



Board Meeting 27 January
2020
Agenda Item 6

Subject Adjustments to ARB's Examination Procedures – following consultation
Purpose For Decision
From Head of Registration

If you have any enquiries on this paper, please contact Rob Jones at robj@arb.org.uk or on 020 7580 5861

1. Summary

At its meeting of 9 December 2019, the Board approved changes to the Prescribed Examination process following the business as usual review that had been undertaken during 2018 and 2019. The Board agreed that it would issue the changes to the Exam procedures at **Annex A** for consultation as soon as the General Election period in December 2019 closed.

The Board decided that as these were business as usual changes, and aspects of the current Examination Procedures were inoperable following changes to the governance structure, the Board did not consider it appropriate or necessary to run a full three month consultation period.

The proposed revisions to the Examination Procedures were published on the ARB website on 16 December 2019 for a period of four weeks, during which interested parties had the opportunity of providing any representations they wished to make in relation to the proposed changes.

This paper sets out the responses received in response to the consultation and recommendation that the Board is asked to make.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board notes that three consultation responses were received and approves the changes to the Examination Procedures as set out in **Annex B**. The Board is also asked to note that an amendment to the online guidance for candidates as set out in key point 5 below will also be made.

Subject to the Board's agreement, the revised Procedures would then become effective on the date of approval.

3. Open Session

4. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

The updating of the Examination Procedures to reflect the recent changes to the Board's governance structure will enable ARB to continue the delivery of its strategic aims and fulfil

its requirements under the Act.

5. Key Points

- i. The key changes that stakeholders were asked to comment on were:
 - A switch from the process being overseen by the Prescription Committee to the Board. Independent Examiner reports will now be considered by the Registrar who will report to the Board at least annually and by exception if any issues arise that need immediate attention;
 - Appeals will be addressed to the Chair of the Board rather than the Chair of the Prescription Committee, with an appeals panel consisting of two Board members rather than three;
 - Reference to appointed and elected Board members removed;
 - Removal of the area of guidance which permits Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) to nominate persons to the Board for appointment. There was little comment on the role of RIBA in nominating to the pool of examiners in the pre-consultation exercise, though there was a strong feeling at the round table events that a skills based approach to appointments was appropriate and that this should be the primary measure for assessing suitability. In reality, this has not happened for many years and we have operated on the basis of an open recruitment exercise for all recent campaigns. As such, we propose removing this requirement from the procedures though will still ensure RIBA are informed of recruitment exercises and encouraged to share with members; and

Other Adjustments

- An advisory limit of 60-80 pages of A3 (or equivalent) to portfolio submissions (excluding any bound written materials). This will form part of ARB's guidelines around submissions rather than forming part of the new procedures.
- ii. The Board is asked to note that when it is establishing or updating its Rules, the Architects Act 1997 requires that a revised draft of the Rules is published to provide the opportunity for representations to be made. The Examination Procedures have the status of Rules of the Board and representations have been sought on that basis. The Act does not specify the method of publication nor the length of time any proposed updates should remain available when published. The Board may therefore determine this in line with its [Code of Practice for Consultations](#).

The Board agreed at its meeting on 9 December 2019 to make the draft of the revised Examination Procedures, which included all of the proposed adjustments referred to above, available on its website for a period of four weeks to allow

interested parties to provide representations regarding the proposed adjustments. The details were made available on ARB's website on 16 December 2019 and the consultation period closed on 13 January 2020. We alerted interested parties who had participated in the pre-consultation exercise directly. The December 2019 Ebulletin included a direct link to the consultation webpage.

- iii. Three consultation responses were received: one from Respondent A, an architect; one from Respondent B, an architect who also acts as an Examiner for ARB in the Prescribed Examination and one from SCHOSA, the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture. The responses are attached at **Annex C**.
- iv. In Respondent A's response, they suggest making a specific reference to 'interested parties' having the right to nominate examiners when the Board is recruiting as an alternative to removing the reference to RIBA and others at 2.10 of the Examination Procedures. As we advertise widely and recruitment is based on the job description and person specification set by the Board, and all appointments are made by the Board we do not recommend that the Board changes the proposed amendments to the Examination Procedures at the former section 2.10. Respondent A also proposes that the English Language requirement is revised upwards to reflect an IELTS level of 7.0 or above. There is no present weight of evidence to suggest that the current 6.5 requirement is insufficient, but this requirement will form part of the planned review of routes to registration, when the Prescribed Examination is reconsidered in full.
- v. In Respondent B's response, they suggest that the proposed amendment at Appendix 1, item A.1.2.2.A, which amended the eligibility criteria for the referral to lead process to be more flexible to account for potential changes to Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications, could be framed in a more rigid manner so that multiple interpretations of which criteria may or may not be considered to relate to design are avoided. This amendment was suggested to ensure that in the event of considerable changes to the ARB Criteria being made, that the 'referral to lead examiner' process for "near miss" applications would remain operable. In light of this feedback, we feel it is more appropriate to take it forward by reconsidering any changes that might be necessary in tandem with any changes to the Criteria. Respondent B agreed with the proposed limits to the evidence it is suggested are added to the guidance.
- vi. In SCHOSA's response, no comments have been made which directly relate to the matters the consultation covers. The points that are raised by SCHOSA relate to a fuller reconsideration of eligibility requirements which are outside the scope of the business as usual review of the Examination Procedures. The Board is asked to note that eligibility will be reconsidered in the wider review of routes to registration but does not form part of the consultation. The feedback gathered within the preconsultation and consultation will not be lost and will be folded into the planned route review.

6. Resource implications

The changes will incur very few additional costs. Adjustments to the website version of the Examination Procedures and guidance will need to be made. We no longer print hard copies of the Examination Procedures and associated guidance and therefore no printed versions require adjustment.

7. Risk Implications

It is imperative that the Board's Examination Procedures align with the governance structure for the Examination process to remain operable. Any lack of alignment would cause issues in terms of ARB's ability to deliver its statutory functions and could lead to appeals which have no means of resolution or legal challenges to the soundness of the route more generally. Updating the Examination Procedures will ensure that the Examination process remains operable under the current governance structure. We anticipate that the amendments to the guidance covering the amount of material recommended will reduce the likelihood of applicants failing the Examination because the submissions are too great for Examiners to review within the time available to them.

8. Communication

The Board is making adjustments to the Examination Procedures in order to ensure that they remain operable following governance changes. The Board issued a draft of the revised Examination Procedures for a period of four weeks to allow any interested parties to provide any representations they wish to make. The details were made available on ARB's website. We also publicised the consultation via ARB's eBulletin and directly by email to those who had participated in our preconsultation exercise. The December eBulletin was sent to 42,326 architects and the email was opened by 12,985 of them leading to 1,004 article views on the microsite.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

The proposed changes to the Examination Procedures relate only to maintaining operability of the Prescribed Examination process. We have not identified any equality groups who will be directly or indirectly affected by the amendments that the Board is asked to agree.

We did undertake an exercise to look at equality and diversity matters impact by the Examination Procedures which will feed into the planned review of routes to Registration at the appropriate time.

10. Further Actions

If approved, the revised Examination Procedures will become effective immediately. We will update and publish the revised Procedures on ARB's website following the Board's meeting on 27 January 2020.