



Surveyor-General

of the Australian Capital Territory

Guideline No.13

Supervision by Registered Surveyors

**Office of the Surveyor-General and Land Information
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1. Definitions

Term:	Definition:
Co-ordinated Reference Mark (CRM)	A reference mark of a kind referred to in Direction 35 and Direction 36, registered by a government authority, which has been or will be connected to a control survey such that coordinates derived from that control survey have been or will be attributed to the mark.
Deposited Plan (DP)	Defined in Section 7 of the Districts Act 2002 (ACT). A DP is the mechanism to legally define and create block boundaries.
Detail Surveys	A survey of a block or blocks to locate boundaries, easements, regulated trees, existing improvements, and topography in 3 dimensions.
Greenfield Survey	A survey of land, in an urban area, that is subject to an Estate Development Plan and may or may not be comprised within a Holding Lease.
Holding Lease	A lease issued to allow for urban development and subdivision.
Estate Development Plan	A plan which sets out the proposed development of the estate, and the creation of blocks within the estate, in a way that is consistent with the concept plan of the area.
Infill Site	An urban site that has been previously subdivided and developed.
SPDs	The Surveyors (Surveyor-General) Practice Directions.
Supervising Surveyor	A registered surveyor who supervises the activities of persons in order to fulfil legal and professional responsibilities and obligations.
Survey Certificate	Under the <i>Planning Development Act 2007</i> , Section 139 means a detail survey plan pursuant to Guideline No. 15.
Unit Plan	refers to a plan as defined by Section 7 of the Unit Titles Act 2001 .

2. Introduction

The Surveyor (Surveyor-General) Practice Directions 2023 describe the obligations of Registered Surveyors in relation to supervision. Section 13 of the Directions requires that a surveyor is solely responsible for surveys carried out under their supervision and that the Registered Surveyor should exercise a standard of supervision that reflects their professional responsibilities. The directions describe the intentions of supervision and the nature of 'general' and 'immediate' supervision.

Version 1 of this guideline was published in 2023 and established provisions to address the concerns of interstate surveyors to operate in the ACT with little oversight under Automatic Deemed Registration (ADR).

This Guideline has been drafted to assist the industry in working towards improved supervision and integrity of surveys produced by non-registered surveyors. It is intended to help the industry improve service delivery, promote and support professional development and clarify the responsibilities of registered surveyors and businesses. Sufficient supervision should be provided to supervised persons such that the integrity of the cadastre is maintained while not being an unreasonable burden on the industry and businesses.

3. Categories of a Supervised Surveyor

The Surveyor Practice Directions 2023 (SPDs) introduced two categories of non-registered surveyors:

- 'Surveyors Assistant' which meant a person subject to immediate supervision by a registered surveyor.
- 'Qualified Surveyor' which meant a person subject to general supervision by a registered surveyor.

Since the Guideline's initial release, concerns have been expressed that the term Qualified Surveyor is confusing and implies the surveyor may be able to perform surveys beyond their competency level.

An associate within numerous professions is a mid-level position that requires qualifications and/or experience and is responsible for performing professional and administrative tasks to support higher level professionals.

To better reflect such a surveyor's professional role, the term Qualified Surveyor has been replaced by Associate Surveyor pursuant to Surveyor-General Guideline No. 12.

Therefore, SPDs 13 and 14 will, in the future, be amended to replace the term Qualified Surveyor with Associate Surveyor.

4. Immediate Supervision - Surveyors Assistant

The Immediate Supervision category applies to persons with no surveying or similar qualifications, no recognised prior learning or little practical experience. A person under immediate supervision is classified as a Surveyor’s Assistant.

4.1. Table 1

Immediate Supervision - Site Attendance Requirements by a Registered Surveyor	
Site attendance	Accompany the Surveyors Assistant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 50% of the time on site. • Apply appropriate remote supervision techniques as required at other times.
Site attendance exemptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessed exemptions by registered surveyors are not permitted. • A registered surveyor may apply in writing to the Surveyor-General for an exemption to the site attendance requirements. • Any exemption granted is at the discretion of the Surveyor-General.

5. General Supervision - Associate Surveyor

The General Supervision category significantly reduces the requirement for the supervising surveyor to accompany the supervised person on site.

General supervision only applies to Associate Surveyors. A person must apply for and be recognised as an Associate Surveyor pursuant to Guideline No. 12.

5.1. Table 2

Requirements for General Supervision by a Registered Surveyor	
Site attendance	Accompany the Associate Surveyor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least once, and • Monthly where a project takes more than 2 months to complete.
Site attendance exemptions	Self-assessed exemptions to site attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must be made by the supervising registered surveyor. • must be made in accordance with Section 9. Where self-assessed exemptions cannot be made in accordance with Section 9: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The registered surveyor may apply in writing to the Surveyor-General for an exemption to the site attendance requirements. • Any exemption granted is at the discretion of the Surveyor-General.

6. Applying Supervision to Field Parties

6.1 Table 3

Applying Supervision to Field Parties		
Field party composition	Status of person or persons in the field party	Relevant level of supervision, required by a Registered Surveyor
1 person	Surveyors Assistant	Immediate
1 person	Associate Surveyor	General
2 persons	Associate Surveyor and a Surveyors Assistant	General
2 persons	Surveyors Assistant and a second Surveyors Assistant	Immediate

7. Nature of supervision

7.1.1 The nature of supervision by the registered surveyor will depend on the skill and experience of the supervised person. A supervising surveyor should exercise their judgement regarding the nature of supervision provided. Generally, the following rules should be adhered to:

Immediate supervision should involve:

- briefing the surveyors assistant on the purpose and details of their required duties before they commence involvement with the survey and associated tasks.
- being present on sufficient occasions to ensure that the surveyors assistant questions and issues can be addressed expeditiously.
- site visits and remote supervision consistent with this Guideline.
- inspecting the marking and physical aspects of the survey and associated tasks upon completion, including but not limited to field notes, closes, etc.
- effecting checks and verification of the assistant surveyor’s work such as to be confident of the quality and accuracy of the work produced.

General Supervision should involve:

- instruction on the requirements for any unusual or difficult aspects of the survey and associated tasks and possible methods of approach, especially if new procedures are involved.
- progress checks on any unusual or complex features of the survey.
- site visits and remote supervision consistent with this Guideline.
- a detailed and comprehensive review of the assignment on completion.

8. Co-Signing of Documentation and Plans

All fieldnotes and plans relating to cadastral surveys must be signed by a registered surveyor pursuant to SPD 57.

An Associate Surveyor **may** add their name and signature in the fieldnotes, to link them to their supervising registered surveyor,

- In addition, all relevant plans related to cadastral surveys **may** be signed by the Associate Surveyor.
- Such plans include deposited plans, unit plans, survey certificates, detail survey plans, and identification survey plans (including plans required under Section 34 of the Building Regulation 2008), as defined by the Surveyors Practice Directions.

9. Exemption Criteria from Site Attendance

Site attendance is critical to ensure survey outcomes meet the requirements of legislation such as the [Surveyors Practice Directions](#) and [Surveyor-General Guidelines](#). Registered surveyors accompanying supervised persons on site is an important element in the training of less experienced surveyors. Therefore, minimum site attendance by registered surveyors is important.

However, an exemption from site attendance requirements is available, where appropriate, and may be determined by:

- Self-Assessment by the supervising registered surveyor, or
- A written request to the Surveyor-General, only where an exemption cannot be based on the self-assessment. Any granting of an exemption will be at the discretion of the Surveyor-General. Requests should be lodged at the Registrar Inbox: surveyors.registrar@act.gov.au

9.1 Immediate Supervision

There will be **no self-assessed exemption** option, for site attendance, given the possible lack of formal qualification and practical experience of the supervised person. Where the supervising registered surveyor is temporarily unable to attend site they should lodge a written request for an exemption to the Surveyor-General at the Registrar Inbox: surveyors.registrar@act.gov.au.

9.2 General Supervision

It is acknowledged that it may not always be practicable to attend each project site with the supervised person at least once. Therefore, a supervising registered surveyor may be exempted from site attendance for projects based on the following criteria:

- Competency of the Associate Surveyor to do cadastral work,
- Project duration,
- Project complexity,
- Project risk.

It is the supervising surveyor’s responsibility to

- Decide whether a self-assessed exemption is appropriate or whether an application to the Surveyor-General, for an exemption, is required. See Tables 4 and 5 for guidance.
- Retain documentation relating to any self-assessed exemption from site attendance.

9.2 Table 4

Criteria for a Self-Assessed Exemption from site attendance	Details
Associate Surveyor is competent, and	The Associate Surveyor has sufficient cadastral experience, to do the work, as assessed by the supervising surveyor.
Duration is short term, and	The duration of the job will be less than 4 hours.
Job, complexity is low, and	Boundary definition is simple, i.e. the reference marks are readily available and in agreement such as CRMs in a Greenfield area.
Risk is minimal	Structures being surveyed are far enough from parcel boundaries such that an encroachment would be unlikely to occur

Note - **All of the criteria** in Table 4 must be met before a self-assessed exemption may be granted.

9.2 Table 5

Criteria for an application for exemption from site attendance	Details
Associate Surveyor is not yet competent, or	The Associate Surveyor does not have sufficient cadastral experience to competently do the work, as assessed by the supervising surveyor
Duration is long term, or	The duration of the job will be greater than 2 months.
Job complexity is high, or	Boundary definition is complex, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference marks cannot be found, or • discrepancies exist between measurements compared to previous survey plans, that may compromise the cadastral integrity
Risk is high	For example, structures being surveyed are not far enough from parcel boundaries such that an encroachment may occur

Note – Where **even one of the criteria** in Table 5 applies, an application for an exemption, to the Surveyor-General, will be required.

9.2.1 Example 1

A Registered Surveyor is required to set out a house in a Greenfield area where the house and related structures are designed to be a substantial distance from the parcel boundaries. The Associate Surveyor has many years of cadastral experience, and will perform the field work under General Supervision. A self-assessed exemption from site attendance would be considered appropriate given the simplicity of boundary re-definition and the minimal risk to the cadastre.

- The registered surveyor should use remote supervision methods, thoroughly check all computations, and field notes.
- A self-assessed exemption for site attendance **would be** considered appropriate.

9.2.2 Example 2

A Registered Surveyor is required to set out an extension to a house in an infill area. The Associate Surveyor, working under General Supervision, has many years of cadastral experience. The extension has been designed to be a substantial distance from the parcel boundary, for example greater than 1m, and the re-definition is not complex. There is minimal risk of an encroachment to an adjoining property.

- A self-assessed exemption for site attendance may be considered appropriate.
- The registered surveyor should use remote supervision methods, thoroughly check all computations, and field notes.

However, while on site, the Associate Surveyor identifies an apparent problem such as a potential encroachment. The Registered Surveyor should attend the site to address the issue if remote methods are insufficient to resolve the issue.

When the survey is in an infill area, such as inner North Canberra, and there are complex redefinition issues such as missing, disturbed, or inaccessible survey marks, coordinated reference marks (CRMS) not connected to the cadastre and the need to use multiple underlying survey plans. A self-assessed exemption for site attendance **would not be** considered appropriate.

9.4.3 Example 3

A registered surveyor is required to perform a cadastral survey in an Infill area. The survey requires boundary re-definition in an older part of Canberra. The Associate Surveyor, working under General Supervision, has many years of cadastral experience. The job takes multiple days, is complex because reference marks are not found and further assistance from the registered surveyor is required. A self-assessed exemption for site attendance **would not be** considered appropriate.

9.5 Long Term Projects

A project with a duration of two months or more may only be exempted for site attendance by the Surveyor-General. Acceptable reasons for a supervising surveyor being unable to attend a site may include jurisdictional travel restrictions, medical circumstances and any other serious impediments to site attendance.

10. Remote Supervision

Remote supervision is an effective tool to assist registered surveyors in supervising staff in the field. Acceptable electronic techniques include audio-visual communications on phones and computers using applications such as 'Zoom' or 'Facetime'. Although remote supervision may be useful, it should not be a replacement for in person site attendance by the supervising registered surveyor.

The supervising surveyor must keep records of instances where remote supervision techniques were used. Records may include photographs, call logs, and audio or audio-visual recordings.

Note, the recordings should clearly identify the survey project to which the file relates, the supervised person and the supervising registered surveyor.

11. Inability to Supervise

There may be occasions where a registered surveyor is unable to supervise persons either directly or by remote methods. In circumstances where the incapacity is:

11.1 Foreseeable

The supervising surveyor must make provision for another registered surveyor to provide an appropriate level of supervision. Foreseeable circumstances may include absences whilst attending training, seminars, conferences or congresses.

11.2 Unforeseeable

An appropriate person may apply for an exemption on the behalf of the supervising surveyor. The request must be made in writing to the Surveyor- General at the Registrar Inbox: surveyors.registrar@act.gov.au and provide details supporting the request. Unforeseeable circumstances include illness or injury. An appropriate person may include a company director, partner or manager. A supervised person **may not** make an application on behalf of the supervising registered surveyor.

12. Audits

The Surveyor-General may audit records required to be kept under this Guideline. Supervising surveyors must ensure that evidence of self-assessed exemptions is kept and can be made readily available in the case of an audit.

12.1 Supervision records

Supervision records may include but are not limited to:

- Work diaries
- Evidence of site inductions
- Call logs
- Electronic records of online supervision
- Internal business quality checking documentation
- Evidence of travel to site such as flight and accommodation receipts
- Self-assessed exemptions by the supervising surveyor

12.1.1 Example 1

- A registered surveyor is responsible for a large development, in Canberra, that includes boundary definition, building set out and staged unit titling over a period exceeding many months.
- The registered surveyor must keep evidence of:
 - All site attendance e.g. work diaries, site induction etc.
 - Remote electronic supervision undertaken.
 - Office checking procedures.
 - Any site attendance exemptions granted by the Surveyor-General.
- The use of audits to ensure compliance will not be prioritised initially. Audits will firstly be used as an educational/training tool for supervising surveyors to improve their supervision record keeping and process.

13. Contacts

Office of the Surveyor-General and Land Information:

- General Inbox: actplasurvey@act.gov.au
- Registrar Inbox: surveyors.registrar@act.gov.au
- Website: [Office of the Surveyor-General and Land Information](#)