



Modernising the initial education and training of architects

Discussion document

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1. Overview

- 1.1 The way we educate and train architects in the UK needs to change. To meet the demands of today and the challenges of tomorrow, we need to ensure architects acquire the right skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours to support safe, effective practice. In short, the right competencies. What we are proposing could lead to the most significant reform of architectural education in fifty years.
- 1.2 ARB is the professional regulator responsible for setting the standards for registration as an architect. Over the last year we have been gathering evidence about the state of architectural education and how it might be improved. That evidence indicates that while UK architectural education is globally respected and continues to attract students from all over the world, without modernisation, higher education institutions will be stuck with an inflexible model and their students may not achieve the competencies required in future. We believe fundamental change is needed to an outdated model which restricts institutions and limits students.
- 1.3 Some of those issues concern the content of courses, and their suitability to meet the new requirements of architectural practice. More fundamentally, the evidence shows that the existing inflexible educational model of Parts 1, 2 and 3 being taught through institutions of higher education appears outdated and hinders the progress needed to meet the demands of students, employers, and society. We know that the current system has produced thousands of excellent architects, but it's also created significant barriers to some people becoming architects at all. We have heard that the cost of education and the requirements for work experience create barriers for people from less affluent backgrounds or without existing networks in the profession. This could disproportionately impact those from poorer backgrounds and minority groups. New routes into the profession must be developed if the UK is to continue to produce world-class architects able to contribute to a high-quality, sustainable built environment.
- 1.4 If the structure of education and training is modernised to make it more flexible, there is an opportunity to build better inter-professional learning. This would reflect the way in which architects work with engineers, surveyors, contractors and technicians and equip them better for the reality of practice.

- 1.5 We have a vision of how we might do this, by developing a regulatory model built around the outcomes required of an individual at the end of their initial period of education and training.

We believe the most important consideration is what a newly qualified architect can do – not how they got there. So, we are actively seeking feedback about different routes to registration, particularly those which will help widen access and increase diversity within the profession.

- 1.6 In this paper we set out our vision for a modern system of educating and training new architects, and the steps we will take to deliver it. We cannot do this on our own – nor should we. We want to work with the profession and with education and training institutions to find bold and innovative solutions to these challenges. We must create an accessible system of education and training that works for students and institutions, that provides us with assurance as to the quality of qualifications, and produces competent architects for the future.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The way we educate and train architects in the UK needs to change. The evidence we have gathered and the feedback we have received has led us to conclude that we need to modernise the initial education and training of architects. Our proposals in this document could lead to the most significant reform of architectural education in fifty years.
- 2.2 The construction industry, a wide and varied sector which includes architects, is at a moment of historic change. The Grenfell Tower disaster, the Climate Emergency, and sweeping demands for equality and inclusion around the world have rightly led to calls for a more joined up approach to regulation, a greater emphasis on the role of architects in sustainability, and a more diverse profession which, together, can meet the challenges and demands of society. Although this won't be delivered solely through changes to the standards required to become an architect, it can't be delivered without them.
- 2.3 The existing requirements for registration as an architect have been in place since 2010 and delivered through an educational system which has been in place since 1958. Much has changed in the intervening years.
- 2.4 In the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster the Government appointed Dame Judith Hackitt to review Building Regulations and Fire Safety. Dame Judith's report¹, published in May 2018, identified several shortcomings in the construction industry in respect of safety, and made recommendations for change. One of those recommendations was that ARB, working with partners, should consider the future competence levels of those architects on the Register of Architects, and those joining the Register, in relation to fire safety design issues. While we have issued supplementary guidelines to architects and guidance to schools of architecture about competence in fire and life safety, a more fundamental review is required as to where such competences sit within an architect's role in the future.
- 2.5 The report also highlighted the importance of culture within the construction industry and the importance of professionals working well across teams, focused on outcomes. Initial education and training, underpinned by continuous professional development, is fundamental to the development of the right behaviours.

¹ [Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: final report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/711111/Independent_Review_of_Building_Regulations_and_Fire_Safety_final_report.pdf)

- 2.6 Climate change is the one of the defining challenges of our time and architects have a significant role to play in addressing it. Through robust sustainable practice and design, architects can reduce the effects of climate change in the built environment by conserving natural resources, designing for adaptation and mitigation and minimising carbon emissions. Future architects must be equipped with the right blend of knowledge and skill, underpinned with a commitment to sustainability, if the profession is to be able to make a positive contribution towards mitigating the impact of their work on the environment.
- 2.7 In 2020 we published a strategic statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and promised, amongst other things, to look at what steps we could take to ensure that the profession is representative of the communities it serves. A key aspect of this will be to ensure the initial period of education and training allows maximum flexibility for entry to the profession, so offering greater access to as wide a group as possible.

3. The existing regulatory model

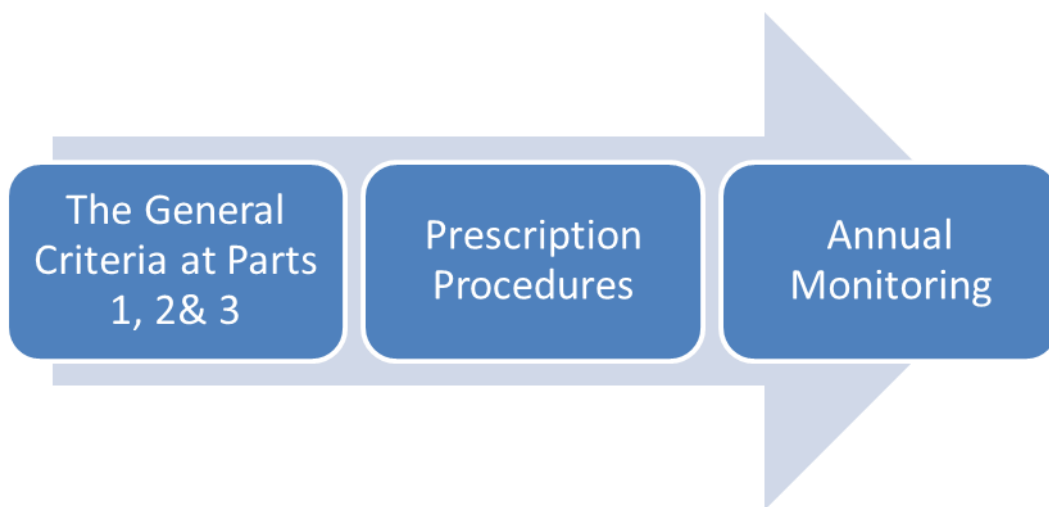
- 3.1 ARB has legal responsibility for determining the qualifications, experience and competence someone needs to become an architect and join our Register.
- 3.2 Those requirements are currently set out in the [Criteria for prescribing qualifications](#) (“the Criteria”). The three stages of education and practical experience (Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3), through which the Criteria are delivered, have been in place since 1958.
- 3.3 Part 1 is typically a three or four year, full-time undergraduate degree; Part 2 is typically a two year or three year, full-time second masters level qualification and Part 3 is attained on completion of two years practical training experience and professional examinations.
- 3.4 In June 2018, the then Institute for Apprenticeships approved the standard and end point assessment for a Level 6 degree apprenticeship: the Architectural Assistant apprenticeship. This typically encompasses a four year programme which includes Part 1 of the requirements for registration. At the same time, the Institute approved the standard and end point assessment for a Level 7 Degree Architect Apprenticeship, which typically encompasses a four-year programme and includes Parts 2 and 3 of the requirements for registration.

Prescription of qualifications

- 3.5 ARB assesses whether individual qualifications delivered by institutions meet the Criteria. This process is called ‘prescription’. The prescription process applies to each individual qualification, so each time a new qualification is developed, or an existing one is changed, an assessment is required by ARB.
- 3.6 Changes to qualifications include the structure, content, method of delivery or approach. A qualification is prescribed for a set period and usually lasts between three and five years, at which point prescription can be renewed. Only students who have been awarded qualifications that have been prescribed by ARB are eligible to join the Register.
- 3.7 The process of assessment is paper-based, with limited visits or engagement beyond the planning visits. Institutions can submit the information they feel

necessary to demonstrate how a qualification meets the Criteria as well as ARB's other prescription requirements, including formal reports from the institution's own External Examiners, to provide assurance of the consistency of the awards.

- 3.8 Once prescribed, qualifications are subject to annual monitoring, where ARB assesses continued compliance with, or deviation from, a set of standard conditions. Prescription can be removed if the Board feels there has been deterioration in compliance.



- 3.9 Feedback from institutions and our own assessment is that the current prescription process is excessively bureaucratic and focusses too much on process measurement, rather than looking at the quality of the education and training and the competence of the students completing the qualification. We will be reviewing how we can put in place better quality assurance systems at a later stage of our review, once we have decided what competencies students must have at the end of their initial education and training.

ARB's role in the quality assurance of architectural education and training

- 3.10 We receive regular feedback from students, from institutions and from representative bodies that there is confusion about the respective roles of ARB and RIBA in relation to standard setting and quality assurance in architectural education. This confusion needs to be addressed to ensure clarity and transparency about our respective roles. Institutions must know what is expected of them by us as the regulator, and students should

understand the meaning of prescription as a requirement for registration and the future right to use the title of 'architect'.

- 3.11 Part of the reason that confusion exists is that since 2002 ARB and RIBA have shared a common set of criteria used for two different purposes: gaining entry to the Register of Architects, and a RIBA 'kitemark' through their validation process.
- 3.12 Any individual who wishes to join the Register and subsequently use the title 'architect' must hold ARB-prescribed qualifications (currently at Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3 levels). The purpose of our prescription process is to determine whether qualifications meet (or continue to meet) our requirements at each stage of initial education and training. This provides assurance that anyone on the Register is competent to practise as an architect.
- 3.13 RIBA is a globally recognised and respected brand. It uses the Criteria in its validation of architectural qualifications in many countries. It is therefore important that international students understand the respective roles of the two bodies; both are important, but different.
- 3.14 We continue to work closely with RIBA as they move ahead with their plans to reform their education standards and procedures as set out in their 2021 publication, 'The Way Ahead'. In addition, we need to hear directly from students, institutions, employers and others through our engagement process if we are to achieve the scale of reform that we think is necessary to deliver a modern, accessible, diverse and innovative model of education and training.
- 3.15 A key step for us is to work with the sector to develop new educational outcomes and standards for institutions without being bound by the need for shared criteria. This is important if we are to provide the necessary leadership and end the current confusion in the system; but we also aim to avoid unnecessary duplication.

4. Evidence and analysis

- 4.1 In 2020 we commissioned research into the competencies architects need to have to meet the requirements of the 21st century marketplace and the expectations and needs of society. The research also investigated how those competencies could best be acquired through the initial stage of education and training, and how they could be best maintained and develop throughout an architect's career.
- 4.2 The research, carried out independently by SQW², began with an analysis of how architects are educated and regulated globally, and a comparison of how other professionals are regulated in the UK. A survey of UK registered architects was carried out, together with an open call for evidence to stakeholders and an examination of the views of employers and clients of architects. In depth interviews and focus groups were then used to examine the initial findings of the research in greater detail. We also set up a small working group composed of recognised external experts to help us interpret the evidence and develop an approach.
- 4.3 Below is a summary of the key findings that we have drawn upon in this review; further information including a detailed account of the methodology and findings is available in the published research reports.³

Who did we speak to?

We set an objective to listen to as many people from the profession and beyond as we were able to, in order to provide a solid evidential basis for our review.

12 key stakeholder scoping interviews

4,405 architect survey responses

200 responses to the Call for Evidence

26 'large' employers surveyed

Consultations with six Schools of Architecture

8 focus groups with architects, students and academics

² More information about SQW is available on their website, [here](#).

³ The survey is published [here](#), and the full research report is available [here](#).

Key finding: There is commonality in the educational content for architects globally

- 4.4 Analysis of requirements for entry to the profession around the world revealed much common ground. The research found that, generally, architects are expected to know and be able to do the same things, regardless of jurisdiction. There are however differences in emphasis from country to country between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, and the UK's requirements for entry to the Register (the Criteria) are comparatively light in detail.
- 4.5 This uniformity was unsurprising in respect of EU member states, who have been bound to the 11 points within the Criteria. However, the core basics of what it means to be an architect vary little whether you are trained in Australia, Canada, or the USA.

Key Finding: The core competencies for architects are changing

- 4.6 Architects and others were asked their views on the tasks they carry out now as part of their roles, and how they thought those roles might change in the coming years. Their responses showed that in addition to the current Criteria, 96% of architects thought they would require additional competency in fire and life safety, 88% thought competence relating to sustainability would need more emphasis, and 86% told us that the ability to incorporate new technology into their practice was becoming more important. Respondents also highlighted the changing role of an architect, with a trend moving from being a generalist with a broad set of skills, to a market demand for them to specialise in particular areas of design.

Key finding: It takes time to become an architect – but that time can be better spent

- 4.7 To enable the mutual recognition of qualifications across Europe, the length of academic routes to registration do not vary a great deal⁴ (six to eight years). Feedback we received showed that while the UK route is nominally seven years, for many this period is longer – approaching a decade. In other countries reviewed, there is more emphasis on the length of professional

⁴ The Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Directive sets out minimum periods of study (five years of university or equivalent level education, or four years of education and two years of experience)

practical experience required to gain full access to the professional register, with greater opportunities to become registered via a non-education route.

- 4.8 The research also looked at the approaches taken by other UK professions. Having a period of four or five years education forms the academic basis for entry into most professions, but there are, in addition, clearer expectations on what practical experience must have been achieved before access to the register is permitted.
- 4.9 Architects' responses to the survey suggested that they felt relatively prepared for practice at the end of their initial period of education and training, and most felt that the length of that period was reasonable. More recently qualified architects felt that the period of pre-registration education and training was too long, which may well be connected to the introduction of higher tuition fees from 2012, and the impact that has had on student debt.
- 4.10 Despite architects' view that they were generally ready on 'day one' of registration, that confidence was not supported by the evidence provided by employers. Over 80% of those recruiting architects said that applicants lacked the levels of competence required by the firm, primarily reporting a lack of necessary skills and knowledge relating to building contracts, health and safety risks, and procurement.
- 4.11 The research covered in some detail how individuals could best acquire the necessary competencies to gain access to the profession. The evidence suggested that the quality of experience of students in higher education varied greatly, and so there are opportunities to improve the initial period of education and training.
- 4.12 It was a consistent theme from the research that rather than focussing on the time spent in education and training, the main concern should be on the quality of outcomes at the end of it. Time, the respondents suggested, could be better spent, particularly in relation to preparing students for the working environment. One stakeholder interviewee said, "When people qualify, there is a disconnect between professional practice and design. It should be more integrated."

4.13 The inconsistent availability of good quality work experience placements was identified as an issue that may require an alternative approach, and one that has the potential to have a detrimental impact on fair access to the Register and diversity within the profession. For this review to be successful, how students gain the right skills, knowledge and behaviours through the exposure to professional practice will be a key question to answer. Suggestions from the research included:

- i) a more integrated approach which aligns work experience with the stage of a student's training;
- ii) a 'clearing' system which better matches students with suitable employers; and
- iii) expanding the scale and nature of the apprenticeship offer.

4.14 We will explore these and other options as part of our engagement process, recognising that these are not within ARB's gift.

Key finding: there should be wider access to the profession

4.15 A consistent and widespread view is that there is a need for new, more flexible entry routes to the Register. Architecture appears to be out of line with other professions in the UK and architectural practice in other countries in having under-developed non-academic routes. This is likely to be a barrier that is impacting on diversity and inclusion within the profession.

4.16 In particular, we heard that the requirement to complete an ARB-recognised Part 1 course was a barrier to those who have transferable knowledge or skills from related disciplines and who may make excellent architects.

Testing and validating the research

4.17 After the SQW research we also carried out two listening sessions with our Architects Engagement Group, consisting of architects, academics and interested stakeholders. Anyone can join the group, and all members of the group were invited to the online events which took place in April and May 2021.

4.18 In those events we explained our early plans for an outcomes-based approach and asked about the key competencies the initial period of education and

training should provide. We heard a range of views. This was a self-selecting sample, so we listened to all views with interest and did not seek to reach a consensus. Some of the views raised included:

- no period of education is ever going to be able to provide an individual with all the knowledge and skill that will be required in their professional life as an architect;
- ARB's approach should focus on a core set of generic skills, and encourage architects to develop the ability to apply new knowledge across those skill areas;
- the core behavioural elements of professionalism, ethics and leadership are crucial to architectural practice;
- there is a need for regulatory standards to be applied flexibly, providing ample scope for innovation.

5. Our vision

5.1 Chapter One set out why we need to undertake this review, and Chapter Four set out the evidence we're using to shape our new regulatory approach. Building on that rationale, we need to be clear about our ambitions for the new approach, and what it will mean for our stakeholders. This is our vision for success, and the scope of change available to us.

PUBLIC

Ensure that anyone joining the Register is equipped to design a built environment that reflects the needs of society so that people can be safe and live well, and helps to tackle the fundamental challenges our planet faces

PROFESSION AND EMPLOYERS

Provide future architects with skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours that they can develop and apply throughout their career

INSTITUTIONS

Allow for flexibility and innovation by bodies that provide education and training, ensuring the UK remains an attractive place to study

FUTURE ARCHITECTS

Enable anyone with the right competencies to become an architect by a route that is right for them

REGULATORY

Through an effective and proportionate quality assurance model, give clarity about the accountability of ARB, the institutions, and students

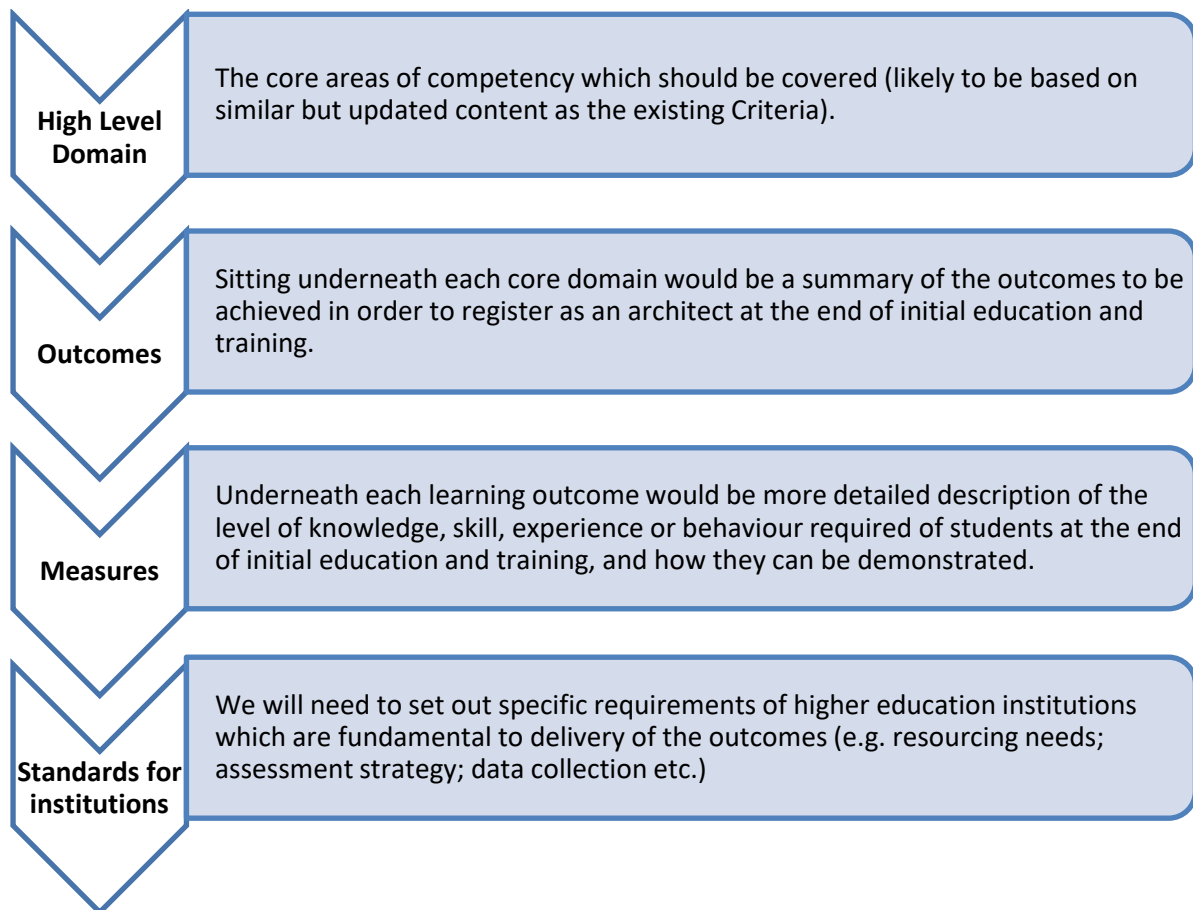
5.2 In Chapter Eight we set out how stakeholders can respond to our survey to give us feedback on this vision.

6. Outcomes-based approach

- 6.1 We believe the most effective way of ensuring standards at the end of the initial period of education and training is to focus on the outcomes that must have been achieved in order to practise as an architect. We want to involve the whole sector in this.
- 6.2 A learning outcome is a measurable achievement that an individual will be able to demonstrate at the end of any particular stage of their education and training, and can be mapped against the practice requirements of being a newly registered architect.
- 6.3 There are significant benefits to this new approach. By agreeing the outcomes that a student must have met at the end of their initial period of education and training, students, employers and clients will be clear about the requirements for access to the Register. The sector and Higher Education institutions will have greater opportunities to innovate as to how they enable those outcomes to be achieved. This, in turn, can lead to a greater flexibility in respect of routes of entry into the profession, increasing diversity and making the profession more representative of the communities it serves.
- 6.4 We are keen to improve the chances of those individuals who are competent to be architects but currently face obstacles to becoming registered. These can include students who have studied a non 'prescribed' course – whether that be in the UK or abroad – or those that have decided to move into the profession at a later stage in their careers and for whom starting again at undergraduate level may be impractical.
- 6.5 Adopting an outcomes-based approach would mark a decisive shift away from the current rules-based approach which is a disincentive to innovation and encourages 'tick-box' monitoring of compliance. Focussing on outcomes, underpinned by a clear set of standards for institutions, will improve quality and accountability, and be better suited to reflecting desired practice standards. It is an approach that is followed by similar standard setting institutions for other professions, and one already widely understood within Higher Education.

The structure of the Outcomes

- 6.6 There are several models that can be followed when deciding how to structure the content of the Outcomes. They might, for example, be based on a description of the required skills, knowledge and other relevant attributes at the end of their initial period of education and training; or based on a description of the tasks a 'day one' architect should be able to carry out competently.
- 6.7 We are considering whether a blended approach would provide the most appropriate vehicle for delivering the competencies that future architects will need. Such a model would allow for the requisite knowledge and behaviours a competent professional will need to demonstrate – for example architectural theory and professionalism – in order to underpin the practical skills a 'day one' architect will require to enter the world of practice.
- 6.8 We will also be considering whether the outcomes could not only provide for the core competencies that every architect must have, but allow for students to specialise in chosen areas of architecture as part of their initial education and training.
- 6.9 A way this might be described is under high level domains, for example: what an architect should *Know*, what an architect should be able to *Do*, and how an architect should *Behave*. Under these three competence headings there would be more detail on the outcomes a successful student should have achieved, and then a further explanation of how they might be demonstrated.



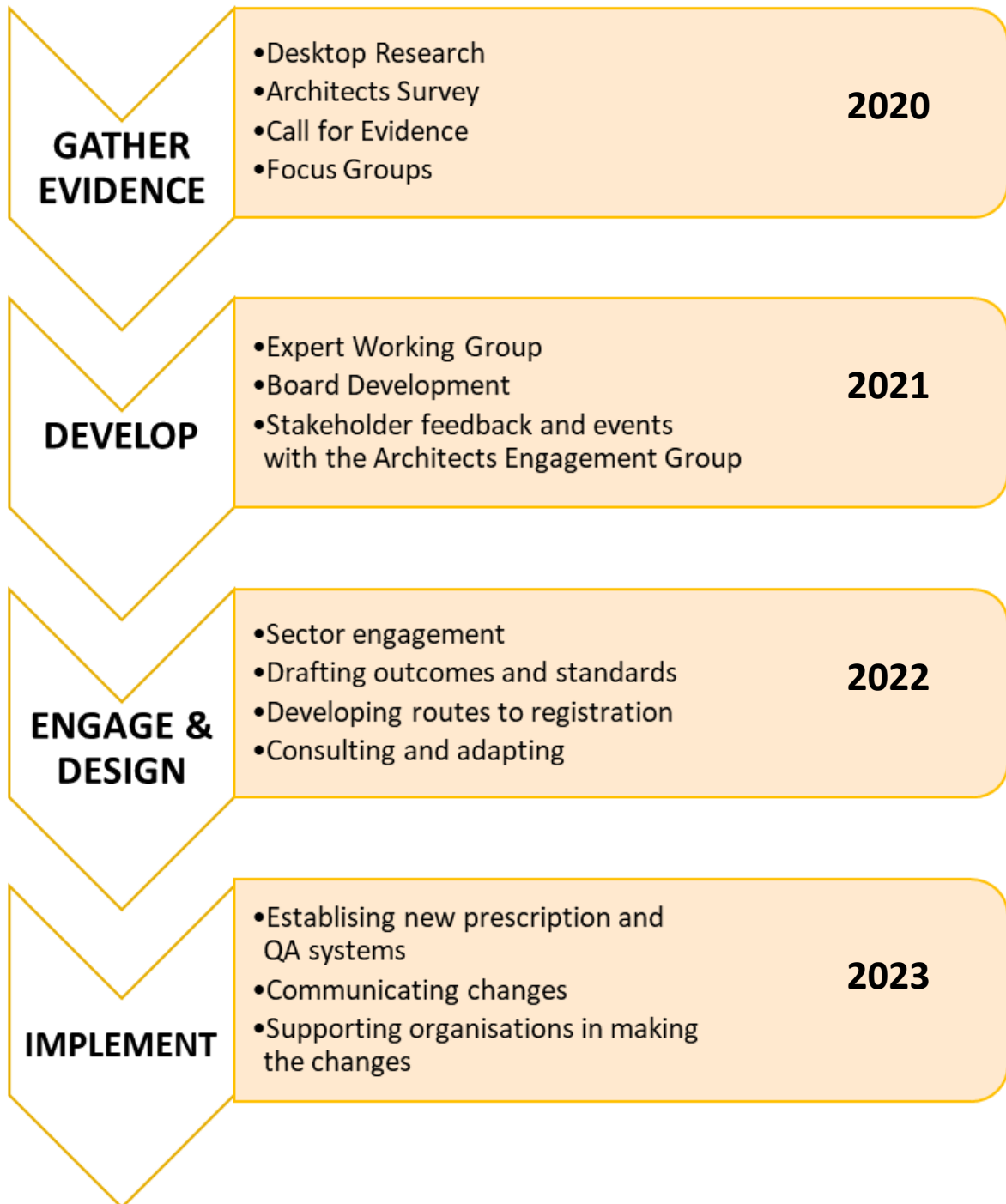
Quality Assurance

6.10 The proposal would require significant changes to the processes by which ARB quality assures qualifications and other routes that lead to registration. We are of the view that our current processes need modernisation, and this review provides the opportunity to develop an accreditation model which provides assurance to the public, better supports and guides institutions and provides proper quality assurance.

7. Next steps

- 7.1 We now need to test our proposed approach through a period of public engagement – particularly with the profession and the Higher Education sector. We have already started to engage stakeholders in this work, in the form of the online events we ran earlier in 2021 and in bilateral meetings with key organisations including all the national professional institutes for architects. A formal public consultation exercise will follow once we have developed draft proposals. These exercises will be promoted to the architectural profession, and anyone interested will be able to respond on our public platform online.
- 7.2 In 2022 we will use the information we get from that engagement to refine our approach and begin to draft new outcomes for the initial period of education and training. We will also be using these outcomes as a catalyst for a wider debate around two of the issues we have identified as risks to the success of this review.
- 7.3 The first of these is how we can better integrate practical experience into architectural education in a way that ensures consistent quality. The second is how adequate funding can be made available to institutions to ensure that courses are adequately resourced.
- 7.4 We will also draft new standards for institutions, again consulting formally on what we have produced.
- 7.5 In 2023 we will develop new quality assurance systems and establish the operational systems we will need to implement the new educational framework.

PROJECT OUTLINE



8. Your views

- 8.1 Our focus in this discussion paper has been to share our proposed approach and receive feedback on it. Our commitment is to engage throughout our review so that our regulatory approach is developed iteratively, with opportunities for stakeholders to help shape solutions at each stage.
- 8.2 We would like to know your views on the new regulatory approach that we have outlined in this paper. Whilst the new framework for education and training directly applies to future architects and the organisations that will develop that education and training, it also relates to issues that are crucial to the built environment sector at large and, necessarily, to society.
- 8.3 We are running a transparent public engagement exercise online and invite responses from anyone who is interested. It is important that you complete the survey online through the link provided below. This will help us to analyse responses effectively, and understand and compare any key trends across different stakeholder or demographic groups. We cannot commit to analysing any responses received outside the online survey platform.
- 8.4 In addition to some questions to help us identify who is responding and how to compare their views to those of other groups, the survey will ask respondents to complete the following questions:
- Chapter 4 of the discussion paper sets out the **evidence** we have analysed to date, and the **conclusions** we've reached. Is there anything you believe is missing from these conclusions, that we should also take into account as we start developing the outcomes-based approach?
 - Chapter 5 of the discussion paper sets out the **vision** for our new regulatory approach. To what extent do you agree with our vision? Please feel free to explain your view, and make any suggestions as to what is missing.
 - To enable institutions to innovate and to promote diversity, we think that the structure needs to change from the current approach of Parts 1, 2 and 3. What are your views on this?
 - We believe that the best way to describe the competencies architects need may be to describe what an architect must **know**, what they must be able to **do**, and how they must **behave**. To what extent do you agree?

- Are there any other views you would like to share with us about this work?

8.5 The survey will close on Monday 10 January 2022 at midday. A link to the survey is available on our consultations page online at arb.org.uk/consultations.



For more information, or if you require this information in a different format, please contact the Architects Registration Board
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