

# Board Paper

for Open session

**Subject: UK Adaptation Assessment Pilot Update**

To note an update on the pilot of the UK Adaptation Assessment

Board meeting:

19 July 2023

Agenda item:

9

Action:

- For noting
- For discussion
- For decision

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## Purpose

To note an update on the pilot of the UK Adaptation Assessment.

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## Recommendations

The Board is asked to note the update.

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## Annexes

N/A

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## Author/Key Contact

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## 1. Open Session

- 1.1. This item is being taken in open session.
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## 2. Background and Key points

- 2.1. In March 2022, and following consultation, the Board agreed the framework for the new international route to registration, which includes the recognition of relevant qualifications through Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). Internationally trained architects seeking registration under this route are also required to pass ARB's UK Adaptation Assessment before they enter the UK Register.
- 2.2. The Board subsequently consulted on the proposed Procedures for the UK Adaptation Assessment process last summer and approved these in October 2022. The UK Adaptation Assessment process, alongside the recognition of relevant qualifications and practical experience, has been designed to provide assurance that internationally trained individuals are competent to join the UK Register. The assessment is a proportionate and supportive approach focusing only on UK-specific requirements that an architect practicing in the UK will need to be aware of and understand. All other competencies are determined through the due diligence processes that we undertake to establish the MRA/MOUs.
- 2.3. When developing the UK Adaptation Assessment process, we committed to undertake a pilot of the process to test each element and make any adjustments as needed before it became fully operational.
- 2.4. We undertook a small pilot in May 2023; two volunteer candidates who would typically be eligible to undertake the UK Adaptation Assessment under the ARB/NCARB MRA participated in the pilot. Also part of the pilot study were several of our appointed UK Adaptation Assessors and Independent UK Adaptation Assessors. We fully briefed all those involved prior to the pilot and then ran the pilot in a 'live' environment, i.e., candidates were asked to prepare the relevant material ahead of the assessment day; assessors were asked to prepare as they would for an assessment session, and the assessment processes took place in real time.
- 2.5. We gathered feedback from all those who participated in the pilot process, including the ARB Team, both through a plenary session at the end of the pilot session and also through individual feedback forms. We also followed up the sessions with a

several one to one meetings after the event to clarify any relevant points with a range of those who had participated in the pilot. In summary, the feedback was positive and no significant issues with the structure or the assessment process were identified. The participants, however, made a series of valuable suggestions as to how the following could be improved:

- the guidance for assessors, candidates and the Registration Team (who facilitate the assessments), particularly around the assessment process itself and the pass/fail threshold;
- the timings and the structure of the assessment sessions; and
- the list of Resources that applicants could draw on to prepare for the assessment.

Additional feedback also included requests for further training for assessors, in particular unconscious bias training, as well as a need to continue to monitor risks and impacts associated with the UK Adaptation Assessment so that these could be tracked and mitigated where needed.

2.6. As a result of the valuable feedback we collected from the pilot session, we have taken a series of steps to act on this. We have:

- updated the suite of guidance documents we have developed for assessors and candidates, seeking input and independent expert input to this process from one of our advisers;
- made adjustments to the timings and structure of the assessment sessions.
- adjusted the relevant templates and forms to provide clearer instructions to the assessors and candidates;
- improved the Resources List we make available to candidates prior to the assessment; and
- developed a dedicated risk register so that we can monitor risks and issues which arise from the process once it is operational.

We are also liaising with our Associates Manager to develop a training programme for our Assessors, which will include sessions focussed on unconscious bias.

2.7. Following the opening of our new MRAs in April and May respectively, we have received a series of applications from internationally trained architects who are within scope of the agreements; we are now scheduling in the UK Adaptation Assessments for these individuals and the first assessment will have taken place in early July 2023.

- 2.8. We will continue to gather and take on board feedback from candidates and assessors as the process is fully operationalised, and we will continue to make adjustments to the assessment guidance and supporting documentation as the process beds in. We will also use both briefing sessions at the beginning of each assessment day, and plenary sessions at the end of each assessment day, to discuss any issues or challenges which arise in relation to the process as they occur.
  - 2.9. As previously reported, a review of the UK Adaptation Assessment process will commence six months after roll out to ensure that it is operating effectively. We will be starting the planning for this review over the next three months.
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### 3. Resource Implications

- 3.1. The UK Adaptation Assessment fee is £2950 and is designed to be cost neutral; the majority of the development of the new international route was funded from a series of grants ARB received from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
  - 3.2. Whilst the International Department has developed the new international route and the UK Adaptation Assessment, the Registration Department will be supporting the route and the assessment process on a day to day basis. Initial interest in accessing the UK Register through the MRA routes has been high; we will need to continue to monitor the impact that this has on resources and capacity over the initial months of operation to ensure that resourcing levels are appropriate.
  - 3.3. Although there have been some challenges in relation to the operation of MRAs, which have resource implications, the pilot of the UKAA has proved successful.
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### 4. Risk Implications

- 4.1. As noted above, we have developed a dedicated risk register to track and monitor risks associated with the new international route as well as the UK Adaptation Assessment process.
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### 5. Equality and Diversity implications

- 5.1. The pilot process highlighted the need to provide the assessors with some further support in relation to unconscious bias, which we will take forward.
- 5.2. As noted above, we are committed to gathering feedback in relation to the process on an ongoing basis; we will continue to monitor the process and take EDI matters into account as the process settles and becomes more established.

5.3. We will ensure that we also take EDI matters into account as part of the six-month review.

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## 6. Recommendations

6.1. The Board is asked to note the update.