

ARB Engagement survey on CPD scheme principles

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) is considering the introduction of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) “scheme”, exercising new powers it is likely to be granted under changes to the Architects Act to be enacted through the Building Safety Bill, and has set out some initial principles on which it is currently seeking feedback.

RIBA Response

Royal Institute of British Architects

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 is committed to continuous enhancement of levels of competence in the profession, both through our existing CPD requirements and the RIBA CPD Core Curriculum and also by the implementation of the new RIBA education and professional development framework set out in The Way Ahead, which includes important competence enhancements in both the pre-registration education of architects and post-registration professional development.

Question 1: To what extent do you agree with each of the four proposed principles for our CPD scheme? Are there any key points missing?

Principle 1: Improve the overall competence of the profession

It is imperative that architects, the RIBA, the public and the construction sector have confidence in the quality, effectiveness and individual and collective competence of the profession. The RIBA is committed to the continuous development and improvement of competence standards throughout the entire architecture profession, and has established a Standards Committee which leads this work. For several decades, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has been a key element of professional culture, not least for architects.

CPD has been mandatory for chartered RIBA members for more than 20 years; the RIBA’s own scheme has evolved over that time with regular enhancements. Noteworthy now in the RIBA scheme is the identification of specific areas of knowledge and skills (the RIBA CPD Core Curriculum) to ensure competence in key practice areas. This is now being augmented with mandatory competence requirements in health and life safety, ethical practice, and climate literacy, as well as pathways for specialisation, such as conservation architect and principal designer.

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While the RIBA's expectations are firm, chartered RIBA members have always been free to engage with CPD in ways that best suit their professional circumstances, businesses, and career stages. Tens of thousands of people participate in RIBA CPD every year, choosing content at every learning level. This RIBA CPD content is tailored by knowledgeable teams to meet the needs of architects and their businesses and is subject to regular, systematic user feedback, enabling us to continually improve and to respond to member needs. Chartered members maintain an auditable digital record of their CPD on the RIBA CPD recording platform.

Any ARB CPD proposals must adhere to the developing range and diversity of architectural practice. The quality and impact of the learning undertaken must be paramount, encouraging a cycle of learning and development, rather than the removal of architects from the register. The RIBA supports, and has indeed for a long time promoted, many of the principles put forward by the ARB in its recent publications – enhancing competence in health and life safety and climate literacy and supporting flexible routes to registration – these are enshrined in *The Way Ahead: the RIBA's education and professional development framework*.

Principle 2: Tailored by architects to their own practice and needs

The RIBA agrees that a one-size-fits-all scheme would not be applicable. The existing RIBA CPD scheme is effective and enables architects to maintain and develop professional competence, through a scheme which encourages architects to systematically plan, enact, reflect upon and evaluate their learning activities.

Competence is a combination of an architect's knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours. The education and training of architects produces a unique, generalist profession with a good all-round knowledge of all aspects of design, development and construction, and understanding of how individual design specialists need to be brought together and their work coordinated.

The ten topic areas of the RIBA CPD Core Curriculum provide a framework for architects to develop a personalized programme of CPD that covers core essentials whilst also allowing for the tailoring of CPD to individual roles and competence requirements.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy and other fires, as well as the Edinburgh PFI schools inquiry, and the 'Building a Safer Future' independent review of the fire safety regulatory regime by Dame Judith, and subsequent 'Raising the Bar' construction industry fire safety competency report, revealed a need to raise levels of professional competence in relation to building safety. The RIBA has determined that the core competency for architects must encompass a fundamental level of awareness and understanding of priority subjects, including health and life safety and climate literacy, in order for architects to be competent to practise and to

provide public assurance, and these will form the new RIBA Mandatory Competence requirements.

Principle 3: Proportionate and deliverable

RIBA chartered and ARB registered architects are expected to uphold the highest standards in the profession. However, the RIBA does not believe that supporting the highest standards ends at the completion of the pathway to qualification, which is why we mandate CPD for all members, as well as requiring members to uphold the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct and that our chartered practices comply with the RIBA Code of Practice. Our research highlights that architects are committed to executing significant levels of CPD, but we recognise the need for even greater rigour in our systems for CPD auditing and compliance verification.

Any ARB CPD proposals must be of relevance to the real world professional practice of architects and avoid placing an additional cost burden on architects, especially following the recent 25% increase in the ARB annual registration fee. The RIBA and other UK professional bodies already have very successful CPD schemes in place. The RIBA is dedicated to maintaining, growing and enhancing its existing CPD scheme. Aspects of this consultation seem to suggest that the ARB are proposing some form of different requirements, and we suggest that ARB resources would be better spent in endorsing the existing CPD systems and working in close partnership with the RIBA and other professional bodies to make any necessary enhancements to those existing comprehensive CPD systems.

The ARB assessment/monitoring requirements outlined in Principle 3 seem somewhat weak and could undermine the more rigorous RIBA system which is already in existence and being further strengthened under the oversight of the RIBA Standards Committee. It would be undesirable for there to be two CPD standards, one set by the ARB at a minimal level and a higher standard set by the RIBA, with lack of clarity for those commissioning services and the general public as to the best practice competence standards expected of architects.

Principle 4: Avoid duplication where possible

The RIBA agrees that we must avoid unnecessary duplication and create synergy in the work on professional development of the ARB and that of the RIBA and the other chartered professional bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The existing CPD requirements and provisions of the architectural professional bodies should be adopted and harmonized, and enhanced through partnership working as necessary.

The RIBA already has a sophisticated digital CPD recording tool in place and this system can easily be made available to all registered architects. It would be a wasteful duplication and unnecessary financial burden for the ARB to duplicate the existing CPD provisions of the professional bodies, and it cannot be sensible to have two or more competing CPD requirements even if you can log CPD in more than one digital recording system. It would undoubtedly be more beneficial for the ARB, RIBA

and others to work in partnership, implementing a collaborative scheme that utilises existing tried and tested infrastructure.

To underscore the importance of the RIBA and the registration body working harmoniously, it should be remembered that UK architecture is a powerful global brand represented on the global stage by the RIBA, and that its potency, effectiveness and high reputation should not be undermined by new developments in the field of regulation.

Question 2: What type of learning and development (this could include formal or informal) have you found most useful in your practice? (Self-directed reading, on the Job training delivered by an external provider and other - Answers suggested by ARB)

Not applicable – Question for an individual rather than an organisation.

Question 3: 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.)

Not applicable – Question for an individual rather than an organisation.

Question 4: Do you have any examples of particularly good or innovative CPD?

The RIBA has a long established CPD system and has considerable expertise as a CPD provider in various formats and media: face-to-face, online and in partnership with product manufacturers. We have recently made a significant investment in the development of our new online CPD and professional development platform – RIBA Academy – which enables us to deliver an easily accessible wide range of real time and on demand digital learning content. The content on RIBA Academy is developed in partnership with nationally recognised experts in the various topic areas of the RIBA CPD Core Curriculum. Together with our online CPD digital recording system, with built-in visual dashboards, messaging, instantaneous compliance checking, compliance statistics and reflective learning, this provides a sophisticated CPD ecosystem for chartered architects, which could readily be made available to all registered architects. RIBA chartered members are not obliged to obtain their CPD directly from the RIBA; on the other hand, most will return to their professional body with its evident expertise and exhaustive resources for a large proportion of their CPD requirements.

CPD content for architects is also available from a variety of other CPD providers, according to specific needs and preferences. This is augmented by the many forms

of informal learning and in-house training architects may do. The RIBA CPD scheme currently requires 35 hours of annual CPD, at least half of which must be structured rather than informal, and 20 hours must be spent covering the mandatory RIBA Core CPD Curriculum topics. Previous auditing exercises and current spot checks reveal that many architects exceed these minimum requirements.

Question 5: Is there anything further you would like us to bear in mind as we develop the monitoring scheme?

There is significant consensus amongst the professional bodies and industry stakeholders about the areas where competence improvement is most needed and about the need to provide greater public reassurance through more rigorous monitoring and verification of CPD compliance. We urge the ARB to work in close partnership with the professional bodies, to make the best use of existing systems and infrastructure and to avoid any unnecessary financial or bureaucratic burden upon architects and any confusing duplication.