

**Royal Institute of British Architects**

**Report of the RIBA visiting board to  
the Architects' Professional  
Examinations Authority in Scotland  
(APEAS) Ltd**

**Date of visiting board: 7 & 8 September 2023  
Confirmed by the RIBA: 2 January 2024**

- 1 Details of institution hosting course/s**  
Architects' Professional Examinations Authority in Scotland  
15 Rutland Square  
Edinburgh  
EH1 2BE
- 2 Chief Executive Officer**  
Antony Eddison
- 3 Award offered for validation**  
Examination in Professional Practice and Management (Part 3)
- 4 Awarding body**  
APEAS
- 5 The visiting board**  
Lindesay Dawe – Chair  
Tony Celford – Vice Chair  
Dr Aisling Rusk

Stephanie Beasley-Suffolk – validation manager – in attendance.
- 6 Procedures and criteria for the visit**  
The visiting board was carried out under the RIBA Procedures for Validation and Themes and Values for UK and international courses in architecture (published September 2021, and effective from September 2022). This document is available at [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com). Boards are being asked to recognise that schools and examining bodies are in transition between the 2011 graduate attributes and criteria and the 2021 graduate attributes (Part 1 and 2) and themes and values (Parts 1, 2 and 3).
- 7 Recommendations of the visiting board**  
On 2 January 2024 the RIBA confirmed continued validation of the of the following examination:

The Examination in Professional Practice and Management (Part 3)

The next full visiting board will take place in 2028.
- 8 Standard requirements for continued recognition** Continued RIBA recognition of all courses and qualifications is dependent upon:

  - i external examiners being appointed for the course
  - ii any significant changes to the courses and qualifications being submitted to the RIBA
  - iii any change of award title, and the effective date of the change, being notified to the RIBA so that its recognition may formally be transferred to the new title
  - iv submission to the RIBA of the names of students/candidates passing the courses and qualifications listed

- v In the UK, standard requirements of validation include the completion by the institution of the annual statistical return issued by the RIBA Education Department

**9 Academic position statement (written by APEAS)**

The Architects' Professional Examination Authority in Scotland Ltd is now 15 years old and has grown into a mature, well respected examination body delivering a high quality Part 3 Examination process. This success has been achieved as a result of a strong partnership between universities and architectural practice in Scotland and the hard work and dedication of many architects, educationists and others.

APEAS is currently in a secure financial position. The APEAS Board is committed to sustaining this position so that APEAS can continue to maintain its independence and offer its highly respected Part 3 Examination throughout the United Kingdom.

As APEAS moves forward the APEAS Board is determined that complacency does not set in. This will mean addressing the following issues:

**Maintaining the strength of the Academic/Practice Partnership**

As noted above this is the cornerstone of APEAS's success and it will be important to maintain this strong partnership in the years ahead by attracting both academics and practitioners committed to this partnership to work as members of the APEAS Board. Such a partnership may result in many benefits including, for example, the effective delivery of the practice management part of any future 7 year integrated degree programmes.

**Appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer**

APEAS recently appointed a new CEO to replace the outgoing CEO who retired in December 2022. The Board put in place appropriate transition arrangements to support the new CEO. There was an overlap period of several months after the new CEO took up his post and before the outgoing CEO retired to allow the outgoing CEO to pass on as much of his knowledge and expertise of the APEAS Part 3 Examination process as possible to the new CEO.

**Attracting new business**

As part of its desire to maintain the long term financial stability of APEAS the Board is keen to attract new business as long as this new business aligns closely with the three strategic objectives originally set for APEAS. This is an area which the new CEO of APEAS is taking forward. APEAS now has a new corporate identity and website which includes new social media channels. Surveys of previous and current examination candidates and other significant stakeholders informed this development. Reviews of the new website and the ease of use and assistance and advice offered to candidates have been very good. The CEO and colleagues have conducted several outreach activities at Scottish Schools of Architecture assisted by the schools PSA's who work in close collaboration with APEAS. We aim to give a 'level playing field' to all our candidates and are aware of the diversity of those

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registering with us to take their Part 3 examination. We now provide all examination materials in a dyslexia-friendly font to those who would find this helpful and APEAS colleagues have undertaken a formal certificated Deaf Awareness course in Glasgow, all participants found the course to be valuable particularly for the APEAS Oral Examinations.

### **Recruitment of Professional Examiners**

The APEAS practice examiner team has changed over the years as some examiners have left the team for various reasons, e.g. retirement or professional/personal reasons. These examiners have been replaced by new examiners who have frequently brought fresh ideas and perspective on the examination process. APEAS has in place a procedure whereby any applicant wishing to become a part of the examiner team is interviewed by the Convenor of the Examination Committee and the Senior Examiner of the Practice Examiners Committee to ensure they have the breadth and depth of architectural practice experience to examine and a strong commitment to the Part 3 Examination process. The APEAS Examination Committee will ensure that this procedure is continued and will explore ways in which it can attract more women architects and architects from ethnic minority groups to the examination team. We have had success in this respect recently and this work will continue.

APEAS has been very fortunate to have as its external examiners people who have had a wealth of experience in both architectural practice and the Part 3 examination process. These people are highly respected by their peers. The APEAS Board is committed to attracting external examiners of high calibre and independence of mind as such persons are critical to the successful operation of APEAS quality assurance arrangements.

### **Examiner Training and Development**

APEAS continues to run its seminar for practice examiners shortly before the Part 3 Examination process commences. This seminar programme received a commendation from the RIBA Visiting Board in September 2013. Since 2013 the seminar programme has dealt with such subjects as assessing candidates with dyslexia, unconscious bias and assessing candidate work on-line. The APEAS Examination Committee intends to explore alternative ways of delivering training to practice examiners including webinars, videos on the APEAS website and online training courses. This year the seminar welcomed six new examiners, five of them women, and focussed on the oral examination and improving the quality of formative feedback to candidates. A video recording of the seminar was produced and disseminated to those examiners who were unable to attend in person.

### **Mentor Training and Development**

APEAS has a separate section on its website for employment mentors which includes a Q & A which addresses many of the questions mentors have about the Part 3 Examination. However, the APEAS Board are determined to introduce training and development for mentors which may include short seminars at different locations, webinars and videos on the APEAS website. We are

currently in the process of creating a series of online videos which will be disseminated via our new APEAS YouTube Channel, RIAS will help us to reach architects practices in Scotland and addition to those office mentors named by our candidates annually.

**Antony Eddison**  
**CEO**  
**APEAS**

**10. Commendations**

10.1 The Board commends the collaborative practice between APEAS and its partners, the focus on shared objectives and continuous improvement through practice.

10.2 The Board commends the engagement of APEAS staff and the tailoring of the company's services to meet a range of candidates' needs.

**11. Conditions**

There are no conditions.

**12. Action points**

The visiting board proposes the following action points. The RIBA expects the organisation to report on how it will address these action points. The organisation is referred to the RIBA's criteria and procedures for validation for details of mid-term monitoring processes. Failure by the organisation to satisfactorily resolve action points may result in a course being conditioned by a future visiting board.

12.1 APEAS should draft and submit an up-to-date Academic Position Statement for inclusion in the 2023 Report. **POST-VISIT NOTE: APEAS subsequently sent a revised Position Statement, which is the one included above (paragraph 9).**

12.2 As frequent and open recruitment has not yet delivered a sufficiently diverse examining body APEAS should proactively seek out applications from women and minority groups, recent graduates and those working, and with experience of examining, outwith Scotland, and should ensure adherence to a maximum term for examiners. APEAS should consider engaging external expertise to achieve this and further develop the APEAS EDI policy.

**13. Advice**

The visiting board offers the following advice to APEAS on desirable, but not essential improvements, which, it is felt, would assist course development and raise standards.

13.1 The Board advises APEAS to adopt, apply and make available appropriate grade descriptors to candidates, examiners and PSAs, and to make the weighting of examination questions explicit to candidates and examiners.

13.2 In the spirit of more in-depth critical reflection and analysis the Board advises APEAS to consider raising the minimum word count in the EBA and encouraging the use of analytical diagrams in drafting more critical

and reflective conclusions relevant to a candidate's projects, practice, personal careers and the wider profession.

13.3 As part of the company's stated commitment to continuous learning the Board advises APEAS to consider commissioning and disseminating focused research, in collaboration with Schools and recent graduates, into trends in learning and assessment, and changes in the profession.

13.4 The Board advises APEAS to consider providing in-person training for new and reapplying examiners to complement the existing refresher course provided to all examiners through the annual seminar.

**14 Review of work against professional criteria: RIBA Themes and Values 2021**

It should be noted that where the visiting board considered a criterion to have been met, no commentary is offered. Where concerns were noted (or a criterion clearly not met), commentary is supplied. Finally, where academic outcomes suggested a criterion was particularly positively demonstrated, commentary is supplied.

14.1 The Board confirmed that all professional criteria were met by the graduates of The Examination in Professional Practice and Management (Part 3)

**15 Other information**

**15.1 Candidate numbers – check with APEAS**  
108 (2023/2024 cycle)

**15.2 Documentation provided**  
APEAS provided all documentation as required by the Procedures for Validation.

**16. Notes of meetings**  
On request, the RIBA will issue a copy of the minutes taken from the following meetings: **These notes will not form part of the published report but will be made available on request. The full set of notes will be issued to the mid-term panel and the next full visiting board.**

- Meeting with CEO, Convenor of Examination Committee and Office Manager
- Meeting with Chair of APEAS
- Meeting with candidates
- Meeting with External and Professional Examiners
- Meeting with PSAs