

The Impact of the *Council on Training in Architectural Conservation* (COTAC)

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In 2019 the renamed Charitable body, *Council on Training in Architectural Conservation* (COTAC), reached a significant milestone with its 60th Anniversary. Established in 1959 as the ‘*Conference on Training in Architectural Conservation*’ COTAC’s founding principle was in its recognition of the need for specialist’s knowledge to properly specify and oversee work involved in repairing and conserving historic buildings and churches. At the time, this ground-breaking approach occurred when industry and professional training and education in modernism, concrete and brutalism prevailed, and when knowledge of traditional building technologies was fast disappearing.

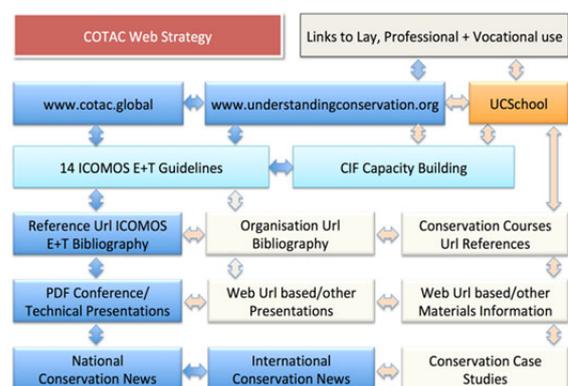
Over the years COTAC has persistently and influentially worked to lift standards, develop training qualifications and build networks across the Conservation, Repair and Maintenance (CRM) sector previously estimated at some 42% of all UK construction industry activities. This has involved creating links with national agencies, professional and standard setting bodies, educational establishments and training interests. But, much still remains to be done, not least of which is the need to promote a greater understanding in the adoption and use of traditional and regionally sourced building materials.

Supporting and influencing the Conservation, Repair and Maintenance (CRM) construction industry sector, COTAC’s priority Aims and Objectives include:

- **Education and training:** Developing, producing and promoting education, training and CPD materials through the COTAC website <https://www.cotac.global>
- **Standards:** Proposing, maintaining and promoting standards for technical conservation education and training, particularly through professional body conservation accreditation initiatives and the COTAC website <http://www.understandingconservation.org>
- **Advocacy:** Collaborating with Supporters, other organisations, voluntary bodies and agencies with interests in conservation
- **Digital resources:** Maintaining, enhancing and developing the Council’s digital resources to ensure their relevance for the sector
- **Publication:** Publishing relevant material on-line
- **Courses:** Promoting relevant courses in the conservation of the historic environment which are in accordance with recognised criteria
- **News:** Promoting national and international on-line information of value to the sector
- **Events:** (Resources permitting) Arrange seminars and conferences along with participation in exhibitions/events relating to relevant heritage issues

As COTAC progresses its activities have adopted, integrated and promoted the following key documents to underpin its day-to-day operations and approach:

- ICOMOS Education and Training Guidelines (1993)
- ICOMOS CIF Capacity Building (2013)
- BS7913: 2013 Guide to the conservation of historic buildings (2013)



Building upon these key documents, the above diagram illustrates in blue tint the sections of the COTAC websites that are currently active. The lighter tinted boxes illustrate where preliminary work has been carried out that will eventually aggregate into additional on-line support materials. Although requiring further checking and refinement prior to being incorporated, much has been achieved and is already available on-line.

In 1992 Sir Bernard Feilden offered the undernoted COTAC skills matrix to ICOMOS in advance of its General Assembly in Sri Lanka in 1993. The then current job functions were assessed against the 14 criteria (Paragraph 5a – n) of the published ICOMOS Education and Training Guidelines. Each job was simply attributed a 'score' by adding up the relevant agreed number of criteria against each job category in an early attempt to illustrate their relevant importance, as below.

This significant COTAC Skills Matrix document also informed the finalisation of the internationally endorsed 1993 ICOMOS Education and Training Guidelines, and the COTAC document is still accessible through the ICOMOS CIF website at:

<http://cif.icomos.org/page2.html>

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	score
Administrator or Owner		x	x					x	x	x		x	x	x	8
Archaeologist	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x			10
Architect	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Art/architectural Historian	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x	x		10
Builder or Contractor				x	x	x	x				x	x		x	9
Conservation or Historic Buildings Officer	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Conservator	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Engineer (Civil or Structural)				x	x	x	x					x	x		8
Environmental Engineers				x	x	x	x	x				x	x		10
Landscape Architect or Historic Gardens Conservators	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Master Craftworker								x	x	x	x	x	x		8
Materials Scientist				x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		10
Building Economist (Quantity surveyor)				x				x	x	x	x	x	x		9
Surveyors	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Town Planner				x	x			x	x	x		x	x		9
Curator	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14

Whilst ICOMOS CIF and COTAC continue to recognise the value of this assessment, the range of interested parties and issues have significantly developed and expanded in the interim period. As a result COTAC, also recognising CIF's desire for enhanced Capacity Building across the CRM sector, has since expanded this list of related functions and roles. This has required significant pan-professional collaboration, which COTAC is encouraging and incorporating in its web-site developments.

As a related example, COTAC is currently in the process of updating a UK-wide study and review of what is being delivered by the various building professional courses. This aims to identify which cohorts could have a potential impact on developing a conservation interest, awareness and understanding at undergraduate and post-graduate level. The intention is to use this knowledge to promote what information and material is already available on the websites and to enable an understanding of wider beneficial links, such as ICOMOS and its related organisations, including ISCS.

COTAC is also in the process of refreshing its website where its Series of Conference Reports; associated pdf's of Conference Presentations, and its specific learning Study Series will be promoted along with relevant national and international News items. In doing so, it would welcome receiving information on the various ISCS initiatives to assist in promoting their wider appreciation and adoption to its on-line audience.

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