

Strategic Statement:

Climate Change & Sustainability



Architects
Registration
Board

Background

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time. Humanity is facing a Climate Emergency which requires urgent action. The UN has set **17 Sustainable Development Goals**¹, including targets to mitigate climate change, to be achieved by 2030.

Research has established that our climate is becoming warmer as a result of human activity, creating major risks to our environment and wellbeing².

The long-term effects of human intervention in the Earth's climate must be addressed urgently. The decisions society takes today will have significant consequences for future generations. Architects have a significant role to play in addressing the challenges. Through robust sustainable practice, architects are in a position to reduce the effects of climate change in the built environment by conserving natural resources, designing for adaptation and mitigation and minimising carbon emissions. Architects can play a leadership and ethical role with stakeholders and multi-disciplinary teams, and have many opportunities to influence others in achieving sustainable outcomes.

To continue to deliver our statutory remit in the 21st century, we are constantly assessing our role in setting and regulating standards of professional conduct and practice in order to deliver confidence to the public, the profession and our key stakeholders. We want to ensure we are ready to shift, adapt and lead the response to the challenge of sustainability.

¹ United Nations (2020) Sustainable Development Goals. Available from: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

² Royal Society 2020: Climate Change Evidence & Causes: An overview from the Royal Society and the US National Academy of Sciences Available from: https://royalsociety.org/-/media/Royal_Society_Content/policy/projects/climate-evidence-causes/climate-change-evidence-causes.pdf

ARB's Position

Under the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice (the Code) architects should consider the wider impact of their work, advising their clients how best to conserve and enhance the quality of the environment and its natural resources, in pursuit of sustainability. The Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications (the Criteria) set out the standards, attributes, knowledge, understanding and abilities that individuals must demonstrate in order to achieve registration. The Graduate Attributes, General Criteria and Professional Criteria all include requirements relating to sustainability that graduates must attain as they complete each stage of their training.

The high level wording of the Code now needs expansion in order to provide sufficient guidance to architects on how to approach the challenges of the Climate Emergency. Similarly, schools of architecture require further clarification and robust guidance on how we expect them to meet the Criteria in order to address the global crisis.

All architects in practice have a responsibility to ensure that they are sufficiently competent in terms of the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours in order to be able to address climate change through sustainable architecture. Given the long-term effects of design decisions, architects should also aspire to do more than just comply with current legislation and Codes.

In order to do this all architects must have an understanding of the global context in which they practise and the implications their decisions and activities have for sustainability. Alongside a commitment to strive for sustainable design solutions, architects need the technical knowledge and skills to apply the appropriate design principles and construction technologies and use resources efficiently in order to promote sustainability. To achieve this aim, architects need to be 'energy-literate' and take active steps to minimise the potential longer-term environmental impact of their work, by addressing where, how and with what materials constructions are designed.

ARB already has under way a comprehensive review of the competencies an architect must have as the present century proceeds, and how they should be acquired and maintained. The results of this important piece of work are expected in 2022. We are confident that the outcomes will have a significant impact on the criteria that architects of the future will need to meet on completion of their architectural education, and make a decisive contribution in terms of professional standards.

The review may well stimulate reconsideration of the standards that architects must meet in relation to sustainability, and go wider than a purely built environment response to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals. However, the need for concerted action to slow the rate of global warming due to human intervention is urgent, so we are taking interim measures to make a clear statement on the importance of competence in this area.

Objective

We are committed to ensuring that all architects engaged in the design and delivery of buildings have the competences to do so in order to address the Climate Emergency.

The skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours required of architects in relation to these areas will be acquired through the successful completion of qualifications and practical experience at Parts 1, 2 and 3, and be maintained and developed throughout an architect's professional life.

Activities

We propose to achieve this goal through a number of principal activities:

Activity	Description
A1 Criteria Guidance	We will issue guidance to institutions seeking prescription and/or offering ARB prescribed qualifications which sets out our interpretation of the Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications at Parts 1, 2 and 3 in relation to sustainability. This guidance will then be used actively in the prescription process. Institutions will be asked to provide evidence as to how they are addressing the content of the guidance documents as part of their applications for prescription and to renew prescription.
A2 Code of Conduct Guidelines	Standard 2.4 of the Code provides that architects should keep their knowledge and skills relevant to their professional work up to date and be aware of the content of any guidelines issued by ARB. Under Standard 5 of the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice architects should be able to advise their clients how best to conserve and enhance the quality of the environment and its natural resources. We will issue guidelines setting out the competences expected of architects in relation to sustainability.
A3 Review of competence	We are already gathering evidence to inform our review of the competences required of architects. This review includes a widespread consultation and is considering what skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours understanding should be required of architects in relation to sustainability before they join the Register and throughout their professional lives.
A4 Monitoring competence	Alongside the review of competence we will establish a new regulatory model for ensuring that the competences required of architects are maintained throughout their careers.

Outcomes

- Improved public confidence in architects' competence and commitment to carry out their work in a way that promotes sustainability and reduces the impact of their work on the environment
- Greater clarity for the profession, students and schools of architecture on the skills, knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours expected of architects in respect of sustainable design



**Architects
Registration
Board**

For more information please contact
the Architects Registration Board

8 Weymouth Street
London W1W 5BU
Email: info@arb.org.uk
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7580 5861
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7436 5269