



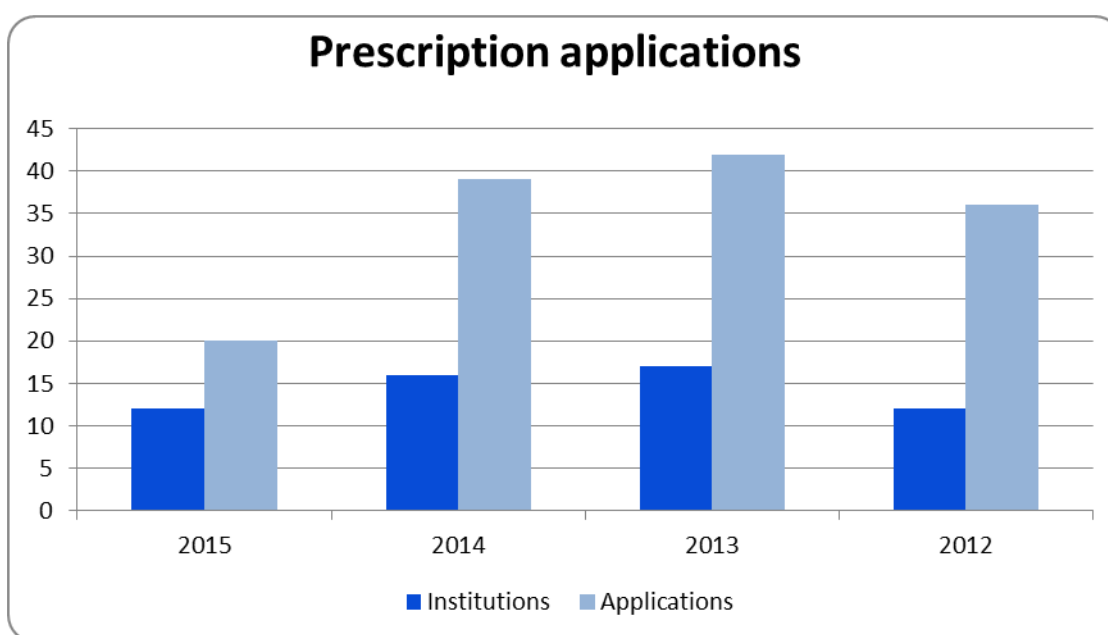
# Qualifications Department Annual Report January 2015 – December 2015

# Maintaining Qualifications of Architects

## 1. Prescription of Qualifications

### Prescription Cycle

1.1 During 2015, the Board considered applications for the renewal of prescription for 20 qualifications from 12 institutions.



1.2 In addition, the Board prescribed 6 new qualifications offered by 6 institutions which offer existing prescribed qualifications. This is an increase on the previous full twelve month reporting period where the Board prescribed 4 new qualifications offered by 3 institutions. Based on enquiries from institutions, and applications for prescription which have not yet been completed, it is expected that this trend will continue in 2016.

1.3 For the last two years, the Board has undertaken an exercise to make the prescription process more flexible for institutions. After undertaking a review of the position, the Board decided to extend prescription of 17 qualifications offered by 8 institutions which were due to renew prescription during the 2015/2016 cycle.

### Planning Meetings

1.5 During 2015, 8 institutions seeking to renew prescription or seeking prescription for the first time requested planning meetings prior to submitting their applications.

## **Processing of Applications**

### **Timings**

- 1.6 In accordance with the timescales outlined in the Board's Procedures for Prescription, applications should be reviewed by the Prescription Committee for the first time within 8 weeks. All of the applications approved by the Board in 2015 were considered within that timescale.
- 1.7 On average, applications for the renewal of prescription took 23 weeks to process from the time of submission to the Board making its final decision. The fastest application was processed in 12 weeks. At the other end of the scale, 1 application took 33 weeks to process.

Applications which take longer to process often involve the Prescription Committee seeking clarification of complex issues, e.g., the mapping of learning outcomes to ARB's Criteria, regarding the qualifications it is reviewing. It is crucial that institutions are offered reasonable opportunities to respond and clarify complex matters where queries arise.

Timings may also be affected by the scheduling of Committee and Board meetings as these do not remain static each year.

- 1.8 The Board approved 6 applications for prescription of new qualifications. Additionally, one other application was withdrawn by the institution in 2015 as it had not yet undergone its internal validation process. This application was re-submitted later in the year and will be included within the 2016 Annual Report.

New qualifications typically take longer to process than renewal qualifications, because the Board must consult for a period of up to three months before prescription can be granted and the issues which require clarification are often more complex and difficult to resolve.

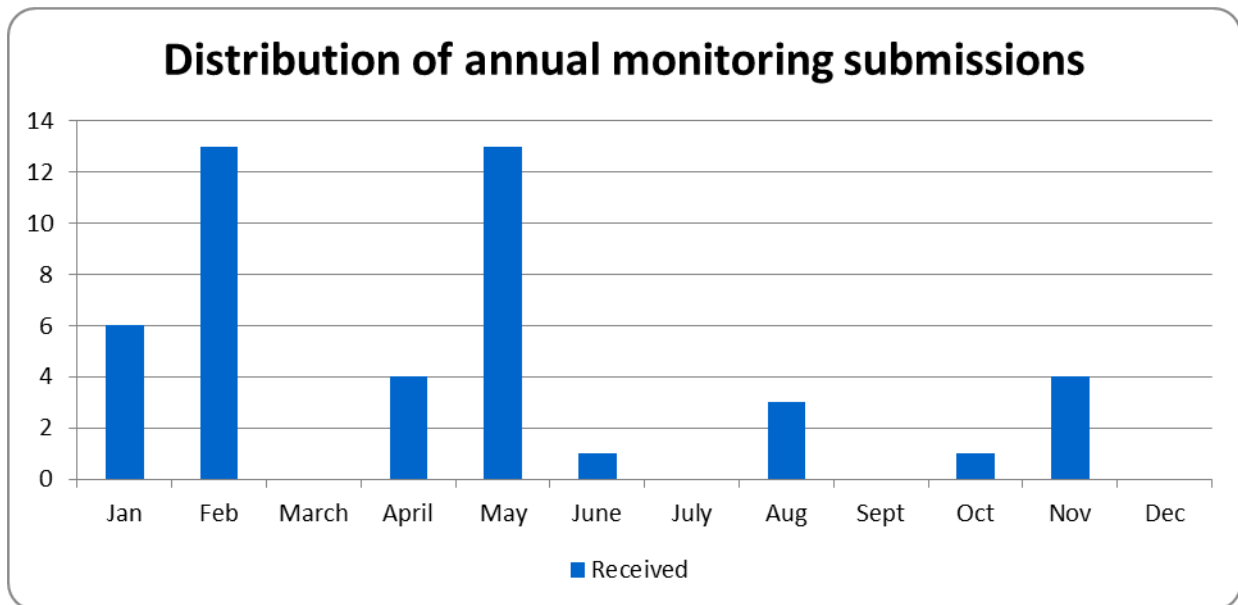
### **Annual Review of the Operation of the Prescription Process**

- 1.9 The Qualifications Team undertake an annual review of the operation of the prescription process. Four institutions responded to an on-line questionnaire, and these responses were made available to the Committee for its consideration. Recommendations were then made to make minor adjustments to the guidance that sits behind the application procedures.

## **2. Annual Monitoring Submissions and Course/Title Changes**

- 2.1 During 2015 the Prescription Committee reviewed Annual Monitoring submissions from 46 institutions covering a total of 45 qualifications. Submissions are not normally expected from institutions renewing prescription in a given year where the submission date falls at the time the application is being considered by the

Prescription Committee.



2.2 Variances occur because the number of institutions required to make annual monitoring submissions differs in any given year, depending on the number of institutions seeking renewal of prescribed qualifications. Additionally, the number of prescribed qualifications offered by institutions can vary greatly with some offering 5 or more while others may offer only 1.

2.3 The chart below sets out how many Annual Monitoring submissions were reviewed by the Committee on a month by month basis during the reporting period. It should be noted that Prescription Committee meeting dates are not consistent year on year and may move by a week or so.

#### Follow up to Annual Monitoring Submissions

2.4 Of the 46 submissions received during the reporting period 11 required the Committee to seek additional information from the institution. Requests for further information were sought for a variety of reasons including:

- Clarification regarding title or awarding body changes and evolutionary changes to modules/units;
- Appropriateness of resourcing provision; and
- Whether appropriate action had been taken in response to recommendations from internal and/or external peer reviews.

#### Deadlines for the Processing of Submissions

2.5 The maximum period allowed for ARB's staff and the Prescription Committee to consider annual monitoring submissions for the first time, is 8 weeks. This is the same period by which applications for prescription must be considered by the Prescription

Committee for the first time.

- 2.6 In 2015 the average time taken for each submission to receive initial scrutiny by the Committee was just over 4 weeks, and 100% of submissions were considered before the 8 week deadline. This compares with 100 % of submissions considered before the deadline in the previous full reporting period, again taking an average of around 4 weeks.

Variances in processing time can be attributed to the varying dates by which institutions make their annual monitoring submissions and changes to Prescription Committee meeting dates year on year. The small increase in turnaround time during the latest reporting period is also likely to be as a result of the Qualifications Team carrying a staff vacancy for eight months during 2015.

### **Late Submissions from Institutions**

- 2.7 During the reporting period, 7 institutions failed to meet the deadline for submitting their Annual Monitoring submissions compared with 13 institutions in the previous full reporting period.

Because of an increase in late submissions in previous reporting periods ARB staff re-emphasised the importance of making submissions on time, and the impact that late submissions had on the Board's confidence that qualifications are continuing to meet its objectives. This was largely done through liaison meetings with SCHOSA and by writing to university directly where submissions had been received late.

### **Course and Title Changes**

- 2.8 Over the reporting period the Department received 4 requests from institutions wishing to make changes to the titles of prescribed qualifications. There was one additional request specifically for the consideration of course changes. It should be mentioned however that a number of institutions submit changes via their annual monitoring submissions rather than through a specific request.

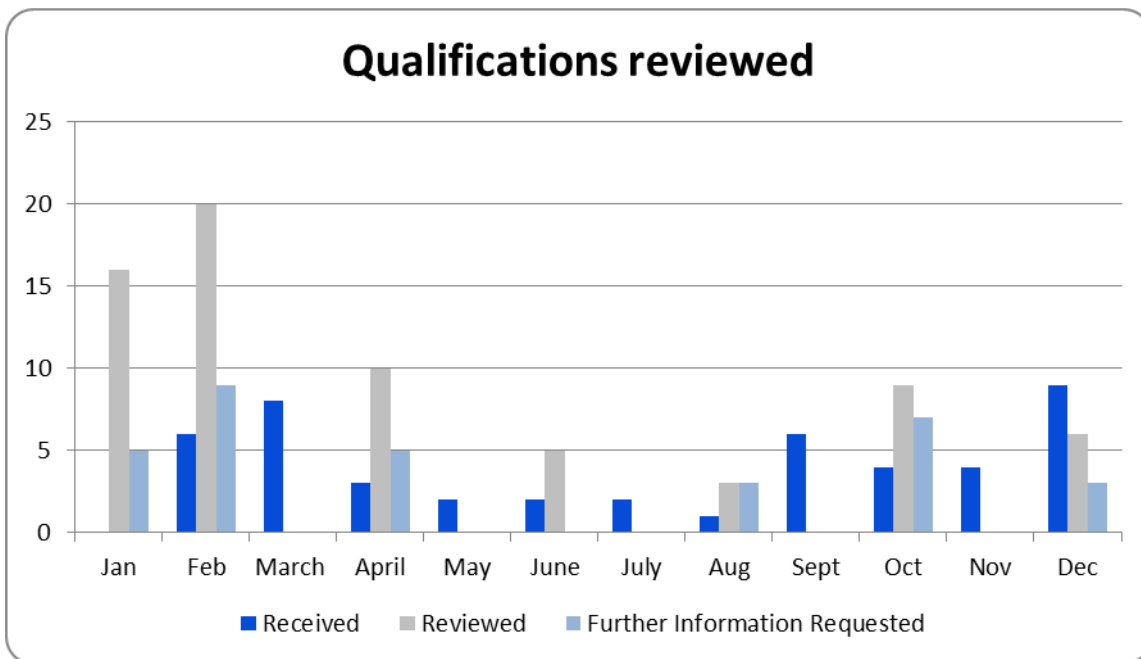
## **3. European Qualifications**

### **Notification of UK Qualifications for Listing under the Directive**

- 3.1 9 UK title changes and 1 change in awarding body were notified and approved for publication by the Commission in 2015.
- 3.2 2 European Notification Planning Meetings were held. Only institutions making significant changes to their Part 2 level qualifications or gaining prescription of their Part 2 level qualifications for the first time require planning meetings.

## Number of European Qualifications reviewed

3.3 47 EU qualifications were notified by 7 different Member States during 2015. This compares with 34 qualifications in 2014 and 14 in 2013. Of the 34 EU qualifications notified in 2014, 31 were notified in November-December 2014 and overall, 69 EU qualifications were reviewed in 2015. Further information was sought by the UK in relation to 32 qualifications.



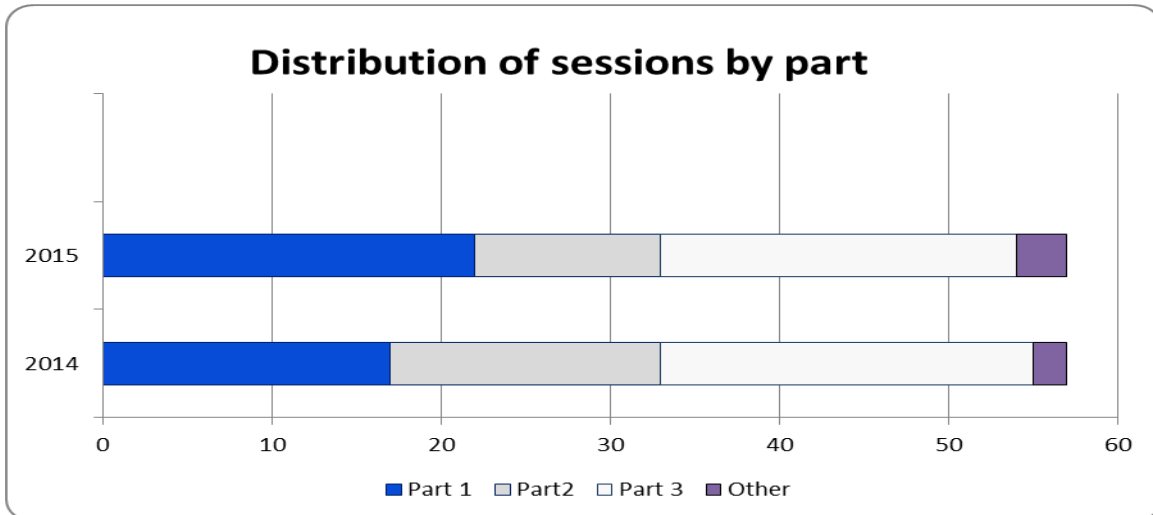
## 4. University Liaison Programme

4.1 During the reporting period, 54 presentations were delivered in 39 institutions reaching around 3000 students. This represents a 15% increase on visits in 2014 as a whole.

One institution offering a recently prescribed qualification requested a visit for the first time and 8 institutions (which offer ARB prescribed qualifications) did not participate in the programme this year.

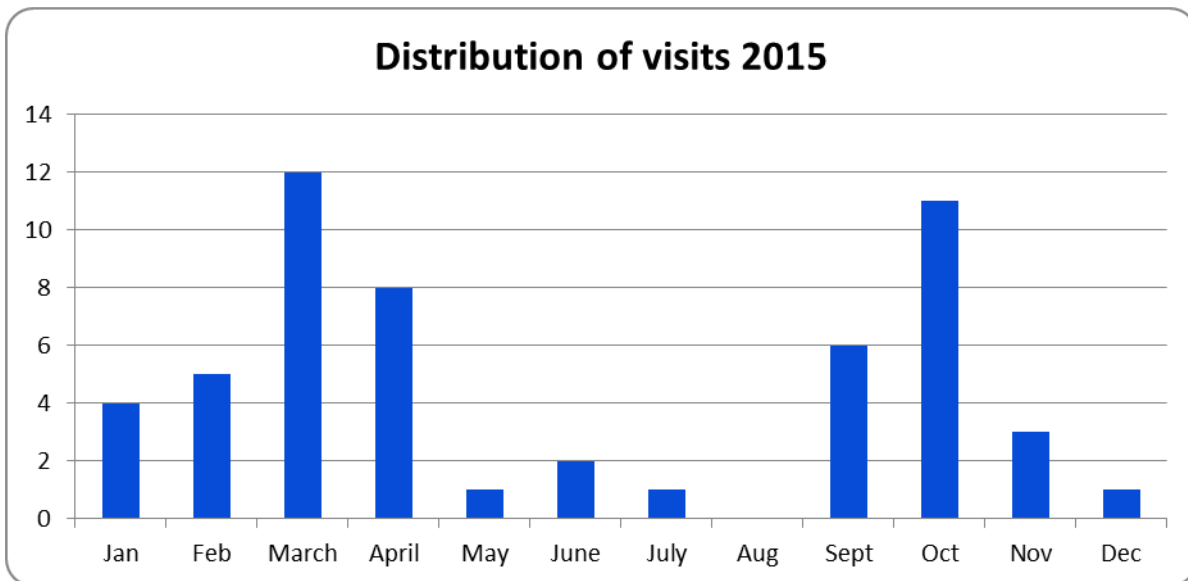
4.2 In addition to the typical liaison sessions in institutions offering prescribed qualifications, the following were also delivered:

- A presentation on the Qualifications and Services Directives at Cardiff University;
- Two sessions on professional regulation and registration in the UK for the Practice in the UK courses, run by London Metropolitan University and the RIBA.



4.5 The majority of sessions (41%) involved Part 1 candidates, with 20% for Part 2 students and 39% for Part 3 students.



4.6 Sessions take place throughout the academic year with a peak occurring during the spring and autumn terms.






## Key Performance Indicators



### 1 January 2015 to 1 December 2015\*



\* Note: we have altered the reporting cycle from an academic year to a calendar year; whilst this provides the details of the team's performance during this first annual cycle, the comparisons set out below reflect performance across previous academic years, i.e., September to August. At the end of 2016 we will be able to undertake a direct year on year comparison with 2015.


Performance Indicator	Target for 2014/2015	Outcomes	Direction of Travel	Comments
<b>Prescription applications</b>				
Average no. of weeks to complete initial scrutiny of Prescription Applications	95% within 3 weeks	<p>100% in 1.19 weeks</p> <p>100% in 4.48 weeks between 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014</p> <p>100% in 1.88 weeks between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014</p> <p>100% in 1.12 weeks in 2012/2013</p> <p>100% in 2.3 weeks in 2011/2012</p>		Taking into account the change to our reporting cycle, there has been an improvement in achieving the target KPI during 2015. We have altered the way in which we distribute prescription applications amongst the team which means that applications undergo an initial screening in a more timely way. It may also be a result of the applications being received over a wider period (and not being as bunched at the end of November/early December). It may also be due to better preparation and planning.
Average no. of weeks taken between an application being received to it being considered by the Committee for the first time	95% within 8 weeks	<p>100% in 4.25 weeks</p> <p>100% in 7.52 weeks between 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014</p> <p>100% in 6.33 weeks between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014</p> <p>100% in 6.65 weeks in 2012/2013</p> <p>100% in 7.14</p>		Notwithstanding the above, we have also improved our application processing times in this area. We looked carefully at the schedule of the Prescription Committee meetings during 2015; we also advised institutions about the timing of the Committee meetings and most timed their submission to coincide with an upcoming meeting.



		weeks in 2011/2012		
Average no. of weeks taken for an Independent Adviser to respond to Committee's request	95% within 3 weeks	100% in 9.86 weeks  No applications sent to independent adviser in 2013/2014  No applications sent to independent advisers in 2012/2013.  100% in 3.5 weeks in 2011/2012		The Prescription Committee asked one of its independent advisers to look at an aspect of one prescription application during the 2014/2015 cycle. There were mitigating circumstances during the period where the advice was required and as a consequence, the adviser was given extensions in order to complete their advice. This did delay the Committee's consideration of the application concerned. We have looked at ways to avoid this kind of delay in future and will look at appointing an alternative adviser should this kind of situation occur again.
<b>Annual Monitoring and course changes</b>				
Average no. of weeks taken for an annual monitoring submission to be considered by the Committee for the first time	95% within 8 weeks	100% in 4.25 weeks  100% in 2.67 weeks between 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014  100% in 3.87 weeks between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014  100% in 3.55 weeks in 2012/2013  100% in 4.17 weeks in 2011/2012		We are still well within the target despite a small increase in the amount of time taken to process an annual monitoring submission. This is likely to be due to staff resources being stretched at critically busy times during 2015, as the Qualifications Team carried a vacancy between January and August during this period.
Average no. of weeks taken for a significant change to be considered by the Committee for the first time	95% within 8 weeks	N/A  No data for period 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014  100% within		No significant changes were received/dealt with during this period.

		<p>4.07 weeks between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014</p> <p>100% in 5.43 weeks in 2012/2013</p> <p>No data available in 2011/2012</p>		
Average number of weeks taken for a minor change to be considered by the Committee for the first time	95% within 8 weeks	<p>N/A</p> <p>100% within 2.71 weeks between 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014</p> <p>100% within 5.81 weeks between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014</p> <p>100% in 3.24 weeks in 2012/2013</p> <p>100% in 3.38 weeks in 2011/2012</p>		No minor changes were received/dealt with during this period; however four award title changes were received. We do not collect statistics relating to title changes but will look to do this in future.
Average number of weeks taken for evolutionary change/s to be considered by the Committee for the first time	95% within 8 weeks	<p>100% within 3.86 weeks</p> <p>100% within 8.57 weeks between 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014</p> <p>N/A between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014</p>		The KPI has been met in this area. This is likely to be due to the timely submission of the relevant material we require and/or the timely scheduling of Committee meetings.

		100% in 5.29 weeks in 2012/2013  100% in 9.43 weeks in 2011/2012		
Average number of weeks taken for an extension to prescription request to be considered by the Committee for the first time	95% within 8 weeks	N/A  N/A between 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014  N/A between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014  No extensions requested in 2012/2013 or in 2011/2012	N/A	No formal requests for extensions were received during the reporting period; the Board did however agree to extend prescription of a number of qualifications through its process for making prescription more flexible. [Note: statistics are not collected for this process.]
Average number of applications received in electronic format	90% during 2013/2014 cycle	100%  100% between 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014  100% between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014  (100% in 2012/2013; 100% in 2011/2012)		All institutions are now submitting their applications electronically in line with the requirements of the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications.
<b>European notifications</b>				
To hold a planning meeting with each UK institution that has to notify its qualifications to the European Commission	100%	2 planning meetings held in 2015  N/A in 2014		Following the Board's decision to prescribe two new Part 2 level qualifications, the Team held planning meetings with both of the relevant institutions during 2015. A third Part 2 level qualification was prescribed by the Board in late 2015 and the planning meeting will be held in early 2016.
ARB to respond to all queries	100%	12 title		The team continued to meet this target

<p>received regarding a notified UK qualification within 2 weeks from the day of receipt</p>		<p>notifications were made during 2015 – all queries from the Commission were dealt with within 2 weeks.</p> <p>N/A between 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014</p> <p>100% between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014</p> <p>100% in 2012/2013</p> <p>100% in 2011/2012</p>		<p>during this period despite carrying a vacancy between January and August 2015.</p>
<p>ARB to respond to the notifying Member States for each notified qualification with comments as appropriate within the 2-month consultation period set out in the Commission's Notification Procedures</p>	<p>100%</p>	<p>100%</p> <p>100% between 1 September 2014 and 31 December 2014</p> <p>100% between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014</p> <p>100% in 2012/2013</p> <p>100% in 2011/2012</p>		<p>The team continued to meet this target during this period despite carrying a vacancy between January and August 2015.</p>