



**Subject** Development of International Routes to Registration  
**Purpose** For Decision  
**From** Emma Matthews, Director of Governance and International  
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## 1. Context

As the UK has now left the European Union, former EU legislation governing the registration of EU architects has ceased to have effect. We are currently operating under an interim set of arrangements which must be replaced and new routes for the recognition of international, including EU, qualifications will need to be put in place once new legislation has been approved. New legislation in the form of the Professional Qualifications Bill (PQ Bill) is presently being considered by Parliament.

If approved, the PQ Bill and the necessary supplementary legislation will provide the Board with powers to recognise international qualifications, as well as to apply additional requirements to those seeking to enter the Register holding international qualifications and experience.

The Government's preferred approach is that regulatory bodies will make use of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) to recognise international qualifications. Given this, we have been working to develop MRAs with international partner organisations.

In parallel with this work, we have been developing new international routes so that we will be compliant with the new legislation when it becomes effective. To develop these new routes we have had several discussions with Policy Committee and the Board. In the Summer of 2021, the Board developed and agreed a set of principles, upon which we have developed our proposed international routes.

In Autumn 2021, we issued a consultation and ran a roundtable event for stakeholders so that they could provide us with their views on our proposals for the new routes.

This paper asks the Board to note the outcome of the engagement and consultation and to agree the framework that underpins the new international routes.

## 2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- i. Notes the outcome of the consultation and the responses of the Executive and agrees that the outcome document should be published on the ARB website; and,

- ii. Agrees the framework as outlined in the consultation document should be taken forward.

### 3. Open Session

### 4. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

To ensure only those who are suitably competent are allowed to practise as architects. We do this by approving the architecture qualifications required to join the Register of architects. The principles we have established for setting up MRAs assure compatibility of qualifications with UK Part 1 and Part 2 qualification requirements and the additional checks on compatibility of registration requirements together with our proposed UK Adaptation Assessment assure that all those joining the UK Register of Architects will have met the same standard of entry as those joining through the UK Route to Registration.

### 5. Key Points

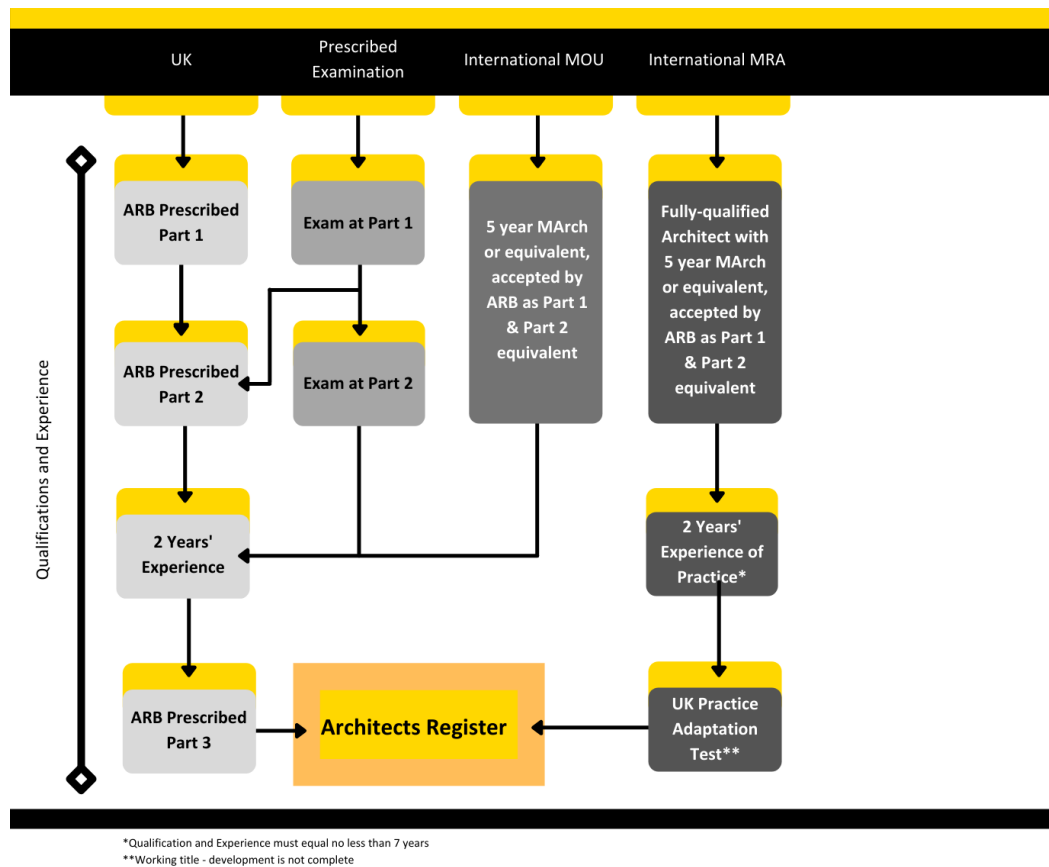
#### Legislative Context

- 5.1 The UK government has stated that it wishes the mutual recognition of professional qualifications to continue where possible. New Legislation in the form of the Professional Qualifications Bill and two supplementary Statutory Instruments, will, when enacted enable the Board to determine how it recognises international qualifications. The legislation will also provide the Board with the powers to apply additional requirements to those holding international qualifications, as well as enabling it to enter into and sign MRAs with our international counterpart organisations throughout the world.
- 5.2 We have been developing new international routes to registration in parallel to the progression of the new legislation through Parliament. We hope to be in a position to operationalise the new routes shortly after all of the relevant legislation has been approved.

#### Stakeholder Feedback

- 5.3 Further to the development of a set of principles upon which we have based the development of our new international routes, we issued a consultation document setting out our proposed direction of travel in relation to the new international routes in late October 2021.
- 5.4 Stakeholder engagement was undertaken based on the Board's support, through a roundtable event and the above mentioned consultation:  
<https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ARB-International-routes-to-registration-October-2021.pdf>
- 5.5 The consultation closed on 14 January 2022.  
The Executive has now analysed the feedback and the consultation responses, and a report including the Executive's responses to the feedback provided is attached at **Annex A**.
- 5.6 Our analysis of the feedback that we received from stakeholders indicates support for the Board's preferred direction of travel.

5.7 Once the new international routes are fully developed and operationalised, they will sit alongside the UK and Prescribed Examination routes as follows:



5.8 Some additional helpful feedback has also been provided by stakeholders which we will use to inform further developments and review of ARB's approach.

5.9 Subject to the Board's approval, we are now proposing to publish our report and to continue the development of the new international routes based on the framework set out in the consultation document.

**Recommendations**

5.10 The Board is asked to agree the recommendations as outlined in section 2 of this paper.

**6. Resource implications**

6.1 We have secured some funding from the DLUHC for the purposes of developing the new international routes and the agreements which will form part of these; our ability to claim against a fund of £350k will expire on 31 March 2022. We are however exploring whether we can extend our ability to claim any un-spent funding beyond this date or bid for further funding for the remainder of 2022 to complete this work. Notwithstanding this we have made some provision for this work in our budget for the remainder of 2022 should our ability to claim against the grant expire. We will continue to monitor emerging interest around the development of MRAs and the associated resources necessary to support our work

in this area. We will provide the Board with periodic updates on any likely increase in demand or unforeseen constraints.

## 7. Risk Implications

**7.1** The design and implementation of new routes to registration is not without risks and whilst the Executive has significant experience of operating the mutual recognition agreement that formerly existed between the UK and the EU, negotiating and establishing new agreements with counterpart organisations has required the team to develop new skills. To mitigate the risk in this area, the Executive has been working with expert external advisers to ensure that all relevant issues are identified and covered in any agreement before it is considered and approved by the Board.

## 8. Communication

**8.1** Our communications approach is to share information with stakeholders about how we plan to introduce new international routes to registration following the UK's exit from the EU. As and when we have information available for stakeholders we will provide relevant updates through our media channels.

**8.2** Our communications materials will include dealing with the announcements that the agreements have been approved by the relevant parties, as well as communicating the relevant details to key stakeholders such as potential registrants, the professional bodies, and students.

## 9. Equality and Diversity Implications

As our principles and approach to MRAs have been developed, we have taken equality, diversity and inclusion implications into account.

We hope through our ongoing and constructive engagement with our partners in different countries we are taking proportionate and appropriate steps to uphold standards and quality. We will need to monitor the impact and ensure that our work in this area supports our ambitious goals around equality and diversity.

## 10. Further Actions

The Executive will bring rules and Procedures which will outline the requirements under the new international routes and which will be used to operationalise the new routes back to the Board at its meeting in May 2022. Once the Board has agreed the draft rules and Procedures, they will then be issued for consultation.

### Consultation – Development of ARB’s International Routes to Registration

We issued a [consultation document](#) setting out our approach, including our aims and objectives, our principles and our proposed decision making process that we intend to use when developing International Routes to Registration. The consultation was launched in late October 2021 and ran until mid January 2022. We notified key stakeholders about the consultation document, which was available on our website, and also ran a small roundtable discussion event for those stakeholders. As anticipated, and given that this is a specialist area of our work, we received a small number of consultation responses to our consultation. Of the three responses we received, two were on behalf of an organisation and one was from an individual. We were able to gather valuable additional feedback via the roundtable event.

We have set out a summary of the key points which arose from our consultation.

### Comments on our Approach

Feedback: One respondent felt that it would be helpful if the scope of our review could explicitly exclude the possibility of ARB accepting applications from overseas Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for the prescription of specific awards at Part 1 or Part 2 level on the basis that ARB had not previously prescribed specific overseas awards and this was a complex area. Their preferred approach was that ARB should maintain the status quo in relation to this area.

ARB Response: We agree with this proposal and can confirm that at this stage ARB does not intend to accept applications from overseas HEIs for the prescription of specific awards. Recognising the complexity of this area, and if ARB was to consider this in the future, we would seek to gather more information and evidence regarding the position and the implications of this before taking any considerations further.

Feedback: One respondent highlighted the complexities around maintaining lists of qualifications approved as equivalent for registration purposes under the terms of a mutual recognition agreement (MRA) or a memorandum of understanding (MOU). It was noted that as the number of agreements increase and due to the propensity for institutions to constantly revise their award titles, maintaining accurate lists is likely to be resource intensive, especially when discrepancies arose. It was suggested that a straightforward process would be to require any applicant for registration to submit to ARB a statement from their own regulator that their academic award met the requirements agreed under the MRA or MOU.

ARB Response: We welcome this feedback. We are conscious of the issues that title amendments cause and how complex it is to maintain accurate and up to date lists of qualifications. We plan to set out the qualifications/experience requirements that fall within scope of each agreement in the text of each agreement. We will require applicants for UK registration who have qualifications/experience that fall within scope of an MRA/MOU to secure a compliance certificate from our partner organisation and submit that to us along with proof of their qualifications/experience. We will require those seeking equivalence at Part 1 and/or Part 2 level only under an MOU to secure a compliance certificate from our partner organisation before going on to secure a ARB-prescribed Part 2 and/or Part 3 qualifications before being eligible for UK registration. Similarly, ARB will be providing compliance certificates to applicants wishing to register with or have their qualifications recognised by one of our partner organisations, provided they hold qualifications/experience that fall within scope of an MRA/MOU.

Feedback: One respondent suggested that it would be helpful if ARB supported the development of preparation courses for the UK Adaptation Assessment given that ARB would solely be running the assessment process, as this may help reduce failure rates and improve competency standards of applicants generally.

ARB Response: To confirm, ARB will not offer any form of preparation course, but will offer guidance/signposting to applicants who are preparing for the UK Adaptation Assessment. We plan to carry out an evaluation of the UK adaptation process in 2023 and will look at this area in more detail at that point. We do not have any objection not preparatory courses being established in the meantime after we have published more detailed information about the new route.

Feedback: One responded outlined their experiences of registering in another country and explained the current route that they had to undertake. The responded confirmed that they supported ARB's approach to the new international routes to registration and observed that it would reduce the burden on applicants in terms of time.

ARB Response: We note and welcome these comments. Our starting point is that architects are professionals wherever they trained; the due diligence that we will carry out when establishing an MRA/MOU should ensure this in terms of the education and training. We believe that for the most part, differences will relate to the context within which architects will be working, whether this be on a national level or within a specific state or territory. Both ourselves and our partner organisations are keen to apply domain specific assessments to ensure that a professional who is moving jurisdictions is aware of the context within which they will be working when they move and are prepared for safe and effective practice. Whilst we have a duty to protect the public, we also wish to support international architects before and after they join the UK Register.

### Comments on our Proposals

Feedback: One respondent focussed on the considerations around training, experience and equivalence of standards as well as the development of the UK Adaptation Assessment. Based on their experience and expertise, they felt that they could offer valuable advice and guidance to ARB as it developed its approach.

ARB Response: We note the response and are considering ways in which we can provide stakeholders with opportunities to share their expertise and advice with us. We will be publishing our proposed UK Adaptation Assessment Procedures for consultation once these have been considered by the ARB Board.

### Comments on our Principles

No comments were received about our proposed principles within formal consultation responses. We do not propose to make any adjustments to the principles at this stage and will continue to base the development of our international routes on the principles as they stand.

### Comments on our Communication and Engagement/Formalising this area

Feedback: One respondent commented on ARB's approach to prioritising agreements and noted that they had expertise, and could obtain evidence, that could be valuable when ARB was considering which partner organisations to work with in the future.

ARB Response: We are pleased to have been made aware of this. We will need to develop a mechanism to gather evidence which will inform our initial considerations when we are assessing whether to work with a new partner organisation. We will discuss this further with our stakeholders and draw up plans for a way forward in the coming months.

## General Comments

Feedback: Two respondents commented on 'daisy chaining' through MRAs/MOUs. An example of this would be where an individual seeks to benefit from registration based upon one MRA/MOU to make use of another MRA/MOU operated in the host country. This could then support recognition in a third country where no rights of recognition would ordinarily arise based upon qualifications held. The respondents acknowledged that this was a complex area. They felt however, that it ought to be explored further so that individuals seeking to register in another jurisdiction were not unduly disadvantaged by one jurisdiction when another had accepted their qualifications/experience as being of an appropriate standard. One respondent highlighted that if 'daisy chaining' was not permitted, it could be seen to undermine the security of the competency standards applied under an MRA/MOU, as opposed to the competency standards of those trained in the UK. Furthermore, they felt that it did not appear to be consistent with the principles stated in the proposal, or consistent with the principle of outcomes-based regulation as previously articulated by ARB.

ARB Response: This is a complex area and will be difficult to resolve. Partner organisations are currently keen to avoid 'daisy chaining'. We are taking a cautious approach and would highlight that some of the agreements we are working on are likely to preclude this initially, as they are founded on prescribed qualifications issued in the UK. We are open to discussing this further with partners in the future. We will continue to look at this and keep it under review.

Feedback: One respondent confirmed that they were broadly supportive of the proposals within the consultation document and would welcome the opportunity to view and comment on the proposals as they were developed. Another respondent confirmed that they fully supported the approach that ARB was taking.

ARB Response: We welcome this feedback. We will be publishing our proposed UK Adaptation Assessment Procedures for consultation once these have been considered by the ARB Board, as well as any changes to our proposed Rules around this area. We will ensure that stakeholders are made aware of the consultation and are provided with opportunities to comment on these.

Feedback: One respondent confirmed that it would be helpful if the diagram of proposed routes had a branch added to show that for MRA/MOUs there would be an alternative route whereby individuals could do the required experience and a prescribed Part 3 level qualification as an alternative to doing the UK Adaptation Assessment.

ARB Response: We note this and will take this on board if we can find a means of conveying this without it being confusing to the end user, provided an MRA/MOU provides for such recognition.



