



Subject Update on ARB's Operational Activities
Purpose For Note
From ARB's Staff Team

If you have any enquiries on this paper, please contact Karen Holmes at karenh@arb.org.uk or on 020 7580 5861

1. Summary

To update the Board on ARB's operational activities since the last Board meeting.

2. Open Session

Open session. Any confidential matters will be discussed in a separate report in the confidential 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, and
- Support architects through Regulation

ARB's Operational Activities Report keeps the Board informed of activities which ensure that ARB meets its purpose and objectives, its statement of priorities and delivers against the Business Plan.

4. Stakeholder Relations

Hackitt Review

The Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety was announced by government in July 2017 following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and was led by Dame Judith Hackitt. Its purpose was to make recommendations that will ensure a sufficiently robust regulatory system for the future. One of those recommendations was that there should be a competence framework specifically for those involved in the design, construction and maintenance of Higher-Risk Residential Buildings.

ARB is a member of the working group that is considering the competencies that should be required for architects and building designers involved in Higher-Risk Residential Buildings. Since the last Board meeting the Head of Professional Standards has attended eight cross-industry competence meetings, and ARB has chaired three working group meetings looking specifically at the design element of buildings in scope.

Office for Students (OfS) / Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

The OfS is the independent regulator of higher education in England. They aim to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers.

The QAA safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education (HE) wherever it is delivered around the world. Their main areas of work include reviewing HE, Access to HE, the UK Quality Code and providing advice and guidance.

The Qualifications Team has been continuing to build a network of contacts at the OfS and QAA over the last few months. Through discussions with the OfS, we have improved our understanding of what to expect with some higher education providers, i.e., those based in England, now having to register with the OfS and how the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework will operate at subject level; we are looking at how we may be able to use any of the information institutions have to prepare for the OfS as part of our prescription processes in the future.

We continue to attend the QAA's Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies forums, which provide us with further understanding of the issues which are important to in higher education. We are also actively engaging with the QAA in relation to the review of the Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement.

Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)

Each Head of every UK Recognised School of Architecture is a member of SCHOSA. They also have a number of associate members of schools. It provides a forum for debate and exchange of ideas between Heads trying to achieve similar goals in different institutions.

Since the last Board meeting we have met with representatives of SCHOSA Council twice, once in early January and again in early March 2019.

At our first meeting, and further to the receipt of high level written feedback in December 2018, we offered SCHOSA representatives the opportunity to take us through SCHOSA's written feedback about an initial draft of the revised Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications that we had been working on. SCHOSA representatives provided helpful feedback and highlighted where further adjustments and improvements could be made to the draft Criteria. We agreed to feed SCHOSA's additional suggestions and comments back into our Joint ARB RIBA Criteria Working Group so that we could progress the drafting of the Criteria further.

At our second meeting, we provided SCHOSA representatives with updates on the progress of our regular cyclical reviews of the Criteria and Procedures and additionally discussed the QAA timeframes for reviewing the Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement. SCHOSA's representatives made us aware of the QAA's intended approach to the review and that it was planning to review the Subject Benchmark Statement over the Summer with a view to approving the revised Statement in September for publication in the Autumn 2019. We are actively working with the QAA in relation to the review of the Statement and the QAA is fully up to date in relation to the review of ARB's Criteria.

We have continued to keep SCHOSA up to date on other areas of our work including our no deal planning in the event that the UK leaves the EU without an agreed deal in place.

Association of Professional Studies in Architecture (APSA)

APSA is an organisation of people involved in the provision of professional education and assessment in the delivery of architects and other architectural professionals. It brings together practitioners, students, academics and businesses related to the built environment to explore ways in which professional issues relating to architectural and construction practice can better be addressed.

Further to the receipt of high level written feedback in December 2018, we had additionally offered APSA representatives the opportunity to take us through their written feedback about an initial draft of the revised Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications that we had been working on. We met with APSA representatives in late January 2019.

APSA representatives focussed largely on the draft Part 3 Criteria and provided some robust feedback in terms of the structure and content of the draft Part 3 Criteria as they stand. We therefore asked APSA to provide further suggestions in writing following the meeting so that this could be then taken into account as part of our ongoing discussions with the RIBA. We have not received these written suggestions from APSA to date.

Shortly after our meeting with APSA, we learned from the RIBA, with whom we hold the Criteria in common, that the organisation had been contacted by APSA following our own meeting with APSA representatives. APSA had suggested to the RIBA that it may be useful for RIBA/SCHOSA and APSA to collectively review the current draft of the Part 3 Criteria and produce something for further discussion with ARB. The Registrar and the Head of Qualifications and Governance have since met with the RIBA. We outlined our reservations about this approach, but agreed that if the RIBA wished to speak with APSA/SCHOSA and bring further feedback to our next Joint ARB/RIBA Criteria Working Group then that would be useful. The RIBA is therefore seeking additional feedback from these two stakeholders in late March and we will then hold a meeting of the Joint ARB/RIBA Criteria Working Group in early April in order regroup, discuss that feedback and decide on next steps.

Architecture students Network (ASN)

ASN is an independent network of student representatives from the schools of architecture within the United Kingdom.

We were contacted by and subsequently spoke with the co-leads of the ASN in late February in order to re-engage in relation to various aspects of our work. We were able to provide updates about key areas that are important to students of architecture such as what the UK's exit from the EU could mean for students, our Criteria and Procedures reviews, and our university liaison programme. We will be providing a written update on relevant areas of our work to the ASN for their spring forum. We have agreed to maintain a regular dialogue over the coming months and subject to invitation, will contribute to the ASN's autumn forum.

Architects Council of Europe (ACE)

The ACE is composed of 43 member organisations which are the national regulatory and professional representative bodies in the EU Member States, the accession countries, Switzerland and Norway. Through its members, the ACE represents the interests of over

600,000 architects from 31 countries in Europe.

We continue to be active members and contribute to relevant ACE meetings. During the early part of 2019 we attended the Finance Committee, the Professional Qualifications Directive/Professional Practical Experience and Continuing Professional Development Working Group; and the General Co-ordination meeting, the latter of which have enabled us to provide updates to ACE colleagues regarding the UK's exit from the EU.

Our attendance has been valuable in terms of disseminating information regarding the plans that we are preparing in the event that a no deal scenario prevails. The ACE has also established an ad hoc working group which will look at the development of a future mutual recognition agreement at the appropriate point. Discussions are also already underway in terms of the potential changes the ACE will seek to make to the Professional Qualifications Directive then next time it is reviewed by the European Commission.

European Network of Architects Competent Authorities (ENACA)

The ENACA provides a forum for Competent Authorities with a view to improving administrative cooperation and exchanging best practice in the implementation of Directive 2005/36/EC on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (PQD). The work of ENACA also extends to the implementation of the Services Directive 2006/123 and exchanging information on legislation, procedures and standards for registration of architects in the EU/EEA/Swiss area with a view to achieving a consistent approach across Europe.

We attended the Spring meeting of ENACA earlier this year. As with the ACE meetings, it provided us with a valuable opportunity to provide our counterpart organisations across Europe with more information about the UK's plans in the event that no deal is agreed before the UK leaves the EU. It also enabled us to begin discussions about how other member states may treat UK qualified individuals in a no deal scenario. These discussions will continue over the coming weeks and months so that we can provide clear and useful information to relevant stakeholders via our website.

Discussions at the ENACA meeting also focussed on how competent authorities were dealing with situations arising under the existing Professional Qualifications Directive as well as how improvements could be made to it in the future. Some competent authorities have concerns that movement whilst obtaining the education and practice required to become an architect across the EU is not as flexible as it could be under the existing Directive. ENACA members are therefore keen to explore what changes could be made to the Directive in relation to this area in the future. The next ENACA meeting will be taking place in the Autumn; we will however be keeping in close contact with ENACA colleagues in the interim so that we can continue to share information regarding the UK's exit from the EU.

Consumer Shows

We exhibited at the Somerset Homebuilding and Renovating Show on 17-18 November 2018. This was our first show in the South West and our attendance was well received by consumers, architects and students. We received positive feedback from those who visited our stand and visitors found the information we provided extremely helpful. Although the number of visitors to the show was lower than those at the larger show at the NEC, Birmingham, the number of visitors actively looking to use an architect was higher.

We also exhibited at our first show in 2019, the Homebuilding and Renovating Show at the NEC Birmingham on 28-31 March. Further information about this show will be provided in the next Operational Report in May.

Architects Benevolent Society (ABS)

The ABS is a registered charity dedicated to helping past and present members of the wider UK architectural profession, and their families, in times of need.

We collaborated with ABS to produce an article for our last eBulletin, published 6 December 2018, advising the profession on the range of confidential support ABS can provide. The article was purposefully timed around the Christmas/Retention Fee period when some architects can experience financial difficulties. ABS have been offered another opportunity to collaborate on a further article for our next eBulletin around stress management.

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) / Freehold

RICS is a global professional body which promotes and enforces the highest international standards in the valuation, management and development of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure.

Freehold is a networking forum for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender real estate professionals working within the real estate sector. It is the collaboration of two major players in real estate – international law firm Taylor Wessing and leading building and property consultants Tuffin Ferraby Taylor.

We attended a LGBT History Month Panel Discussion hosted by RICS in partnership with Freehold. It was an excellent event in which panel members and the audience shared personal experiences and recommendations for improving and supporting diversity and inclusion in the Property Sector. In addition the event provided useful ideas for future groups and individuals ARB could connect with.

Joint Regulators Web Group

We attended one of the quarterly meetings for Communications colleagues from other 'Register Regulators' such as the General Chiropractic Council, General Dental Council, General Optical Council and General Osteopathic Council among others. The group provides a productive forum for discussing shared experiences, learning and recommendations.

London Trading Standards Group

Further to our engagement with Westminster Trading Standards in 2018, we were invited to attend a meeting of the London Fair Trading Group held in February. It was an opportunity to explain our role and area of regulation to representatives from each London Trading Standards branch, as well as discuss possible collaborative actions. It is hoped that this type of engagement will support 'top down' awareness raising of ARB and the Register with the public as well as identify partnerships that will support public protection outcomes.

6. EU Exit

Since the last Board meeting, we have:

- Continued to liaise with relevant Government Departments in order to provide them with requested information about our current EU recognition processes;
- Attended four RIBA/MHCLG roundtable events with RIBA members to inform them of activities being undertaken to prepare for Brexit and to give the government an opportunity to listen to the sector's concerns;
- Built a dedicated 'Brexit' website page which provides key statistics/facts, links to our FAQs, signposting to Government information etc;
- Continued to meet with other regulatory bodies who deal with both the automatic and general system regimes under the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive;
- Update key web pages in preparation for a potential No Deal exit from the EU on 12 April 2019; and
- Assisted MHCLG with their preparations to get the changes required to operate in the event of a No Deal Brexit to Parliament.

7. Business as Usual Reviews of the Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications

Refer to the sections above regarding SCHOSA and APSA.

The next meeting of the ARB/RIBA Joint Criteria working Group will take place in early April 2019. At this meeting we will be discussing the latest drafts of the revised Criteria and agreeing next steps. Once ARB and the RIBA are satisfied with the drafts, they will be forwarded to the ARB Board and RIBA Education Committee for consideration. A formal three month consultation will then take place. Feedback further to the consultation will be taken into consideration and a final version of the Criteria will then be developed for final approval by both organisations before being published.

In relation to the Procedures, we have been continuing to work with our advisers to finalise a working draft of the Procedures. We will be circulating a draft to our Task and Finish Group for final review, and to key stakeholders for initial high level feedback in the next two weeks. We will be bringing a draft of the revised Procedures to the Board at the same time as the revised Criteria; the consultation referred to above will additionally include the Procedures, so that the two documents will be consulted upon in parallel.

8. Communicating ARB's work

Publications

Since the last Board meeting in December, we have supported two articles for other publishers, generated seven news releases and been referenced in at least 28 earned content articles. We also trialled an ARB advertorial in the Guardian Homes & Property section, with the aim of raising awareness of ARB and the Architects Register. One known impact of the advertorial was to prompt members of the public to contact our Professional Standards team regarding content which appeared in the same publication.

eBulletin

The last eBulletin email, published 6 December, was delivered to 40,014 recipients and opened by 12,921 – an open rate of 32%. The December eBulletin microsite received 2,983 page views. Both email opens and microsite page views were the highest for the year.

The December edition was the fourth most popular email and fifth most popular microsite since records began in 2015. The *Dear Architect* article on minimising the risk of project problems developing was the most popular article from the edition across email and microsite.

In addition to serving as a point of contact to our registrants the eBulletin is a cost effective way to help ensure the Register is kept up to date. The eBulletin email prominently features the recipient's contact details at the top of the message together with a click through option to update this information. We received approximately 836 contact detail updates in the week immediately after the eBulletin was sent out compared to 209 in the previous week – exactly four times as many.

The eBulletin has been redesigned to bring it in line with current ARB branding and to allow easier access to the microsite content. The new design will be featured in the first eBulletin edition of 2019.

Online

In anticipation of General Data Protection Regulation requirements, changes were made in May 2018 to our Cookie Consent Policy. Prior to this date, new visitors to our websites would be tracked from the moment they landed on one of the pages, until such time as they opted out (a rare occurrence). After this date, users were not be tracked until they manually consented to it (by clicking on a pop up message). Following a review of this position, the policy decision was reversed on 23 January 2019 and original tracking process resumed.

Brexit Communications

As a development of the original *Brexit FAQs* webpage on ARB's main website, the Brexit Team developed a dedicated Brexit section of the website which went live on 14 January 2019. Signposted on the ARB homepage and website navigation header, the new section features an introductory landing page, updated FAQs, a collection of links to useful information and guidance, a summary routes to registration graphic and a range of EU related Register statistics.

In the week prior to the launch of the new content there were 39 views of the original Brexit FAQ page. With no promotion, the new webpages achieved 79 page views in their first week. Taking a slightly broader look, between the 13 December 2018 and 13 January 2019 the original Brexit FAQs received 99 page views. Between 14 January and 14 February 2019 the new Brexit webpages received 1,852 page views.

On the 8 March we sent a Brexit advice eBlast email to the profession. This resulted in 243% increase in views of the Brexit webpages compared with the week before (373 pages views versus 1,279). Between the 15 February and 15 March, the new Brexit webpages received 3,168 page views.

9. Administration of the Register and Organisational Efficiency

Numbers on Register

On 31 December 2018, the Register stood at 41,170. As of 20 March 2019, there were 41,234 architects on the Register. Of these, 8,700 are EU nationals (not including UK). 7,461 of these individuals have registered addresses in the UK. This compares with 8,108 EU nationals (not including UK) at the start of 2018, with 6,943 based in the UK. This demonstrates that the Register is still growing and that the number of EU nationals on the Register and with addresses in the UK is still increasing.

On 4 January 2019, we removed 1,090 architects for non-payment of the retention fee. This was down from 1,204 in 2018. We consider that the reduction in the number removed is down to a combination of enhanced communications around the fee deadline and better general awareness of the deadline for payment. 511 (47%) of those removed have since been reinstated.

Systems improvements

We introduced a new email management system in late 2017. The system allows us to track the number of emails sent, their topics and response rates. In 2018, we sent a total of 16,553 email responses to queries, with an average response rate of one day.

Across the course of 2018, the five most popular topics were Change of Address (1,339), Prescribed Examination (695), Retention Fee (673), General Queries (669), and UK applications (663). We had 608 queries about making an application from the EU applications (456) and 58 queries about Brexit.

So far in 2019, we have sent 5,299 emails with the most popular topics being requests for certificates to register in the EU (406), Brexit (317), making an application from the EU (273), reinstatement (232) and change of address (220). We experienced a spike in email activity with 1,118 emails being sent between 8 March 2019 (when an email was sent out to all registrants encouraging them to make contact soon if they were concerned) and 20 March 2019. We had sent 3,635 emails in the same period during 2018.

We continue to work on software we have developed to store and process pass lists electronically. We have completed a successful pilot of the system, receiving excellent feedback from school users and internal users alike, and have rolled the system out to 25 Part 3 providers. We are in the process of rolling the system out to all other course providers and the system is fully operational within the Registration team.

Work is underway to build an end to end application processing system in Registration and we are meeting regularly with systems developers to create wireframes. Once these have been finalised we will be in a position to go out to tender for the work. It is anticipated that building an end to end system will create efficiencies, result in quicker processing times, reduce paper use in the office and create better audit trails for record keeping.

Registration EU matters

As reported above, we are tracking the number of architects with EU nationality (other than UK) entering and leaving the Register. We note that the number of EU nationals on the

Register is still increasing at a faster pace than in 2018 with 399 joining the Register so far this year against 232 in 2018. The number is significantly higher than both the first quarters of 2016 (333) and 2017 (331) were by the end of March.

The number of EU nationals (excluding UK) leaving the Register in 2018 was down from 2017, with only 550 leaving the Register through resigning or being removed for non-payment, compared with 567 in 2017. In 2016, 164 resigning architects were of EU nationality (other than UK). We also reported that in 2017, 32% of architects removed from the Register for non-payment were of EU nationality (other than UK) against 30% in 2016.

Finally, the number of certificates we have issued (which would potentially enable a UK architect to register in Europe) has increased exponentially in 2019, with 332 being processed or in progress by 28 March 2019. This is already 49% higher than the entire annual total for 2018, when 223 were processed across the year and 54 in the first quarter. 197 of these requests have come since we sent out a communication on 8 March 2019 informing registrants that if they should contact us without delay if they have any questions about what Brexit might mean for ARB and their registration status. In 2016, the year the referendum on whether the UK should remain in or leave the EU, 105 certificates were issued in the whole year.

Prescribed Examination Review

As was reported in 2018, and in line with the agreed 2018 Business Plan, we are progressing a 'business as usual' review of the Procedures for the Prescribed Examination ('the Exam'). We established the scope of the review as:

- Explore whether the procedures remain fit for purpose following completion of the Criteria/Procedure reviews
- Explore whether the eligibility requirements remain fit for purpose
- Explore whether the process is efficient and robust in offering assurance that those who pass the exam have equivalent competence to an architect undertaking an ARB prescribed qualification at the appropriate level

Any revised or updated procedures for 'the Exam' should enable the Board to:

- Continue to discharge its functions under Section 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b) of the Architects Act 1997 ('the Act'); and
- Ensure that 'the Exam' process supports the admission of competent individuals to the Register, in that individuals given 'equivalence' to Part 1 or Part 2 through 'the Exam' have demonstrated that they are competent against all of the Criteria and to the required level.

One of our further objectives is to ensure that processes are streamlined insofar as is possible, but that achieving this does not come at the expense of ARB discharging its functions under Section 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b).

We have concluded the first stages of our pre-consultation process and have compiled the preliminary views of the stakeholders who responded. This included a survey, three further

roundtable events, one with existing examiners and two open events which across both sessions were attended by examiners, former candidates and architects from academia attending. We have also undertaken some research on additional costs incurred by Exam candidates which has demonstrated that our proposed changes are likely to result in cost savings for Exam candidates.

Whilst we had anticipated making a decision on the revised procedures for the prescribed examination in November/December, we made the decision to delay until it can be considered together with the Criteria and Procedures review and the consultation exercises run simultaneously.

We will be looking to split the Exam into two stages, Stage A and Stage B to ensure that those who do not stand a realistic prospect of passing the Exam at interview will not bear the full expenses.

As a final step, in the lead up to the Board considering the revised Criteria (following the business as usual review), we will ensure that the prescribed examination and any proposed changes are compatible with the revised Criteria.

10. Committee Meetings held since December Board Meeting

Audit Committee – 20 December 2019

Prescription Committee – 8 January 2019

Prescription Committee – 31 January 2019

Prescription Committee – 7 March 2019

11. Resource Implications

Only as identified in the paper.

12. Risk Implications

ARB's Operational Activities Report provides the Board with an update on business activities, progress against the Business Plan, as well as highlighting any emerging risks which may impact on delivery.

We continue to manage the risks associated with Brexit as far as we are able to despite uncertainty and have made arrangements for the UK leaving the EU on 29 March 2019 with no deal in place.

Risks also remain with regards the review of the Criteria, Procedures and Prescribed Examination which are outlined in the body of the paper, and subject to individual risk registers for each project.

Further detail of specific risks to the organisation and in relation to operations will be provided in the confidential Registrar's report.

13. Communication

The update on ARB's operational activities, informs the Board of ARB's work and any risks

which may prevent the delivery of ARB's operations.

14. Equality and Diversity Implications

Equality and Diversity considerations will be central to the review of the prescribed examination with comments drawn from the pre-consultation response being factored into the direction of travel. An Equality Assessment will be carried out once the shape of any changes has been formulated.

15. Further Actions

These are referred to within the key points set out above.