Subject	**Update on Prescribed Exams**
Purpose	**For Note**
From	Brian James, Director of Registration

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1.   Summary

This paper provides a summary of the Prescribed Examination activity in the period 1 January 2021 to 20 October 2021. It also describes the in progress development activities that are underway, as part of wider ARB transformation and continuous improvement.

2.   Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- Note the exam activity and outcomes described in the paper
- Note the future improvement activities

3.   Open/Confidential Session

Open session

4.   Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

5.   Key Points

5.1 To date, in 2022, 132 Prescribed Examinations have been listed, which is a similar number to the previous year. The exams have continued to be run entirely online, using facilitators, due to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on travel, and ARB's offices remaining closed to the public.

5.2 The Examination has two components, a portfolio of evidence that the candidate maps against the Board's general criteria and graduate attributes, and an interview with a panel of examiners, overseen by an independent examiner, to ensure the Board's processes are followed consistently. There are two exams; part 1 and part 2, both using the same criteria.

5.3 There are more than forty criteria and attributes for the candidates to map against within a word limit and number of pages. This can result in complex portfolios, or omissions. The complexity of the mapping process generates many queries from candidates, and the guidance documents have been developed, and added to over time, making them cumbersome and hard to navigate, especially where the first language may not be English.

5.4 Examiners review the submitted portfolio to decide if they meet the Board's standards. If not, the candidate does not progress to an interview, and is failed. If the portfolio is deemed to meet the standard, the candidate is interviewed by the

Panel, who explore the work and application of skills and understanding. There are two outcomes, the candidate can pass (meeting ARB equivalence requirements), or they can fail and be referred to the Lead Examiner, with feedback on their performance, so they can revisit their materials and be re-examined.

5.5 In 2022, year to date, the breakdown of the examination outcomes is:

Exam	Pass	Fail	Total	% pass
Part 1	41	52	93	44%
Part 2	23	16	39	59%

5.6 This pass rate is similar to the previous year, and there is no impact on pass rates indicated by the use of remote examinations. Part 2 examinations have a higher pass rate than Part 1, likely due to the experience of the architects, either because they have already taken a Part 1 exam, or because they have more experience in the profession.

5.7 Analysis of the fail rate at portfolio stage, or at interview shows an equal distribution.

5.8 The breakdown of exam candidate shows 52% are female. The five countries of qualification of the applicants most common in 2022 applications are: Honk Kong (18), Australia (11), USA (10), China (7) and South Africa (5). We are also seeing increased interest from candidates in India and Brazil.

5.9 There have been three appeals against examination decisions, which have been considered by the Chair. None of these appeals were upheld.

5.10 There are 20 examination slots already booked for 2022. These include 11 candidates who were part way through a qualification where prescription was withdrawn before they graduated. As holders of a non-prescribed qualification, the Prescribed Examination therefore is their only route to UK registration.

5.11 Improvement activities
We have identified a range of improvement activities in advance of next year's exam cohort. These include:-

- Independent audit of the current process, as part of our internal audit programme. This work fits under the remit of the Audit and Risk Committee and will be delivered by independent auditors
- Review of application materials, including the criteria mapping documentation, and associated webpages
- Engaging with past candidates, to understand their experience of the process
- Development of our supporting IT systems, to log, administer and report on exam outcomes, and demographics of applicants, as part of our wider IT infrastructure transformation work

5.12 The audit will review our adherence to the Board's processes, and provide recommendations, which will be considered by the Executive, and incorporated into the development plan. The audit fieldwork will conclude by the end of November 2021, with recommendations by the end of 2021.

5.13 We have started to engage with past candidates, and are exploring how to make use of such stakeholder feedback on the language, complexity and context of the exam process. The Chief Executive and Director of Registration met with a representative of a group of international architects, and are exploring how we can make use of such feedback, along with other types of engagement (such as surveying a sample of the last two years cohorts).

5.14 Our Corporate Strategy 2022-26 includes the following commitment: *"we will overhaul the prescribed examination, ensuring it is proportionate and focused on the fitness to practise of architects, moving away from the current inefficient mapping process which provides unnecessary barriers for international architects."* As part of the business planning process for 2022 we will consider how we will scope, design and deliver this review recognising the interdependencies with our work on initial education and training and wider equality, diversity and inclusion initiative.

5.15 We know that the current guidance for the exam process is difficult to navigate. The webpage is one of the most frequently viewed ARB webpages, but also generates the majority of emails to the Registration team, with each application generating an average of 15 emails from enquiry to exam submission. We also know that the guidance videos are outdated (due to Covid-19 remote working), and this offers an opportunity to refresh and simplify the guidance. We would plan to use the stakeholder feedback to help guide the development, and testing, of the new versions.

5.16 Our IT systems do not support easy administration of exam applications or processing them through the system. There are four different spreadsheets to track applications, and an exam database that does not support all of the information we need, including management and logistics associated with Examiner training and usage, or provide useful statistics of outcome or demographics, including equality, diversity and inclusion information, that would help demonstrate the outcomes of the process. An example of the type of standard report, which cannot be tailored, is included in Annex 1. The database is structured so that it is not possible to query the data by more than one field, so it is not possible to report on the nationality of the candidate and the country where they took their qualifications, and breakdown by type of exam, or gender, age, exam outcome etc. We are currently using a business analyst to map information flows, and requirements for reporting, that will inform the wider IT transformation and new ways of working activities.

6. Resource Implications

There are no additional resource implications. All development work activities are either planned and budgeted for, or are delivered within internal operational resource.

7. Risk Implications

There are no additional risk implications. The improvement activities will contribute to improving accessibility for those with non-ARB recognised qualifications to the UK register, and using the data and feedback from candidates to continuously improve our processes.

8. Communication

There are no additional communication messages as a result of this paper or the development work at this stage.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

The improvements we are working on will help potential candidates in their application and navigation of the process.

10. **Further Actions**

We will provide an update report to the Board in the first quarter of 2022, after the independent audit recommendations are received, and our response to them.

Nationalities

Nationality	Count
Algerian	2
Argentinian	1
Australian	3
Brazilian	1
British	30
Canadian	2
Chinese	11
Croatian	2
Egyptian	1
French	1
German	2
Hong Kong	7
Hungarian	1
Indian	3
Iranian	1
Irish	2
Israeli	2
Italian	3
Japanese	1
Jordanian	1
Kenyan	1

Countries of Qualification

Country of Qualification	Total	Pass	Fail	Undetermined
Algeria	1	0	1	0
Argentina	1	0	1	0
Australia	11	5	6	0
Austria	1	0	1	0
Belgium	1	0	1	0
Bosnia And Herzegovina	1	1	0	0
Brazil	4	1	3	0
Canada	2	1	1	0
Chile	2	1	1	0
China	7	3	4	0
Denmark	1	1	0	0
Egypt	1	0	1	0
France	1	0	1	0
Germany	1	0	1	0
Hong Kong	18	11	7	0
India	6	3	3	0
Iran	3	1	2	0
Ireland	3	2	1	0
Israel	2	2	0	0
Italy	3	2	1	0

Nationality	Count
Korean (South)	1
Latvian	1
Lebanese	2
Malay	1
New Zealand	2
Pakistani	2
Polish	2
Portuguese	2
Romanian	2
Russian	1
Serbian	1
Singaporean	1
South African	2
Spanish	1
Sudanese	1
Swedish	1
Thai	2
Turkish	1
United States	1

Country of Qualification	Total	Pass	Fail	Undetermined
Japan	1	0	1	0
Kenya	1	0	1	0
Korea, Democratic Peopl	1	1	0	0
Lebanon	5	3	2	0
Malaysia	2	2	0	0
Moldova	1	0	1	0
Morocco	1	1	0	0
New Zealand	4	3	1	0
Nigeria	1	0	1	0
Pakistan	2	1	1	0
Poland	3	1	2	0
Romania	1	1	0	0
Russian Federation	2	1	1	0
Saudi Arabia	1	0	1	0
Serbia	2	1	1	0
Singapore	2	1	1	0
South Africa	5	3	2	0
Spain	1	1	0	0
Sudan	1	0	1	0
Sweden	1	1	0	0
Thailand	2	0	2	0
Turkey	1	0	1	0
United Kingdom	9	4	5	0
United States	10	5	5	0