

TALKING POINT

As the Register of Ground Engineering Professionals comes closer to reality, the BGA discusses how the scheme will be implemented.



Many readers will be aware that the BGA has been working on behalf of pan-industry body Ground Forum (GF), to develop a registration scheme for geotechnical professionals. ("Ground Engineering" will be used rather than "Geotechnical", to fit better into EU definitions.)

Preparation of the scheme is nearing completion, with the approval of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), the Geological Society (GS) and the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IoM3). The ICE will administer the register, and is making final corrections to the documents – No 3009(4) within the ICE 3000 series.

The register has two principal purposes: to raise the profile of the ground engineering profession and provide defined career paths; and to assist clients in finding appropriately qualified people to carry out geotechnical work.

In addition, the register will encourage education and training in ground engineering and promote best practice.

To oversee the register, a panel has been formed with senior ground engineering representatives from ICE, GS and IoM3 plus GF and the BGA.

The representatives' affiliations encompass consulting, contracting and academia. In addition to the panel (which has 10 members), a team of assessors is to be appointed.

Two people from this team will be selected to review each application.

Grades of registrant

There are to be three grades: professional, specialist and adviser with adviser being the highest level. Each applicant will be assessed on the basis of their competence and experience. The definitions of the categories will be used in the revised Site Investigation Steering Group (SISG) documents, which are expected to be available later this year.

Registrants will be entitled to use the description Registered Ground Engineering Professional/Specialist/Adviser as appropriate.

Application Documents

Application will be made by completion of the appropriate forms together with statements from two sponsors.

The applications will be reviewed by the selected assessors. Borderline applicants may be called for interview or asked to submit further written information.

There will be an appeals procedure for applicants who are unsuccessful.

Applicants will be required to submit:

- recent CPD records
- a summary CV
- a summary of technical experience in the form of a personal statement, a short report setting out their competence and experience relating to six attributes: innovation, technical solutions,

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integration with other engineering disciplines, risk management, sustainability and management.

The level of competence and experience to be demonstrated will depend on the grade.

Those applying for admission at professional level will be required to show ability with regard to each attribute; at specialist level they will need to demonstrate that they can manage such matters; while at the highest level of adviser they will be expected to be able to make plain that they can take full responsibility for tasks encompassing those attributes.

Registration will be for a period of five years, following which registrants will be required to show that they continue to be entitled to be included on the register.

Cost

There will be a standard application fee of £75 regardless of grade, with one exception: applications to join the register may be made at the same time as an application for Chartered Professional Review, in which case the fee will be reduced to £30.

Those who are called to interview or who choose to appeal will be subject to an additional fee of £125. There will be an annual registration fee of £12.

No fee has yet been set for renewal following the first five years.

The fees have been set on the basis of a budget which takes account of the cost of administering the scheme and an estimate of the number of individuals seeking registration.

They will be reviewed regularly, with the objective that the scheme does

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not make a surplus, but just covers its costs.

Initial Steps

Clearly, the register will need to include a sufficient number of professionals, and it will take some time to achieve this. Hence, for the first year of operating the scheme, applications may be made using a streamlined application process.

In addition, those who achieved chartership via one of the three supporting professional bodies from 1 January 2009 onwards, and who demonstrated competence and experience in ground engineering at their professional review, will be invited to join the register under a simplified arrangement.

External Stakeholders

Some key clients of ground engineering services have already been consulted about the scheme and have expressed their keen support. Other clients are being approached to ensure they are informed of the scheme and to enlist their backing.

Timing

The formal register documents are intended to be completed by 29 March 2010. The panel is to meet again on 27 April when it will plan details of the formal launch of the scheme. Following this, applications to join the scheme will be welcomed.