

Board Paper

Open session

Subject: Terms of Reference for the PPE Commission

Terms of Reference for the ARB-appointed independent
Commission on Professional Practical Experience

Board meeting:

6 December 2023

Agenda item:

10

Action:

- For noting
- For discussion
- For decision

Purpose

To approve the Terms of Reference for the PPE Commission.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- i. Approve the Terms of Reference for the PPE Commission
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Annexes

Annexe A – Proposed Terms of Reference for Commission on professional practical
experience

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1. Open Session

- 1.1. ARB's decision to establish an independent Commission was announced publicly in September. The Board's decision as to the guiding Terms of Reference for that Commission should follow an open discussion.
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2. Background and Key points

Background

- 2.1. The Board held a statutory consultation on proposals to reform the initial education and training of architects in the UK from 8 February to 10 May 2023. Detailed analysis was provided to the Board at its workshop on 14 June, and the Board decided next steps in ARB's education reforms at its meeting on 6 September. The Board's decisions were published in full and shared with all identified stakeholders immediately after. Further detail about the education reforms and the decisions made by the Board to date is set out in [previous Board papers](#) and in a [summary on ARB's website](#).
- 2.2. Following consultation, one of the Board's decisions was to establish an independent Commission to make recommendations to ARB on how to improve the effectiveness of its Professional Practical Experience.
- 2.3. In ARB's consultation, we proposed moving to an outcomes-based approach to professional practical experience which would mean that we would no longer require a minimum of two years of employment in architecture. Our aim was to improve flexibility so that future architects can gain experience in ways that work for them. It was also intended to help them focus their professional experience on what they need to be able to do in order to qualify as an architect. We acknowledged wider problems with the availability of employment, not all of which are within ARB's gift to solve, but we tried to improve our model to help make our requirements more achievable.
- 2.4. The majority of consultation respondents (60%) disagreed with our proposal to no longer require a minimum of two years of employment in architecture. We learned through the responses that removing the minimum duration of experience will not address the problems that arise for those looking to gain the experience, that it may create further uncertainty for employers and students, and that it could have the unintended consequence of weakening the standards of the architects' profession.
- 2.5. We also received a broad range of ideas and concerns about the role of practices in our proposals, and the impact our proposals would have on them. In their comments, respondents discussed the challenges of getting this right.

- 2.6. As a result of the consultation feedback, the Board concluded that ARB's proposals for professional practical experience should be revised. It was decided that ARB will appoint a Commission with an independent Chair to provide options and advice to ARB on the key challenges of professional practice experience identified through the consultation. It will be tasked with making recommendations to ARB on how to improve fair and consistent access to quality practical experience, and the recommended new minimum requirements for relevant experience.
- 2.7. ARB cannot solve all the problems with practical experience alone, but we want to take the lead in helping. The independent Commission will bring stakeholders together to help us achieve that. In the meantime, we will retain the existing two year minimum duration while continuing to consider short-term modifications like additional flexibility about the types of experience which are deemed relevant.

Commission Terms of Reference

- 2.8. Annexe A sets out the proposed Terms of Reference for Commission on professional practical experience. These draft Terms of Reference have been discussed with our preferred candidate for the role of Chair.
- 2.9. The Commission will be formed of an independent Chair appointed and three additional Commissioners: an architect from a practice that employs professionals during their training and education; an academic from an accredited learning provider; and a lay person with experience across other regulated professions or policy areas.
- 2.10. The Commission will be funded by ARB, and ARB will provide the secretariat to manage its engagement and assist in writing its briefings and reports.
- 2.11. The Commission will be established in January 2024 and will report to the Board in December 2024, with its recommendations to be published shortly afterwards. During the year, it will meet with architects, employers, students and learning providers across UK nations and regions. Engagement activities will include an open call for evidence, meetings with an expert working group of approximately 12 professionals representing key organisations, and the need for new research will also be considered. A full, detailed programme is being prepared. Further detail about the format of the Commission's anticipated work is included in a [previous Board paper on the Commission](#).
- 2.12. In its final report it will provide options and recommendations to ARB on the topics identified in the Terms of Reference, which includes a Scope of Work and Deliverables.
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3. Resource Implications

- 3.1. In [September 2023 the Board approved](#) the establishment of the Commission, including a budget of £250,000. The Terms of Reference are aligned with this budget.
 - 3.2. The staffing requirements for providing the Secretariat for the Commission can be covered within the current staff team.
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4. Risk Implications

- 4.1. The Terms of Reference are drafted to define the scope of the Commission, and to help it make recommendations that ARB is able to implement from a practical perspective.
 - 4.2. Many of the challenges to improving the practical professional experience of architects cannot be solved by ARB within our statutory remit; there is a risk that the Commission identified challenges that are not within ARB's gift to solve. During the Commission's engagement we will seek to manage stakeholder expectations.
 - 4.3. If the Commission identifies key challenges that need support from other organisations, ARB will support the Commission in communicating these. We will also support the Commission in building connections with other stakeholder groups, who may choose to support new initiatives of their own volition.
 - 4.4. The Commission's recommendations are likely to shape how ARB accredits the new practice qualification, and the requirements professionals will be expected to meet in order to achieve that qualification. ARB's [transition timeline](#) anticipates that new qualifications to assess the Practice Outcomes will be in place by September 2028. We believe this allows adequate time between the Commission reporting its recommendations in early 2025 and ARB implementing any that the Board agrees to take forward.
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5. Communication

- 5.1. Once agreed by the Board, the Terms of Reference will be published on ARB's website and sent to stakeholders through targeted emails, including to registrants in ARB Insight.
- 5.2. The Commission's call for evidence will be widely published and its engagement meetings and events will be publicised through ARB's channels, including social media.

6. Equality and Diversity implications

- 6.1. The Commission of four experts, and the working group of approximately 12 representatives we intend to establish to meet with and advise it, provide an opportunity for ARB to take an inclusive approach that reflects the diversity of the built environment sector, and the professionals and students within it. We are committed to ensuring these groups are diverse.
- 6.2. A key driver for this work is to address some of the challenges in access to work experience, particularly by those from minority and certain socio-economic groups.

7. Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- i. Approve the Terms of Reference for the PPE Commission.

Commission on professional practical experience in architecture

Terms of Reference

Purpose and Objective

In reviewing the initial education and training of architects, the lack of access to good quality professional practical experience has been identified as a barrier for entry into the architectural profession.

A commission will be established to make recommendations for improving the effectiveness of professional practical experience for architecture students in the UK.

Membership

Members will be invited to join the Commission to represent the views of the profession, students, academia and government.

The work of the Commission will be overseen by a Chair appointed by the Architects Registration Board.

Scope of Work

The Commission will conduct a comprehensive review of the current landscape of practical experience opportunities available to architecture students across the United Kingdom.

This will include:

- a. Reviewing the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for securing practical experience and identify any gaps or challenges faced by students.
- b. Evaluating the quality and availability of practical experience for students from diverse backgrounds, including underrepresented groups and individuals with disabilities
- c. Identifying best practices from within the UK and abroad and investigating potential collaborations between academia, the architectural profession and other relevant stakeholders
- d. Analysing whether changes to the regulatory framework or legislation would improve the quality of practical experience available to students

- e. Considering the role of central funding for architectural training in the context of meeting the Government's objectives in relation to sustainable development, building safety and levelling up

Resources

The Commission will be funded by the Architects Registration Board, which will provide the secretarial, technical and other support required by the Commission to carry out its work effectively.

Engagement

Through the ARB the Commission will engage with architecture students, recent graduates, educators, architectural firms, professional bodies, and other relevant stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and public consultations. It will seek input from individuals and organisations with expertise in diversity and inclusion to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by underrepresented groups.

Deliverables

The Commission will complete its work within 12 months and deliver:

- a. An interim report to ARB outlining its initial findings and recommendations, providing the opportunity for further feedback from stakeholders.
- b. A final report to ARB outlining its recommendations and proposed actions to improve access to good quality practical experience for architecture students.
- c. Specific recommendations on measures to enhance equity, diversity, and inclusion in practical experience opportunities.
- d. Recommendations should state where they are for ARB to implement and the extent to which statutory powers exist to do this, or where they are for ARB to take forward by progressing them with others.
- e. A roadmap for implementation, including timelines, responsible entities, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the effective execution of the recommendations.