

Royal Institute of British Architects

Architects Registration Board: Consultation on draft guidance for a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme December 2022

The Royal Institute of British Architects is a global professional membership body driving excellence in architecture. We serve our members and society in order to deliver better buildings and places, stronger communities and a sustainable environment. Being inclusive, ethical, environmentally aware and collaborative underpins all that we do.

The RIBA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the draft guidance for a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme.

The RIBA strongly believes that chartered professionals in regulated professions should be required to demonstrate evidence of competence. Chartered bodies are required to re-evaluate holders on a regular basis to ensure continued professional competency and development, and we have done so for more than two decades.

With that in mind, we welcome news that our rigorous approach to architects' competence complements and fits in with the Architects Registration Board's (ARB) own approach, and that RIBA CPD records will be accepted by the ARB. As they stand, the proposals seek to bolster, rather than duplicate RIBA processes and this is positive.

CPD is vital to ensure the chartered professional is evolving to respond to the fast-changing issues we face in a dynamic world. Architects must be adaptable and the need to reflect and continually learn is crucial.

Closer scrutiny of competence for all on the architects register – not just for RIBA Chartered members – coupled with the message from the ARB that the need to prove competence applies to all registrants, without exception, we believe is the right approach.

RIBA Chartered Members are required to undertake and record CPD each year as evidence that they are taking organised steps to maintain their competence through continuous learning.¹ In support, we offer face-to-face and digital CPD, on RIBA Academy or accredited by RIBA through the RIBA CPD Providers Network.



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However, CPD doesn't have to come from, be accredited, or approved by the RIBA to count. Any relevant structured or informal learning from any source can be included. The CPD architects choose should be tailored to their own needs or that of their practice or business and should reflect the statutory and regulatory rules wherever they practice. What is important is *doing* the CPD, and the maintenance of competence in a changing profession and industry.

The RIBA will continue to support the ARB's CPD requirements on the assumption that there will be no duplication, as advertised widely, and changes are made in line with the recommendations below. It's crucial that architects continue to develop their knowledge and skills to respond to the challenges we face.

Therefore, the RIBA recommends the ARB:

- Bases requirements around inputs (hours) or outputs (reflected learning) rather than simply activities
- Drives registrants to the RIBA for CPD solutions
- Considers the fact that the RIBA already provides the features you are proposing

Question 10: Recording activities

To what extent do you agree or disagree that recording activities is a good way of measuring CPD that has been undertaken?

Strongly agree

The RIBA believes that recording activities is the only way of demonstrating that CPD has been undertaken, given the large number of architects on the register. The other alternative, a combination of certificates, spreadsheets, diaries, and written statements would be impossible to review consistently.

Question 11: Minimum activity requirements

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it would be helpful for ARB to recommend a minimum number of activities?

Strongly disagree

The proposed scheme requires eight undefined activities per year and that they can be informal. However, we recommend basing requirements around inputs (hours) or outputs (reflected learning) rather than activities.

Our vast experience of working with other professional bodies over many years (and against whom we benchmark our own approach) tells us that the usual practice is inputs or outputs, sometimes both. You have said that the suggested approach is based on what other professional bodies have told you; however, we are unaware of other bodies (especially in regulated professions) who base their requirements on numbers of activities as opposed to other types of inputs.

In addition, in highly regulated professions with complex entry and competence requirements, it seems risky to focus on undefined activities. Comparing reading eight articles is clearly very different to undertaking a new (for example, principal designer) course. Learning new skills and new information requires more detailed learning. Therefore, the proposal inadvertently favours the easy over the complex.

Question 12: Mandatory topics

Do you have any suggestions about topics we should mandate?

The RIBA's own CPD scheme mandates ten topics, which cover the key technical, regulatory, statutory, design, business, and societal requirements. It is now also used as the RIBA Validation themes and values at Part 3, and therefore the knowledge one needs at registration.

The scheme is maintained by rigorous reviews using our existing networks, our professional team members, expert advisory groups and individual members, industry groups, local and central government, legislative and regulatory changes, other built environment bodies and member need and feedback.

As a key player in construction and the built environment, we continually update our competence requirements for future needs. Upcoming issues will invariably slot into one of our existing ten categories, and our agility allows us to name and provide for new issues.

The ten topics of the RIBA CPD Core Curriculum are:

- Architecture for social purpose
- Design, construction, and technology
- Sustainable architecture
- Inclusive environments
- Places, planning and communities
- Building conservation and heritage
- Health, safety, and wellbeing
- Business, clients, and services
- Legal, regulatory, and statutory compliance
- Procurement and contracts

Underpinning each of the ten topics is a set of suggested learning areas, offering dozens of ideas and suggestions for each of the topics. Members have the discretion to engage with these topics in a way that is relevant to them and their practice. In short, topics are and should be defined, to ensure the competence of practicing professionals.

Question 14: Inclusivity of the scheme

Is there anything within the scheme that could have an impact on ARB's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, or have a positive or negative impact on anyone with particular protected characteristics?

The proposed scheme suggests that learning will be conducted in a way that accommodates different styles, needs, and personal and professional requirements – this is welcome. It has long

been our own approach to our expectations for members, for what we allow them to call CPD, and for how we deliver our own content. It is entirely possible to have a rigorous framework whilst allowing for personal choice and freedom.

ⁱ These steps include:

- Undertaking at least 35 hours of relevant learning each year;
- Making sure half of the required CPD is structured, whether this is a face-to-face course or online (where possible) (and thus, informal activities are permissible);
- Spending at least 20 of the 35 hours on the 10 mandatory RIBA Core Curriculum CPD topics (two hours per topic per year); and
- Recording and keeping track of CPD activities using the RIBA online CPD recording tool.
- In the future we will be making reflection a mandatory part of the CPD record.
- We regularly audit member records on our online recording platform to check compliance.