

# Pathways to Professionalism

Over the last few years it has become apparent to many in our profession that some form of recognised formal career development, above and beyond an initial degree or course of study, is becoming more and more desirable – if not necessary.

It is normal to read in a job specifications that the Surveyor-in-Charge or Party Chief should be to International Advisory Board (IAB) Cat A standard or seeking an equivalent level of competence. Unqualified or part-qualified hydrographic surveyors are finding it increasingly difficult to progress.

Why? The profession is dealing with increasingly sophisticated technologies and techniques. More is being asked of the hydrographic surveyor - government and industry has become more stringent and produced best-practice guidelines in support of Marine Safety publications. There is a growing recognition that the public should be protected from unqualified service providers and for insurance purposes many large survey operations will insist on fully qualified and competent professional staff. Ships are getting larger, tolerances are getting smaller and systems/processes are now more complex than ever.

How then does the profession cater for those that wish to progress? After all, there are many in our profession that are highly regarded industry leaders, competent and well qualified - often with non-cognate degrees. The answer lies in developing national/regional and internationally recognised career development pathways; usually in conjunction with professional institutions or associations.

This is nothing new but is gathering momentum within the hydrographic community around the world. The Australasian Hydrographic Surveyors Certification Panel (AHSCP) was established over ten years ago and assesses applications for specialist certification in hydrography. In Canada the Canada Lands Surveyors (ACLS) Offshore Issues Committee and the CHA have prepared recommendations to implement a national certification programme. In the UK, the International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA) provides guidance and programmes on Training, Certification and Personal Competence (TCPC). Last year in November the UK Hydrographic Society held a one day seminar entitled “More than Button Pushers”™ with a session dedicated to professional issues where accreditation and recognition were discussed in some detail.

What is new is the increasing desire for international recognition of such pathways and to this end the IAB has commenced a review and evaluation of how best this may be achieved under the IAB umbrella, whilst retaining important national elements. The next meeting of the IAB is in Goa in April where this topic is to be discussed with the aim of producing a draft process on how such pathways may be endorsed.

Overall, these schemes will not only lift the standard of hydrographic surveying; they will provide a clear statement of what competencies the Standard Levels represent and they will ensure the delivery of quality survey services to government and the private sector and provide a career path for the aspiring Hydrographic Surveyor - both young and old alike.