



Subject Update on ARB's Operational Activities
Purpose For Note
From ARB's Staff Team

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1. Summary

To update the Board on ARB's operational activities since the last Board meeting.

2. Open Session

Open session. Any confidential matters will be discussed in a separate report in the confidential session.

3. 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, and
- Support architects through Regulation

ARB's Operational Activities Report keeps the Board informed of activities which ensure that ARB meets its purpose and objectives, its statement of priorities and delivers against the Business Plan.

4. Stakeholder Relations

Hackitt Review

We attended the Westminster Briefing: The Next Steps for Building Regulations and Fire Safety in September. ARB continues to chair a working group looking at what competencies should be required of architects and designers working on Higher-Risk Residential Buildings.

Office for Students/Quality Assurance Agency

The Qualifications Team has been building a network of contacts at the Office for Students (OfS) and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) over the last few months. Through discussions with the OfS and QAA's we have improved our understanding of what to expect with English higher education providers now having to register with the OfS, and what will be required to maintain a registration under QAA's revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education. We have also increased our knowledge about the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), and its focus on teaching excellence at undergraduate level. We will also be attending the QAA's Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies forum in late November 2018 which will also cover these topics. We will be providing a more detailed briefing session to the Prescription Committee in relation to the QAA and OfS' before the end of the year.

This will also include a review of the current regulatory arrangements for Higher Education across all four home nations.

Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)

We met with representatives of SCHOSA Council in mid-October as part of our regular series of liaison meetings with stakeholders. Discussions centred around the provision of updates in relation to the business as usual Criteria and Procedures reviews; the development of apprenticeship provision and the UK's exit from the European Union. Whilst we did not attend SCHOSA's Autumn meeting in early November, we did provide the SCHOSA Chair with a written update in terms of the developments relating to the Criteria and Procedures reviews which could be provided to attendees/SCHOSA members. We will be holding an additional liaison meeting with representatives of SCHOSA Council in late November to continue our on-going discussions on topics of mutual interest.

Architects Council of Europe (ACE)

The ACE has established an ad hoc Working Group which is looking at the UK's exit from the European Union (EU). We have joined and are participating in the Group's work. The purpose of the Group is to identify, at an early stage, the issues relating to the possible development of a Mutual Recognition Agreement on qualifications in architecture between EU27 and the UK. The progress of and the direction that the Group's work will be contingent upon the outcomes of the UK and EU's negotiations which should become clearer towards the end of the year. We will provide further updates at the meeting on 29 November 2018.

Stakeholder Research

We received 16 eligible proposals by the submission deadline of 14 September. The submissions were carefully evaluated and three agencies were shortlisted for interview. The last interview took place on 12 November and it is anticipated the 'set up' phase of the project will commence with the successful agency shortly after.

Consumer Shows

We exhibited at the Edinburgh Homebuilding and Renovating Show on 20-21 October 2018. Our attendance was again well received by consumers, architects and students. We received positive feedback from those who visited our stand and visitors felt the information we provided was extremely helpful. Although the number of visitors to the stand were lower than those we see at the larger shows, those who did visit our stand were all actively looking for an architect.

Our attendance at the show also resulted in a request from Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, a Scottish charity working with the Scottish Government, to provide content for their new Self Build Portal. This content was submitted early in November and will provide information about ARB, the Register and the regulation of architects to help the public make informed choices.

Consumer Projection Partnership (CPP)

Links established early in the year resulted in ARB being noted by the CPP as a potential 'third party expert' for relevant projects. One such project is understood to be underway and ARB's details have been passed to the lead organisation in case ARB involvement will be of use.

Talks by ARB

ARB staff have been presented at a number of events since September including a talk for the Association of Consultant Architects' CPD Zone at London Build, a Homebuilding and Renovating Show Masterclass in Edinburgh and a talk for the Edinburgh Architectural Association's Code of Conduct & Risk Management CPD session.

RIBA Student Council Members

As the result of connections made by an ARB Board member, our Chair and Registrar and Chief Executive met with three representatives of the RIBA Student Council in order to further develop links between ARB and architecture students.

Architects Benevolent Society (ABS)

On 12 November, we had a visit from the Architects Benevolent Society (ABS). The ABS have visited our offices for the last three years running to talk to staff about the service they offer and how they can assist architects struggling to pay the fee or struggling more generally, either financially or personally. The focus on their presentation this year was on mental health as well financial assistance.

5. EU Exit

Since the last Board meeting, we have:

- Continued to liaise with relevant Government Departments in order to provide them with requested information about our current EU recognition processes;
- Started to build a dedicated 'Brexit' website page which will provide key statistics/facts, links to our FAQs, signposting to Government information etc. This will go live before the end of the month. We will continue to update the page and its contents in order to provide appropriate advice and guidance to relevant individuals as things develop and we learn more about the way forward;
- Continued to meet with other regulatory bodies who deal with both the automatic and general system regimes under the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive; and
- Analysed the Government's Technical Notice concerning the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, published a timely statement highlighting the key information and continued to deepen our understanding of the potential impact and risks associated with the 'no deal' scenarios.

6. Business as Usual Reviews of the Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications

An email update was provided to the Board on 30 October 2018 which reported that a positive meeting had been held with the RIBA on the 29 October 2018, and that we are now going to continue to develop the revised Criteria at all three Parts so that we can continue to hold them in common. The key area that remains the subject of our discussions is the drafting of the amplifications, but much progress has been made, and with some further discussion over the coming weeks we should arrive at a mutually agreeable position.

7. Communicating ARB's work

As always we continue to use a range of communications tools to support the functions of ARB.

Publications

We have received seven press enquiries, put out six news releases and have been referenced in at least eleven publications since the last Board meeting in September and 13 November 2018. As joint representatives for the UK, ARB and RIBA put forward a contribution for the August/September edition of the ACE Info. ARB's first article for Local Authority Building Control (LABC) was published in October, it explains ARB's role and the benefits of regulation for self/custom builders. As mentioned in Section 4, we have also provided content for an online portal for Scottish self-builders.

eBulletin

The latest eBulletin was published on 18 September 2018. We actively track performance in the first week following publication. The email was sent to 39,030 architects, 0.6% more than the last edition in July 2018. The email was opened by 13,690 recipients which is the highest unique open rate we've experienced since we began recording the information in 2015. The most popular microsite content was the *Brexit Preparations* article.

The most accessed email link was the *Update Your Details* link. In addition to serving as a point of contact to our registrants the eBulletin is a cost effective way to help ensure the Register is kept up to date. The eBulletin email prominently features the recipient's contact details at the top of the message together with a click through option to update this information. We received approximately 460 contact detail updates in the week immediately after the September eBulletin was sent out compared to around 155 in the previous week.

Website

The Professional Standards team explored the support available to complainants offered by other, similar organisations to ARB. As a result of that exercise a template complaint letter was developed for clients to use when writing to their architect and added to the relevant areas of the website.

Retention Fee Communications

The retention fee for 2019 was set at the September Board meeting. We simultaneously published a news release and a Fee FAQs webpage on 14 September 2018. We then sent an email to all architects we hold email addresses for on 12 October 2018 informing them of the fee and the deadline for payment, and highlighting our FAQs page. The formal postal invoice was sent on 26 October 2018. An email offering top tips for paying the fee was sent on 16 November 2018 and further reminders are planned via text message and email in December.

As of 12 November 2018, 5642 architects have paid the fee.

Brexit Communications

We published a timely statement in response to the publication of the Government's technical notice related to the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC in a 'no-deal' scenario, which was picked up by other organisations and news outlets.

Tone of Voice Project

As a culmination of the project group's work, which involved working group meetings with fellow regulators and organisations a Writing Style Guide has been adopted by ARB staff. This guide provides easy reference advice and tips for producing clear, consistent and accessible content. Each department has been reviewing their standard correspondence and publications to ensure that they are compliant with the guidance and 'plain English' principles.

8. Administration of the Register and Organisational Efficiency

Numbers on Register

On 31 December 2017, the Register stood at 39,988. As of 12 November 2018, there were 41,177 architects on the Register. Of these, 8578 are EU nationals (not including UK). 7331 of these individuals have registered addresses in the UK. This compares with 8108 EU nationals (not including UK) at the start of 2018, with 6943 based in the UK. This demonstrates that the Register is still growing and that the number of EU nationals on the Register and with addresses in the UK is still increasing.

Prescribed Examination Review

As was reported in May, July and September, and in line with the agreed 2018 Business Plan, we are progressing a 'business as usual' review of the Procedures for the Prescribed Examination ('the Exam'). We established the scope of the review as:

- Explore whether the procedures remain fit for purpose following completion of the Criteria/Procedure reviews
- Explore whether the eligibility requirements remain fit for purpose
- Explore whether the process is efficient and robust in offering assurance that those who pass the exam have equivalent competence to an architect undertaking an ARB prescribed qualification at the appropriate level

Any revised or updated procedures for 'the Exam' should enable the Board to:

- Continue to discharge its functions under Section 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b) of the Architects Act 1997 ('the Act'); and
- Ensure that 'the Exam' process supports the admission of competent individuals to the Register, in that individuals given 'equivalence' to Part 1 or Part 2 through 'the Exam' have demonstrated that they are competent against all of the Criteria and to the required level.

One of our further objectives is to ensure that processes are streamlined insofar as is possible, but that achieving this does not come at the expense of ARB discharging its functions under Section 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b).

We have concluded the first stages of our pre-consultation process and have compiled the preliminary views of the stakeholders who responded. This included a survey, three further roundtable events, one with existing examiners and two open events which across both sessions were attended by examiners, former candidates and architects from academia

attending. We are now undertaking some research on additional costs incurred by Exam candidates to help assess whether any proposed changes will have a positive or negative affect in this area.

Whilst we had anticipated making a decision on the revised procedures for the prescribed examination in November, we have made the decision to delay until the December Board meeting so that it can be considered together with the Criteria and Procedures review and the consultation exercises run simultaneously.

Subject to a costing exercise, we will be looking to split the Exam into two stages, Stage A and Stage B to ensure that those who do not stand a realistic prospect of passing the Exam at interview will not bear the full expenses.

As a final step, in the lead up to the Board considering the revised Criteria (following the business as usual review), we will ensure that the prescribed examination and any proposed changes are compatible with the revised Criteria.

Systems improvements

We reported at the February 2018 Board meeting that we had introduced a new email management system. As of 30 September 2018, 11,041 active email conversations were being tracked, with a total of 24,974 messages exchanged between ARB and people making enquires.

Across the course of the year, the five most popular topics have been Change of Address (771), Prescribed Examination (593), General Queries (553), EU applications (456) and Reinstatement (417). In addition to 456 queries about EU applications, 327 conversations were tagged as 'EU queries' and 38 as 'Brexit queries'.

In terms of the origin of queries relating to the Prescribed Examination, India (49), the USA (41), South Africa (31) and Australia (29) are the most common countries we receive enquiries from.

We continue to work on software we have developed to store and process pass lists electronically. We have completed a successful pilot of the system, receiving excellent feedback from school users and internal users alike, and have written to 25 Part 3 providers to start using the system. So far, 24 of those providers have written back to provide details of the users for the portal. We aim to write to the remaining course institutions in early 2019. The system will be fully operational internally before the end of 2018.

We believe the benefits will be faster processing times, greater control of the title of prescribed awards being handed out to students, and the ability to structure the data and link specific qualifications to an individual's registration record. We also hope that as the system is further developed, the conversion of the paper files into structured data which we have already undertaken, and the continued collection of pass lists as structured data, will give us greater insight into the number of architects we anticipate registering with us year on year.

Registration EU matters

As reported above, we are tracking the number of architects with EU nationality (other than UK) entering and leaving the Register. We note that the number of EU nationals on the Register is still increasing though at a slower pace than in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

We reported in September that only 485 applications had come via the EU route up until the end of July 2018, against 846 and 636 in 2016 and 2017 respectively, and that this was a 24 per cent drop from 2017 to 2018 and a 42 per cent drop from 2016. By way of an update, from 1 January 2018 to 31 October 2018, 689 architects have registered via the EU route. This is down from 817 in the same period in 2017 (16% drop) and 1073 from the same period in 2016 (36% drop).

Despite there being a drop in numbers registering from the EU against the same period in 2016 and 2017 as a whole, the deficit has decreased and numbers registering in the third quarter of 2018 has actually increased on the 2017 figure from 183 to 197.

We have factored the drop in EU applications into our forecasts for 2019, and will continue to monitor the terms of the agreement around the UK's exit from the European Union and how this is likely to affect the Register.

We reported earlier in the year that there was a marginal increase in EU qualified architects resigning from the Register in 2017. In 2016, 28% of resigning architects were of EU nationality (other than UK) against 33% in 2017. We also reported that in 2017, 32% of architects removed from the Register for non-payment were of EU nationality (other than UK) against 30% in 2016.

83 architects have resigned from the Register between 1 January and 31 October 2018 in total. This is down from 96 by the same stage in 2017 and 88 in 2016. There is nothing to suggest that EU architects are disproportionately represented in this cohort.

Finally, the number of certificates we have issued (which would potentially enable a UK architect to register in Europe) has increased since 2017, with 185 being issued from January to 31 October 2018 of 2018, against 142 in the same period of 2017 (30% increase). This is up from 82 in the same period in July 2016 (126% increase) and could demonstrate an increase in the number of architects seeking accreditation in another member state before the date on which the UK exit the EU (29 March 2019).

9. Committee Meetings held since September Board Meeting

- 20 September 2018 - Professional Conduct Committee
- 21 September 2018 – Investigation Oversight Committee
- 27 September to 2 October 2018 - Professional Conduct Committee
- 3 and 4 October 2018 - Professional Conduct Committee
- 11 October 2018 – Prescription Committee
- 18 October 2018 – Audit Committee

17 to 19 October 2018 - Professional Conduct Committee
23 October 2018 - Professional Conduct Committee
30 October to 1 November 2018 - Professional Conduct Committee
13 to 16 November 2018 - Professional Conduct Committee
20 to 22 November 2018 - Professional Conduct Committee

10. Future Meetings and Events

3 December 2018 – Remuneration Committee
6 December 2018 – Prescription Committee
19 December 2018 – Audit Committee

11. Resource Implications

Only as identified in the paper.

12. Risk Implications

ARB's Operational Activities Report provides the Board with an update on business activities, progress against the Business Plan, as well as highlighting any emerging risks which may impact on delivery.

As our discussions about the any potential development of mutual recognition agreements progress it is important that we continue to engage and work closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department for International Trade and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to ensure we are appropriately aligned with the UK's approach in this area.

As we approach the potential November and December EU Summits, it is important that we have a considered and resourced Brexit Communication plan in place to ensure our stakeholders are informed of relevant information in a timely and effective manner. We will also need to ensure that we have adequate resource to update systems to manage any changes that may come about on 29 March 2019 if no deal for the UK's exit from the EU is agreed.

13. Communication

The update on ARB's operational activities, informs the Board of ARB's work and any risks which may prevent the delivery of ARB's operations.

14. Equality and Diversity Implications

Equality and Diversity considerations will be central to the review of the prescribed examination with comments drawn from the pre-consultation response being factored into the direction of travel. An Equality Assessment will be carried out once the shape of any changes has been formulated.

15. Further Actions

These are referred to within the key points set out above.

