Working with mortgage lenders – the battle for recognition of CTA and ATT qualifications continues

Professional standards | Technical

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Whether it is a sign of the start of the house buying season or an indicator of increased confidence in the economy, from our postbag it seems that more clients are applying for mortgages. With that often comes the request for some form of financial reference from their adviser; ie you. Over the years we have gone to considerable lengths to obtain confirmation from mortgage lenders that they will recognise the CTA and ATT qualifications and thus accept financial references from our members. A list of lenders which do accept the qualifications can be found on both the CIOT and ATT websites.

However, the problems caused through ill-advised mortgage lending a few years back and the difficult economic climate has led many lenders to review their lists of acceptable professional qualifications or to simply be far more cautious. In some instances, it appears that they have removed ATT and/or CTA (among others) from their approved list. Unfortunately, they do not tell us of this change in policy and we have to rely upon members to tell us when their references are turned away.

We have taken a decision not to amend the list on the websites unless we receive formal confirmation from the lender that CTA/ATT qualifications are no longer recognised. This is because there have been instances of local branches using out of date lists, not following central lists, or misunderstanding the lists. In one case, a lender did not connect CIOT with CTA – the lender's list of approved qualifications showed CIOT but the member's reference was signed as a CTA. It was initially turned down until the member clarified the position. Until we are advised otherwise by the lender, a member should be able to challenge any rebuttal on the grounds of qualification by a lender on the list on our websites. If a member contacts **hbrehcist@ciot.org.uk** or **cali@att.org.uk**, we can provide details of the lender's

confirmation of recognition of CTA/ATT. The member can then go back to the lender and see if they can be persuaded to change their mind.

We are very aware of the consequences for members of the difficulties this problem presents. Some of you have told us that you have lost credibility with your client and in some cases have even ended up losing the client. We have been exploring ways of trying to resolve the issue, but there is no easy solution. It is extremely difficult to identify who should be approached within the lender and even more challenging to get a reply. We have met twice with the Council of Mortgage Lenders, which is sympathetic and says it supports our qualifications, but it looks doubtful that there is a solution through that route as it does not seem to have the power to direct its members. We do try and follow up any of the lenders declining the qualifications but sometimes come up against issues of local discretion.

We have not given up and are pursuing other lines of action. However, it is not a quick process. In the meantime, please do let us know of any difficulties you are experiencing, as it can be helpful to be able to present evidence to the lenders (on a no names basis) of the consequences of their lack of recognition of CTAs and ATTs.