



Scheme for Continuing Professional Development: Proposed principles

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Architects play a vital role in creating a built environment that is safe, sustainable and where everyone in society can live well. The public and users of architects' services have a right to expect that architects will not only be competent on their first day of registration, but that they will continue to maintain and develop their skill, knowledge, experience and behaviour in whichever field of architecture they choose to practise.

1.2 The Building Safety Bill currently progressing through Parliament will, once it becomes an Act, provide ARB with powers to monitor the ongoing competence of architects. We want to introduce a scheme that supports and encourages good practice, helps to raise competence within the profession, and can be tailored by each architect to their own practice and needs. The scheme will need to be proportionate and avoid duplication and bureaucracy where possible. It needs to work for architects so it should, where possible, avoid any additional costs for them. They should be able to view the time they spend on it as an investment in their development.

1.3 To make sure we design a scheme that will work, it is vital that we engage with the profession and our stakeholders. This paper sets out the principles we intend to follow and invites views so that we can better understand what kind of scheme would be most effective for raising the standards of competence amongst architects.

2. Introduction

2.1 As the regulator of the architect profession, ARB sets the education and training requirements for UK architects and sets and enforces the professional standards expected of them. The Government's Building Safety Bill is intended to give ARB the power to monitor and assess competence of architects throughout their careers.¹ ARB will therefore introduce a new regime for monitoring the way architects manage their Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

2.2 While the [Architects Code of Conduct and Practice](#) expects all architects to keep their knowledge and skills relevant to their professional work up to date, the only point that a check is carried out on whether they have done so is when an architect is the subject of a disciplinary complaint. It is quite plausible that for many architects there will have been no checks to see whether they are maintaining their competence from their point of registration until their retirement.

2.3 The Grenfell Tower disaster and Dame Judith Hackitt's subsequent [Building a Safer Future Review](#) changed the regulatory landscape. One of the outcomes of that Review was a recommendation that a culture change is required within the construction industry that has to be underpinned by a greater emphasis on both improved competence and regulatory oversight.

2.4 Most architects already demonstrate a commitment to continued learning throughout their professional lives. We intend to use the new legislative powers proposed in the Building Safety Bill to create a scheme that reflects that commitment and will help to uphold public confidence in the competence of the profession. The scheme will ensure that an architect's responsibility to maintain their competence is a requirement of their continued registration.

What is Continuing Professional Development?

2.5 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a combination of approaches, ideas and techniques that will help a professional maintain and improve the knowledge and skills they need.

¹ The rationale for this policy decision is detailed in the Government's response to a [consultation run](#) by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

2.6 Attending a course is just one example of CPD. There are many other activities that can contribute to a professional's development – some planned, some unplanned. CPD can be acquired unexpectedly through a new experience or learning opportunity as much as it can from a peer review (including feedback from a colleague or client) or identifying a particular training need and addressing it.

2.7 The focus of CPD should be on outcomes – the benefits that a particular activity can have on an architect's professional practice, not a tick-box compliance tool.

3. The Building Safety Bill

3.1 In designing the new CPD scheme, ARB must ensure our work aligns with legislation and takes into account public policy. As described in the Introduction of this paper, the Building Safety Bill intends to introduce changes to the powers ARB has under the Architects Act 1997. The Bill is anticipated to come into force as the Building Safety Act in 2022.

3.2 The relevant section of the Architects Act that is subject to change is section 9, which provides a power for ARB to set the level of competence² an individual must demonstrate in order to have their name entered or re-entered in the Register.

3.3 The proposal within the Building Safety Bill is to provide ARB with a power to set the recent practical experience and training that an architect must have undertaken before their registration will be renewed. The new wording of section 9, which is subject to amendment in Parliament, is below (with the proposed addition highlighted):

9. Competence to practise.

(1) Where the Board is not satisfied that a person who—

(a) applies for registration in pursuance of section 4;

(b) wishes his name to be retained or re-entered in Part 1 of the Register under section 8; or

(c) applies for his name to be re-entered in Part 1 of the Register under section 18,

*has gained such recent practical experience **or undertaken such recent training** as the Board may prescribe, his name shall not be entered or re-entered in Part 1 of the Register, or shall be removed from it, unless he satisfies the Board of his competence to practise.*

² Competence can be defined as the skill, knowledge, experience and behaviours required for a person to practise as an architect

4. Evidence and analysis

4.1 Following the publication of the draft Building Safety Bill in 2020, ARB carried out a significant piece of research into the future competence of architects. The research included an analysis of how architects might best maintain and develop their skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours throughout their careers.

4.2 The research,³ carried out independently by SQW, began with an analysis of how architects maintain their competence globally, and a comparison of how other UK professionals are required to carry out CPD. All 42,546 UK registered architects who had an email address were invited to complete a survey, which was completed by 4,400 architects (around 10% of all architects working in the UK). An open call for evidence was sent out to stakeholders, with an examination of the views of employers and clients of architects. In depth interviews and focus groups were used to examine the initial findings of the research in greater detail.⁴ Below we summarise the key findings of the research.

Comparisons

4.3 The research found that statutory regulation of UK architects is unique in that registration can be renewed without any requirement to confirm that CPD has been carried out in line with the regulator's rules and guidance. Most CPD schemes internationally are based on a required number of hours or points being accumulated over a set period, although some include assessments and interviews before registration will be renewed.

4.4 All UK professions analysed have a minimum requirement for CPD (excluding solicitors). All of those schemes are based on a blend of formal and informal training, and tailored towards the individual needs and risks of their specific profession.

Architects and CPD

4.5 Architects told us that they carry out both formal and informal CPD annually. The survey found that 70% of respondents carried out more than 15 hours of formal CPD annually, around half of whom who said that they complete in excess of 35 hours. This included both self-directed learning and acquiring of new experience in the workplace, alongside formal training delivered by an external provider.

³ The SQW survey is available [here](#).

⁴ The SQW research report is available [here](#).

4.6 There was a high degree of acknowledgement from our research participants that a more formal system of that work would be an appropriate step in upholding public confidence in the profession and raising competence.

Barriers

4.7 While 45% of architects responding to the research expressed a desire to do more CPD than they currently carry out, several barriers were identified that may prevent them from doing so. These barriers are likely to represent a risk to the success of any new CPD scheme we introduce, so consideration will have to be given to how they can be overcome. They include:

- i) A lack of time
- ii) Unsupportive employers in respect of time off work or funding
- iii) The financial impact on practices
- iv) A lack of quality CPD on offer from formal training providers, often based on business marketing or product promotion

Monitoring of competence

4.8 There was a wide, if not unanimous, view amongst those involved in the research that the regulation of architects' CPD should be formalised. However, there was a lack of consensus as to the best form that regulation should take.

4.9 There were, however, several themes that emerged from the research. Architects were very keen that any new scheme should be focussed on raising standards and improving practice, rather than being a 'tick-box' exercise that would lead to an administrative burden with little benefit.

4.10 There was also a widespread view that any new scheme should be developed with the existing schemes of the professional bodies in mind. Although a significant proportion of architects are not members of RIBA, RIAS, RSUA or RSAW, care should be taken not to create diverging systems that would be confusing and costly.

Other useful evidence

4.11 The Government's consultation exercise also gathered useful insights into stakeholder views on how the CPD scheme should work. We will draw on their consultation response, published online, as we start to develop the scheme.⁵

⁵ Information about the Government's consultation is available [here](#).

4.12 In addition to the commissioned research, ARB has also carried out desk research on other models of CPD both in the UK and internationally, reviewed literature on the effectiveness of CPD models and interviewed a number of UK regulatory bodies to learn from best practice. Following this work, we have developed several principles to guide our policy development in this area. These are set out in the next section.

5. Principles

5.1 In considering what kind of scheme might be most appropriate for architects and meet the requirements of the updated Architects Act, ARB has developed some initial principles to guide our CPD scheme. It is important that we understand stakeholder views on the principles before we start developing the scheme in accordance with them. Details of how to complete our survey are available later in this paper.

Improve the overall competence of the profession

5.2 The scheme will need to create an overall positive shift in the collective competence of the profession by promoting a culture of continuing professional development. We want the scheme to encourage architects to think about their competence and take personal accountability for addressing it. The aim is to drive up standards of competence throughout the whole profession.

5.3 It is therefore likely that the model will be based on formative learning rather than competence assessments or tests. We do not believe that it is possible to create single point assessments that are capable of being relevant to the range and diversity of architectural practice.

5.4 The scheme should focus on outcomes instead of inputs. This means that the quality and impact of the learning undertaken will be paramount, rather than the hours that have been logged.

5.5 The purpose of the scheme will not be a drive to remove architects from the Register, but to encourage a cycle of learning and development. While there must be a consequence for those architects who are unwilling or unable to commit to maintaining their competence, or to engage in the process, it will be unconnected to the disciplinary process which deals with serious cases of incompetence and misconduct.

Tailored by architects to their own practice and needs

5.6 We believe that every architect has unique development requirements, so an effective CPD scheme must allow for individuals to maintain and develop their competence in a way that is relevant to their practice. This means that we are not proposing to introduce a 'one-size-fits-all' scheme. Instead, we will develop a scheme that will encourage architects to reflect, plan, act and evaluate on their learning activities in a way that is relevant to their own practice and development needs.

5.7 The scheme should however allow for ARB to make interventions where we identify particular areas of competence that the whole profession needs to address. For example, following Dame Judith Hackitt's [Building a Safer Future Review](#) and in light of the climate crisis, we recently addressed the need for all architects to maintain their competence for fire and life safety and sustainability.⁶ Again, this would be done in a way that allows architects to carry out additional CPD in a way that is relevant to their work.

Proportionate and deliverable

5.8 As research suggests that architects are already committed to carrying out significant levels of CPD, we want our scheme to formalise, direct and regulate that learning. The scheme we design should, where possible, avoid any additional costs for architects, and they should be able to view the time they spend on it as an investment in their development.

5.9 This would likely rule out a model which requires a detailed analysis of every architect's ongoing competence on an annual basis. It could, for example, allow for a regime that covers the whole profession on a light-touch basis or a periodic sample of the profession in a more involved way.

Avoid duplication where possible

5.10 One of the key themes emerging from the Government's consultation on the proposed changes to the Architects Act was the need to avoid unnecessary duplication with the CPD requirements of architects' professional bodies. An ARB scheme should minimise unnecessary bureaucracy and allow architects maximum opportunity to use their time valuably.

5.11 While ARB must create a model that is suitable for all registered architects, we should pay due regard to how best it can work alongside these existing schemes - both in terms of subject matter and logistical compatibility (such as being able to write up CPD once but log it in more than one system).

⁶ We shared new [guidelines with architects](#) in March 2021. We also published new [guidance for schools](#) of architecture in August 2021.

6. Your views

6.1 We would like to hear your views on the principles for the CPD scheme that we have outlined in this paper.

6.2 We are running a transparent public engagement exercise online and invite responses from anyone who is interested. Whilst the new scheme will directly apply to architects, it also relates to issues that are crucial to the built environment sector at large, and of course to society.

6.3 It is important that you complete the survey online through the link provided below. This will help us to analyse your response in a comparable way to other stakeholders, and to understand your position on specific questions that will help inform our decisions about what we do next. The survey will be open from Wednesday 16 August 2021 and will close at midday on Monday 29 November 2021. We cannot commit to analysing any responses received outside the online survey platform.

6.4 Some questions are to help us identify who is responding and enable us to compare their views to those of other groups. The survey will also ask respondents to complete the following questions:

- To what extent do you agree with each of the four proposed principles for our CPD scheme? Are there any key points missing?
- What type of learning and development (this could include formal or informal) have you found most useful in your practice?
- Please tell us about any barriers you have observed that have prevented you or architects you know from undertaking good quality CPD? (By good quality CPD, we mean CPD you have found effective because there has been a useful outcome that has positively impacted your practice.)
- Do you have any examples of particularly good or innovative CPD?
- Is there anything further you would like us to bear in mind as we develop the monitoring scheme?

[Click here to take the survey >](#)

If you need information on this document in a different format such as an audio recording or braille, you can:

- email info@arb.org.uk
- call 020 7580 5861
- write to us at ARB, 8 Weymouth Street. London W1W 5BU

We'll consider your request and get back to you within 14 days.



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