

The Construction Management programme in 2000

The construction management MSc programme was launched in 1990 under the title *Construction Management by Distance Learning (CMDL)*. The programme was promoted as being specifically relevant for:

- managers needing formal training to enhance their effectiveness
- individuals who have a significant management focus in their work but little or no training
- those moving from specialist or technical roles into management
- those wishing to develop their career potential by moving into management.

The CMDL programme largely took the form of an augmented correspondence course of study and the programme profile (**Figure 1**) remains largely true to the current time.

The elements of CMDL study comprised:

- Six core units (6 X 6 = 36 credits)
 1. Management in Construction
 2. Economics in Construction
 3. Construction Law
 4. Managing Human Resources
 5. Procuring Construction
 6. Strategy in Construction
- A Case Study unit – later replaced by the *Consolidating Theory and Practice* unit (6 credits)
- Two option units chosen from four (2 X 6 = 12 credits)
- Two residential workshops (14 days total = 6 credits))
- A dissertation (30 credits)

Now, as then, each block of six credits entails 100 hours of study. The master's MSc degree is available for 90 credits, a postgraduate diploma PGDip for 60 credits and an advanced certificate for 30 credits.

Figure 1. An outline of the CMDL programme

It should be noted that the Case Study unit, at 7% of the total programme content, was the only point at which students concertedly contextualised their learning, usually within a given scenario rather than their own professional working circumstances.

Study resources for each unit were posted to students in a study pack that contained:

- A spiral-bound workbook containing core subject-specific material and self-assessment questions
- One or more textbooks
- Offprints from academic journal articles
- Assignment questions.

Each unit was overseen by a subject tutor, an expert in the field covered by the unit in question. Students initially had access to unit tutors via the telephone or by the post but increasingly via email as the medium developed. Interaction between students and tutors tended to concentrate on the clarification of subject facts or programme procedure. Assessment for each unit was by means of a written assignment submitted in hard copy by post plus a formal two-hour essay-style written examination, taken either at the University of Bath or at local overseas centres supervised by approved providers such as the British Council.

The CMDL programme was superseded in 2004 by the *International Construction Management* (ICM) programme.

Throughout the whole of its 25-year existence, the rationale for the programme (whether CMDL or ICM) has been based on a clear recognition that construction industry managers must strike a finely tuned balance between pragmatism and intellect if they are going to succeed. On the one hand, they need to know the 'nuts and bolts' of the building process; on the other hand, they need the creative skills and the vision to think, plan and act strategically within the uniquely demanding context of construction management. Thus the aim of the programme was, and is, to mirror the two twin-linked realisations of construction, namely, the intellectual reality and the practical realities. The latter provides the industry's output while the former determines the quality of that output.