

# Guidance for employers of trainees

## Draft proposals for consultation

January 2026

### Introduction

Taking on a trainee brings real benefits to a practice: new ideas, extra capacity, and the chance to shape the next generation of professionals. It is also a serious responsibility.

An important part of a trainee's employment is to gain the practical experience necessary to meet ARB's Practice Outcomes. That requires commitment from senior leadership, proper supervision, and a structured environment in which the trainee can learn safely and effectively.

This guidance sets out the responsibilities of employers when providing professional practical experience to a trainee as part of their architectural qualification. It is advisory, but reflects the professional expectations within the ARB Code of Conduct. Learning providers will monitor the suitability of placement environments and may withdraw approval if standards are not met.

### 1. Workplace culture

- Practices should recognise the important role they have in setting a positive workplace culture and shaping the attitudes of future architects.
- Practices should ensure a working environment free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation or inappropriate behaviour.

- Leaders within practices should understand and manage the imbalance of power that exists between senior staff and trainees. Professional boundaries should be strictly maintained.
- Concerns raised by the trainee should be taken seriously, recorded properly, and acted on.

## **2. Appointing a mentor**

- Every trainee should be assigned a designated mentor who oversees, coordinates, and reviews the trainee's experience during their placement.
- The mentor should have appropriate experience and enough time and resource to carry out the role properly.

## **3. Employment status, contract and pay**

- Where trainees are employees, they must have a written employment contract setting out duties, supervision arrangements, working hours, pay and terms.
- Where trainees are employees, they must be paid at least the National Living Wage (or the National Minimum Wage if they are under 21).

## **4. Structured work and purpose of employment**

- An important part of a trainee's employment is for them to acquire the experience necessary to meet the Practice Outcomes.
- Work given to the trainee should therefore be structured, planned and appropriately sequenced in a way that balances the trainee's goals with the needs of the practice—not always simply whatever happens to be available.
- As far as possible, practices should ensure the trainee has opportunities to gain experience across the different stages of work.

## **5. Induction and objective setting**

- Trainees should receive a structured induction covering:
  - The practice's policies and procedures.
  - Health and safety.

- Expected standards of behaviour.
  - Confidentiality and data protection.
  - How and when they will receive supervision.
- Clear objectives should be agreed at the outset and revisited regularly.

## **6. Training, support and supervision**

- Practices should ensure the trainee receives the training and support needed to carry out their tasks safely and competently.
- Trainees should have reasonable access to senior staff for questions, technical guidance and reflection.

## **7. Trainee Record of Experience**

- Practices should provide the trainee with the information and support needed to complete their Record of Experience.
- Record of Experience entries should be promptly and accurately corroborated by the registered architect responsible for the supervision of the relevant architectural work. Where possible this should be used to reflect on the trainee's progress with them.

## **8. Feedback and review**

- Trainees should receive constructive, honest feedback throughout their period of employment.
- Practices should also provide feedback to learning providers on what support and advice could be provided to improve future placements.
- Practices should be open to feedback *from* trainees on their experience, and act upon it where appropriate in respect of future placements.

# Guidance for trainees undertaking professional practical experience

## Draft proposals for consultation

January 2026

### Introduction

A period of practical experience is a vital part of becoming an architect. It allows you to apply what you've learned, develop professional judgement, and gather the evidence you need to meet ARB's Practice Outcomes.

If your qualification requires you to acquire the Practice Outcomes, your learning provider should support you. They are required to undertake a coordinating role. This role includes advising you on how to find available work placements, but it remains your responsibility to find suitable employment.

This guidance sets out what is expected of you and how to make the most of your time during your placement. It complements the guidance issued to employers so that everyone understands their role in making the experience productive, fair and professionally meaningful.

### 1. Understand the purpose of the placement

- Your primary purpose during this period is to gain experience that helps you meet the Practice Outcomes set by your learning provider and ARB.
- While support should be available to you, it is important that you also take responsibility and ownership of your own experience and development. Be proactive in seeking out learning opportunities, asking questions and engaging with the work you're given.

### 2. Act professionally

- You are expected to conduct yourself with the same professionalism you would show as a registered architect: reliability, punctuality, respect and integrity. Although

you are not yet an architect, you should understand and act in accordance with the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice.

- Understand that it is a significant commitment for a practice to offer a professional practical experience placement. Make an effort to collaborate, share information and support your colleagues whenever you can.
- Follow practice policies, including confidentiality, data protection, and health and safety procedures.
- If you're unsure about anything—especially legal or safety issues—ask before acting. You should expect to have support from senior staff when you need it.

### **3. Commit to your learning**

- You should receive a structured induction. Engage fully with the induction process and make sure you understand how your placement will work.
- Understand what experience you need to complete your Practice Outcomes. Your learning provider should help you do this and you should regularly discuss with your mentor the plan for acquiring it.
- If you feel you don't understand a task, or haven't been shown enough to complete it safely, say so promptly.

### **4. Keep an accurate Record of Experience**

- You are responsible for maintaining your Trainee Record of Experience accurately and promptly.
- Keep notes throughout your placement to help you record and reflect on your experience—don't try to reconstruct months of work at the end.
- Submit your Trainee Record of Experience to your supervising architect for verification in good time. They should do this promptly but avoid placing them under avoidable pressure.

## 5. Engage in feedback

- Be open to constructive feedback, even when it's uncomfortable—it's part of becoming a competent architect.
- Give feedback respectfully where asked, especially if parts of your experience are not working well.
- If you are struggling or feel overwhelmed, tell your mentor early rather than waiting for problems to escalate.

## 6. Conditions and concerns

- Your employer should understand and meet their legal obligations towards you, including on pay and working conditions. If you are an employee (as opposed to being self-employed) then you must be provided with a contract of employment and be paid the National Living Wage (or the National Minimum Wage if you are under 21).
- If you experience discrimination, harassment, or behaviour that feels inappropriate or unsafe, raise it with your mentor, your supervising architect or other senior staff at the practice, or your learning provider. Your learning provider might not be able to intervene directly but should be able to provide advice or direct you to another specialist organisation that can assist you.
- If concerns are not resolved, or raising them internally is not appropriate, then use the ARB Guidance on 'Raising Concerns and Whistleblowing' to better understand your options for escalating them. You do not have to stay quiet – there will be support for you.