

# Career in quantity surveying



Quantity surveyors come in two flavors. There is the PQS, Private Quantity Surveyor, who works in professional practice and the CQS or Contractor's Quantity Surveyor, who works for a building contractor. The Quantity Surveyor is responsible for all the financial, contractual and legal aspects of a construction project. The PQS will provide cost planning advice during the design stage of a project and then monitor the actual costs against the budgets whilst the project is being built. Building contractors are often paid monthly in instalments on large projects and it is the quantity surveyors job to determine a fair valuation for the work that has been completed. In addition the PQS will advise the client on a suitable form of building contract. The Contractor's Quantity Surveyor will be involved in pricing work that a contractor is asked to tender for, letting packages of work to specialist subcontractors and valuing and paying for subcontractor's work. In the same way that the PQS provides cost planning advice to the client the CQS provides financial advice to the building contractor.

If you think you are more skilled with figures than floor plans then you might think about becoming a quantity surveyor the so called economist of the construction industry. As a student quantity surveyor, Ruth Smart worked on the McAlpine Stadium in Huddersfield calculating the construction costs. Listen to what she has to say about her work by clicking on her link. Hit Back on your browser to return to this page.

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construction industry. As a student quantity surveyor Ruth Smart worked on McAlpine Stadium in Huddersfield calculating the construction costs.

The major one of this stadium was all of these they are called banana trusses because they are shaped like bananas. The steel work that went into this stadium was very expensive. There is a lot concrete in this building as you can see all the seats. The whole structure is concrete. The seats are put on top of concrete.

Steps, huge, huge money. The nicer bits are thing like you know the actual pitch, and the lights all these extras that you don't think of which need to be priced. The line markings, everything we have to take into account everything, signage, big project.

I studied quantity surveying at Leeds and years 1 and 2 was spent in the college learning, year 3 was spent on site at McAlpine Stadium and year 4 was my final year again spent in College. It wasn't just text book stuff it was things like learning to build a brick wall. What construction was about the actual physical building of buildings.

Surveyors who have been educated in Britain are viewed very well overseas.

Two months after I graduated I started work out in Johannesburg, South Africa. Which was fantastic lots of exposure. Thrown in at the deep end was great running my own jobs.

I became chartered June 2000. It's good in the fact that if you wanted to set up your own practice you have to be chartered to do it for your professional indemnity insurance. It's good also because being chartered means you are <https://assignbuster.com/career-in-quantity-surveying/>

more qualified and you get a bigger salary. And also if you take a break from your career when you are chartered it's easier to get back into your career.

Team work in this sort of industry is very important because there are lots of different parties you have to communicate with and that you have to work with.

The design team being architect, quantity surveyor, engineer, contractor must all work together must all communicate because without each other we couldn't get the job done.

I was attracted to the construction industry because I had never met a woman who worked within construction and it was a challenge to me. I would say to a woman who was a little bit nervous about joining the industry to go for it because I think it's worthwhile and she'd love it like I do.

## **Quantity Surveying**

Our team undertakes all types of Quantity Surveying services for a wide-ranging client base and property profile. We cover all aspects of a project, from feasibility through to overall redevelopment, consistently applying a number of firm principles. These include strict financial and risk control at all times, continuous value engineering and cost-in-use assessments.

### **Our Services**

#### **Feasibility and Planning**

- Provision of an unambiguous statement, setting out each client's brief and objectives.

- Provision of initial cost advice and an anticipated complete out-turn price. Initial estimates are later developed into detailed cost plans to monitor the ongoing cost of the design development.
- Identification and control of the project's risks, which can typically include neighbouring issues, access issues, ground conditions and programme restrictions.

### **Procurement**

- Recommendation on the form of contract.
- The selection of contractors and associated tendering/negotiating processes
- The provision of an unambiguous, concise and complete Agreement between all parties, accurately reflecting our client's requirements and the contractor's proposal.
- Appointment of the contractor and production of contract documentation.

### **Construction**

- Financial monitoring, including interim payments and variation control
- Programme monitoring
- Contract operation and administration
- Real-time reporting on programme and out-turn costs

**Completion**

- Managed possession - we can negotiate and agree full, sectional or partial possession of a project
- Agreement of final account

**Supplementary services**

We supply a range of supplementary services, complementing our other divisional colleagues by providing specialist cost and time critical analysis to them, where they may be responsible for the overall service to the client.

Such services include:

- Employer's agent, as identified by the JCT Standard Form of Contract
- Litigation support for disputes arising within building contracts
- Expert witness relating to issues of construction
- Cost-in-use/value engineering for alternative construction solutions
- Development monitoring for third parties
- Fire insurance valuations
- Planning supervision - as recognised by the Health & Safety Executive
- Capital allowance assessments - for increased allowances against corporation tax
- Tax and VAT guidance

**QS Description**

Quantity surveyors prepare cost estimates and plans, audit projects, manage construction costs and administer construction contracts for all levels and types of construction.

Quantity surveyors may perform the following tasks:

- talk to architects, engineers, builders, contractors, suppliers and project owners
- study architectural and engineering drawings and specifications
- prepare a 'Bill of Quantities', which lists the individual components required to construct the project
- check on changes of design to assess the effects on cost
- assess and recommend payment to contractors during construction
- prepare monthly cash-flow forecasts for clients and tax depreciation schedules
- undertake feasibility studies to assist in decisions about the worth of a project proceeding
- act as consultants to business and government.

Quantity surveyors usually work in offices. They also visit building sites, clients and other members of construction teams.

**Personal Requirements:**

- analytical and logical

- able to concentrate for long periods
- good oral and written communication skills
- able to work accurately with figures
- able to work as part of a team
- able to work independently
- aptitude for working with computers.

## **RICS**

Increasingly, Chartered Quantity Surveyors are becoming involved when they should be: at the start of the decision-making process.

The role of the quantity surveyor has changed significantly in recent years. There was a time when they tended to be brought in, too late in the day, to cost someone else's work and ended up being wrongly cast in the role of the spoilsport who said it was all too expensive.

Today the skills are largely the same but importantly the perception and understanding have changed. Increasingly, quantity surveyors become involved when they should be: at the start of the decision-making process.

Whilst the primary role of a quantity surveyor remains to manage costs on building or construction sites, arguably they are just as valuable at providing ideas and creative solutions in the early stages of the project.

Quantity surveyors are particularly skilled at taking the long view, assessing the options and at providing the client with a full picture on which to make decisions.

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Take, for example, a large new housing complex requiring an access route. When all the aesthetics and environmental issues have been considered the decision is whether to go for the shorter more direct option or for the longer one. Superficially the shorter route seems more attractive but detailed examination reveals expensive additional engineering would be required.

The full job specification for a quantity surveyor would alone fill this page but typical responsibilities include:

- preparing cost estimates
- managing costs on site
- advising on choice of materials
- advising on construction techniques
- dealing with planning issues, building regulations, architects
- involvement in the procurement process
- providing cost and contract expertise

The type of project could range from large residential or offices to motorways, water companies or a sports stadium.

Alasdair Thompson is a Divisional Director of Franklin + Andrews, one of the UK's leading firms of quantity surveyors.

With ten years' experience Alasdair has a very clear opinion of how quantity surveyors should be used: " There is no doubt our clients get the best value when they involve us at the outset. I also believe the relationship with the

other professionals is much more cooperative and open with everyone listening and taking advice early on.”

Quantity Surveyor: a person who measures and prices building work.

In real life:

Quantity surveyors are the accountants of the building profession - planning and managing costs of construction projects from start to finish. Quantity surveyors (or QSs as they are known, since it's a bit of a mouthful) either work for a private QS practice and act on behalf of clients or for a contracting firm which carries out construction work.

This profession is certainly not all hard hats and wellies. In fact the role of the quantity surveyor has changed so dramatically in recent years that the profession doesn't always answer to the name of quantity surveying anymore!

You will often see private practices referring to themselves as 'cost consultants' and 'project managers' because of the nature of the work they now handle. Due to the recession, QSs have had to adapt or die and there are now fewer, larger private practices than ever before taking on a broader remit of work.

No longer do quantity surveyors just measure and price work, they have a more strategic role. Nowadays the QS is involved at all stages of a project from preparing tenders and planning costs to preparing final bills of quantities; essentially, making sure projects are planned and completed to cost and quality, on time.

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UK construction professionals are respected abroad and, partly in response to the depressed home market, many UK firms have developed an international outlook.

#### Best bits

Seeing things happen exactly as you said they would.
The opportunity to have a career with commercial AND practical elements.
No two projects are the same.

#### Worst bits

As with all parts of the construction industry, quantity surveying is very recession sensitive.

Everyone outside the industry thinks you are an estate agent!

Don't bother if ...

You're sensitive to jokes about counting nails.

You want a  
nine to five  
career full of  
textbook  
projects.

Demands

Technical  
and  
business  
knowledge.  
QSs  
understand  
the building  
work in  
hand and  
make sure  
work is done  
in a  
commercially  
viable  
way.

A logical  
mind with a

down-to-earth approach to problem solving and a personality which is at ease with business executives, site employees . .. and spreadsheet s is an advantage.

Teamwork - Overused word, but in this business you appreciate

the clients' needs and work with them to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Also required is the ability to motivate and lead people on site.

Flexibility  
You'll be required to travel to projects all over your patch (a car is often part of your salary

package).
<p>Qualification s and training Most entrants follow relevant degrees or HNDs and have gained work placements in the process (sandwich courses are popular). To qualify as a chartered quantity surveyor entrants take the</p>



APC  
(assessment  
of  
professional  
qualification  
) run by The  
Royal  
Institution of  
Chartered  
Surveyors  
(RICS). The  
APC is all  
about what  
you know  
and how  
well you can  
apply it.

Areas of work

Contracting QS
Private Practice QS

## Contracting QS

Often seen as the 'muddy boots' side of the profession because contracting QSs are usually based in site offices - although contrary to popular rumour they do not count bricks all day!

The contracting QS has a budget for

every project and must make sure a project stays within it. To control the purse strings the QS will:

Organise work on site in the most efficient manner.

Liaise with the site employees, plus employees from subcontra

cting organisati ons (smaller organisati ons brought in to handle particular portions of work).
Negotiate with the client's QS over any price changes.
Approve payments made to suppliers, employee s and

subcontra  
ctors.

Prepare  
bills of  
quantity  
for work  
in  
progress  
and the  
final  
accounts.

Private QS

A private  
quantity  
surveyor is  
employed  
by a client  
to advise on  
their  
construction  
costs. Key  
roles for the

private QS  
include  
working out  
the most  
appropriate  
way to meet  
clients'  
needs and  
advising on:

The site  
chosen.

Costs of  
labour,  
plant  
and  
material  
s.

A  
suitable  
building  
contract

or.

Once the project is up and running the QS monitors costs and negotiates with the contractor's QS (agreeing payments and any changes to the original price) to ensure work is carried out to the quality specified and in the time

available.
Once a project is complete the services of a QS can be retained to ensure a building is managed and maintained efficiently.

Quantity Surveyors - National Commercial Services UK

National Commercial Services specialise in the following areas

- Quantity Surveyors
- Careers in Construction
- Construction Consultants
- Construction Dispute Resolution
- Quantity Surveying



*Quantity Surveyors* are concerned with financial management, measurement and accounting on construction projects. They deal with detail and tend to be highly literate and numerate and possess computer and IT skills to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. They work on their own or within teams of other QS's or multi-disciplined professionals. They can be employed by Contractors, Subcontractors, Trade Specialists, Architects, Consulting Engineers or other companies or organisations involved in the construction process.

Quantity Surveyors are trained professionals. Some will start straight from school, some will study further with a university or higher education degree in the subject. Professional qualifications can be gained through a number of institutions recognized throughout the world, examples being the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) or the Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors (Inst. C. E. S.). Qs can work in all levels of the industry, from assistant and trainee through intermediate, project, senior, managing, regional and chief Quantity Surveyor levels to Company Directors.

Quantity Surveyors are involved with all financial aspects of construction work and increasingly, in the role of commercial, legal and contractual specialists. In addition to the prime *quantity surveying* functions, many Qs have an expertise in the research, preparation, submission and negotiation of contractual claims as a part of the general responsibility for financial control and financial well-being of contracts.

Quantity Surveyors work in building, civil engineering, water, process, M & E and other areas of the construction industry. They usually operate in two

distinct environments. 'Pre-contract' work involves the preparation of documentation to enable work to be put out to tendering contractors on behalf of the Client. Clients include government bodies, public and private authorities, developers and others seeking to undertake construction projects.

Quantity Surveyors working in this area are usually employed by Professional Quantity Surveying Practices, Consulting Engineers, Architects or other companies, practices, professionals or individuals retained by the end user to ensure that what is eventually built is what he actually requires. He is likely to work in conjunction with designers and engineers and other construction professionals.

The Quantity Surveyor's work includes taking off quantities from drawings prepared by others, analysing, tabulating, formulating the information to facilitate the preparation of bills of quantities, schedule of rates or other documentation chosen to enable the works to be measured and valued. In doing this, the Quantity Surveyor follows guidelines set out under various documents which form part of the contract, including the method of measurement, conditions of contract, contract specification and other particulars. He may be involved in the preparation of preambles or other documents forming part of the contract.

Once the documentation is prepared, the contract can be let and the work commenced. The quantity surveyor is then concerned with 'Post-contract' work, for either the Employer or his agents, or the Contractor carrying out the work. He may work on site or remote from site in his Employer's offices.

The Quantity Surveyor working on behalf of the Employer may have been involved in the pre-Contract work or he may not. His job is to ensure that the value of work carried out is properly established in accordance with the particular contractual arrangements being used, and to certify appropriate payments to the Contractor. This involves taking receipt of the Contractor's interim applications for payment usually at fortnightly or monthly intervals, checking the Contractor's submissions and calculations and preparing details for certification of payment by the Engineer or the Architect.

The principle role of the Quantity Surveyor working for the Contractor is to look after the financial interests of his employer. He will calculate and record the financial value of the work carried out and ensure that the Contractor is paid properly and on time. During the currency of the contract, he will be involved in measurements on site and from drawings in order to establish the true value of work done in the interim period. This is usually itemised within a bill of quantities or schedule of rates prepared in advance as part of the contract documentation. He will consider variations, modified and additional works and evaluate their value for his interim applications for payment.

Concurrently, he will be concluding measurement and evaluation wherever possible as part of the final measure, to be submitted later as part of the Contractor's Final Account. In addition to preparing applications for payment, the site-based Quantity Surveyor is also likely to be involved in internal company reporting so that the Contractor's management are kept abreast of the financial status of the project. He is likely to be involved in forecasts and budgets and other reporting systems.

Another key role for the modern quantity surveyor working for Contractors, is the procurement, appointment, administration, management and payment of subcontractors. On some projects, the management of subcontract accounts is the Quantity Surveyor's chief responsibility. He may also have responsibility for matters such as insurance claims on behalf of the Contractor or third party claims.