

Version

- Internal Draft for Approval
- Chair's Draft for Approval
- Chair's Approved Draft
- Confirmed

Minutes of Board Meeting held on Wednesday, 21 January 2026

Location: Online via Video Conferencing

Present

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

In attendance

Hugh Simpson (CEO & Registrar)
Emma Matthews (Director of Governance & International)
Simon Howard (Director of Standards)
Brian James (Director of Registration & Accreditation)
Charlotte Gellatly (Director of Performance & Planning)
Helen Ransome (Interim Director of Professional Standards)
Mandy Kaur (Governance Officer), Minutes
Alice Pun, Governance Manager

Private Meeting of the Board

The meeting started with a private discussion of the Board.
No staff members were present for this item.

ARB staff members joined the meeting.

Open Session

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for the meeting.

Helen Ransome, Interim Director of Professional Standards, was introduced to the Board. It was noted that whilst Simon Howard continued to be the Director of Standards, he would additionally be leading the Policy and Communications Department until a new Director was appointed.

Two representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and one member of the general public joined the Open Session to observe the meeting.

2. Members' Interests

All Board members had been asked to declare conflicts of interest in any of the agenda items prior to the meeting. The Register of Interests was noted.

There were no declarations of interest.

STANDING ITEMS

3. Update from the Chair

It was Stephen McCusker and Mark Bottomley's last meeting as they were reaching the end of their tenure. Both Board members were thanked for their immense contributions and the significant progress achieved during their time on the Board. Their valuable input would be greatly missed and the Board wished them both well for the future.

The Chair had attended an event held by RIBA North West in Manchester the previous week, which focused on the future of architectural education. The RIBA had also been represented at the event. Architects who had followed more unconventional routes into architectural education shared insights into their experiences which had been extremely interesting and much valued by those present.

The Chair had attended an event hosted by The Edge, which explored different approaches to assessment and attitudes to learning, with a particular focus on reflective Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

4. Minutes

A concern was raised regarding the way in which Item 10 – Changes to ARB's Professional Practical Experience Requirements, had been recorded within the minutes. A view had been expressed at the meeting about the readiness of the proposals to proceed to consultation. The Board as a whole had supported the recommendation in Item 10, but it was agreed that the dissenting view should be recorded within the minute for completeness.

The Board **unanimously agreed** to delegate authority to the Chair for approval of the final version of the open session minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2026, subject to the above amendment.

ACTION: Governance Officer to review and amend the minutes from the meeting on 10 December 2025 to ensure that the full position was accurately recorded. The Board Chair to approve the final version of the minutes subject to the above amendment being made.

5. Report on Actions following the Previous Meetings and Matters Arising

Board Members noted a report on actions resulting from the previous meeting. There were no matters arising.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

6. Chief Executive's Report

In response to queries submitted in advance of the meeting by Board members, the following points were noted:

International Updates

Clarification was provided regarding the visit to South Africa and the use of independent experts. Prior to drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA), a desktop exercise was typically used with input from independent experts. In this instance, the same approach had been followed; however, some technical areas had been identified from the initial due diligence work that required further in depth exploration. As a result, it was necessary to involve an independent expert in the visit to South Africa to support the executive gather the relevant information to complete the due diligence work.

Continuing Professional Development

The Board received an update on the value that the AI tool had brought during its first year of operation. No regulatory decisions had been made using the AI tool, but it had been used to identify whether individuals had completed mandatory topics and engaged in reflective learning across different modules. The tool was used to flag non-compliance, which was then addressed directly by the registration team.

A meeting was due to be held with the Director of Practice at RIBA. It was noted that the data from the RIBA would be reviewed on a sample basis to monitor CPD recording compliance.

Eos Transformation

The initial requirements for the case management system had been developed three years ago and were at a high level, focusing on how complaints were managed through the regulatory process. The purpose of the Validation Workshops was for the project manager to ensure that these requirements remained valid and to retest or review what was originally set out for the case management system.

The remainder of the report was noted.

7. Report on the Delivery of the Business Plan 2025

Several Board members had raised queries in advance of the meeting in relation to the deferral of the development of a case management system, the role of the IT Working Group and the Transformation Programme Board. Clarifications and updates were provided in response.

Transformation reporting would continue to be provided through the executive Transformation Programme Board, which would operate until the end of Phase 3. The IT Working Group, referred to in the paper, was forward-thinking, with a focus on operational decision making with appropriate governance. The recent Board effectiveness review had indicated a desire for more detailed updates to the Board on Transformation. This would be provided at every Board meeting, supplemented where appropriate with workshop discussions.

The Board confirmed that it had been helpful to receive regular updates on all this work, given the significant investment of time and resources. There was value in understanding measurable benefits and members suggested an overall assessment at the end of Phase 3 to evaluate the benefits of the transformation for ARB.

Continuous Improvement in our regulatory service

It was noted that there had been a bottleneck in the work of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) staff working group, specifically due to the departure of the former Director of Policy and Communications. Consideration had been given to alternative approaches. The idea of embedding EDI work within teams would be considered. A meeting with Purpose Union was scheduled in the coming weeks to discuss this further.

The Board discussed data on registrants joining through international MRAs. It was reported that, since the implementation of the CRM system, applicants from international MRAs represented just under 5% of all new registrants.

The Board was provided with data regarding the numbers of applicants entering the Register under the MRA and EU routes, how these were changing and the implications of this.

An international recognition arrangements strategy would be developed further this year.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Dates of Future Board Meetings

The next Board meeting would take place on Thursday 19 March 2026, followed by a Board Workshop. This meeting would be held in person at the ARB office.