

Professional Practical Experience Commission

Final report

Submitted to the Architects Registration Board in March 2025.

The Commission

Chair: Professor Sir Chris Husbands

Felicity Atekpe, University College London

Peter Barker, Ryder Architecture

Polly Mackenzie, University of the Arts London

The Commissioners



Chair

As an educationist, academic, public servant and university leader, **Professor Sir Chris Husbands** has decades of experience in the education sector. Chris recently stepped down from his previous role as Vice-Chancellor for Sheffield Hallam University. As the Chair, he will oversee the Commission's recommendations on how to improve fair and consistent access to quality practical experience and recommend new minimum requirements for PPE.



Architect Academic

Felicity Atekpe is an Associate Professor and Director of Practice and Design of Practice at The Bartlett School of Architecture (BSA), University College London. Her academic research includes innovative pedagogies, which address the role of education, ethics and alternative routes to qualification and equitable urban landscapes. She has more than 20 years of experience as an educator and in her current role she provides academic design practice leadership for programmes across the BSA.



Employer of architects

Peter Barker is an architectural technologist by background and is a partner at Ryder Architecture. With over 40 years' experience in practice and a focus on learning, research and development, Peter was a founding director of BIM Academy and brings a wealth of experience and interest that includes developing new routes into the sector, including the award winning PlanBEE programme and architecture degree apprenticeships. Founded in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1953, Ryder Architecture has teams across the UK and internationally.



Lay member

Polly Mackenzie is Chief Social Purpose Officer at UAL, having previously served as Chief Executive of Demos, which brings citizen voice and lived experience into public policy discussions. Her previous roles also include founding CEO of the Money & Mental Health Policy Institute and establishing the operations of the Women's Equality Party. From 2010-2015 she was Director of Policy to the Deputy Prime Minister.

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Executive summary

Architecture is a critical profession. It is one of the ways in which society creates and curates its built environment and a dialogue with the future: through the design, development and improvement of buildings and built environments and, increasingly, through doing that in a way which is consistent with our responsibilities towards a climate-conscious future. This report was commissioned at a time of change in architecture and in architecture education. There are widespread changes in the profession as it responds to changing regulation, expectations and technologies. The professional regulator is already leading a process of change in relation to the competencies required of architects and the accreditation arrangements for providers of architecture education. Arrangements for professional practical experience form a key part of the training of architects, and this Commission was established to review access to, mechanisms for, and the quality of practical experience.

The Commission engaged with views across the nations of the United Kingdom and widely with educators, employers, professional bodies, and with trainees. We considered the coherence of academic and practical training, working conditions and support for learning in the workplace, learning content and trainees' experience of learning, barriers to progression and potential regulatory changes. Whilst there is evidence of very good practice, there is strong evidence that current arrangements for practical experience are inefficient and ineffective. The evidence suggests wide inconsistency in trainees' experience. Excellent practice is not the norm. We set out a case for change which is moral, economic, professional and social.

In building recommendations, we have placed the needs of trainees at the centre and attempted to develop approaches which think about the whole system of architecture education. We have aimed for simplicity, effectiveness, consistency with regulatory changes, and we have tried to be future focused.

We set out three principal sets of changes which are required, and we outline specific recommendations for change in each. First, ARB as the regulator should lead sustainable change across the profession by removing constraints to innovation. Secondly, learning providers should take a co-ordinating role in facilitating trainees' acquisition of all the Competency Outcomes. Thirdly, significant improvements in workplace culture and support should be secured to strengthen how competence is gained. In each of these areas, we outline specific recommendations for change. Those recommendations interlock, and we invite ARB to approach them as a connected whole.

Our recommendations will secure a better deal for trainees. They will strengthen the profession of architecture by building a more robust and resilient training framework. To maximise the impact of our changes, and to assess their success, we encourage ARB to lead cultural and regulatory change in a coherent and structured way.

Our terms of reference required us to focus on access to, and the quality of practical experience. Our conclusions are that access to, and the quality of practical experience, depend not simply on arrangements for practical experience but on change in regulation, in learning providers and in employers. We recognise that this is a complex system of learning providers and mainly small practices operating in a complex and competitive market. Legislative and regulatory change is happening rapidly across the profession. Change will not be a single event but needs to happen over time – though major changes can be achieved quickly. Our recommendations will change the culture of the profession and its approach to training its next generation.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents work undertaken by the independent Commission on Professional Practical Experience (PPE Commission) established in February 2024 by the Architects Registration Board (ARB). It has been commissioned at a time of change in architecture and in architecture education. The rapid acceleration of technology, particularly generative artificial intelligence (AI) is influencing design and building processes. The climate crisis has become urgent and unavoidable, bringing with it the need to transition the built environment to net-zero-compatible operation. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 2 Report set out an extensive change agenda for all those working in building design and construction. These challenges come at a time when the Architects Registration Board had already embarked on reforms to how architects are trained and educated. These changes include a focus on the outcomes at the end of initial education and training, with a clearer definition of what architects are expected to know and do and how they should behave.
- 1.2 These changes define the context for our work, and they are connected: for example, the combination of the demands of the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 Report, the significance of architects to society and priorities like the trajectory to net-zero mean that it is important that architects can work across the Academic and Practice Outcomes defined by ARB. The Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 Report means that there is a premium on ensuring that the architecture profession is equipped, by virtue of its own diversity, to understand and meet the needs of a diverse population. The transition to outcomes-based regulation, together with society's expectations of the profession from the point of registration, mean that it is essential that professional practical experience is used as effectively as possible, and that those who undertake it gain the most they can for the next stage of their careers and their registration as an architect. Throughout our work we have been aware of these multiple demands on the training of new architects as they work towards this point, and on the profession.
- 1.3 We have taken a wide range of evidence, and we are aware that there are different views on many of the issues we have considered. However, we are also sure that change is necessary. It is time for ARB, learning providers and the profession to shape a more inclusive, more flexible, and more effective set of arrangements. New architects need a better deal, the profession needs a more coherent approach to training, and society needs a more diverse architecture profession. Many of the ways architects are trained have been stable for a long while, which means that for almost all practising architects they are accepted norms. Change requires a different approach and, as we explain, action from every part of the system.

ARB's reforms – Modernising Initial Education and Training (IET)

- 1.4 As the professional regulator, one of ARB's principal functions is to ensure only those who are suitably competent are allowed to practise as architects. It does this by approving the architecture qualifications required to join the Register of Architects.
- 1.5 In February 2023, following over two years of research and development, ARB consulted on proposals for a new regulatory approach to the ways in which architects are trained and educated.
- 1.6 The new regulatory approach, Tomorrow's Architects, aimed to reduce barriers to becoming an architect, including by addressing the challenges facing people from less affluent backgrounds or without existing networks in the profession. ARB's data shows the profession is not representative of the society it designs for, with underrepresentation from some groups, including women and certain ethnic groups. ARB's reforms form part of its commitment to tackling this. Its reforms have involved removing regulatory barriers, a proportionate approach to quality assurance and creating the flexibility for new routes to becoming an architect in the UK. But diversity and the quality of the profession go hand in hand: a more diverse profession, assessed against rigorous outcome competencies, will be a higher quality profession, more able to reflect the society it serves.
- 1.7 These reforms are being progressively introduced and will reshape architecture education and training. They will see a move away from regulating based on the traditional, three-part qualification structure as ARB sets a new framework based on Academic and Practice Outcomes, which outline the competencies required for registration as an architect. In this new framework, ARB's regulatory focus is on what an individual must know, what they must be able to do, and how they must behave, rather than how and what they are taught.
- 1.8 Learning providers are starting to work with ARB to develop qualifications that meet those Outcomes and the new Standards for Learning Providers that accompany them. ARB's reforms aim to encourage innovation and its important role as the regulator means the way it communicates the transition matters. It should not, for example, inadvertently reinforce the status quo or encourage unnecessary hesitance from learning providers. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report also recommends that ARB review the changes they have already made to the training and education of architects, to ensure they are sufficient considering the Inquiry's findings. ARB has done this, and we hope our work helps to inform any further review that might take place.
- 1.9 Alongside ARB's education and training reforms, our Commission has also been conscious of two other important areas of its work. The first is that it is currently updating its Code of Conduct and Practice for Architects, and the second is its new mandatory scheme for continuing professional development.

Formation of this Commission

- 1.10 As part of the new outcomes-based approach, ARB proposed to no longer require a minimum of two years of employment in architecture before architects could achieve registration. This period of professional practical experience is the time in their route to registration when they work within architecture practices and other employers, gaining the experience they need to complete their initial education and training. The intention was to improve flexibility so that trainees could gain and demonstrate practice-based experience in a variety of ways, including through an incremental, blended approach.
- 1.11 It was also intended to help them focus their professional experience on what they need to be able to do to qualify as an architect. ARB learned through consultation on that proposal that 60% of respondents felt removing the minimum duration alone would not address the problems that arise for those looking to gain experience and that it could have the unintended consequence of weakening the standards of the architects' profession.
- 1.12 ARB decided to revisit the requirements for practical experience and to do so by appointing this independent Commission to advise on the challenges, opportunities and requirements for practical experience under the new educational framework. Commissioners were chosen to bring expertise from architecture employment, academia, and policymaking towards meeting our terms of reference.¹ These terms of reference are:
- i) Reviewing the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for securing practical experience and identify any gaps or challenges faced by students and others training to become architects.
 - ii) Evaluating the quality and availability of practical experience for students from diverse backgrounds, including underrepresented groups and individuals with disabilities.
 - iii) Identifying best practices from within the UK and abroad and investigating potential collaborations between academia, the architectural profession, and other relevant stakeholders.
 - iv) Analysing whether changes to the regulatory framework or legislation would improve the quality of practical experience available to students and others training to become architects.
 - v) Considering the role of central funding for architectural training in the context of meeting the Government's objectives in relation to sustainable development, building safety and levelling up.

¹ <https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/PPE-Commission-Terms-of-Reference.pdf>

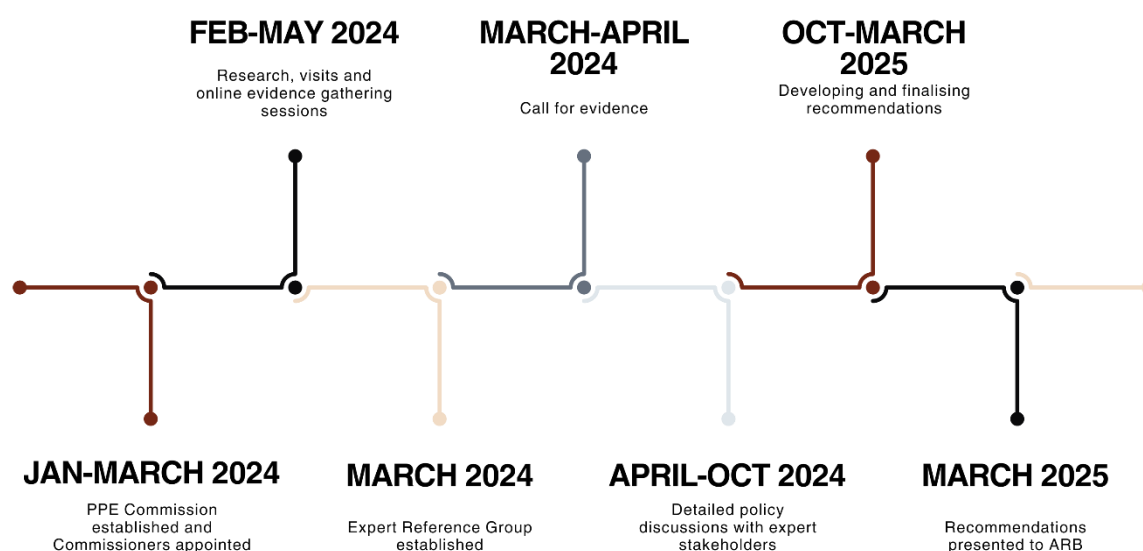
2. Our evidence

Between March 2024 and October 2024, the Commission undertook research, fieldwork and other initial evidence gathering. This included visits to different parts of the UK to speak to professional bodies, learning providers, architects and trainees. These visits were complemented by online meetings, including with an expert reference group that we established to inform the Commission as our work progressed. We also launched a public call for evidence to hear views from those we did not have the opportunity to speak to individually.

What we found: our data sources

- 2.1 We drew on a range of evidence about the challenges and issues. We accessed survey data and background evidence, some of it assembled for ARB and some by others. Our own Call for Evidence, which received responses from experienced architects, academic architects and trainees, helped inform us of existing good practice, which has shaped our recommendations. We also held evidence sessions across the country with academics, practitioners, and trainees. The evidence built a compelling case for change.

Fig 1: Timeline of the Commission's work, illustrated



- 2.2 We noted the importance of language early in our work, and that the default is to talk about those training to be architects, whether they are studying at Part 1, Part 2 or Part 3, as 'students', however long their training and education. We found this to be problematic in several respects and to have implications for supporting trainees in their progression towards the Outcomes. Whilst it is legitimate to talk about most undergraduates as 'students', those preparing for registration at any given time are not really students: they have built up considerable work experience and many are employed, including as

apprentices. The tendency to talk about trainees as ‘students’ contributes to the challenges they face in asserting their right to structured professional learning.

- 2.3 We would like to see a shift in language to reflect the fact that these individuals, who may be students, apprentices, or employees, rapidly acquire professional experience. We have explored this extensively with stakeholders, who recognise the issue. Our preference would be to refer to those who have secured a Level 6 qualification and who are working towards registration as “trainee architects”, which more accurately describes what they do. The title “trainee architect” has a sense of destination and implicitly acknowledges that they have both an employment and training entitlement.
- 2.4 Under the Architects Act 1997, the title “trainee architect” would be a misuse of the title ‘architect’. However, we argue that there is a case for legislative change to make the use of the term possible. We recommend later in this report that ARB pursue this change in legislation, and that the profession also adopts this term when it can do so. In this report, we refer to ‘trainees’.

Previous survey research

A. What the public value about architects' education

- 2.5 In 2023, ARB commissioned research by Thinks Insight & Strategy, an independent agency, to understand the public's expectations of professionalism in architecture. The two key audiences engaged for this research were small-scale clients and users of public spaces. The research explored how the architects' profession interacts with end users' lives, and the standards users expect of architects regarding safety, sustainability, ethics, and equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- 2.6 This research generated findings that are relevant² and important to our work:
- i) The public understood that architects are “highly trained, with specialist knowledge.” They value high professional standards and believe this matters across professions. The public also believe architects have high standards because of extensive training requirements.
 - ii) Although the public understood that architects were professionals critical in building design, they did not generally understand the importance of architects in designing and taking responsibility for public spaces.
- 2.7 This is likely to lead to public underestimation of the range and importance of the architecture profession. Recent changes, including the Building Safety Act and digital and technological advancements in the industry may constitute a further challenge to public understanding of the range and importance of the work of architects. Given the gap between professional change and public perception, ARB has a particular responsibility to make sure that standards of competence, professionalism and conduct are not only upheld but are fit for the future. Experience gained on the path towards registration is an important component of this.

B. What research tells us about trainees' experiences

- 2.8 We explored the current state of the profession using data from industry stakeholders including the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), alongside data and articles from the Future Architects Front, the Architects' Journal, and the Female Architects of Minority Ethnic (FAME) Collective, amongst others. There is no doubt – and we will return to this – that there are some exemplary approaches in learning providers and in employers. Some of those learning to be architects have superb experiences which blend theory and practice, integrate learning across academic and professional sites and respond to individuals' strengths, learning needs and progression towards the Outcomes required for Registration.

² The full report can be accessed here: <https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ARB-and-Thinks-Insight-Strategy-Professionalism-in-Architecture-March-2024.pdf>

But the evidence suggests wide inconsistency. Excellent practice is not the norm. This was especially the case in respect of two topics we researched independently: attrition and workplace cultures.

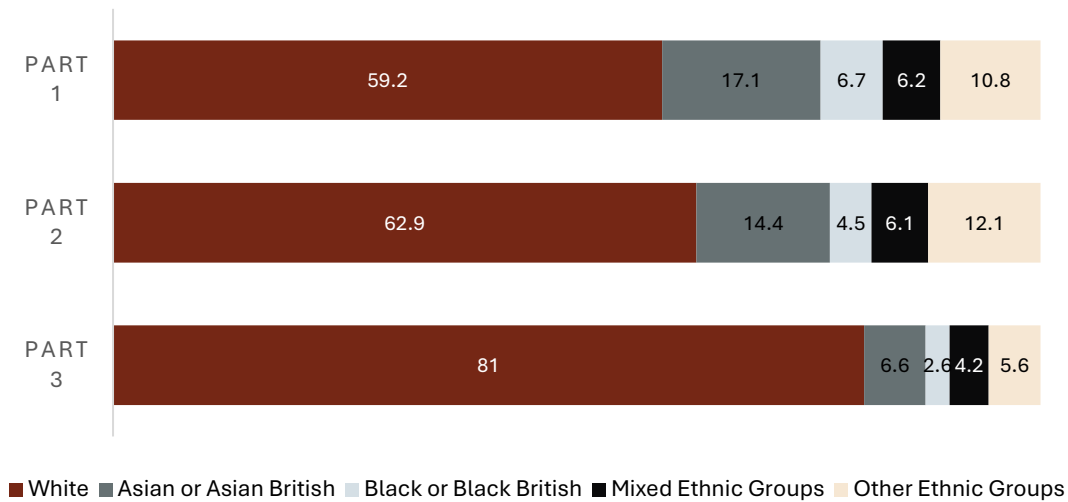
Attrition

- 2.9 Some evidence suggests that student attrition rates in architecture degrees are not dissimilar to attrition rates across the sector. The RIBA Education survey from the academic year 2021/22 notes a 9.9% attrition in graduating cohorts at Part 1 levels across 58 validated schools of architecture, which is similar to the national attrition rate of 9.4%, reported by the Office for Students. However, this is a measure of **undergraduate** completion rather than of progression into the profession, where the registration data tells a different story. In the academic year 2021/22, approximately 4,700³ students entered Part 1, while just 1,075 candidates joined the Register through the UK route⁴.
- 2.10 Attrition has complex causes. There are multiple reasons why individuals choose not to complete the full qualification process, which is true in all education and training. In architecture, the attrition rate is compounded by the time it takes for those who do pursue registration to successfully complete it; there are significant challenges in retaining candidates, and thus in the efficiency of the qualification process. Attrition seems to be due to factors experienced in different ways by different trainees, including a lack of appropriate jobs, degree-associated costs, and work culture, as well as difficulties in accessing the Part 3 stage of the qualification process (itself due to further range of factors).
- 2.11 Some data also suggests that attrition is higher for trainees from minority ethnic groups. The chart overleaf shows the percentage of individuals completing Parts 1, 2 and 3 by ethnicity, in the academic year 2021/22 (data is from the RIBA Education survey of the same academic year). These figures show a significantly declining proportion of those from minority ethnic backgrounds, starting with 38% of all new entrants at Part 1 but 14.9% of those qualifying at Part 3.

³ <https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/education-statistics>

⁴ <https://arb.org.uk/arb-publishes-2022-annual-report-and-financial-statements/>

**Fig 2. Percentage of students graduating from each qualification stage, by ethnicity
(RIBA Education Statistics, 2021/2022 academic year)**



Workplace culture and behaviour

- 2.12 In ARB's 2021-22 consultation on initial education and training, 79 respondents (11% of the 711 total respondents) raised concerns that the conditions of employment for architects were problematic in some way. This topic was not prompted by a specific survey question. Some respondents explained that they saw working conditions as a deterrent to people joining the profession. Some reported a poor work-life balance, some thought that salaries were too low, and some (4% of respondents) raised concerns about mistreatment. Poor working conditions were more likely to be raised by women, people from minority ethnic groups, architects who had recently qualified, and those who worked in architecture but were not (or not yet) qualified as architects.
- 2.13 In 2024, ARB commissioned Thinks Insight & Strategy to undertake research on the workplace culture and behaviours in the architects' profession. Prior to this, much of the evidence available to ARB on workplace behaviour was anecdotal. Concerns about unethical behaviour had also been raised with ARB staff when undertaking other engagement, and the topic has been discussed online, in articles in the architecture press or on social media.
- 2.14 The research conducted by Thinks Insight & Strategy considered three key groups: future professionals (those who had Part 1 or 2 qualifications with experience of work in the industry or architectural apprentices), early career professionals (Part 3 candidates or registered architects with less than five years of experience), and experienced professionals (those that had been working as registered architects for over 5 years). It undertook a quantitative survey with 898 participants, followed by in-depth qualitative research with a smaller number of participants. The survey was completed anonymously but demographic information collected indicated that responses were received from a range of professionals,

with diversity in their stage of qualification, location and size of architectural firm, and protected characteristics including race, gender, disability and age.

2.15 On the culture of workplaces in the architecture sector, the research⁵ found that:

- i) Architects felt that workplaces embody many of the values and attributes the public and clients would expect of the profession (integrity, honesty, commitment and accountability) but not all (empathy, respect, inclusion, and confidence raising concerns).
- ii) Only half of professionals agreed the working environment is inclusive. This drops lower for underrepresented groups including women, ethnic minorities, and professionals with disabilities.
- iii) Architects are concerned about lower quality of work, ethical behaviour and wellbeing because of excessive workloads and hierarchies that sometimes create significant power imbalances.

2.16 On the issue of misconduct in the profession, the research found that:

- i) Significant proportions experienced bullying (41%), discrimination (33%), and sexual misconduct (10%). Not many sectors publish similar statistics for comparison, but architecture lags several that do.
- ii) Over a third (38%) of all professionals have experienced insults, stereotypes or jokes relating to protected characteristics; this is higher for female professionals (53%), those from ethnic minorities (46%) and those with disabilities (46%).
- iii) Nineteen percent of all professionals and 38% of female professionals have experienced unwelcome sexual comments. Twelve percent of all professionals and 24% of female professionals – one in four – have experienced unwelcome sexual advances.

2.17 It also highlighted that some professionals felt that issues in the workplace stem from ways of working at university and architecture school. They recounted the high stress, excessive workloads and poor treatment which trainees often experience, and believe senior architects may now pass outdated and regressive learned behaviours onto their junior employees. Similar themes were raised during our own fieldwork and discussions.

2.18 We are clear that environments in which the architects are trained should be supportive, enabling skills to be developed responsibly and ethically to ensure diligence in architects' work. We believe strongly that trainees have an entitlement to fair pay and a manageable work-life balance. We recommend later in this report a series of connected changes which are intended to address the environments and working conditions that trainees should be entitled to receive.

⁵ The full report can be found here: <https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Workplace-Culture.pdf>

Our call for evidence

2.19 We issued a public call for evidence to examine the obstacles encountered by UK trainees in obtaining, managing, and finishing their practical training. This sought opinions, personal accounts and perspectives on practical training in architecture. The aim was to collect both successful practices and areas needing enhancement, while also inviting respondents to propose potential improvements to the system.

2.20 The call for evidence was open between 13 March and 24 April 2024, running alongside our visits and other engagement⁶. We received 123 unique responses. We heard from trainees at different stages and others not yet fully qualified (24%). Although the highest group of respondents was from London and the Southeast, which is where many architects and employers are concentrated, we also obtained views from different nations and regions.

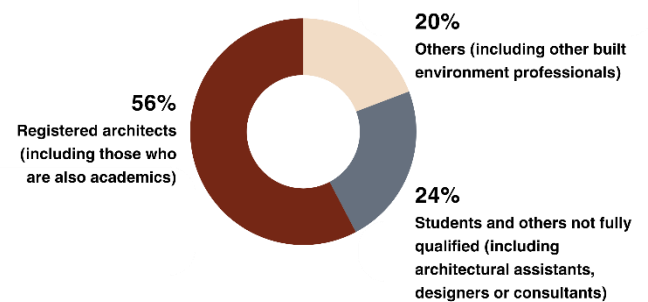


Fig 3. Responses from the call for evidence

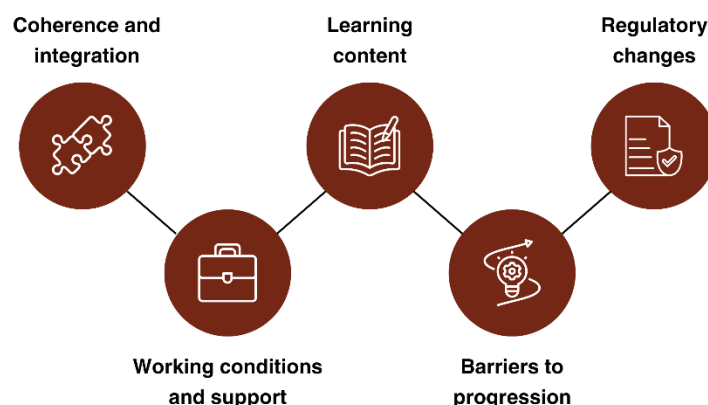
2.21 The call for evidence included our view of what good experience looks like:



Paid employed work, with effective management and supervision. There is support for individuals so that their work experience complements their academic journey to registration as an architect. Good practical work experience should be in an environment where they are supported and treated fairly so that the requirements of ARB's Code of Conduct and Practice are role-modelled and encouraged.



2.22 Five main themes emerged from the responses. We tracked the number of respondents raising each of these and built up a richer picture of the factors contributing to good experience.



⁶ The call for evidence is available here: <https://arb.citizenspace.com/policy-and-communications/ppe-call-for-evidence/>

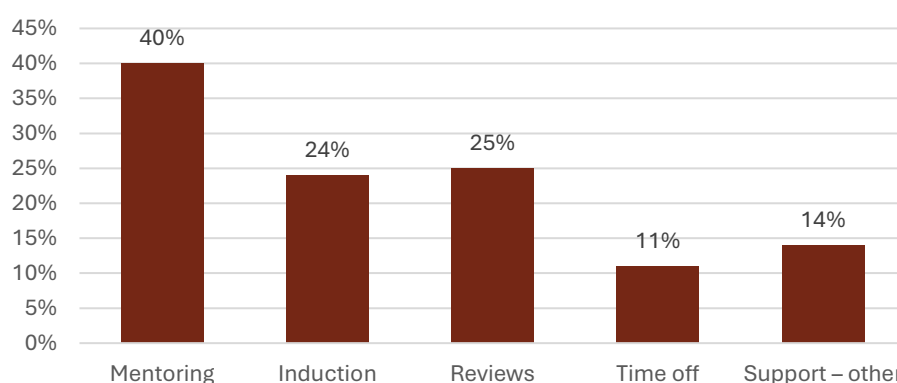
Theme 1: Coherence and integration between learning providers and employers

- 2.23 This theme related to the relationship between the work trainees undertook in their academic programmes and their work in employment. Successful practical experience was associated with a strong relationship between the two. Some respondents said that practical experience should be organised with a formalised and structured placement component (21%); 26% of total respondents said that crossover between content was important, so that work in practice could be used as part of university work, or where learning providers teach skills that are directly relevant to their practice work.
- 2.24 Respondents highlighted specific gaps in skills that affected preparedness for practice, including familiarity and capability with specific software. Some also raised the impact of competing academic and professional workloads on trainees undertaking placement years.

Theme 2: Working conditions and support for learning in the workplace

- 2.25 This theme related to the experience of working in employment, including the extent to which employers prioritised the learning of trainees and had in place arrangements to support learning. The most common components of good practical experience that respondents mentioned were mentoring (40%), induction (24%), and regular reviews (25%). We received suggestions for further guidance or regulation in these areas but a common theme among these was the need for greater clarity about expected roles and better guidance for individuals.

Fig 4. The most raised elements of good practical experience (% of responses)
[note – responses do not sum to 100%]



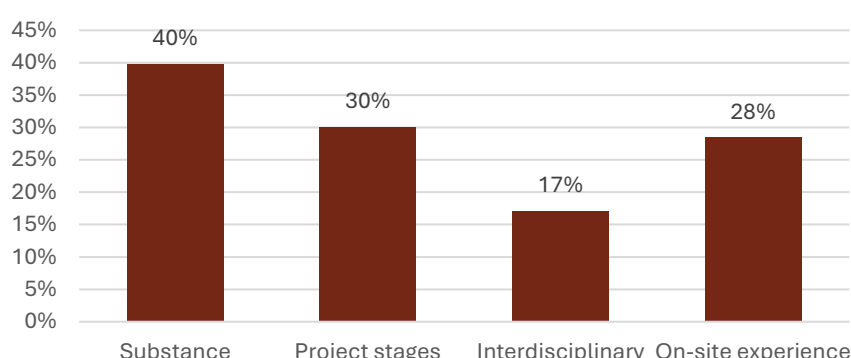
- 2.26 Fourteen comments were critical of current formats for reviewing and recording experience. The PEDR (Professional Experience Development Record) and the process surrounding it were mentioned, as well as suggestions for improving this area (11% of total responses). There were criticisms of pay and working hours (37% and 20% respectively), with some asking for more regulatory interventions to prevent what they saw as underpayment. In

addition, 11% said that time off for studying or flexible working was important. Suggestions included mandating this in a standardised framework.

Theme 3: Learning content and experience

- 2.27 This theme related to the work trainees undertook in employment and the way this contributed to their capacity to meet the Outcomes required for registration. Respondents thought trainees should be doing work that was substantial (40%) and across the full range of project stages (30%). They raised concerns that too often, skills and learning needs were not being properly matched to the work they were undertaking.

Fig 5. Features of experience that respondents raised (% of responses)
[note – responses do not sum to 100%]



- 2.28 Some suggested ARB should produce a clearer checklist about the experiences trainees should be receiving, to complement the new Academic and Practice Outcomes.

Theme 4: Barriers to progression and successful acquisition of learning

- 2.29 This theme related to barriers which trainees encountered in maintaining progression towards registration outcomes. The process of navigating practical experience is complex for trainees, and responses provided specific examples of the circumstances, behaviours and attitudes which made it difficult for them to progress. The most frequently cited examples were of employers being unable or reluctant to hire trainees (12%), difficulties in finding available placements (12%), and examples of direct and indirect discrimination (8%). Within these, respondents acknowledged the dilemmas employers face where they want to help train trainees and pay them appropriately but might lack the resources to do so while working competitively.
- 2.30 Respondents also mentioned expectations from employers regarding the ability of trainees to undertake practical experience that went beyond their capabilities – this was raised in relation to those who were recent graduates, or those without extensive contacts in the industry. Respondents also described instances of discrimination, including harassment, bullying, and unfair work content allocated by gender. Mechanisms to address these behaviours were often said to be absent.

Theme 5: Regulatory and registration changes

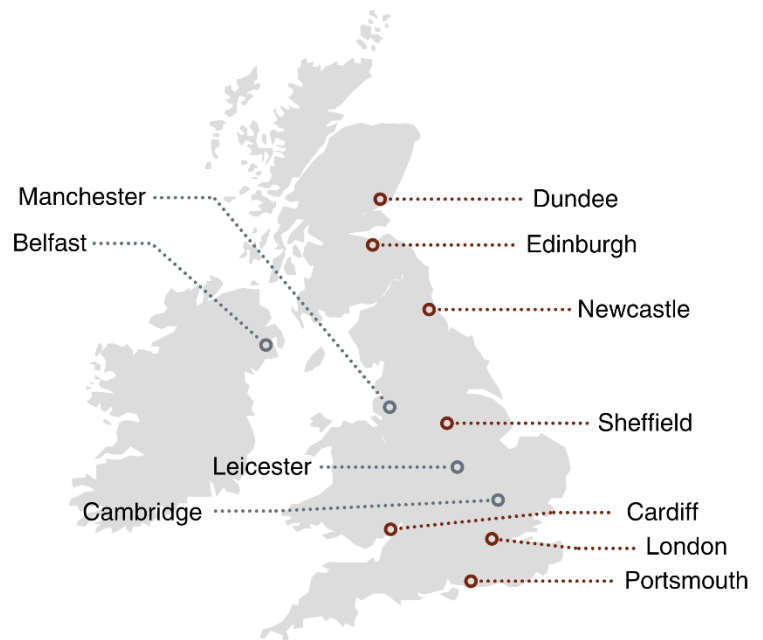
- 2.31 This theme was different to the others and referred to responses which highlighted areas where specific regulatory or registration changes might contribute to improving access to, and the quality of, practical experience. Whilst these responses were not widespread, they nonetheless relate closely to the functions of ARB and our work. Two respondents suggested changing ARB's 'double counting rule' that prevents experience gained while on a credit bearing course from counting towards ARB's minimum requirement. Other suggestions were to consider more flexible practical experience requirements that would help individuals who already had some experience in other built environment disciplines.

Our fieldwork

2.32 We undertook visits and online sessions in conjunction with the call for evidence. The timing of the call for evidence meant we could also use our analysis of it to inform our visits later in this stage.

2.33 Our visits were to Sheffield, Portsmouth, Dundee, Edinburgh, Newcastle, London and Cardiff. At each, we tried to speak to as many trainees and practitioners as possible. We combined our visits with meetings with membership and examination bodies. Over the course of our work, we have spoken to over 150 individuals, including over 50 trainees.

Where we visited and who we spoke to



2.34 Alongside in-person visits, we arranged online sessions to hear from a wider range of stakeholders and regions, including convening an Expert Reference Group. Through these, we have been able to work with professional bodies, SCOSA (the Standing Conference of Schools of Architecture), APSA (the Association for Professional Studies in Architecture), the Trailblazer groups for the Level 7 Architecture degree apprenticeship and Level 6 Architectural Assistant degree apprenticeship, architectural mentors, early career architects, Part 3 candidates, architectural assistants, and architects from a range of practice locations and sizes.

2.35 Later in our work, we held a series of further discussions with learning providers, professional bodies and practising architects to test our emerging thinking and to consider how our proposals might work in practice.

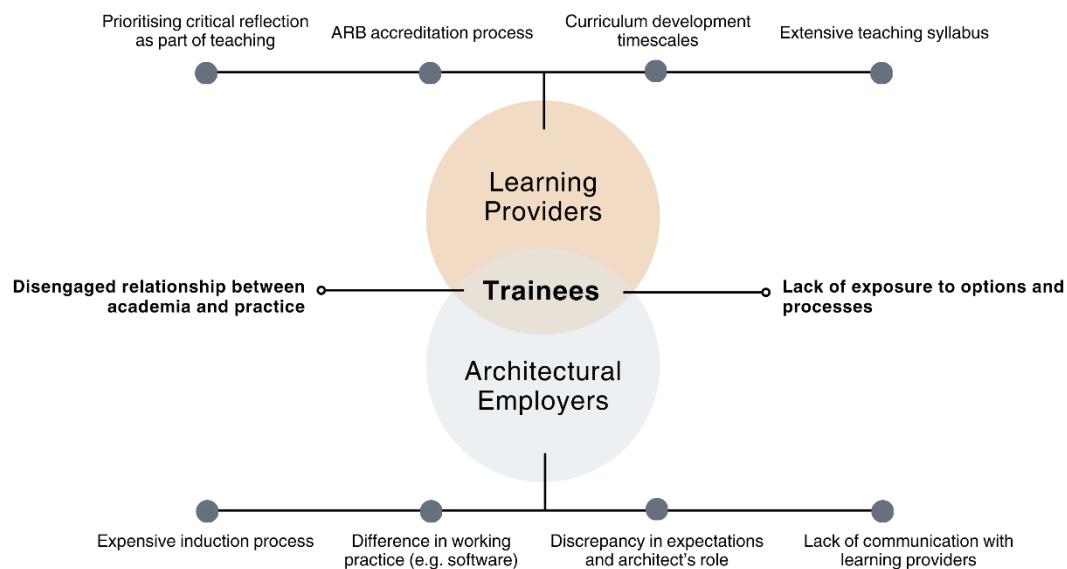
2.36 Feedback from our visits and online sessions was wide-ranging and insightful, and we are grateful to everyone who took the time to meet with us and share their views. Our findings from these discussions can be categorised into three primary sections:

- i) Arrangements for **securing and accessing practical experience**
- ii) The **duration and quality of practical experience**
- iii) The **impacts of practical experience on registration** and final qualifications.

Securing and accessing practical experience

- 2.37 The visits and online sessions developed our understanding of the ways in which learning providers and employers interact, and how this affects trainees accessing practical experience.
- 2.38 We found perceptions of significant gaps between what trainees had been taught prior to beginning employment, and employer requirements. This varied between individuals and employers but created frustrations for all three stakeholders – learning providers, employers, and trainees – though they expressed and experienced these gaps and frustrations in various ways.

Fig 6. Constraints on delivering practical experience



- 2.39 **Learning providers**, and the academics who worked in them, acknowledged the perception of a gap between academic curricula and practice. They tended to cite two main explanations: first, the importance of prioritising reflection on practice as well as the acquisition of skills; and secondly, the restrictions on rapid change in curricula in learning providers due to accreditation and quality assurance arrangements, including ARB's own accreditation process. They also argued that it was not possible to teach everything that any practice might want from one of their trainees.
- 2.40 **Employers** saw the gap between academia and practice differently. For them, the gap in content meant that employers had to expend significant time and resources on training and induction for their employed trainees. One practitioner estimated this to be almost a hundred hours per trainee; another talked in detail about the need to train them on a range of software applications, some of which are core to their business (such as BIM software).



Some employers also argued that too many trainees were not sufficiently aware of the range and breadth of the architect's role, including in the wider built environment sector, creating a steep learning curve between academic training and professional development. In some

instances, the differences of perspective between learning providers and employers meant that there was a lack of communication between them on the needs of trainees, and on ways to improve programmes to address this.

2.41 **Trainees** were caught between these different perceptions and felt that there were quite different expectations on them in the academic and professional aspects of their route to qualification. Many struggled with the different emphases between the creative and reflective nature of academic coursework and the 'professional,' private-business nature of the working sector. They felt that that some learning providers appeared 'disengaged' from the commercial realities of architecture and that some employers underplayed the importance of creativity and imagination. Trainees saw themselves

holding the risk in the bridging between the different expectations. This was compounded by any challenging personal circumstances during the transition, which led to involuntary attrition from the profession, and additional time taken before registration. Many said that they did not know what an architectural practice looked like before they joined it. There was a strong feeling that academia and practice should be better integrated into a more formalised framework that managed risks more effectively, with clearer responsibilities, providing trainees with clearer and more reliable entitlements.

- 2.42 There were other concerns raised by each group. **Learning providers** expressed concern about the resources required to support practice learning, including the facilitation of placements and apprenticeships. Some argued that resource issues were a barrier to scaling the provision of degree apprenticeships in architecture. They also spoke about the challenges involved in 'delivering parity' for trainees, by which they meant that they saw themselves as being responsible for delivering teaching that could adapt to any given cohort's variety of experience gained to date and then fill in gaps—with those gaps differing from person to person. Alongside the administrative impact of managing and delivering

placement programmes, this played a role in ‘slowing down’ the academic content and may have contributed to the lack of mutual understanding between learning providers, employers and trainees.

- 2.43 Both **learning providers and employers** told us about physical limitations on the integration of practice and academia, particularly due to the geographical distribution, size and funding abilities of learning providers, as well as the locations, resources, and training capabilities of employers. For smaller learning providers, a lack of employers in the geographic areas their trainees would have preferred to work meant that trainees could struggle to get the types of experience they wanted, and in some cases appropriate practical experience at all.
- 2.44 **Trainees** also described to us the considerable variety in the extent to which their learning provider had supported their access to practical experience. Some arrangements described, including detailed preparation of applications and work shadowing, were seen to be extremely helpful. Some talked about the ways in which their learning provider stayed connected with them during their time in practice. But it was clear that these examples of good practice were far from universal, creating amongst trainees a sense of inequity and disempowerment.

Good practice

“PPE integrated in the course and not a year in practice is a good example for engaging the students with PPE at very early stages. [...] made possible with the help of the institution through [understandings] with local Architectural Firms/Construction companies to ensure the effectiveness of the PPE.”

Academic, West Midlands

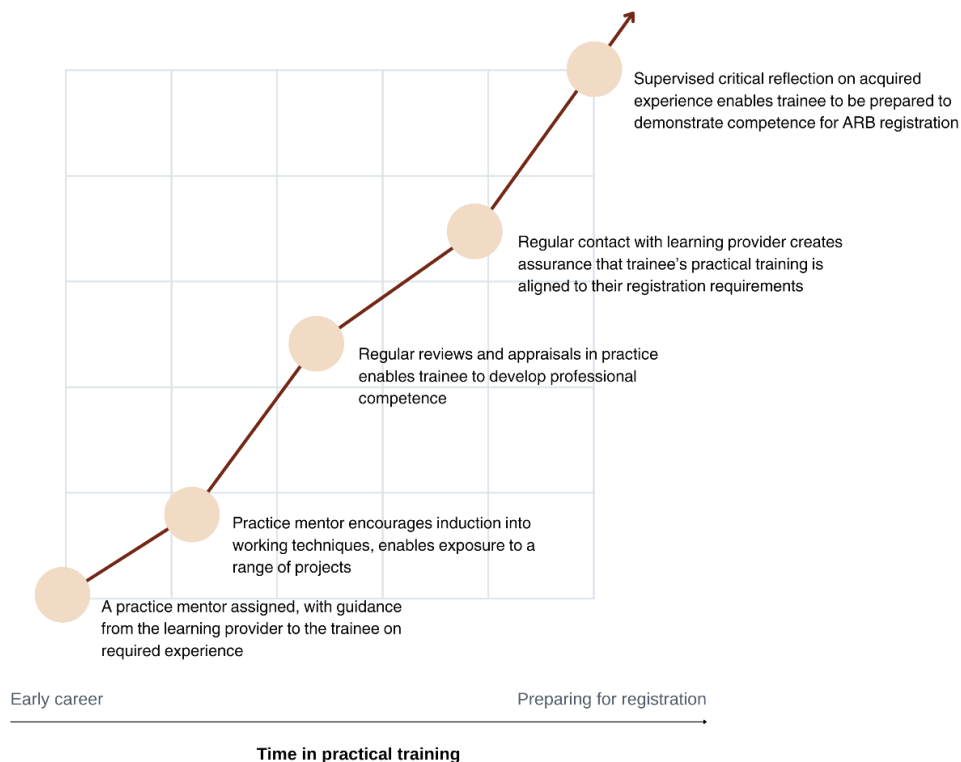
The duration and quality of practical experience

- 2.45 We wanted to understand both the ingredients of high-quality practical experience and the challenges faced by trainees during it. In addition to our conversations with learning providers, and trainees on conventional routes, we were able to speak to those involved in the delivery of placement-based, or practice-integrated courses.
- 2.46 It was clear to us that trainees appreciate a range of structures, with preference toward those that enabled them to work while pursuing their academic programmes. However, this resulted in heightened workloads; some trainees said that balancing academic and professional demands impacted on their health, wellbeing, and flexibility. Trainees were critical of arrangements which implied that programmes had been repetitively and poorly planned: many found themselves undertaking the same work in Part 2 practical experience

as they had in Part 1 practical experience, whilst others experienced significant gaps in experience which inhibited their progress toward registration. Whilst many acknowledged that there were real challenges in securing coherence and progression under current arrangements, it was trainees who held the risk on this: their ability to progress toward registration in a timely way was impeded by the nature of the practical experience they happened to undertake. One Part 2 trainee summarised the position that the nature of professional experience was “so practice dependent”, whilst another said that “pathways are not mapped – you are always second guessing what is required.”

- 2.47 Those we spoke to agreed that high quality professional development benefitted from arrangements for structured critical reflection. Many of those we met made constructive suggestions, based on examples from academia and employment for arrangements which would protect or enhance reflective practice. Trainees suggested that work done in practice could be better integrated into taught programmes at university, which would reduce duplicated effort and help them to reflect across their practical and academic work.
- 2.48 The biggest theme from these discussions was the importance and availability of good quality mentoring in the workplace. Experiences of mentoring were very inconsistent. For some, mentoring was formal, structured, sequenced and engaged with both professional and personal development based on transparency on all sides about the learning to be acquired in academia and in practice. But this was far from universally the case.

Fig 7. Impact of mentoring on practical training



Good practice

“As a practice we take seriously our responsibility to support staff development at every stage. This ranges from talks in schools and work experience for year 11/12 students, to regular in-house CPDs, funding external training and covering the cost of memberships including RIBA, ARB and CIAT so that staff have access to the training and support each of these offer. We have developed formal links with several universities and support apprenticeships and other arrangements that enable students to work part-time while continuing their studies.”

Registered architect, London and South East

2.49 Miscommunication in the expectations between the learning providers, employers and trainees appeared to be frequent and added risks for trainees: the risk that mentoring might not be adequate, or even provided, and the risk that the mentor would lack the skills, training, or commitment appropriately to support the trainee. Those we spoke to suggested that trainees’ entitlement to mentoring should be protected, and that it would be helpful to have further guidance to both learning providers and employers on good practice and on what is expected of a mentor and mentee.

2.50 Trainees thought that learning providers could provide better oversight of their time in employment. Trainees wanted learning providers to use their involvement to help ensure that they

gained appropriate experience and were briefed and prepared beforehand. To them, these could include explanation of how the Outcomes might be achieved, exposure to all project stages, interaction with other disciplines, construction development, and time spent on a project site. The suggestion was supplemented by a request for guidance on what good practical experience looked like and the outcomes expected from the three parties: as one trainee put it, “I don’t know whether my experience was good because no-one told me what good was meant to be.” Our discussions with learning providers offering structured mentoring during their trainees’ practical experience showed that learning provider oversight was both achievable and beneficial. Those we spoke to shared that their oversight was able to positively influence the practical experience the trainee gained and helped structure their attainment of the Outcomes.

Good practice

“The university ensured that we carried out a range of student projects and gave us lectures so that we were prepared for practice. We could then apply what we had learnt at university to a professional, real-world context. When returning back to university, we would then apply the knowledge and experience we gained into our student work.”

Registered architect, London and South East

2.51 Those we met were positive about the benefits of apprenticeships. Apprenticeships not only provide a clear learning and progression structure spelling out responsibilities of employers and learning providers but also offer a tripartite contract supported by comprehensive Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) which scaffold apprentices' learning towards the End Point Assessment (EPA). The development of degree apprenticeships has been rapid for some providers, and there are marked differences in delivery models. These sometimes arose from the adaptation of legacy architecture programmes to align with the apprenticeship structure. Some providers have made deeper adaptations to programmes to integrate practice learning.



Commissioners visit a range of employers to meet trainees and senior staff, June 2024



2.52 Despite the enthusiasm for apprenticeships from those learning providers, employers, and apprentices with experience of them, there was strong consensus that that apprenticeships cannot entirely replace the current educational framework: limitations in funding, levy provisions, employers' preparedness and workload preclude wholesale adoption without more strategic changes to the apprenticeship structure and funding model. We also acknowledge that potential challenges around the availability and funding of Level 7 apprenticeships and return to this point later.

2.53 In the UK, the title “architect” is legally protected, while the role and functions of the architect are not. In our visits, some practitioners argued that this was a factor in attrition rates and might also lead to and a reduced commitment to mentoring. The point was often made alongside the broader context of fees challenges for the profession. Some respondents suggested that it created a working culture in which there was insufficient

resource to provide oversight of the work undertaken by trainees. Financial pressure in practices, which some said was a result of this lack of protection of function, also led to situations where trainees were undertaking work less relevant to their Part 3 requirements, leading to additional time taken for them to qualify as architects.

- 2.54 Some of those we spoke to therefore argued that protection of function would enable higher fees, and therefore generate more resources to fund training for architects, although we are not convinced there is enough evidence for the assumption that any extra fees would go towards this, nor are we convinced that protection of function alone would necessarily make a material difference to the experience of trainees.

The impact of practical experience on registration

- 2.55 We were interested in exploring the final stages of access to the profession and experiences of registration arrangements. As trainees complete progression toward registration, individuated support becomes even more important. Many issues we had encountered in earlier stages of practical experiences were in evidence here and came together to affect trainees' preparedness to complete their Part 3 and register. These were, in particular, the availability and quality of mentoring, content repetition between the stages of qualification, and flaws in the system for recording their progress.

- 2.56 Many trainees felt that these systems for recording progress - the most common being the PEDR (Professional Experience Development Record) operated by the RIBA - were ineffective. The sense was that the PEDR is too cumbersome, abstract and repetitive. Trainees acknowledged that a recording system of some kind was helpful for tracking progress and reflecting on it, in a way that could inform their future development. But they argued that the PEDR itself, and the arrangements for managing it, could be simplified. Our discussions with RIBA suggested that they were aware of these concerns and acknowledged the need for change.

- 2.57 In addition to the format of recording their progress, trainees also raised issues about assessments and

Good practice

"During my [...] professional experience, [...] I found my practice very supportive. I entered this period of experience by making a clear request for experience, particularly at technical work stages, and this was well received. They ensured I was placed on projects across all work stages, even allowing me to manage projects of a lower value that were appropriate to my experience to date.

They made sure I was invited to meetings, but I was always supervised so that I was not challenged unduly. [...] time with senior staff to understand their roles and ask questions which helped enrich what I was taught at university, and they lined up a [...] case study well in advance. This project allowed me ample technical and site experience, with support from a senior technologist. Most of all however I felt they were very pastorally supportive."

Registered Architect, Wales

appraisals of it. They emphasised the importance of being assured that they were learning the right things to support progress toward registration. There were suggestions that it would be helpful to have standard, industry-wide arrangements for defining, communicating and monitoring practical training experience, with ARB setting standards. Some employers also suggested mandatory monitoring and engagement between them and learning providers, to address miscommunication and to reduce the chances of trainees bearing the burden of incomplete training.

- 2.58 Critical self-reflection was mentioned as a priority in reaching successful registration. Trainees, employers and learning providers all noted the importance of reflection, whether through a record-keeping medium (such as the PEDR) or in oral examinations at Part 3. Some of those we spoke to suggested a requirement for both learning providers and employers to engage in structured mentoring, with this including regular critical reflection, and appraisals with trainees to ensure their practical experience prepared them for registration and took their individual personal development and professional experiences into account.
- 2.59 Concerns were raised about practice contexts and preparation for assessments. Learning providers commented that the requirement for rigour in practice-based learning outcomes meant some employers could not offer appropriate training even if they had the resources to do so. Examples of this included built environment consultancies working on infrastructure projects or architectural practices working on smaller projects such as extensions.

Good practice

“Students with fully engaged Employment mentors. [...] This individual sees their responsibility to the student as very important. They are engaged in the process from the start using the PEDR as a clear and supportive documenting device. The student therefore feels fully supported and often remains in practice longer.”

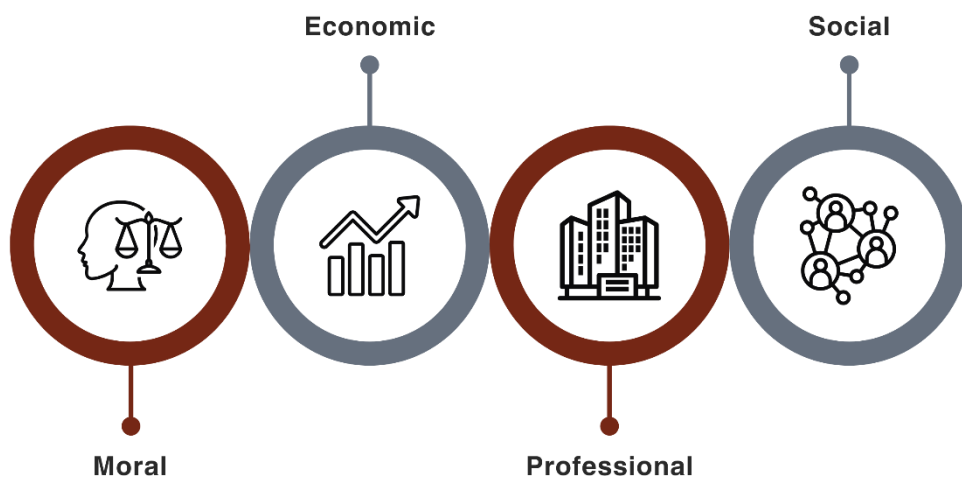
Architect academic, London and South East

Commissioners visit learning providers across the UK,
May and September 2024



3. The case for change

- 3.1 Architecture is a critical profession. It is one of the ways in which society creates and curates its built environment and a dialogue with the future: through the design, development and improvement of buildings and built environments and, increasingly, through doing that in a way which is consistent with our responsibilities towards a climate-conscious future. Getting the training and development of trainees right matters to us all.
- 3.2 During our work, we met thoughtful professionals in learning providers and employers who had established excellent practice in supporting trainees. Some had a real passion for nurturing the next generations of the profession. It was also pleasing that, amongst the problems we came across, there are examples of very good practice in the profession, some of which we have highlighted across this report. But the evidence base we have assembled draws us to a clear conclusion: the good practice which does exist is not typical. There is a compelling case for that to change, and we think this has four dimensions.



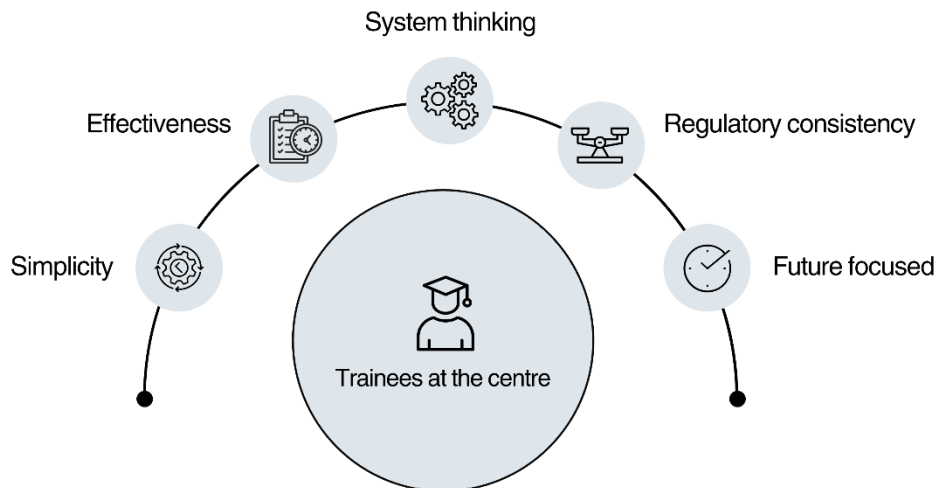
- 3.3 The first is **moral**: trainees deserve better and more equitable arrangements. Current arrangements for professional practice do not routinely secure access to the quality of experience needed for the acquisition of outcomes which the regulator and public require. Too much is left to chance. There is no entitlement to structured mentoring and coaching which would scaffold learning. None of these challenges are necessary, and none of them are acceptable.
- 3.4 There is an **economic** case for change. At the start of our evidence gathering, one academic said to us becoming an architect is “too long, too expensive and too difficult to navigate.” We agree. We know that the profession is demanding, and that standards are, and should be, high. But current arrangements for practical training increase the likelihood that those who embark on it may not complete it, generate too much involuntary attrition, and mean that trainees build up too much debt. This impacts particularly on the most financially

vulnerable. It also means that because architecture as a profession is insufficiently representative of the society it serves, architects are likely to find it more difficult to respond to the multiplicity of demands on them.

- 3.5 There is a **professional** case for change. Too often, professional preparation is hampered by gaps in provision – between academic and practice-based learning, or in progression towards the Outcomes. As a corollary of gaps, we encountered instances where trainees repeated experiences in different placements, in which insufficient thought had been given to mapping obtained experience and building on it. We found instances where learning providers did not take account of prior professional experience, as well as instances where employers appeared unable to build on academic learning. All of these are examples of what happens when there is a poor articulation of the place of professional learning in employment experience; it is wasteful and generates frustration.
- 3.6 Finally, there is a **social** case for change. The challenges of learning across academic and practice sites; of progression in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and behaviours; of the relationship between critical reflection; and day-to-day professional delivery are all familiar in professional education and are not unique to architecture. But architecture is now an outlier in the extent to which it has not put in place arrangements which mitigate these challenges. Other professions have addressed these problems, which both suggests that they can be overcome, and that the profession may be putting itself at a disadvantage if it does not address them.
- 3.7 As we said above, we encountered many examples of good practice. There is a good case to be made for building out from the examples of collaborative practice, integrated provision, structured definition, communication of both Academic and Practice Outcomes, and high-quality apprenticeships. The basis exists in the profession for sustained and highly effective training. But as Commissioners we agree that scaling good practice alone will not address the difficulties trainees encounter. Indeed, we suspect that most practitioners and academics already understand this: despite the best efforts of imaginative and committed learning providers and employers, it seems to have been difficult to scale good practice and achieve consistency. The combination of circumstances which have produced the current difficulties with practical experience make achieving change through scaling good practice highly unlikely. For these reasons, more sustained and systematic change is needed, and it is to this that we now turn.

4. Principles for developing our recommendations

- 4.1 Based on the evidence we have reviewed we have identified six principles that should run through our recommendations. The principles are a way of framing our thinking about the evidence and the route to successful improvement and we have made them explicit here.



Trainees at the centre

- 4.2 Trainees have been required to take on too much risk, while the quality of their experience is far too variable and too often involves conditions that are not supportive. Too many feel frustrated, and their progress towards registration as competent and confident architects is hampered by gaps in responsibility towards them. Many of the processes in place to support their gaining of practical experience are not working as they should. At the same time, too many trainees go into practical experience not knowing what good experience is. Our recommendations aim to provide more structured and supportive environments for them, and to increase the likelihood of them getting the good experience they deserve.
- 4.3 Change is needed in the culture of how the profession educates, develops and supports its future members. The profession is more likely to embed equity, build diversity and foster inclusion if the needs of trainees are placed at the centre of initial education and training. This means ensuring that flexible programmes, which can respond to different needs, become more common. There are limited options for who should be responsible for the oversight of individual learner progression: the individual trainees themselves, their employers and their learning providers. Our view is that it is not fair for individual trainees to hold the risk.
- 4.4 **For this reason, our first principle is to put trainees at the centre of our thinking.**

Simplicity

- 4.5 Arrangements for gaining experience and the potential routes towards gaining the Competency Outcomes are currently too complex, are often too poorly mapped and communicated, and do not secure a core entitlement for trainees.
- 4.6 **Our second principle is that arrangements for navigating and securing practical experience need to be much simpler for individuals to understand and acquire, without lowering standards.**

Effectiveness

- 4.7 The complexity and inconsistency of current arrangements mean that the process of securing practical experience is often unnecessarily inconsistent and time-consuming. There is too little mapping of the relationship between practical experience and the acquisition of the Outcomes. There is both too much repetition and too many gaps. The process of securing and navigating practical experience needs to be improved for trainees, but without compromising on the standards necessary to join the Register and while still allowing them to develop their competence at a pace that suits their personal circumstances.
- 4.8 **Our third principle is that arrangements for practical experience need to be more consistent and more time-efficient for trainees and for the profession.**

System thinking

- 4.9 Architecture training is a complex enterprise involving different stakeholders who are themselves distributed across different organisations. Experience is not gained in isolation or involving just one organisation. While scaling or duplicating best practice alone will not be an entire solution, good practice does exist. Our evidence suggested that best practice was often found when organisations worked effectively together, particularly employers and learning providers. In these circumstances, learning was planned, employers could better understand what trainees were capable of and what they needed to learn, and learning providers had additional reassurance on the quality of their experience with employers.
- 4.10 We recognise that our recommendations for change must be achievable given the constraints on practices, the diversity of provision across the four nations of the United Kingdom and the powers available to ARB. The architecture profession is made up of a small number of large employers and many small employers, which creates pressures on employer capacity and inconsistency between practices regarding training requirements. Variation in the architectural projects available to practices means that our recommendations should also not assume economic cycles or situations. Any requirements on employers should not limit the number of those that can employ trainees,

either through direct requirements or through additional expectations from learning providers. That would disadvantage trainees.

- 4.11 We also recognise the variety of arrangements across the four nations of the UK, including variation in funding available to learning providers and devolved education systems.
- 4.12 Another key aspect of the system is the conditions of regulation. The ability of regulatory bodies, professional bodies or learning providers to take responsibility as part of any of our recommendations will depend on proportionate expectations from each, as well as those in the sector working together to achieve them. To disproportionately recommend responsibility to one would be incompatible with the wider system of the architects' profession and would not enable realistic and fruitful change. Our recommendations will land in a complex system with many moving parts. These arrangements should comprise a holistic system, but at present this is poorly co-ordinated with too little connected thinking about the entire system.
- 4.13 Our fourth principle is to think about the whole system and the way in which different organisations interact with each other to contribute towards a trainee's progress towards registration.**

Regulatory consistency

- 4.14 A key component of ARB's new framework is flexibility in respect of routes to registration. Our recommendations must be consistent with implementing the new framework, and we are clear that we do not want to limit routes into the profession by constraining the flexibilities which arise from it. Nor do we want to assume trainees will have gained certain experience or competencies before the point at which ARB will be accrediting.
- 4.15 Our fifth principle is that our recommendations must build on the new ARB framework, with its new Competency Outcomes and Standards for Learning Providers, while considering opportunities in its new Code of Conduct and new scheme for continuing professional development.**

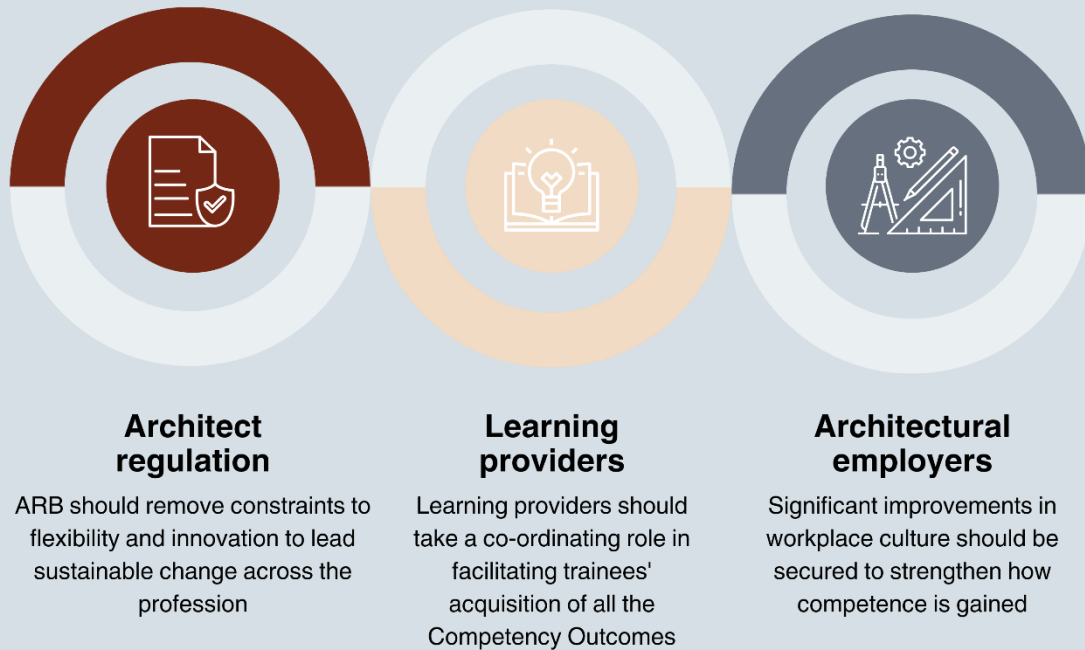
Future focused

- 4.16 Finally, we recognise that architecture as a profession is facing extraordinary change. The combination of shifting legal and regulatory requirements, changing societal norms and expectations (not least because of responses to climate change, building safety and accelerating technological innovation) mean that the context in which trainees will practise will look different from the profession today.
- 4.17 There are also ongoing changes in academic provision because of regulatory changes already being introduced. We have tried to recognise these changes, and to ensure that as they are embedded, the key relationships between academic learning and the acquisition of practical competencies will remain in balance.

4.18 While recommendations cannot be future proof, we need to consider the type of professional needed in the future, guided by ARB's Competency Outcomes. Working methods, technology and legislative change will all impact on the future professional development of architects. The model through which people gain practical experience must be responsive enough to adapt to the future needs of the public and profession.

4.19 Our sixth principle is that our recommendations should be future focused.

5. Our recommendations



Our recommendations need to be seen together as a package of changes, with the greatest benefit coming from them building on each other. This is consistent with our 'whole system' approach, but we are also aware that there is a need to change the cultures of learning providers and of employers, and that will only happen if change is coherent and co-ordinated.

1

ARB should lead sustainable change across the profession by removing constraints to innovation

Our reflections on the evidence

We found examples of individuals undertaking work of the highest quality in supporting trainees. But their task is made more difficult by requirements which are difficult to navigate, out-dated, embed inflexibilities and constrain innovation. The frameworks within which learning providers and employers operate need to be overhauled. We know that not all our recommendations will command universal support, and that there is familiarity with existing ways of working. But without a change in the frameworks within which people work, the impact of other changes will be limited.

Our evidence gathering highlighted the benefits of training models that enable trainees to undertake practical experience alongside academic studies, through blended programmes, apprenticeships, or placements. Regulatory barriers exist that make blended programmes difficult to deliver. Our recommendations address these constraints and inefficiencies but do not prescribe routes to, or types of professional practical experience. The Commission would like to see ARB encourage innovation from learning providers by enabling the development of blended programmes which deliver Practice Outcomes alongside Academic Outcomes. We recognise that not all learning providers are equipped to develop such programmes, and we have reflected this in our recommendations, which are designed to make practical training more accessible, more effective, and more efficient.

Our recommendations reduce constraints and provide greater scope for imaginative programme development aligned with recent ARB reforms. They are focused on enabling the acquisition of the Outcomes through measuring the quality of the experience and the competence the trainee must gain, rather than metrics such as time taken or routes to gaining practical experience. At a time when government is keen to remove constraints on growth, flexibility and innovation have both public policy and professional importance. ARB is right to focus attention on Outcomes rather than processes; it should encourage provision which integrates academic and practice learning and provides clearly mapped routes through to registration. It should see itself as a champion of change across the profession using its regulatory and convening power to shape provision, which is inclusive, coherent and well-planned. In pursuit of that vision, some regulatory changes are needed.

Government and the public need to be assured that new architects have sufficient quality and range of experience to do their job safely and well. ARB currently require a minimum of two years' practice experience under the direct supervision of a professional working in the

construction industry before candidates can be admitted to the register. ARB previously consulted on removing the two-year minimum requirement as part of its proposals for reforming initial education and training. We recognise the need for trainees to accumulate sufficient breadth and depth of practice to meet the Practice Outcomes set by ARB, but the current requirement is misleading. The two-year minimum does not specify the range or nature of practice to be acquired, nor does it guarantee the quality of the experience gained. It is also possible that the two-year requirement gives an overly optimistic expectation to trainees about their route to registration. The challenge facing trainees is often not in the regulatory two-year minimum requirement for practice, but in how practical experience is planned, managed and acquired.

Professional practical experience needs to be more effective for trainees and the profession, and such effectiveness would be best served by focusing more clearly on the successful attainment of the Practice Outcomes. This principle is also at the core of the ARB reforms, which are based on demonstrating competencies and outcomes rather than durations. We are strongly of the view that practical experience should not solely be undertaken at the end of a trainee's academic training. Our evidence suggests that the highest standards of training and practice are characterised by interleaving academic and practical experience, as part of an integrated approach.

For the culture of architectural training to shift away from easy acquisition metrics such as time in experience, or how and where experience is gained, we are recommending an interlinked set of changes that bring focus to quality, breadth and diversity of experience.

Our recommendations:

a. ARB should review its Standards for Learning Providers and Accreditation Handbook to remove any requirements that all Academic Outcomes must be met before Practice Outcomes.

Our evidence has highlighted that trainees are better prepared for professional work when academic programmes enable them to acquire practical, employment-focused skills which comprise not simply of design capabilities but project management, business planning, technical prowess and facility with widely used software packages which underpin professional life in a competitive environment. We have found examples within the Accreditation Handbook that may create a perceived requirement for Academic Outcomes to be met before Practice Outcomes. Our view is that this constrains innovation and hampers the ability of learning providers to develop courses that blend academic learning with practical training.

b. ARB should ensure arrangements for practical experience enable trainees to undertake a sufficient range, breadth and variety of experience, by making the following linked changes:

- b1) ARB should issue clear advice to trainees on potential routes for acquiring the Competency Outcomes through their practical training, instead of the requirement that trainees complete a minimum of two years' practical experience.**

This shift from measuring time to measuring quality will strengthen standards, focusing more attention on the proven achievement of the professional competencies required of architects at the point of registration, including for example those relating to fire and life safety.

Some of those we spoke to expressed concern that the removal of the time-based minimum requirement may mean that impatient trainees pressure them to complete training too quickly. Our view is that the question of preparedness is at root a question of mentoring and support. ARB should be clear in its communicating this change it is essential for new registrants to demonstrate proven achievement against Outcomes. This change should not give trainees an unrealistic expectation about the duration of their initial education and training.

- b2) ARB should revise the rules which link requirements on supervision to the existing time requirement.**

Supervision is currently linked to the minimum requirement and will therefore require updating. To ensure that competence gained is appropriately measured, and that ARB and the public in turn can be satisfied that the trainee is well-prepared to Register, we make further recommendations on supervision, covered in Recommendation 2.

- b3) ARB should remove the current 'double counting' rule to ensure that the focus remains on measuring the quality of experience and competence gained, and to enable practical experience to be undertaken in a variety of methods.**

This will also change as a consequence of removing the minimum time requirement, as with no minimum time, there is nothing to 'double count' against. Current ARB requirements prevent time in practice contributing towards the minimum requirements for registration if it has been gained as part of a credit-bearing course. It was clear that this is a potential constraint on the development of more integrated training provision and should be removed.

We emphasise that these three changes are linked and need to be implemented together.

c. ARB should retain its advice that trainees should gain significant experience within the UK.

Our recommendation to replace the current minimum time and to focus on the quality and breadth of experience inevitably means that the advice that “at least twelve months be undertaken in the UK” needs to be changed. We recommend that as it revises this wording, ARB should continue to advise candidates that they should acquire significant experience within the UK. Those whose experience lies solely outside the UK may find it difficult to meet the required level of knowledge and skills to practise safely and effectively within it. The pace of change in legislative and professional requirements in the UK means that there is no pressing case for ARB to relax this advice at the present time. This is an area that ARB may wish to evaluate once the new routes and qualifications are embedded, particularly if there is ever a significant increase in trainees applying with a large proportion of their experience gained outside of the UK.

d. ARB should update its current requirements and advice on the recency of acquired practical experience.

ARB practical training requirements state that “at least 12 of the 24 months’ experience requirement should have been undertaken in the two years immediately before taking the Part 3 exam”. It is important that those registering are competent at the point at which they register. The changes below would help mitigate risks by ensuring the recency of a trainee’s competence, while still allowing some experience to be gained earlier. These would be made alongside the changes required to focus on the quality of professional experience instead of a time minimum. We recommend that:

- i. Trainees should be required to use an approved Record of Competency (covered in Recommendation 2c) to record and reflect on their practical experience.
- ii. Trainees should have completed their final accredited qualification no more than two years prior to applying for registration. Their most recent qualification should include some understanding and undertaking of work involving current legislation and regulations.
- iii. ARB should require trainees whose qualifications and Record of Competence are completed more than two years before their application to be examined by the ARB Competency Standards Group.
- iv. We further recommend that ARB’s evaluation of these changes should pay particular focus to the content of qualifications that are typically gained closest to registration, once these are in place.

e. ARB should encourage learning providers to submit new qualifications for accreditation which address both Academic and Practice Outcomes, and consider whether its current transition timeline needs to be amended.

Such qualifications could take a variety of forms, but the principle that qualifications should address both the Academic and Practice Outcomes is paramount. Not all future programmes will be able to encompass the whole learning journey through to registration. We would expect learning providers to develop innovative approaches, as more and more are doing, and for ARB to support this.

We envisage that the current three-part approach is likely to be replaced by a two-part approach, some of which would begin outside of ARB's accreditation arrangements. The first part would comprise undergraduate provision, beginning the journey through Academic and Practice Outcomes with practical experience embedded, and the second would comprise masters-level provision which would enable trainees to complete the journey. Some providers may be placed to offer courses which cover the entire journey, but not all will do so, and, of course, trainees may wish to access different providers for their undergraduate and masters-level provision,

The current timescales for ARB assessment and approval of new accredited qualifications give the impression of being forcefully staggered when they are not, and this may be unintentionally slowing innovation. ARB should clarify its transition timeline to make it clear that providers can already submit proposals for blended qualifications including the Practice Outcomes, and that these do not need to wait until September 2028. The current timescales may be reinforcing existing structures, not in keeping with our "reshaping" vision, and may not be helpful in achieving a more coherent and potentially shorter qualification process.

As part of their clarification, ARB should consider the current role of its transition reference group and position it to act as a steering group to help implement change at a faster pace. This should therefore include identifying how providers can be encouraged to transition more quickly.

f. ARB should routinely describe individuals who are in the process of completing their initial education and training as "trainee architects."

Language matters. Some of those engaged in initial training are students, but not all are: many are employees, and they acquire experience relevant to their future practice from early days in their learning. Most are graduates with experience of undertaking architectural work. A lead from ARB would shift culture in the profession.

However, the current wording of the Architects Act 1997 states that a person "shall not practise or carry on business under any name, style or title containing the word

“architect” unless he is a registered person.” This does not prevent the use of some designations, such as “landscape architect”.

We recommend that ARB pursue legislative change that would add “trainee architect” as another exemption, allowing it to be legally used. This change would recognise trainees’ developing expertise, reduce feelings of being infantilised and potentially help to reduce involuntary attrition on the route towards registration. We believe the use of “trainee” within the title adds a clear distinction that lowers the risk of misunderstanding among the public. In this report, we have simply used the term ‘trainee’ and, depending on the timescale required for legislative change, ARB could adopt this as an interim step.

g. ARB should evaluate the impact of these changes alongside its wider reforms to initial education and training.

Our recommendations will change assumptions and working ways of both learning providers and employers, and in the support available to trainees. We have highlighted some specific areas for evaluation within the applicable recommendations. In addition, ARB should undertake a broader and formal evaluation of the impact of these changes.

2 **Learning providers should take a co-ordinating role in facilitating trainees' acquisition of all the Competency Outcomes**

Our reflections on the evidence

Change is needed because current arrangements place too much risk on trainees in navigating, securing, and succeeding in professional practical training. Learning providers should take a stronger guidance and facilitating role in ensuring their trainees are prepared for the practical experience they will need to secure to achieve registration. We considered alternatives, including recommending that employers exercise this role, but given the structure of the profession, with a multiplicity of small employers and sole-practitioner architects, along with the diversity of the work they do, we consider that it is not possible to pass responsibility solely to employers nor to envisage a wholly-apprenticeship-based model for architecture training.

Education and training in many professions has undergone profound change in the last generation. Problem-based learning, pioneered in medical education is now widely embedded in programmes of professional learning, shifting the boundaries between the academy and practice, and placing increased focus on the ways in which novice professionals build knowledge of underlying principles and their applications. Increasingly, the focus in professional education is on developing pedagogic approaches which prioritise authenticity. The research evidence suggests that there are gains in student engagement, motivation, and applied knowledge growth.

There are already examples of excellent practice in many learning providers, but we understand that our recommendations will involve change for others. Our evidence is strong that learning providers are best positioned to exercise a planning, facilitating and monitoring role because of their oversight of the educational process, their relationship with trainees, their ability to address specific gaps in learning as part of the qualifications they provide, and the potential for them to develop links with architectural practices. Many learning providers already support, to a greater or lesser extent, their trainees in communicating the whole learning pathway to registration and assisting in finding employment and practical experience. But this is not universal. Under our recommendations, trainees' experiences will be more coherent because practical and academic training would be more coherently related to each other.

Our recommendation for learning providers to take on a co-ordinating role needs to be accompanied by a complementary and significant improvement in workplace culture, to

improve the support trainees receive to facilitate successful practical experience (see recommendation group 3).

This more clearly defined role for learning providers could take several forms dependent on the context of the learning provider. It could involve:

- i) Delivering blended programmes which address all the ARB Competency Outcomes.
- ii) Ensuring that trainees are adequately prepared for professional practical experience by encouraging acquisition of relevant Practical Outcomes as part of their academic training.
- iii) Building strong partnership arrangements with specific practices (whether local or more remote) to collaborate on the training and development of trainees.
- iv) Developing professional programmes which link from existing or developing master's-level programmes to link to registration.
- v) Mapping out the learning pathway for the acquisition of Competency Outcomes and how these lead to the eventual achievement of registration.
- vi) Either delivering formal apprenticeship programmes or drawing on the features of apprenticeship programmes which formally designate complementary responsibilities to support the trainee.

There are early signs of interest in the design of '4+2 models', where four years of full-time academia (delivering the Academic Outcomes) are followed by two years of professional practical experience (and the acquisition of the Practice Outcomes). This is an expected trajectory given recent reforms and is producing programmes with stronger integration across Levels 4 through 7. However, the trend may widen the divide between academia and practice, leaving trainees inadequately prepared for the workplace and employers having to address shortcomings through additional training to achieve practical competencies. It is for this reason that we are recommending (as above in recommendation group 1) the removal on the current constraint on the relationships between Academic and Practice Outcomes.

Our expectation is that the **combination** of our reforms to regulation and the role of learning providers will accelerate the move to more blended and integrated programmes. Over time, we anticipate that the profession will move to a two-stage or single stage training process in which the acquisition of competencies is managed across academic and practice contexts and in which learning, and experience are more closely integrated.

Our proposed changes will shift the culture of architectural training to a quality-focused ecosystem. We would encourage innovation from learning providers to develop blended approaches which encompass the acquisition of all the Competency Outcomes. However, because of their contexts, not all learning providers will be able to develop programmes which encompass the full range of Outcomes. We believe that they should still, then, have an obligation to orientate and guide trainees to employment and to the further training which will allow them to progress to registration.

This coordinating role should therefore be focused on helping trainees acquire the Competency Outcomes required for registration by the end of their training. In practice, this means that learning providers will need to either teach and assess that all the Outcomes have been met as part of their own qualification or, if the qualification only teaches and assess part of the Outcomes, to use their interaction with the trainee at that point to help them progress to meeting the full Outcomes in future with another provider.

Our aim is to strengthen relationships between learning providers and employers as well as ensuring that trainees are supported as they navigate their journey toward registration. It will improve the overall efficiency of training and make it easier for trainees to complete the initial education and training in a timely way. Our expectation is that as learning providers take on a stronger co-ordinating role and become better at developing links with employers, there will be more clarity and reassurance to employers on what to expect about the individuals they recruit, and vice versa, addressing this area of uncertainty for both employers and trainees that was prominent in our evidence gathering. This, combined with providing more structure towards their progress (see recommendation area 3), should also reduce the burden on employers that we heard could be a barrier to the level of support they provide.

We are sure that the profession would be strengthened by better links between learning providers and employers, and that both could gain from such improved links. These links should include developing local, and national networks to help match trainees to suitable employers, working with those employers to implement good training environments and collaborating with mentors within these employers. There are professional bodies and existing industry networks that have already undertaken efforts to facilitate this relationship. We encourage these to develop, and for ARB to support them where possible.

We are also sure that trainees at any stage of their qualification process thrive best when they are signposted to, and supported through, resources that enable them to make informed choices about pathways to registration. This could include provisions such as career services, report-and-support tools, and the coordinating role learning providers can play to help facilitate the trainee on their journey. By having a stronger presence in the trainee's qualification, learning providers will be the most effective at scaffolding trainees' career progression in a way that takes their personal circumstances into account.

Our recommendations

a. ARB should revise its Standards for Learning Providers and Accreditation Handbook to require that learning providers take a co-ordinating role in facilitating trainees' acquisition of all the Competency Outcomes.

In undertaking its revisions, it should be sensitive to both the context in which learning providers operate and its intention to encourage innovation and diversity, but the core principle of a co-ordinating role for learning providers should be enshrined. The key changes which are required are:

a1) The Standards for Learning Providers or Handbook should require all providers to clearly detail and demonstrate how they will use their significant role and involvement with trainees to prepare them to acquire the full Outcomes, as part of a coherent approach, either during their current qualification or as preparation for a future one.

We note that Standard 6.2 already provides a requirement to ensure that “students have access to guidance and support to access work-based learning where it is a requirement of the qualification,” but this appears to limit the role of learning providers to offer guidance to those courses where work-based learning is a part of the qualification, and the Standard needs to apply to all courses. There are also areas where more rigorous or specific requirements could instead be set through the Accreditation Handbook. The Standards or Handbook could also be supported by guidance in these areas where ARB considers this more suitable.

a2) These updates to the Standards or Handbook should be informed by our evidence base and by working with professional bodies, individual learning providers and their representative groups. Within either the Standards, Handbook or guidance, we recommend specific expectations for providers:

- i. Setting out to ARB how they have considered their resources, local architecture sector and availability of employers in deciding what support they can provide to trainees.
- ii. A requirement that learning providers have a clearly identified individual or individuals with lead responsibility for co-ordinating the provider's relationship with employers for the purpose of facilitating their trainee's placements with them.
- iii. A requirement that learning providers should work with practices on training and development where possible, including developing a code of conduct for practices where their trainees work.

- iv. A requirement that learning providers provide guidance to trainees about where they can gain practical experience, support for securing employment and how such experience will link to their individual route to registration.
- v. A requirement that learning providers provide trainees with individualised information and advice on their future acquisition of the full Competency Outcomes and on meeting any of ARB's requirements or advice.

ARB should monitor these provisions through its annual monitoring of learning providers. At the point of any accreditation review, every learning provider should be required to re-consider how they will exercise their co-ordinating responsibilities to the best of their ability, considering their own circumstances.

b. ARB should work with others, including professional bodies, to help consolidate and deepen links between learning providers and employers.

It will be for ARB to determine how it uses its relationships within the role it has, but this could include building and sharing consistent best practice resources with both groups, and guidance to learning providers on their responsibilities to articulate to mentors in practices their role in supporting trainees' acquisition of the Outcomes.

c. ARB should set minimum standards for a new streamlined and standardised Record of Competency (ROC), which must be used by learning providers.

Too many individuals are currently not using the voluntary PEDR and similar tools as effective supports for learning and development. A more concise system is needed, aligned to the new Competency Outcomes. We recognise that the PEDR has evolved as a document to operate in a wide range of settings, to cover a broad range of practice and to encourage in-depth reflection. Inadvertently, it has become onerous and bureaucratic. We are pleased that the RIBA has committed to updating their PEDR. A standardised and streamlined record of experience across the profession would help trainees to critically reflect on their progress, while also helping both learning providers and employers to support them through their route to registration.

Once ARB has defined minimum standards for the new Record of Competency, it should require learning providers to use a tool that meets this standard. This could be their own or one produced by another organisation. ARB's accreditation role means it is best placed to set that minimum standard and ensure it is used by learning providers.

We expect it would be helpful for ARB to approve specific models of this new ROC which meet the defined minimum standards, so that if learning providers did not want to develop their own, they could choose one that they know will be compliant.

ARB should develop these required minimum standards with input from others.

However, the standards should include that any record must:

- i. Explicitly map closely to the ARB Competency Outcomes.
- ii. Ensure appropriate weight is given to recording both experience and the trainee's reflection on that experience.
- iii. Ensure that prior learning can be properly acknowledged, to reduce scope for repetition and to facilitate trainees' movement between learning providers.
- iv. Provide clarity about who is, and has been, responsible for supervision of the trainee's progress towards the Outcomes and any other requirements for registration.
- v. Be digital by design, accessible and available to all parties involved.
- vi. Provide a basis for the verification of authentic achievement of the Outcomes.

The new ROC should also enable flexibility in sharing responsibilities between learning providers and practices, and include specific guidance on who is best placed to supervise the trainee's ROC to ensure their progress towards their acquisition of the Competency Outcomes.

The flexibility granted in enabling a range of supervisors for the ROC would enable learning providers to work imaginatively with smaller practices which constitute the bulk of the profession. In most cases we expect supervision to be provided by the employer, but current regulations pose difficulties for self-employed individuals. The change will allow flexibility in the types of environments in which experience is gained, as those not working under an architect working in the construction industry could be overseen by an appropriate person in a learning provider.

We recommend that ARB provide guidance on the who is appropriate to supervise practice. Our advice would be that the responsibilities could be undertaken by a qualified architect employed in the construction industry or by a qualified architect employed by a learning provider (such as a Professional Studies Advisor). **ARB should use accreditation arrangements to ask how each learning provider approaches this and that they have specific named individuals designated to undertake the role.**

3

Significant improvements in workplace culture and support should be secured to strengthen how competence is gained

Our reflections on the evidence

As we noted in our call for evidence, we know what good quality practical experience looks like:



Paid employed work, with effective management and supervision. There is support for individuals so that their work experience complements their academic journey to registration as an architect. Good practical work experience should be in an environment where they are supported and treated fairly so that the requirements of ARB's Code of Conduct and Practice are role-modelled and encouraged.



The key ingredients here are support and fair pay. Our third recommendation area complements the others while more directly addressing the support and working cultures trainees experience. In our evidence gathering, we were able to refer to data from ARB's survey on workplace culture, which paints a worrying picture – especially for trainees from diverse backgrounds. We want our recommendations to help shape a culture in which more trainees, and especially those from diverse backgrounds, can succeed. Consistent with our focus on enabling quality, enabling diversity will itself improve the quality of the profession, and that facilitating diversity amongst those training to become architects will improve the way our society experiences architecture.

Low pay and long hours are endemic issues for many trainees, and our evidence suggests that low pay during training is itself a barrier for those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Not only does this disproportionately impact the most vulnerable members of the profession, including women, those with disabilities and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, it also makes architecture less representative of the society it serves than it should be.

As ARB regulates individual architects, and not architecture practices, it is not formally placed to take regulatory action against practices which persistently underpay trainees or provide an unacceptable workplace culture. Our terms of reference required us to consider access to and quality of professional experience and the case for central funding. We have considered the case for central funding, and we suspect that ARB will not be successful in bidding for central funding to support trainees. Moreover, it is arguably the case that central funding for professional placements would mean that the underlying problem of low pay would persist. For this reason, we are not making a recommendation about central funding, though we return to this in our concluding remarks. However, there is strong evidence low

pay is widespread. Moreover, students working as a required part of a UK-based further or higher education course do not qualify for the minimum wage if their placement does not exceed one year. Such circumstances are factors in involuntary attrition and can make it very difficult for those who do not have private or family income to sustain them through their training. We have also, of course, heard from practices that low pay rates are driven by low fee rates in an intensely competitive market. We understand that, but the evidence is that low pay rates are affecting the profession's future members. Whilst ARB cannot directly set wage or fee levels, we think it does have a role in highlighting barriers to accessing the profession and that the moral case for the profession to also confront the problem of low pay is strong. Higher pay will generate higher productivity and focus the attention of practices on the ways in which trainees' work adds value. It is part of the process of cultural change which will shift the way the profession operates.

In terms of the culture of the workplace, we are convinced by our evidence that structured mentoring and an employer disposition to support trainees' developing competence, are essential ingredients of high-quality experience. So strong was the evidence on mentoring, that we believe that the profession collectively needs to prioritise the importance of mentoring for trainees as one of its own responsibilities for the future. High-quality workplace mentoring is not only highly valued by trainees but can be critical in supporting progress towards registration. In some cases, the quality of mentoring was able to mitigate other difficulties.

We were struck by the ways in which some employers had formal arrangements to ensure that trainees received on-going and consistent support. But this was not the norm. We understand that employers are often working on very tight margins in difficult and competitive markets but, consistent with our moral case for change, we do not think that the most vulnerable and newest members of the profession should be carrying the burden of that.

We have seen examples of excellent mentoring in employers of whatever size; our evidence suggests that the provision of successful mentoring is as much a question of culture and disposition as it is of resourcing and capacity. To be clear: both small and large employers, on our evidence, are equally able to support the learning of trainees. It is important to make the point that 'mentoring' is not 'supervision'. All employers exercise supervisory oversight – they need to do so to fulfil contracts and meet job requirements. 'Mentoring' has a different focus and meaning. While the core focus of supervision is on the completion of the job in hand, the core focus of mentoring should be on the professional growth and development of the trainee.

Employers must take more responsibility for the mentoring of their employees. This would be part of the more integrated approach to learning that we set out in this report. This should include transparency on expectations and responsibilities, and the active participation of

the key players: the trainee, the learning provider, and the employer. Our reforms to the arrangements to professional practical experience will be less likely to succeed without this cultural change in the profession.

We are also convinced that guidance on, and support for, the development of mentoring should have a higher profile in the work of ARB, learning providers and professional bodies. We have seen excellent examples of mentor training and development, and we strongly encourage their wider take-up and dissemination.

We discussed mentor requirements with many of those we spoke to. Some argued for a voluntaristic approach, as at present; others argued that mentor training should be mandatory for those working with trainees, although this would require a complex change as it would be a requirement imposed only on some registrants. Finally, there were those who argued that training in mentoring should be a requirement for all architects. Their argument was that given the way the profession is evolving, with the onus increasingly on cross-professional working across the built environment, the skills of supporting others, working as an effective team and developing inclusive practices are now part of the bedrock of successful professional practice.

We have reflected on this, and we think that this third argument is the right one, not simply for supporting professional practice but as a tool in making architecture as a profession fit for the future. We are aware of the challenges of ‘contrived compliance’ and of mentor training potentially becoming a ‘box-ticking exercise’. But this argument can be made about any required professional development. Having reflected carefully, we think that such is the challenge in workplace culture and so extensive are the demands on contemporary architects, that training and development in mentoring should be part of the skillset of all architects, reinforced and supported through CPD.

Our recommendations

a. ARB must ensure that its new Architects Code or supplementary guidance includes specific requirements on architects to support trainees on their journey to registration.

The Code itself, or the supplementary guidance, should emphasise to registrants their underlying responsibility and ethical obligations towards trainees as a component of professionalism, particularly those for whom they are responsible. The supplementary guidance should provide clear advice on how to mentor trainees and early career professionals in the workplace and should encourage architects to consider their role in supporting the future of the profession. It should be clear that mentoring involves getting the basics of support right, so that trainees are positioned to succeed.

In producing these changes, ARB should be guided by our evidence base and work with professional bodies and employers; it should encourage professional bodies to integrate similar expectations into their own codes of conduct where they exist. It should also be informed by any available research undertaken by learning providers on the experiences of their trainees and graduates and should draw on the outstanding examples which exist of good practice.

b. ARB should require all architects to undertake CPD on mentoring.

This would improve the quality and profile of mentoring in architecture and further improve the wider culture of the profession. It would also complement the above changes to ARB's Code of Conduct and guidance.

Professional bodies themselves should also develop their own CPD schemes, aligned with the ARB requirement, and use their communication with members to promote engagement with mentoring and mentor training.

Priorities for CPD should include arrangements to evaluate the impact of mentoring on the emergent professional: not all trainees are the same and may require different approaches. Mentoring should therefore take account of individual learning needs, including how progression may be affected by protected characteristics.

c. ARB should lead sustained work across the profession to address issues of workplace culture.

We recognise that fair payment and workplace culture play important roles in trainees' professional experiences. We strongly recommend that ARB, learning providers and the profession take the following steps to encourage improvement in the workplace:

- c1) Learning providers, through their coordinating role, as well as what we envisage as stronger relationships with employers, should proactively share information in their networks regarding pay, contracts and other employment requirements. This would help to inform both trainees and potential employers about what should be expected. It would also help trainees make more informed decisions about how they can undertake practical experience.
- c2) Professional bodies should use their convening role to reinforce that employers and practices must comply with workplace legislation, including wage laws and the Equality Act, and to promote good professional conduct.
- c3) ARB should enable those working in the profession to raise complaints about unacceptable professional conduct, including in relation to pay, more easily. They should do this through the proposed Code guidance on whistleblowing and raising concerns, as well as through sustained communication with the profession. ARB

should also provide clear signposting for how and where to raise concerns through other organisations in circumstances where ARB itself does not have a defined role.

- c4) No trainees should be caught out by minimum wage exemptions because of the type or duration of their placement. ARB should work with providers to identify the types of placements being taken by trainees as part of the new framework. It should then ask the Government to make any legislative changes that would be necessary for these trainees to be covered by minimum wage regulations.

d. ARB should work with others to maintain funding for apprenticeship-based routes to registration for trainees.

Our terms of reference require us to consider issues of central funding. Positive experiences were reported by trainees on apprenticeship routes leading to qualification at Level 7. These routes combine paid work, work-based learning and academic study in ways which are highly consistent with our vision for the future of architecture education and training. We understand that the Government is reviewing approaches to the funding of level 7 apprenticeships. These are a way of delivering a practice-based, diverse and inclusive profession which is very much aligned with the ARB Tomorrow's Architects reforms and in the long-term interests of both architecture and the communities it serves. Any reforms to apprenticeships should be pursued in a way that does not end this route and compromise these benefits.

6. The future of professional experience in architecture training

- 6.1 Recent regulatory change has increasingly focused on outcomes. This is good regulatory practice: regulators are right to be concerned with professional standards and to encourage innovation and diversity in the ways those outcomes are achieved. Our recommendations work with the grain of these reforms and do not require either ARB or learning providers to step back from any changes currently being implemented. In this conclusion, we return to our terms of reference and set those in the context of our thinking and recommendations.
- 6.2 We were asked to review **the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for securing practical experience and identify any gaps or challenges faced by students and others training to become architects**. In doing so, we have found that it is not possible to separate the question of access to, or quality of practical experience, from the wider relationships, practices, and culture which shape training. Architecture is a complex profession, vital for our society and our future. We have set out interlocking recommendations which will bring about decisive change in the training of architects – training which in many respects has remained stable since the 1950s. As we spell out in this report, change is now needed. That requires change from everyone. It needs:
- i) ARB to use its role as regulator and its focus on Outcomes to encourage innovation and drive change.
 - ii) Learning providers to use their distinctive expertise to play a stronger co-ordinating role in supporting trainees' progress through the complex training process and mapping out routes to success.
 - iii) Employers and individual practitioners to place much greater emphasis on building healthy workplace cultures which give higher priority to professional learning and mentoring.
- 6.3 Our terms of reference required us to evaluate the **quality and availability of practical experience for candidates from diverse backgrounds**. Whilst we have uncovered serious inequities in access and experience, we also know that the vision we have for the future of architecture is realisable because we have seen its ingredients in practice. Our reforms are designed to make them the norm. Our changes will produce a much stronger profession – more robust, more inclusive, and better able to play its part in literally building our future.
- 6.4 Our terms of reference also required us to identify **best practices from within the UK and abroad, and to investigate potential collaborations between academic, the architectural profession and other relevant stakeholders**. Underpinning our proposals is a clear sense that the most effective outcomes for trainees are achieved when learning

providers and employers work successfully together. We hope that a consequence of our recommendations is that more, and eventually all, trainees will experience qualification routes where partnership is embedded throughout their progression towards registration. That will improve access to the profession, reduce involuntary attrition and make trainees' progress towards registration better supported, more efficient and less complex. Whilst the degree of integration between practice and academic work will, rightly, vary across diverse provision, more trainees will benefit from coherent and planned approaches to acquiring the Practice Outcomes, experiencing provision which incorporates both learning from their provider and time spent in practice, with the latter benefiting from a better and trainee-centred relationship with that same provider.

- 6.5 We were asked to analyse whether **changes to the regulatory framework or legislation would improve the quality of practice experience** and to consider the potential role of central funding for architecture training in the context of the government's objectives for sustainable development, building safety and now, growth. We have set out regulatory changes which are required: we have flagged one potential legislative change, in the use of the title "trainee architect" and a change in the National Minimum Wage regulations as they apply to higher education placements. We recognise that the regulation of the architect's function is outside ARB's current statutory powers, with any changes requiring updates to the law through Government and Parliamentary legislation. Protection of function was raised with us as a measure which might incentivise interest in the profession and promote a more effective workplace culture. Our evidential base, and our terms of reference, do not allow us to take a clear view on the question of protection of function, but we would note that it is definitionally complex and practically fraught.
- 6.6 The work of architects has changed over the past generation and is continuing to change: the job is more complex and more demanding. A combination of developments, including rapid technological change, the accelerating climate crisis, regulatory and legislative reform in respect of the built environment and an increasingly complex society all mean that architects in the middle of the twenty-first century will need to work in different ways from those of a generation ago. The move towards inter-professional teams, to remote and technology-assisted projects and to looking at the built environment in dynamic and inter-connected ways mean that architecture training needs to be more open to work across the built environment professions. The debate about protection of function needs to move on to consider the role of the architect in this more complex environment. This is flagged in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 2 report and the potential future development of the 'principal designer' role in major projects. Whilst we have not included a recommendation on this, which is outside our terms of reference, we would encourage ARB not only to develop its own thinking about the relationship between the principal designer role and the work of architects, but to contribute to the built environment's work in defining this.

- 6.7 Finally, we have considered the **question of central funding** in the context of the government's objectives, but while paying attention also to the tight constraints on public spending. We recognise the tight cost constraints on both higher education and on architecture practices. We know that both academia and practice face funding challenges, and we have thought carefully about our recommendations in this light. We understand that there may be an argument that specific central funding for professional practice would make a difference to the availability of, and access to, practical professional experience. However, we are also realistic both about public spending issues and about the potential impact that any higher funding would have on salary levels. We have tried to design reforms which can be implemented within the current resource envelope; again, we have seen sufficient evidence of good practice to know that change can be achieved. However, we have argued strongly that the distinctiveness of architecture as a profession means that it is important that funding for Level 7 architecture training is maintained. Beyond this, the key challenges standing in the way of better professional experience for trainees are regulatory and cultural.
- 6.8 We have been privileged in our work to find some exceptional practice, but we have also met trainees deeply frustrated by their experiences of training. We have seen outstanding practice, and we know that it is achievable. Our recommendations will involve change, and change for almost everyone, but they will make a difference to the future of architecture. They will strengthen architecture, make training more effective and coherent, and make for a more diverse and inclusive profession.



PPE Commission, September 2024

End Notes

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone that responded to our call for evidence, allowed us to visit them or shared their time in speaking to us as part of our online sessions. We are also thankful to the many expert organisations whose insights and advice proved invaluable for both our initial evidence gathering and the development of our recommendations.

The Commission was supported through its work by an ARB secretariat. We have been keen to ensure that our proposals are practicable and consistent with ARB's regulatory changes, but our work has been independent throughout.

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