



**Subject** Prescription Committee's Annual Report 2018-2019  
**Purpose** For Noting  
**From** Prescription Committee

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**1. Summary**

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

**2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Board notes the Prescription Committee's Annual Report 2018 - 2019.

**3. Open Session**

**4. 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.

**5. Background**

- i. This report concerns the Prescription Committee's work between June 2018 and August 2019. 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**

Little has changed in relation to the Committee's role and remit since the current

Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications were established.

Further to changes being made to the Architects Act 1997, the previous Board ceased to operate and Board members completed their tenures on 6 January 2019.

However, due to the volume, complexity and on-going nature of the work in relation to prescription matters, the Board, at its meeting on 29 November 2018 the Board considered whether the membership of the Committee and its quorum should be adjusted so that the Committee could continue to operate in early 2019, before a series of new Board appointments became effective in early March 2019.

At its meeting on 19 December 2018, the Board, further to a short consultation, agreed changes to the terms of reference in relation to the membership of the Committee which meant that the membership could remain stable during the early part of 2019 and until the new Board had the opportunity to review the position. As a result, all existing members were re-appointed as Committee members on a fixed term basis. Initially, members were given a fixed term appointment until the end of April 2019, which was subsequently extended to 31 July 2019 in order to give the new Board time to become established. A further extension was granted to members when the Board agreed to undertake an internal governance review of its committee structure. In agreeing to undertake the internal governance review, the Board agreed to appoint two Board members to the Committee, one lay and one architect member.

### **Independent Advisers**

Between June and the end of September 2018, the following were Independent Advisers to the Prescription Committee:

Peter Beacock  
Tony Cleftord  
Don Gray  
Peter Walker and  
Alona Martinez Perez

The tenures for Peter Beacock, Tony Cleftord, Don Gray and Peter Walker expired on 30 September 2018.

Since 1 October 2018, the following have been Independent Advisers to the Committee:

Des Fagan  
Wendy Colvin  
Stefanie Rhodes  
Kelly Mackinnon and  
Alona Martinez Perez

Des Fagan was additionally appointed to serve as the Independent Adviser to the Prescription Committee from 1 October 2018. Wendy Colvin was also co-opted on to the Committee from 24 April 2019.

One independent adviser's tenure will be due for renewal in 2021, the remaining four advisers' tenures will be due for renewal in 2022. 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.

### **Committee Membership**

The Committee members from June 2018 to 6 January 2019 were:

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

They were supported by an Independent Adviser, Peter Beacock between June and the end of September 2018. Mr Beacock's tenure expired on 30 September 2018. At that point, Des Fagan joined the Committee and replaced Mr Beacock.

Caroline Corby opted to leave the Committee once the former Board ceased to operate due to work commitments elsewhere.

From 7 January 2019, the Committee members were as follows:

Carol Bernstein; Alice Hynes (Chair); Guy Maxwell; Susan Ware, Alex Wright and James Grierson

Des Fagan continued in his role as Independent Adviser to the Committee. Given the nature and complexity of the issues which the Committee was dealing with, the Chair, on 24 April 2019, additionally co-opted a further independent adviser, Wendy Colvin, on to the Committee. The co-option was reported to the Board on 1 April 2019.

Board members, Emeritus Professor ADH Crook and Richard Parnaby were additionally appointed to the Committee with effect from 1 April 2019.

With the exception of the current Board members, (Emeritus Professor ADH Crook and Richard Parnaby) and the Independent Advisers, current Committee members' contracts will come to an end of 30 September 2019. The outcomes of the Board's internal governance review mean that new Terms of Reference and a newly constituted Committee will operate from Autumn 2019.

### **Meetings**

The Committee met eleven times between June 2018 and August 2019.

### **Committee Effectiveness Review**

No formal Board/Committee effectiveness review was undertaken at the end of 2018. Before the previous Board ceased to operate, Board members were asked to provide relevant feedback and offered an exit interview. The feedback was gathered by an external independent consultant. A summary of the feedback was collated and the Executive agreed to ensure that this was taken into account as part of the future Board's considerations when reviewing its governance arrangements.

### **Prescription of Qualifications**

As of August 2019, ARB prescribed 167 qualifications which are offered by 61 institutions. Of these 74 are at Part 1 level; 64 are at Part 2 level and 29 are at Part 3 level. In May 2018 the Board prescribed 161 qualifications, offered by 60 institutions. The number of qualifications prescribed by the Board has increased by two at Part 1 level and increased by four at Part 2 level. The number of qualifications prescribed at Part 3 level has remained stable over the last 12 months.

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 prescription process during 2018 (refer to most recent Departmental Key Performance Indicators to the Board following the end of each calendar year).

There has been a moderate increase in the total number of prescribed qualifications between May 2018 and August 2019 as set out above. However, during this period the Committee dealt with a series of extremely complex submissions which necessitated it looking very thoroughly at the material, and where necessary gathering additional material via visits to institutions.

The consideration of course changes to existing qualifications and new qualifications which will sit within the apprenticeship framework has increased the volume of work being dealt with by the Committee during this reporting period.

The Committee has sought to ensure that it properly understands the requests that have been made as well as fully understanding the apprenticeship standards and end point assessments. During the reporting period the Board has approved one qualification at Part 1 level, four qualifications at Part 2 level, and one qualification at Part 3 level which lie within the apprenticeship framework.

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 Executive and the Committee's independent adviser/s will also occasionally hold meetings with representatives from institutions which are seeking prescription for the first time in order to obtain further information in relation to the application. This happened on one occasion during the 2018/2019 prescription cycle.

The development of a new prescription application form has meant that the Committee sought fewer explanations on the more routine elements of applications for prescription/to renew prescription such as compensation, study abroad, and accreditation of prior learning. The Committee typically continues to seek explanations in relation to the mapping of the learning outcomes and assessments to the Criteria and the resourcing of a qualification.

The Committee/Board has continued with its agreed 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 2018/2019 cycle the Committee recommended that one institution be 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 reviews the feedback gathered annually from regarding the prescription process. Feedback is sought from all institutions that have sought prescription/sought to renew prescription once the Board has made a final decision on an application. Eight responses were received from institutions.

No significant issues were identified by responding institutions following the 2017/2018 prescription cycle. All reported receiving all the information and advice they wanted, and responded positively to the improvements to the application form. A number of suggestions were made and will be used to inform the next review and development of the Good Practice Handbook.

### **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 May 2019, 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 124 throughout 2017, to 132 throughout 2018. The Report also identified a number of key themes which had been highlighted through the External Examiners report. These themes included:

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 candidates' performance is enhanced by attendance at advisory sessions offered by external providers.
- that the value of office-based work is made clearer by employers references.
- Examiner training has emphasised their ability to divide work amongst themselves as necessary and re-group to consider the work as a whole and this approach continues to be noted by Independent Examiners.

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

- We continue to advise candidates to get in touch with us for more information on the range of support available from third parties.
- In February, Candidate invitation letters were strengthened to make clear that attendance at the specified time is mandatory, with no adjustments to the running order being possible in the event of lateness.
- In April, the Independent Examiners were contacted to confirm that they should ensure that the time scheduled for Examiners to complete records is fully utilised and if they are dissatisfied with the quality of the feedback

During 2017/2018 the Committee also:

- Noted that Examiner training and induction took place on 7 March 2018 for existing and new Examiners and Independent Examiners. Fourteen new examiners were appointed by the Board at its meeting on 14 February 2018, to replace eighteen Examiners whose term of appointment expired at the end of 2017.

### **Competency Standards Group**

In July 2019, 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 54 individuals during 2018. This compared with 84 individuals who had made applications during 2017 and 60 in 2016. It was also noted that in 2018, 52% of applications had been processed within the key performance indicator processing time. This compared to 68% in 2016 and 2017. An additional training day was organised for July 2019 to address concerns. It was also noted that three new members joined the CSG in September 2018, to add to the existing pool of four. Two previous members have since withdrawn.

### **Apprenticeships**

The Committee has considered a number of course change proposals for existing prescribed qualifications so that they can be offered as part of the apprenticeship framework. As of July 2019, the Board made decisions which resulted in the following prescribed qualifications now being delivered as part of an apprenticeship framework:

- London South Bank University  
BA (Hons) Architecture – Part 1  
Master of Architecture – Part 2
- Northumbria University  
Master of Architecture – Part 2
- De Montfort University  
Master of Architecture in Architecture – Part 2  
Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture Practice – Part 3
- University of Manchester/Manchester Metropolitan University  
Master of Architecture – Part 2

The Committee has further discussed and raised concerns regarding the way in which institutions publicise their apprenticeship provision, noting that in some cases the wording that had been used on institutions' websites could be misleading to existing and future apprentices. Whilst contacting relevant institutions directly regarding their websites and seeking adjustments to them, the Executive, in conjunction with the Registrar, will be undertaking a wider review in terms of the way in which institutions publicise their prescribed qualifications, including those which will sit within the apprenticeship framework, this Autumn.

iii. The Board is asked to note the above report.

## **6. Resource implications**

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

## **7. 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.

**8. 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.

No changes to ARB's website or publication will arise from the Board's considerations of this paper.

**9. 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.

**10. Further Actions**

N/A