

- Version
- ☐ Internal Draft for Approval
- ☐ Chair's Draft for Approval
- ☒ Chair's Approved Draft
- ☐ Confirmed

BOARD MEETING: MINUTES

Minutes of Board Meeting held on Monday, 14 July 2025

Location: Online via Video Conferencing

Present

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

In attendance

- Hugh Simpson (CEO & Registrar)
- Simon Howard (Director of Standards)
- Brian James (Director of Registration & Accreditation)
- Rebecca Roberts-Hughes (Director of Policy & Communications)
- Charlotte Gellatly (Director of Performance & Planning)
- Alice Pun (Governance Manager)
- Mandy Kaur (Governance Officer/Minutes)
- Eleri Jones (Head of People), Observer
- Joeris Morgan, (Accreditation Manager), Observer
- Jodie James (Executive Officer and Business Plan Co-ordinator), Observer
- Kathryn Parry, (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government), 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.

Open Session

ARB staff members joined the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Teri Okoro had provided her apologies for the afternoon part of the meeting. The Director of Governance & International had also submitted her apologies for the meeting.

Kathryn Parry, (MHCLG) was welcomed to the meeting. Ms. Parry observed the whole of the open session of the meeting.

Jodie James, Executive Officer and Business Plan Co-ordinator, joined the meeting to observe Item 11 - Performance Monitoring Updates for Q2.

Joeris Morgan, Accreditation Manager joined the meeting to observe Item 12 – Accreditation Update.

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

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

2. Members' Interests

All Board members declared an interest in Item 7 – Review of Board and Committee Members' Annual Review Process, on the basis that the process applied to each of 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.

Elena Marco and Stephen McCusker declared an interest in Item 12 – Accreditation Update, as they both had a connection with education providers that may be considered under that item. The Board agreed that whilst this should be noted, given that the paper was 'to note' and no decisions would be made, any Board members in this position could remain in the room for the item.

STANDING ITEMS

3. Update from the Chair

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Charlotte Gellatly on her appointment as Director of Performance and Planning. This was noted as a positive appointment to the team of Directors.

The Chair reported that the recruitment campaign was live, and activity under way, for the appointment of external members to the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC). The recruitment was now at the shortlisting stage, which would be carried out by GatenbySanderson, the agency that were supporting the recruiting campaign. Interviews were expected to take place from mid-August, with the appointments expected to be made as soon as possible thereafter. The interview panel would likely consist of the Chief Executive & Registrar, the Chair of the FRAC, the Chair of the ARB Board and one Architect Board Member. However, this would be confirmed, subject to availability.

As the next Board meeting would not be held until October 2025, it was proposed that the appointments be confirmed via a write-around process, subject to the Board's agreement. This approach would allow the appointments to be finalised and FRAC to begin to operate with its full complement of members.

The FRAC Chair had anticipated a first meeting to take place as early as possible in the autumn, depending on the appointment of the two external members; this would be kept under review.

4. Minutes

The Board unanimously approved the Open session minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025.

Minute 12 - Professional Practical Experience (PPE) Commission Report Recommendations Implementation

A query was raised whether, in light of anticipated legislative changes, the phrase 'trainee architect' would still be appropriate. An example was provided of the protected title 'solicitor', where the term 'trainee solicitor' was not formally used. The Director of Standards noted that, while the risk may be insignificant, the legal position remained clear, that referring to individuals as 'trainee architects' would be a breach of Section 20 of the Architects Act. Although ARB may not prosecute, other bodies may take action, and it was not within the Board's remit to permit usage of the term. The legislation made it unlawful to use the protected title unless registered.

5. Report on Actions following the Previous Meetings

Board Members noted a report on actions resulting from the previous meetings.

Further to the Board's request to apply a traffic light system to the actions reports, the actions had been colour coded, to provide more clarity.

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. Review of Board and Committee Members' Annual Review Process

The Head of People reported that she had met the majority of Board members on a one-to-one basis to gather feedback on the annual review process, with the exception of one Board member, where diaries could not align.

The Board paper summarised the feedback received from the Board and outlined the recommendations around improvements to the process. The proposed key changes included some adjustment of the timing of the process, from sending the documentation, to completion to the meeting date. Another change meant the Governance team would coordinate and distribute the nominated reviewer forms for Board members to ensure broader and more diverse feedback in future years. There were also some minor adjustments to the appraisal form, particularly around the section reflecting on the Seven Principles of Public Life, to reduce repetition.

This was a process of continuous improvement with adjustments expected annually. Feedback would continue to be welcomed each year.

It was noted that the process around the Chair's annual review process would remain unchanged, other than that the Chair's appraisal would take place earlier in the annual cycle for 2025.

The People Committee Chair shared feedback from the Committee, expressed appreciation to the Head of People on the high level of engagement, and noted the positive responses from Board members. The Committee recognised that a similar process for Associate members would be more complex, and that work was ongoing.

The People Committee Chair commended the refresher session on values and behaviours, which was referenced in section 2.23 of the paper, and suggested that it would be good practice for this to be held annually, to maintain ongoing discussion around values and behaviours.

It was confirmed that while dates were not fully mapped, communications would begin in late August/early September, with regard to preparations for the next annual review cycle. Board members would receive documents at least six weeks prior to their meetings. The allocation of the nominated reviewers would also be announced to individuals at this time.

Board members raised concerns around GDPR compliance, particularly regarding the collection and storage of personal data and feedback referenced in sections 2.22 and 2.25 of the paper. It was confirmed that all feedback would be collected via the governance team, with access limited to four members of staff. The information was collated into a single anonymised form, ensuring GDPR compliance. It was confirmed that the data retention remained GDPR compliant.

A discussion was held around the anonymity of nominated feedback, and whether it should be sent directly to the individual. It was noted that, as the Board was appointed by the Privy Council, it was not an entirely independent process. The ARB office was responsible for storing the data and it was important to strike a balance between transparency and confidentiality. The anonymised approach aimed to encourage constructive feedback.

The Board requested further assurance on the handling of data and data traceability, particularly in the context of a potential Subject Access Request (SAR) request.

The Board **unanimously agreed** to:

- i. Note the feedback on the annual review process.
- ii. To approve the small number of actions ahead of the 2025 review cycle including:
 - a. Increasing the timings between the issue of documentation
 - b. the deadlines for completion of the forms and the date of the review meeting.
 - c. Housing the documents online in the future.
 - d. The Governance team sending the nominated reviewer feedback forms to two reviewers on behalf of each board member and coordinating their receipt.
 - e. Removing the need to provide feedback and examples on the Seven Principles of Public Life, focusing solely on the Board's Values. The opportunity to provide overall commentary on the Principles of Public Life will remain.
 - f. Updating the guidance notes to reflect the proposed changes.
- iii. Note the feedback following the annual review process for the ARB Board Chair and that no adjustments are proposed.

8. Updates to the Scheme of Delegation

The Chief Executive Officer & Registrar introduced the paper, noting that most of the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation were consequential updates following the establishment of Finance, Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC) and the appointment of the Director of Performance and Planning.

The updated Scheme of Delegation would be reviewed by the FRAC to consider the scope of its responsibilities.

It was noted that it may be necessary to bring to the Board further proposed adjustments later in the year following a review of financial procedures by FRAC. The content of the recently enacted Data User and Access Act 2025 was also being reviewed internally to consider the implications of this compared to existing internal data policies. Any significant updates would be reported to the Board.

The Board **unanimously agreed** to approve the revised Scheme of Delegation as set out in Annexe B and that the revised Scheme should become effective immediately.

9. Review of Board's Open and Confidential Policy

The Governance Manager introduced the paper and reported that the policy was last reviewed in 2019. No major policy changes were proposed, but there were a series of low level changes to reflect up to date practice and ensure that the policy aligned with others within the organisation, as well as some stylistic changes to modernise the policy. Benchmarking had been undertaken to ensure consistency with other regulators. The policy would be subject to further review in five years' time.

The section relating to the 'confidentiality of legal advice' had been removed from the policy following benchmarking with other professional bodies, but legal professional privilege was still referred to within the policy.

The Board queried whether the document should clarify that items discussed in Board workshops were captured in the Chief Executive Officer's Report, in line with previous discussions. However, it was noted that Board Workshops were not formal Board meetings and did not involve decision-making. Including references to workshop discussions could be misleading to external readers. It was suggested that the development of a separate policy on workshop documentation and discussion could be considered in the future.

It was suggested the policy should clearly identify what constituted 'confidential information' and be amended to clarify information that 'merits confidence'.

The Board **unanimously agreed** to approve the revised Open and Confidential Sessions of Board Meetings Policy, subject to the clarifications that had been requested.

10. ARB Procurement Policy

The Director of Performance & Planning introduced the revised Procurement Policy which had been updated to align with the Procurement Act 2023.

The policy had been simplified to ensure it was easy for staff to follow, while also improving documentation and guidance throughout the procurement and tendering processes.

Contracts with a total value of above £30,000, but below £214,904 were now classified as 'regulated below threshold contracts' and must be processed through a government tendering platform. It was noted that, while securing three tenders was a preferred option, using an established procurement framework was an acceptable alternative. Any proposed waiver of the policy would be notified to the FRAC. While there was flexibility, it would be monitored to ensure exceptions remained infrequent.

The Board suggested that there was a lack of integration of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within the procurement policy, noting that public sector organisations increasingly requested suppliers to demonstrate alignment with inclusive values, such as partnerships with minority led firms. It was suggested that social value criteria be incorporated, particularly for larger contracts, and considering how smaller suppliers might be supported in meeting these expectations. The Board noted that the Code of Conduct for architects included expectations around ethics, sustainability and EDI, and were concerned that similar principles be applied to ARB's own procurement activities. The Chief Executive Officer & Registrar noted that the proposed changes were to take into account the updated legal framework, but the executive would take away the Board's wish for social value and EDI to be embedded within the policy and consider further policy changes later in the year.

The FRAC would place particular importance on monitoring how the new procurement approach was implemented and embedded. The internal auditors would have a particular focus on the procurement process and how the Procurement Policy was working, and it was expected that auditors would provide feedback on the process.

The Board were also assured that, with the new Purchase Order (PO) system, processes were more robust, with improved documentation and audit trails in place.

The Board **unanimously agreed** to approve the updated Procurement Policy with immediate effect for all new procurement activity undertaken by ARB.

ITEMS FOR NOTE

11. Performance Monitoring Updates for Q2

The Board noted the operational performance monitoring of ARB for Q2, 2025, as set out in the annexes to the paper, including the mid-year update on delivery of the business plan 2025 and the management accounts.

The Board queried whether there had been an impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on website traffic. The Director of Policy and Communications explained that tracking issues may have obscured some data but there had been no significant changes in traffic identified. There were some algorithmic issues which may have been impacting the tracking.

A member of the Board noted the decline in the number of registrants, particularly in a year when CPD was not mandatory, and queried the risks for 2026. It was reported that this was being monitored and a projected budget for 2026 and a medium-term financial plan to include various scenarios would be considered at the September Board Workshop. It was noted that this is a period of flux, and targeted communication had been sent to those who had resigned, retired, or failed to pay or to comply with CPD requirements. There had been a significant percentage of registrants rejoining the register. As with any major policy and operational first, as had been the case with CPD rollout for architects, there had been lessons learned.

The Director of Registration and Accreditation fed back that there were no visible trends or single cause with regards to the strike-offs. There were a combination of reasons such as CPD unfamiliarity, payment changes and the requirement to make a professional declaration online. These were being addressed through ongoing enhancements to the MyARB platform. With the number of people that had resigned or were over retirement age, the register was now more accurately reflective of the profession, as a published register should be.

Questions were asked about the two freedom of information (FOI) requests and if there were any implications for their being responded to outside the statutory timeframe. The Governance Manager explained that the delays had been due to overlaps of staff leave and the dates of the requests. These delays were of only one or two days. There had been no further complaints or repercussions as a result. Non-compliance would be escalated only if reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). In this instance, it had not been the case. The Customer Service Complaints Policy was publicly available on the website.

It was noted that there had been an improvement in examination pass rates of 71%, for Part 2 results, which was an increase from approximately 64% in the previous year. However, due to relatively small sample sizes, annual fluctuations were expected. Historical data was available on the ARB website. The Policy and Communications team had been implementing continuous improvement initiatives, which may have contributed to the improved performance.

A discussion was held around the prescribed examination process. The Accreditation Committee did not review the prescribed examinations. ARB used appointed assessors and was working to replace the prescribed examination, partly because the current assessment methodology was outdated, and it was better to have a greater degree of independence. Accreditation visitors also provided feedback to the Accreditation Committee, reflecting on

their observations during annual monitoring visits.

The Board commended the Director of Performance & Planning on the clear financial reporting and noted the reduction in registration processing times. The Director of Registration & Accreditation reported that there were efficiencies resulting from the new CRM system, particularly with staff morale. Work on KPI development was under way and the team had begun to consider developing complexity-based KPIs.

12. Update on Accreditation

The Director of Registration & Accreditation provided an update on the accreditation work, noting that it had been just over 18 months since the Board approved the transition from the prescription model to the new accreditation model. Significant progress had been made, but there was still a lot of work to be done.

There were some key challenges in relation to the outcome of the work of the Professional Practical Experience (PPE) Commission, higher education sector pressures and ensuring consistency of outcome and approach across the UK.

The biggest change from the prescribed approach to the accreditation approach was the implementation of the new standards for providers. Standards 3 and 6 related to student support and leadership and were the current areas of focus for ARB.

More comprehensive data would be available by the end of the year following recent surveys and student engagement initiatives.

There are some preliminary indications about how some education providers planned to replace the Part 3 qualifications. The team were currently engaging with Part 3 providers to discuss proposals for joint integrated qualifications.

The Board considered the risk of bias in decision-making and asked how institutions could be assured of impartiality and moderation in the application process. It was noted that accreditation visits were conducted by a visitor panel comprising of practising architects and lay members, who had undergone thorough induction and training that helped frame the questions that were asked of providers. Recently visitors had been invited to the Accreditation Committee to provide assurance and participate in the review process. This provided visitors with the opportunity to reflect on the visit process from their perspective. There was also a weekly internal team meeting to discuss findings and variations from accreditation visits.

Decisions were not based solely on visitor opinions; the data was triangulated to support

recommendations. Some robust discussions had taken place to ensure data was interpreted objectively. Unlike the prescription model, the accreditation model allowed for the addition of special conditions following visits. Clear guidance had been issued to external examiners as part of the accreditation process.

There were only two providers that had converted to the new framework so far, so the process was still in development.

It was noted that regulators are often subject to criticism, including perceptions of bias, but it was important to emphasise that the process approved by the Board was robust, there was a consistent application of standards and assessment reviews and impartial assessment by the Accreditation Committee which operated independently from the Board and the Executive.

The Director of Registration & Accreditation reported that feedback from providers on the PPE Commission's proposed changes and their impact on Part 3, echoed the broader sector concerns, especially uncertainty about what the future held, including the nature of the Record of Competence. Currently, 29 providers had actively engaged.

With regard to ARB's approach to visiting and reporting, the Executive were drawing on the approach of other regulators who did this.

The Board noted the update on accreditation.

13. Chief Executive's Report

The Board noted a report from the Chief Executive & Registrar on matters relating to the running of the Board's business, including a summary of recent Workshop discussions.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

One of the areas that had been considered in relation to CPD was how to best review CPD records next year. The initial proposal was to manually conduct manual reviews for approximately 3.5% of the register. This had been piloted earlier this year and was found to be more time-consuming than estimated which was incurring greater cost.

An alternative approach was being explored in working with an AI provider. A prototype AI tool was being developed which could assess for non-compliance. If successful it would assist in more targeted resource allocation and enable automated communications to individuals with incomplete or non-compliant CPD submissions. No registrant would be removed due to CPD without human assessment. The aim was to have the system in operation by October.

People Update

ARB were in the process of applying to be a Visa Sponsorship organisation through the Home Office. This was to enable employment of individuals on visas where certain specific criteria were met. There was currently one staff member who was going through the process. It was noted that the sponsorship process had been beneficial in highlighting areas for policy strengthening, especially in HR and identifying verification practices. Legal advice had been obtained as part of the application.

Professionalism and Code of Conduct

To build on ARB's work on professionalism and culture, plans were being drafted for a professionalism conference this autumn. This had been included in the annual budget at the start of the year.

A date had not yet been set for the conference, but this would be scheduled with consideration of other professional bodies.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Dates of Future Board Meetings

The next Board meeting would be held online on Thursday, 16 October 2025.

Board members were reminded to complete the doodle polls for the setting of Board meeting dates for 2026. It was noted that the December 2026 meeting would be held in person, rather than online.

The Board were provided with a broad overview of the agenda for the two-day Board Workshop in September 2025, which would be held in Glasgow.