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Architects Registration Board

BOARD MEETING: MINUTES

Minutes of Board Meeting held on 22 July 2026

Location: Online

Present:

Alan Kershaw (Chair)
Cindy Leslie
Will Freeman
Professor Elena Marco
Dr Teri Okoro
Liz Male
Tom McDermott
Caroline Turnbull-Hall
Jon Prichard
Grace Choi
Eduardo Petrilli

In attendance

Hugh Simpson (CEO & Registrar)
Emma Matthews (Director of Governance and International)
Brian James (Director of Registration & Accreditation
Simon Howard (Director of Strategy)
Charlotte Gellatly (Director of Performance & Planning)
Helen Ransome (Interim Director of Professional Standards
Eleri Jones (Head of People)
Alice Pun (Governance Manager)
Nina Martin (Temporary Governance Officer) - Minutes

Private Meeting of the Board

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

ARB staff members joined the meeting.

Open Session

1. Apologies for absence and introductions

No apologies were recorded. Nina Martin was introduced as the temporary Governance Officer. Additional members of staff, two representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and a member of the public observed relevant elements of the Open Session of 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.

All Architect Board members declared an interest in Item 7 – Consultation Outcome: Changes to ARB's Investigations Rules; Item 8 Changes to the Professional Practical Experience (PPE) requirements and Item 9: Consultation Outcome: Code Guidance on the basis that it could potentially impact them. The declarations were noted for the minutes, and it was agreed the Board members could remain part of the meeting.

STANDING ITEMS

3. Update from the Chair

The Chair updated the Board on a recent meeting he had held with Chris Williamson, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Discussions had focused on the boundaries and remits of both organisations and the work that ARB had been commissioned by MHCLG to do relating to regulation of function within the professions in the sector. There had been a discussion on the importance of the work and approaching it positively as it afforded a huge opportunity to support legislative changes being planned and which could be announced by the Government in the first quarter of next year.

The Chair had also met with Ali Parish, Deputy Director for Buildings, Design and Construction, MHCLG. Ms Parish had repeated her thanks for the work of ARB. The Department continued to express confidence in ARB's judgements and valued its experience in regulation and professional standards, and how this was overseen.

The Chair had also visited the Kingston School of Architecture, noting how inspiring it had been to see the work of young aspiring architects and meet their tutors.
The second Institute of Regulation chairs meeting was held on 1 July at the ARB office. All at the meeting were facing a great deal of change, and challenges in their governance and legislative frameworks. It was positive that many of the changes were being shaped by the regulators themselves and their extensive experience.
The Board **noted** the update.

4. Minutes

The Board **unanimously agreed** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2026.

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

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

ITEMS FOR NOTING

6. Chief Executive's Report

The Board noted the Chief Executive's Report; and the Chief Executive, with support from other members of the executive, addressed key points and questions arising from the report.

Temporary external consultancy support had been brought in to provide additional capacity and manage workload pressures so that the new and revised routes to registration could be delivered on time, and as registration staff were also supporting the CRM development project. Additionally, support was needed given the present and upcoming extra demands on leadership time.

A new Head of Communications was due to start on 19 August and a new Head of Policy was expected by end of September or early October 2026.

Action: The Board commended the Talos platform but agreed that the automated messages going out be reviewed for assurance. The People Team would address this.

MHCLG was coordinating the recruitment campaign for five Board appointments to replace Board members stepping down from their natural terms. The recruitment campaign was for four architect members and one lay member. The application window would close at 5pm on 11 August 2026. The vacancies were being actively promoted through ARB's website and social media channels. Information sessions had also been planned and were ongoing. The Appointments Panel had advised that interviews would likely be held mid-October 2026.

To address or prevent large numbers of board vacancies arising at the same time, the Board was assured that going forward appointments would be staggered.

The International Team were continuing to make positive progress in relation to the development of a new Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) with ARB's South African counterparts, the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP). The Chief Executive Office & Registrar had been invited by SACAP to speak at a conference in September 2026 in Cape Town. The visit was being funded by the Department for Business and Trade's Ricardo Fund. Round tables with some of the architecture firms in Cape Town would also form part of the visit.

The Board **noted** the update.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

7. Consultation Outcomes: Changes to ARB's Investigations Rules

The response rate to the consultation had been relatively low, which was consistent with previous consultations around the more technical aspects of ARB's professional standards work. Useful feedback had however been received and had informed the proposed changes and actions within the report.

Main actions included undertaking a full review of quality measures and controls across the investigations process, undertaking a complete review of guidance documents so relevant

stakeholders had a clear understanding of investigations, and reviewing the decisions process.

Feedback received proposed including more visual communication tools such as flow charts and process maps, videos and infographics to support a better understanding of the process. It was noted that a suite of plain English guidance for complainants at each stage of the process was planned. Work would start with the Communications Team to move beyond written to electronic communication and promotional tools.

The proposed guidance would be tested with relevant stakeholders, associates and staff outside the professional standards team. Training for investigators was also being arranged through external providers and legal advisers to ensure readiness ahead of implementation.

The Board reflected that the low response rate may require scrutiny. Respondents included associates who engage with other regulators and could cascade information as needed, as well as legal firms that represent architects in ARB proceedings. However, most feedback came from individual registered architects and indicated a good understanding of the process. ARB should seek feedback from all relevant stakeholders.

While there was no formal legal definition of 'public interest', ARB had developed its own working definition of 'public interest' to ensure consistency.

The proposed implementation date for the changes was 1 January 2027, allowing sufficient time for finalising guidance and communications, completing investigator training and preparing teams for implementation.

A formal review of the new model would be conducted after two years using predefined quantitative and qualitative success measures.

The Board **unanimously agreed** to approve the revised Investigations Rules and Professional Conduct Committee Rules**.** The new Rules would come into effect on **1 January 2027.**

8. Consultation Outcome: Changes to the Professional Practical Experience (PPE) Requirements

The Board noted a report which set out consultation outcomes on changes to professional practical experience requirements. Useful feedback had been received and as a result, the executive were proposing some pragmatic changes to mitigate particular risks. These included some small but important changes in implementation through guidance, best practice signposting and clear communication of what is required. The aim was to improve flexibility and accessibility.

ARB had proposed removing the minimum two-year requirement for professional practical experience. The key principle was that time was not the deciding factor and that

competence should be assessed by quality of experience and evidence of competence. In most cases the process would take more than two years, but some people could complete it more quickly if they already had substantial prior experience.

The following was noted around the training record of experience:

- A record of experience was needed to track progress and the current preferred route was the RIBA PDR portal, but this was not the only option.
- The RIBA was committed to making changes to its Professional Education and Development Record (PEDR) in order to meet ARB requirements. ARB would continue to work with the RIBA to test and adapt the record of experience system.
- RIBA would need to invest in software changes to support uploads and tracking. It was noted that RIBA had an incentive to invest and it had given assurance this would be done by the end of the year.
- The record of experience must be universally accessible to trainees and employers with only a nominal cost for users.
- It was suggested that a single record of experience would be ideal as multiple records can cause confusion.

Further to the discussion, other comments and points of clarity included:

- Experience did not have to be solely UK based, however there must be a UK element in recorded experience.
- Trainees needed help to ensure courses were compliant. There was no hard requirement for UK qualifications. Inclusion was one of the measurable indicators.
- Focus should remain on the quality of experience and whether it met the required criteria.
- ARB's regulatory role was to set requirements and monitor compliance, not to coach or deliver training.
- Trainees needed to know the minimum standards to improve education quality.

The Board queried the planned approach to gather feedback on the process and on the progress with transition plans. It was noted that ongoing feedback would be managed through the Accreditation team and the Accreditation Committee. Transition arrangements would be on a case-by-case basis with providers moving at their own pace. By way of governance, progress with the transition plans would also be discussed through the Accreditation Committee. Employers' understanding of the changes would be facilitated through webinars and record of experience.

In terms of addressing and measuring poor employment conditions, ARB would need to highlight good practice with employers and providers while being cognizant of ARB's role as a regulator.

The Board **unanimously agreed** to approve the updates to the Standards for Learning Providers, the new guidance for employers and for trainees, minimum requirements for a

Trainee Record of Experience and accompanying advice topics, the updated Registration Rules and the policy position and final proposed wording in the annexes. The Board also **noted** that the Accreditation Handbook would be updated to ensure consistency with these decisions.

9. Consultation Outcome: Code Guidance

The Board noted the final set of five proposed guidance documents supporting the Code. The falling numbers of respondents were noted as a risk. ARB had however taken a more targeted approach to promote expert input into the consultation.

Consequently, the quality of responses was positive and sensible suggestions were received.

As a result of the consultation, some changes were proposed including reorganising the guidance so that 'resource' sections would be removed from individual documents and moved to a website resource hub with separate tabs for easier maintenance.

The guidance documents had been selected using three criteria: had guidance already been published and should it be retained? Was there a regulatory risk? Had feedback from the profession been received which suggested there was a gap in guidance?

Future guidance would be added if it was felt that this was needed by the profession.

The Board commended the Executive on the clarity of the sustainability guidance and proposed that item 3.4 (Annexe C) should clearly state that architects should reflect on whether they should continue with a particular appointment.

Action: Item 3.4 (Annexe C). The Executive should remove duplicated wording in the sustainability guidance section.

There was a brief discussion about definitions of leadership and management, noting that people management and leadership were different.

Action: In terms of the building safety guidance, the Executive would undertake checks to ensure appropriate use of 'must', reflecting mandatory requirements and 'should', which was guidance only. This would help users apply guidance correctly.

In terms of EDI guidance, a suggestion was received for additional resources offline. It was also noted that ARB should ensure that leadership guidance links to inclusivity.

Action: Final revisions to the guidance will be shared for sign off before publication

The Board **noted** the report and unanimously approved publication of the five supporting guidance notes, subject to final editorial amendments being signed off by the Chair.

10. Remodelling of ARB's Prescribed Examination

The Board was asked to approve a six-week consultation period, rather than twelve weeks, on proposed changes to ARB's Registration Rules relating to the Prescribed Examination, together with draft Eligibility Guidance and draft Prescribed Examination Guidance.

The Prescribed Examination was a necessary route for people who did not have access to other recognition routes. It was not a mainstream route to registration but a route to support fairness and access. The aim was to ensure people with relevant qualifications can still access registration. It was noted the exam already exists and the remodelling aimed to improve fairness and inclusion. The Prescribed Examination would be updated to align with new academic outcomes as it was currently based on the old model.

As yet there was no detailed costing, but the new model would not cost more than the current process and could potentially be cheaper over time. It was also noted that the number of candidates taking the Prescribed Examination was expected to reduce as new qualifications became available.

On grounds of inclusivity, it would be important to be mindful of colleagues in Scotland who worked to level eleven qualifications. A concern was raised around the reduction of the consultation period from twelve weeks to six weeks. Responses could be impacted by the holiday period. It was noted that this had been considered but there had been many opportunities for respondents to provide feedback on the overarching policy approach previously; the focus of this consultation was on implementation rather than the principles.

The Board **unanimously agreed** to approve the proposed changes to the Registration Rules relating to the Prescribed Examination, Draft Eligibility Guidance and the Draft Prescribed Examination Guidance.

The Board **noted** the proposed approach to implementation of the new Prescribed Examination in spring 2027.

11. ARB's approach to safeguarding

The Board noted the report which responded to a previous board effectiveness review recommendation. The proposal was to include safeguarding within the governance infrastructure in a proportionate way. It would become an important feature for ARB's governance infrastructure.

Key updates and points of clarity included:

- Safeguarding responsibilities were shared across the organisation but no dedicated safeguarding lead was deemed necessary at this stage

- Existing training already included safeguarding principles. The need for explicit safeguarding training would be reviewed further by the Director of Governance and International and Head of People.
- Given that engagement with vulnerable people was minimal, ARB wished to ensure its approach was proportionate and to avoid safeguarding being a tick box compliance process.

Action: Though low risk for the organisation, a follow-up review of the approach to safeguarding would be undertaken every two years.

The Board unanimously **agreed** the proposed future approach to safeguarding as outlined in key points 2.20-2.20.2.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

12. Performance Monitoring Updates, Q2, 2026

The Board noted the various performance reports: the management accounts, performance monitoring dashboard and the mid-year business plan. Key updates included:

- The management accounts were complete up to the end of May 2026.
- The forecast remained on budget for nearly all cost and income lines. A reforecasting exercise was carried out across the business. We had only adjusted for the legacy decommissioning work which we were considering moving out to 2027 due to timing issues around the CRM project
- This was the second presentation of the dashboard to the Board with only minor adjustments since the first draft.
- The mid-year business plan update was presented with the scorecard annexed. Progress was positive with most activities on trajectory, though some activities would fall into 2027.
- Performance wise, there were no issues, risks or red flags to highlight in the reporting period.

Further to the update, the reintroduction of communications, staff engagement and external engagement as KPIs on the dashboard was proposed given the imminent start of the Head of Communications.

Action: The reintroduction of communications KPIs would be revisited later in the year, once the Head of Communications was settled into post.

Clarity was sought on the meaning of the 'monitor' tag on the dashboard. It was clarified that this means the indicator was approaching the agreed upper or lower limits. If it went beyond, it would be escalated to the Board in a timely manner with an action plan.

ARB was tracking as 'amber' on delivering modern, efficient, effective regulation. One deliverable for 2026 was to continue implementing the EDI strategy which was also 'amber' rated. It was clarified that 'amber' meant performance was on trajectory and expected to be delivered. There were parts of the business plan for which feasibility had not fully been tested but for which delivery was still planned and for which resources were available.

The Board **noted** the update.

13. Any other business

No other item of business had been raised.

14.Dates of Future Board Meetings

The Board noted the dates of future meetings.

Arrangements for the annual two-day Board Workshop, and related events, in Leeds were ongoing. An update was scheduled at the Board workshop.