CICES have a long-standing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). From 2011 onwards, RICS recognised CICES full membership (MCInstCES/FCInstCES) for direct entry to MRICS via what is now termed Recognition of Professional Qualifications (RPQ). In late 2025 the institutions signed an updated strategic agreement which, inter alia, confirms mutual recognition and sets out mechanisms to enable access to an RICS Chartered Civil Engineering Surveyor (CCES) designation for dual members, together with a UK joint subscription option from 2026.

The CCES designation itself was originally approved by RICS in 2009 and ratified in 2012, but intentionally deferred until deeper institutional alignment and agreement on sharing the designation could be achieved. In 2024 a joint Working Group was re-established to complete the alignment work necessary to operationalise CCES in a way that is fair, rigorous and transparent.

5. Joint Working Group (2024–2026): governance, scope and actions

The joint Working Group established in July 2024 comprised senior representatives across regulation/assurance, education and qualifications, membership development, professional practice and market strategy from both institutions. The group met regularly to manage eight interlinked actions: renew RPQ conditions for CICES members entering RICS; define CCES competency requirements; define eligibility; define assessment requirements; address regulatory issues; agree a joint subscription model; clarify operational responsibilities; and renew the MoU.

By the end of 2024 the Group prioritised actions 1–4. A revised RPQ route simplifies conditions and reduces the post-membership experience requirement for eligible CICES members, while maintaining RICS' professionalism (ethics) and proposer requirements. Competency alignment for CCES is defined to ensure that dual members who qualified via specific geospatial or commercial combinations (e.g. RICS Geomatics with Engineering at Level 3; or CICES Geospatial core with Land/Engineering specialism; or CICES Commercial core with Quantity Surveying/Cost Engineering) can access CCES directly; others may undertake a short, evidence-based assessment with potential interview. The assessment is delivered by CICES with RICS oversight via Quality Standards Review.

6. Previous collaborative platforms and outputs

Survey Liaison Group (SLG). RICS, CICES and The Survey Association (TSA) have collaborated since the 1980s through the SLG to avoid duplication, cross-endorse relevant guidance, coordinate events and address skills and standards. The Group meets regularly (in-person and online), rotates the chair and has recently launched the Geo:Influence initiative to convene action on sector challenges (e.g. education and skills).

Cross-endorsement and joint client guidance. Over the past decade the SLG partners have increasingly co-published and endorsed client guides and professional notes in geospatial practice. Recent examples include the 'Do You Need a Survey?' client guide (2025), designed to improve commissioning and procurement of geospatial surveys by promoting qualified providers, appropriate specifications and risk management. CICES has also issued new guidance on survey control reporting to establish consistent expectations across sectors. TSA has also produced an extensive series of SLG cross endorsed client guides and best practice guidance The Survey Association's (TSA) Guidance Notes

There are three core RICS geospatial best practice standards that are cross endorsed by the SLG:

- Measured Surveys of Land, Buildings and Utilities, 3rd edition
- Earth observation and aerial surveys
- Use of Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) in land surveying and mapping, 3rd edition
-

GEO Business GEO Business | The geospatial event . Since 2014, the SLG partners have collaborated closely with the GEO Business exhibition and conference in London—as supporters, programme contributors and co-located partners—using the platform to promote professional standards, outreach and early-career development across the geospatial ecosystem.

7. Competency alignment for CCES: rationale and model

The alignment model recognises that a Chartered Civil Engineering Surveyor should demonstrate both (i) disciplinary depth in either geospatial engineering or commercial

management applied to civil engineering, and (ii) sufficient breadth across adjacent competencies to operate effectively in multi-disciplinary project environments. The Working Group identified combinations where existing RICS and CICES assessments already test appropriate standards, enabling a 'direct award' of CCES to dual members. Where evidence is partial, a concise written submission (and where necessary interview) allows members to close the gap efficiently without duplicating prior assessment.
This approach preserves the integrity of both institutions' assessment regimes while minimising unnecessary burden for professionals who have already demonstrated relevant competence. It also supports mobility and clearer client signalling by allowing an additional, unambiguous title that resonates within civil engineering delivery contexts.

8. Benefits, risks and mitigations

Benefits include: (a) clearer professional identity for civil engineering surveyors; (b) improved member mobility via mutual recognition; (c) simplified dual-membership administration (through a joint subscription) and a transparent pathway to CCES; (d) stronger quality signals for clients and employers through aligned competencies; and (e) a platform for future joint standards and guidance across emerging domains (e.g. digital twins, reality capture QA/QC, carbon and whole-life performance data).
Risks include potential brand confusion, divergence in regulatory expectations, and operational complexity in shared assessments. These are mitigated through: precise eligibility statements; published competency mapping; RICS oversight of CICES-run assessments via annual quality review; and consistent joint communications (including FAQs and member guidance).

9. Implementation roadmap (2024–2026)

Key milestones include: 2024—Working Group formation; scoping and action plan; initial alignment proposals. Late 2025—signature of updated strategic agreement; publication of CCES FAQs and information for dual members; announcement of joint UK subscription for 2026. 2026—launch of automatic CCES for eligible dual members, and opening of the short-form assessment route for others; continued RPQ route operation and monitoring; expansion of joint communications and CPD materials supporting CCES adopters.
Governance progress routes through the RICS Qualifications and Assessments Committee, Standards and Regulation Board and relevant professional panels, alongside CICES Council of Management. Ongoing evaluation will use member uptake metrics, assessment outcomes, and stakeholder feedback (including employers and clients) to refine criteria and delivery.

10. Implications for professional standards and market outcomes

The partnership strengthens RICS/CICES collaboration in the UK and international surveying ecosystem. For clients and the public, CCES offers a clear marker that a professional has satisfied rigorous, complementary standards under two chartered bodies. For education

providers and apprenticeships, a harmonised competency picture can support curriculum design and progression pathways. For regulators and policymakers, the model demonstrates how professional bodies can collaborate to improve quality, reduce duplication and support economic productivity through better data and commercial stewardship in infrastructure.
At sector level, the collaboration complements ongoing cross-endorsement of best practice guidance and standards and the development of practical client tools (e.g. SLG guides) that improve procurement and data-quality outcomes. As digital technologies and AI accelerate, joint standards on geospatial data governance, information security, integrity and provenance, and safety-critical survey practice offer fertile ground for future RICS–CICES initiatives in association with SLG partners and other national bodies such The Royal Geographical Society (RGS) and Association for Geographic Information (AGI).

11. Evidence of demand and member pipeline

The demand for a unifying designation emerged from member feedback, employer consultations and historic data on mobility between the institutions. Since 2012, more than 300 CICES members have been elected to MRICS via the recognition route—an indicator of overlapping practice and market value in holding both identities. In parallel, experienced MRICS professionals in infrastructure and engineering contexts have increasingly engaged with CICES to signal discipline depth in geospatial and commercial specialisms.
Employers operating design–build and alliancing models report that surveyors able to bridge technical dimensional control, geospatial data governance and commercial risk bring outsized value to programme certainty. A designation that recognises this breadth and depth under a civil engineering banner is expected to support workforce planning, competence assurance and clearer role definition within integrated project teams.

12. Case study: integrated survey delivery on a major infrastructure programme

Consider a multi-billion pound rail upgrade where early-stage decisions on alignment and structures are constrained by utilities, ground risk and schedule. The survey function must orchestrate: (i) a control network and monitoring regime; (ii) reality capture and GIS integration to support design; (iii) utility detection and clearance planning to PAS-aligned specifications; and (iv) commercial governance of survey packages under NEC or FIDIC forms. A Chartered Civil Engineering Surveyor would be expected to evidence competence across these interfaces—coordinating geospatial technical assurance and commercial controls to protect programme outcomes.
The competency alignment proposed for CCES specifically anticipates this role, enabling dual members whose prior assessments already sampled the necessary capabilities to achieve a designation that signals readiness for such responsibility.

13. Alignment with FIG 2026 themes and commissions

The collaboration contributes directly to FIG's focus on future-proofing the profession—by modernising pathways, strengthening ethics and competence assurance, and enabling mobility across the geospatial and land/infrastructure domains. The CCES model supports climate and sustainability agendas by promoting consistent, high-quality geospatial data and commercial stewardship—the foundations for low-carbon design choices, material efficiency and whole-life performance management.
It also underpins FIG's cross-cutting theme on diversity and inclusion: the dual-membership route and concise top-up assessment lower unnecessary barriers for experienced practitioners whose careers traverse allied disciplines, while maintaining rigorous outcomes.

14. Limitations and future work

This paper reports on the governance pathway, competency alignment and early implementation of CCES access; it does not present a longitudinal evaluation of career outcomes or employer perceptions. Future work should include systematic monitoring of CCES uptake, role profiles and remuneration signals, as well as analysis of any unintended consequences such as title proliferation or confusion in markets outside the UK. International portability of the designation, and potential alignment with other professional bodies and statutory regimes, are also promising avenues.

15. Conclusion

The revitalised RICS–CICES partnership and this new practical route to a chartered alternative designation, CCES, represent a significant step toward a more integrated and future-ready profession. Building on decades of collaboration and shared public-interest commitments, the institutions have put in place a proportionate, standards-led mechanism that recognises the multi-disciplinary practice of civil engineering surveying. Continued joint governance, transparent criteria and member-centred delivery will be key to realising the full benefits of this approach for professionals, employers, clients and society.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

James Kavanagh FRICS is Head of Professional Practice – Land and Development at RICS, leading standards, guidance and engagement across geomatics and land resources. He has extensive experience in geospatial and land administration internationally, and has authored numerous professional guidance notes and sector reports.

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Appendix A: Summary of Working Group actions and key proposals

• Renew Recognition of Professional Qualifications (RPQ) route for CICES members seeking MRICS: retain proposer and ethics requirements; specify CPD evidence; reduce post-membership experience to one year for eligible applicants; maintain exclusions for specialist areas without core competencies.

• Define CCES competency requirements: identify combinations of RICS pathways and CICES divisions/specialisms that constitute sufficient evidence for direct access to CCES; publish competency mapping for transparency.

• Define eligibility: dual membership (MRICS/FRICS and MCInstCES/FCInstCES) as a pre-condition; pathway/specialism combinations as above.

• Define assessment model: concise written submission addressing any competency gaps with potential interview; delivery by CICES; RICS oversight through its annual quality assurance of education and qualifications.

• Governance and approvals: stage-gated review via RICS committees and CICES Council of Management; formalisation through updated MoU/strategic agreement; communications via joint FAQs and member guidance.