



Development of ARB's international routes to registration

Consultation document

Contents

1	Our role and the purpose of this document	3
2	Why we're making changes	3
3	Our principles	6
4	The overarching approach	6
5	Additional requirements for individuals	7
6	Mutual recognition agreements and memoranda of understanding	8
7	How we would implement these principles	10
8	Your views and our next steps	13
Annex	Active registrants by country of qualification	14

1. Our role and the purpose of this document

- 1.1 As the regulator for architects, we have a key role in public protection. One of the ways in which we do this is by setting the standards for entry to the UK Register of architects. This includes deciding what qualifications and experience architects who have trained and qualified outside the UK need to hold to join the Register.
- 1.2 In recent years we have run two separate processes and routes to registration (in addition to the UK route) based on the legal framework: we have had an EU route based on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) Directive which created an automatic right to registration for most EU architects; we also had an international route where architects qualifying outside the European Union were required to complete ARB's Prescribed Examinations as well as complete a Part 3 recognised qualification.
- 1.3 Following the UK's exit from the European Union, we have been exploring a new approach to registration of international architects which we intend to implement once the relevant legislation introduced to Parliament by the Government is in place.
- 1.4 This consultation document sets out and seeks views on our approach, including our aims and objectives, our principles and our proposed decision-making process.
- 1.5 We want this new approach to support and uphold standards in the UK while also facilitating and supporting the UK architectural profession's trade with the world, with its reputation for excellence and global presence.
- 1.6 This document sets out the principles we intend to follow in achieving this and in particular seeks views on:
 - i) the overarching approach we take to our new international routes to registration;
 - ii) the development of the additional requirements for individuals holding international qualifications;
 - iii) the development of mutual recognition agreements and memoranda of understanding with other countries, and how we'll decide whether or not to pursue these.

2. Why we're making changes

- 2.1 Up until 31 December 2020, we had statutory obligations under the MRPQ Directive regarding European qualifications and experience. As part of this we were required to assist individuals holding UK 'prescribed', or recognised, qualifications to register in other EU member states.
- 2.2 These requirements meant that we mutually recognised a series of qualifications across the EU. Appropriately qualified individuals, who were also citizens of EU/EEA states or Directive-rights nationals, from both the UK and Europe could therefore register simply and straightforwardly within any European State under the terms of the Directive.
- 2.3 Anyone holding international (i.e. non-EU) qualifications has been (and is currently) obliged to undertake ARB's Prescribed Examinations to demonstrate equivalence to the UK's Part 1 and Part 2 level qualifications. In addition, they must undertake a Part 3 level qualification before being eligible for registration in the UK.
- 2.4 Our role changed when the UK left the EU. From 1 January 2021, ARB has been provided with some adjusted statutory responsibilities in relation to the recognition of EU qualifications and experience. We are therefore currently operating under a set of interim arrangements in relation to the recognition of European qualifications and experience.
- 2.5 Under those interim arrangements, EU-qualified individuals remain eligible to register subject to certain legislative conditions¹.
- 2.6 We have been advising architects throughout these interim changes, including via detailed guides on our website and articles in our eBulletin. We have also been working closely with EU counterparts.
- 2.7 All other EU routes which operated under the Directive have now ceased in the UK.
- 2.8 Notwithstanding the interim arrangements above, we established our first memorandum of understanding (MOU) with our Irish counterparts, the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI), to facilitate the registration of both UK and Irish architects. This MOU became effective on 1 January 2021 and reserves the automatic routes to registration as they operated under the former Directive.
- 2.9 The UK Government has taken the opportunity to review the regulatory systems in relation to the recognition of international qualifications. The Government's aim is to

¹ See FAQs 2 and 3 [here](#)

facilitate the development of a more cohesive approach to the recognition of non-UK qualifications and experience.

- 2.10 In late 2020 and early 2021, ARB's sponsoring government department, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)² undertook a consultation on potential legislative changes that would enable ARB to adjust and develop its regulatory approach in this area.
- 2.11 Further to the outcomes of the DLUHC's consultation, as well as the outcome from a call for evidence conducted by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Professional Qualifications Bill was introduced to Parliament in May 2021. This Bill sets out what will replace the current interim arrangements for recognising EU qualifications and experience, and how regulatory bodies will be able to recognise international qualifications in the future.
- 2.12 In particular, regulatory bodies will be able to develop and establish mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with partner organisations around the world in order to facilitate professional registration.
- 2.13 Though the general provisions within the Professional Qualifications Bill will apply to all regulated professions, it additionally contains some specific proposals which would lead to changes to the Architects Act 1997:
- i) If the Bill is approved, the ARB Board will be able to set out how it recognises international qualifications in its rules for the purposes of entry to the UK Register.
 - ii) It is also likely to have the power to apply additional requirements to those holding international qualifications and experience prior to registration.
- 2.14 Once the Professional Qualifications Bill receives Royal Assent, the Government is likely to take forward secondary legislation which is a necessary requirement to 'turn on' the Board's powers in relation to recognition of international qualifications through MRAs.
- 2.15 The point at which our new international routes will need to become operational will be dependent on the progress of this legislation. We are basing our plans on the possibility that they may need to become operational in mid-2022.

² At the time called the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

- 2.16 In order to meet this timeline, we have been developing principles to underpin the changes we would make. We now want to provide interested stakeholders with an opportunity to provide feedback on these.

3. Our Principles

- 3.1 To support the development of the new international routes we have developed a series of principles to provide a framework for making decisions. The principles will act as a foundation for the development of the routes, as well as providing clarity and transparency about our approach.
- 3.2 We have created three sets of principles to support the development of the following:
- i) the overarching approach to the new routes;
 - ii) the additional measures individuals holding international qualifications will need to meet prior to registration; and
 - iii) mutual recognition agreements and memoranda of understanding.

4. Principles underpinning the overarching approach to our new international routes to registration

- 4.1 Research tells us that the education and training of architects globally has a high degree of commonality. Architects who have already qualified in many countries throughout the world are likely to already have gained the skills and knowledge that would be taught as part of ARB prescribed qualifications at Part 1 and Part 2 level. They are also likely to have acquired most of skills and knowledge that are covered by UK Part 3 qualifications.
- 4.2 However, they may not have sufficient knowledge, skills or experience on practising in a UK context. One aim of our new international routes is therefore to support those who have already qualified overseas to apply their existing skills in the UK context. This will focus on ensuring they understand what is necessary for safe and effective practice here.
- 4.3 The principles for our new international routes are underpinned by our overarching duty to protect the public and are as follows:
- i) The standard of entry for those holding international qualifications should be equivalent to the standard of entry for those holding UK prescribed qualifications.

- ii) Proportionate compensation measures, with some flexibility, should apply when developing the mutual recognition agreement/memorandum of understanding route.
- iii) We should engage and co-operate effectively with our counterpart organisations where MRAs/MOUs apply.
- iv) We need to consider principles of good regulation, including proportionality.
- v) We want to identify innovative ways of working in this area where possible.

5. Principles underpinning the development of the additional requirements for individuals holding international qualifications

- 5.1 For ARB to be reassured that individuals who have qualified overseas understand what is necessary for safe and effective practice in the UK, there will need to be some additional requirements to address areas of UK-specific legislation, regulations and the context of UK practice.
- 5.2 Once we have engaged with our international counterpart organisations and found that there is substantial alignment between our respective qualifications and practical experience requirements, we believe a lighter-touch approach to assessing applicants' understanding of the UK-specific context is more appropriate. We therefore aim to design a light-touch assessment framework that incentivises and supports overseas architects in their desire to register with ARB.
- 5.3 The following principles will apply when we develop the additional requirements that individuals holding international qualifications will need to meet. The additional requirements must:
 - i) provide assurance that the standard of entry for those holding international qualifications is equivalent to the standard of entry for those holding UK prescribed qualifications at Parts 1, 2 and 3;
 - ii) support the simplification of the recognition process for individuals holding appropriate international qualifications;
 - iii) be applied proportionately, with some flexibility, to the development of the mutual recognition agreements/memoranda of understanding;
 - iv) be required from applicants where an ARB mutual recognition agreement/memorandum of understanding is in place.
- 5.4 We will recognise the education and practical experience that registered professionals have undertaken where this aligns to our own registration requirements.

- 5.5 We want to make use of innovative online facilities to support applicants to complete additional requirements and enable effective assessment of additional requirements.
- 5.6 We will undertake a review of the additional requirements that we initially put in place, taking feedback into account, and will make adjustments where there is evidence to support doing so. Periodic reviews of the additional requirements will then be undertaken.

6. Principles underpinning the development and prioritisation of mutual recognition agreements/memoranda of understanding

- 6.1 We aim to work with new and existing overseas partners to facilitate the UK's ongoing access to international talent and to support the export of UK architects' services to other countries. We believe that where there are realistic prospects that architects from the UK and overseas will make sufficient use of an agreement, where costs are proportionate and that such an agreement will support efficient and effective regulation, we should explore the development of such agreements. Our decisions to explore and take forward future agreements will therefore be based on the following:

Proportionality

Principle:

- 6.2 There should be a realistic expectation that the agreement will facilitate the registration of architects between jurisdictions.

Criteria:

- 6.3 We will consider and take into account current demand (e.g. through current UK applications for registration as well as other sources) for UK registration as well as any evidence of latent demand. We will also consider feedback from UK architects wishing to practise internationally.

Resources

Principle:

- 6.4 There should be suitable level of resources available to develop, deliver and monitor agreements.

Criteria:

- 6.5 ARB will consider any costs in developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the MRA, which may include travel, external quality assurance or engagement costs.
- 6.6 ARB will consider resource implications including, but not limited to, staff time and availability, in prioritising, developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing agreements.

Reciprocity

Principle:

- 6.7 There should be evidence that there is a realistic prospect of reciprocity.

Criteria:

- 6.8 The international authority has a public commitment to engagement and sharing information with ARB to develop, implement, operate and monitor the agreement.

Equivalence

Principle:

- 6.9 There should be broad equivalence in education and training outcomes to those in the UK.

Criteria:

- 6.10 The outcomes of architectural education and training should align with the ARB's requirements, currently set out in the Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications.
- 6.11 In assessing equivalence we will take into account the structure, duration and quality assurance process in place.

Transparency and robustness

Principle:

- 6.12 ARB must have confidence in the regulatory oversight mechanisms and quality assurance processes designed to ensure standards are being met.

Criteria:

- 6.13 The partner organisation must have the appropriate authority to develop, sign and monitor an MRA/MOU.
- 6.14 Qualifications that are the subject of the agreement are quality assured and are regularly reviewed.
- 6.15 ARB should have access to evidence to demonstrate effective quality assurance mechanisms including, if appropriate, direct observation.

Public interest

Principle:

- 6.16 We will consider the wider public interest including the opportunity to support and improve quality within the profession.

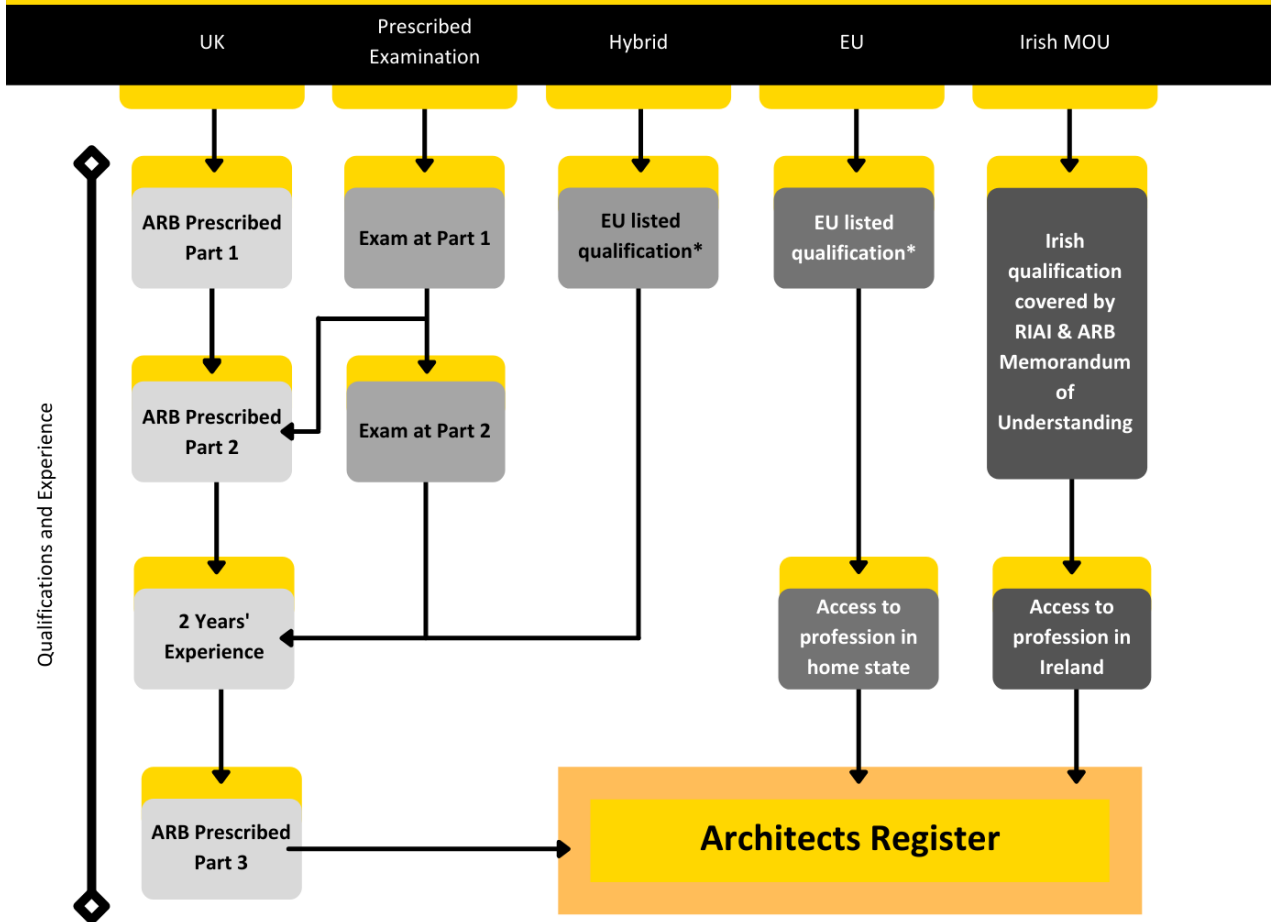
Criteria:

- 6.17 Decisions will be taken on a case by case basis.
- 6.18 The standard of entry to the UK Register must be maintained through the agreement.
- 6.19 Where appropriate, we will consider relevant Government advice regarding the development of an MRA/MOU.

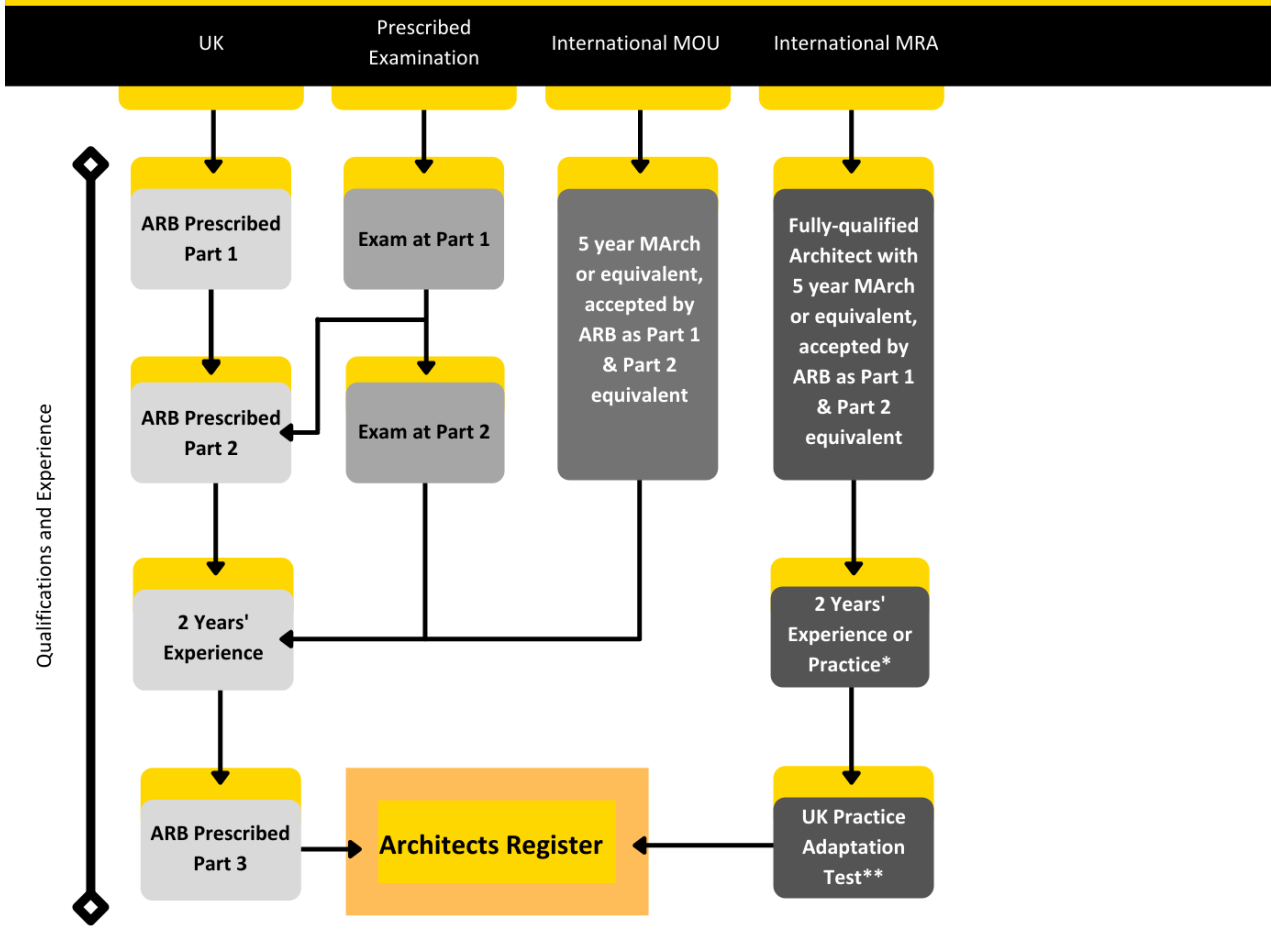
7. How we would implement these principles

- 7.1 We agree with the Government's view that there should be more cohesive routes to registration if someone has trained to become an architect elsewhere in the world. Whilst we believe that it is paramount that the UK's standards are upheld, we also believe that our new routes should be as streamlined and easy to understand as possible. Figure 1 below shows the current range of routes to registration and Figure 2 shows our proposed streamlined approach.

Current Routes to Registration - Since 1 January 2021



Future International Routes to Registration - Expected Mid 2022



*Qualification and Experience must total no less than 7 years
 **Working title - development is not complete

- 7.2 The main international route will operate on the basis of ARB establishing mutual recognition agreements or memoranda of understanding with counterpart organisations in other countries. Eligibility under the MRA/MOU route will require individuals to hold appropriately recognised qualifications (which are covered by the relevant MRA or MOU) as well as meeting ARB's additional requirements prior to registration. Individuals will need to hold qualifications which are recognised under an MRA/MOU and should also:
- i) have gained two years of practical experience, either for the purposes of registration in their home state or post registration; and
 - ii) have successfully passed ARB's UK adaptation assessment.
- 7.3 Applicants will need to demonstrate that they hold appropriate experience in order to access the UK adaptation assessment.
- 7.4 As part of the UK adaptation assessment, individuals will need to:
- i) provide a professional career evaluation;
 - ii) respond to scenario questions which focus on practising in a UK-specific context;
 - iii) successfully pass a professional interview which will assess an applicant's knowledge and understanding of UK processes and protocols and the competence for the practice of architecture in the UK.
- 7.5 The Prescribed Examination route will remain available for anyone who holds qualifications and experience which are not the subject of an MRA or MOU. Whilst this engagement exercise is not concerned with the Prescribed Examination route, we are planning to review this route in due course and as part of our initial education and training review.

8. Your views and our next steps

- 8.1 The purpose of this paper is to share our proposed direction of travel and to seek feedback on the approach we are taking.
- 8.2 We are running this engagement exercise online and invite any interested parties to provide their views on the approach, proposals and principles that we have outlined above. These will help inform our decisions as to what we do next.
- 8.3 We would also like to get your views about how we should communicate and engage in a way that's beneficial and constructive for interested parties, and how we could formalise this into arrangements that provide more certainty and transparency.
- 8.4 Comments or feedback can be emailed to us at communications@arb.org.uk by **14 January 2022**. After this date we will analyse the comments we've received and summarise them into a report that will be reviewed by the ARB Board and published.
- 8.5 This current engagement is not the end of the process and we will continue to consider views raised as we develop the international routes. This will include undertaking a formal consultation on the rule changes necessary to support the introduction of the new international routes, which are likely to be dealt with through our General Rules.
- 8.6 The point at which our new international routes will need to become operational will be dependent on the progress of legislation. We are basing our plans on the possibility that they may need to become operational in mid-2022.
- 8.7 Further updates and more detail regarding the timings will be published on our website and through our usual media channels.

Annex - Active registrants by country of qualification

8.8 The table below shows current non-UK³ registrants by country of qualification, as of October 2021, and is based on data submitted at time of application. The data of those registrants who have joined and subsequently left the register is not included. This has been included for reference and should not be considered a prioritised list of countries we will seek agreements with.

Italy	1898
Spain	1680
Germany	625
Greece	572
Poland	488
Portugal	482
Ireland	459
France	237
Romania	196
United States	194
Netherlands	155
Denmark	124
Australia	100
Switzerland	95
South Africa	92
Bulgaria	83
Hungary	79
Sweden	62
Cyprus	58
New Zealand	57
Austria	50
Czech Republic	50
Belgium	48
Canada	38
Slovakia	37
Lithuania	33
India	29
Malta	23
Hong Kong	21
China	20
Malaysia	20
Others (below 20)	282

³ 'Non-UK' is based on the country of qualification and not the architect's nationality.

If you need information on this document in a different format such as an audio recording or braille, you can:

- email info@arb.org.uk
- call 020 7580 5861
- write to us at ARB, 8 Weymouth Street. London W1W 5BU

We'll consider your request and get back to you within 14 days.



For more information please contact
the Architects Registration Board
8 Weymouth Street, London W1W 5BU
Web: www.arb.org.uk
Email: info@arb.org.uk
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7580 5861