



**Subject** Update on ARB's Operational Activities  
**Purpose** For Note  
**From** ARB's Staff Team

If you have any enquiries on this paper, please contact Karen Holmes at [karenh@arb.org.uk](mailto:karenh@arb.org.uk) or on 020 7580 5861

---

## 1. Summary

To update the Board on ARB's operational activities since the last Board meeting.

## 2. Open Session

Open session. Any confidential matters will be discussed in a separate report in the confidential session.

## 3. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

- Protect the users and potential users of architects' services, and
- Support architects through Regulation

ARB's Operational Activities Report keeps the Board informed of activities which ensure that ARB meets its purpose and objectives, its statement of priorities and delivers against the Business Plan.

## 4. Stakeholder Relations

### Hackitt Review

*The Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety was announced by government in July 2017 following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and was led by Dame Judith Hackitt. Its purpose was to make recommendations that will ensure a sufficiently robust regulatory system for the future. One of those recommendations was that there should be a competence framework specifically for those involved in the design, construction and maintenance of Higher-Risk Residential Buildings.*

ARB is a member of the working group that is considering the competencies that should be required for architects and building designers involved in Higher-Risk Residential Buildings. Since the last Board meeting in April ARB representatives have attended four cross-industry competence meetings, and ARB has chaired a working group meeting looking specifically at the design elements of buildings in scope.

A final report recommending a new regulatory framework for raising competence levels across the construction industry is to be submitted to Government by the end of May. A full briefing will be provided to the Board once the detail of those recommendations is known.

### Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

*The QAA safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education (HE) wherever it is delivered around the world. Their main areas of work include reviewing HE, Access to HE, the UK Quality Code and providing advice and guidance.*

The QAA has responsibility for developing Subject Benchmark Statements. These Statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas. They show what graduates might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their studies. The current Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement incorporates ARB's Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications, which are also held in common with the RIBA. The Criteria at Part 1 and Part 2 levels form the core of the Statement; the Criteria at Part 3 are appended to the Statement. The QAA has recently embarked on a review of all Subject Benchmark Statements and the Architecture Statement will be one of the first to be reviewed.

The QAA, in conjunction with the subject community, is in the process of establishing an expert review team to carry out this work. ARB will be represented on the team by the Head of Qualifications and Governance. We have been in dialogue with the QAA and updated the Executive on the progress of our current business as usual review of the Criteria; the intention is to include the revised Criteria at Part 1 and Part 2 levels within the updated Subject Benchmark Statement and append the revised Part 3 Criteria as is currently the case. The QAA is aware of the timescales of our Criteria review and is prepared to await the outcomes of our review so that this can be achieved.

The work to review the remainder of the Statement will commence in May; drafting will occur during the Summer and the QAA hope to publish a revised Statement further to a consultation in the Autumn. It is anticipated that the revised Statement will be completed by the end of this year. In order to support the Head of Qualifications and Governance with this work, we have asked a subset of our Criteria Task and Finish Group (the Chair; an academic and a lay representatives from the Group) to assist. We will provide further updates as the work in this area progresses.

### Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture (SCHOSA)

*Each Head of every UK Recognised School of Architecture is a member of SCHOSA. They also have a number of associate members of schools. It provides a forum for debate and exchange of ideas between Heads trying to achieve similar goals in different institutions.*

We met with representatives of SCHOSA Council as part of our regular liaison meetings in early May 2019. We provided SCHOSA Council members with the opportunity to give us some initial, high level feedback on the draft Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications. Other key issues that were discussed included updates on the reviews of the Criteria and the QAA's Architecture Subject Benchmark Statement. SCHOSA has invited us to attend their Summer meeting in July 2019, at which they hope to discuss the progress of the Criteria and Procedures reviews in greater depth.

### [Architecture Students Network \(ASN\)](#)

*ASN is an independent network of student representatives from the schools of architecture within the United Kingdom.*

Member of the Qualifications Department held a call with the co-lead from the ASN in early May 2019. This formed part of our initiative to create a regular dialogue between ourselves and one of the main groups representing students of architecture. The ASN welcomed the information that we had provided for their national conference in early April 2019; this had included practical information about our requirements for registration, updates on the reviews that we have been undertaking as well as advice, so far as we can provide it at this point, about the UK's Exit from the European Union. We provided additional updates on our Criteria and Procedures reviews as well as the review of the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement. We will continue our dialogue with the ASN, providing updates on the work that we are doing at the ARB that could impact on students and ensuring that they are involved in upcoming consultations. It is also likely that ARB will be invited to contribute to the ASN's Autumn conference.

### [Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland \(RIAS\) / \[Royal Society of Ulster Architects \\(RSUA\\)\]\(#\)](#)

*RIAS and RSUA are the professional bodies for chartered architects in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively. RSUA formed a direct alliance with the RIBA in 1925 and act for them in Northern Ireland.*

Over a series of exchanges, we strengthened our relationship with both these organisations. In the spirit of complementary collaboration we have shared information on title misuse communications and case data with RSUA and reaffirmed a commitment to share content of interest to our respective stakeholders with RIAS.

### [Chartered Trading Standards Institute \(CTSI\) - 2019 Symposium](#)

*CTSI represents trading standards professionals in the UK and overseas. The Symposium is an annual professional development event.*

Work has begun to arrange meetings between the Registrar, Communications Lead and Symposium event attendees. Many awareness raising activities, for ARB and the Architects Register, arise from the advocacy of others. The Symposium is an excellent opportunity to learn from, exchange information with and develop relationships with a range of organisations working in public protection.

### [Architects Benevolent Society \(ABS\)](#)

*The ABS is a registered charity dedicated to helping past and present members of the wider UK architectural profession, and their families, in times of need.*

As part of our commitment to support architects through regulation, we signpost to sources of other assistance such as the ABS. The April edition of our eBulletin featured a dedicated article focussed on mental wellbeing and the support ABS can provide. This will be supported by a social media post for Mental Health Awareness Week in May.

## 6. EU Exit

Since the last Board meeting, we have:

- Continued to liaise with relevant Government Departments in order to provide them with requested information about our current EU recognition processes;
- Attended a MHCLG roundtable events in Edinburgh and Belfast hosted and attended by members of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland and the Royal Society of Ulster Architects respectively, to inform them of activities being undertaken to prepare for Brexit and to give the government an opportunity to listen to the sector's concerns;
- Assisted MHCLG in making amendments to the Architects Act to allow for the continued recognition of Swiss qualified architects in the event of a No Deal exit; and
- Further updated key web pages in preparation for a potential No Deal exit from the EU on 1 June 2019.

## 7. Business as Usual Reviews of the Criteria and Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications

We are continuing to undertake work on the revised draft Criteria and Procedures documents. As noted in our April update, we issued a draft of the revised Procedures to key stakeholders for initial high level feedback for a short period. We are now taking that feedback into consideration.

Once both ARB and the RIBA are satisfied with the draft Criteria, they will be forwarded to the ARB Board and RIBA Education Committee for consideration. A formal three month consultation will then take place. Feedback further to the consultation will be taking into consideration and a final version of the Criteria will then be developed for approval by both organisations before being published. We will be bringing a draft of the revised Procedures to the Board at the same time as the revised Criteria; the consultation referred to above will additionally include the Procedures, so that the two documents will be consulted upon in parallel.

## 8. Communicating ARB's work

### Publications

Since the last Board meeting in April, we have provided content for FE Weeks' *Movers and Shakers* column, been referenced in a least 6 articles, published 1 news release and responded to 5 press enquiries.

Earned media (content not directly created by ARB but by others without payment) is a highly trusted source of information. Earned press coverage enables us to inform and raise awareness of ARB and our regulatory activities with a range of stakeholders. In addition significant earned coverage in a national newspaper that will be seen by a large readership would cost thousands if the equivalent space was bought as advertising.

### eBulletin

Our eBulletins remind the profession of their responsibilities and provide updates on decisions made by the Board as well as other information of interest and relevance to

architects. Issues are published after Board meetings, which are usually held around five times a year.

The last eBulletin email, published 8 April, was delivered to 40,615 recipients and opened by 16,953 in the first week following publication. The April eBulletin microsite received 5,956 page views. Continuing the trend reported in the last Report, both email opens and microsite page views were the highest for the year.

The April edition was the most engaged with email and microsite since records began in 2015.

In addition to serving as a point of contact to our registrants the eBulletin is a cost effective way to help ensure the Register is kept up to date. The eBulletin email prominently features the recipient's contact details at the top of the message together with a click through option to update this information. We received approximately 759 contact detail updates in the week immediately after the eBulletin was sent out compared to 92 in the previous week, an increase of approximately eight fold.

### Online

While our reactive response workload (case handling) with regards to misuse of the title 'architect' continues to grow, it was recognised that we did not have the capacity or skills support our public protection by maximising our *proactive* activities to reduce instances of misuse occurring in the first place.

In 2018 the Board indicated a preference for employing a dedicated resource to raise awareness of the Register and in September 2018, agreed to increase funding for its regulation of title work. Part of this funding was used to employ a Public Awareness Lead on a two year contract.

As part of their activities, our Public Awareness Lead conducted two small trials of Google Adwords and Facebook Ads in the weeks leading up to and over the Easter weekend in order to understand what impact (and cost) they might have in raising awareness of the protection of title, the benefits of checking the Register and of ARB. The results of the trials will be analysed and used to inform the Public Awareness Lead's future work plan.

It has been over two years since the arb.org.uk website was redesigned both in terms of look and content. Work has begun on a website audit in order to confirm and review the structure and performance of the website with a view to improving user journeys and the websites effectiveness if supporting our statutory duties. Regulatory best practice recognises the importance in ensuring information is easily accessible, available at a single point, clearly signposted kept up to date – a well-functioning websites as a key tool for achieving this. A quality website should be easy to navigate, concise, functional, clearly branded and encourage users to engage with you then and in the future.

Steps have been taken to revise our Live Chat function to help enquirers identify the most appropriate team for their query. This will help provide a better experience for the user and reduce enquiry transfers amongst the ARB Team.

### **Brexit Communications**

Our aim is to respond to the UK's changing relationship with Europe and the rest of the World in a way which supports the continued protection on the public and support of architects through regulation.

In some areas ARB will be the primary source of information and providing timely, definitive and practical information to stakeholders when and wherever possible is an aspect of an effective response. It will hopefully enable the profession and others to successfully navigate changes which impact them. We edited our dedicated pages to reflect the changes to Exit Day (Glossary) and the launch of Governments dedicated website for their settled and pre-settled status scheme (Useful Links).

## **9. Administration of the Register and Organisational Efficiency**

### **Numbers on Register**

On 31 December 2018, the Register stood at 41,170. As of 1 May 2019, there were 41,689 architects on the Register. Of these, 8,966 are EU nationals (not including UK). 7,686 of these individuals have registered addresses in the UK. This compares with 8,108 EU nationals (not including UK) at the start of 2018, with 6,943 based in the UK. This demonstrates that the Register is still growing and that the number of EU nationals on the Register and with addresses in the UK is still increasing.

On 4 January 2019, we removed 1,090 architects for non-payment of the retention fee. This was down from 1,204 in 2018. We consider that the reduction in the number removed is down to a combination of enhanced communications around the fee deadline and better general awareness of the deadline for payment. 558 (51%) of those removed have since been reinstated.

### **Systems improvements**

Our email management system indicates that in 2018, we sent a total of 16,553 email responses to queries, with an average response rate of one day. Between 1 January and 1 May 2018, we had sent 4,868 emails.

So far in 2019 (as of 1 May 2019), we have sent 7,396 emails (an increase of 52% on 2018) with the most popular topics being requests for certificates to register in the EU (615), Brexit (386), making an application from the EU (349), change of address (297) and reinstatement (258). As previously noted at April's Board meeting, we experienced a spike in email activity with 1,880 emails being sent between 8 March 2019 (when an email was sent out to all registrants encouraging them to make contact soon if they were concerned) and 29 March 2019 (original EU exit day). We had sent 716 emails in the same period during 2018.

Work is underway to build an end to end application processing system in Registration which will link the front end systems we have already built to host online applications, with back end office management systems. We are working on a specification to go out to tender for the work. It is anticipated that building an end to end system will create efficiencies, result in quicker processing times, reduce paper use in the office and create better audit trails for record keeping.

### **Registration EU matters**

As reported above, we are tracking the number of architects with EU nationality (other than UK) entering and leaving the Register. We note that the number of EU nationals on the Register is still increasing at a faster pace than in 2018 with 422 joining the Register in the first quarter of 2019, against 232 in 2018. The number is significantly higher than both the first quarters of 2016 (333) and 2017 (331).

Finally, the number of certificates we have issued (which would potentially enable a UK architect to register in Europe) has increased exponentially in 2019, with 387 being issued in by close of April 2019. This is already 77% higher than the entire annual total for 2018, when 223 were processed across the year and 54 in the first quarter. 256 of these requests have come since we sent out a communication on 8 March 2019 informing registrants that if they should contact us without delay if they have any questions about what Brexit might mean for ARB and their registration status. In 2016, the year the referendum on whether the UK should remain in or leave the EU, 105 certificates were issued in the whole year.

### **Prescribed Examination Review**

As was reported in 2018, and in line with the agreed 2018 Business Plan, we are progressing a 'business as usual' review of the Procedures for the Prescribed Examination ('the Exam'). We await progress with the Criteria and Procedures review before moving further forward with this review as one of the core objectives was to ensure that any new process was compatible with changes to the Criteria.

As a final step, in the lead up to the Board considering the revised Criteria (following the business as usual review), we will ensure that the prescribed examination and any proposed changes are compatible with the revised Criteria. We will be taking a decision on how to proceed once the Board have decided on the direction of the Criteria review.

## **10. Committee Meetings held since April Board Meeting**

Prescription Committee – 24 April 2019

Audit Committee – 25 April 2019

## **11. Future Meetings and Events**

Prescription Committee – 30 May 2019

Professional Conduct Committee – 10 to 13 June 2019

Professional Conduct Committee – 17 to 19 June 2019

Prescription Committee – 4 July 2019

## **12. Resource Implications**

Only as identified in the paper.

## **13. Risk Implications**

ARB's Operational Activities Report provides the Board with an update on business activities, progress against the Business Plan, as well as highlighting any emerging risks which may impact on delivery.

We continue to manage the risks associated with Brexit as far as we are able to despite uncertainty and have made arrangements for the UK leaving the EU on 1 June 2019 with no deal in place.

Risks also remain with regards the review of the Criteria, Procedures and Prescribed Examination which are outlined in the body of the paper, and subject to individual risk registers for each project.

Further detail of specific risks to the organisation and in relation to operations will be provided in the confidential Registrar's report.

**14. Communication**

The update on ARB's operational activities, informs the Board of ARB's work and any risks which may prevent the delivery of ARB's operations.

**15. Equality and Diversity Implications**

Equality and Diversity considerations will be central to the review of the prescribed examination with comments drawn from the pre-consultation response being factored into the direction of travel. An Equality Assessment will be carried out once the shape of any changes has been formulated.

**16. Further Actions**

These are referred to within the key points set out above.