



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

If you have any enquiries on this paper, please contact Karen Holmes at karenh@arb.org.uk or on 020 7580 5861

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

Alzheimer's Society

Alzheimer's Society is a UK charity that campaigns for change, funds research to find a cure and supports people living with dementia.

We met with representatives from the Alzheimer's Society who were interested in ways in which we could work together in the future. We discussed how the Society could contribute to the review of our Criteria and future work. We also discussed ways in which we could build a relationship on an organisational level.

Architects Council of Europe (ACE)

The ACE is composed of 43 member organisations which are the national regulatory and professional representative bodies in the EU Member States, the accession countries, Switzerland and Norway. Through its members, the ACE represents the interests of over 600,000 architects from 31 countries in Europe.

We have attended various ACE meetings this autumn, including the Professional Qualifications Directive/Professional Practical Experience Working Group, the Finance Committee, the General Co-ordination Committee and the General Assembly. Our attendance at the meetings provides us with valuable information about developments across Europe and an opportunity to influence key policies as they are developed or reviewed where appropriate.

A key issue relating to the way in which the Professional Qualifications Directive is interpreted arose at several meetings. Currently individuals holding qualifications from and who have access to the market in their home state are eligible for automatic recognition under the Directive. Some concerns have been raised in relation to the potential restrictiveness of this interpretation despite it being based on legal advice and agreed by the European Commission. Queries have been raised as to whether there is scope to permit individuals to hold undergraduate qualifications from third countries and/or different EU member states and still be eligible for automatic recognition. We have successfully secured agreement to review the issues arising from these concerns over the coming months before any further action is taken, so that we, and others, can carefully consider the potential implications arising from any change to the interpretation of the Directive requirements.

Architecture LGBT+

Founded in 2016, this support and social network's mission is to create a safe and prejudice free environment for LGBT+ architects.

We were pleased to welcome representatives from Architecture LGBT+ who responded to an invitation to speak to ARB staff about the support they provide and insight into LGBT+ experiences across the profession. We plan to build on this valuable experience with further conversations to explore ARB's role in supporting the profession and as an ally for LGBT+ architects.

European Network of Architects Competent Authorities (ENACA)

The ENACA provides a forum for Competent Authorities with a view to improving administrative cooperation and exchanging best practice in the implementation of Directive 2005/36/EC on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (PQD). The work of ENACA also extends to the implementation of the Services Directive 2006/123 and exchanging information on legislation, procedures and standards for registration of architects in the EU/EEA/Swiss area with a view to achieving a consistent approach across Europe.

We attended the most recent ENACA Forum in mid-October. Attending these meetings enables us to build and develop good working relationships with our European counterpart organisations and to discuss how we respectively approach the registration of appropriately qualified individuals under the terms of the Professional Qualifications Directive. As well as discussions about the interpretation of the Directive (see above), the meeting focussed on:

- the implementation of the Proportionality Directive (a Directive which requires member states to ensure that they have fully consulted upon and carefully considered the introduction of new, or the amendment of existing, requirements relating to access to a profession);
- competent authorities' experiences of establishing online registration processes; and
- the content of certificates used for the purposes automatic recognition.

We also took the opportunity to update ENACA colleagues about the UK's exit from the EU and what our position would be in the event that the UK left the EU without a deal.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

The QAA safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education (HE) wherever it is delivered around the world. Their main areas of work include reviewing HE, Access to HE, the UK Quality Code and providing advice and guidance.

We reported earlier this year that the QAA was reviewing the Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement. The Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement currently includes the ARB/RIBA Criteria at Parts 1 and 2, and the shared Criteria at Part 3 is appended to the current Statement.

Further to the Board's decision to cease the business as usual review of the Criteria in July 2019, we updated the QAA and the Review Group and explained that the revised Benchmark Statement would need to include the existing Criteria. A draft of the revised Statement was worked on throughout the Summer, with ARB inputting to the discussions and drafting.

In late September an 'editing' meeting was convened to discuss any areas requiring more detailed consideration. A key discussion at the editing meeting centred around the inclusion of the Criteria within the Statement or whether clear signposting and website links to ARB and RIBA's websites would be sufficient. The Group ultimately decided to put forward a draft which included clear signposting and links to the Criteria; we have however provided feedback to the QAA and recommended that they consult on this point, i.e., whether the full Criteria should be included in the main body of the Statement or whether signposting and links are appropriate. The basis for our recommendation is that previously the sector has expressed a strong desire for all relevant professional and statutory body requirements to be included within the Statement so that they do not need to refer to several different sources of information.

The QAA is now in the process of preparing its consultation on the revised Statement and intends to release this either late this year or early next year for consultation. We will continue to keep the Board up to date as this review continues.

Stakeholder Research

With support from a leading consultancy, we are in the process of conducting stakeholder research project to enable us to strengthen relationships, benchmark current impact, improve our activities and assess future performance. The project is focused on two main areas, awareness of ARB and views on how well we do what we do.

The majority of surveys are either complete, underway or launching imminently. It is hoped we will have top level, early findings on all surveys in early December and the full and final report on findings by the end of the year. Once the data has been analysed, we plan to publish details of the findings and will determine the appropriate time and method for doing so.

Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)

Each Head of every UK Recognised School of Architecture is a member of SCHOSA. They also

have a number of associate members of schools. It provides a forum for debate and exchange of ideas between Heads trying to achieve similar goals in different institutions.

We met with representatives of SCHOSA Council as part of our series of regular liaison meetings in early October 2019. Having previously met with them in June, and having maintained contact via email during the summer months, we provided SCHOSA Council members with more detailed updates about the Board's decisions to cease its business as usual reviews of the Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications.

Other key issues that were discussed included updates on the review of QAA's Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement and the UK's exit from the EU. We also attended and gave a presentation at SCHOSA's Autumn meeting in Newcastle. We provided SCHOSA members with more details about the operational and governance adjustments we were in the process of making to our Procedures and explained the revised roles of the Executive and the Prescription Committee. We also updated SCHOSA members on the changes that we would implement in the event the UK left the EU with no deal.

Finally, we took the opportunity to explain to SCHOSA members that we had, over the course of the last few months, identified some discrepancies between the award titles that were prescribed and the award certificates being presented by individuals seeking to register as well as the importance of ensuring that the details matched. We explained that we would be writing formally to institutions (Heads of Schools/Head of Quality Assurance and Academic Registries) to outline ARB's position in relation to these matters.

Further meetings between representatives of SCHOSA Council, the Chair of the Board and the Executive will have taken place on 2 December and we will provide any relevant updates at the Board meeting on 9 December.

[UK Regulators Network](#)

Bring regulators together for the benefit of consumers and the economy. They were established by their members in 2014 and have developed strong relationships and a culture of collaboration and learning. They work together to share knowledge, explore cross-cutting issues and build better ways of working.

We attended the most recent meeting of the Regulators Network. Presentations and discussions covered making changes to an organisations regulatory framework, regulating in the current environment and learning from mistakes which have arisen using a 'human factors' approach. Future sessions are likely to cover topics such as the introduction of artificial intelligence into regulation and communicating with stakeholders. The Network is an extremely valuable source of information and provides opportunities to discuss issues with other regulators.

6. EU Exit

We continue to plan primarily for the UK leaving the EU without a deal. This is because it remains the highest impact permutation associated with EU exit. As such, we sent an email out to all registrants we hold email addresses for to encourage them to contact us if they were concerned about the potential impact of EU exit on their status as an architects in the UK, or their ability to register in other EU countries. We carried out a similar exercise in

March 2019 and both prompted a huge response from the profession, with data about EU exit and enquiries provided in section 10 of this report.

We also attended a number of EU exit roundtable events with the MHCLG and members of the profession in October 2019, in Newcastle, Birmingham, Belfast, Manchester, Edinburgh, Bristol and London and a forum on EU exit with representatives from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. As we are now in a period of Purdah due to up and coming election, the round table events have ceased.

7. Mutual Recognition Agreements

We are continuing to explore the possibility of establishing a mutual recognition agreement with Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACAA) and New Zealand Registered Architects Board (NZRAB). In recent months we have been sharing detailed information about our respective routes to registration and our accreditation processes; we have mapped our respective sets of accreditation criteria against one another in order to determine the levels of compatibility between them.

Our reviews and discussions have identified that there is compatibility between each country's requirements and that this could form a sound basis upon which to base any potential mutual recognition agreement. We are therefore now undertaking initial high level discussions with the AACAA/NZRAB about what the basis of any mutual recognition agreement might be, e.g., a post registration agreement, an educational level agreement, what compensatory measures might need to be included within any agreements etc.

It is anticipated that our high level discussions will continue into 2020; we have explained throughout our discussions that we will require legislative change before we are able to enter into any agreement and we will need the UK/EU position to be clearer before we can make any further major progress. We are planning a more detailed Board briefing in relation to this area and this will take place in early 2020.

8. Communicating ARB's work

Publications

Earned media (content not directly created by ARB but by others without payment) is a highly trusted source of information. Earned press coverage enables us to inform and raise awareness of ARB and our regulatory activities with a range of stakeholders. In addition significant earned coverage in a national newspaper that will be seen by a large readership would cost thousands if the equivalent space was bought as advertising.

Since the last Board meeting in September, we have been referenced in a least 53 articles, published 9 news releases and responded to 20 press enquiries.

We also reached out to 7 publications in order to coordinate the correction of factual errors in their content and/or educate them on the restrictions around the use of the title.

eBulletin

Our eBulletins remind the profession of their responsibilities and provide updates on decisions made by the Board as well as other information of interest and relevance to architects. Issues are published after Board meetings, which are usually held around five times a year.

The last eBulletin email, published 19 September 2019, was delivered to 41,458 recipients and opened by 13,968 in the first week following publication. The September eBulletin microsite received 4,479 page views in the first week.

The September edition was the third most engaged with email and microsite since tracking began in 2015.

To help ensure the Register is kept up to date, the eBulletin email prominently features recipient contact details together with a click through option to update. We received approximately 588 contact detail updates in the week immediately after the eBulletin was sent out compared to 93 in the previous week, an increase of approximately six fold.

Website

In addition to an update of all associated webpages, new Retention Fee FAQs were published on 19 September. For the first time FAQs for those coordinating payment for others (e.g. employers) were produced and have received 106 views since launch. The [five main Fee webpages](#) have received a total of 3,096 views since 19 September.

There have been 13,717 sessions (a period of sustained engagement by a user) on the Fee payment portal from its 11 October go live date. This compares with 10,546 sessions in the same time period last year (a 30% increase).

Our redesigned [Equality & Diversity \(E&D\) page](#) went live on 6 November. It features information on our Statement, Performance Plan and Scheme as well as a page dedicated to the E&D Survey data we hold for the profession.

10. Administration of the Register and Organisational Efficiency

Numbers on Register

On 31 December 2018, the Register stood at 41,170. As of 18 November 2019, there were 42,785 architects on the Register. Of these, 9,411 are EU nationals (not including UK). 8,020 of these individuals have registered addresses in the UK. This compares with 8,108 EU nationals (not including UK) at the start of 2018, with 6,943 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.

In 2019, we removed 1,094 architects for non-payment of the retention fee. 623 (57%) of those removed have since been reinstated.

On 24 October 2019, we removed 34 architects, under Section 11 of the Act, for failing to maintain an up to date registered address. We wrote to 467 architects in January to inform them that their address was out of date, and successfully contacted 433 (93%) of them to inform them that they needed to update their address.

Email data

The email management system used to track email traffic coming into the main generic information account (monitored by Registration), indicates that so far in 2019 (as of 18 November 2019), we have sent 12,925 emails (an increase of 33% on 2018 which stood at

9,732 messages sent). The most popular topics have been about requesting certificates to register in the EU (1,164), changes of address (784), Brexit (717), EU applications (709) and UK applications (687).

Retention fee campaign

Our retention fee campaign has commenced with the initial email invoice going out to all architects with emails on 14 October 2019 and the statutory invoice being sent out to 42,538 registered architects on 28 October 2019. We will be sending reminder notices to all architects without an email address on 4 December 2019 and will be sending the first email reminder to those architects with an email address who have not yet paid the week commencing 9 December 2019. We will be collecting payment for architects with direct debits set up on 3 December 2019.

As of 28 November 2019, we are ahead of where we were last year with payment, 9,692 architects having paid the fee to date, compared with 8,603 by the same point in 2018.

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 at a faster pace than in 2018.

Overall, for the year to 31 October, in 2019, 860 architects have joined the Register via the EU routes compared with 699 in the same period in 2018 (23% increase), 817 in 2017 (5% increase) and 1,073 in 2016 (20% decrease).

Finally, the number of certificates we have issued (which would potentially enable a UK architect to register in Europe) has increased exponentially in 2019, with 683 being issued to the end of October. This is already 206% higher than the entire annual total for 2018, when 223 were processed across the year. In 2016, the year the referendum on whether the UK should remain in or leave the EU, 105 certificates were issued in the whole year.

11. Committee Meetings held since July Board Meeting

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee – 2 October 2019
Professional Conduct Committee – 2 to 4 October 2019
Professional Conduct Committee – 15 to 16 October 2019
Board Development Day – 25 October 2019
Professional Conduct Committee – 28 to 29 October 2019
Board Development Day – 4 November 2019
Professional Conduct Committee – 12 to 13 November 2019
Professional Conduct Committee Annual Review Day – 29 November 2019
Remuneration and Appointments Committee – 2 December 2019

12. Future Meetings and Events

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee - Friday 24 January 2020
Professional Conduct Committee – 6 to 10 January 2020
Professional Conduct Committee – 20 to 22 January 2020
We are currently in the process of finalising future dates for Committee meetings.

13. Resource Implications

Only as identified in the paper.

14. 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.

There are risks associated with the UK's exit from the EU which are subject to a separate risk management programme. There are also risks associated with potential changes to the operation of Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC which would allow for individuals with the majority of their study undertaken in non-EU countries to be eligible for automatic recognition, following an assessment by a university/higher education institution. ARB has a high degree of oversight over qualifications approved under the Directive at present and would need significant mitigations in place to manage the risk associated with the proposed amendments outlined at section 4 of this paper.

Further detail of specific risks to the organisation and in relation to operations will be provided in the confidential Registrar's report.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. Further Actions

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