



**Subject** Fire & Life Safety Design Guidance to Institutions  
**Status** Open  
**Purpose** For decision  
**From** Simon Howard, Director of Regulation  
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## 1. Summary

Following the publication of ARB's Strategic Statement on Fire and Life Safety Design, the Board resolved to issue guidance to institutions seeking prescription and/or offering ARB prescribed qualifications which sets out our interpretation of the Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications at Parts 1, 2 and 3.

Draft guidance has now been prepared for wider consultation.

## 2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board agrees to publish for consultation the draft Guidance to Institutions on Fire and Life Safety Design at [Appendix A](#)

## 3. Terms of Reference

The Architects Act 1997 states the following:

Section 4(1) A person who has applied to the Registrar in the prescribed manner for registration in pursuance of this section is entitled to be registered in Part 1 of the Register; if

- a) he holds such qualifications and has gained such practical experience as may be prescribed; or
- b) he has a standard of competence which, in the opinion of the Board, is equivalent to that demonstrated by satisfying paragraph (a).

This guidance will apply to both the Board's prescription process, which has been established under Section 4(1)a of the Act, as well as the Board's Prescribed Examination process, which has been established under Section 4(1)b of the Act.

## 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 by ensuring that future architects are competent to design buildings that are safe

Support architects through regulation by ensuring that future architects have the

competencies on point of registration to meet the demands of the market

## 5. Key Points

- i. In the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster the Government appointed Dame Judith Hackitt to review Building Regulations and Fire Safety. Dame Judith's report, published in May 2018, identified a number of shortcomings in the construction industry in respect of safety, and made a number of recommendations for change. One of those recommendations was that ARB, working with partners, should consider the future competence levels of those architects on the Register of Architects, and those joining the Register, in relation to fire safety design issues.
- ii. In 2020 the Board agreed its strategic statement on Fire & Life Safety Design. That statement set out how ARB would be reviewing the competence requirements for architects and future architects in respect of fire and life safety design, but acknowledged that such a comprehensive review would - quite properly - take some significant time. The Board resolved that it would, in the meantime, issue guidelines to the profession on this area of practice, and provide guidance to institutions as to how the Criteria at Parts 1, 2 and 3 will be interpreted for the prescription of qualifications.
- iii. A draft of that guidance has been prepared. It is important to note that the guidance does not purport to change the existing Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications, but is supplementary direction as to how the General Criteria and Graduate Attributes at Parts 1 and 2 and the Professional Criteria at Part 3 should be interpreted.
- iv. The content of the guidance has been based on the outputs from the working groups established earlier this year, which included the input of fire-industry experts, the RIAS and the RIBA, which has already produced its own CPD material in these areas. It also takes into account the recommendations of Working Group 7<sup>1</sup>, which has produced a competence framework for architects and designers working on Higher Risk Residential Buildings.
- v. The Board will note that the guidance reflects the competence guidelines it has already approved to be issued to the profession. The core content remains broadly the same, but adapted for institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> WG7 is the architects & designers subgroup of the Competency Standards Group, established under the Construction Industry Council in response to Dame Judith Hackitt's report 'Building a Safer Future'

- vi. We have carried out pre-consultation engagement with The Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA) which has made helpful drafting and implementation submissions. It is our view that further consultation would be beneficial, to ensure we receive input from a range of key interest groups. The benefit of carrying out more formal consultation with institutions was something SCHOSA raised. We agree.
- vii. While the guidance will be taken into account as part of the prescription process, its intention is to provide greater assurance to the public that this subject matter is being covered comprehensively and consistently by the 60+ institutions across the UK. We are also considering how best to receive feedback and assurance from institutions as part of the prescription annual monitoring process.
- viii. We have carried out a mapping exercise to assure ourselves that the guidance is applicable within the strictures of the General Criteria, and Graduate Attributes at Parts 1 and 2, and the Professional Criteria at Part 3. It is.
- ix. Subject to Board agreement, the draft guidance will be issued for an eight week period of consultation. The intention will be for the Board to be able to make a decision at its May meeting. A summary of our plans for the consultation is set out in the Communication section below.

## **6. Resource Implications**

None identified outside of the existing budget.

## **7. Risk Implications**

It is critical that all parts of the sector adapt their practices to reflect the emerging learning from Grenfell and elsewhere. The guidance must be capable of making a positive difference to the consistency of competence of architects entering the Register, but also be deliverable by the institutions. We are confident that our pre-consultation engagement means that the content of the draft guidance reflects key requirements, but by facilitating further public consultation it will enable us to raise awareness of the issue, receive additional feedback about the content from a wider range of audiences and enable the Board to demonstrate that it has taken into account a wide range of views before reaching a decision.

## **8. Equality & Diversity Implications**

None identified at present; further exploration of unintended consequences of this policy can be carried out through the consultation exercise.

## 9. Communication

This is such an important part of the education of future architects that it must be carried out in a way that can ensure that they have the necessary competencies to design safe buildings for people to live, sleep and work in.

Having already engaged SCHOSA, we will now make sure that schools of architecture can directly feed into the guidance. We would also like to be able to compare their feedback to that of other important stakeholders, such as the architectural practices that will employ the architects currently being educated, and others in the built environment sector. We should also anticipate student interest, as students will want to be assured that the qualifications being prescribed by ARB are going to provide them with an adequate foundation to becoming a competent architect.

A detailed consultation plan will be prepared that will cover the following points:

- Key messages including why the issue is important, ARB's role in relation to it, why we are consulting, who we'd like to hear from, and how their responses will feed into the final guidance;
- Consultation questions that will help us gather demographic and other information about who is responding (so that we can compare the views of different stakeholder groups) as well gathering feedback on their views on the guidance, including whether they agree with us on the importance of the issue, and any specific changes they'd like to recommend;
- Target audiences, focusing on schools of architecture, students and student groups, professional institutions, architects, others in the built environment sector, and other interested groups relevant to the issue of fire and structural safety;
- Tactics to reach those audiences including the eBulletin, direct emails to schools and institutions, and trade press;
- Once the consultation closes we will prepare a consultation report for the Board to consider including any recommendations on changes to the guidance.

## 10. Further Actions

Subject to the Board's agreement, the draft Guidance will be issued for consultation, before being brought back to the next Board meeting in May. One of the important elements of the consultation will be to seek further information on what would be an achievable timescale for implementation.