

Board paper

for Open session

Subject:

Analysis of consultation on ARB's International Routes to Registration

Board meeting:

21 May 2025

Agenda item:

10

Action:

- For noting ☐
- For discussion ☐
- For decision ☒

Purpose

To agree to publish an analysis report and next steps following consultation on ARB's international routes to registration, incorporating major changes to the Prescribed Examination and associated changes to the UK Adaptation Assessment.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to agree that ARB:

- i. publish an analysis report on the consultation for major changes to ARB's international routes to registration (in the paper at **Annexe A**)
 - ii. implement the proposals for a competence-based assessment in a modernised format, simpler eligibility requirements, and a single point of entry to the Register
 - iii. review and remodel the Competency Standards Group to provide an alternative route for those with partial qualifications
 - iv. undertake further scoping work to explore a contract model for outsourcing the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptation Assessment, rather than an accreditation model
 - v. initially seek to appoint a single provider, and consider widening out to multiple providers based on the success of the contract model
 - vi. consider the potential for courses to be provided at a later stage in the project, once the new exams are running and can be evaluated
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Annexes

Annexe A – International Routes to UK Registration for Architects: Consultation Report

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1. Open Session

- 1.1. This item is being taken in the open session. The Annexes will not be published as part of the papers. This is to avoid confusion by publishing a consultation report that will be finalised after the Board's discussion.

2. Background and Key points

- 2.1. ARB accredits the UK qualifications required for registration as an architect, and also creates routes to registration for applicants with international qualifications. We must ensure that standards of competence are maintained no matter how professionals join the UK Register, to fulfil our fundamental duty of protecting the public.
- 2.2. At its September 2024 meeting the Board agreed to consult on proposed changes to ARB's international routes to registration. The changes aim to align our international routes with our new approach to UK initial education and training, and improve access for those who can demonstrate competence, to the UK Register by simplifying the examination process and removing unintended complexity and barriers.
- 2.3. The proposals included an overhaul of the Prescribed Exam. They also included proposed changes to the UK Adaptation Assessment that is undertaken by architects joining the UK Register through one of ARB's international agreements.¹ In summary, the changes outlined in the consultation paper are:

Competence-based assessment

- Assessment would be based on ARB's Academic and Practice Outcomes (in place of the outgoing Criteria).
- It would assess equivalent competence and UK context-specific knowledge (instead of equivalent qualifications).

Single gateway

- There would be a single examination gateway to the Register (instead of requiring two exams to prove equivalence to Part 1 and/or Part 2, and in addition, requiring a Part 3 UK-accredited qualification).

Improved eligibility

- Simpler eligibility requirements would be based on qualifications that focus on architecture and meet ARB's UK professional practical experience requirements (without reference to the number of years spent in education and training).

¹ The consultation paper discussed at the September 2024 Board meeting was subsequently published here: <https://arb.org.uk/consultations/uk-registration-for-internationally-qualified-architects/>

Accredited providers

- ARB would accredit a range of assessments offered by providers, including any potential adaptation requirements such as preparation courses (rather than running exams in-house).

Modern assessment format

- We would introduce an online gateway assessment of UK-specific knowledge and readiness to practise in UK context, which would be designed to also operate as the UK Adaptation Assessment.
- We would invite providers to develop the online gateway test and the subsequent competence assessment exercises for ARB to accredit. The formats of the assessment exercises could vary depending on the provider, to increase options for candidates.

- 2.4. We also proposed to review and remodel the Competency Standards Group² to provide an alternative route for those with partial qualifications – namely, an accredited Part 2 and Part 3 but no Part 1. We invited views on whether there should be one assessment methodology for candidates or a range of assessment options, and whether courses should be provided to help candidates prepare for the registration assessment.

Consultation respondents

- 2.5. The public consultation ran from 3 October 2024 to 6 January 2025. The consultation was communicated widely through digital channels including emails to networks and previous consultation and engagement contacts, and through ARB's social media channels.
- 2.6. We received 59 unique responses. Just under half (25, 42%) were from registered architects, including three who were also academics. Respondents were from a range of roles, regions and levels of experience as an architect. A third of responses (19, 32%) were from 'other' types of respondents, including some (11) who stated that they were internationally-qualified architects not yet on the UK Register.
- 2.7. There was a slightly higher proportion of respondents reporting their gender as female and higher proportions of people from different ethnic groups compared to the Register. This suggests that if changes to ARB's Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptation Assessment meet our aim to improve access to the UK Register by simplifying the examination process and removing unintended complexity and barriers, the Register could become more diverse as a result.
- 2.8. We received a lower response rate to this consultation than some of our other strategic consultations. One of the potential reasons for this is that the proposals will apply to internationally-qualified architects who wish to become a registered architect within the UK and are therefore less relevant to those already registered with, and in regular communication with, ARB. A higher number of stakeholders (108) attended an online event in which ARB presented and discussed the proposals than responded to the consultation.

² [Guidance Notes - CSG Guidance - Architects Registration Board](#)

Respondent feedback

- 2.9. The consultation exercise demonstrated agreement for all our proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaption Assessment. Our proposals to move to a competence-based assessment (88%) and for a single point of entry to the UK Register (80%) received the highest levels of support.
- 2.10. Of all our proposals, support was lowest for our proposal to move to an accreditation approach (58%) rather than run the exams in-house. In analysing the written text in which respondents could explain their views, we learned that about a quarter of respondents (16 of 59, 27%) were concerned that the cost of the assessment, exam or route must be affordable for candidates. 'Other' types of respondents (including those who are registered in other countries but not yet the UK) were slightly more likely to raise this topic. This is also one of the key risks identified by ARB: that in outsourcing the exam, the exam provider would not be bound by the same legislation as ARB which requires that costs are recovered, and could instead set exam fees that promote a profitable model.
- 2.11. The consultation also identified that potential providers are mindful of costs, and the question of whether there would be enough candidates and throughput for the model to be viable. Some respondents suggested external providers could be discouraged by perceived high administrative costs, the development of resources that would be required, the need to keep assessments up to date and the work needed to promote their services to candidates.
- 2.12. Respondents shared the types of organisations they perceived could be interested in running future assessments. Suggestions included learning providers (e.g. universities), private organisations who have previous experience in running similar examinations, and professional bodies in the sector.
- 2.13. Another area in which views were split was in our discussion about whether there should be one assessment for candidates (36%) or a range of assessment options (39%). Respondents on both sides gave compelling reasons.
- 2.14. Respondents who preferred a range of assessment options suggested a range would accommodate different candidates' varying backgrounds and learning styles. Some emphasised that even though they thought having a range of assessment options was good, there needed to be parameters in place to ensure consistency, so that the competencies were always demonstrated to the same standard.
- 2.15. Respondents in favour of a single assessment believed this would be effective because it would ensure consistency for all candidates. Some thought that having a single assessment would make the process simpler, rather than having different options candidates would need to research and compare.
- 2.16. We are particularly convinced that a single provider and methodology would be simpler for the online UK-context knowledge assessment. Whilst respondents raised a range of different methods of assessing competency (including portfolio assessments, online tests, and face-to-face interviews), a knowledge assessment is a simpler exercise. A bank of questions would be maintained and used, and the data collected in running the test itself would help to quality assure those questions by identifying which questions perform well.

- 2.17. We invited views on whether courses should be provided to help candidates prepare for the registration assessment, and just over half of the respondents (32, 54%) shared positive views on the benefits of courses. Suggested formats included online learning, in-person learning, group learning, seminars, and portfolio reviews. Some respondents commented on the cost of potential courses and suggested, for example, that taught courses should be included as part of the fees paid towards their assessments, or that employers should pay for them. Just under a third of respondents (17, 29%) suggested other forms of support should be offered to candidates, such as a mentorship or peer review programme, or online, accessible resources such as practice tests.
- 2.18. Other topics raised by respondents – such as their views on assessment styles or their concerns about the requirement for a Prescribed Exam at all – are discussed in the consultation report at Annexe A.

Revised proposals to the Board

- 2.19. Following the results of our consultation, we recommend that the Board proceed to implement the proposals for a competence-based assessment, simpler eligibility requirements, and a single point of entry to the Register (noting that this single entry point might have more than one stage to it, but would not require separate exams to prove Academic Competency Outcomes and Practice Competency outcomes).
- 2.20. We also recommend that the Board proceed with the proposal to review and remodel the Competency Standards Group to provide an alternative route for those with partial qualifications – namely, an accredited Part 2 and Part 3 but no Part 1.
- 2.21. Should the Board agree to implement these proposals, we will commence work immediately. First steps on the CSG review and remodel and on the improved eligibility requirements will be policy scoping papers and project planning to identify a timeline for consultation and implementation. An initial scoping exercise suggests we would be able to remodel the CSG and introduce the new desk-based assessment route for those with accredited Part 2s and Part 3s (but no Part 1) in one year.
- 2.22. We recommend that we undertake further scoping work to explore a contract model for outsourcing the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptation Assessment, rather than an accreditation model. We also recommend that we initially seek to appoint a single provider, and consider widening out to multiple providers based on the success of the contract model.
- 2.23. Since reviewing the mixed consultation feedback on our proposed accreditation approach, we have undertaken further research into the difference between an accreditation model and a contract model. As part of our research we have looked at the basis of contracts used by other regulatory bodies to outsource assessments, and we are continuing this research. We have not identified any other regulatory bodies that operate an accreditation model for the sole purpose of an examination or assessment; although some regulators do accredit qualifications required by overseas professionals. We've also met with three potential assessment providers to hear their initial views on the difference between accreditation and contract models.

- 2.24. One of the benefits of an accreditation model is that ARB could adapt its existing assurance process that is used for qualifications. Another is that it is easier to use for multiple providers, as it supports an open process of inviting anyone eligible to apply for accreditation, with a single set of standards used to quality assure all of them. However, accreditation is a model more commonly used for providers of qualifications, rather than solely assessments or examinations. We are also conscious that accreditation can be a significant undertaking and as yet we are unsure about the numbers of likely applicants. One of the benefits of using a contract model would be additional control over performance, including the ability to review or terminate a contract if the fees are problematic for candidates. One of the disbenefits would be that we would need to develop a more detailed brief for running the assessments than is typically required through an accreditation model – which is based on standards and their assurance, rather than on detailed requirements.
- 2.25. In light of the consultation feedback, and the further research we have undertaken since analysing it, we are recommending a revised approach to the Board. We would like to explore and trial a contract model, which would include:
- Meeting more potential providers to discuss pros and cons with them, and discussing the viability of providing the exams given the potential numbers / throughput of candidates.
 - Meeting other regulatory bodies to better understand the contract model they use.
 - Through meetings and desktop research, developing a greater understanding of the assurance process for different types of contracts and assessment methodologies. (For example, we intend to introduce an online UK-context knowledge assessment that would both be the standalone UK Adaptation Assessment and the first part of the Prescribed Exam. We would compare contract and accreditation models to consider the best process for the development and maintenance of banks of questions.)
 - Reviewing the Architects Act to ensure a contract approach is possible.
 - Identifying an expert to help develop a tender document that could be used to appoint a contracted assessment provider for both the UK Adaptation Assessment and the Prescribed Exam.
- 2.26. Throughout this process we would provide regular updates to the Board, and would highlight any problems or concerns with a contract approach. Before we publish the tender document, we would return to the Board with detailed plans (see paragraph 2.28 below).
- 2.27. Lastly, in light of consultation feedback on the potential for courses and support to be provided to candidates, we recommend that we keep this under review, carrying out further informal engagement with past and future candidates. Once the new exams are running, we can evaluate their success and whether there is a pool of candidates that would benefit from more detailed support, such as an accredited taught adaptation course with a registration assessment built in at the end.
- 2.28. We are keen that we move quickly with this project, as any solution will take time to design and implement. As identified in our consultation, we intend to bring more detailed recommendations to the Board and subsequently consult on a new approach for the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptation Assessment next year. At this

point in time, we are still due to meet the transition timetable published in our consultation paper.³ As we progress this work, including scoping out a contract approach, we will keep the timetable under review.

3. Resource Implications

- 3.1. The changes we anticipate to resourcing requirements and costs were set out in the consultation paper.⁴ In summary, there will be some resourcing changes if we move to a new model that outsources the examinations and amends the role of the Competency Standards Group. We will need to review and repurpose the Competency Standards Group and our pool of examiners, and we would need to consider whether any changes are needed to the role of the Accreditation Committee. We do not anticipate an increase in staff headcount but will be in a better position to review this once we start developing the new assessment model, should we go ahead with the proposals in this consultation.
- 3.2. The same applies to the fee for candidates: we do not intend for the costs to candidates to increase as a result of these proposals but we will not be able to model the potential costs until we start to operationalise the policy changes recommended in this consultation.
- 3.3. At this stage, we are recommending further exploratory work and cannot yet predict the resourcing changes nor the future cost of the assessments. We will undertake a detailed modelling exercise once we have further information and return to the Board for its decision on the full resource implications. The assessment model would also be subject to a consultation, as it would entail changes to our rules to implement.

4. Risk Implications

- 4.1. The extensive changes we are proposing amount to a complete overhaul of the Prescribed Exam. There are risks associated with such fundamental changes to one of our regulatory roles and services, which are captured in a risk register as part of our project management.
- 4.2. These risks were outlined in the July 2024 Board paper and have not changed,⁵ but the consultation exercise has helped to reinforce our understanding of some of them, such as the need to manage costs (see paragraph 2.10 above) and simplicity for candidates (see paragraph 6.3 below).
- 4.3. The project team maintains a risk register and will keep all risks under review.

³ See figure 7.1 on page 25 of the consultation document: <https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/International-Routes-to-UK-Registration-for-Architects-Consultation-on-a-new-approach.pdf>

⁴ <https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/International-Routes-to-UK-Registration-for-Architects-Consultation-on-a-new-approach.pdf>

⁵ The paper discussed at the July 2024 Board meeting is available here: <https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/9.-July-Board-meeting-draft-Item-9-Cover-Sheet-International-Routes-to-Registration.pdf>

5. Communication

- 5.1. We will promote the outcome of this consultation to all those who responded or attended our online event. We will also share it with learning providers, examiners, recent and potential candidates, our international MRA partners, and architects who may employ or work with internationally qualified professionals. It will be shared in ARB Insight, on our website and through our digital channels.
 - 5.2. This is a complex area of ARB's work and candidates and their employers are keen to understand the timetable, and how our proposals will impact their individual circumstances. We will ensure our communications are clear, and will maintain both a transition timetable and FAQs to support colleagues in responding to specific questions.
 - 5.3. When we have developed detailed implementation proposals, we will return to the Board with those proposals and subsequently hold another public consultation.
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6. Equality and Diversity implications

- 6.1. One of the guiding principles for our overhaul of the Prescribed Exam is 'fairness and inclusivity'. Having heard that stakeholders experience the Prescribed Exam as unfair and stressful, we believe change is needed to create an accessible exam that mitigates against bias. A new, better exam could help to diversify the makeup of the profession so that it better reflects the makeup of society, whilst upholding standards and protecting the public. The makeup of the respondents to the consultation reflects this potential.
- 6.2. We conducted an equality impact assessment and published it as part of the public consultation, to invite feedback on our assumptions.
- 6.3. Just under half of the respondents (28, 47%) answered our question about whether our proposed changes would have a positive or negative impact on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Just over half of these respondents (16 of the 28, 57%) expressed positive comments towards our proposed changes and EDI. A third of them (10 of the 28, 36%) shared neutral comments about our proposed changes. These included sentiments that EDI was important to have within the profession but without specifically stating how our proposed changes would affect it. Two respondents said our changes were too confusing for candidates and could negatively impact EDI. We have taken this viewpoint into account when recommending to the Board that we trial a contract approach to a single provider, and we will also aim for clarity in our communications about this work.

- 6.4. The consultation did not raise any evidence that would change the equality impact assessment. We will keep it under review as this work progresses.
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7. Recommendations

The Board is asked to agree that ARB:

- i. publish an analysis report on the consultation for major changes to ARB's international routes to registration (in the paper at **Annexe A**)
- ii. implement the proposals for a competence-based assessment in a modernised format, simpler eligibility requirements, and a single point of entry to the Register
- iii. review and remodel the Competency Standards Group to provide an alternative route for those with partial qualifications
- iv. undertake further scoping work to explore a contract model for outsourcing the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptation Assessment, rather than an accreditation model
- v. initially seek to appoint a single provider, and consider widening out to multiple providers based on the success of the contract model
- vi. consider the potential for courses to be provided at a later stage in the project, once the new exams are running and can be evaluated



Consultation on the International Routes to UK Registration for Architects

DRAFT Analysis report

October 2024 – January 2025

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Executive Summary

ARB is the professional regulator responsible for setting the standards for registration as an architect. Registration exists to protect the public, so that anyone calling themselves an architect has the appropriate skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours. ARB must ensure that standards of competence are maintained however professionals join the UK Register.

The current route open to the majority of internationally qualified architects, the Prescribed Exam, is in urgent need of a complete overhaul. The assessment methodology used in the exam is outdated and complex, and candidates often report deep frustration with the assessment format and process.

ARB has also signed new international agreements with counterparts around the world. Eligible internationally registered professionals seeking to join the UK Register through one of these agreements must take the UK Adaptation Assessment to demonstrate that they are ready to practise safely in the UK. In overhauling the Prescribed Exam, there is also an opportunity to simplify the UK Adaptation Assessment at the same time.

The proposed changes included simpler eligibility requirements and a single point of assessment, which will reduce the number of exams international architects need to take. ARB also proposed to outsource the assessment rather than run it in-house, and is inviting potential providers to share their views on whether they could run the new exam. ARB's proposals for the new exam were designed to specifically target the knowledge gaps that internationally qualified architects have reported through ARB's research, as well as provide assurance around wider competencies.

The consultation ran from 3 October 2024 and closed on 6 January 2025. We received 59 unique responses. Just under half (25, 42%) were from registered architects, including three who were also academics. Respondents were from a range of roles, regions and levels of experience as an architect. A third of responses (19, 32%) were from 'other' types of respondents, including some (11) who stated that they were internationally-qualified architects not yet on the UK Register. In addition to our consultation survey, we also ran a webinar to explain our proposals and take questions from stakeholders, which was attended by over 100 stakeholders. We also discussed our proposals in meetings and at other engagement opportunities.

The consultation exercise demonstrated agreement for all our proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaption Assessment. Our proposals for a competence-based assessment (88% of respondents) and for a single point of entry to the UK Register (80%) received the highest levels of support. Support was slightly lower for our proposals to move to an accreditation approach (58%) rather than run the exams in-house, and views were split as to whether there should be one assessment for candidates (36%) or a range of assessment options (39%).

Next steps

Following the results of our consultation, we will proceed to implement the proposals for a competence-based assessment, simpler eligibility requirements, and a single point of entry. However, we intend to consider other forms of outsourcing the assessment, and intend to scope out a contract model rather than an accreditation model. Further details about next steps on all our proposals are set out in the final chapter of this report. Our transition timetable remains unaffected by these revisions, and we intend to hold a further consultation on our detailed implementation plans in 2026.

Introduction

ARB's role

1.1 ARB is an independent professional regulator, established by Parliament as a statutory body, through the Architects Act, in 1997. We are accountable to government. The law gives us a number of core functions:

- To ensure only those who are suitably competent are allowed to practise as architects. We do this by approving the architecture qualifications required to join the Register of architects.
- We maintain a publicly available Register of architects so anyone using the services of an architect can be confident that they are suitably qualified and are fit to practise.
- We set the standards of conduct and practice the profession must meet and take action when any architect falls below the required standards of conduct or competence.
- We set requirements for and monitor the continuous professional development that architects must undertake, to provide assurance to the public about the continuing competence of the profession.
- We protect the legally restricted title 'architect'.

This consultation and our proposals

1.2 Architects play a vital role in shaping the places where we live and work. The public, our communities and clients expect that architects will deliver buildings and spaces that are safe and sustainable and carry out their work ethically and with integrity.

1.3 ARB has legal responsibility for determining the competence someone needs to become an architect and join our Register. The main way we achieve this is by setting the standards for qualifications and assessing and accrediting individual qualifications delivered by UK learning providers. ARB also has a duty to ensure that those who apply for registration without UK qualifications accredited by us have an equivalent standard of competence to those who enter the Register with accredited qualifications.

1.4 The Prescribed Exam exists to ensure any internationally-qualified architects who wish to become a registered architect in the UK. At present, the Prescribed Exam is based on upon ARB's outgoing Criteria that are set across three stages of education and training, and accredited qualifications, but it needs to reflect ARB's reforms to the education and training of architects.¹ We also proposed several changes to the UK Adaption Assessment to align it with our new approach to education and training.

¹ ARB has recently introduced a new regulatory framework for education. This includes the introduction of new Competency Outcomes that set the threshold competencies required for registration as an architect. See <https://arb.org.uk/consultations/results/education-consultation-results/>

1.5 This consultation proposed the following changes to both our Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptation Assessment:

Competence-based assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment would be based on ARB's Academic and Practice Outcomes (in place of the outgoing Criteria). It would assess equivalent competence and UK context-specific knowledge (instead of equivalent qualifications).
Single gateway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There would be a single examination gateway to the Register (instead of requiring two exams to prove equivalence to Part 1 and/or Part 2, and in addition, requiring a Part 3 UK-accredited qualification).
Improved eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simpler eligibility requirements would be based on qualifications that focus on architecture and meet ARB's UK professional practical experience requirements (without reference to the number of years spent in education and training).
Accredited providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARB would accredit assessment(s) offered by providers, including any potential adaptation requirements such as preparation courses (rather than running exams in-house).
Modern assessment format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We would introduce an online gateway assessment of UK-specific knowledge and readiness to practise in UK context, which would be designed to also operate as the UK Adaptation Assessment. We would invite providers to develop the online gateway test and the subsequent competence assessment exercise(s) for ARB to accredit. There might be a range of formats of the assessment exercises, to increase options for candidates.

1.6 We proposed to review and remodel the Competency Standards Group to provide an alternative route for those with partial qualifications – namely, an accredited Part 2 and Part 3 but no Part 1. We invited views on whether there should be one assessment methodology for candidates or a range of assessment options, and whether courses should be provided to help candidates prepare for the registration assessment.

1.7 In addition to this formal consultation exercise, we continued our engagement with stakeholders and used opportunities to discuss our proposals. We hosted an online event on 14 November 2024 to present and answer questions on our proposals, that was attended by over 100 stakeholders. Attendees participated in polls during the event and their response rate reflected a supportive need for change.² We also met with architects and organisations

² The polls were informal and different numbers of respondents completed each of them. As such, they are not rigorous as a form of research and are not included in our detailed consultation analysis. For completeness, the responses were:

- 69% of webinar attendees support our overhaul of the Prescribed Exam;
- 66% support the proposed changes would simplify the Prescribed Exam process;
- 59% support multiple assessment methodologies, compared to 33% support for a single assessment methodology; and
- 96% support for courses to be available for candidates.

in New York between 3-6 March 2025 in New York, where we were able to gain insight from architects working in the United States, some of whom have used or intend to use our Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA).

How we analysed responses

- 1.8** In addition to some gateway questions to help us understand the types of stakeholders responding, the consultation was comprised of eight questions. Four were ‘closed’ multiple choice questions that also had an optional ‘open’ free-text element where respondents could provide more insights into their views. Four further questions were optional free text written responses where respondents could provide more information if they chose to do so. The questions are reproduced in order below.

Question 11: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam?

Multiple choice on each separate change area, with optional written response

Question 12: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the UK Adaptation Assessment?

Multiple choice on each separate change area, with optional written response

Question 13: Do you think there will be interest from learning providers and those with expertise in assessment becoming providers of ARB-accredited international assessments?

Multiple choice, with optional written response

Question 14: Do you have any views on whether ARB should aim to accredit a range of assessment methodologies, or one single assessment methodology?

Optional written response

Question 15: We have heard that candidates may benefit from taking courses to help them prepare for the assessments. Do you have any views on this including, for example, views on how they could be delivered?

Optional written response

Question 16: We have suggested a desk-based assessment through a redeveloped ‘Competency Standards Group’ for candidates with mixed types of qualifications (see Chapter Seven of our paper, ‘Mixed Qualifications’). To what extent do you agree with this approach?

Multiple choice, with optional written response

Question 17: Is there any feedback you wish to give about a positive or negative impact on equality, diversity and inclusion within our proposals?

Optional written response

Question 18: Is there any other feedback you would like to share about our proposals?

Optional written response

- 1.9** We asked respondents the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of the proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam and the UK Adaptation Assessment. Respondents were able to provide a different answer for each proposed change topic and expressed their opinion towards through a closed multiple-choice scale, by selecting Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, or Strongly disagree. Where respondents selected “Neither agree nor disagree”, we have stated they are neutral on our proposal.
- 1.10** We have combined the roles of ‘registered architects’ and ‘academics (registered architects)’ together when calculating percentages. Where appropriate, we have conducted further analysis of the roles ‘registered architect’ and ‘other’ types of professionals or stakeholders as these were the respondent groups with the highest response rate and therefore a sample size we could analyse.
- 1.11** Respondents were also able to use additional text to explain their response. These text responses have been analysed in the later section on qualitative results.
- 1.12** We used qualitative research methods to analyse the responses to the eight questions that allowed respondents to provide free-text responses. This involved identifying, and then applying, a list of themes that we generated by reading responses and assessing recurring topics. When we say that a topic was raised a certain number of times, the numbers refer to the number of respondents who raised that topic, not how many times that respondent raised it.
- 1.13** A full breakdown of the consultation data can also be found in Annex B: Consultation data. Our coding framework is set out in Annex C: Qualitative analysis coding framework.

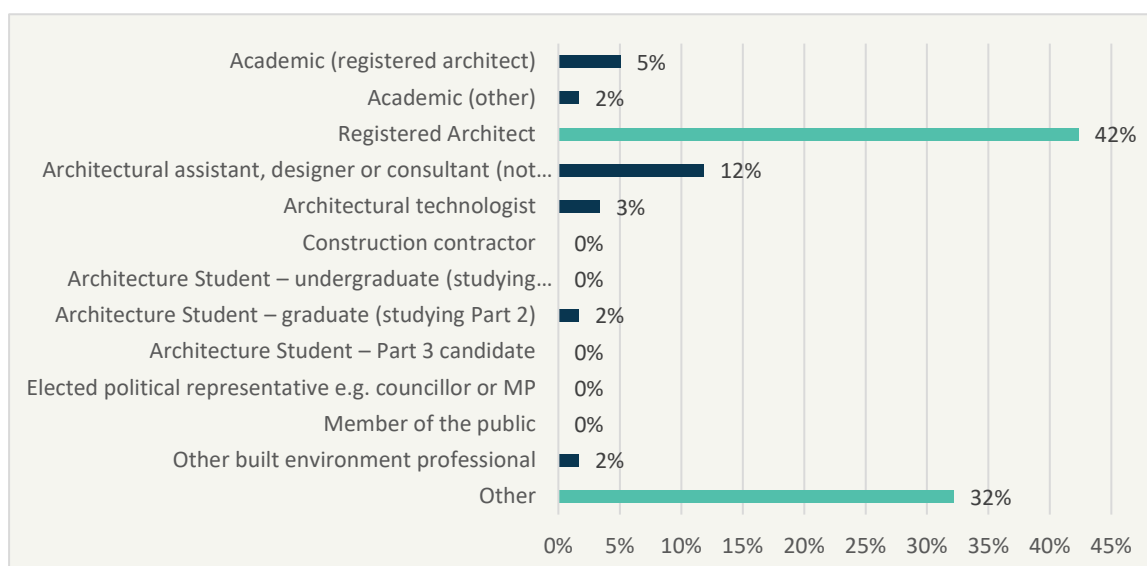
Who responded

- 2.1** The consultation was open between 3 October 2024 to 6 January 2025. We received 59 unique responses to the consultation. Respondents were asked to identify themselves across categories, including demographic information and their role.

Role

- 2.2** The largest group of respondents was registered architects (28, 47%), including three respondents who were also academics. Nineteen respondents (32%) stated their role as 'other' types of professionals. Over half (11 of the 19, 58%) further specified they were an architect who was registered overseas. This means one in five respondents (11 of 15, 19%) were internationally qualified as an architect (this number could be greater as we did not ask a specific question to request this information). Jurisdictions in which respondents shared that they were registered included the European Union, Israel, South Africa, and the United States of America.
- 2.3** There were a further seven respondents (12%) who were architectural assistants, designers or consultants (not Part 3 qualified). There were also five (8%) other types of respondents, which included other academics (1, 2%), architectural technologists (2, 3%), architecture student – graduate (studying Part 2) (1, 2%) and other built environment professionals (1, 2%).

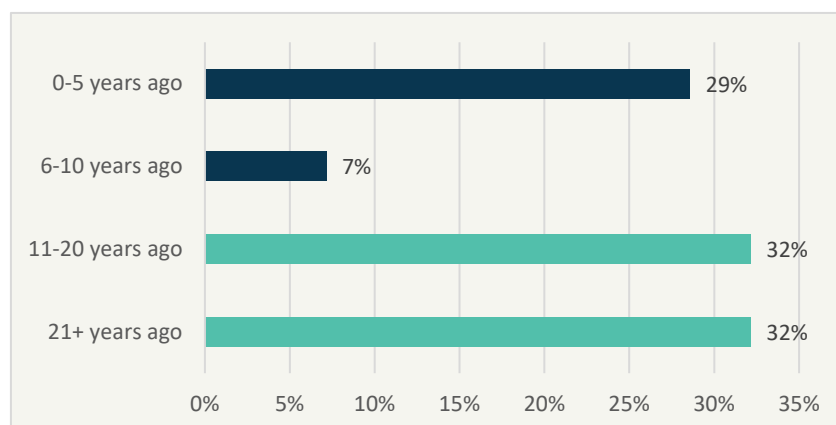
Figure 2.1: Respondents organised by role (% of responses)



Registered architects

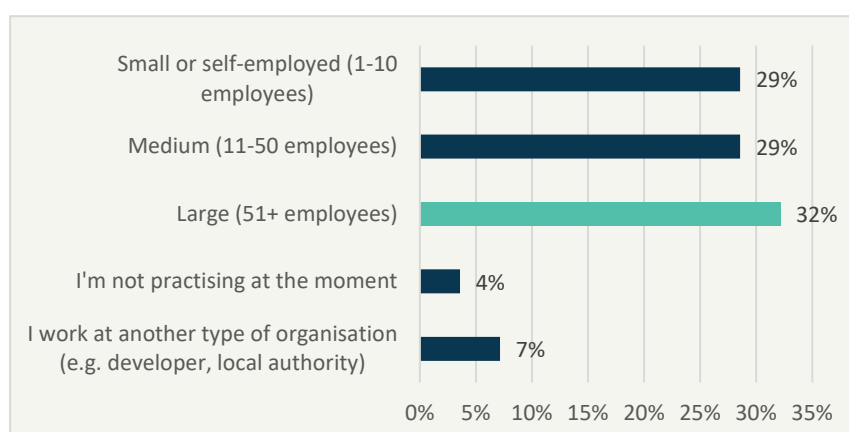
- 2.4** Registered architects (including three who were academics) were asked how long they had been qualified and the size of their practice. Of the 28 registered architects who responded, similar numbers qualified 0-5 years ago (8, 29%), 11-12 years ago (9, 32%) or over 21 years ago (also 9, 32%). Two of the 28 registered architect respondents (7%) had qualified between 6-10 years ago.

Figure 2.2: Registered architects organised by time since qualified (% of architect responses)



- 2.5** We also asked respondents who were registered architects for the size of their current practice. Similar numbers of respondents worked at either small, medium, or large practices. Nine of the 28 respondents stated that they worked at a large practice (51+ employees), while eight of the 28 respondents (29%) worked at either a small or self-employed practice (1-10 employees) or a medium practice (11-50 employees).
- 2.6** Two of 28 respondents (7%) stated they worked at a different type of organisation, while an additional one respondent (4%) stated they were not currently practising.

Figure 2.3: Registered architects organised by type/size of practice (% of architect responses)



Organisations

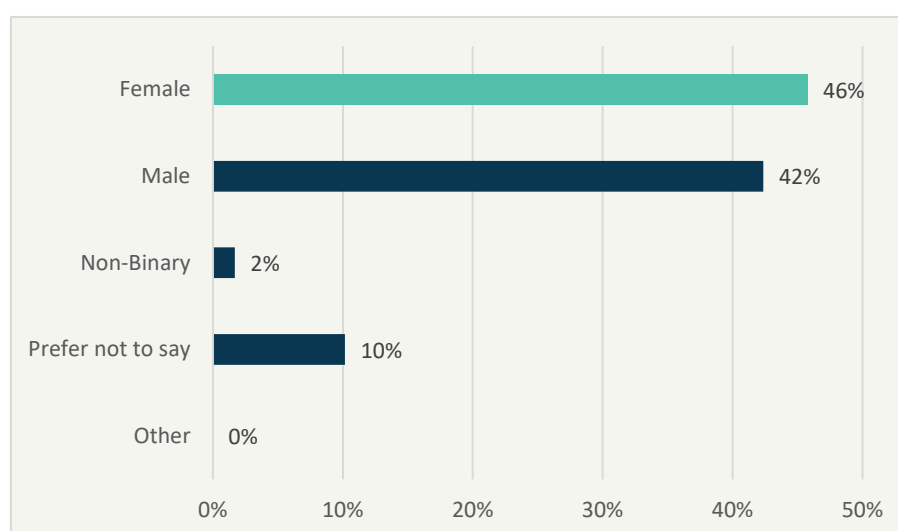
- 2.7** There were 11 responses on behalf of organisations, which accounted for 19% of all responses to the consultation. Many of these were individual practices, but some were

representative bodies. A full list of respondents who agreed to their response being published is included in Annex A.

Gender

- 2.8** Twenty-seven respondents (46%) identified as female, while 25 respondents identified as male (42%). One respondent selected non-binary (2%) and six respondents (11%) preferred not to say.
- 2.9** The proportion of female respondents (46%) is higher than the proportion of female registered architects on the Register (34%). The proportion of male respondents (43%) is lower than the proportion of male registered architects on the Register (65%).³

Figure 2.4: Respondents organised by gender (% of responses)

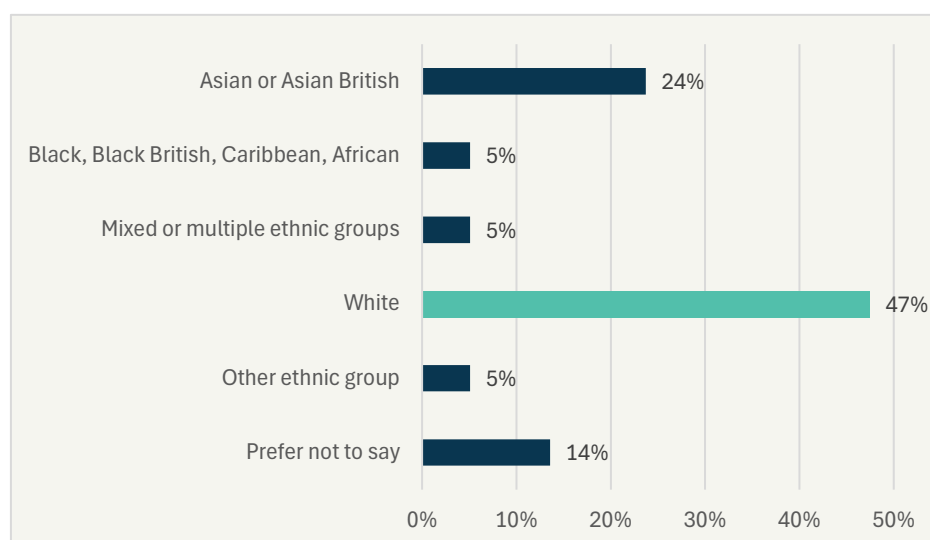


Ethnicity

- 2.10** Respondents were asked which ethnic group they belong to. Twenty-eight of the 59 respondents (48%) were 'white'. When excluding those who preferred not to say, most groups were in line with the Register. There were 14 respondents (24%) who were 'Asian or Asian British,' and this was higher than the proportion on the Register (8%). Three respondents (5%) were 'other ethnic groups,' which was also higher than the proportion on the Register (1%).

³ Register data is as of December 2024. Further information is available on ARB's website at <https://arb.org.uk/about-arb/equality-diversity/data>.

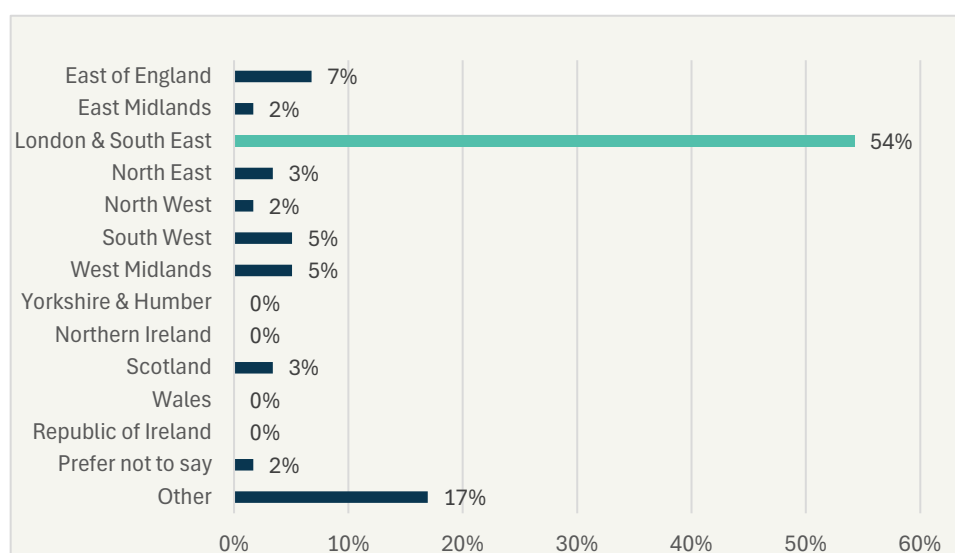
Figure 2.5: Respondents organised by ethnicity (% of responses)



Geographic spread of respondents

2.11 Respondents were asked to identify the nation or region that most closely described their place of residence. The highest group, with 32 respondents (55%), were those based in London and the South East. This was followed by 10 respondents (17%) stating they were based in 'other' locations. These locations included Australia, the European Union, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America.

Figure 2.6: Respondents organised by place of residence (% of responses)



Health

2.12 We asked respondents whether they have any physical or mental health conditions or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. Fifty-four respondents (78%) said they did not, one respondent (2%) said they do, and four respondents (7%) preferred not to say.

Conclusions

We received a lower response rate (59) to this consultation than some of our other strategic consultations. One of the potential reasons for this is that the proposals will apply to internationally-qualified architects who wish to become a registered architect within the UK and are therefore less relevant to those already registered with, and in regular communication with, ARB. The consultation was communicated widely through digital channels including emails to networks and previous consultation and engagement contacts, and through publication across ARB's social media channels. A higher number of professionals attended an online event in which ARB presented and discussed the proposals (108) than responded to the consultation.

Over half of the consultation respondents were not registered architects. Respondents included those working in other roles in the sector, and professionals who are qualified and/or registered as architects in other countries and jurisdictions.

Respondents to this consultation formed a more diverse group compared to the UK Register of architects, and compared to other consultations ARB has run. There was a slightly higher proportion of respondents reporting their gender as female and higher proportions of people from different ethnic groups compared to the register. This suggests that if changes to ARB's Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptation Assessment meet our aim to improve access to the UK Register by simplifying the examination process and removing unintended complexity and barriers, the register could become more diverse as a result.

Consultation responses: levels of agreement and respondent views

Proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam

3.1 We proposed to also make changes to the Prescribed Exam. We listed the proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam and asked respondents the extent to which they agree or disagree with each. These were:

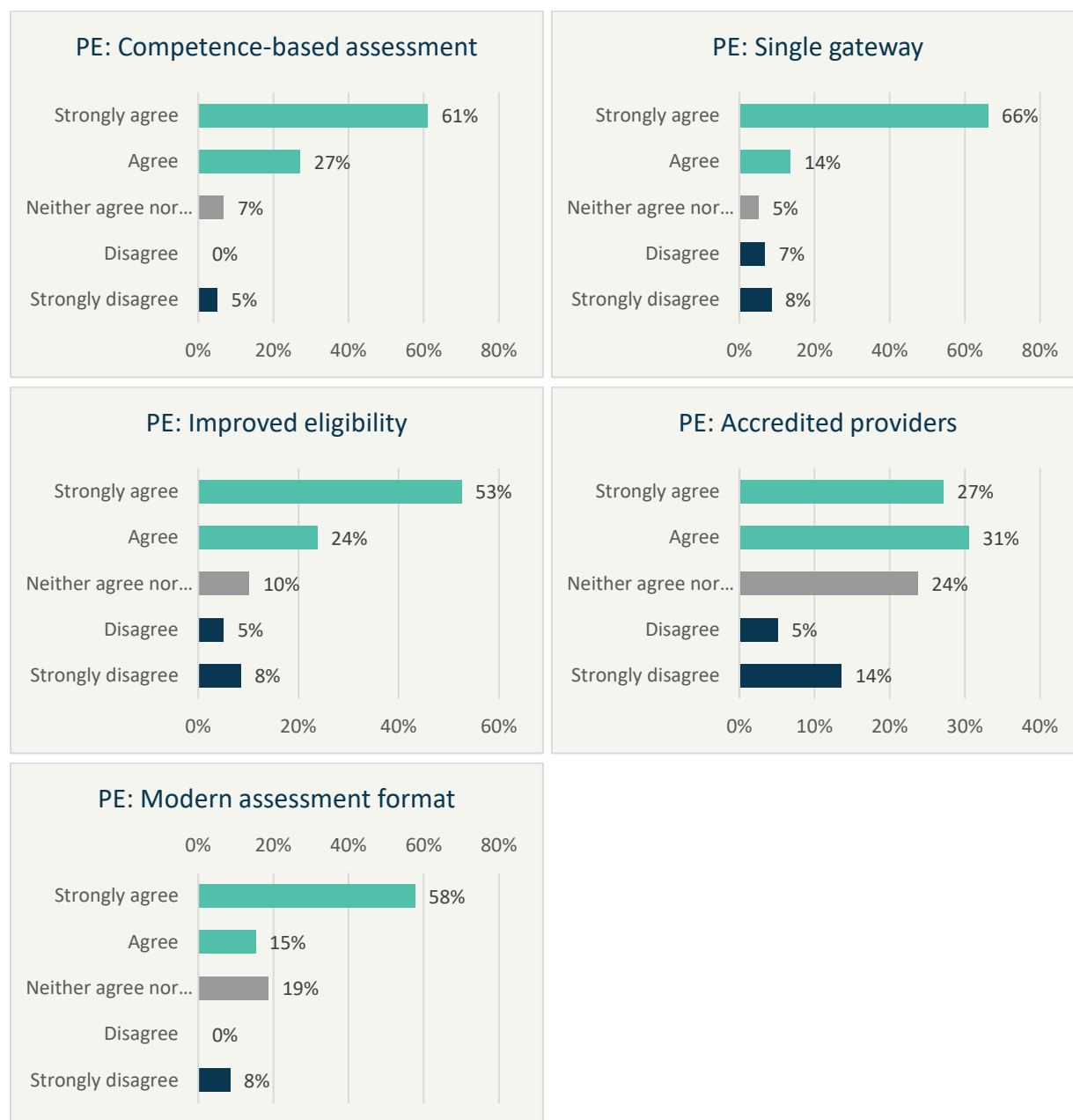
Competence-based assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment would be based on ARB's Academic and Practice Outcomes (in place of the outgoing Criteria). It would assess equivalent competence and UK context-specific knowledge (instead of equivalent qualifications).
Single gateway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There would be a single examination gateway to the Register (instead of requiring two exams to prove equivalence to Part 1 and/or Part 2, and in addition, requiring a Part 3 UK-accredited qualification).
Improved eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simpler eligibility requirements would be based on qualifications that focus on architecture and meet ARB's UK professional practical experience requirements (without reference to the number of years spent in education and training).
Accredited providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARB would accredit assessment(s) offered by providers, including any potential adaptation requirements such as preparation courses (rather than running exams in-house).
Modern assessment format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We would introduce an online gateway assessment of UK-specific knowledge and readiness to practise in UK context, which would be designed to also operate as the UK Adaptation Assessment. We would invite providers to develop the online gateway test and the subsequent competence assessment exercise(s) for ARB to accredit. There might be a range of formats of the assessment exercises, to increase options for candidates.

3.2 More respondents agreed than disagreed with each proposed change, with between 58% and 88% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with each proposal (see figure 3.1). This ranged from the proposal for accredited providers, with which 58% (34 of 59) respondents agreed, to the proposal for competence-based assessment, which with 88% (55 of 59) of respondents agreed.

3.3 The proposal to use external accredited providers received the lowest support out of the five proposals. While, as mentioned above, 58% of respondents agreed this proposal, it also received the highest levels of disagreement (11, 19%), and the highest level of neither agree

nor disagree (14 24%). Our thematic analysis below summarises the comments we received and why respondents agreed less with this part of the proposals.

Figure 3.1: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam? (% of responses)



Competence-based assessment

3.4 The proposal for a 'Competence-based assessment' received the highest level of agreement⁴ when compared to other proposed changes for the Prescribed Exam, with 52 of 59 respondents (88%) either agreeing (16, 27%) or strongly agreeing (36, 61%). Three

⁴ This is the total of respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.

respondents (5%) strongly disagreed with our competence-based assessment proposed changes.

- 3.5** All three of the respondents who strongly disagreed with this proposal were registered architects. Of the four respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal, two were registered architects and two were 'Other' types of stakeholders.

Single gateway

- 3.6** The proposal for a 'Single gateway' received the second highest level of agreement when compared to other proposed changes for the Prescribed Exam, with 47 of 59 respondents (80%) either agreeing (8, 14%) or strongly agreeing (39, 66%). Nine respondents (16%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with our single gateway proposed changes.
- 3.7** 'Other' types of stakeholders were more likely to agree with this proposal, accounting for 36% of those agreed, while being 32% of respondents overall. Registered architects were slightly less likely to agree, accounting for 40% of those who agreed, compared to being 47% of respondents overall. Registered architects were more likely to disagree with this proposal, accounting for 78% of those who disagreed but only 47% of respondents overall. One respondent (11%) was an 'Other' type of stakeholder.

Improved eligibility

- 3.8** The proposal for 'Improved eligibility' received high levels of agreement, with 45 respondents (76%) agreeing. Eight respondents (14%) disagreed.
- 3.9** 'Other' types of stakeholders were more likely to agree, accounting for 38% of those who agreed, while also being 32% of respondents overall. Registered architects were less likely to agree, accounting for 38% of those who agreed but 47% of respondents overall.
- 3.10** Eight respondents disagreed with this proposal. Registered architects were more likely to disagree, accounting for 88% of those who disagreed but only 47% of respondents overall.

Accredited providers

- 3.11** The proposal for 'Accredited providers' received the lowest levels of agreement within the five proposals for the Prescribed Exam, with 34 respondents (58%) agreeing. Eleven respondents (19%) disagreed.
- 3.12** Registered architects were more likely to disagree with this proposal, accounting for 82% of those who disagreed but only 47% of respondents overall. Only two respondents who disagreed were 'Other' types of stakeholders, accounting for 18% of those who disagreed but 32% of respondents overall.
- 3.13** Fourteen respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal. 'Other' types of stakeholders were more likely to be neutral with this proposal, accounting for 43% of those who were neutral, while being 32% of respondents overall. Four registered architects (29%) were neutral.

3.14 The views some respondents shared in free text responses are analysed in more detail below and help to illustrate why agreement was lower on this proposal.

Modern assessment format

3.15 The proposal for ‘Modern assessment format’ received high levels of agreement within the five proposals for the Prescribed Exam, with 43 respondents (73%) agreeing. Five respondents (8%) strongly disagreed.

3.16 ‘Other’ types of stakeholders were slightly more likely to agree with this proposal, accounting for 37% of those who agreed (16) but 32% of respondents overall. Registered architects were less likely to agree, accounting for 37% of those agreeing (16) but 47% of respondents overall. Five respondents strongly disagreed with this proposal and were all registered architects.

3.17 Eleven respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal. Registered architects were more likely to be neutral with this proposal, accounting for 64% of those who were neutral, but 47% of respondents overall. Three respondents (27%) ‘Other’ types of stakeholders and were neutral on this proposal but were 32% of respondents overall.

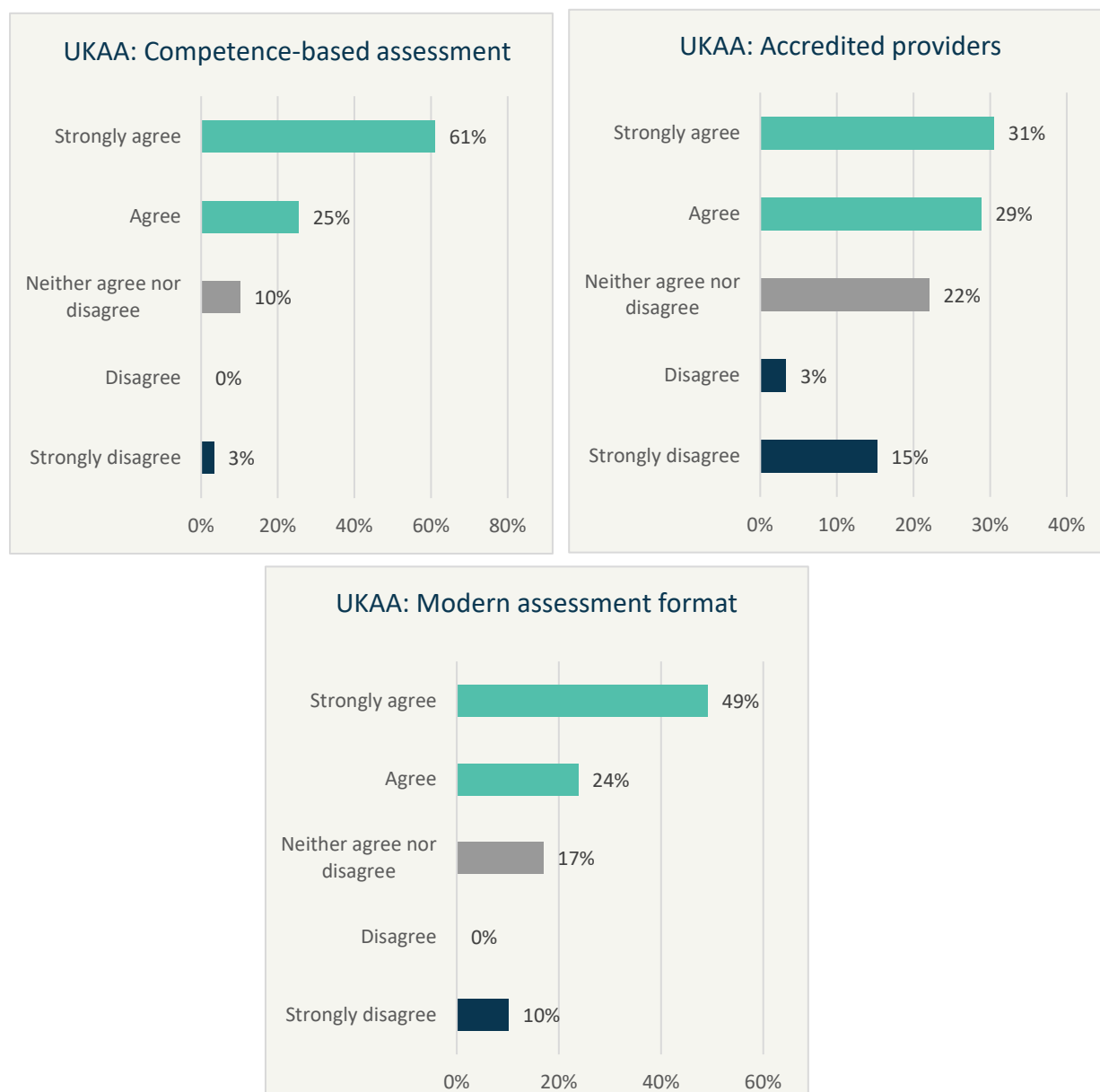
Proposed changes to the UK Adaption Assessment

3.18 We listed the proposed changes to the UK Adaption Assessment and asked respondents the extent to which they agree or disagree with each. These were:

Competence-based assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment would be based on ARB’s Academic and Practice Outcomes (in place of the outgoing Criteria). It would assess equivalent competence and UK context-specific knowledge (instead of equivalent qualifications).
Accredited providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARB would accredit assessment(s) offered by providers, including any potential adaptation requirements such as preparation courses (rather than running exams in-house).
Modern assessment format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We would introduce an online gateway assessment of UK-specific knowledge and readiness to practise in UK context, which would be designed to also operate as the UK Adaptation Assessment. We would invite providers to develop the online gateway test and the subsequent competence assessment exercise(s) for ARB to accredit. There might be a range of formats of the assessment exercises, to increase options for candidates.

3.19 As with the Prescribed Exam, more respondents agreed than disagreed with each proposed change, across all respondent groups (see figure 3.2). ‘Strongly agree’ was again the most common response for each. ‘Competence-based assessment’ and ‘Modern assessment format’ received the highest level of agreement (86% and 73%), with ‘Competence-based assessment’ having a noticeably higher proportion of strong agreement (61%).

Figure 3.2: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the UK Adaption Assessment? (% of responses)



Competence-based assessment

3.20 The proposal for making the UK Adaption Assessment a 'Competence-based assessment,' received the highest support within the three proposals for the UK Adaption Assessment, with 51 of the total 59 respondents (86%) agreeing. Two respondents (3%) strongly disagreed with our competence-based assessment proposed changes.

Accredited providers

3.21 The proposal for 'Accredited providers' received the lowest levels of agreement of the three proposals for the UK Adaption Assessment, with 35 respondents (59%) agreeing. Eleven respondents (19%) disagreed. Thirteen respondents (22%) neither agree nor disagreed.

3.22 Registered architects were more likely to disagree with this proposal, accounting for 73% of those who disagreed but only 47% of respondents overall. Two respondents (18%) were ‘Other’ types of stakeholders, while accounting for 32% of respondents overall.

3.23 Fourteen respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal. ‘Other’ types of stakeholders were more likely to be neutral with this proposal, accounting for 43% of those who were neutral but 32% of respondents overall. Four registered architects (29%) were neutral on this, but were 47% of respondents overall.

3.24 The views some respondents shared in free text responses are analysed in more detail below, and help to illustrate why the strength of agreement was lower on this proposal.

Modern assessment format

3.25 The proposal for ‘Modern assessment format’ received high levels of agreement within the three proposals for the UK Adaption Assessment, with 43 respondents (73%) agreeing. Six respondents (10%) disagreed and 10 respondents (17%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal.

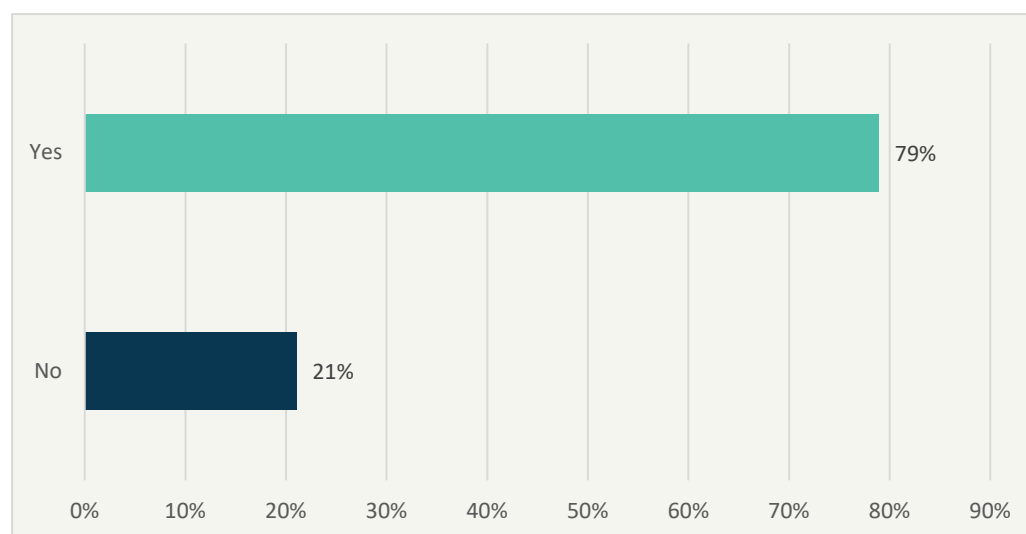
3.26 ‘Other’ types of stakeholders were more likely to agree with this proposal, accounting for 37% of those who agreed but 32% of respondents overall. Just under a third of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed (13) with the proposal were registered architects. Six respondents strongly disagreed with this proposal and were all registered architects.

Potential assessment providers

3.27 We asked respondents whether they thought there would be interest from learning providers or those with expertise in assessments to become accredited and carry out assessments.

3.28 The majority of respondents (79%, 45 of the 57 who answered this question) believed there would be interest from learning providers and others. In comparison, 12 of the 57 respondents (21%) did not think there would be interest.

Figure 3.3: Do you think there will be interest from learning providers and those with expertise in assessment becoming providers of ARB-accredited international assessments? (% of responses)



3.29 In their written text responses, some respondents offered further suggestions for which organisations may be appropriate for this role. Suggestions included learning providers (e.g. universities) including mentions of those that run Part 3 courses in particular; private organisations who have previous experience in running similar examinations; and the architect professional bodies. Some respondents also commented that providers should be accredited and be CPD certified to carry out examinations on behalf of ARB.

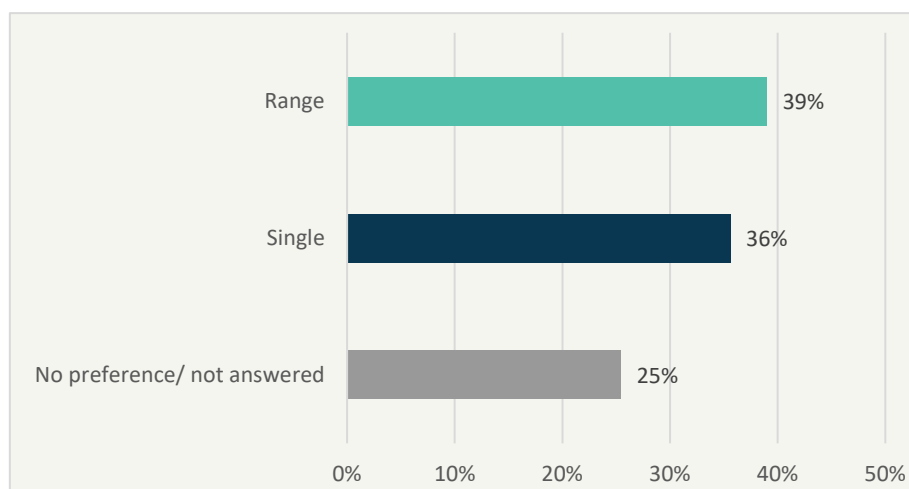
3.30 Both the Architects Professional Examination Authority in Scotland Ltd (APEAS) and the RIBA used their own responses to express potential interest in becoming accredited providers, and outlined some of the points that they would need to consider should the opportunity arise.

Single vs multiple assessment options

3.31 We asked respondents whether they thought a range of assessment methodologies would be better in the future, or one single assessment methodology. This was an open question, meaning respondents could choose to express their perspective in their own words.

3.32 Similar numbers of respondents indicated they preferred a range of assessment methodologies (23, 39%) to those who preferred a single methodology (21, 36%). Fifteen respondents (25%) either did not answer this question or did not have a preference, and we have grouped these together when analysing this question.

Figure 3.4: Do you have any views on whether ARB should aim to accredit a range of assessment methodologies, or one single assessment methodology



Range of assessments

3.33 Eight of the 23 respondents (35%) who preferred a range of assessment methodologies were registered architects. Nine of the 23 respondents (39%) were 'Other' types of stakeholders.

3.34 Respondents who preferred a range of assessment options suggested that a range would better accommodate different candidates' unique backgrounds and learning styles. Some said assessment methodologies should be diverse, including portfolio assessments, online tests, and face-to-face interviews.

3.35 Some of the respondents who preferred a range of assessments emphasised that even though they thought having a range of assessment options was a good option, there needed to be parameters in place to ensure consistency, so that the competencies were demonstrated to the same standard across the range of assessments.

"A range of assessment methodologies would best accommodate a series of circumstances. It is, however, important to mention that the various options shouldn't negatively impact the quality of the competencies required to register as an Architect. The safety and well-being of the public lie at the heart of the competencies needed by Architects."

Other, South Africa

"I believe ARB should aim to accredit a range of assessment methodologies rather than a single one. Offering diverse options like portfolio presentations, special Part 3 education tracks, and additional education materials that cover optional areas can cater to the varied experiences and backgrounds of candidates. This flexibility allows candidates to demonstrate their competence in ways that align with their professional journey, making the process more inclusive while maintaining high standards."

Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified), South West

Single assessment

3.36 Fourteen of the 21 respondents (67%) who preferred a single assessment methodology were registered architects. Another six of the 21 respondents (29%) stated their role as ‘Other’ types of stakeholders.

3.37 Respondents in favour of a single assessment believed this would be effective because it would ensure consistency for all candidates. Some thought that having a single assessment would make the process simpler, rather having different options to research and compare.

3.38 Some respondents who preferred a single assessment methodology had some misconceptions about both the Prescribed Exam and the UK Adaption Assessment. For example, they thought that having a range of assessments would mean some external accredited providers would administer assessments that would not be fit for purpose. Another misconception was that having a range of assessments would mean that the integrity of the architect profession would suffer by allowing candidates to pass who did not meet rigorous UK standards. Our policy approach to assessing competence, and our quality assurance processes, would help to ensure all assessments were fit for purpose and that they assess the Competency Outcomes required of all UK registered architects.

“ARB should aim for a single, standardized assessment methodology to ensure consistency, fairness, and rigor across all applicants. A range of assessment methodologies may introduce variability in the quality and standards, undermining the credibility and value of the UK architectural profession. A unified approach ensures that every architect, regardless of their origin, meets the same stringent requirements, protecting the integrity of the profession and upholding the high standards for which British architects are known globally.”

Registered architect, London & South East

“It should be possible to have a single methodology albeit with measures for candidates with disabilities. The core competencies are at the heart of it so having different methodologies is unnecessary.”

Registered architect, London & South East

Supplementary courses and other forms of support

3.39 We asked respondents to share their views on the potential for courses to help candidates prepare for the Prescribed Exams or the UK Adaption Assessment, including views on how they could be delivered. Thirty-two respondents (54%) shared positive views on the benefits of courses to support candidates.

3.40 These respondents commented how short courses could be beneficial at helping candidates prior to taking the Prescribed Exam or UK Adaption Assessment. Some respondents stated that these should be accessible to candidates through a range of means and formats, such as being only a few days in duration, online based, and affordable. It was important for some respondents that courses would be able to be taken alongside full-time work. Other respondents thought that any courses developed externally to support the examination

should have accreditation from ARB, along with any teachers having appropriate qualifications for teaching those courses.

3.41 In addition, 28 respondents provided suggestions on what support could be offered to candidates. Their comments often related to course structure, feasibility, and which organisations might offer this service. Suggested layout of courses included online learning, in-person learning, group learning, seminars, and portfolio reviews.

3.42 Three respondents commented on the cost of potential courses and suggested, for example, that courses should be included as part of the fees paid towards their assessments, or that employers should pay for them to ease the financial burden on candidates.

“Candidates would likely benefit from preparatory courses tailored to the assessments. These courses could be delivered through various formats, such as online modules, in-person workshops, or hybrid models, allowing flexibility based on candidates' locations and schedules. Offering resources like practice assessments, portfolio review sessions, and tutorials on specific topics [...] could further enhance candidates' readiness.”

Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified), South West

3.43 Seventeen respondents (29%) said that other support (not including courses) should be offered to candidates who are preparing to take the Prescribed Exam or UK Adaption Assessment.

3.44 Several of these respondents suggested incorporating a mentorship or peer review programme to help candidates by having a support person to confide in before taking either the Prescribed Exam or UK Adaption Assessment. Some respondents felt that candidates struggled with the assessments due to the unfamiliarity of what would be included and felt that preparing candidates beforehand with mentorship would help ease this burden.

3.45 A few respondents suggested that quick and simple online tests could be a way for candidates to have access to accessible resources to help them prepare for the examinations, and that this would be a lower burden on them while juggling the rest of their commitments.

“Incorporating mentorship or peer review opportunities would provide personalized guidance, helping candidates identify areas of improvement and gain confidence before the assessments.”

Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified), South West

Candidates with partial qualifications

3.46 We asked respondents whether they agreed with our suggestion for a desk-based assessment through a redeveloped ‘Competency Standards Group’⁵ (CSG) for candidates with partial qualifications. For example, there are candidates who have accredited Part 2 and Part 3 qualifications, but not an accredited Part 1. Under the new framework, ARB will no longer require an undergraduate degree to register. But this is based on applicants having new

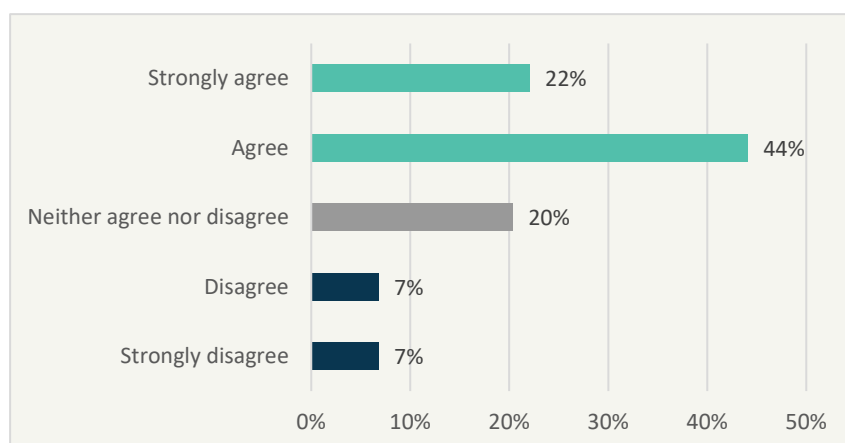
⁵ The current role of the Competency Standards Group was outlined in our proposals and is also summarised on ARB’s website: <https://arb.org.uk/architect-information/guidance-notes/csg-guidance/>

qualifications mapped against the new Competency Outcomes. These qualifications are not the same as the current Part 2 and 3, and we have identified a small potential gap in the competencies gained by candidates with only a Part 2 and 3.

3.47 Our proposal was to review and update the CSG as a registration route for such candidates, instead of requiring that they pass the Part 1 Prescribed Exam. We proposed that CSG would likely be remodelled and renamed as part of that review.

3.48 Two thirds of respondents (39, 66%) agreed with our proposal to allow for candidates with mixed qualifications to have the option to be assessed via the CSG. Seventeen of the 39 respondents (44%) who agreed with the CSG proposal were registered architects, while there were 14 respondents (36%) who were 'other.' Eight respondents (14%) disagreed with the CSG assessment route.

Figure 3.5: 'Competency Standards Group' for candidates with mixed types of qualifications - To what extent to you agree with this approach? (% of responses)



Equality, diversity and inclusion

3.49 Twenty-eight respondents (47%) answered our question about whether our proposed changes would have a positive or negative impact on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Just over half (16 of the 28, 57%) expressed positive comments towards our proposed changes and EDI.

3.50 Two respondents said our changes were too confusing for candidates and could negatively impact EDI. One respondent stated it could be difficult to assess candidates on a range of competencies, leading to exclusivity, while the other negative respondent shared a concern for a candidate's original country being affected by 'brain drain' if too many candidates left to come to the UK.

3.51 The remaining 10 of the 28 respondents (36%) shared neutral comments about our proposed changes. These included sentiments that EDI was important to have within the profession but without specifically stating how our proposed changes would affect it.

“Your proposals would positively impact equality, diversity, and inclusion by increasing the number of professionals gaining accreditation, thereby expanding the talent pool and improving workforce knowledge. By offering flexible assessment options for candidates with mixed qualifications, you allow individuals from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds to contribute their unique perspectives. This approach not only enhances diversity but also enriches the industry with a broader range of ideas, experiences, and solutions, benefiting both companies and the profession as a whole. Moreover, incorporating different methods of assessment would attract professionals from underrepresented groups, creating a more inclusive and skilled workforce.”

Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified), South West

“I think that there are a wide range of competencies, and it may be difficult to assess everyone from different places in the same manner. This could cause exclusivity rather than being inclusive, so the registration assessment would need careful consideration of what the competencies are.”

Academic (registered architect), South Africa

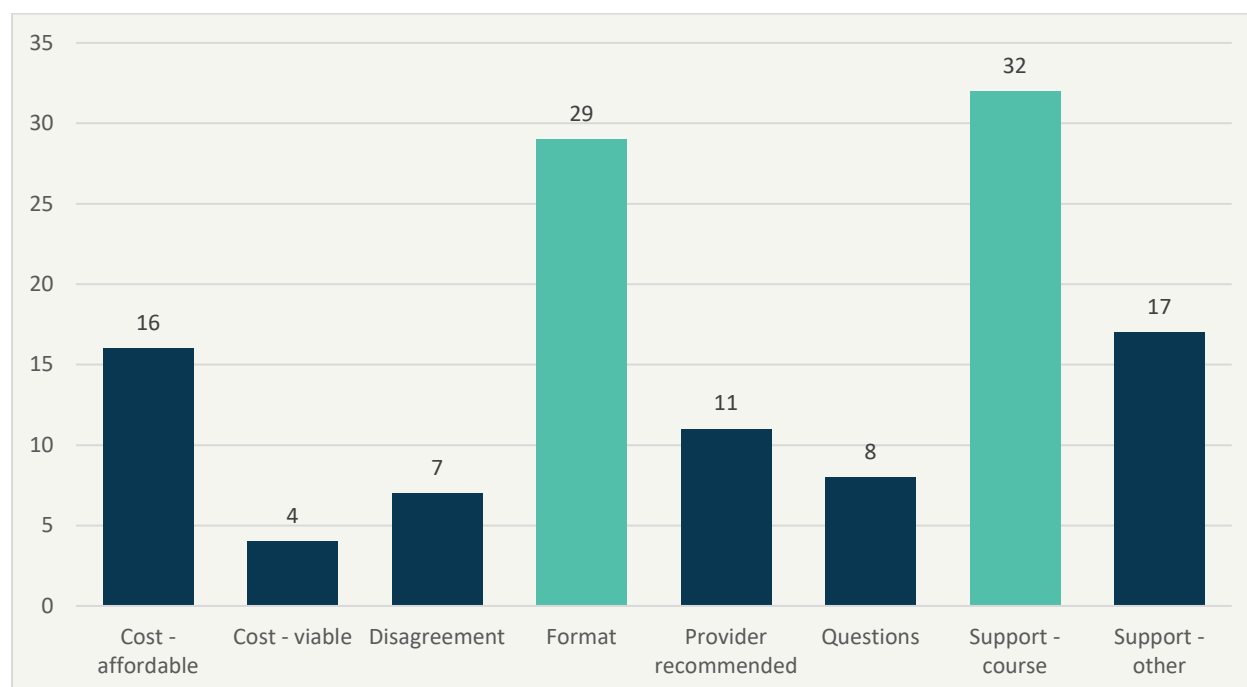
Other topics raised

3.52 We identified eight recurring sentiments that respondents raised within their responses. These were:

- Views about the **cost of the assessment**, including:
 - Views that the cost should be **affordable** for candidates undertaking Prescribed Exam and/or UK Adaption Assessment.
 - Views that the cost needs to be **viable** for potential external providers that might seek accreditation to provide the assessments.
- Views about the strategy underpinning the proposals, which included respondents **disagreeing** that the Prescribed Exam/ UK Adaption Assessment should apply internationally-qualified architects, or disagreeing with the need to change the current system.
- Suggestions for the future **format or method of assessments** and how they should work.
- Views about the **types of support** candidates might find helpful; this was often in response to our question about courses, and is analysed separately above.

3.53 We also recorded specific questions that respondents raised, so that we could feed these concerns into our implementation approach and subsequent communications, and any recommendations for potential assessment providers.

Figure 3.6: Common themes raised by respondents (number of respondents)



Cost and affordability

3.54 About a quarter of respondents (16, 27%) expressed views that the cost of the assessment, exam or route must be affordable for candidates. ‘Other’ types of stakeholders were slightly more likely to raise this topic, accounting for 44% of those who raised affordability but 32% of all respondents.

3.55 In explaining their concern, respondents suggested cost was the biggest barrier for overseas qualified architects to become registered architects in the UK. Some also commented that cost could be equivalent to a month’s salary, that employers would not want to cover the cost for their employees to get registered, and that the high cost was exacerbated due to higher costs of living.

“I think ARB need to be careful that costs do not spiral or become extortionate, but some cost is to be expected. It may be helpful to benchmark against other similar costs, for example.”

Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified), London & South East

“The goal of reducing the costs for prospective candidates is fundamental; the current model is exclusionary on a financial level. The cost of each exam (Part 1 & 2) is almost equal to the monthly salary of a Part 2 Architectural assistant.”

Other, South Africa

Cost and viability

3.56 Four respondents (7%) raised concerns around the cost being viable for assessment providers, and this included suggestions for a cost benefit analysis being needed. These respondents suggested external providers could be discouraged by perceived high administrative costs, the development of resources that would be required, the need to keep assessments up to date and the work needed to promote their services to candidates.

“The issue for [us], and probably for other providers, is whether it would be cost effective to examine international candidates. There is likely to be significant costs in developing appropriate, high quality assessment materials, train an appropriate number of examiners and in setting up systems and procedures to run international candidate examinations. There will also be on-going costs in refreshing assessment materials, publicising the international examination, accreditation costs, mentoring candidates and IT and administration costs.”

Architects Professional Examination Authority in Scotland Ltd (APEAS), Scotland

Disagreement

3.57 Seven respondents (14%) outlined their disagreement with the need for and/or format of the route itself, and/or its assessment component. These included some of the following views:

- that an international degree should be enough, and ARB should accept all international qualifications without further assessment;
- suggesting alternative routes: including Part 3 / Prof Outcomes qualification should be required instead of whole route; and
- CPD should be used instead of an exam or assessment
- that the current Prescribed Exam should not change.

3.58 Some of these respondents disagreed with our intention to simplify the process for internationally-qualified architects, with their reasoning being that it should be intentionally difficult to become a registered architect in the UK to help protect the integrity of the profession. This sentiment confuses ARB’s intentions for the process – which should be accessible and simple to understand – with the competencies that would be assessed – which should remain high, in the public interest.

“I strongly disagree with the proposed overhaul of the ARB’s international routes to UK registration. British architecture is globally renowned for its rigorous standards and high-quality output, cultivated through strict education, examination, and accreditation processes. These new changes risk undermining that legacy by diluting the entry criteria for internationally qualified architects. Simplifying the assessment with a competence-based online test does not guarantee the same level of technical, creative, or ethical proficiency expected in the UK. This could lead to a flood of under-qualified practitioners, ultimately damaging the profession’s integrity.”

Registered architect, London & South East

Format

3.59 Almost half of the consultation respondents (29, 49%) provided feedback about the format of the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptions Assessment. Nine of these 29 respondents (31%) were registered architects and 13 (45%) were 'other' types of stakeholder. These respondents often shared their views on the best assessment methodology. Methodologies raised by respondents included online-tests, multiple-choice exams, and hybrid assessment formats including in-person, online, and portfolio reviews/ interviews.

3.60 Over half of the respondents who made comments about format (16 of the 29, 55%) wanted to ensure that the format or methodology enable candidates to demonstrate their competencies effectively. Some of these respondents noted that the assessment's administration could be a barrier while juggling other areas of their busy lives.

"Having sat the US style computer-based exams I would be in favour of a computer based online assessment. I think it is good if the exam can be focused on the practical and legal aspects specific to UK practice which applicants would not be exposed to if they have studied and practiced abroad. All architecture students will learn about designing in context, construction technology and sustainability etc. what they don't learn is how practices run, how they use the local codes and so on."

Other, London & South East

Conclusions

The majority of respondents supported ARB's proposals for changes to both the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaption Assessment. Respondents who identified in the 'other' stakeholder category, which included internationally-qualified architects and others likely to be affected by the changes, were more likely to be supportive of our proposed changes compared to registered architects. Some registered architects who disagreed with our proposals gave feedback that they wanted to ensure the integrity of the profession in the UK, which is absolutely ARB's intention.

Overall, we learned of significant support, and no substantive arguments made against, our proposals for a competence-based assessment; a single gateway; improved eligibility requirements; and a modern assessment format.

Our proposal to have external accredited providers deliver the Prescribed Exam and the UK Adaption Assessment received lower levels of agreement and mixed views. There were also mixed views as to whether a range of assessment methodologies or a single assessment methodology option was appropriate. We have analysed the views of respondents and we are reconsidering the best approach for outsourcing the assessment. In particular, we need to be mindful of the need to keep costs proportionate for candidates, whilst ensuring the assessment is viable for providers to run.

There were some misconceptions or misunderstandings about our proposals or aims, particularly around how a range of assessment methodologies would be put into practice without leading to a fall in standards. As part of our next steps and progressing the proposals, we will more clearly communicate our changes with the sector. This includes reinforcing that we are not making the

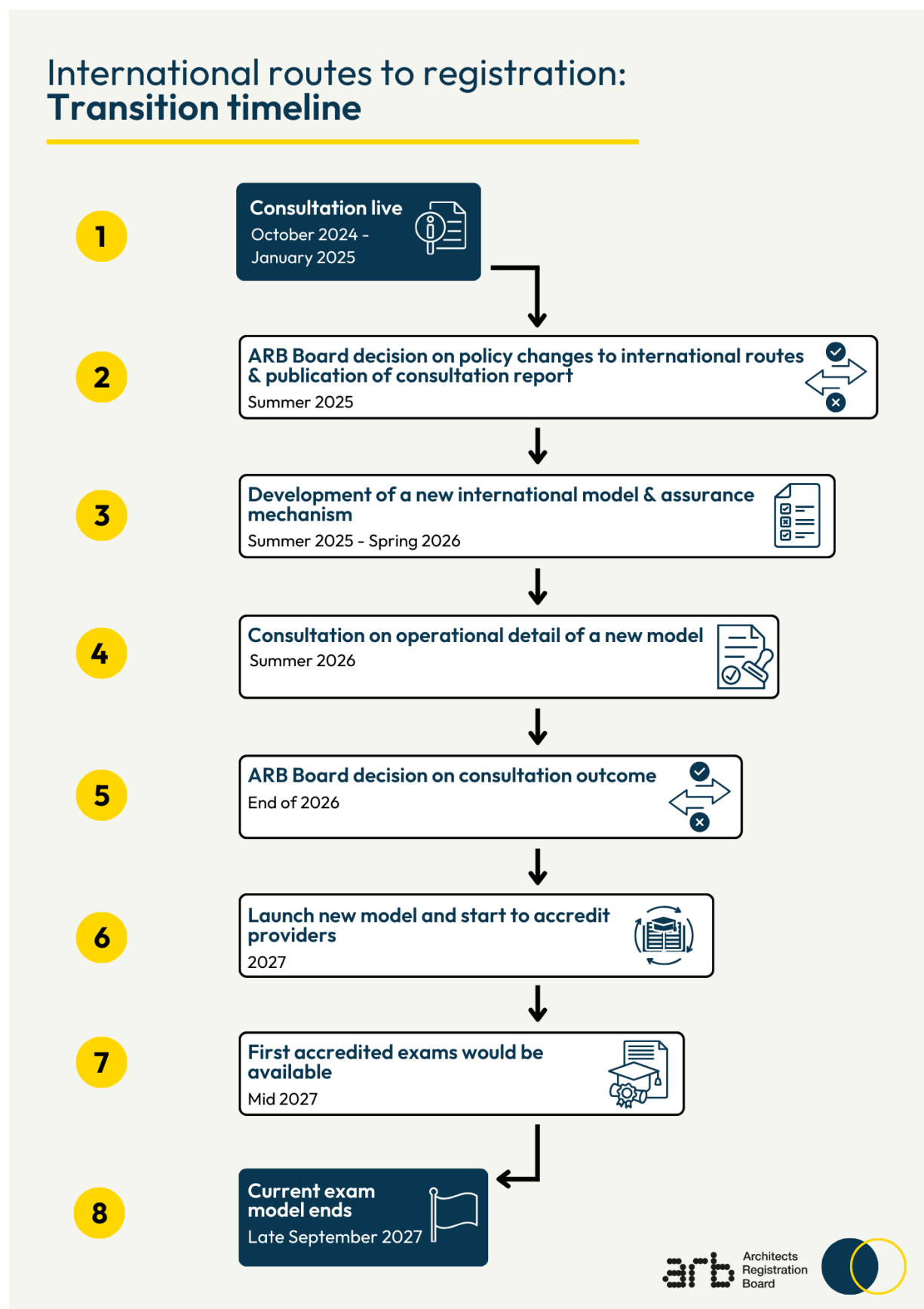
assessments easier or lowering the competency required to register, but rather the administration and complexity of the process instead

The questions, concerns and misconceptions raised by respondents will help us develop effective communications to help explain our work and, when we are ready to introduce it, the new exam and assessment model. It was clear that more clarity will be needed on the format of the new assessments. As our proposals develop, we will need to be clear about the methodology of the assessment and ensure future candidates have clarity as to our proposals.

Conclusion and next steps

- 4.1** Following the results of our consultation, we will proceed to implement the proposals that received high levels of agreement, including a competence-based assessment in a modernised format, simpler eligibility requirements, and a single point of entry to the Register.
- 4.2** We will review and remodel the Competency Standards Group to provide an alternative route for those with partial qualifications (specifically, an accredited Part 2 and Part 3 but no Part 1). We intend to do this over the next 12 months and hope to be able to open this route up at the end of 2026.
- 4.3** In light of the mixed feedback shared by consultation respondents, and further desktop research and engagement ARB has undertaken as a result, we will conduct further scoping work to explore a contract model for outsourcing the prescribed exam and UK Adaptation Assessment, rather than an accreditation model. We believe a contract model is more common to this type of professional assessment, and would potentially offer more direct quality assurance and control over performance. In light of concerns respondents and other stakeholders have raised about the potential cost of assessments, we would explore whether we can include within the contract terms the ability to review or terminate a contract if the fees are problematic for candidates.
- 4.4** To help simplify the process for candidates, we would initially seek to appoint a single provider, and consider widening out to multiple providers based on the success of the contract model.
- 4.5** In light of consultation feedback on the potential for courses and support to be provided to candidates, we recommend that we consider the potential for courses to be provided at a later stage in the project. Once the new exams are running, we can evaluate their success and whether there is a pool of candidates would benefit from more detailed support, such as an accredited programme with a registration assessment built in at the end.
- 4.6** We aim to continue to work to our timeline below and will communicate updates if we need to make any adjustments to it. Our plans include a further public consultation in 2026, on the details implementation of the changes set out in this conclusion.

Figure 4.1: Predicted timeline for changes to the Prescribed Exam and the UK Adaption Assessment



Annex A: List of respondents

There were 16 respondents who gave permission for their responses to be published in full, with a further 39 asking for their responses to be published anonymously.

There were 11 responses made on behalf of organisations, with seven agreeing to be published in full and four anonymously.

The individuals and organisations who gave permission for their response to be published in full are listed below.

- Amitai Amir
- Architects Professional Examination Authority in Scotland Ltd
- Artcrafters
- Bert
- Donald E Wahlberg
- Fiona Petch
- Firas Hnoosh
- Goh Ong
- Interarch Construction
- Jennifer Ward
- John Young Architect
- Lars Gunnar Orefelt
- London South Bank University
- International Architects Collective
- Royal Institute of British Architects
- Yifei

Annex B: Consultation data

The full consultation data is below. Some questions were optional, and we have included the numbers of respondents who chose not to answer each question. In the main report, respondents who did not answer were not included for the analysis for each section.

Table B1: Consultation respondents by Stakeholder category		
Option	Total	Percent
Academic (registered architect)	3	5.1%
Academic (other)	1	1.7%
Registered Architect	25	42.4%
Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified)	7	11.9%
Architectural technologist	2	3.4%
Construction contractor	0	0.0%
Architecture Student – undergraduate (studying Part 1)	0	0.0%
Architecture Student – graduate (studying Part 2)	1	1.7%
Architecture Student – Part 3 candidate	0	0.0%
Elected political representative e.g. councillor or MP	0	0.0%
Member of the public	0	0.0%
Other built environment professional	1	1.7%
Other	19	32.2%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B2: Consultation respondents by Gender		
Option	Total	Percent
Female	27	45.8%
Male	25	42.4%
Non-Binary	1	1.7%
Prefer not to say	6	10.2%
Other	0	0.0%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B3: Consultation respondents by Ethnicity		
Option	Total	Percent
Asian or Asian British	14	23.7%
Black, Black British, Caribbean, African	3	5.08%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	3	5.08%
White	28	47.5%
Other ethnic group	3	5.08%
Prefer not to say	8	13.6%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B4: Geographic spread of respondents		
Option	Total	Percent
East of England	4	6.8%
East Midlands	1	1.7%
London & South East	32	54.2%
North East	2	3.4%
North West	1	1.7%
South West	3	5.1%
West Midlands	3	5.1%
Yorkshire & Humber	0	0.0%
Northern Ireland	0	0.0%
Scotland	2	3.4%
Wales	0	0.0%
Republic of Ireland	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	1	1.7%
Other	10	17.0%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B5: Health		
Option	Total	Percent
Yes	1	1.7%
No	54	91.5%
Prefer not to say	4	6.8%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B6: Registered architects (including academics) - when qualified		
Option	Total	Percent
0-5 years ago	8	13.6%
6-10 years ago	2	3.4%
11-20 years ago	9	15.3%
21+ years ago	9	15.3%
Not Answered	31	52.5%

Table B7: Registered architects (including academics) - size of practice		
Option	Total	Percent
Small or self-employed (1-10 employees)	8	13.6%
Medium (11-50 employees)	8	13.6%
Large (51+ employees)	9	15.3%
I'm not practising at the moment	1	1.7%
I work at another type of organisation (e.g. developer, local authority)	2	3.4%
Not Answered	31	52.5%

Table B8: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam? – Competence-based assessment		
Option	Total	Percent
5: Strongly agree	36	61.0%
4: Agree	16	27.1%
3: Neither agree nor disagree	4	6.8%
2: Disagree	0	0.0%
1: Strongly disagree	3	5.1%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B9: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam? – Single gateway		
Option	Total	Percent
5: Strongly agree	39	66.1%
4: Agree	8	13.6%
3: Neither agree nor disagree	3	5.1%
2: Disagree	4	6.8%
1: Strongly disagree	5	8.5%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B10: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam? – Improved eligibility		
Option	Total	Percent
5: Strongly agree	31	52.5%
4: Agree	14	23.7%
3: Neither agree nor disagree	6	10.2%
2: Disagree	3	5.1%
1: Strongly disagree	5	8.5%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B11: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam? – Accredited providers		
Option	Total	Percent
5: Strongly agree	16	27.1%
4: Agree	18	30.5%
3: Neither agree nor disagree	14	23.7%
2: Disagree	3	5.1%
1: Strongly disagree	8	13.6%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B12: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the Prescribed Exam? – Modern assessment format		
Option	Total	Percent
5: Strongly agree	34	57.6%
4: Agree	9	15.3%
3: Neither agree nor disagree	11	18.6%
2: Disagree	0	0.0%
1: Strongly disagree	5	8.5%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B13: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the UK Adaption Assessment? – Competence-based assessment		
Option	Total	Percent
5: Strongly agree	36	61.0%
4: Agree	15	25.4%
3: Neither agree nor disagree	6	10.2%
2: Disagree	0	0.0%
1: Strongly disagree	2	3.4%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B14: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the UK Adaption Assessment? – Accredited providers		
Option	Total	Percent
5: Strongly agree	18	30.5%
4: Agree	17	28.8%
3: Neither agree nor disagree	13	22.0%
2: Disagree	2	3.4%
1: Strongly disagree	9	15.3%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B15: To what extent do you agree with each of our proposed changes to the UK Adaption Assessment? – Modern assessment format		
Option	Total	Percent
5: Strongly agree	29	49.2%
4: Agree	14	23.7%
3: Neither agree nor disagree	10	17.0%
2: Disagree	0	0.0%
1: Strongly disagree	6	10.2%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Table B16: Do you think there will be interest from learning providers and those with expertise in assessment becoming providers of ARB-accredited international assessments?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	45	76.3%
No	12	20.3%
Not Answered	2	3.4%

Table B17: We have suggested a desk-based assessment through a redeveloped 'Competency Standards Group' for candidates with mixed types of qualifications (see Chapter Seven of our paper, 'Mixed Qualifications'). To what extent to you agree with this approach?

Option	Total	Percent
5: Strongly agree	13	22.0%
4: Agree	26	44.1%
3: Neither agree nor disagree	12	20.3%
2: Disagree	4	6.8%
1: Strongly disagree	4	6.8%
Not Answered	0	0.0%

Annex C: Qualitative analysis coding framework

Theme	Description
Cost	Views that the cost should be affordable for candidates undertaking Prescribed Exam and/or UK Adaption Assessment. Views that the cost needs to be viable for potential external providers that might seek accreditation to provide the assessments.
Disagreement	Views about the strategy underpinning the proposals, which included respondents disagreeing that the Prescribed Exam/ UK Adaption Assessment should apply internationally-qualified architects or disagreeing with the need to change the current system.
Format	Suggestions for the future format or method of assessments and how they should work.
Support	Views about the provision of supporting courses for candidates to give them additional help before the Prescribed Exam and/or UK Adaption Assessment. Suggestions for other types of support to help candidates, such as using mentors and tutors.
Questions	We also recorded specific questions that respondents raised, so that we could feed these concerns into our implementation approach and subsequent communications, and any recommendations for potential assessment providers.

If you need information on this document in a different format such as an audio recording or braille, you can:

- email info@arb.org.uk
- call 020 7580 5861
- write to us at ARB, 70 Gray's Inn road, London, WC1X 8NH

We will consider your request and get back to you within 14 days.