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## Royal Institute of British Architects response to MAC Call for evidence – Shortage Occupation List 2018

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) is a global professional membership body that serves its members and society in order to deliver better buildings and places, stronger communities and a sustainable environment. We provide the standards, training, support and recognition that put our members – in the UK and overseas – at the peak of their profession. With government and our partners, we work to improve the design quality of public buildings, new homes and new communities.

**1. Please indicate from which of these industries are you providing evidence?**

- Construction
- Professional Services

**2. If you wish, you can provide details of individual jobs titles you/your members have found hard to fill in the boxes below (maximum of 10).**

	Job title	Closest ONS job title	Closest ONS occupation code	Sector(s) most affected
1	Senior Architect	Architects	2431	
2	BIM Coordinator	Architects	2431	
3	Technologist	Chartered architectural technologists	2435	
4	Conservation Architect	Architects	2431	

**3. What do you think are the main reasons for job shortages (answered in the question above), and or wider shortages in the sector(s)? (Not to exceed 500 words).**

The most frequent issues reported by practices to the RIBA for shortages are a low number of applicants for positions generally and a low number of applicants with the required skills for the above roles.

Perhaps as a consequence of this, competition from other employers in the sector is also listed as a challenge to recruiting applicants by some practices, especially for senior architects and BIM Coordinators, with practices citing salary competition as a significant factor. Some smaller practices have also reported challenges in recruiting capable and motivated candidates due to their location (most larger practices are based in London and other urban centres) and size, telling us that potential candidates are often less willing to work for a small or rural practice than a large, urban- or London-based firm.

Some practices have reported further difficulties in filling vacancies due to seeing fewer applications from EU nationals than in previous years; one in four architects registered with the Architects Registration Board is a non-UK EU national and many large practices have a significant proportion of European architects working for them. Since the EU referendum in 2016 45% of RIBA members reported to us in our most recent survey of the profession that their practice has experienced difficulties retaining or attracting international staff.

**4. Please explain what measures have been taken to reduce shortages in the sector as informed by your members and or research. (Not to exceed 500 words).**

Most practices report that they have improved the offered wages to candidates as a result of increased competition for the best candidates, especially for senior architects and Building Information Management (BIM) Coordinators, with one in particular labelling the sector at present as a 'candidate's market.' Practices have also advised us that salaries indicated by RIBA Benchmarking data – upon which the appropriate salaries for roles included in the Immigration Rules Annex J are based – are not always representative of candidates' requirements.

Practices have also increased their spending on recruitment, for example using recruitment agencies to find qualified candidates or to provide candidates not actively looking to move, including EU nationals not currently resident in the UK with the appropriate skills and experience. Some practices have also reported using agency staff to fill roles over the short-term, while some others have changed the channels via which they advertise, for example by using social media such as LinkedIn to advertise vacancies.

Practices also report an increase in the time and money they are spending on training for existing staff, focusing on retention of and upskilling their existing workforce as a response to a more challenging recruitment environment. However, other practices also report impacts on their level of resourcing as a result of recruitment difficulties, with businesses unable to be as responsive to client needs; as a project-based sector, architecture practices rely on being able to get skills into their business quickly when need emerges in order to satisfy the demands of a project.

**5. Have these measures worked, if not why? (Not to exceed 500 words).**

Practices report some success in addressing recruitment challenges over the last 12 months – however, those that have seen successes are in effect working harder and spending more time and money on recruitment for the same outcomes, and report that it is now taking longer to get the skills they need into their business. As outlined above, this has an impact on the sector's productivity when skills gaps, once identified, cannot be filled promptly to meet the needs of a project or client.

Other practices report limited success and that they are still operating in a challenging recruitment environment over the past 12 months, with an increased reliance on temporary or agency staff to fill some roles – especially BIM – and continuing pressures on existing staff teams due to under-resourcing in practice.

**6. Are the jobs that you have said are in shortage, open to eligible workers from the Tier 2 points-based visa system?**

Yes

**7. If known, how many workers from outside of the UK have been recruited using the Tier 2 points-based visa system in the past 12 months, stating the job titles. (Not to exceed 500 words).**

According to data obtained from the Home Office by the law firm Eversheds Sutherland in July of this year, between November 2017 and April 2018 just 5% of Tier 2 visa applications for roles in architecture were accepted (<https://www.building.co.uk/news/just-5-of-visa-applications-by-non-eu-architects-approved/5094382.article>). We however have no information on which roles these applications, or the granted visas, were for.

In this period, 111 visas were sought by architects and only six were granted. A significant contributing factor to this experience will be that the monthly Tier 2 visa cap was consistently reached during this period, in effect pushing the required minimum salary for a visa for roles not on the Shortage Occupation List far above the average salary for roles in the sector.

**8. If you have any other information that might be useful for our call for evidence please use the space below to explain (Not to exceed 500 words).**

Average reported salary ranges for the roles identified above were:

- Senior Architect: £40,000 - £55,000
- BIM Coordinator: £35,000 - £55,000
- Technologist: £35,000
- Conservation Architect: £30,000 +

A significant reporting challenge for the sector is that the standard ONS SOC code for roles in the sector, Code 2431 'Architects,' is insufficiently granular to capture the variation of roles within practices. While the SOC code captures the different levels of architectural training and qualification (Part 1 graduate, Part 2 graduate, Part 3 graduate with less than 3 years' experience and Experienced worker), it does not however capture a range of specialist roles which exist in practices, each requiring specific skillsets which practices often find challenging to recruit especially from UK workers. This is particularly true for Building Information Management (BIM) roles such as BIM Coordinators. BIM – a process for creating a digital model of a building containing information which can be extracted, exchanged or networked between parties to support decision-making throughout the building's lifecycle – is increasingly commonly-used in practices and these roles increasingly important. While BIM Coordinators (also known as BIM Managers or by other names) in practices are usually all qualified architects, they also have an additional role in coordinating the process of generating, revising and managing the BIM files in use by the practice and so have an additional skillset. The challenges practices report in locating these key digital skills are not sufficiently reflected in the relevant SOC code, which makes no distinction between this role and another qualified architect.

Similarly, the SOC code does not capture numerous specialist skillsets among practitioners – such as conservation architecture – which are often

reported by practices to be difficult to recruit for. Compared to the engineering sector, where different specialist skillsets and roles are substantially delineated by the ONS SOC codes – allowing the addition of roles where skills are in shortage to the Shortage Occupation List in a more granular way – this creates a further reporting challenge. While it is not the case that there is a shortage of architects – as defined by SOC 2431 – in the UK, there are certain specific roles in practice or specialist skillsets such as conservation architecture which practices have challenges recruiting and which may be in shortage, given the frequency with which practices report using EEA migration to fill these roles.

The specialist nature of these skillsets is reflected by, for example, the RIBA Conservation Register which lists architects with specialisms in all aspects of historic building conservation, repair and maintenance. There are three levels of specialism reflected on the register – Specialist Conservation Architect, Conservation Architect and Conservation Registrar – reflective of differing levels of expertise. RIBA recognises a number of specialist courses, the completion of which can provide evidence for applications to the register.