

Interview with Andrew, Course Director for Postgraduate Building Surveying and Real Estate

Q. Hi Andrew, what's your background and why did you join LSBU?

A. I'm a Chartered Engineer (CEng) and have worked across construction, demolition and property management throughout my career. Like many of the lecturers on these courses, my background is primarily in industry and professional practice, which means students benefit from real-world insight as well as academic teaching. I also run a small property development company.

Later in my career, I completed a PGDip in Building Surveying at South Bank and an MPhil in Land Economy at the University of Cambridge. I joined LSBU because I genuinely enjoy working with and supporting the next generation of surveyors entering the profession.

Q. What's the key difference between the two courses?

A. That's a great question. The courses are quite closely linked and share three of the six core modules, covering the fundamentals of property, surveying and construction. We make sure all students develop a strong understanding of the industry, including current legislation, professional practice and emerging areas such as sustainable construction.

However, each course has a distinct focus.

The **Real Estate** course is more commercial and strategic in nature, with a stronger emphasis on investment, valuation and asset management. It tends to suit those interested in property investment, consultancy or leadership roles within organisations such as local authorities, the NHS or the Civil Service.

The **Building Surveying** course is more technical and practice-based. It is closely aligned to the APC and progression towards MRICS status. Students complete a detailed building surveying feasibility study and viva, which is challenging but extremely valuable preparation for professional practice and RICS assessment.

They are both excellent courses - it really comes down to your career goals and interests.

Q. What study options are available?

A. If you don't already have a degree or professional background in the built environment, you can apply for the **non-cognate (conversion) route**. This includes two additional Level 6 modules designed to provide the underpinning knowledge needed before progressing onto the postgraduate course. These modules must be passed, although they do not contribute towards the final award.

The conversion route is only available for the September/October intake.

If you already hold a built environment degree or have significant industry experience, you may be able to join the main course directly. In this case, we offer both September/October and January entry points.

Q. Is it better to study the MSc or the PGDip?

A. It really depends on your circumstances and career plans.

The **PGDip** is the quickest and most cost-effective route to professional qualification. Both the PGDip and MSc are accredited by RICS and CABE, so from a professional accreditation perspective there is no disadvantage to choosing the diploma route.

The **MSc** may be the better option if you require postgraduate student finance or if you would like to achieve a higher academic qualification. MSc students complete an additional research module and a 15,000-word dissertation.

We also offer a flexible **Top-Up MSc** option, allowing PGDip graduates to return within five years to complete the dissertation over a summer period and convert their qualification to a full MSc.

It's a personal decision, and I'm always happy to discuss the options with prospective students.

Q. How long does the course take?

A. Full-time PGDip students typically attend classes on Wednesdays and Thursdays across two 12-week semesters.

MSc students attend the same taught sessions but also complete the research module and dissertation over the summer period.

Alongside formal teaching, we organise networking opportunities, site visits and guest lectures. Wherever possible these take place on scheduled university days, although some additional events are optional.

Q. Can I study part-time or online?

A. Yes - we offer a part-time option which works particularly well for students already working in the industry.

Part-time students attend one day per week: Thursdays in Year 1 and Wednesdays in Year 2, studying alongside the full-time cohort.

We do not currently offer a fully online option. The course is highly interactive and practice-focused, with site visits, guest speakers and collaborative activities that are best experienced in person.

Q. How many exams are there?

A. Currently, there are no traditional exams. We focus instead on coursework, professional reports and work-based assessments that reflect the kinds of tasks you would undertake in industry.

Q. Does the university support students with employment opportunities?

A. Absolutely. LSBU provides excellent careers support through job fairs and employer engagement activities. We also work closely with industry partners who regularly visit the university to present opportunities and recruit students directly.

We circulate vacancies through virtual noticeboards and have had strong success recently with graduates securing roles at major surveying and property firms.

Q. Which course would you choose?

A. I teach on both courses and run them as a combined cohort in many areas, which creates a really strong sense of community, networking and professional support among students.

Personally, I completed the PGDip in Building Surveying, although at the time I was already working as a senior property professional. Looking back, Real Estate may actually have been the better fit for me.

Ultimately, the right course depends on where you want your career to go. I'd encourage prospective students to attend an open day or arrange a Teams meeting so we can discuss the options in more detail.

Good luck, and I hope to meet you soon.

Andrew

Course Director and Deputy Head, CPS