



**Subject** Prescription Committee's Annual Report 2017-2018  
**Purpose** For noting  
**From** Prescription Committee

If you have any enquiries on this paper, please contact Sam Eden at [same@arb.org.uk](mailto:same@arb.org.uk) or Emma Matthews [emmam@arb.org](mailto:emmam@arb.org), or on 020 7580 5861

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### 1. Summary

To note the Prescription Committee's Annual Report to the Board.

### 2. Open Session

### 3. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

Protect the users and potential users of architects' services: we ensure that architects are appropriately qualified and have undertaken appropriate qualifications before being admitted to our Register.

Support architects through regulation: we maintain and publicly demonstrate the status of architects as competent, qualified professionals by ensuring that they have completed appropriate qualifications before they are admitted to our Register.

### 4. Background

- i. This report concerns the Committee's work between June 2017 and June 2018. The Board is asked to note that no detailed statistics have been included within this report as these are routinely included in the Departmental Annual Report and ARB's Annual Report each year.
- ii. **Administrative Issues**

#### **Prescription Committee's Terms of Reference**

The Committee's Terms of Reference were last reviewed in February 2017; a business as usual review of the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications is currently being undertaken which will include a review of the Terms of Reference; the Staff Team has reviewed the current Terms of Reference and in view of the business as usual review, recommends that no further changes should be made to the Terms of Reference at this time.

### **Independent Advisers**

Since June 2017 the following have been Independent Advisers to the Committee:

Peter Beacock  
Tony Cleford  
Don Gray  
Peter Walker

Dyfed Griffiths was an Independent Adviser until 30 September 2017; Mr Griffiths was required to step down from the role to take up the role as the UK's Nominated Expert in Architecture. Alona Perez Martinez was appointed by the Board in September 2017 to the pool. Ms Perez Martinez's tenure commenced on 1 October 2017.

Peter Beacock, Tony Cleford, Don Gray and Peter Walker will all complete their full tenures on 30 September 2018 and will need to step down from the pool of independent advisers at that point. At its meeting in May 2018, the Board appointed the following Independent Advisers to the Prescription Committee's pool to replace the four Advisers who will be leaving the pool. The new Advisers will be appointed for a period of four years (1 October 2018 – 1 October 2022).

Wendy Colvin  
Kelly Mackinnon  
Stefanie Rhodes  
Des Fagan

Des Fagan was additionally appointed to serve as the Independent Adviser to the Prescription Committee from 1 October 2018. Mr Fagan will replace Mr Beacock, who will complete his role as adviser to the Committee on 30 September 2018. Mr Fagan's position on the Committee will be reviewed annually in line with the Board's regular review of the membership of its committees.

The Independent Advisers' appointments may be renewed for a further period of four years subject to satisfactory performance. Independent Advisers carrying out this specific role may be appointed for a maximum period of two consecutive terms, e.g., eight years, in line with the Board's policy on the appointment of advisers and external professionals.

The Independent Advisers will be required to attend an induction session in September 2018 and will be invited to observe Committee meetings in late 2018/2019; a handover to take place for Des Fagan prior to taking up his post formally on 1 October 2018.

### **Committee Membership**

The Committee members for the reporting period were:

Carol Bernstein; Caroline Corby; Alice Hynes (Chair); Guy Maxwell; Susan Ware, and Alex Wright.

These Board members will continue in their roles for the remainder of 2018 and into 2019.

As mentioned above, Peter Beacock was the Independent Adviser appointed to serve on the Committee for the reporting period.

The co-opted chair Alan Jago stepped down at the end of November 2017 and Alice Hynes formally took up the Chair from November 2017 after a period of shadowing.

### **Meetings**

The Committee met eleven times between June 2017 and June 2018.

### **Committee Effectiveness Review**

The Committee is due to consider the outcomes of the 2017 Effectiveness Review as part of its meeting of 21 June 2018. By way of follow up to the 2016 Effectiveness Review the Committee has received pre or post-meeting briefings on the potential impact of the UK's departure from the European Union; the role and activities of the Quality Assurance Agency and the work of the Architecture Trailblazer Group.

### **Prescription of Qualifications**

As of May 2018, ARB prescribed 161 qualifications which are offered by 60 institutions. Of these 72 are at Part 1 level; 60 are at Part 2 level and 29 are at Part 3 level. In May 2017 the Board also prescribed 161 qualifications, but offered by 58 institutions. The number of qualifications prescribed by the Board has fallen by one at Part 1 level and increased by one at Part 2 level. The number of qualifications prescribed at Part 3 level has remained stable over the last 12 months. While there have been two new qualifications at Part 1 level prescribed by the Board over the last 12 months, one institution withdrew prescription of three of its qualifications, as these qualifications were no longer being run by the institution. One new qualification at Part 2 level was prescribed by the Board for an institution which already holds a prescribed qualification.

The Committee's core work involves overseeing ARB's prescription process to assist the Board in ensuring that the qualifications which it prescribes meet/continue to meet the relevant ARB requirements, e.g., analysis and processing applications to renew prescription and applications from institutions seeking prescription for the first time; analysing and processing annual monitoring submissions; reviewing details of course, title and awarding body name changes etc. Where appropriate and in accordance with the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications, the Committee provides advice and guidance to the Board in relation to all of these

areas.

The Committee successfully oversaw the 2017/2018 prescription process (refer to most recent Departmental Key Performance Indicators which are provided to the Committee in the annual Departmental Reports each year.

Compared to previous years, May 2017 to May 2018 has not seen a significant increase in the number of prescribed qualifications. However, the Committee's current work plan identifies that the Board is likely to make a decision in relation to at least seven new qualifications before the end of 2018. One of these will be for an institution without any currently prescribed qualifications. A number of institutions have also made initial enquiries in relation to prescription and it is likely that applications will be submitted by at least two of these before the end of 2018.

New applications for prescription not only have an impact on the work of the Committee and staff through the application process, but also through subsequent annual monitoring submissions which will need to be made year on year.

The Prescription Committee typically needs to seek a second round of explanations for applications for prescription where prescription is being sought for the first time. At the request of the Committee, the Staff team and the Committee's independent adviser will also occasionally hold meetings with representatives from institutions which are seeking applications for prescription for the first time in order to obtain further information in relation to the application. It is more unusual, however, for members of the Staff team and the Committee's independent adviser to meet with representatives from institutions who are seeking applications for renewal of prescription. Two meetings were held with institutions seeking renewal of prescription during the 2016/2017 prescription cycle, and one such meeting was held with an institution during the 2017/2018 cycle.

There has been little change in the areas upon which the Committee has typically sought additional explanations. Exceptions to this have generally come where an application has been made for a more unusual mode of delivery, where there are periods of education in practice or where there is an element of specialisation within a qualification. The Committee has dealt with all of these elements within the 2017/2018 reporting period.

A large number of clarifications have been sought in relation to annual monitoring submissions. Eleven submissions required follow-up throughout 2015, whereas this increased to 31 during the whole of 2016, and 29 during 2017. To date, explanations have been sought in relation to 27 submissions during 2018. The Committee/Board has continued in its approach to late annual monitoring submissions and the impact of late submissions on applications for renewal of prescription. Where institutions are consistently late in making their annual monitoring submissions, the Committee has advised the Board that the period of prescription should be granted for one year less than that requested by an

institution as part of an application for renewal of prescription. During the 2017/2018 cycle three institutions were granted prescription for one year less than that requested because of late annual monitoring submissions.

The Committee has continued to provide advice to the Board regarding the flexibility of the overall prescription cycle by reviewing the prescription history of a qualification to determine whether an extension of prescription can be offered in cases where appropriate criteria have been met.

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

The Committee reviewed the annual feedback gathered from institutions which had been through the prescription process during the 2016/2017 prescription cycle. Feedback is sought from all institutions once the Board has made a final decision in relation to an application for prescription and the Committee reviews this each autumn. The feedback is used by both the Committee and the staff team to develop and improve the operation of the prescription process. No significant issues arose from the feedback gathered following the 2016/2017 prescription cycle. The action points arising from the review of the feedback have been taken forward.

### **Prescribed Examination**

The Committee is also responsible for overseeing the Prescribed Examination process. The Committee continues to review the Independent Examiners' reports and the statistics relating to candidates' results following each Examination session. The Committee also considers how improvements and adjustments to candidate guidance and to the operation of the process can be made.

In January 2018, the Committee considered the Prescribed Examination annual report. The Annual Report identified that there had been a slight increase in the number of candidates undertaking the Prescribed Examination from 121 throughout 2016, to 124 throughout 2017. The Report also identified a number of key themes which had been highlighted through the External Examiners report. These themes included:

- that the process is enhanced by examiners' agility and flexibility in dividing work amongst themselves for consideration before re-convening to explain and reach a collective decision;
- that candidates whose work is not clearly organised and annotated are likely to perform less successfully at examination;
- that development work to back design projects being presented is essential and should continue to be encouraged.
- that observers attending Examinations for training and development should follow the protocols put in place by staff and be mindful that they may need to recuse themselves from the process if asked to do so by an Independent Examiner.
- that candidates' performance is enhanced by attendance at advisory sessions offered by external providers.

- that candidates should be encouraged to accompany office-based work with a reflective narrative.

The Committee also noted the actions taken by staff in response to these themes. These following issues were identified:

- Examiner training emphasised their ability to divide work amongst themselves as necessary and this approach continues to be noted by Independent Examiners.
- The protocol document for observers attending was revised in November 2017.

During 2017/2018 the Committee also:

- Oversaw a recruitment exercise for a number of new Examiners and Independent Examiners; and
- Noted that training had been undertaken for Examiners and Independent Examiners covering how Equality and Diversity, and recognising the potential for unconscious bias is relevant to examination process, ensuring fairness, consistency and in the giving of feedback to candidates. It noted that the training had also included briefings for individuals acting as Lead Examiners.

### **Competency Standards Group**

In January 2018, the Committee considered the Competency Standards Group (CSG) Annual Report. The Annual Report provided background to the work of the CSG and identified that the CSG had considered applications from 84 individuals during 2017. This compared with 60 individuals who had made applications during 2016. It was also noted that in 2017, 68% of applications had been processed within the key performance indicator processing time. This compared to 68% in 2016. A review of the CSG's work was undertaken and decision making guidance drafted. It was also noted that four new members of the CSG had been appointed to replace the existing members whose tenure as examiners expired in December 2017.

### **ARB Board's Business as Usual Reviews of the Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications**

The Board agreed to undertake business as usual reviews of the Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications in May 2017. Separate Task and Finish Groups have been appointed to undertake these reviews and these groups report directly into the Board. The Prescription Committee did however discuss and provide feedback to the Task and Finish Groups in its capacity as a user of the Criteria and Procedures as part of the pre-consultation exercise which took place during the Autumn of 2017. The Committee has received regular updates from the Staff team regarding the progress of the reviews.

### **Apprenticeships**

The Committee has been closely following the work of the Architecture Trailblazer Group including the development of the apprenticeship standards and end point assessments for the Architectural Assistant and Architect apprenticeships; the Committee has discussed the implications of the apprenticeships and what steps it will need to take in order to process applications for prescription/course changes to the academic provision which will sit within the apprenticeship framework; the Committee received a briefing from the Architecture Trailblazer Group Lead in May 2018 and likewise the qualifications team also presented at their forum to explain the prescription process to providers/other stakeholders involved in the apprenticeships. The Committee has also considered a set of frequently asked questions for institutions seeking to develop provision which will sit within the framework; these will be distributed to all institutions and included in the Good Practice Handbook by the end of July 2018.

### **Compliance with the Professional Qualifications Directive**

It is the Board's policy that all of its prescribed qualifications must comply with the requirements of the Professional Qualifications Directive (PQD). The Board may be at risk of reputational damage by submitting a qualification for EU listing which is then rejected by the Commission.

Within the context of the Committee's consideration of specific applications for prescription, ARB has undertaken a considerable amount of work to determine how the guidance underpinning the requirements of the Professional Qualifications Directive should be interpreted. Interpretation of the guidance has been particularly problematic when attempting to apply it to dual award qualifications, or qualifications with specialisms.

The Committee and the Staff team have therefore sought to clarify the position and based on advice from a range of sources, revised guidance has been drafted which will be issued to all institutions offering/seeking to develop prescribed qualifications, which will help institutions to develop qualifications which will comply with Directive, as well as the Board's regular, prescription requirements. The Committee will be reviewing the revised guidance with a view to agreeing it at its meeting in June 2018.

### **Other areas**

The Committee has continued to keep up to date with stakeholders' developments throughout the year. The Committee has received regular updates from the Staff Team in relation to their engagement with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA); Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA); the Association for Professional Studies in Architecture (APSA). The Committee has also continued to receive updates from the Team regarding the work ARB undertakes with other key stakeholders.

The Committee has also continued to look at the risks and issues which will affect the work which falls under its remit on a regular basis. The Committee has also looked at issues which may affect its future work through a horizon scanning exercise.

### Looking Forward

The Committee is aware that it will need to continuously update and extend its knowledge of relevant matters affecting the higher education sector so that it can continue to provide high quality advice and guidance to the Board.

The Committee will need to continue to develop its awareness of the wider higher education landscape. This will become increasingly important as the Committee deals with issues relating to the impact of the UK's departure from the European Union, the implementation of apprenticeships, the development of more complex qualifications and the implementation of the revised Criteria and Procedures review.

There is an emerging trend which indicates that the Committee's workload is growing as more institutions seek prescription and the environment within which it works continues to change. With this in mind the headcount within the Qualifications Team has been increased in order to help support ARB's work in this area. The Committee has discussed whether holding extra meetings are a possibility and the Qualifications team are preparing for this should additional meetings be needed.

The Committee, as well as the Board, will need to keep abreast of developments in relation to 'Brexit' and how these may impact on the prescription process and the need for qualifications to continue to comply with European requirements. Additionally, where the Board approves any changes to the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications and/or ARB's Criteria, the Committee will need to be aware of how these changes will impact on the prescription process and the Committee's ability to advise the Board appropriately.

Post-Committee sessions will be organised in relation to the Teaching Excellence Framework and the work of the Office for Students over the next six months in order to support the development of the Committee's knowledge and understanding of the wider Higher Education landscape.

The development of the apprenticeship framework which is likely to contribute significantly to the Committee's workload during the latter part of 2018 and throughout 2019 as institutions seek to secure prescription of the academic provision which will sit within the scheme.

- iii. The Board is asked to note the above report, and agree that this should now be forwarded to the Board for noting in the Open Session of its meeting on 19 July 2018.

## 5. Resource implications

The Committee's costs are accounted for within the ARB's Annual Budget.



**6. Risk Implications**

The risk implications associated with the Committee's work are covered in ARB's Risk Register. Regular updates/risk implications are also included in Committee and Board papers.

**7. Communication**

The Prescription Committee prepares an annual report for the Board to assist the Board in carrying out its oversight responsibilities. The annual report also provides the Board with the opportunity to explore the Prescription Committee's work and identify any areas of concern.

**8. Equality and Diversity Implications**

Whilst the production of this Annual Report has no specific Equality and Diversity implications, the specific work of the Committee involves ensuring that institutions seeking to apply for and/or renew prescription comply with the Board's objectives (as set out in the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications) in this area.

**9. Further Actions**

None.