

Accreditation Committee Annual Report and Updates

for Open session

Board meeting:

19 March 2026

Agenda item:

12

Action:

- For noting
- For discussion
- For decision

Subject:

Annual Report of the Accreditation Committee Chair

Purpose

To receive an update on the activities and decision-making conducted by the Accreditation Committee in 2025.

Recommendations

To discuss the Accreditation Committee Annual Report 2025.

To discuss updates on the implementation of the new accreditation model and processes.

Annexes

None

Author/Key Contact

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1. Open Session

- 1.1. This item will be taken under the open session.
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2. Background and Key points

Background

- 2.1. The Accreditation Committee considers and makes decisions about the accreditation of UK qualifications required for registration as an architect with ARB. It was established in 2023, replacing the Prescription Committee which had advisory powers only.
- 2.2. This report covers the period January to December 2025. It summarises the achievements of the Committee and includes decisions taken and points for the Board to consider.

Committee membership, attendance and meetings

- 2.3. Membership comprises 3 lay and 3 registrant members as well as an independent lay chair. Further information about the specialist expertise of committee members is available at <https://arb.org.uk/about-arb/arbs-board-committees/the-accreditation-committee/>.
- 2.4. There have been 8 meetings in 2025; 6 online and 2 in person. Five of 8 meetings had 100% Committee member attendance.
- 2.5. In person meetings were full day events with half day on accreditation business and the other half as a discussion or developmental workshop. During the developmental sessions the Committee received ARB staff briefings on:-
 - PPE changes and potential outcomes
 - Standards 4 & 5 to be reviewed in 2026
 - External Examiner survey
- 2.6. In addition, the Committee discussed the approach to accreditation work in 2026. Further information in 2.14 and 2.15.

Activity Report

Between January 2025 and December 2025 the Committee considered the following:-

2.7. **Annual Monitoring submissions** from 66 Universities for a total of 196 qualifications

2.8. **Standards 3 & 6 as part of annual monitoring and/or Regular Review and/or New Qualifications** from 47 providers. Submissions were not required from the small number of providers that only offer Part 1 qualifications. There is a small number of submissions yet to be considered by the Committee. These are expected in early 2026. The Executive reviews all submissions before they are submitted to the Committee, including seeking clarification where necessary. After a few months of reviews the process was amended so if there was an upcoming regular review, points of clarification would be built into the review process rather than conducted separately. This created some efficiencies for both the Executive and Committee, alongside providing an opportunity for dialogue and more in depth exploration where information in the standards submission was lacking or absent.

2.9. **Regular Reviews.** The Committee has reviewed and approved 13 regular review reports. Visits have been a combination of online and in person and are attended by 2 ARB visitors and 2 members of the Executive.

2.10. **Accredited qualifications under the new framework.** Four new qualifications including integrated masters and standalone masters have been approved across two providers, Leeds and Loughborough Universities.

2.11. **Transition applications.** Qualifications from 3 providers were approved to transition to the new standards. These included 2-year part 2 quals, and Part 3 qualifications.

2.12. **Causes for Concern:** two areas have been discussed by the Committee in 2025:

- **University College London (UCL):** The Committee closed the causes for concern investigation into University College London in October 2025. The final review visit included speaking to junior staff and students to gain a view as to whether the University had made sufficient progress in relation to the Howlett Brown report. The Visitors attended the October Committee meeting and provided evidence, which alongside the Executive report, provided satisfactory assurance that sufficient progress had been made. The Committee has requested that a brief update on ongoing progress is included within the University's annual monitoring report submission.

- **University of Plymouth:** In August the Committee became aware of an issue raised by external examiners that some students had not met all of the ARB's required outcomes. The Executive met with the External Examiners and University and engaged one of ARB's Visitors in the process. Additional assessments were undertaken by the affected students over the summer period and subsequently, the Committee was assured that the cohort had met the required standards. The issues arose because the Provider had made changes to the delivery of the course, that had not been discussed with ARB, and there was some evidence that students were in one cohort were not meeting the criteria on one of the key design modules. Actions to address this cohort have been satisfactorily resolved, but the Executive is now undertaking a wider review to consider the causes of the concern and the Committee will continue to review the situation during 2026.

Approach to accreditation work in 2026

- 2.13. The Committee discussed approaches to its work in 2026 taking account of workload pressures, wind-down on accreditation of undergraduate qualifications, and how to prioritise work through the lens of risk and with a view to meeting transition deadlines. Committee members were of the view that reviewing all annual monitoring submissions was not a Committee priority in comparison to having oversight of Regular Reviews, causes for concern and new/transition applications for accreditation. The Committee was also of the view that any continued monitoring and review of undergraduate (Part 1 only) qualifications by either the Executive or the Committee was not the best use of time and resource.
- 2.14. In addition to the observing of Committee discussions by the Chair of the Board, these views were fed into the Board in December 2025. A paper outlining how the Committee is assured of the quality of qualifications, including the effective use of sampling of annual monitoring reports will be considered at the Committee's March meeting.

General commentary

- 2.15. **HE funding pressures & staffing:** The Committee is aware of current higher education funding pressures and of the impact this is having, particularly on staffing. The Committee has seen a number of comments from External Examiners and other sources expressing concern over the staffing pressures faced by architecture schools. The Executive and the Committee continue to monitor staffing levels at Universities. Under both old and new accreditation process there are no minimum staffing requirements although data is monitored for outliers. It is for Universities to decide how to staff their architecture departments, and ARB will only get involved where there is evidence that students are failing to meet ARB Outcomes because there is insufficient staffing in place. To date the Committee has

not seen evidence that this has happened on any accredited qualification, notwithstanding the causes for concern investigation at Plymouth which is not believed to be directly related to staffing reductions and pressures within higher education.

2.16.ARB Visits: The visiting process appears to be embedding well as an effective quality assurance tool. The involvement of external visitors has brought a richness to the Committee's understanding, and their independent expertise is very much valued, alongside that of the Executive. The Committee has regularly commented that quality assurance would be strengthened if reported information is triangulated through students and University staff. It is positive that the ARB supports this direction of travel once the transition to new qualifications is complete. Where students have been able to contribute to visits e.g. UCL causes for concern, Leeds new qualification, the visitors have commented positively about the value of this.

2.17.Workload: The Committee is sensitive to the heavy workload associated with maintaining effective accreditation processes whilst transitioning in parallel to new standards and processes. The Committee supports the steps taken to manage this additional workload. This includes wrapping clarification on Standards 3 and 6 into regular reviews whenever possible, and making recommendations arising from annual monitoring a requirement for the following year rather than standalone actions for each provider.

2.18.The future approach to accreditation set out in 2.16 should also assist as it will reduce the volume of Committee briefings that the Executive provides.

Conclusion

2.19.In summary, the Committee has made significant steps in supporting the adoption of the new educational standards, notably with accreditation of the first new and transitioned qualifications. The Committee would like to thank the Executive for their extensive support and hard work during this ongoing period of significant change, and we look forward to continuing to work together to progress this critically important agenda for the future of architecture in the UK.

3. Resource Implications

3.1. There are no resource implications arising from this update. The activities of the Committee, and the workload associated with delivering the new framework for initial education and training, are included in the Board's budget, and the strategic business plan.

4. Risk Implications

4.1. There are no direct risks associated with the contents of this report. Accreditation, and impact on statutory duties are already included in the ARB Risk Register. We keep these risks under close review, and may be impacted in terms of volumes or types of accreditation applications received once the Board makes its final decisions on the Practical Experience components of work, and also the financial and political situation within the Higher Education system. If there were significant changes in the number of applications or Providers, this may affect income or the delivery of the Transition Plan by December 2028.

5. Communication

5.1. There are no additional communication issues related to this report that are not covered by existing engagement with individual Providers, or representative bodies in the sector.

6. Equality and Diversity implications

6.1. There are no additional EDI implications of this report. The Accreditation Handbook sets out the requirements on Providers to collect and submit data as part of the Standards for Providers. This data, once collected from each Provider will be used to inform decision-making, for the individual Provider over time, or for benchmarking purposes across all accredited Providers as a whole.

7. Recommendations

To discuss the Accreditation Committee Annual Report 2025.

To discuss updates on the implementation of the new accreditation model and processes.