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Qualifications Department

Annual Report September 2009 – September 2010

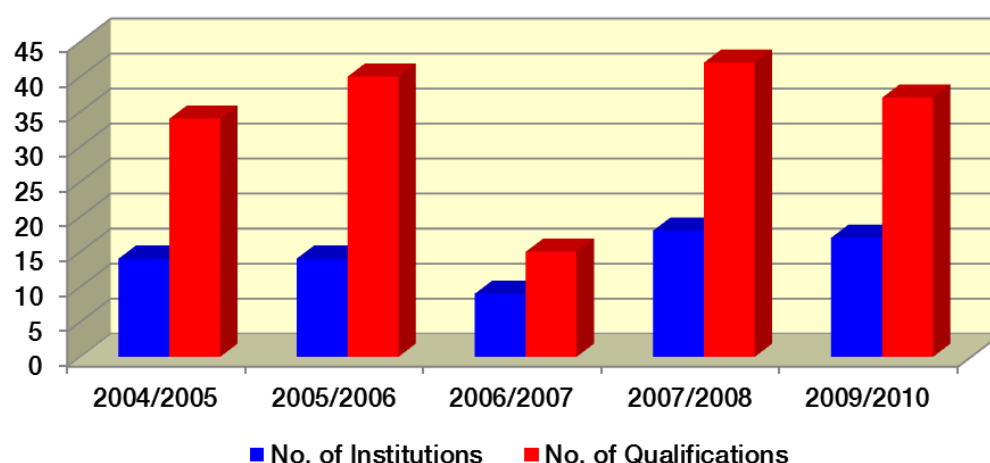
Section 1. Prescription of Qualifications

Prescription Cycle

- 1.1 During the 2009/2010 cycle, the Board considered 37 qualifications from 17 institutions. Of these, 3 qualifications were new and considered by the Board for the first time. Of the 3 new qualifications, 2 were offered by institutions which had not previously sought prescription.

By comparison, the Board considered 42 qualifications from 16 institutions in the 2008/2009 cycle; 42 qualifications from 18 institutions during the 2007/2008 cycle; and 15 qualifications from 9 institutions during the 2006/2007 cycle (Figure 1).

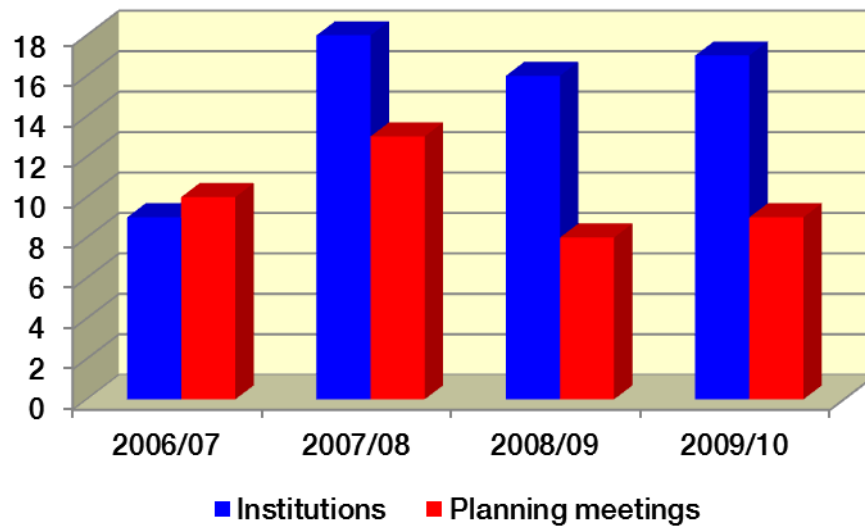
Figure 1



Planning Meetings

- 1.2 During the 2009/2010 cycle, 9 institutions seeking prescription, whether it was for the first time or for the purposes of renewing prescription, requested planning meetings with ARB's Staff prior to submitting their applications. By comparison, 8 institutions requested planning meetings in the 2008/2009 cycle, 13 institutions requested planning meetings in 2007/2008, and 10 institutions requested planning meetings in 2006/2007 (Figure 2).

Figure 2



Processing of Applications

Timings

- 1.3 In accordance with the timescales outlined in the Board's Procedures for Prescription, applications should be reviewed by the Prescription Committee within 8 weeks. However, the Committee's meeting of 7 January 2010 was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. The applications due to be considered at this meeting were rolled over to the next meeting of 28 January 2010. As a result, 5 applications were considered for the first time by the Committee over 8 weeks from the date on which they were submitted. ARB Staff were in touch with the institutions concerned throughout the delay and this did not adversely affect the overall processing of the applications.

All institutions responded to the Committee's initial requests for clarification on aspects of the applications within the required 3 weeks.

- 1.4 On average, applications relating to the renewal of prescription took 25 weeks to process from the time of submission to the Board making its final decision to renew prescription. The fastest application was processed in 16 weeks. At the other end of the scale, 1 application took 41 weeks to process. It is important to note that applications which take longer to process often involve the Prescription Committee seeking to clarify very complex issues with institutions. It is crucial that institutions are offered reasonable opportunities to respond and clarify complex matters where queries arise.

By comparison, it took an average of 25 weeks to process renewal applications for the 2008/2009 cycle with the fastest being processed in 11 weeks, and the slowest 50 weeks. For the 2007/2008 cycle it took an average of 24 weeks to process renewal applications, with the fastest being processed in 11 weeks, and the slowest in 33 weeks.

For the 3 applications relating to new qualifications in the 2009/2010 cycle, only one had been prescribed by the Board by September 2010, and this took 51 weeks to process. For the 2008/2009 cycle, on average applications relating to new qualifications took 35 weeks to process from the time of submission to the Board making its final decision to prescribe. By comparison, it took an average of 39 weeks to process applications for new qualifications during 2007/2008. Applications for new qualifications normally take longer to process than renewals due to a statutory requirement under the Architects Act 1997 which requires the Board to consult with specific bodies. Consultations are normally run for a period of 3 months, although where all respondents indicate their views more quickly, this can be shortened.

Seeking Advice

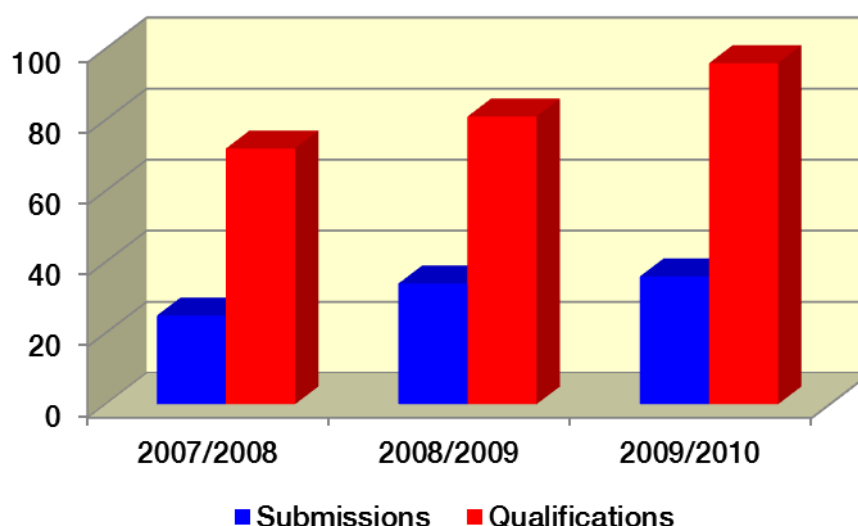
- 1.5 Should it feel the need to seek further advice in relation to a particular aspect of an application, the Procedures allow the Prescription Committee to seek advice from a member of its pool of Independent Advisers. The Committee requested advice from members of the pool on 3 times in relation to new qualifications. On all 4 occasions, advice was provided by the relevant independent advisers within the timeframe of 3 weeks, as stipulated within the Procedures.

For the 2008/2009 cycle, the Committee requested advice from members of the pool on particular issues arising from 3 of the applications; once in relation to a new qualification.

Section 2. Annual Monitoring Submissions and Course/Title Changes

- 2.1 During the period September 2009 to September 2010, the Prescription Committee reviewed 36 Annual Monitoring submissions from 35 institutions covering a total of 96 qualifications. Submissions are not expected from institutions which have made applications seeking to renew prescription in any given year. By way of comparison, the period September 2008 to September 2009 saw submissions from 34 institutions covering 81 qualifications, while the period September 2007 to August 2008 saw submissions from 25 institutions cover 72 qualifications.

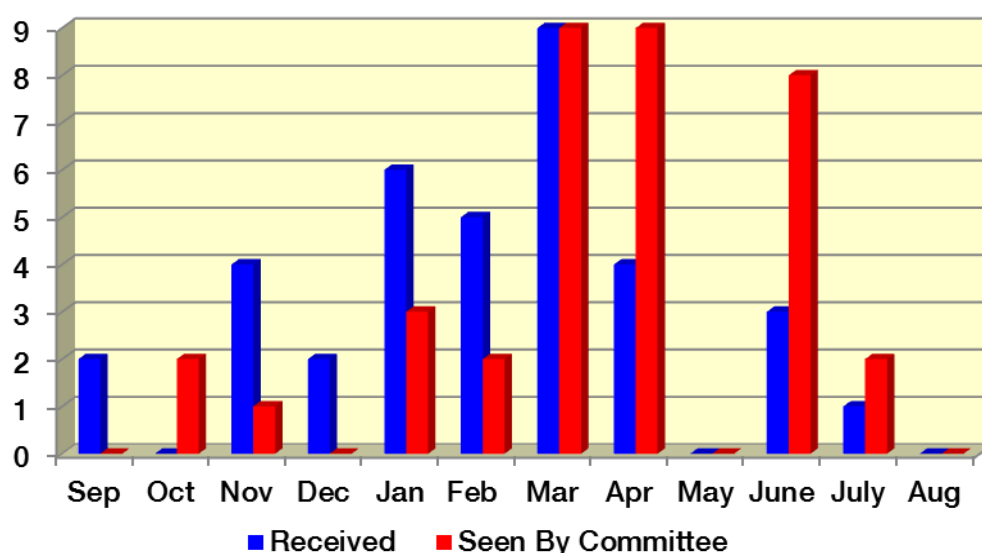
Figure 1



- 2.2 These variances can be linked to the differing number of applications for renewal which are considered by the Board in any given year. Additionally, the number of prescribed qualifications offered by institutions can vary greatly, with some offering 5 or more prescribed qualifications while others may offer only 1.

2.3 Figure 2 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.

Figure 2



Follow up to Annual Monitoring Submissions

2.4 Of the 36 submissions received during the reporting period, 4 required the Committee to seek additional information from the relevant institution. These requests involved the follow up to concerns raised by the submissions. These concerns most were most frequently with regard to the resourcing of the qualifications and uncertainty over whether all of the students receiving the qualification had met all of the criteria.

Deadlines for the Processing of Submissions

2.5 Timescales which set out the maximum period that should be taken by ARB's Staff, and the Prescription Committee, to consider annual monitoring submissions for the first time were inserted into the revised version of the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications.

This maximum period was set at 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 For the 2009/2010 reporting period, the average time taken for each submission to receive initial scrutiny by the Committee was approximately 4.5 weeks, and 94.5% of submissions were considered within the 8 week deadline. This shows a significant improvement on the reporting period between September 2008 and September 2009, where the average time taken to process submissions was 9 weeks.

Late Submissions from Institutions

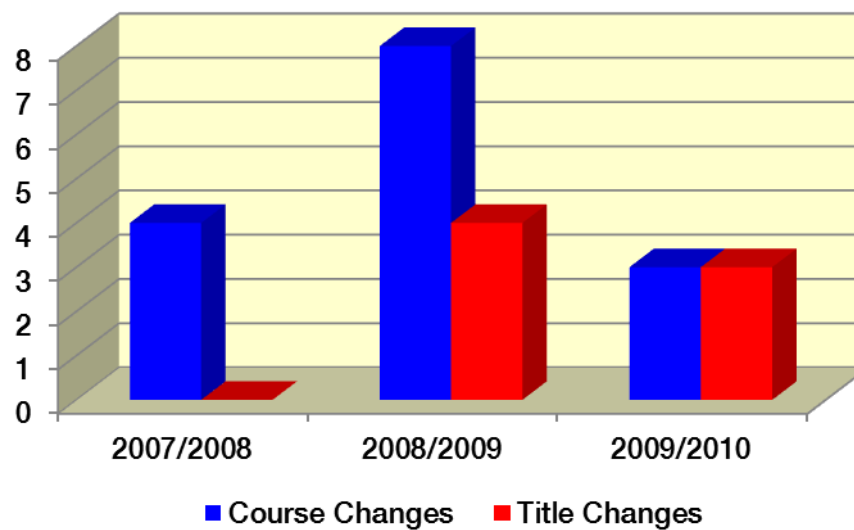
- 2.7 During the period September 2008 to September 2009, 7 institutions did not meet the deadline by which their Annual Monitoring submissions should have been made. Reminder letters are sent annually to all institutions from which submissions are expected and the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA) has been asked to remind institutions of their obligations in this area on several occasions.

Course and Title Changes

- 2.8 Over the reporting period the Department received 3 requests from institutions which wished to make changes, substantial or otherwise, to their prescribed qualifications. Additionally there were also 3 requests from institutions who wished to make changes to the titles of their prescribed qualifications.

This shows a decrease on the period September 2008 to August 2009 where there were 8 requests from institutions who wished to make changes, substantial or otherwise, to their qualifications. There were also 4 requests from institutions wishing to make changes to the titles of their qualifications during this period.

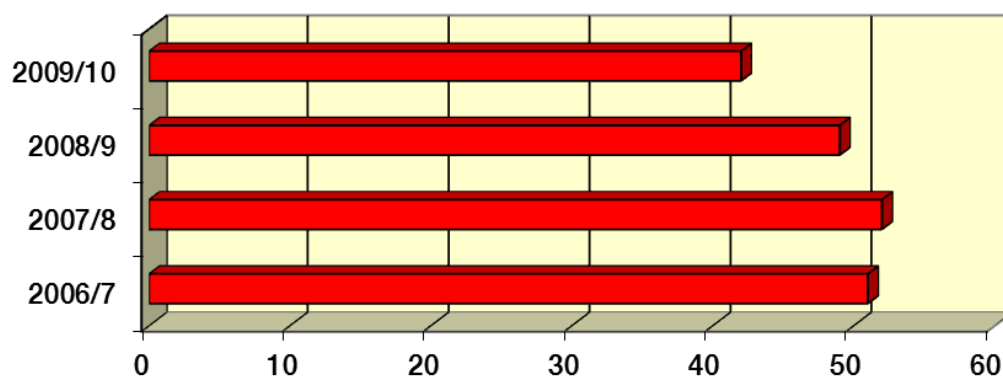
Figure 3



Section 3. University Liaison Programme

3.1 In the academic year 2009/2010, 42 presentations were arranged in 35 institutions reaching approximately 2,200 students. This represents seven fewer sessions compared with 2008/2009.

Figure 1



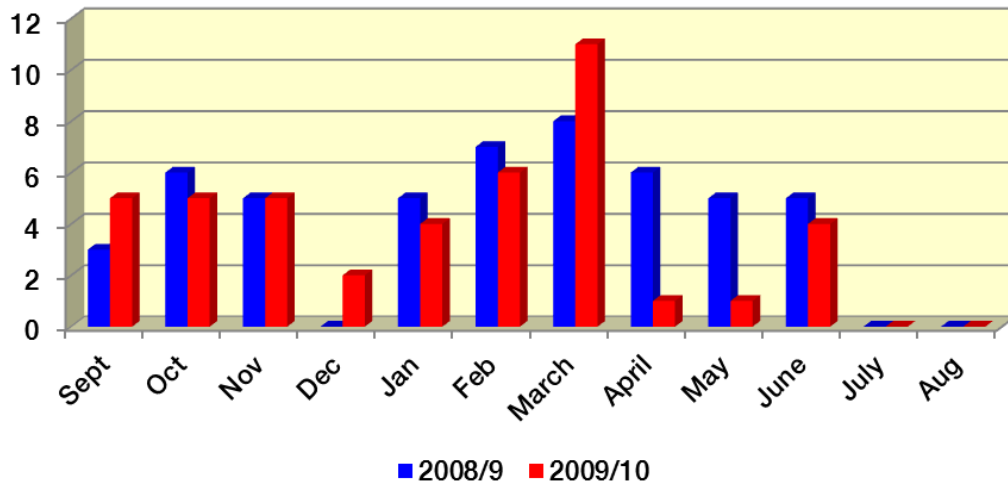
3.2 This variance is due to a number of factors:

- Two institutions combined their session with another institution for the first time this year, so while the number of presentations is smaller, the number of institutions involved remained the same.

- Requests from three institutions could not be accommodated because of an over-demand for visits on the same dates.
- Some institutions request visits every two years rather than on an annual basis.
- Changes in personnel within an institution mean that contact must be re-established which may not be possible within the academic year.

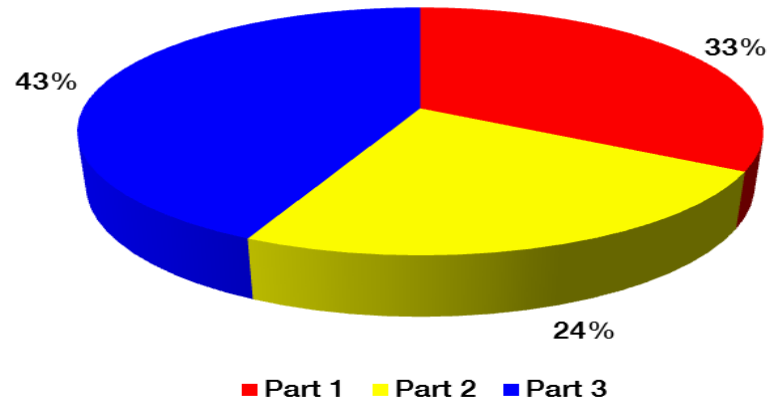
3.3 Sessions take place throughout the academic year with a peak occurring during the spring term. (figure 2)

Figure 2



3.4 The majority of sessions involved Part 3 candidates (figure 3). This compares with 27% at Part, 33% at Part 2 and 40% at Part 3 for 2008/9.

Figure 3



Section 4: European Affairs

Context

- 4.1 Section 1A of the Act designates ARB as the UK's competent authority and requires ARB to facilitate the mobility of architects under the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC). All activities undertaken by ARB regarding European matters enable and support the organisation in fulfilling its responsibilities as a competent authority.

Number of UK qualifications notified to the European Commission

- 4.2 During 2009/2010 Staff have been working together with the UK institutions which are required to notify their qualifications to the European Commission under the Qualifications Directive. At the time of writing, 7 institutions had been identified as needing to notify their Part 2 qualifications. As this is the first time UK institutions are going through the European Notification Process, Staff held European Notification Planning Meetings with each individual institution in addition to the regular European Seminars held at ARB since November 2008. An update on the notified qualifications and the number of

other UK qualifications to be notified to the European Commission will be provided during the 2010/2011 reporting period.

Number of European qualifications reviewed

- 4.3 Part of ARB's role as the UK's competent authority is to review qualifications in architecture which have been notified by other European States.

ARB Staff, together with the UK's Nominated Expert to the European Commission's Architecture Sub-Group and ARB's Independent Adviser on European Notifications, provided comments to the Communities and Local Government and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills on each notified qualification received during the reporting period to confirm whether or not the qualification met the relevant requirements of the Qualifications Directive. In some instances, the UK had to seek further explanation/clarification in order to assure itself that the notified qualification met all the relevant requirements under the Qualifications Directive. In some cases, the UK was able to confirm that it was satisfied that the notified qualification met the requirement of the Qualifications Directive without having to seek further information.

The notified qualifications were received and considered (Figure 1) compared to 17 qualifications received and considered in 2008/2009 (Figure 2).

Fewer European notifications than originally expected were received in 2009/2010. However, Staff have received information from the Commission which indicates that over 100 qualifications will be notified in 2010/2011.

Figure 1

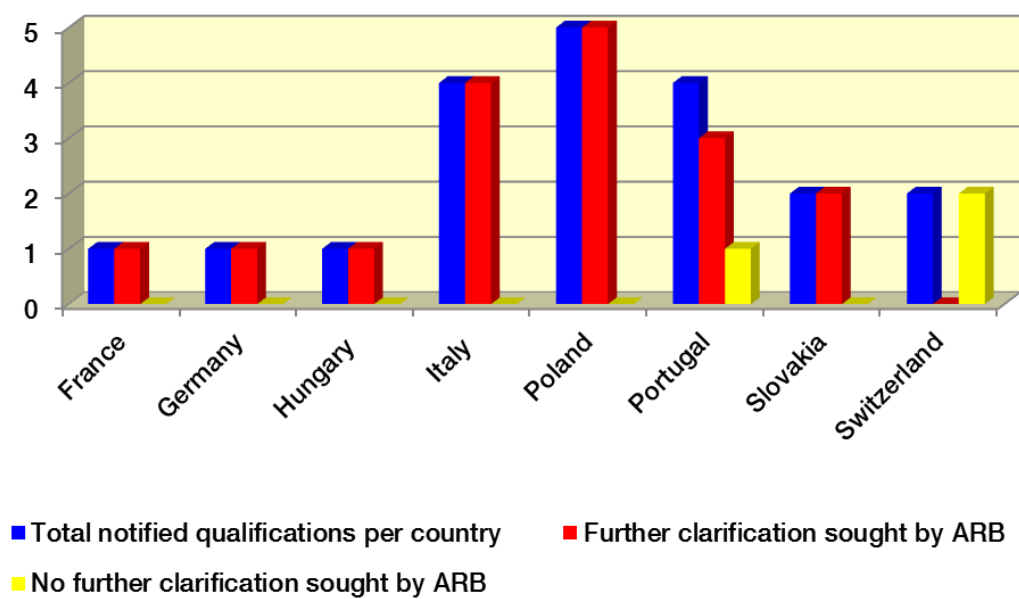


Figure 2

