

The Path to Professional Status

The Register of Chartered Security Professionals was launched back in the summer of 2011 as a means of recognising and maintaining high standards and ongoing proficiency for individuals operating within the security business sector. David Gill offers an overview of why the CSyP designation is so vitally important

Since the launch of the Register of Chartered Security Professionals (RCSP) back in May 2011, I've had the honour of being the elected Registrar. Among other things, this task involves overseeing the application process, including the handling of appeals and reporting developments to the governing body, namely the Chartered Security Professionals Registration Authority (CSPRA).

My initial brief was unambiguous. However, as a security practitioner and business owner, experience has taught me to never expect the expected. Perceptions and reality often bear little resemblance. Surprises both good and bad are invariably just around the corner, so maintaining an open mind has become something of a personal mantra.

During the early part of my tenure, I discovered there were indeed a number of surprises – which, for the most part, were positive in nature – and some quite remarkable.

From the positive perspective, I've been amazed at the level of dedication of those who form the backbone of the RCSP operation, which essentially comprises the assessors and the members of the CSPRA, which is chaired by the eminent Lord Alex Carlile QC CBE.

While the Register is professionally managed by staff of The Security Institute on behalf of The Worshipful Company of Security Professionals, the CSPRA members, assessors and specialist advisors are unpaid volunteers.

In addition to the remarkable dedication of those volunteers, I continue to be astounded at the level of talent, diversity of specialist skills and depth of knowledge of many of those who apply to be admitted to the Register and duly achieve Chartered Security Professional (CSyP) status. Like other chartered professionals, all CSyPs must demonstrate a good generalist knowledge of their field and, in the case of the RCSP, core security principles.

What I've found particularly interesting is the incredible range of specialisms and the number of experts we have on the Register. The criteria for admittance is very clear, yet I should emphasise that anyone contemplating applying for admission doesn't need to be an 'expert' in any particular area. Being an 'expert' is not one of the five core competencies required.

An incredible legacy

I've been most fortunate to work with an amazing group of professionals who are unquestionably devoted to giving back and

creating what I believe to be an incredible legacy. This became evident the day I first met with the much respected former Security Institute chairman Mike Bluestone CSyP and past Masters of The Worshipful Company – namely Peter French MBE and Don Randall MBE – to discuss the outline draft of the RCSP.

Their commitment and drive to create a Register and formulate the preliminary qualifying criteria was the start point. The next phase involved sourcing professional expertise to help build and make the Register a reality and fit for purpose. This led the team to approach the renowned academic Dr Alison Wakefield from the University of Portsmouth and the legal expertise of Keith Lawrey, a barrister specialising in the formation and management of chartered bodies.

Without Alison and Keith's unwavering support throughout the process, I seriously doubt that our vision would have been realised. Indeed, they're remarkable people who remain integral to the ongoing success of the Register.

I could never have anticipated the level of dedication, professionalism, teamwork and the array of talented individuals I've been so fortunate to work with throughout the creation and subsequent management of the RCSP.

Alas, as with most walks of life, there have been some negatives along the way, such as notifying applicants who, despite their best endeavours, have fallen short of the mark.

The criteria for admission are plain to all. There are five well-defined competencies that applicants need to demonstrate, covering security knowledge, practice skills, communication, leadership and professional commitment. The process allows applicants every opportunity to demonstrate their experience and competence. The majority of those who reach the final interview stage do go on to be admitted to the Register.

Lacking the requisite high level of experience is among the main reasons for those falling short of final success. However, failure is not generally a word professional bodies tend to apply. Instead, applicants who do fall short of the mark are referred to as being 'unsuccessful'. In these cases, where an applicant has been unsuccessful, they receive comprehensive feedback and are advised on the areas they need to develop.

Many who fall short of the required standard first time around are often encouraged to reapply after completing perhaps further



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strategic, frontline practice skills at a very senior operational level, or maybe some enhanced study. Unsuccessful applicants can also seek mentoring support (without charge) from an experienced advisor.

We aim to do what we can to help those who strive to achieve the professional pinnacle.

Pathways to acceptance

Stage One of the process, itself an intrinsic element, involves two independent assessors who review the written submission.

At this point, an applicant might be asked for clarification on his/her submission or maybe for some supplementary information. It's the Stage One assessors who recommend if an applicant is put forward for final interview under either the standard pathway (degree holders) or the individual pathway.

Those applicants who appear to possess the relevant experience, yet do not hold a degree (ie individual pathway applicants), are set four topics to research and must then produce a written portfolio. The purpose of the portfolio is to assess the applicant's research and writing skills, which need to be in line with university degree level standard (including using the Harvard referencing system). Thereafter, references are followed up.

The standard of written portfolios is generally very high, and often leads to a successful outcome for those willing to apply themselves and who don't attempt to cut corners.

Among the several hundreds of applications and expressions of interest there are, as I've alluded to, some wholly genuine, but sadly unsuccessful attempts. However, not all unsuccessful applicants fall into the category of 'genuine attempt'. In spite of the very clear requirements and conditions set out in the application papers, there have unfortunately been a few self-proclaimed 'security professionals' who've sought to use slapdash and, in some cases, even underhand methods in their attempt to achieve the much coveted CSyP post-nominal. Given that the RCSP strap line is 'The Gold Standard' (of the private security arena), the temerity of some people leaves a lot to be desired.

Evidently, some applicants have either overestimated their experience and competence or simply not properly read and/or understood the criteria required for admittance.

Of much greater concern have been the few instances where there's clear evidence the applicant has attempted to deceive the assessment process using a variety of unethical methods. These have included falsely claiming responsibility for a high level project,



purporting to be central to an organisation's success in winning a prestigious award or multiple cases of plagiarism. In one instance, an applicant actually used falsified references.

Needless to say, each and every individual was informed that they would not be put forward for interview and told the reasons why.

Integrity is essential

In a sector where integrity is such an essential factor, I've found it extraordinary that those operating in security, and purportedly at a senior level, would deceitfully attempt to attain the highest professional standing.

What these few instances have shown is that the admittance process works effectively and provides a very high degree of assurance that unprincipled applicants will be exposed.

As is the case with all professional Registers, the RCSP has a formal disciplinary process in place and Registrants are required to conform to a strict Code of Conduct. To date, there have been no instances which have triggered the disciplinary process.

In January this year, everyone connected with the Register was absolutely delighted to celebrate the admission of its 100th Registrant.

For far too long, the private security sector ignored the true and genuine importance of evolving into a properly recognised profession, but thanks to the commitment and dedication of those I've mentioned, we now have a genuine, tested and proven benchmark for security practitioners to aspire towards.

Paul Miller (centre), managing director at National Monitoring, becomes the 100th Chartered Security Professional admitted to the Register. Also pictured are David Gill CSyP and Garry Evanson CSyP, chairman of The Security Institute

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