



Commission on Professional Practical Experience

Analysis report on the Commission's call for evidence

March – April 2024

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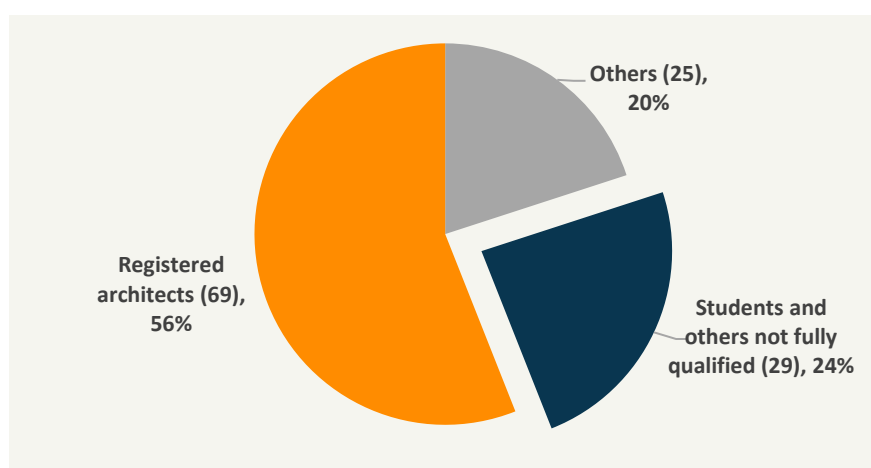
Summary

ARB's independent Professional Practical Experience Commission is investigating the challenges faced by architecture students in the UK in seeking opportunities for suitable PPE and making recommendations to ARB to help improve the quality of training experience for architects.

We launched this call for evidence so that anyone could tell the Commission what's working and what isn't. It asked for views, experiences and insights into PPE in architecture, aiming to gather both positive examples and areas for improvement, and provided the opportunity for respondents to suggest changes that could be made. They were able to do so through a series of open questions (see Annex A for the list of these questions).

The call for evidence was open between 13 March and 24 April 2024. During that time, we received 123 unique responses. As with other ARB consultations and surveys, most responses (69, 56%) were from registered architects, including those who are also academics (17, 14%). We also heard from students at different stages and others who are not yet fully qualified (29, 24%). The highest group of respondents was from London and the South East but a breadth of locations meant we obtained views from different nations and regions.

Figure 1.1: Composition of respondents by respondent type (% of responses)



Alongside the call for evidence, the Commission has continued to visit different parts of the UK to hear from learning providers, students and architects directly.

Insights

The call for evidence included our view of what good experience looks like:

“Paid employed work, with effective management and supervision. There is support for individuals so that their work experience complements their academic journey to registration as an architect. Good practical work experience should be in an environment where they are supported and treated fairly so that the requirements of ARB's Code of Conduct and Practice are role-modelled and encouraged.”

Professional Practical Experience Commission

We read and analysed each response against the recurring themes we observed (see Annex B) and tracked the number of respondents raising each of these unprompted. This meant the call or evidence has told us more about the biggest contributors to good experience and more detail on its components. We also noted any specific suggestions for improvements that respondents made.

Integration between learning providers and practices

We analysed comments about integration between learning providers and practices, including course structure, content and general collaboration.

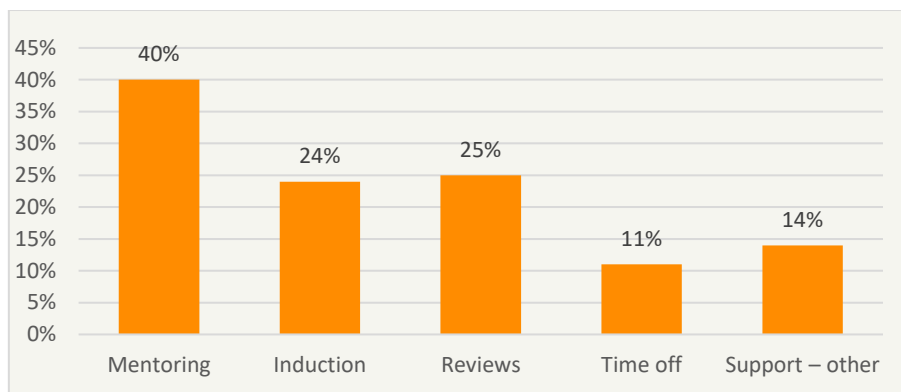
- Twenty-six respondents (21%) said courses should be organised with a formalised and structured placement component, although some cautioned about the impact on work levels for students on these.
- Thirty-two respondents (26%) said that crossover between content is important so that work in practice could be used as part of their university work, or where learning providers teach skills that are directly relevant to their practice work. Respondents also highlighted specific gaps in skills that affected preparedness for practice, including certain types of software.
- Some respondents (16, 13%) wanted learning providers to do more to help students access placements.

Working conditions and support

We analysed the most common ideas and concerns raised by respondents as important areas. We also identified specific suggestions for types of support that might be helpful in those areas.

- The most common components of good PPE that respondents mentioned throughout this call for evidence were mentoring (49, 40%), induction (29, 24%) and regular reviews (31, 25%). We received several suggestions for further guidance or regulation in these areas (see 3.1 to 3.9) but a common theme among these was to provide more clarity about expected roles and guidance to help individuals to achieve that.
- Some respondents included criticisms of the current format of reviewing and recording experience, mentioning PEDRs and suggestions for improving this area (see 3.14).
- Respondents raised pay (45, 37%) and working hours (25, 20%) as a recurring issue, with some asking for more regulatory interventions to prevent what they saw as underpaying students. In addition, 14 (11%) said time off for studying or flexible scheduling was important. Suggestions included mandating this in a standardised framework.
- Workplace misconduct was cited in some responses but not extensively.
- Other suggestions we received (see 3.15) included:
 - Accrediting or auditing practices.
 - ARB guidance to both students and practices on what is expected of each other.
 - ARB facilitating placements, such as through a platform that brings together practices and students to help fill placements.
 - Using ARB's CPD scheme or Code of Conduct as a way to indirectly improve the support students receive from registered architects.

Figure 1.2: The most common areas of good PPE raised by respondents (% of responses)

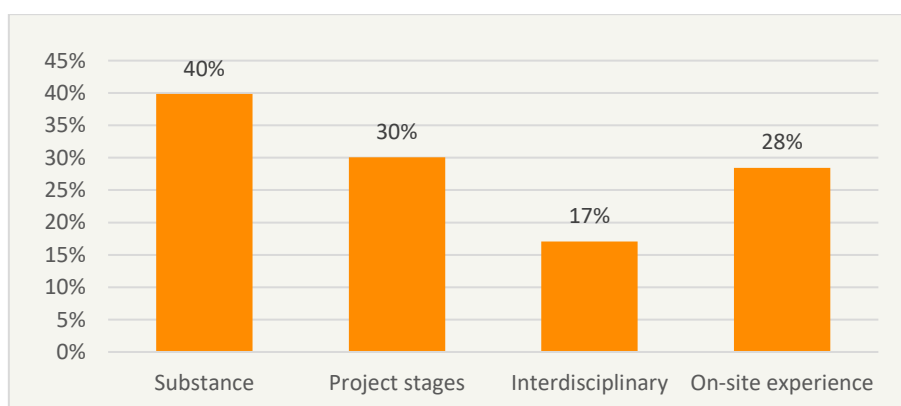


Content and experience gained

We analysed views on how the content of ARB's Competency Outcomes should be gained, rather than suggestions on the already agreed Outcomes themselves. The most common themes that respondents found important were:

- Respondents thought students should be doing work that was substantial (49, 40%) and across a full range of project stages (37, 30%). They raised concerns that skills and learning needs weren't being properly matched to the work they were undertaking.
- Thirty-five respondents (28%) highlighted on-site experience as a particularly important area and 21 (17%) mentioned exposure to other disciplines in the built environment.
- Some suggested ARB should produce a clearer checklist about the experiences students should be receiving, as a way to complement the Outcomes.
- In addition to clearer guidance on mutual expectations mentioned above, standardised job descriptions were suggested to help the content of experience.
- Respondents had mixed views about the impact of practice size on experience gained. Some said that smaller practices were more likely to be able to provide more cohesive or comprehensive development, often due to faster project turnovers or smaller working teams. Others commented on the benefits of working across a range of sizes or that larger practices were more able to provide resources directly for professional development.

Figure 1.3: Features of experience that respondents raised (% of responses)



Barriers

We recorded specific barriers that could guide potential interventions, rather than more general sentiments about difficulties accessing the profession. The three biggest areas were:

- Practices being unable or reluctant to hire students – respondents spoke about dilemmas practices face where they want to help train future architects and pay them appropriately but may not have the resources to do so while working competitively.
- Difficulties in finding available placements – respondents highlighted issues in finding listings or that some depended on existing connections to the practice.
- Discrimination experienced – 10 respondents (8%) mentioned this and ways in which they felt it affected the quality of experience gained.

Other comments included difficulties that a lack of experience posed for entering Part 2 courses, with learning providers requiring experience that some students may not have at this stage.

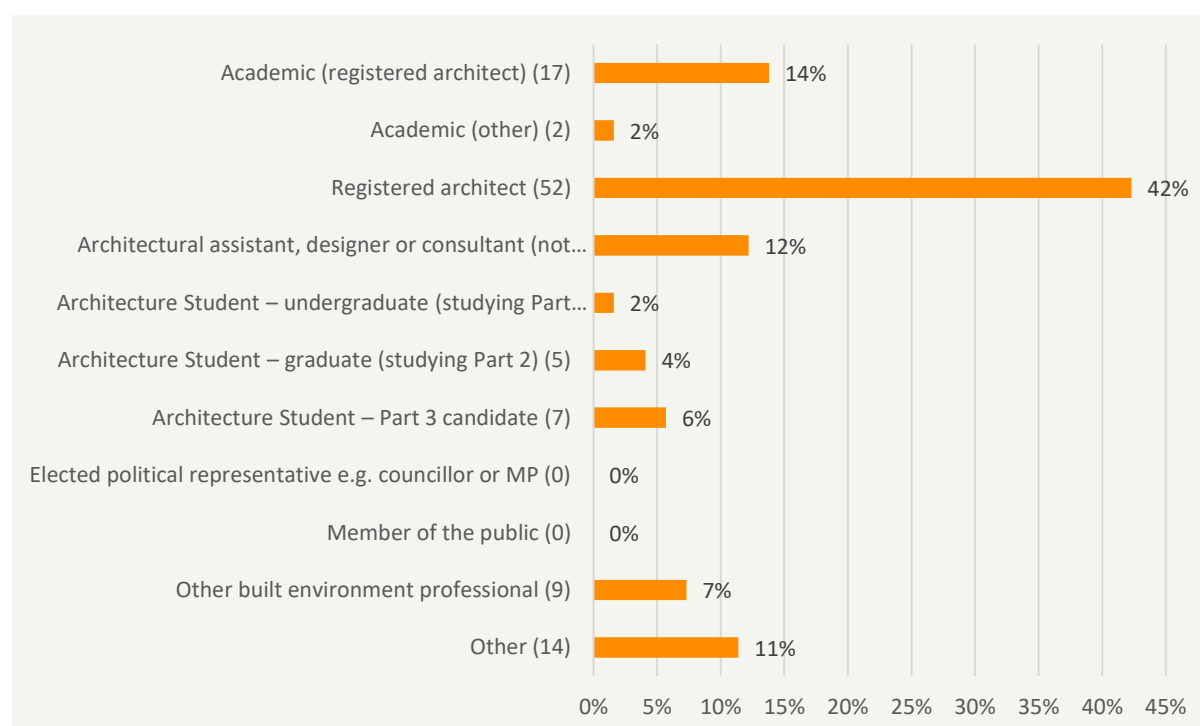
Registration changes

Two respondents suggested changing ARB's 'double counting rule' that prevents experience gained while on a credit bearing course from counting towards ARB's minimum requirement. Other suggestions were to consider more flexible practical experience requirements that would help individuals who already had some experience in other built environment disciplines.

Who responded

- 1.1** We received 123 unique responses to the call for evidence. Respondents were asked to identify themselves across categories including demographic information and their type of work or size of practice. Most responses (69, 56%) were from registered architects, and 17 of these (14%) were from those who are also academics.
- 1.2** In addition to the 17 academics (14%) who are also registered architects, we received another 2 responses (2%) from other academics. There were a further 15 respondents (12%) who selected architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified), followed by 14 respondents (12%) who selected other, which included international architects, chartered architectural technologists, and retired architects.
- 1.3** Fourteen students (11%) responded, and they could identify their stage of education and training: undergraduate architecture student studying Part 1 (2, 1%); architecture graduate studying Part 2 (5, 4%); and architecture student – Part 3 candidate (7, 5%). Nine respondents (7%) were other built environment professionals.

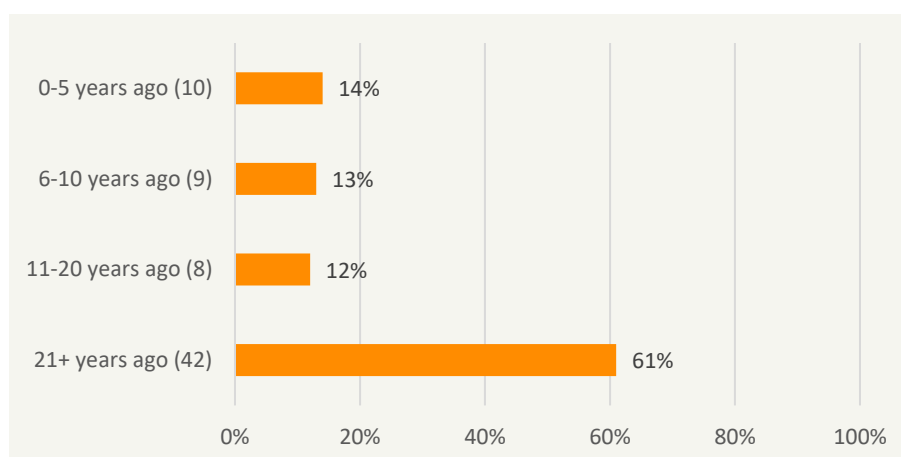
Figure 2.1: Respondents organised by role (% of responses)



Registered architects

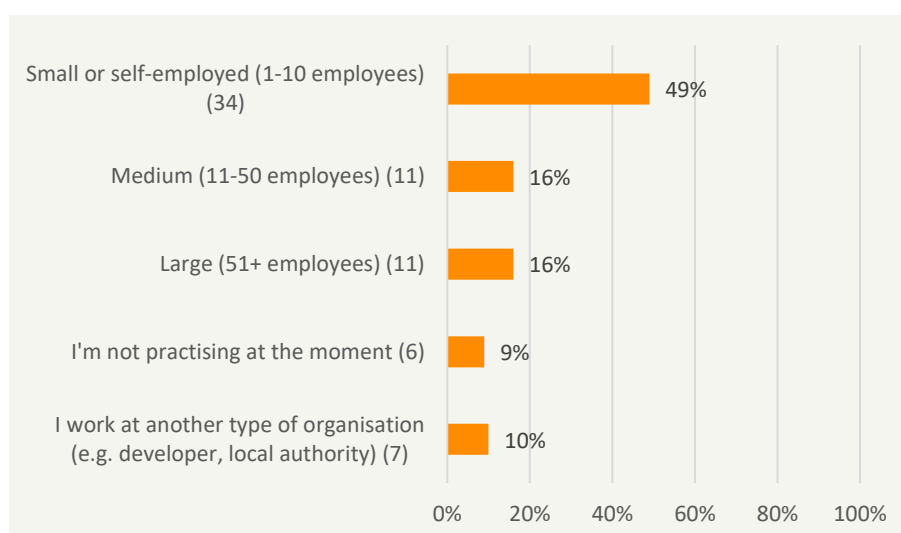
- 1.4** Most registered architects qualified 21 or more years ago (42, 61%). Responses from remaining architects were spread across different times since becoming fully qualified. This included hearing from 10 (14%) who had recently qualified 0-5 years ago.

Figure 2.2: Registered architects by time since qualified (%)



- 1.5** Among registered architects, we received responses from a range of practice sizes. They ranged from small or self-employed (34, 49%), medium (11, 16%) and large (11, 16%).

Figure 2.3: Registered architects by type/size of practice (%)



Organisations

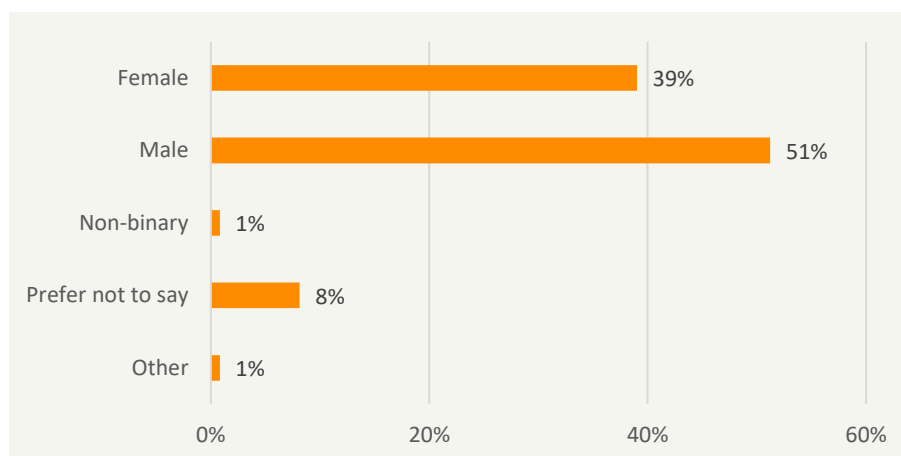
- 1.6** There were 31 responses on behalf of organisations, which accounted for 25% of all responses to the call for evidence. These included architectural practices, universities, professional bodies and a local council. A full list of respondents who agreed to be identified is included in Annex A.

Gender

- 1.7** Forty-eight respondents (39%) identified as female and 63 as male (51%). One respondent (0.8%) identified as non-binary, 1 selected other (0.8%) and 10 (8%) chose not to state their gender. The proportion of female respondents is slightly higher than the demographics of

the Register (which is 32%), with the proportion of men responding falling below their proportion on the Register (68%).¹

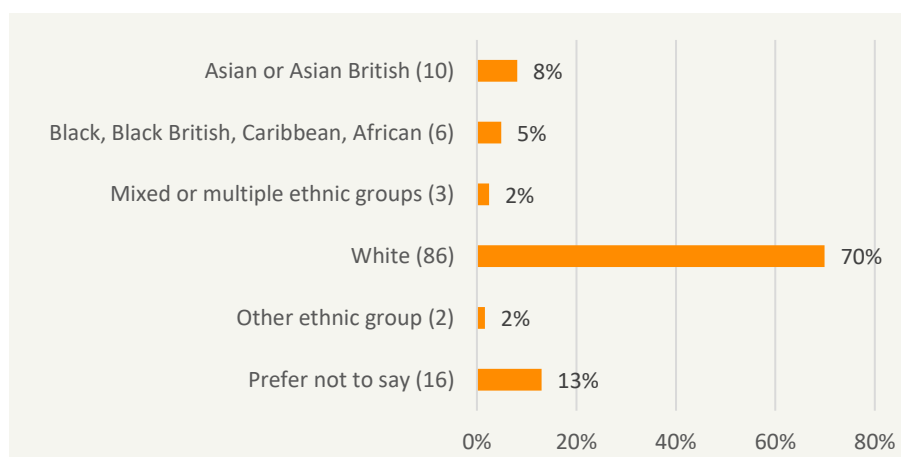
Figure 2.4: Respondents organised by gender (% of responses)



Ethnicity

- 1.8** Respondents were asked which ethnic group they belong to. Most respondents (86, 70%) were white. This is lower than the demographics of the Register (81%), with Asian, Black, being slightly higher than their percentage of the Register.

Figure 2.5: Respondents organised by ethnicity (% of responses)



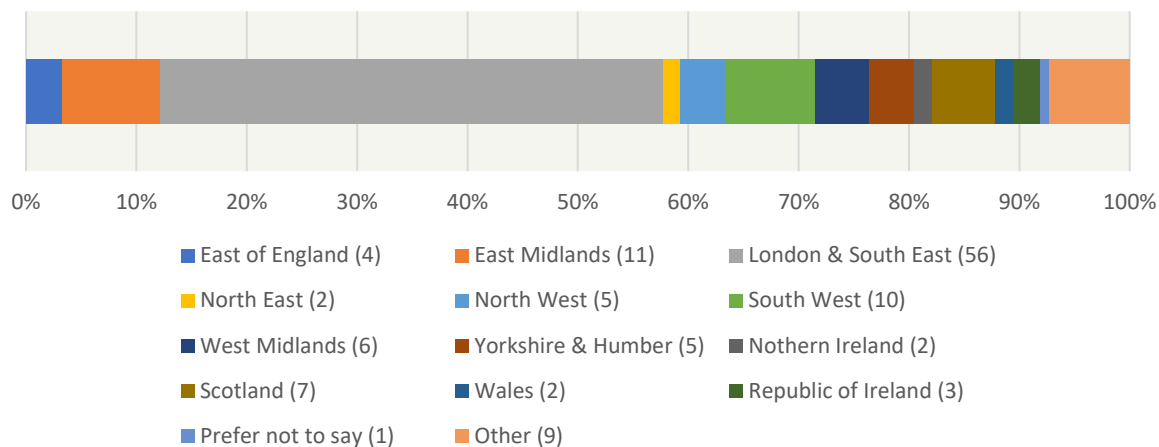
Geographic spread of respondents

- 1.9** Respondents were asked to identify the nations and regions that most closely described their place of residence. We received responses from each region, but the highest group were based in London and the South East (56, 46%), followed by East Midlands (11, 9%) as the second highest group and South West (10, 8%) as the third highest group (See Figure

¹ Register data is as of May 2024. Further information is available on ARB's website at <https://arb.org.uk/about-arb/equality-diversity/data>.

2.6). There were 9 respondents (7%) selected other locations. These locations included Australia, Italy, Germany, Kenya, Czechia, and China.

Figure 2.6: Respondents organised by place of residence



Health

1.10 We asked respondents whether they have any physical or mental health conditions or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. Seven percent of respondents said they do, 79% do not and 14% preferred not to say.

Integration

Views expressed on integration

- 2.1** One of the recurring themes in responses was the integration between academia and practices. These included comments about integrating the course structure itself, having more crossover content, and having more access support between learning providers and practices.
- 2.2** There were 26 respondents (21%) suggesting that courses should be organised with a formalised placement component as part of their structure. Examples included internships or work placements being structured in the modules, allowing students to gain professional practical experience during their studies. A recommendation highlighted that having a placement year in between studies would both enable the candidate to apply practical professional skills to their academic outputs, as well as enable the candidate to be under the mentorship and supervision of the university while at practice, ensuring the candidate a mentor and support during their practical experience.

“My experience in professional practical experience comes from studying, teaching and practicing architecture locally and abroad. One thing I have found common in the 3 countries where I’ve worked, is the integration of a PPE module since the early stages of the undergraduate degree through well-structured modules requiring a number of hours spent in architectural firms, construction companies, developers, etc.”

Academic (other), West Midlands

- 2.3** However, as a counterpoint to this, some also said that parallel practice work is less effective overall and can result in extra pressure on students.

“It seems clear that the educational model in the UK relies on others to deliver the content for 'professional practice'. This no longer works and is not an integrated approach. Part 3 should not be a bolt-on but is a strand that should be part of the education of an architect from year 1.”

Academic (registered architect), East of England

“...found the parallel practice work sapped their energy such that there was little effective work being done for study and creative work under their education requirement. This blended learning method in my view is not working and the reason for this is the practice dynamic of paying students to work and students needing time for study pulls opposite directions.”

Registered architect, West Midlands

- 2.4** On content, 32 respondents (26%) said that direct crossover between the content of university and placement work is important. This is where their work in practice could be used as part of their university work, or where learning providers teach more skills that are useful in their practice work.

“Each young aspiring Architect gets immediately immersed into life as an Architect in practice, meeting clients at inception face to face, conducting measured surveys of the site and buildings [please can this be introduced into University courses as it's an essential skill] and drafting those survey notes onto an accurate CAD base.”

Registered architect, Yorkshire & Humber

- 2.5** Some respondents also asked for more integration to help students access placements, with 16 (13%) making comments in this area. They explained that this would be helpful due to having lack of connections. The requirement for support were not only limited to access for job opportunities, but also about career advice such as CV, portfolio, and interview support, as well as support during student's work experience in terms of mentoring. They also suggested having a stronger connection between academia and practices when it comes to mentorship support might be helpful for both students and practices.

“Universities should have a placement cell, that helps to place graduates within offices across the UK to gain the required practical professional experience. The RIBA could also set up a similar placement cell, besides just running the RIBA Jobs portal. This would ensure that everyone is able to find gainful employment and also help offices to gain new talent.”

Other, London & South East

Gaps in learning

- 2.6** We analysed responses that mentioned any gaps in academic teaching and working in practice. Responses raised concerns that the skills being taught in university were not as applicable in practice, which created a skills gap for candidates looking to undertake professional practical experience. Some mentioned specific skills or software.

“Students should be taught more valuable skills during university to ensure their work based experience is better - such as using Revit, ArchiCAD or similar BIM Level 2 software.”

Registered architect, South West

“My experience of the Part 1 degree is that, as a vocational degree, it does a very poor job of preparing students for the reality of the construction industry. During the degree there was no real consideration for construction cost, buildability, building regulation compliance, structural design - although we had lectures and tasks that touched on these subjects, they were never seen as a core part of the considerations when designing a building. It was often explained that the Part 1 degree was just there to "Open our minds" and teaching students how to "design" and be "creative", and I only ever saw these real-world constraints being considered as an afterthought.”

Other built environment professional, East of England

Working conditions and support

Mentoring

- 3.1** The role of mentoring was a common theme in responses. Respondents raised concerns or made suggestions about the role of mentoring in the successful undertaking of professional practical experience. This mentoring covered both support by learning providers and practices, but also mentorship in the facilitation of PEDRs, benchmarking against Part 3 outcomes, and professional environments.
- 3.2** Concerns or suggestions about mentoring were proactively raised by 49 respondents (40%). Registered architects were more likely to raise this; 67% of respondents (33) saying this were registered architects, and 15 of these were those who are also academics.
- 3.3** There was another concern that mentoring was not consistent across the profession, and that this impacted those in earlier stages of their practical training (post-Part 1) in acclimatisation to the profession. Another recalled the experience of a student who felt their practice was not aware of how to support them on their apprenticeship route.
- 3.4** Eight respondents made specific recommendations that ARB should provide different types of guidance, standards or other activities to improve mentoring. These included:
- Clarifying the role of a mentor within a practice.
 - Establishing a scheme to directly provide mentors for students.
 - Stronger powers to 'suspend' mentors if they don't meet specified standards.
 - Strengthening ARB's Code of Conduct and Practice to require architects to support others on their education, training and development.
 - Requiring a 3-month review for every student as part of the pathway.
 - ARB providing coaching or training for mentoring, with one respondent suggesting mandatory training in this area.
 - Further general guidance on best practice, including guidance on the regulatory of meetings and reviews.

Induction

- 3.5** Another frequent response theme was about receiving a good induction into practice, with 29 (24%) saying this was important. Suggestions varied from standardised induction frameworks to better management by practices regarding those in training, such as establishing the requirements of both the 'trainee' and practice.
- 3.6** Respondents highlighted the impacts of good induction and training on candidates, including better performance at Part 3 assessment, and that good practice could involve not only

making sure induction takes place but also aligning it to an individual's growth development and resources the practice could provide in response.

Reviews

- 3.7** Regular and structured reviews or appraisals were seen as important by 31 respondents (25%). As with responses on induction and training, concerns and suggestions for reviews were raised with comments on mentoring.
- 3.8** A lack of formalised review systems was mentioned. Respondents claimed that without these, those in training were not supported to reach their Part 3 criteria, and therefore, lengthening their qualification process. One respondent suggested to have "statutory 3-month reviews for all architectural assistants, where PEDR sheets could be assessed and reviewed." Another summarised their experience by talking about a lack of clarity in how their tasks were related to projects or their performance.
- 3.9** Those that offered current best practice included references to formalised training and mentorship programmes currently offered at a few practices in the UK. Examples of these included "12-month benchmarking reviews," as well as "robust Part 3 training and mentorship programmes" by practices, and "access to architecture" programmes by universities.

Time off

- 3.10** Fourteen respondents (11%) said time off or flexible scheduling is important. This was often in conjunction with concerns raised on hours worked and pay, especially for those that had not yet began their Part 3 qualifications and were working in the sector as Part 1/Part 2 architectural assistants.

"Granting of study leave by practice differs, with a varied approach to what is given or permitted. Some practices split this over two years, so 5 days per year. This does not work with a Part 3 cycle of teaching and assessment, which is often scheduled to run in 12-month time frame. Some practices allow study leave to be taken as unpaid time off, whilst others require employees to use their annual leave."

Academic (registered architect), South West

- 3.11** Other suggestions included having mandating of study leave in a standardised framework that practices, students, and academics could follow, as well as guidance from bodies such as ARB toward the facilitation of professional practical experience.

Other support for students

- 3.12** Seventeen respondents (14%) raised other areas of support that they thought were important. Of these, CPD and its role in indirectly creating better support for students was more likely to be mentioned.
- 3.13** Suggestions on CPD were made in conjunction with recommendations on what a new Architects' Code of Conduct could look like. Respondents recommended that training of candidates, active practice mentorship, and support could be required by registered architects through the Code of Conduct. This was also raised by respondents who highlighted misconduct and unprofessional behaviour within their time in practice. They suggested that ARB could host a signposting and 'whistleblowing' platform for complaints to be made without harmful consequences for those making their complaints.
- 3.14** Some respondents included concerns with the current format of recording experience, through the PEDR system. They mentioned the flaws they have seen in the current system and many of these interacted with other concerns. For example, gaps in mentoring or lack of access to sites or projects made PEDRs more difficult to complete. These concerns were also related to costs of the Part 3 and its subsequent involved costs, such as PSA support, PEDR sheets, and the time commitment undertaken often at the expense of working (billable) hours. We received these suggestions specifically on PEDRs:
- Replacing it with something lighter and less onerous.
 - Avoiding the student being reliant on a university they're no longer part of or having to pay in that situation.
 - Supplementing it with somewhere where a student can write comments that wouldn't be seen by someone from the practice.

"PEDR's to include X number of hours of site experience for example. Or that you should have worked on one project X amount of hours. But this can be difficult as some periods of time, there are no projects on site due to economic reasons and no project is guaranteed to be live for a continuous period."

Registered architect, London & South East

“The RIBA managed PEDR in its current format is not fit for purpose. APSA members report tardiness in students submitting these (often because of the slowness to respond by Practice Mentors or practices, rather than the students), which negates their effectiveness as a reflective document informing personal, professional development. Often the feedback is cursory, and there have been reports of students writing their own feedback for practice mentors to sign off, to speed the process, with little or no idea of what the student may need to do. Similarly, some students do not (or are unable to) submit contemporaneous sheets as they go - saving these to submit several at once. This jeopardises the chance to get and act upon feedback from their PSA's or practice mentors.”

APSA

“The PEDR system is long winded and complicated. Much of the details it asks for are confidential to my company and I really struggled to get my PSA mentor from my undergrad uni to cooperate. The system of relying on a PSA from an institution you're not a part of anymore is impractical, and a £200 fee for a private one is not something the vast majority of part 1's can afford on their starting salary.”

Architecture Student – graduate (studying Part 2), London & South East

3.15 Thirteen respondents suggested changes that would directly provide information or other help for students. A recurring theme among these was a lack of mutual understanding between practices and students. The suggestions included:

- An ARB ‘accreditation badge’ or practice charter that would help inform students where the best experience could be obtained.
- Auditing practices to ensure they are providing the right environment for gaining experience, with a clear list of what’s expected and minimum standards.
- Clarity from ARB on where students can undertake PPE.
- The guarantee of practical experience placements, or at least facilitating this.
- ARB hosting a platform where companies could advertise placements that students could view. One said this should include commitments for practices who participated.
- Clearer guidance to students and practices on what is expected of each and what is ‘good’ or ‘not good’ experience. This included producing a list of principles and guidelines to ensure students receive what they need.
- ARB and professional bodies giving more visibility to best practice in the sector.
- Providing advice on what students should show in a portfolio or interview.
- A support line for students to get advice from ARB, especially on what’s expected of practices.

- ARB providing an approved training contract.
- Students being helped to second between practices to fill gaps in their experience.
- Looking specifically at the RSUA Professional Insights Programme and its role in helping employers find students who would benefit them.

“Within practice it is almost impossible to understand what is expected of the practice and the student.”

Academic (registered architect), East of England

Pay

- 3.16** Pay was raised as a concern within respondents, with 45 respondents (37%) saying that low or no pay was a problem. There were concerns about students being used as cheap labour to fulfil repetitive tasks. Concerns on pay were raised by different types of respondents, not just those currently going through their initial education and training.
- 3.17** Respondents raised concerns about underpayment, both as a salary, and when considered with overtime work conducted. These were consistent regardless of location, personal characteristics, and stage of qualification. Respondents stated that underpayment was “significantly present” across the profession, and that ARB could provide better guidance on expected pay for those in training. This was also raised as a point of consideration for Code of Conduct, where pay for those in training could be mandated to a certain degree.
- 3.18** Lacking guidance or industry framework on the differences between Part 1, 2, and 3 architectural assistant roles was also raised as a concern. Respondents mentioned that a lack of guidance on the job description and professional skills of each position meant that those in training could not refer to an expected salary and would undertake work for less pay. Some further mentioned that a lack of clarity in different roles meant that practices were not able to resource training and pay appropriate to their staff, especially to those in training stage.
- 3.19** Unpaid overtime was also mentioned. Respondents concerned that graduates had often accepted pay cuts to reflect their apprenticeship programmes. Additionally, when unpaid overtime hours were taken into consideration, many were paid below the national minimum wage. The advertisement of unpaid positions including both full-time and internships, was another concern being raised.
- 3.20** Recommendations included sanctions by ARB in cases where minimum wage was not provided, as well as stronger guidance on billed hours and working conditions. Of the 45 respondents raising pay as a concern there were suggestions for mandated pay, regulated pay scales, and infractions penalised.

Behaviour

- 3.21** Respondents raised workplace behaviours as a concern in current professional practical experience. Some respondents highlighted the misconduct they had personally experienced, and some shared about the misconduct they had either witnessed or been told.

“We have heard about numerous situations of bullying and harassment. This includes verbal intimidation with belittling, poking fun, and condescension. It includes more extreme verbal behaviour with shouting, searing, aggressive tones, and racist comments. It includes applying undue pressure for work deadlines, unfair laying of blame and unreasonable expectations. It includes less overt intimidation of questioning a long-term sickness, ignoring the student and ‘gaslighting.’ [...] Students say they do not feel empowered to challenge this, because it was the director and there is no one more senior to approach. Even with an HR department, students can feel inhibited in acting.”

Academic (registered architect), South West

- 3.22** EDI and EDI initiatives were raised as a point of concern, and were in conjunction with concerns regarding support, behaviour, and resourcing initiatives. Suggestions centring EDI mentioned workplace respect, and that facilitation or monitoring of workplace culture could have a positive impact on the delivery and success of professional practical experience.

“Often the struggle that trainee architects have is in experiencing micro-aggressions, such as exclusion from conversations, being pigeonholed for certain tasks (because they are good at them), their needs not being prioritised etc. [...] One thing that exacerbates this for those undertaking PPE is the fear of complaining. Firstly, the trainee might not feel that what is happening to them is out of the ordinary, or culturally unacceptable and so might not feel they have a right to raise an issue. Secondly, the employee is beholden to the employer and may feel that it is not worth their while ‘rocking the boat’, for fear of repercussions.”

Academic (registered architect), Wales

- 3.23** A respondent quoted data from the ‘Project on Architectural Student Employment Outcomes’ (PASEO) 2023 to support their concerns about workplace culture and behaviours specifically impacting those in the training and final stages of their architectural qualifications. This PASEO included data from over 300 student respondents, and included 3 findings relevant to our investigation:

- “Workload and Pressure: A significant number of students (34%) report feeling overwhelmed at least once or twice a week. This suggests that workload management could be improved. This includes addressing the practice of working late at the request of managers, which correlates with feeling overwhelmed.”

- “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policies: There’s an indication that discrimination in the workplace is an issue, with reports of gender-based discrimination and bullying, often by directors/managers.”
- “Bullying and harassment: 32% of our Part 3 students reported being bullied in the previous month. More than half reported that it was by their director or immediate manager. The previous year’s results reported 31% being bullied. There is a hesitance to report bullying due to fear of retaliation, lack of trust in the processes, or perceived futility.”

Hours

- 3.24** Comments about working hours were raised by 25 respondents (20%). We analysed these separately to pay but they were often raised together with concerns on underpaid work, such as unpaid overtime and no time off in lieu.
- 3.25** Respondents did not specifically highlight the number of hours overworked. However, we noticed that concerns about workplace culture were raised in relation to overtime work, with phrases like "this is the expectation" and variants being used.
- 3.26** Contractual disparities and disputes were also mentioned alongside overtime work culture. Though no specific examples or types of contracts were highlighted in this context, there were suggestions about having a whistleblowing policy or a standardised contract framework that ARB could provide for those in their early stages of training. In addition, there was a suggestion claiming that hours or time off should be enforced by ARB.

Content and experience gained

Substance

- 4.1** A recurring theme was that the quality or substance of work is important – not just menial. Forty-nine (40%) respondents mentioned this as important. Comments included that repetitive work was undertaken by those in the early stages of their training, with reference to “students being used as cheap CAD fodder.” The sentiment was reflected in mentions to those in training undertaking work of similar skill for extended periods of time, leading to a lack of experience in a range of skills development.
- 4.2** Respondents said ARB should produce a checklist of types of experience that students should acquire, as this would provide them with information on what to work towards. This would be information beyond the descriptions of the competency Outcomes for initial education and training. Standardised job descriptions according to the student's experience level were suggested by one respondent.

“A lack of recognition of the expected roles and responsibilities of Part 1 and Part 2 students led to practical experience led to periods when I was not offered work to the level of my education. This was poorly monitored by my universities and offices.”

Academic (registered architect), South West

Stages

- 4.3** There were 37 responses (30%) claiming that exposure to every project stage is important. Comments included mentions of RIBA work stages, the ability of candidates to undertake work across project components and project stages, and the opportunity for candidates to apply critical thinking skills or independent skills to these project components (as opposed to undertaking work on a task-completion basis).
- 4.4** Responses about project stages were also related to comments about the substance of work undertaken, as well as the ability of trainee candidates to undertake site visits. Project stages were mentioned in some responses along with candidates’ familiarity with different contracts.
- 4.5** There were also views on the practice size that could offer a range of project stages for candidates in training. Respondents shared that the size of projects often undertaken by large practices meant that projects were stuck in a certain project stage for an extended duration of time, which limited the involved candidate’s ability to experience other project stages.

- 4.6** This was also inversely mentioned in responses about the ability of small practices to expose candidates to a range of project stages. One respondent highlighted that, as a small practice, they can offer experience across a wider scale of services.

“As a small practice we feel we offer students excellent experience of the full range of architectural services, either directly through the projects they work on or indirectly by visiting other projects and joining in the discussion on other projects at regular team meetings. It is much easier to have an overview of the whole process in a small office with shorter building contracts.

The downside of a small practice is when there is a downturn in workload we cannot always afford to keep staff which unfortunately sometimes includes students on their practical training.”

Registered architect, London & South East

Site

- 4.7** The importance of on-site experience in professional development was highlighted in 35 responses (28%). One response summarised the problem that “site experience is typically a challenge for younger aspiring architects.”
- 4.8** Responses echoed that site visits were necessary to understand the practicalities of building. One response suggested that it should be mandatory because of its role in understanding what is taught during education.

Interdisciplinary experience

- 4.9** There were 21 respondents (17%) mentioned the importance of experience of working alongside other disciplines or professions. This was raised in conjunction with mentions on the collaborative nature of the profession. We analysed these as comments on multidisciplinary project teams, the architects’ awareness of other construction professionals, and whether practical training should be more reflective of this collaborative nature of a building project.
- 4.10** Suggestions about having a cross-disciplinary route to registration were also noticed, for example, alternative formats, or education after which professionals could undertake architectural registration. Specifically, respondents mentioned enabling those with architectural technology qualifications to be able to appear for registration post-practical experience.
- 4.11** Some responses were related to site visits, saying that this would aid candidates’ understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of the profession, and architects’ role in the wider design team. While no specific suggestion was raised regarding facilitating

interdisciplinary relationships, there were comments claiming that ARB could mandate or have stricter requirements on site visits (as mentioned in above section).

Size of practices

- 4.12** We analysed responses about the size of practices and how this could be relevant to the content of the experience gained. There was a total of 23 responses (19%) mentioning the size of practices, and this varied between small practices and large practices; respondents also commented about experiences gained in a range of practice sizes.

- 4.13** Thirteen responses (11%) thought experience is better gained in small practices. Some highlighted that smaller practices could offer more cohesive practical training, due to their stronger cross-employee links and faster project turnovers, such as projects with shorter completion durations and smaller working teams. However, some respondents raised concerns that mandating practices would put pressure on small practices, especially those which were financially under stress.

- 4.14** Eight responses (7%) highlighted experience is better gained in a range of practices. These mentioned that the scale, timelines, and resources varied between practices. Shorter projects meant that candidates could be more intrinsically involved in a range of project stages. As for in large practices, candidates could have peers in similar professional stages that aided mentorship and peer network support.

- 4.15** One respondent mentioned that being in a larger practice meant that candidates could be “exploited”, while another said that being in a larger practice meant that the practice was able to dedicate more resources toward the professional development of the candidate.

Barriers

Views expressed on barriers

5.1 We recorded views on various barriers that respondents experienced in the process of gaining professional practical experience. Three main areas we noticed and tracked were:

- Practices being unable or reluctant to hire students.
- Difficulties in finding placements.
- Discrimination experienced during working or during the process of applying.

5.2 There were 15 respondents (12%) who shared comments about practices being reluctant or that they are unable to hire students. Views here included the dilemmas that practices have on hiring. For example, smaller practices may want to help train the next generation of architects but might not have enough resources to do so while working in a competitive market.

“It is a highly competitive market, and not all practices will hire Part 1 or Part 2s which can cause a bottle neck. It introduces new issues with the availability of bigger practices to provide PPE. There is increasing risk for demand of PPE placements to outweigh provision, and guidance is required to assist those who have not been able to obtain a placement. Can this be regulated? If so, how?”

Other built environment professional, North East

“We are a small company and we can't afford to have either students or part 1 or part 2 students any more because they need so much training and supervision. If I want them to become experienced and useful I have to take them on site and to meetings but that means I'm paying them to just go with me and the client won't want to be paying for two people to attend a meeting when they only need one. So ultimately as a small practice I end up paying to train someone which I just can't afford. Architectural fees are just nowhere near large enough to accommodate these sort of additional costs. The other option I have is to try to get them to do some work of value but that probably means they get put on something which isn't that interesting or exciting for them.”

Registered architect, London & South East

“Practices feel that particularly taking on students, particularly Part 1's, can come with too much investment in time, which Practitioners do not have.”

Academic (registered architect), London & South East

- 5.3** In addition, there were 15 respondents (12%) who claimed that placement opportunities are hard to find, including lack of listings as a specific barrier. Some explained that security a post-Part 1 jobs was difficult because practical work experience would be expected even though applicants are recent graduates. Respondents also described that such barriers could also be related to having no connection or network with the practices and industries.

“In smaller offices there is very little recourse to have a mentor as all project architects are busy. I was lucky to be able to work closely with one but I have seen other examples of assistants just doing bits of different tasks and don't really get to be involved in one project for a longer term.”

Registered architect, London & South East

“Bar our universities or job forums / social media posting (very rare) openings, there is no tangible, accessible mechanism in place for any of us to find and secure these vital placements. Myself and so many of my peers spent months upon months of cold-calling and cold-emailing every single practice of interest (and eventually every single one in commutable distance of our homes as most of us don't have the luxury of just focusing on the practices we find interesting) only to get a handful of replies, if any at all. While it is largely considered a 'right of passage' amongst architects to have to go through these processes to find our first placements, that does not mean it makes it fair or correct that this is the case.”

Architecture Student – graduate (studying Part 2), Scotland

- 5.4** Furthermore, 10 respondents (8%) described discrimination by a practice, including in the process of applying. These respondents raised cases such as harassment, bullying, and more specific situations like unfair work content allocated by gender, or that practices were not accommodating towards people having disabilities or pregnancies. Such conditions were considered to impact the quality of professional practical experience gained. Some felt there were not enough mechanisms to help address these behaviours.

“Many practices do not pay students. They do not accommodate disabled architects or those with parental responsibilities. [...] I saw bullying in academia and in practice, report it but nothing changes.”

Academic (registered architect), East Midlands

"It can be very difficult securing your first practice job as all employers look for experience, yet with the rigorous study time, gaining highly effective experience and enough of what employees look for is very challenging. I believe the portfolio and person should be the priority for securing roles in practice over CV / experience."

**Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified),
London & South East**

"I did get experience in one practice - but received no design work, as a female I was allocated charity advocacy work and written archival work. It would have been better to be offered design work, in an architectural practice, rather than soft skill work as a female. I would have liked to have been given the opportunity to showcase my skills and develop them, in practice."

Architecture Student – graduate (studying Part 2), London & South East

- 5.5** One respondent said they found the pathway from undergraduate to Master's was difficult. This was because universities preferred to accept individuals with work experience.

"...I skipped the year out and accepted a place in M.Arch programme after a few months of job hunting. But even that was not easy, as the preference of the university for taking a year out was so high and I was first denied an interview due to graduating with 2.2 but actually 20% of us came straight from undergraduate. Something needs to change: there either must be more part 1 roles available, or the route straight from undergraduate to masters must become more accepted and encouraged."

Architecture Student – graduate (studying Part 2), East Midlands

Other topics and suggestions

Variation

- 6.1** In addition to the above topics identified, a recurring theme we noticed was that professional practical experience was too varied. There were 21 respondents (17%) commented that variation of the experience can be an issue or that experience should be more standardised and consistent. This was raised due to gaps in quality, opportunities, and support that exist in the process of gaining practical experiences.

“As PSA for students undertaking PPE in practice currently it is clear the experience of PPE is extremely varied. Varied in terms of quality (what are students exposed to, what guidance are they given) but also in terms of the varying practices they are working at - small practitioners to huge multinationals - residential to commercial, to industrial etc etc. There is also some variation, honestly, in the professionalism of the practices in which PPE is gained.”

Academic (registered architect), East Midlands

“I think the thing that could be improved in general is the standardisation of placement from practice to practice. For example the ability for students in smaller or sector specific practices to second to another practice to achieve knowledge that fills skills gaps during their placement.”

Other built environment professional, London & South East

“From interfacing with other architects over the years, I would describe practical experience as patchy, lacking any consistency and somewhat of a lottery.”

Academic (registered architect), Other

Timing

- 6.2** Comments on the best timing to take professional practical experience was another theme. There were 10 respondents (8%) who raised this, with mixed views. There were comments recommending specific timing, such as that it should be between the current Part 2 and Part 3 or setting the placement year between the second and third year of university. One said this should include a minimum of two years’ experience between these two points.
- 6.3** Additionally, some were commenting about the year out system, saying that having a year out after Part 1 could be beneficial as students would be better prepared for Part 2 and be

given time for reflection on their career options upon qualification. However, certain level of difficulties might exist for year out students to transition into the workforce after 3 years of education due to their little to no prior work experience when they enter Part 1.

“I would move the placement year for Architecture students from after the degree to being a sandwich year between the 2/3rd year of University (similar to how it is often done for engineering degrees) so that going into their 3rd year of university - students would have significantly more real-world context and experience, and upon completing their Bachelor's should be much better prepared for entering the world of work.”

Other built environment professional, East of England

“Perhaps there should be an option to specialise in stage 4 and then go into practice to engage in that specialisation, swapping mentored learning for university learning, with academic credit being gained for that.”

Other, Scotland

“The year out format works well after third year as the practical experience informs and enhances the students work at part two level and gives time for reflection on practice and their career options upon qualification.”

Registered architect, London & South East

Registration requirements

- 6.4** Two respondents suggested changing the current ARB ‘double counting rule’ that prevents experience gained while on a credit bearing course from counting towards ARB’s minimum requirement. One said this is because the best experience is a mixture of the two areas and that students shouldn’t be penalised for doing this. Another said it is logical as part of an individual’s development.
- 6.5** One respondent suggested looking at architecture students being able to join the Register after their (currently) Part 2 qualification. They suggested they would be allowed to work with certain restrictions before fully joining and that this would help place them on par with other built environment disciplines.
- 6.6** One respondent said ARB should consider more flexible and tailored requirements for registration that would ‘fast track’ more experienced people who may have fewer gaps in their knowledge and experience.
- 6.7** One respondent suggested relaxing requirements to work under the direction of a registered architect.

Annex A: Questions and respondents

Questions we asked respondents

- What is your view or experience of professional practical experience for architects?
- Have you experienced or witnessed any good examples of professional practical experience, from within the UK and abroad?
- Have you experienced or witnessed any examples of professional practical experience which you think could be improved?
- What changes to policy or practice would improve the quality and coherence of professional practical experience?
- Do you have any further reflections or personal experiences about professional practical experience that you would like to share?

List of respondents

There were 35 respondents gave permission for their responses to be published in full, with a further 71 wishing to be published anonymously. Of those who wished for their responses to be published in full, 19 were registered architects and 7 of them were also academics.

31 responses were made on behalf of organisations, with 13 agreeing to be published in full.

The names of all individuals and organisations published in full are listed below.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Alex Marsh (Self employed) | • Paul Crosby, Academic (registered architect) |
| • Andy Culley, Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified) | • Professor Gordon Gibb, Other |
| • APSA (Association of Professional Studies in Architecture) | • Project Orange + London School of Architecture |
| • Architects' Alliance of Ireland | • Qarchlab |
| • Bath Spa University | • Quinquennial Inspections Limited |
| • Benjamin Youd, Registered Architect | • Reddy Architecture + Urbanism |
| • CK Architecture | • Renga Design |
| • Deniece John, Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified) | • Robert Aspey, Other |
| • Dhruv Gulabchandre, Registered Architect | • Ross Langtree, Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified) |
| • Graham Sharpe, Other | • Royal Institute of British Architects |
| • Griffiths Ochieng', Architectural assistant, designer or consultant (not Part 3 qualified) | • Sumita Singha, Registered Architect |
| • Ian Hurlstone, Registered Architect | • Thomas Studio Ltd |
| • Ian Taylor Reid, Registered Architect | • Timothy Godsmark, Registered Architect |
| • Jake Johnson, Registered Architect | • Tom Partridge, Registered Architect |
| • Kenneth Awele Okafor-Anene, Architecture Student – Part 3 candidate | • University of Westminster |
| • Lush Alexander, Registered Architect | • Wendy Colvin, Academic (registered architect) |
| • Mark Wildish FCIAT, Other | |
| • Martin Newham, Academic (registered architect) | |
| • Michael Harris, Other | |

Annex B: Qualitative analysis coding framework

Tag	Description
Integration - structure	Courses should be organised with a formalised structured placement component
Integration – content	Crossover between the content of university and placement work is important
Integration – access	Learning providers should do more to help students access placements
Integration – other	Any other comment about integration with learning providers,
Mentoring	Mentor support is important (including about PEDRs)
Induction	Induction support is important
Reviews	Regular and structured reviews or appraisals against Outcomes are important
Time off	Time off work or flexible scheduling for education is important
Support – other	Other support from practices (e.g. CPD, P3 fees) is important
Pay	Low or no payment is a problem
Behaviour	Workplace behaviour is a problem
Hours	Excessive working hours or time pressure is a problem
Size – S	Experience is better gained in smaller practices
Size – Mix	Experience is better gained in a range of practices
Size – L	Experience is better gained in bigger practices
Content – Substance	Quality/substance of work is important – not just menial
Content – stages	Exposure to every project stage is important
Content – site	On-site experience is important
Content – interdisc	Experience of working alongside other disciplines or professions is important
Content – gap	Practices aren't adequately able to fulfil the Outcomes
Barrier – reluctant	Practices are reluctant or unable to hire students
Barrier – listing	Placement opportunities are hard to find (including but not limited to listing)
Barrier – discrim	Respondents says they were discriminated against by a practice, including in the process of applying
Barrier – other	Other specific barrier (that we may not have been aware of)
Variation	Any comment that variation is an issue or that experience should be more standardised and consistent
Timing	Comment about when it's best to take PPE on the route to registration

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