

Version

☐ Internal Draft for Approval

☐ Chair's Draft for Approval

☒ Chair's Approved Draft

☐ Confirmed

BOARD MEETING: MINUTES

Minutes of ARB Board Meeting held on 21 May 2025.

Location: ARB, 5th Floor, 70 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8NH

Present

- Alan Kershaw (Chair)
- Mark Bottomley
- Will Freeman
- Cindy Leslie
- Professor Elena Marco
- Stephen McCusker
- Tom McDermott
- Dr Teri Okoro
- Jon Prichard
- Caroline Turnbull-Hall
- Francesca Bonnici (Boardroom Apprentice)

In attendance

- Hugh Simpson (CEO & Registrar)
- Emma Matthews (Director of Governance & International/Minutes)
- Simon Howard (Director of Standards)
- Rebecca Roberts-Hughes (Director of Policy & Communications)
- Brian James (Director of Registration & Accreditation)
- Eleri Jones (Head of People) Observer
- Rosie Fairfax (Policy Manager), Observer
- James Farrar (Policy & Public Affairs Manager), Observer
- Sarah Thessman (Policy Officer), Observer
- Harsha Gore (Policy & Engagement Officer), Observer
- Grant Dyble (Head of Accreditation), Observer
- Joeris Morgan (Accreditation Manager), Observer
- Michelle Wright (Accreditation Visits Manager), Observer
- Sabrina Bell, Member of the Public (Observer)

Private Meeting of the Board

The Board met in private at the beginning of the meeting. No staff members were present for this item.

Open Session

ARB staff members joined the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Liz Male had provided her apologies for the meeting.

The Chair welcomed two new lay members of the Board, Caroline Turnbull-Hall and Jon Prichard. Ms. Turnbull-Hall and Mr. Prichard formally introduced themselves to the Board. It was noted that two new architects would need to be appointed in early 2026, to replace two members who would be stepping down due to the end of their respective tenures.

The Chair formally thanked Ms. Samantha Peters, who had completed the maximum tenure possible under ARB's rules regarding temporary membership of the Board, for her contributions to the Board over the previous two years.

Rosie Fairfax, Policy Manager, joined the meeting to observe Item 7 – Code of Conduct and Practice for Architects and Item 8 – ARB's Code of Conduct guidance.

James Farrar, Policy & Public Affairs Manager and Sarah Thessman, Policy Officer joined the meeting to observe Item 10 – International Routes Consultation Responses and Next Steps.

James Farrar, Policy & Public Affairs Manager, Harsha Gore, Policy & Engagement Officer, Grant Dyble, Head of Accreditation, Joeris Morgan, Accreditation Manager, and Michelle Wright, Accreditation Visits Manager joined the meeting to observe Item 12 – PPE Commission Report Recommendations and Implementation.

Nadine Schweitzer, Registration Manager and Jonathen Lionel, Registration Officer joined the meeting to observe Item 28 – Application for Re-entry to the Register.

Helen Ransom attended the meeting to observe Item 28 – Application for Re-entry to the Register.

Eleri Jones, Head of People, observed the whole of the meeting.

Sabrina Bell, a member of the public, observed the open session of the meeting.

2. Members' Interests

The Register of Interests was noted.

All of the architect members of the Board declared an interest in item 7, ARB's Code of Conduct and Practice and Item 8, ARB's Code of Conduct Guidance, on the basis that these items would impact them as registrants and there could be a perception that there was a conflict. The Board agreed that, in order to maintain the quorum, the architect members needed to be present; and that they would in any case have valuable expertise to contribute to the item. As a result, it was agreed that all architect members of the Board should remain in the room.

All Board members declared an interest in item 9, Finance, Risk and Audit Committee Terms of Reference, on the basis that the constitution of the Committee would impact them. The Board agreed that, in order to maintain the quorum, all members needed to be present; and that all Board members should remain in the room.

All Board members declared an interest in item 11, Updates on ARB's Travel and Subsistence Policy, on the basis that the policy would impact them. The Board agreed that, in order to maintain the quorum, all members needed to be present; and that all Board members should remain in the room.

Stephen McCusker declared an interest in item 12, Professional Practical Experience Commission Report Recommendations Implementation, on the basis that he was involved in the delivery of an ARB-accredited Part 3 level qualification, for which the recommendations might have implications. Noting the declaration, it was agreed that Mr. McCusker could remain in the room and, if he wished to speak before the decisions were made, he should speak last. It was noted that Professor Marco had a similar interest given her role at an education provider. The same approach would apply to Professor Marco.

STANDING ITEMS

3. Update from the Chair

The Chair provided a brief update on a recent visit to Toronto and Montreal, part of which had included the signing of the new ARB and Regulatory Organizations of Architecture in Canada (ROAC) Mutual Recognition Agreement. The visit had included some celebratory events as well as visits to education providers and practices in both locations. Initial numbers seeking certification from ARB in order to register in Canada were looking positive.

4. Minutes

The Board unanimously approved the Open session minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2025.

5. Report on Actions following Previous Meetings

Queries were raised as to how ARB would track progress regarding increased access to the Register, as well as monitor the position regarding visas for international Part 3 level students, which had been points that had been flagged at the previous meeting. These points had not however, been captured in the actions report. It was agreed that the Executive would give further thought as to how progress updates could be provided in relation to these areas, as well as ensuring that they were included in relevant update reports to the Board.

Board members suggested that a traffic light colour-coding system should be applied to the Actions reports in future to more accurately reflect the position regarding the completion, partial completion or ongoing status of actions.

Remaining actions arising from previous meetings were noted.

6. Updates since the Board papers were issued

There were no matters to update on since the Board papers had been issued.

MATTERS FOR DECISION

7. ARB's Code of Conduct and Practice for Architects

The Director of Standards introduced the item, noting that adjustments had been made to the proposed revised Code further to the recent public consultation and the Board's discussions in February 2025. Further non-substantive drafting adjustments had been suggested by a number of Board members since the May Board papers had been circulated. Noting this, the Director of Standards proposed that those minor drafting adjustments be considered outside the meeting, and that the Chair be delegated with responsibility for approving the final wording prior to the revised Code being published.

Three key changes were brought to the attention of the Board which were as follows: within Standard 3.2, 'best' had been adjusted to 'good', within Standard 4.4, 'quality assurance' had been adjusted to 'business assurance', and within Standard 4.9, 'properly' had been adjusted to 'appropriately'.

Board members debated the use of 'business assurance' as it did not readily encompass those who were educators. Alternatives were suggested including 'business processes', 'quality assurance and business processes' or 'processes'. It was agreed that the Director of Standards would give more thought to the form of words, noting that it needed to be as broad a term as possible, before presenting the final version to the Chair for approval following the meeting.

Board members also discussed whether there was sufficient emphasis on ethics within the Code, beyond the reference to ethics in the introduction section, given that this was typically a key focus point within other professions' codes. It was noted that ethics were embedded within the Code itself, but that ethics would be highlighted through supporting guidance. The introduction could also be reviewed and strengthened in this area. The guidance would additionally provide an opportunity to highlight good practice in relation to diversity and inclusion, leadership and mentorship, as well as setting out ARB's expectations regarding equity, equality and courtesy.

The Board also felt that it would be valuable to help architects' understanding of the hierarchy of the relevant documents, including where the Code sat in this context, as well as what they must comply with.

The Board unanimously agreed to authorise the Chair to approve the final version of the Code subject to any final adjustments made by the Director of Standards following the Board's discussions and feedback. Should any further substantive changes be required, the revised Code would then be circulated via write round for Board consideration and approval.

Subject to the final approval of the Code as agreed, the Board unanimously confirmed that the Code should be issued and become effective with effect from 1 September 2025.

It was noted that the effective date of 1 September would enable the Standards Department to provide training to relevant associates. The application of the new Code would not be retrospective. The Professional Practical Experience (PPE) Commission had not recommended changes to the Code, but there were links and connections, regarding mentoring for example, that would be picked up in supporting guidance.

8. ARB's Code of Conduct Guidance

The Director of Standards reported that limited feedback had been received in relation to the first three guidance notes that had been issued for consultation. These were existing notes which had been updated and consolidated. Modest adjustments had been made to the first three guidance notes as a result of the feedback. The next three guidance notes which needed to be issued for consultation, were again revised versions of existing guidance. Over the course of the summer, additional work would be undertaken to develop a third set of new guidance notes, which would need more engagement with stakeholders.

A Board member suggested that the Board should hold a further discussion and subsequently set out its position regarding the Principal Designer role. The CEO & Registrar confirmed that feedback following initial discussions around this area had been provided to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Board members also queried whether there was need for ARB to produce guidance when other bodies including the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) would have published guidance already. A query also arose regarding the minimum level of Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) which was set out in the guidance notes. It was confirmed that ARB published only guidance which was of key importance to registrants. The team also sought to avoid replicating guidance which had been published by others. It was also noted that estimates indicated just 50% of architects on the UK Register were members of the RIBA. The background and context to the minimum level of PII being set at £250k, and some of the challenges and impacts that this brought, were explained and noted.

It was queried whether non-architects would know how to raise a concern regarding an architect; the existing guidance notes were for architects rather than non-architects. A website page had been developed and published for others seeking to raise concerns.

The Board noted the consultation report on the guidance notes on Terms of Engagement, Dealing with complaints, and Professional Indemnity Insurance, and unanimously agreed to publish them with effect from 1 September 2025.

The Board unanimously agreed to consult on three guidance notes on managing conflicts of interest, raising concerns and managing finances appropriately.

9. Finance, Risk and Audit Committee Terms of Reference

The Director of Governance & International introduced the paper, noting that the Board had been looking to enhance scrutiny and assurance regarding the organisation's financial management. Following feedback from recent effectiveness reviews, and the recommendations in an independent review which had been commissioned in the second part of 2024, initial proposals to develop a new Finance, Risk and Audit Committee had been discussed by the Board in February 2025. The Board had provided valuable feedback at its meeting in early 2025, which had been taken into account and woven into the updated Terms of Reference for the new Committee. The covering paper also addressed other points which the Board had raised in February, including how the 'three lines of defence' risk methodology would be maintained and relevant benchmarking information.

Further to feedback received from a Board member following the circulation of the Board papers in May, the Executive wished to propose two key substantive adjustments to the Terms of Reference which were as follows:

Proposed adjustments to the final sentence in the purpose section

The Committee will seek appropriate assurances that ARB is adhering to appropriate governance practices, complying with applicable legislative and regulatory requirements, and is effectively managing its financial and operational risks.

Proposed adjustments to section 2.7 of the Terms

Seek appropriate assurance that the organisation is maintaining a system of robust financial controls to safeguard the assets of ARB.

It was suggested that, subject to the approval of the new Terms of Reference, a review of the effectiveness of the new Committee and the Terms should be undertaken following the first year of operation. It would also be valuable to formally seek the view of the MHCLG to provide assurance that the Department was comfortable with the change from an Audit and Risk Committee to a Finance, Risk and Audit Committee. The potential for there to be a perceived conflict between the finance and audit functions being looked at by a single committee, as well as the risk that the committee may be overloaded with duties, were highlighted. It was felt that there were sufficient mitigations in place to manage these issues.

The Chief Executive Officer & Registrar confirmed that he had discussed the transition to a new committee with MHCLG and no issues had been raised to date. The final Terms of Reference would,

however, be sent to the Department in order to keep officials fully up to date and to provide them with the opportunity to raise any concerns. Confirmation that this had been done would be provided to the Board before any recruitment to the Committee commenced.

Other examples of committees which held combined roles were cited, including the RICS and the Legal Services Board. The appointment of two new external members to the Committee would assist with any additional workload felt by the committee. These appointments were vital; when recruiting, the panel could take the opportunity to explore how potential appointees would handle the need to balance the duties regarding finance, risk and audit. Notwithstanding this, ARB's activities were growing, and as a result changes to the levels of oversight were needed to ensure that ARB continued to develop into a high performing organisation. Although there were different approaches that could be taken, it was felt that introducing a new FRAC was the right approach. This would be kept under review once it had commenced its work. This could be picked up as part of a review of ARB's overarching governance and incorporated into the next externally facilitated Board and Committee Effectiveness Review, which was due in 2026.

The Board noted that the membership of the ARB's committees would be considered under item 26 on the Board's agenda of 21 May 2025, and unanimously agreed:

- i. to dissolve the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee with effect from 30 June 2025;
- ii. to create a new Finance, Risk and Audit Committee with effect from 1 July 2025;
- iii. Terms of Reference for the new Finance, Risk and Audit Committee, subject to adjustments proposed by the Executive at the meeting and a review one year after the Committee commenced operating;
- iv. that two independent, external members should be appointed to the Committee as a priority.

10. International Routes Consultation Responses and Next steps

The Director of Policy & Communications reminded the Board that they had held initial discussions at their most recent workshop in relation to the benefits and challenges of outsourcing or accrediting providers to deliver new processes, as well as whether single or multiple assessments should be undertaken within the new processes.

Members of the project team had met and undertaken further research in the meantime. The team were recommending that a contract model should be explored further. This may mean a greater time commitment up front, but lead to benefits and efficiencies in the longer term. Upfront costs would be incurred in order to ensure that the tender and contract documents were robust and covered ARB's requirements. It was envisaged that a new model could be running from mid-2027. Additionally, the Executive felt that a review and remodelling of the Competency Standards Group could be undertaken within one year.

It was noted that there were references to 'adaption' rather than 'adaptation', and that some of the percentages in the text corresponding with the charts were incorrect, within the annexes. Corrections would be made before publication and where necessary.

The Board thanked the Director of Policy & Communications and the project team for the work that had been undertaken to date, particularly given the complexity of the issues involved.

A Board member highlighted the importance of making provision for reasonable adjustments within any new processes so that relevant legislation was being adhered to. This would be picked up through briefing and tender documents, as well as any future contract.

Concerns were raised regarding potential future providers seeking to make excessive profit from the revised assessment processes and noted that this was going to be challenging given ARB's aim of making the assessment process more affordable for applicants. This had been raised within the consultation responses, where views from both sides had been given. Initial feedback from organisations, who had undertaken some modelling based on the information with which they had been provided by ARB, suggested that they could offer a cheaper process than ARB currently did due to economies of scale. It was noted, however that more detailed modelling would be necessary to ensure that this would be the case. This risk would continue to be borne in mind as the project progressed. The complexity of balancing many challenges and issues, whilst seeking to realise the principles which had been set for this area of work, was acknowledged.

In response to a request for clarification regarding the way in which ARB currently dealt with plagiarism, an outline of the processes and checks undertaken was provided. Plagiarism was an infrequent occurrence.

Further updates on progress in relation to the review would be provided to the Board via the Chief Executive Officer & Registrar's Report, with formal policy proposals being brought back in 2026.

The Board unanimously agreed to:

- i. Publish an analysis report on the consultation for major changes to ARB's international routes to registration (in the paper at Annexe A);
- ii. Implement the proposals for a competence-based assessment in a modernised format, simpler eligibility requirements, and a single point of entry to the Register;
- iii. Review and remodel the Competency Standards Group to provide an alternative route for those with partial qualifications;
- iv. Undertake further scoping work to explore a contract model for outsourcing the Prescribed Exam and UK Adaptation Assessment, rather than an accreditation model;
- v. Initially seek to appoint a single provider, and consider widening out to multiple providers based on the success of the contract model; and
- vi. Consider the potential for courses to be provided at a later stage in the project once the new exams were running and could be evaluated.

11. Updates on ARB's Travel and Subsistence Policy

The Chief Executive Officer & Registrar introduced the item and explained that there was currently a gap in ARB's policy, which did not cover international travel. Typographical errors in relation to the subsistence expenses were noted. No changes were being proposed to the subsistence rates, and these would remain as they had been to date, i.e., breakfast and lunch allowances would continue to be £10 per person, per day, and dinner would be £35 per person, per day. The additions to the policy

relating to international travel were intended to be proportionate and had been supported by the People Committee.

One Board member raised concerns about the approach and the impact that international air travel, particularly business class travel, had on the environment. There was a discussion about the importance of ARB challenging itself to justify the impact of air travel in general and the additional impact of business class travel. It was however noted that there was a balance to be struck and that the welfare of ARB's Board members, associates and staff team were also a priority, particularly if they were travelling long distances and expected to attend meetings and work immediately after a long-haul flight. The Board was also reminded that business class air travel would be used only in certain circumstances in line with the criteria set out in the proposals, otherwise economy class would be used.

The Board agreed the updated expenses policy to make provisions for overseas travel by majority.

12. Professional Practical Experience (PPE) Commission Report Recommendations Implementation

The Director of Policy & Communications introduced the paper, highlighting that Annexe A set out the proposed approach to each of the recommendations. The team wished to run workshop sessions with the Board to discuss some of the key areas of work being taken forward including the Record of Competency and whether mentoring should be a mandatory topic within the CPD scheme. Specific engagement activities were also being proposed around the development of the 'co-ordinating role' which had been recommended.

The Board unanimously and formally noted the PPE Commission's Report.

Board members discussed the proposals regarding the use of 'trainee architect', noting that legislative change would be needed before this could be used. The potential to bring 'trainee architects' within scope of registration was also raised as something to consider in the longer term if legislative change was being sought. The Board was reminded that issues relating to protection of title had been highlighted to the Department within the post-Grenfell context, but ARB had not directly approached the Department seeking legislative changes at this point. Legislative change was likely to take some time and would be complex, particularly if changes to the Act regarding the registration of trainees was pursued. Whilst ARB could take a pragmatic approach and refrain from prosecuting those using the title 'trainee architect', ARB was not the only prosecuting body.

One Board member felt that there was insufficient detail within the papers setting out what the role and expectations of the co-ordinator would be at this stage, and how the co-ordinating body would be expected to deal with specific circumstances. e.g., cases of trainees being bullied or harassed, which could arise. They would have preferred to have more detail at this stage before the proposals were moved forward, particularly around wording under Section 2.5 and 2.6 of the paper.

Following the PPE Commission's careful consideration of these issues, it was important to see the Commission's recommendations collectively. The Commission had also seen examples of good practice and how challenges had been dealt with effectively. The Board was reminded that those undertaking their professional practical experience bore significant risks and that ARB wished to change that through its work in this area.

There were plans to work closely with stakeholders, as well as form focus groups and a reference group, to explore, discuss and work through the relevant issues as set out in the paper, and in order to produce clear guidance for co-ordinators. Formal changes could not be introduced before statutory consultations had taken place which would require Board approval.

Links between the new Code and the new arrangements regarding the mentoring of those undertaking professional practical experience would be drawn out and highlighted in guidance. A separate discussion would need to be held about whether mentoring should be a mandatory topic within the CPD scheme in future.

Board members requested a visual timeline, setting out when the proposed actions in response to the PPE Commission's recommendations would be taken forward.

Two Board members did not feel ready to support the recommendations until further assurances were provided about the implementation plan. The Board, by majority, agreed:

- i. to the three main recommendations from the Commission;
- ii. to approve the proposed approach for each of the Commission's recommendations as set out in the paper (paragraphs 2.4-2.6) and Annexe A.

The Board noted, following discussion, that engagement would include focus groups to help develop the Standards and Handbook to require learning providers to take on a co-ordinating role; and a reference group to support the development of the Record of Competency.

ITEMS FOR NOTE

13. Performance Monitoring Updates for Q1

It was suggested that the key performance indicators (KPIs) referred to in 2.13 and 2.14 of the cover paper should be reviewed and reset. This was already in hand and the Director of Registration & Accreditation had commenced a review of the relevant KPIs.

Concerns relating to the ways in which the current retention and related fees applied to those on maternity/paternity or sabbatical breaks were highlighted, particularly in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion. The Chief Executive Officer & Registrar noted that the Register was an online record of those able to practise. There were opportunities to pro rata registration fees and those not practising could still call themselves architects provided they did not do so in the context of business. There were significant challenges in terms of administering these types of breaks, but it was important to keep this policy under review to ensure we were upholding our commitment to equality and diversity. Further advice would be presented to the Board before decisions were made for the 2026 annual retention fee.

In response to queries regarding the spike in professional standards cases, it was noted that the requirement for those renewing registration to report any criminal convictions had led to this. Individuals were reporting low level fines, as well as more significant convictions.

The Board noted the performance monitoring updates for Q1 2025, including the additional section on the management accounts.

14. ARB's Policy Log

It was noted that responsibility for approving the Board and Committee members' annual review process now lay with the Board rather than the People Committee; the entry in the Policy Log needed to be updated to reflect this. This would be done immediately following the meeting. The Board noted the updated Policy Log.

15. Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

The Board noted the annual report of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

16. Annual Report of the People Committee

The Board noted the annual report of the People Committee.

17. Chief Executive's Report

Noting the update relating to the CPD Scheme, it was queried whether there was any indication as to the quality of the returns sampled to date, and whether good examples could be used to inform future communications. Sufficient samples had been analysed to start to understand where improvements could be made in terms of CPD submissions. The reflective element was an example of this. Tailored communications explaining the expectations would be developed to assist architects. The team were exploring ways in which samples were being reviewed and would report back to the Board on this at the next meeting. The benefits and challenges in relation to automating aspects of the process were discussed, noting that it would be important to ensure the right balance was struck.

The Board noted the Chief Executive Officer's Report.

18. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

19. Dates of Future Board Meetings

2025

Board Workshop – Thursday, 12 June 2025 - In person, at ARB office

Board Meeting – Monday, 14 July 2025 - Online

Board Workshop (2 Day) – Tuesday, 9 & Wednesday, 10 September 2025 - In person, Off-site to be held in Glasgow

Board Meeting – Thursday, 16 October 2025 - Online

Board Workshop – Wednesday, 19 November 2025 - In person, at ARB office

Board Meeting – Wednesday, 10 December 2025 - In person, at ARB office

Further details regarding the Board Workshop being held in Glasgow would be circulated as soon as possible.