

## Practical Training Guidelines – Frequently Asked Questions

These frequently asked questions have been put together to help you if you have any queries about the practical experience you are about to undertake or have already undertaken.

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## Practical Training Guidelines – Frequently Asked Questions for students and Part 3 candidates

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Under rule 15.3(b) of ARB's General Rules you are eligible to apply for registration if in addition to the required prescribed qualifications (listed in Schedule 1 of the Rules) you have also:

'... recently completed a minimum of 24 months' practical experience under the direct supervision of a professional working in the construction industry which should include at least 12 months working in the EEA, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, under the direct supervision of an architect.

For the purpose of this Rule:

"months"	–	these will be calendar months of full time working (at least 20 hours a week). Reasonable time off for holidays and illness may be included in this period. (Where the work is less than 20 hours per week, applicants will be expected to complete a commensurately longer period of experience.)
"practical experience"	–	experience which consists of activities which would typically be undertaken by an architect in practice. (The Part 3 Criteria are helpful in setting out in broad terms, some of the activities which are likely to be required to be undertaken.)
"recently"	–	at least 12 of the 24 months' experience should have been undertaken in the two years immediately before taking the Part 3 exam.
"direct supervision"	–	the person supervising should have responsibility for and control over the work being undertaken.

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“professional working in the construction industry”	–	will be an architect registered in the territory where the experience is being undertaken or a chartered or similarly qualified member of an appropriate professional body. The ‘construction industry’ will include qualified professionals typically involved in the procurement, design and management of the built environment.
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### **Guidance on the application of Rule 15.3(b)**

Whilst Rule 15.3(b) states that candidates for registration should have undertaken a minimum of 12 months experience working in the EEA (including the UK), the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man under the supervision of an architect, candidates should note that the UK’s Part 3 qualification tests UK practice and law. Practical experience is an integral element of the Part 3 qualification, and is important in assisting individuals to meet the Part 3 Criteria against which all Part 3 candidates are assessed.

It is therefore recommended that candidates undertake a minimum of 12 months’ experience within the UK, as those whose experience lies solely outside the UK may find it difficult to meet the required level of knowledge and skill.

Candidates must be supervised during their practical experience. ‘Direct supervision’ is defined above but essentially, the supervisor should have control over and take responsibility for the work being undertaken. Typically the candidate and the supervisor will be employed by the same organisation but where the relationship is not typical they will need to satisfy their PSA that the level and type of supervision is appropriate.

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While it is acceptable for any professional who is working within the construction industry (as defined above) to supervise up to 12 months of the experience, a registered architect is likely to be in the best position to assist a candidate in acquiring the required levels of skill and knowledge. Candidates who are not supervised by an architect may find it helpful to seek guidance and support from an architect working in another practice.

The ARB Rule sets out the requirement for registration in the UK. Candidates may find that schools and Part 3 providers have more specific or additional requirements for entry to courses and for exam purposes. In the first instance they should discuss any queries with their professional studies adviser (PSA) who will be able to advise them about the suitability of a placement and whether it is likely to satisfy ARB's and the school's own rules.

## **1. Is there a typical pattern for training to become an architect in the UK?**

There are a number of acceptable variations but the most straightforward route to qualification takes a minimum of seven years. A student would typically:

- Take a three-year first degree in architecture which is prescribed by ARB (often referred to as Part 1)
- Followed by at least one year of practical experience
- Then a further two years' full-time study (or part-time equivalent) towards a prescribed diploma or second degree in architecture (often referred to as Part 2)
- Followed by at least one further year's practical experience
- You would then take a prescribed professional practice qualification (often referred to as Part 3)

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## 2. What is a Professional Studies Adviser (PSA)?

A Professional Studies Adviser (PSA) is someone who has responsibility for monitoring graduates who are undertaking professional experience, both post Part 1 and post Part 2. They are often also responsible for the teaching of Professional Studies within the schools of architecture and are involved in the research of matters related to professional education. Nearly all are qualified architects and many practice architecture at the same time as teaching and mentoring students in practice.

Your university should be able to tell you who your PSA is and their contact details

## 3. I'm not linked to a school of architecture, how can I contact a PSA?

During your year out (between Part 1 and Part 2) you will usually work with the PSA attached to the university where you studied for your Part 1. If you studied for your Part 1 overseas or for some other reason you do not have a link to a university, you could seek advice from the institution where you intend to take your Part 2 or Part 3, depending where you are in the qualifying process. They may offer a PSA monitoring and mentoring service (for which there is likely to be a fee). If not, the RIBA North West Region provides a PEDR Monitoring and Support service - again there is a fee for this (for more information see: [www.architecture.com/EducationAndCareers/RIBA Part3/PEDR](http://www.architecture.com/EducationAndCareers/RIBA%20Part3/PEDR)).

## 4. Can I count experience gained anywhere in the world?

You should work for at least 12 months in an EU member state (including the UK), the EEA, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man. The remaining 12 months may be undertaken anywhere in the world. You should note, however, that your Part 3 examination will be testing your knowledge and skills in relation to UK practice. It is therefore recommended that at least 12 months of your experience is undertaken in the UK.

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**5. I have been working in Dubai supervised by a UK architect, working on UK projects. Does this count as UK/EEA experience?**

In most cases the location of your practice will determine the location of your experience. If, however, you are supervised by a UK/EEA architect and working on UK/EEA projects, then it is possible that this could be counted as UK/EEA experience. You should discuss this with your PSA particularly if you are only working for part of the time on the UK/EEA projects.

**6. What sort of experience should this be?**

The experience should consist of activities that would typically be undertaken by an architect in practice. This covers a wide range of areas but you will find reference to the Part 3 Criteria and PEDR website ([www.pedr.co.uk](http://www.pedr.co.uk)) helpful in setting out the skills and knowledge you will be assessed against.

**7. Can I count the two years I spent working in an architect's office before I started my Part 1 course towards my practical experience?**

The ARB/RIBA Rule states that at least 12 of the 24 months' experience should have been undertaken within the 2 years immediately before taking your Part 3 exam and would, therefore, permit you to include up to 12 months of any experience undertaken before you started your Part 1. It will, however, be for your school to decide whether the experience is acceptable to them for the purposes of the professional practice examination and you are advised to discuss this with your PSA.

If you have not recorded this experience your PSA will want to know the type of work you were doing and the level at which you were working and they will most likely want to see references or other supporting evidence.

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**8. I want to go straight from Part 1 to Part 2 and then work for two years before taking my Part 3, is this acceptable?**

Yes, this would be acceptable under the ARB/RIBA Rule - but many schools prefer students to have some practical experience before starting their Part 2 qualification and you would need to check this with your PSA or admissions tutor at the institution where you intend to study.

**9. I do a work placement as part of my course, can I also count this towards my 24 months' practical experience?**

It will depend where you are studying, ARB/RIBA policy does not permit you to 'double count' – that is to use time spent in practice which contributes to the achievement of academic credits at Part 1 and/or Part 2, to also satisfy part of the practical experience requirement.

If your placement does not contribute to the achievement of academic credits at Part 1 and/or Part 2, then it is likely that you would be able to include it. Your course tutor or PSA should be able to advise you of the position for your specific course. As a general guide, in order for you to be able to include some/all of your placement experience your course must be longer than the typical 3 years for a Part 1 qualification and 2 years for a Part 2 qualification.

If in doubt you should check with your PSA or contact the Qualifications team at ARB ([info@arb.org.uk](mailto:info@arb.org.uk)).

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### **10. I am studying for my course part-time, can I include my time in practice towards the experience requirement?**

If the course is officially designated a part-time course and you are working for at least 20 hours a week, you should be able to include some or all of it provided the other requirements are met.

If you are working for less than 20 hours a week you will have to complete a correspondingly longer period of experience.

Remember that the experience must also be ‘recent’ - i.e. 12 of the 24 months must be in the 2 years immediately preceding the Part 3 exam, so it is likely that only part of the period can be included.

### **11. I am on a full time course but I am also working more than 20 hours a week, can I count this experience?**

If you are on a full-time course you may not include experience gained during the academic term. You may be able to count experience gained during the holidays – see Q12 below.

### **12. Does time spent working in the summer holidays count?**

The ARB/RIBA Rule does not set any minimum limits for periods of experience but if your placement is very short your PSA may want to see evidence of reasonable involvement in the practice and in the projects you are working on. For this reason your school may prefer you to spend at least 3 months in any placement and you are advised to discuss this with your PSA if you think it may be shorter.

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**13. Do I have to record my practical experience in a particular format?**

ARB rules don't specify a format but your school or PSA may ask you to use their own recording system or the RIBA Professional Education and Development Resource (PEDR) for example. You should check with your PSA.

**14. Do I submit my log book or PEDR to ARB with my application for registration?**

No – ARB does not look in detail at the work you have been doing. Your PSA will sign it off and use it to help you plan your experience and guide you in deciding when you are ready to sit the Part 3 exam. Your professional practice (Part 3) examiner will assess the content and quality of your experience as part of your professional practice exam. (ARB ensures that schools do this to a standard that meets its criteria as part of its prescription process).

**15. I didn't complete a record of my first year of practical experience at the time, can I do this now?**

ARB rules would permit this, however you should speak to your PSA because each school sets their own requirements regarding this.

**16. My PSA signed off my PEDR sheets and approved my experience but I failed the experience assessment at Part 3?**

Your PSA will provide guidance as to whether your experience is of an appropriate nature in terms of length, location, etc to meet the ARB/RIBA rules and will assist you in deciding whether you are ready to take the Part 3 examination.

At the Part 3 examination the professional practice examiner will assess the content and quality of your experience and whether you have gained the appropriate competencies to allow you to fulfil the joint ARB/RIBA Criteria at Part 3 level.

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It is possible that a student may appear to have met all the requirements but at the Part 3 examination, is not able to satisfy the examiners that they have met the required standard.

### **17. I am self-employed and working on my own projects, can my ‘supervisor’ be a registered architect from another practice?**

The supervising professional should have responsibility for and control over the work being undertaken. Typically the candidate and supervisor will be employed by the same organisation but where the relationship is not typical, for example where a candidate is self-employed, they will need to satisfy their PSA that the level and type of supervision is appropriate.

In support of your case your PSA may want to see evidence of an agreement between you and your supervisor, setting out how the arrangement will work, how regularly you will meet and what the ‘supervision’ will consist of. Whatever the circumstances, your supervisor is expected to have a close and structured working relationship with you.

You should also be aware that candidates who are self-employed may be exposed to more limited experience with little scope for getting involved in an appropriate range of projects at different stages. They may also be putting themselves in a vulnerable position, particularly in terms of liability. As an alternative it might be helpful to work in collaboration with another architect who would have a strong professional interest in maintaining close supervision of your work and ensuring that you are working at the right level.

You should certainly discuss this with your PSA and perhaps consider other options if possible.

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### **18. What happens if I lose my job before completing Part 3?**

In the first instance, you should consult your PSA. ARB does not require that candidates are in employment whilst undertaking their Part 3 so long as the experience requirements have been met (particular note should be made of the requirement for 12 of the 24 months' experience having been undertaken in the two years immediately before taking the Part 3 exam). Therefore, subject to your prior experience and Part 3 course provider regulations, you may find that you are able to remain registered on your course and complete Part 3.

### **19. Does my supervisor have to be an architect?**

The ARB/RIBA Rule permits up to 12 months' experience supervised by any professional working within the construction industry so if you are working for a multi-disciplinary practice or you are employed by an organisation other than an architectural practice, provided the work you are doing is architectural in nature (see Q4) your supervisor may be any professional as defined above provided they have knowledge and experience of the area within which you are working.

If your supervisor is not an architect, you may also find it helpful to seek guidance and support from an architect working in another practice.

### **20. A relative has offered to employ me in their practice, can they be my supervisor?**

While ARB/RIBA rules would not prevent this, as good practice, you should see if anyone else in the practice may be able to take on the role of supervisor. Your PSA should be able to advise you whether in your particular circumstances this is likely to create any problems.

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**21. I don't think my experience satisfies your Rule, what should I do?**

In the first instance you should discuss this with your PSA who will be able to advise you whether your experience is likely to meet ARB/RIBA requirements and whether it will be adequate to assist you in meeting the Part 3 Criteria. If you need further information or have any additional questions please contact ARB or RIBA.

**22. My PSA says that although I have 24 months' experience, it is very specialised and I will need to spend more time in practice before I attempt the Part 3 exam?**

It is possible that while you might satisfy the Rule in terms of length of training and location, your PSA may advise that the breadth or quality of that experience may not be sufficient to assist you in meeting the Part 3 Criteria. In this instance they may well advise you to get some more experience before taking your exam. 24 months is the minimum required for registration but many candidates will need longer than this to acquire the required level of skill and knowledge for examination.

**If having spoken to your PSA and looked at the questions and answers above, you are still unsure of the acceptability of your experience or the steps you should take next, please contact us at:**

**info@arb.org.uk .**

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## **Glossary of abbreviations used:**

ARB Architects Registration Board

EEA European Economic Area – includes member states of the European Union plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein

EU European Union

RIBA Royal Institute of British Architects

PSA Professional Studies Adviser

PEDR Professional Experience and Development Record



Architects Registration Board

## Contact us

**Queries about your experience or qualifications:**  
For the attention of the Qualifications team at: [info@arb.org.uk](mailto:info@arb.org.uk)

**Queries about registration:**  
For the attention of the Registration Team at: [info@arb.org.uk](mailto:info@arb.org.uk)

8 Weymouth Street London W1W 5BU  
Telephone 020 7580 5861 Facsimile 020 7436 5269  
Email [info@arb.org.uk](mailto:info@arb.org.uk) [www.arb.org.uk](http://www.arb.org.uk)