ARB Business Plan 2014

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) was established by an Act of Parliament - the Architects Act – in 1997. ARB is both the independent statutory regulator of all UK architects and the UK's competent authority for architects.

ARB has fifteen members on its Board, eight of whom are members of the public (lay members) appointed by the Privy Council, and seven are architects who are elected by their peers. The term of office for both architect and lay members is three years, with the option of a second consecutive three-year term if reappointed or re-elected.

Our primary purpose is to deliver the Act and in doing so, we will also observe other statutory requirements. In accordance with the provisions of the Architects Act 1997, we work to ensure that architects are competent and have integrity. We set and maintain standards for entry to the Register of Architects, as well as the standards of conduct and practice which are expected of architects.

The Board has identified two objectives from the Act which underpin all of our work. These are:

Protect the users and potential users of architects' services, and

Support architects through regulation

Protect the users and potential users of architects' services: We will protect the users and potential users of architects' services by regulating architects so that the public can be confident that architects are appropriately qualified. We will raise the public's awareness of the Register.

Support architects through regulation: We will maintain and publicly demonstrate the status of architects as competent, qualified professionals, and we will regulate use of the title "architect". We will raise awareness of the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice and the need to maintain their competence.

We will ensure that we act in a manner which is at all times proportionate, while seeking to maximise the efficient and effective use of our resources. We will ensure that we secure value for money, and that we are accountable to our stakeholders.

We will work in conjunction with partners from within the profession, education, the wider built environment and beyond, to deliver our objectives in the most efficient way.

The 2014 Business Plan reflects those objectives and also reflects the priorities identified by the Board for 2014 – 2016, which are detailed in the Statement of Priorities which is published on ARB's website.

Format of the Business Plan

The Plan for 2014 has been divided into key areas of our work. Section F identifies the performance indicators which monitor the delivery of our regular work, such as entering appropriately qualified applicants onto the Register, the timely handling of complaints, prescribing the qualifications needed to become an architect and keeping stakeholders informed. Section G notes the areas which the Board may consider as part of a rolling programme of work for 2015 and 2016.

Reporting against the Business Plan

An annual report showing our performance against the Business Plan is given at the first Board meeting after the year end. The management team keeps the plan under review on a monthly basis and also assesses performance mid-year. The Board is alerted to any major problems in delivery.
The performance indicators in Section F are monitored regularly by the management team and are reported to the Board twice yearly. We monitor financial performance through the budget setting process and management accounts, which are provided to the Board four times a year.

Section A - Maintaining the Quality of and Access to the Register

Under the Architects Act 1997, ARB maintains the UK Register of architects. The Register identifies those who are entitled to use the title "architect" in business and practice as they have met the requirements for qualifications and competence. The Register is the tool through which potential users of architects' services can find an architect and check that an architect is registered. It is also important to architects that they are identified as qualified professionals. The Register must therefore be accurate and accessible. The work which underpins the maintenance of the Register is wide ranging.

	Area of Work	Actions	Measures of Success
1.	**Improve the accuracy of the Register by improving the timescales for updating information. (Second year of three year project).**	• Increase the use of online tools for updating details.	80% of change of detail requests received through online tool (60% in 2013). 90% of change of detail requests processed within three days.
2.	**Promote further use of online registration forms. (Second year of three year project)**	• Enhance promotion of the system. • Respond to feedback on improvements to the system.	Further increase in the number using the online facility to register. 90% of all applications received via the online facility (80% in 2013).
3.	**Provide an efficient and effective service to all enquirers.**	• Ensure our online resources are readily available and are easy to understand and use. • Increase use of online chat and availability of online information, interactive media and feedback mechanisms. • Provide timely responses to queries.	Gather feedback and statistical information that demonstrates we are efficient and effective.
4.	**Scope a fundamental review of the routes to registration. (First stage of project).**	Project planning to deliver the following in 2015-2016: • Explore whether current arrangements remain fit for purpose and reflect current best practice. • Explore whether registration should continue to be qualifications-based and any implications for change at an EU and international level. • Consider whether alternative routes to registration would be viable and would widen access to the Register whilst maintaining standards of competence.	The scope and plan of work is ready to action in 2015. The following stages will seek to: • Test the basis for ARB's requirements for registration and explore whether changes could be made in the future to widen access to the Register, whilst providing public confidence in the competence of architects. • Consider whether alternative routes to registration would be viable and continue to meet ARB's purpose and objectives.

Section B – Maintaining the Qualifications of Architects

Under the Architects Act 1997, ARB prescribes (or recognises) the qualifications required to become an architect for those who gain their qualifications within the UK. We also contribute to the scrutiny and review of those qualifications which are obtained in other European Economic Areas, and which seek to be listed at a European level. We therefore maintain systems for assessing qualifications against set criteria. These criteria are held in common with the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Quality Assurance Agency benchmark for architectural qualifications. The UK criteria also reflect the minimum requirements across the EEA. We work closely with many other organisations and Member States to ensure that our systems are robust, fair and efficient and provide support to Schools and Institutions of Architecture, whilst ensuring that as a regulatory body, we have confidence that prescribed qualifications meet the Board's objectives and criteria.

	Area of Work	Actions	Measures of Success
1.	**To have engaged with institutions, students and other stakeholders regarding the prescription process and Criteria to inform, to obtain feedback and to promote an understanding of ARB's role with regard to qualifications, and to maintain a high quality service for institutions, students and EU Member states.**	To promote the availability of the following services and to meet 90% of all requests for: • feedback sessions; • planning meetings; • university liaison sessions; • regular liaison meetings with stakeholders; • speaking at relevant conferences/ forums; • providing support for those seeking to list qualifications in Europe. To keep the Student Handbook and other areas of ARB's website relating to prescribed qualifications up to date. To gather feedback on the content and structure of the current Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications from key stakeholders, with a view to reviewing the Criteria in 2015.	Relationships are good with key stakeholders, as exhibited by individual and collective feedback, and should therefore be maintained. Stakeholders believe ARB adds value over and above performance on the prescription function, as evidenced by collective and individual feedback. ARB is kept well informed of possible future developments in order to plan its work and respond to developments. ARB will have a good understanding of views about the current Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications. ARB will be prepared to make a full contribution to the review of the Criteria in 2015/2016.
2.	**On behalf of the UK and its capacity as the UK's Competent Authority for Architects, scrutinise and review European qualifications which are notified to the European Commission for listing under the PQD.**	Ensure that the European Commission's deadlines for considering notifications are met on every occasion.	ARB will have reviewed 100% of European notifications within the European Commission's deadlines.
3.	**Continue work to explore the possibilities of developing a process to deal with prescription of UK qualifications offered at institutions based outside the UK/prescription of qualifications offered by overseas institutions (in conjunction with the review of routes to registration).**	Seek and collect the views of UK Schools and Government. Consider whether ARB is able to develop a process to deal with this area. Present results for consideration by the Prescription Committee, and if appropriate, the Board.	ARB has considered its policy in this area and explored the possibilities of developing a process to deal with UK qualifications offered at institutions based outside the UK/prescription of qualifications offered by overseas institutions. ARB will have kept its stakeholders informed concerning its position and any potential outcome.

Section C - Maintaining the Standards of Conduct and Practice of Architects

Users and potential users of architects' services need to have confidence in the standards set by us under the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice, and that we take appropriate action where architects fall below the standards expected. We will seek to raise awareness of the Code and how clients may use the Code to help them in their relationship with their architect, as well as raising awareness and understanding of the Code by architects themselves. We will investigate allegations of unacceptable professional conduct and serious professional incompetence but will also seek to mitigate the risk of such situations arising.

	Area of Work	Actions	Measures of Success
1.	**Maintain awareness of the Code and steps that architects can take to mitigate complaints.**	• Use the website to provide advice to architects on preventing and handling complaints. • Increase the frequency of relevant articles in the eBulletin. • Seek opportunities to work with others (RIBA/ACA etc) to provide written information or presentations to architects. • Develop and publish online assistance to architects in relation to professional standards through online presentations.	It is unlikely that ARB would experience any measurable downturn in complaints, which are rising. Success is measurable by the increase in profile of the Register, and feedback on the usefulness and accessibility of the information. A possible decrease in telephone enquiries as a result of enhancements to available information could be offset by an increase from growing awareness of ARB's role.
2.	**Ensure efficient processes which are fair to all in all aspects of complaints handling.**	• Review and improve all literature and processes involved in complaints handling in light of feedback. • Develop a more effective method for complaints to be submitted online.	80% of third party reviews find no further action. Take action where identified. Increase the use of feedback forms and review and action where appropriate. A fully operational online complaints system in place.
3.	**Ensure the investigations process is running smoothly and offers a fair process to all.**	• Ensure that the IP and PCC are adequately resourced and trained in best practice. • Embed the Investigations Oversight Committee and ensure that it is communicating effectively with both the Board and those investigating complaints. • Enhancing outdated Professional Standards database and IT system.	80% of Investigations Panel decisions are reached within 12 weeks. 80% of Third Party Reviews find no further action to be taken. No findings of 'no case to answer' at the PCC or adverse findings by Judicial Review. No successful appeals against PCC decisions.
4.	**PCC Consent Orders.**	• Prepare draft Rules and Guidance to introduce consent orders. • Consult and obtain approval for changes. • Amend documentation, website etc for implementation.	Consent Order regime agreed and ready for implementation in 2014. 10% of cases utilise this route in the first 12 months of operation.

Section D – Raising Public Awareness of the Register and Helping Users and Potential Users of Architects' Services to Make Informed Choices

We recognise that it is not sufficient simply to hold an accurate Register. To be of value, the Register must be accessible, and users and potential users of architects' services must understand the distinction of the title "architect" and the importance of the Register in confirming an architect's registered status. We therefore work to increase awareness of the Register, to inform the public about the qualifications and competence of architects and to alert members of the public to the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice. We also work to prevent the misuse of the title "architect" which may only be used by those on the Register.

	Area of Work	Actions	Measures of Success
1.	**Support consumer confidence through raising awareness of the Code with users and potential users of architects' services.**	• Publish articles promoting the importance of the Code of Conduct in relation to the Register of Architects. • Increase the prominence of the Code on ARB's website. • Utilise digital media and online presence to raise awareness.	Difficult to measure success of the general effect of actions, but an increase in the mention of the Code in publications. Increase in the hits on the relevant sections of the ARB website by 10%.
2.	**Increase use of the online Register which will mitigate the risk of consumers being misled by those misusing the title "architect".**	• Inform members of the public about the online Register, and the difference between an architect and non-registered person, emphasising the importance of checking the Register. • Take steps to ensure that www.architects-register.org.uk is appropriately optimised. • Encourage linkage to the online Register, both with architects and other organisations. • Encourage architects to add their email and web addresses to their personalised online Register webpage. • Understand consumer needs through engagement with consumers and consumer surveys at consumer shows events. • Undertake targeted campaigns to enhance the understanding of the role of an architect (perhaps councils or planning).	Increase the number of visits to the online Register by 10 %. The Register is more consumer-friendly as potential clients are able both to email an architect and view their website.
3.	**Encourage architects to promote their registered status to increase awareness and value of the Register.**	• Promote the use of the ARB logo and explain the value of referring to registered status. • Expand the secure area in which architects can have access to their details and embedded logo information.	An increase in 10% of architects that link to the online Register, or display the ARB logo on their own website.

	Area of Work	Actions	Measures of Success
		• Increase links to the ARB Register via websites.	
4.	**Procure local expertise for regulation in Scotland.**	• Run tender exercise for legal services to be provided for prosecuting misuse of title and/or PCC cases in Scotland.	The completion of an exercise to consider whether it would be advantageous to appoint a legal service provider with Scottish expertise.

Section E – Corporate Functions

	Area of Work	Actions	Measures of Success
1.	**Consider the implications, both legal and practical, of amendments to the Professional Qualifications Directive (PQD); prepare for changes to the European notification/listing process, the requirements for practical training experience and the ARB Criteria following revisions to the PQD.**	• Consider the outcome of the PQD legislative changes. • Take legal advice and advice from DCLG where necessary. • Determine where changes may need to be made, produce plans and timeframes for revision to the appropriate ARB policies, requirements and documents in 2015. • Analyse and cost any necessary system changes for 2015 budget. • Engage in discussions with stakeholders and ensure understanding of the changes. • Ensure information is readily available.	ARB systems are ready to meet the UK deadline for compliance with the PQD and amended Architects Act. Stakeholders are aware of the implications of the changes. ARB revises its policies, requirements and documents so that they are compliant with the revised Directive when implemented in the UK.
2.	**Managing risk.**	• Audit Committee regularly reports to Board. • Internal audit function appropriately resourced and monitored. • Maintain reporting cycle of risk register and risk strategy from staff to Board level. • Monitor delivery against performance indicators (bi-annual), the Business Plan (annual), ARB's purpose and objectives (annual). • Ensure adequate reserves are maintained through review of reserves policy and maintenance of the policy minimum. • Effective and regular reviews of all of ARB's policies. • Monitor the outcome of legal challenges for areas of improvement and trends, particularly where there may be a financial or reputational risk.	Information provided to the Board on performance and risk considered to be at the right level by the Board. Internal audit continues to be robust and add value, as assessed by ARB staff and Audit Committee. Live risks that do arise are sufficiently mitigated by the actions in place or the level of risk accepted as being within the Board risk tolerance level. The level of reserves maintained provides the appropriate level of reassurance/confidence to the Board, the DCLG, the organisation and key stakeholders.
3.	**Maintain adequate and appropriately skilled staffing levels that are utilised effectively.**	• Ensure sufficient staff resources are maintained to deliver statutory functions. • Maintain staff development budget and encourage flexible working, both internally to make best use of resources and through flexible arrangements for staff. • Cultivate an environment that	Maintain adequate staffing levels in 2014. Report on increased flexibility in use of staff resources along with evidence of increased flexible working. A committed and engaged staff resource (2015 Engagement survey).

	Area of Work	Actions	Measures of Success
		• supports employee engagement to assist employees in delivering to their full potential. • Ensure pay and reward is competitive and reflects the current market.	
4.	**Engage fully with the Periodic Review and maintain Government confidence.**	• Engage with the Periodic Review of ARB at all levels, ensuring Chair/Board contribution as well as prompt production of information requested. • Encourage and facilitate engagement of stakeholders in the Periodic Review, particularly users and potential users of architects' services. • Identify areas for improvement under the legislation. • Demonstrate consideration of the Framework Agreement and undertake an annual review. • Maintain transparency wherever possible. • Annual internal review to ensure delivery of statutory obligations. • Consider and contribute to areas of policy development, such as the appropriateness of title regulation.	Confirm ARB's compliance with the Framework Agreement at year end. Confirm ARB's delivery of the statutory obligations throughout the year, unaffected by the Periodic Review. Government recognises constructive engagement in the process.
5.	**Efficient financial management.**	• Clear budget setting process agreed and understood by Board. • Regular monitoring of outcomes against budget, along with forward planning, horizon scanning and alerting the Board. • Prompt notification of fees. • Alignment of budget and Business Plan and consideration of capital projects and longer term financial obligations.	Deliver ARB's work as set out in 2014 Business Plan within budget. Fees collection process efficiently handled, meeting timescales and with minimal impact on the normal range of those failing to pay fees.
6.	**Enhance the information on trends in the Register, profession and students and provide information which is sufficient for the Board to take informed decisions.**	• Identify additional Board requirements. • Work with partners to access existing available information to meet requirements. • Produce clear and timely information enabling the Board to make evidence- based decisions.	Board effectiveness review confirms satisfaction with information.

	Area of Work	Actions	Measures of Success
7.	**Compliance.**	• Health and safety. • Employment requirements. • Data handling. • PAYE. • Introduce pension auto-enrolment.	No adverse incidents taking place during 2014.
8.	**IT strategy**	• Keep under regular review the strategic IT development plan. • Understand the ongoing needs and vision for the organisation, including a strategy on continuous improvement and efficiency savings through technology.	Systems remain stable enabling staff to perform activities. External systems remain fit for purpose, available and responsive to any feedback received.
9.	**Communications.**	• Continue to develop ARB's website as a key information resource, responsive to users' needs, and updated promptly when changes/additions are required. • Revisit and refresh key messages for ARB's audiences and identify digital and other delivery methods. • Enhance the Stakeholder Engagement Register as a tool for setting objectives and deliver programme. • Continue to build on relationships with the key architectural journals. • Key messages are communicated to staff, who become advocates of those messages.	Increase in the number of visitors to the website. Increase in the number of people who feel well-informed by ARB. Few critical/incorrect articles in the architectural press.
10.	**Finalise the secure external portal for key areas of ARB's work. (Second year of project).**	• Continue to implement a portal enabling access to information in a secure environment.	Reduced printing and scanning costs, postage and staff and external input. Improving efficiency and KPIs. Increased data security. Flexibility of working.
11.	**Explore and take up opportunities to work with stakeholders jointly to deliver ARB's objectives.**	• Seek opportunities for joint working with RIBA, SCHOSA, ACA and others.	Joint initiatives share costs and should increase the effectiveness of the delivery of ARB's (and the stakeholders') objectives.
12.	**Review the effectiveness of the regulation of the title 'architect' as a consumer protection tool.**	• Consider the prevalence of misuse of title. • Assess the effectiveness of the current regime.	For the Board to have a position on the effectiveness of the regulation of the title architect in order to input into the

	Area of Work	Actions	Measures of Success
V1		• Consider the requirements and limitations of the current legislation. • Benchmark against other jurisdictions/professions.	periodic review.

Section F - Key Performance Indicators

We have performance indicators for all areas of work, which are monitored by both the management team and the Board.

Performance Indicator	Target for 2014	Assumptions	Responsibility
Maintaining the quality of the Register: **Processing of registration applications**			
Applications received through the UK route to registration processed within 30 working days.	90% of applications processed within 30 working days.	The number of applications likely to remain static at approximately 800/900 per annum.	
Applications received through the automatic European route to registration processed within 30 working days.	90% of applications processed within 30 working days.	The number of applications likely to remain static at approximately 400 per annum.	
Reinstatements & Readmissions.	90% of reinstatements and readmissions processed within 10 working days.	The number of applications likely to remain static at approximately 600 per annum.	
Maintaining the qualifications of architects: **Processing applications for the prescription of qualifications and listing of qualifications at EU level**			
Average no. of weeks to complete initial scrutiny of prescription applications.	95% of applications initially scrutinised within three weeks.	ARB is likely to receive in the region of 18-22 applications for prescription/to renew prescription during the 2013/2014 cycle which is higher than in 2012/2013.	
Average no. of weeks taken between an application being received to it being considered by the Committee for the first time.	95% within eight weeks.	ARB is likely to receive in the region of 18-22 applications for prescription/to renew prescription during the 2013/2014 cycle which is higher than in 2012/2013.	
Average no. of weeks taken for an annual monitoring submission to be considered by the Committee for the first time.	95% within eight weeks.	ARB is likely to receive in the region of 30 annual monitoring submissions during the 2013/2014 cycle which is similar to 2012/2013.	

Section F - Key Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Target for 2014	Assumptions	Responsibility
ARB to have processed responses to all queries regarding the UK's notifications to the European Commission within two weeks of receipt.	100%	It is anticipated that the UK will make 2-3 notifications to the European Commission during the 2013/2014 cycle which is the same as in 2012/2013.	
ARB to have scrutinised and reviewed European notifications within the two-month consultation period set out in the European Commission's Notification Procedures.	100%	In previous years, the number of European notifications has fluctuated widely. On the basis of European Commission data, up to 50 European notifications are due to be made during the latter part of 2013 and in 2014. Based on previous figures it is estimated that 25 -30 notifications will need to be reviewed in 2014 which is the same as in 2013.	
Maintaining the standards of conduct and practice of architects: Managing the complaints process			
Complaints in office – No. of weeks from date of receipt of a formal complaint to Investigations Panel referral or closure.	80% referred to the Investigations Panel or closed within sixteen weeks.	160 complaints are dealt with. (no increase from 2013)	
Complaints with the Investigations Panel – No. of weeks from referral of case to issue of final decision.	80% within twelve weeks.	70 decisions are made. (no increase from 2013)	
PCC Hearing date – No. of weeks from Investigations Panel final decision to production of Board solicitor's Report.	80% within twelve weeks.	30 reports are produced. (no increase from 2013)	
PCC Hearing date – No. of weeks from receipt of Board solicitor's Report to PCC hearing.	80% within twenty weeks.	26 hearings are scheduled. (no increase from 2013)	

Performance Indicator	Target for 2014	Assumptions	Responsibility
Raising public awareness of the Register and helping users and potential users of architects' services to make informed choices			
Title complaints in office – No. of weeks from date of receipt to referral to Board's solicitor or closure.	80% within sixteen weeks.	600 investigations are undertaken. (no increase from 2013)	
Title complaints with Board's solicitor to conclusion - No. of weeks from date of referral to non-prosecution conclusion/summons.	80% within twelve weeks.	60 cases are referred to Board's solicitor. (no increase from 2013)	
Online Register availability 24 hours a day, seven days a week.	Online Register available via website at all times.	No major incidents which affect the ability of ARB as a whole to function occur during the year.	
Corporate functions			
Publish Annual Report and Financial Statements.	Publish electronically within six months of the year end. To receive an unqualified audit opinion. Comply with FReM and accounting standards.		
Issue post-Board eBulletins.	Issue eBulletins within five days of each Board meeting.		

Glossary

DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
EEA	European Economic Area
ENACA	European Network of Architectural Competent Authorities
FReM	Financial Reporting Manual (Government document)
PQD	Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications
PCC	Professional Conduct Committee

Section G

ARB maintains a rolling programme of review for all of its policies and procedures. The following are the main major areas which ARB may consider in 2014/2015.

2015

- Review the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice [last reviewed in 2010]. (This item was scheduled for 2014 but has been moved to 2015 owing to the extent of work which may take precedence in 2014).
- Amendments to the Architects Act to reflect the Professional Qualifications Directive.
- Any work necessary to implement changes proposed in the Periodic Review.
- Review of the Staff Handbook.
- Conduct a Remuneration Review and Engagement Survey.
- (Architect Elections 2015).
- Review of ARB's Guidelines for the Maintenance of Competence. (This item was scheduled for 2014 but has been moved to 2015 owing to the extent of work which may take precedence in 2014).
- Review of the criteria for the prescription of qualifications [last reviewed in 2011].
- Review of the procedure for the prescription of qualifications.
- Review routes to registration.
- Commence two-year project on complaints handling IT systems.

2016

- Review of the prescribed examination procedures [last reviewed in 2010].
- Implementation of the Professional Qualifications Directive.
- Deliver final stage of two-year project on complaints handling systems.