This is part of the Oxford paper back reference series and deemed on the cover to be for students and professionals. It lives up to its title and as all three authors are lecturers at Leeds Metropolitan University, one from each of the disciplines mentioned in the title, it can be expected to be suitable for use at undergraduate level. Most professionals would not need it unless on the fringes of the professions listed. Undergraduates in architecture and structural engineering might well find it useful although there is little on the design side. Also included are many terms relating to the environment and sustainability, with which all the built environment professionals are currently concerned.

Although the back cover states that it includes useful further reading references I failed to find them. They are not within the text and there is no supplementary material before or after the dictionary proper. In the same vein one should mention that the ‘many’ weblinks are few and far between and no websites are cited in the traditional manner, e.g. www.abc.... Instead the entry may say visit the website of xyz organisation. The actual site has either to be googled or located via the OUP site www.oup.com/uk/reference/resources/construction which is given on the back cover. This is not the most helpful approach. Nowadays most dictionaries manage a little prefatory material or essential data as appendices.

To consider the terms covered is difficult given the wide variation in requirement between a surveyor, whether building or quantity, and a civil engineer. Terms such as ‘error’ and ‘employer’ are more general than one would expect to find here. But ‘estoppel’ is well within the scope. While some definitions are lengthy, others are amazingly precise and not as informative as they could be. Many of the web links found take you to organisations concerned in that area. However as I continued to delve I found ‘elm’, but not oak, ash or beech, although oak was referred to comparatively from the elm definition. Trying to get a little further into that I checked green oak, widely used in timber frame structures, to find ‘green timber’ but not oak.

This theme continued with some entries being surprising, such as Murphy’s law. The first cross reference I checked was unfortunately missing: ‘Recirculated hot water SEE Secondary circulation’ (if you can find it – I could not!). The entry for ‘first angle’ refers you to ‘the technology students web site’, whatever that is. It sounds like an internal reference from a reading list which has not been edited out of the undergraduate version. The inclusion of ‘first floor’ is a bit naïve given that it gives the English definition without a mention that some countries
call the ground floor the first floor (fairly logically it may seem to some). There are many more points which may be made. The entry for ‘contract’ does not lead you to the standard forms of contract of which ACA and JCT are included but not NEC nor the BPF Property forms. These are UK based as is the whole dictionary – to extend it would be impractical but it should be stated where you are dealing with topics governed by UK legislation and standards. The building regulations do get a mention but a very slim one and no web link to their source on the planningportal. It is this type of detail which would have made it so much more useful to its potential users. An opportunity missed. Still for a relatively inexpensive volume it can achieve its basic aim for the undergraduate audience.

Valerie J Nurcombe
Winsford