



Subject	Prescription Committee's Annual Report 2014 - 2015		
Status	Open		
Purpose	For Note		
From	Prescription Committee		
History	Parent Committee	First Submitted	Revision Number
	Prescription Committee	16/07/2015	1

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#### 1. Purpose

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

#### For Note

#### 2. Terms of Reference

N/A.

#### 3. Open

#### 4. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

Protect the users and potential users of architects' services: we ensure that architects are appropriately qualified and have undertaken appropriate qualifications before being admitted to our Register.

Support architects through regulation: we maintain and publicly demonstrate the status of architects as competent, qualified professionals by ensuring that they have completed appropriate qualifications before they are admitted to our Register.

#### 5. Key Points

- i. This report concerns the Prescription Committee's work between June 2014 and June 2015. The Board is asked to note that no detailed statistics have been included within this report as these are routinely included in the Departmental Annual Report and ARB's Annual Report each year.

- ii. **Administrative Issues**

The [Prescription Committee's Terms of Reference](#) were last reviewed and updated

by the Board in November 2012, following an internal audit of the prescription process. At that point, the Board agreed some minor updates and adjustments to the Terms of Reference to allow the Chair to deal more effectively with the quoracy of the Committee should a series of conflicts of interest arise at any one time. Other minor amendments were made to align the Terms of Reference with the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications.

The Terms of Reference continue to remain up to date, however should the Committee wish to review them this could be done annually and/or at the time when the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications are next reviewed.

### **Committee membership**

During 2014/2015, the Committee's membership consisted of John Assael; Peter Coe; Alan Jago (Chair); Richard Parnaby; Susan Ware and Neil Watts. Peter Beacock was also appointed to the Committee to undertake the role of the Committee's independent adviser from January 2015. The Board has recently reconfirmed Mr Beacock's membership of the Committee for a further year. Mr Beacock was appointed from the Committee's pool of independent advisers following a thorough recruitment process. The Committee continues to be supported by ARB's Qualifications Team.

### **Pool of independent advisers**

The Committee's pool of independent advisers consists of: Peter Beacock; Tony Cleftord; Don Gray; Dyfed Griffiths and Peter Walker. Following their initial appointment in September 2013, the Committee undertook its regular annual review of the membership of the pool in August 2014. All five advisers were re-appointed to their positions for a further year. Advisers can serve for a total of five consecutive years.

### **Meetings**

The Committee met nine times between June 2014 and June 2015.

### **Committee Effectiveness Review**

In January 2015, the Committee considered the outcomes of the relevant sections of the Board's Effectiveness Review which related to the Prescription Committee's work.

As a result of its consideration of the feedback, the Committee agreed that:

- It would like to continue to receive annual updates on areas of risk which ARB faces in relation to this area of its work, as well as a horizon scanning paper which looks at the issues which may impact upon its work; and
- It would like to introduce a series of post-Committee sessions to help the Committee develop its knowledge and understanding of key issues. The

2015 programme includes a visit to an End of Year Show; a briefing on the Qualifications Directive; an update on relevant European trends and a session on how other regulators collect information as part of their accreditation processes.

The Committee also noted a number of issues which could be looked at when the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications were next reviewed.

The Committee will again review its effectiveness later this year and will revisit its progress in relation to the previous feedback on a regular basis throughout 2015.

### **Work of the Committee**

#### **Prescription of Qualifications**

ARB currently prescribes 133 qualifications which are offered by 51 institutions. Of these 58 are at Part 1 level; 48 are at Part 2 level and 27 are at Part 3 level.

The Committee's core work involves overseeing ARB's prescription process to assist the Board in ensuring that the qualifications which it prescribes meet/continue to meet the relevant ARB's requirements, e.g., analysing and processing applications to renew prescription and applications from institutions seeking prescription for the first time; analysing and processing annual monitoring submissions; reviewing details of course, title and awarding body name changes etc. Where appropriate and in accordance with the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications, the Committee provides advice and guidance to the Board in relation to all of these areas.

The Committee successfully oversaw the 2014/2015 prescription process (refer to the most recent [Departmental Key Performance Indicators](#) which are provided to the Committee in the Departmental Report in the Autumn each year – whilst these refer to the 2013/2014 prescription cycle, it is anticipated that similar statistics will result from the 2014/2015 cycle, the details of which will be published in Autumn 2015).

The Committee has continued to see a steady number of applications for prescription of new qualifications from new and existing institutions wishing to offer or widen their provision of ARB-prescribed qualifications. On average the Committee/Board receives two to three applications from new institutions which have previously had no contact with ARB.

The Committee has continued to find it more difficult to determine how qualifications are meeting ARB's Criteria due to the lack of clarity within the documentation initially presented by institutions, and has therefore needed to seek greater levels of clarification from institutions than has previously been the case. The Staff team are continuing to encourage institutions to present clear

information through planning meetings, and will continue to review the guidance provided to institutions in this area.

Over the last year, the Committee has also noted that the number of institutions wishing to discuss applying for prescription of more innovatively structured qualifications is growing, e.g., conversion courses; qualifications including periods of 'education in practice'. The Committee has also noted that several institutions offering UK prescribed qualifications in the UK have also been seeking to deliver these qualifications overseas. Noting that the Board only prescribes qualifications which are fully compliant with the relevant elements of Qualifications Directive, as well as its own requirements, the Committee has developed and issued guidance to remind institutions of its policy in relation to this area.

The Committee has continued to provide advice to the Board regarding the flexibility of the overall prescription cycle by reviewing the prescription history of a qualification to determine whether an extension of prescription can be offered in cases where appropriate criteria have been met.

#### **Annual Review of the operation of the prescription process**

The Committee reviewed the annual feedback gathered from institutions which had been through the prescription process during the 2013/2014 prescription cycle. The feedback is used by both the Committee and the Staff team to develop and improve the operation of the prescription process. No significant issues arose from the feedback gathered following the 2013/2014 prescription cycle, although some of the relevant feedback regarding the current Criteria will be retained and taken into account as part of any future review of the prescription process.

The Committee also noted and approved the content of the Qualifications Department's Annual Report which sets out details about the Department's performance and how well it is meeting its key performance indicators.

#### **Prescribed Examination**

The Committee is also responsible for overseeing the Prescribed Examination process. The Committee continues to review the Independent Examiners' reports and the statistics relating to candidates' results following each Examination session. The Committee also considers how improvements and adjustments to candidate guidance and to the operation of the process can be made. Amongst other things, in 2014/2015, the Committee:

- Had oversight of a recruitment exercise to renew the pool of Examiners and Independent Examiners responsible for delivering the Prescribed Examination route. The Committee noted that a total of 40 applicants for Examiner positions were interviewed, with 29 being appointed. The Committee also noted that a further 10 applicants were interviewed for the Independent Examiner positions, with 5 being appointed. The term of

appointment is for up three years with annual renewal of contracts each year;

- Noted that training and induction had been undertaken for all Examiners and Independent Examiners prior to them taking up their posts; and
- Worked with SCHOSA (the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture) on introducing extended transitional arrangements to support access to the Prescribed Examination for a number of graduates who were relying on access to the Prescribed Examination based on arrangements no longer in operation.

### **ARB's Competent Authority Role**

The Committee has continued to keep up to date in relation to relevant developments concerning the revised Qualifications Directive, and is anticipating further information and briefings on the impact that this could have on the UK's qualification throughout the remainder of 2015. The Committee also received an annual trend report from ARB's European Advisers who review European qualifications once these have been notified to the European Commission for listing under Annex V of the Directive. The Committee uses this information to inform the operation of the prescription process and to ensure that ARB's process continues to dovetail with that of the European Commission to facilitate the notification of UK qualifications.

### **Other Areas**

The Committee has continued to keep up to date with stakeholders' developments over the last year. In particular, the Committee has received regular updates regarding the Staff Team's engagement with the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA) and the Association of Professional Studies Advisers in Architecture (APSAA). The Committee has also continued to follow the progress of the RIBA's Review of Architectural Education. As noted last year, it is envisaged that the outcomes of all recent reviews of this nature will be taken into account when ARB reviews its routes to registration in due course. The Committee has also received updates from the Team regarding the work ARB undertakes with other key stakeholders.

In addition, the Committee looks at the risks and issues which will affect the work which falls under its remit on a regular basis.

### **Looking Forward**

The Committee is aware that the higher education landscape is changing rapidly and that in order to maintain its ability to provide high quality advice and guidance to the Board, it will need to spend time updating and developing its knowledge of the relevant matters affecting the sector. The programme of post-Committee discussions should facilitate this. As the Committee deals with applications/course changes of an increasingly complex nature, it is beginning to look at issues with which the Board will also need to familiarise itself over the next year.

The Committee is also looking forward to gaining a clearer understanding of the revised requirements within the Qualifications Directive so that it can advise the Board accordingly and assist it in continuing to ensure that the appropriate conditions are adhered to.

The Committee is anticipating that it will play a role in the advising the Board in relation to its review of ARB's routes to registration. It is likely that as well as the routes, the current Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications will also require review as part of this project.

In terms of the Prescribed Examination, the Committee is expecting to see an increase in the number of students applying to undertake the examination in the coming year as result of the improving economy, and from candidates at institutions which are in the process of seeking prescription of existing qualifications.

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

#### **6. Risk Implications**

The risk implications associated with the Committee's work are covered in ARB's Risk Register.

#### **7. Resource Implications**

The Committee's costs are accounted for within ARB's annual budget.

#### **8. Communication**

The Prescription Committee prepares an annual report for the Board to assist the Board in carrying out its oversight responsibilities. The annual report also provides the Board with the opportunity to explore the Prescription Committee's work and identify any areas of concern.

#### **9. Equality and Diversity Implications**

The Committee is careful to ensure that it takes equality and diversity issues into account when undertaking its work. Papers considered by the Committee make reference to any equality and diversity implications which may be relevant.