

Industry collaboration bears fruit for quantity surveying

Quantity surveying graduates of the Department of Construction Economics at the University of Pretoria are highly rated in the industry. They are formally acknowledged as work-ready professionals in independent surveys carried out by specialist consultants among practitioners, and are therefore sought after by industry.

Quantity surveyors provide specialised financial and contractual services and advice to clients in the construction industry, as well as other related industries. They are independent, professional consultants who act in cooperation with architects, consulting engineers and contractors, among others, to promote the interests of building clients.

Dr Stephan Ramabodu, who has been a senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria since March 2016, believes the University to be a distinguished provider of training in this field.

He was appointed President of the Association of South African Quantity Surveyors (ASAQS) in June 2016, and his extensive experience in both academia and industry adds value to the University's Quantity Surveying study programme.

He had initially enrolled for a generic BSc degree at the University of the Free State (UFS), but changed to BSc Quantity Surveying (QS) after an uncle who worked on a building site introduced him to the profession. After graduation, he became a junior lecturer at UFS and did private work for contractors and QS firms to gain further experience. By 2005, Dr Ramabodu had completed his master's degree by coursework in land and property management. He obtained his PhD at UFS in 2014, where he studied the procurement guidelines for project success in the cost planning of construction projects.

In 2006, he joined the quantity surveying consultancy Davis Langdon as a director, and in 2008, left to start his own business, Ramabodu & Associates. He was also elected Senior Vice-President of ASAQS and Editorial Board Chairperson of *Acta Structilia*, the national research journal in the physical and development sciences, published by the UFS's Department of

Quantity Surveying and Construction Management.

His current research interests include developing a template that can be used every year to update reimbursable quantity surveying expenses as outlined by the South African Department of Public Works, and producing articles on regulations that need to be amended to improve compliance in the industry. According to Dr Ramabodu, compliance is a big issue in the industry, as is evident in the number of pending court cases.

Basic training for quantity surveying consists of a three-year undergraduate degree and a one- or two-year honours degree. The University of Pretoria offers a three-year BSc (Quantity Surveying) degree, as well as postgraduate qualifications up to doctoral level.

The BScHons (Quantity Surveying) degree is the second phase of the Quantity Surveying programme and students have to complete it before they can register as professional quantity surveyors. Students are also required to obtain practical experience in the construction industry to support their academic learning. The honours degree requires students to work part-time at approved QS firms for a prescribed period to supplement their theoretical studies with practical experience.

According to Dr Ramabodu, each university is different in the way it offers quantity surveying study programmes. In terms of UP, the option of completing the honours degree over two years is unique. This means that some students study for five years, instead of four. The benefit of this is that they only need to complete two of the three years of in-service training, as required for professional registration.

What makes UP unique?

In this way, UP is able to supply work-ready students who can cope with the demands of industry. In other situations, where students only complete a four-year degree, they still need to be taught how to do their jobs in the first year of the three-year vocational training period.

Another unique aspect of UP's training is the fact that students need to complete at least 240 hours of vocational training during their studies before they can graduate. The emphasis of this process is on gaining experience and becoming more confident in the work environment, so that graduates are confident in their trade.

Collaboration between industry and higher education institutions is important to ensure that graduates are highly employable.

The ASAQS provides guidance and resources to help quantity surveyors succeed in the quantity surveying industry and stay abreast of developments in the built environment. The ASAQS also provides continuous career development opportunities and is involved with regulation, standardisation and accreditation.

Because the process of becoming President of such a body is rigorous and because the incumbent has to be an influential person in the industry, having such a person on its establishment is beneficial to the University. Dr Ramabodu's expertise and capacity at the ASAQS allows him to be in-tune with industry trends and challenges as he conducts his research, knowing which challenges employers and graduates might experience.

Dr Ramabodu feels it is important to inspire prospective students to study quantity surveying and he aims to motivate all his students to achieve their full potential. ➔

