



Subject	Prescription Committee's Annual Report 2015-2016		
Status	Open session		
Purpose	For note		
From	Prescription Committee		
History	Parent Committee	First Submitted	Revision Number
	Prescription Committee	14 July 2016	1

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1 Purpose

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

For Noting

3. Terms of Reference

N/A

4. Open Session

5. 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.

6. Key Points

i. This report concerns the Committee's work between June 2015 and June 2016. The Committee 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

Committee's Terms of Reference

The Prescription Committee's Terms of Reference were last reviewed and updated by the Board in February 2016. The Board agreed that the Terms of Reference should be adjusted

to include the minimum number of occasions upon which the Committee would meet each year (following an internal audit recommendation) and to include the proviso that the Chair of the Board should not sit on the Committee.

Given that the Terms of Reference have recently been reviewed and updated, it is not recommended that they are reviewed again at this point. It is recommended that the Committee review the Terms of Reference at the mid-year point in 2017 and also when the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications are next reviewed.

Committee Membership

During 2015/2016 the Committee's membership consisted of John Assael; Peter Coe; Alan Jago (Chair); Richard Parnaby; Susan Ware and Neil Watts. Peter Beacock was appointed to the Committee to undertake the role of the Committee's independent adviser from January 2015; the Board recently reconfirmed Mr Beacock's membership of the Committee for a further year.

John Assael left the Committee when he completed his term of office as a Board member on 31 March 2016. At its meeting of 13 May 2016, the Board agreed that the Committee's membership would be as follows for 2016/2017:

Peter Coe; Alan Jago (Chair); Guy Maxwell; Susan Ware, Neil Watts and Alex Wright. As mentioned above, Peter Beacock was also appointed for the 2016/2017 period. The Board additionally agreed that Peter Coe would be replaced by Carol Bernstein with effect from 1 August 2016.

Pool of Independent Advisers

The Committee's pool of independent advisers consists of: Peter Beacock; Tony Cleford; 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 2015. All five advisers were re-appointed to their positions for a further year. Advisers can currently serve a total of five consecutive years. The next review is due in July 2016.

Meetings

The Committee met nine times between June 2015 and June 2016.

Committee Effectiveness Review

In February 2016, 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:

- The Head of Qualifications/Qualifications team would try to ensure sufficient time is given to discussing important/key topics;
- We would continue to make better use of post meeting sessions where time and the agendas/workload permitted this; and
- We would introduce a 'buddying process' for any new members joining the Committee in May 2016.

The Committee, alongside the Board, will undertake a further review of its effectiveness later this year and will revisit progress in relation to the previous feedback on a regular basis throughout 2016.

Work of the Committee

Prescription of Qualifications

ARB currently prescribes 144 qualifications which are offered by 53 institutions. Of these 60 are at Part 1 level; 55 are at Part 2 level and 29 are at Part 3 level. In 2015, ARB was dealing with qualifications offered by 51 institutions.

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

The Committee successfully oversaw the 2015/2016 prescription process (refer to most recent Departmental Key Performance Indicators which are provided to the Committee in the annual Departmental Reports each year.)

The Committee has continued to see a regular number of incoming applications from institutions seeking prescription for the first time and/or institutions adding new qualifications to their existing portfolios. In 2015, the Board prescribed seven new qualifications. Five of these were delivered by institutions with existing prescribed qualifications, and two delivered by institutions that had no history of previously prescribed qualifications. In 2016, it is expected that the Board will need to make decisions relating to the prescription of up to 10 new qualifications, six of which will be applications from institutions with no history of offering prescribed qualifications. In the past the

Committee/Board received an average of two or three applications relating to new qualifications/new institutions.

The Committee has seen an increase in the number of occasions where it has needed to seek clarifications in relation to an application for prescription/to renew prescription as well as in relation to the annual monitoring submissions it has reviewed. In terms of the applications for prescription queries have routinely been raised in relation to the mapping of a qualification's learning outcomes to the ARB's criteria. Some institutions appear to be developing more generic learning outcomes in order to ensure they meet students' expectations and these generic learning outcomes are making it increasingly difficult to determine how the learning outcomes map to the Criteria at any given level. The Staff team will be looking at this in more detail in the coming months with a view to developing some additional guidance in this area for institutions.

A greater number of clarifications relating to course changes and the resourcing of qualifications have also been sought as the information within the relevant annual monitoring submissions has not initially been sufficiently clear; 11 submissions required follow-up in 2015, whereas 24 submissions have required follow up to date during 2016. The Committee has also noted that the number of instances where annual monitoring submissions are either late and/or incomplete has increased significantly during the last six months. The Head of Qualifications will be writing to institutions which have not complied with ARB's requirements following the Committee's meeting in June 2016 to remind them about ARB's standard conditions of prescription and the obligations upon them in terms of meeting these.

The past year has continued to see a number of institutions wishing to discuss applying for prescription of more innovatively structured qualifications, e.g., qualifications including varying periods of 'education in practice'; qualifications being offered by private institutions; qualifications involving mixed modes of study; top-up or conversion qualifications etc.

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 2014/2015 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 2014/2015 prescription cycle. The action points arising from the review of the feedback have been taken forward and are being worked on.

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 2015/2016, the Committee:

- Recommended the re-appointment of Examiners and Independent Examiners to the Board for a further term, subject to the Board being provided with additional information on the overall duration of appointment for each individual;
- Noted that training had been undertaken for Examiners and Independent Examiners covering how Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is relevant to examination process, ensuring fairness, consistency and in the giving of feedback to candidates. Noted that the training had also covered the Examiners' responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty of April 2011 and provided feedback to staff on adjustments to the process they had identified during training; and
- Noted that due to increased demand during 2015, it was agreed that with effect from January 2016, examinations run every other month rather than quarterly to deal with the increasing number of candidates wishing to sit the Prescribed Examination.

ARB's Competent Authority Role

The Committee has also been seeking to get to grips with the interpretation of the revisions which have been made to Article 46 of the Professional Qualifications Directive, so that it can continue to assist the Board in ensuring that all qualifications prescribed at Part 1 and Part 2 levels continue to comply with the Directive. There have been delays throughout the year in terms of obtaining the appropriate advice and feedback from our Government Departments but progress is now being made.

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 continues to use this information to inform the operation of the prescription process and to ensure that ARB's processes 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 throughout the year. The Committee has received regular updates from the Staff Team in relation to their engagement with the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of

Architecture (SCHOSA); the Association of Professional Studies Advisers in Architecture (APSAA) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). 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 relevant 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 continued to receive updates from the Team regarding the work ARB undertakes with other key stakeholders.

The Committee has also continued to look at the risks and issues which will affect the work which falls under its remit on a regular basis. The Committee has also looked at issues which may affect its future work through a horizon scanning exercise.

Looking Forward

Given the rapidly changing higher education landscape, the Committee is aware that it will need to continuously update and extend its knowledge of relevant matters affecting the sector so that it can continue to provide high quality advice and guidance to the Board. This will become increasingly important as the Committee deals with applications for prescription/course changes of increasingly complexity. The programme of post-Committee session should facilitate this. The Committee will need to continue to develop its knowledge and understanding of the revised Professional Qualifications Directive in order to advise and assist the Board in ensuring that prescribed qualifications continue to comply with the appropriate requirements. The Committee will also be tracking the progress of the Government's White paper, 'Higher Education: success as a knowledge economy' and looking at the impact that the proposals could have in terms of ARB's prescription process in the future. The Committee is also anticipating the receipt of applications for prescription of qualifications which have been franchised by UK-based institutions to those in European member states. Finally, the Committee is expecting to see further increases in the number of students undertaking the Prescribed Examination as the economy improves.

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

7. Risk Implications

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

8. Resource Implications

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

9. 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.

10. Growth Duty

The Board's responsibilities in relation to the prescription of qualifications and practical training experience form part of its core responsibilities.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

Whilst the production of this Annual Report has no specific Equality and Diversity implications, the specific work of the Committee involves ensuring that institutions seeking to apply for and/or renew prescription comply with the Board's objectives (as set out in the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications) in this area.