

Andy Xitsas - A Sava Graduate

Andy Xitsas studied the Certification in Residential Valuation with Sava. We recently caught up with him to get an understanding of his experiences with the Sava course and the Q&A is summarised below.

Q: What was your role before joining the course?

A: I spent over 10 years at a niche & well-respected firm of Chartered Surveyors & Agents, based in Mayfair, central London. As part of a close-knit team of only 3 fee earners, my role as a Commercial Surveyor was two-fold and evenly split between agency & professional valuation work. Hence, my focus was either on undertaking complex commercial valuations in the form of rent reviews & lease renewals or in brokering, negotiating and advising on various property transactions such as acquisitions, leasing/letting and purchase/sale instructions.

It's worth mentioning that while working full-time I simultaneously undertook my master's and eventually achieved MRICS status several years ago. Hence, I was well versed and exposed to property valuation, both academically and professionally, prior to enrolling onto this unique & outstanding course.

Q: What made you consider a career in property valuation?

A: Personally and ultimately because I simply love it!

For most of us, property values will continue to play a crucial part in our lives, at various stages, both directly and indirectly. It is no wonder that it is so ingrained within our culture to habitually discuss and have an opinion on property values. To be able to closely follow the market, analyse it and then be appointed as a qualified and certified professional to form an opinion on market value is both challenging and exciting. This diploma not only opens the door for chartered surveyors to engage in this sector but also prepares and equips them to confidently hit the ground running.

It also made total sense commercially. Qualifying as an RICS registered valuer enabled me to provide an additional fee earning service and tap into new markets. I no longer turn away referrals from clients, solicitors and accountants who require an RICS 'Red Book' valuation.

I also considered matters holistically and in doing so I identified another benefit. It is already well documented that qualified property valuers are within the midst of a skills shortage and on the cusp of a retirement 'cliff-edge'.

'Anticipation is your greatest weapon' and I encourage surveyors to keep an eye on their future and capitalise on this opportunity by tackling this skills shortage. On that note, I firmly believe and it's crystal clear to me that property valuers are not just here to stay, they are here to thrive!

I can only encourage both young & experienced chartered surveyors, from various pathways, to courageously enrol onto this certificate and bring along their diverse and respective skills, so

that we can unitedly embrace and complement not just one another but also all the exciting advances in technology within the property valuation industry.

Q: Would you recommend the Certificate in Residential Valuation? (If so, why?)

A: Without any hesitation, yes! I was already well connected and could have obtained registered valuer status by approaching the RICS directly, however my goal wasn't to simply 'get the letters' so to speak. Rather I sought to find the best possible training out there and come out fully competent and confident to value residential property. True to the meaning of the word the 'Certificate in Residential Valuation' makes you a 'Professional'.

Furthermore, the sad truth is that finding a good mentor to support you is extremely difficult – we are all extremely under pressure from all angles. However, on this course you are assigned an assessor whose role it is to ensure the learner demonstrates all the required skills/knowledge by asking the relevant questions.

Also, the assessors are on point, have done this job for years themselves, are very passionate, want you to succeed and will not cut any corners. The training covers an array of topics, valuation methods and types of residential properties and I am truly grateful to all my assessors who made the journey enjoyable and supportive.

Q: What are your plans now that you have completed the qualification?

A: I see nothing but opportunities ahead, both in the short, medium and long-term future. There is lots in the pipeline and I am very excited about announcing them in due time, very soon!

My immediate focus is to continue to deliver high class, timely and compliant valuation reports for all my lender clients. With a long future head of me, bags of energy and passion, I am naturally focused on deepening my working relationships with existing panel managers, whilst there is ample capacity to take on further points from additional panel managers (please get in touch).

Finally, I am currently really enjoying mentoring future AssocRICS registered valuers where I am passing on much of what I have learned on this very course.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add?

Yes, firstly to Lenders & Employers.

The course in question here is the 'Certificate in Residential Valuation' which is for existing and experienced Chartered Surveyors, it is not to be confused with the more recognised 'Diploma in Residential Surveying & Valuation' which has no formal requirements for entry.

I feel it is appropriate to simply remind ourselves that any candidate who will be enrolling onto this course will already carry with them a lot of experience and technical skills. Many MRICS candidates will already have been working on very technical jobs & in senior positions, hence it is only appropriate that employers, recruiters and of course lenders really grasp this important point, so as to allow us to tackle the skills shortage and continue to attract, qualify and hold on to future registered valuers.

The following is aimed at existing chartered surveyors considering taking on this course: -

I have come across all too many chartered surveyors, who are either already exceptional valuers, or at least have all the technical skills to train into one but are simply not VRS-registered!

Many APC-students avoid choosing 'Valuation' to Level 3 as there is a stigma that this is where you are most likely going to fail the final interview. Hence many 'play it safe' and then never look into it again. If you are one of them, then you are missing a trick here because this course, with help from a mentor, will get you qualified and enable you to undertake capital valuations, without the need of an interview. The hardest part was getting to MRICS, why not use your MRICS status to the maximum by getting VRS-registered, it is not as hard as the APC, neither as time consuming but definitely as fruitful.

Finally, I'd like to reassure all readers that there was no agenda or self-gain for me in contributing to this article and for those that know me personally will tell you that I am very measured with my words and praise. Having been the very first MRICS candidate to have graduated from course and now reaping many rewards because of it, I naturally wanted to express my gratitude to everyone at Sava but ultimately and more importantly inspire many Chartered Surveyors out there to take the leap and enrol onto the 'Certificate in Residential Valuation' and become RICS Registered Valuers – it will be more than worth it!

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