

Background to the New Reciprocal Recognition Agreement with the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers

In April 1993, the former IMM signed a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) with the HKIE. This was renewed in July 2004 as a Reciprocal Recognition Agreement (RRA) between the IMMM and the HKIE. The agreement covers reciprocal recognition of the professional qualifications of **geotechnical engineers** who are, respectively, MIMM, CEng and MHKIE (Geotechnical Discipline).

A review of the former MRA was discussed with the HKIE during a visit to Hong Kong by the IMM's then Deputy Secretary (Mr Peter Martindale) in November 2001. As agreed during those discussions, the HKIE produced a draft of a new RRA and sought comments from the IMM HK Branch in 2002. After several rounds of correspondence on the details, a revised document was agreed by both sides in July 2004. The RRA was jointly signed by the Presidents of the IMMM and the HKIE on the 28th July 2004, during a visit to Hong Kong by the IMMM President, Mr Jeff Smith. The MRA continued to be valid and was actively used up to the signing of the new RRA.

Based on a review of RRAs completed by the HKIE in March 2002, the new agreement incorporates the following three principles:

- (i) **'Home jurisdiction first'** – applicants who have gained their substantive training and experience in a particular jurisdiction should apply to the institute in that jurisdiction directly rather than use the RRA (e.g. applicants whose training and main working experience has been obtained in Hong Kong should apply directly to the HKIE for professional recognition).
- (ii) **No 'daisy chaining'** – applicants should have obtained their professional qualifications through a professional assessment by their parent institute, and not through reciprocal recognition of their qualifications by a third institute.
- (iii) **Discipline matching** - if either side has doubt over an applicant's geotechnical engineering knowledge and experience, there is provision for discretionary partial professional assessment, consisting of an interview based on submission of a report on training and experience and a CPD record.

In negotiating the wording of the new RRA, the IMMM HK Branch Council took the view that the first principle is acceptable in respect of engineers whose main discipline

can be matched with an existing HKIE discipline but should not be applied to other local engineers (e.g. mining engineers) or applied scientists (e.g. engineering geologists) who are currently unable to join local professional qualifying bodies in their own disciplines. This view has been catered for in the new RRA by incorporating some flexibility to allow waiving of the requirements for additional partial professional assessment in certain cases.

In summary, from the IMMM perspective, the new RRA, as with the former MRA, is suitable for use by mining engineers and engineering geologists with substantial geotechnical experience, as well as 'non-local' geotechnical engineers, who have obtained their CEng through the IMMM and who have been professionally assessed as geotechnical engineers by the IMMM. 'Non-local' civil or structural engineers, and local geotechnical, civil and structural engineers who apply to become MHKIE (Geotechnical) via the RRA should appreciate that they are not following principles (i) and (iii) above and will be subject to additional professional assessment, including a possible essay test as well as an interview based on written submissions.

The former Institute of Materials (IoM), prior to its merger with the former IMM to create the IMMM in 2002, had a separate RRA with the Materials Discipline of HKIE. This arrangement continues unchanged. Both sides have agreed that the IMMM can maintain separate RRAs with the Geotechnical and Materials Disciplines of HKIE.

IMMM HK Branch
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