



Subject Operational and Governance Adjustments to the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications
Purpose For Decision
From Head of Qualifications and Governance

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1. Summary

To agree to issue the draft Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications for a four week consultation.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board agrees that the Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications as set out at Annex A should be issued for a four week consultation.

3. Open Session

4. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are to 'protect the users and potential users of architects' services' and to 'support architects through regulation'.

In line with Section 4(1)a of the Architects Act 1997, the Board is responsible for determining what qualifications and practical experience are required for entry to the Register under the UK routes to registration. In order to ensure that individuals have met the appropriate standards on entry to the Register, the Board has established a prescription process for recognising qualifications and practical experience as well as the criteria which must be met at the appropriate levels. The Procedures are therefore important in terms of assuring the users and potential users of architects' services that a clear and transparent process for reviewing qualifications exists and assists in ensuring that individuals who are on the Register have the appropriate minimum levels of skills and expertise.

5. Key Points

i. Background/Current Procedures

The current Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications set out the detailed process which the Board undertakes when dealing with the prescription of a qualification for the first time as well as with renewing prescription of existing prescribed qualifications. The procedures also set out the details of the annual

monitoring process which dovetails with the first time prescription and renewals processes. The Procedures document also provides information to institutions in terms of the requirements and conditions that must be met in order to secure and maintain prescription. The current Procedures have been in operation since 2011. We also have a Good Practice Handbook which underpins the Procedures and sets out how we operate the prescription process in more detail and how the Board/the Prescription Committee approach areas that could have an impact on an institution's ability to meet ARB's prescription requirements. Since that point, we have regularly sought feedback from the institutions seeking prescription/seeking to renew prescription in terms of the operation of the process which has led to some minor adjustments being made to the Good Practice Handbook and how we operate the process.

- ii. At its meeting on 19 July 2019, the Board decided to cease its business as usual review of the Procedures, and that governance and operational adjustments should be brought back to the Board at the earliest opportunity for consideration and agreement for consultation.

The Executive has now undertaken a review of the procedures and the proposed governance and operational adjustments are set out in **Annex A** (tracked changes version of the revised Procedures) and **Annex B** (clear copy of the revised Procedures).

The key revisions relate to the information gather processes that take place prior to the Board's consideration of an application for prescription/to renew prescription.

Adjustments have also been made so that the Procedures realign with the Prescription Committee's revised role and terms of reference. A copy of the Committee's terms of reference can be found at **Annex C**.

The Board is asked to note that any final typographical errors etc., will be corrected before the document is issued for consultation.

- iii. The Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications are Rules of the Board. 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 Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications is published to provide the opportunity for representations to be made. 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](#).

It is recommended that the Board agrees to make the draft of the revised Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications available on its website for a period of four weeks. The details of any representations received will then be circulated to the Board for consideration via write around. Subject to the Board's agreement, the revised Procedures would then become effective on the date of

approval.

- iv. The Board is asked to consider the proposed adjustments to the Procedures and agree the recommendations set out in section 2 of this paper.

6. Resource implications

The adjustments which are being made to the constitution and role of the Prescription Committee have been accounted for in the 2019 and 2020 budgets. The changes to the role of the Executive in gathering information prior to the Board's consideration of an application for/application to renew prescription will mean that the Executive will need to draw on the advice of a pool of external expert advisers to a greater extent than has previously been the case. The pool of external expert advisers will need to expand. Costs relating to expanding the pool can be accommodated within the 2019 budget and have been budgeted for in the 2020 budget. The is however asked to note that in relation to the Executive, this is closely linked to the requests which have been put forward in relation to additional resources being required in the Qualifications Department.

7. Risk Implications

There is a risk that there is insufficient and/or the incorrect balance of expertise to support the changes which we are seeking to make to the prescription process. This risk should be mitigated through the expansion of the pool of external expert advisers to support the Executive and the additional posts which we are seeking for the Qualifications Department.

There is a risk that any delays to the consultation or approval of the revised Procedures will cause bottlenecks within the prescription process; the existing Prescription Committee will cease to operate on 30 September and it is of paramount importance that we are able to transition to the revised process this Autumn to continue the flow of prescription work. This risk should be mitigated by undertaking a short consultation which allows interested parties sufficient time to provide their feedback, but enables us to move things forward in a timely manner. We are in the process of recruiting new Committee members and they should be in post by the end of October 2019. We have five existing expert advisers in our pool and are developing plans to recruit five more this Autumn, who should then be in post at the time we will need to draw on their expertise at the end of the year/into 2020.

8. Communication

The Board has decided to focus on making governance/operational adjustments to the Procedures and will be issuing details of the proposed revisions for consultation shortly after the Board's meeting on 11 September 2019. Consultation responses will be taken into account and considered by the Board following the four week consultation. A final version of the Procedures will then be published and will become operational immediately. A root and branch review of ARB's approach to prescribing qualifications will be scoped for consideration by the Board in December 2019, with a view to the review taking place in 2020.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

We undertook an equality impact assessment in relation to the existing Procedures; the assessment did not highlight any equality or diversity implications. We will undertake a further review once the consultation responses have been considered and any adjustments have been made as a result of the consultation feedback, i.e., prior to the Board's consideration of the final draft for approval.

10. Further Actions

If the Board agrees to the recommendations set out in section 2 of this paper, we will issue the draft Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications for a four week consultation. We will circulate details of the consultation responses and a final draft of the Procedures to the Board for consideration and approval further to the consultation.