

RIBA education reform policy note

March 2023

The Royal Institute of British Architects champions the need for a more accessible, inclusive, and diverse profession, which requires the adoption of shorter routes to the register and more flexible modes of study. Any changes to the educational model cannot avoid or compromise this necessity. Dialogue across the architecture sector between academia and practice is critical to ensure that academia addresses the needs of practice and practice takes greater responsibility for the appropriate training of students. It is time to develop qualification systems which ensure fair access for a diverse range of students, support well-being and address matters of competence.

New regulatory framework

Change needs to be made to the current model of architectural education to encourage a more accessible, inclusive, and diverse profession:

1. **The Register must be accessible from a number of different routes.** Any changes to the educational model cannot avoid or compromise this necessity. These should include, but not be restricted to apprenticeships, part-time flexible study, combined work and study models and professional examination routes, and should open access to the development of programmes with integrated, academic credit bearing professional experience, of which one route should provide an accelerated, integrated 5-year pathway to full qualification.
2. **There is huge value in a Part 1 qualification** which is where students learn spatial design and develop the ability to solve problems and think in three dimensions.
3. **Routes must equate to 600 credits of academic study.** This is important in order to maintain portability for students and compatibility with public funding models for higher education. A five-year integrated education and practice award should be one of the routes available.
4. **The requirement of Part 1 for international architects wanting to access the register must be removed.** The current framework is inflexible for architects who have qualified in other countries.
5. **Access to title upon graduation is important.** While this should carry restrictions and there must be a requirement to undertake Part 3 professional examinations before full registration, carrying the title upon graduation aligns with all other built environment professions and many other international models for architectural education, and halts the undermining of the profession whereby we call graduates ‘assistants’.
6. **The funding of architectural education must be improved** to ensure education and training providers can adequately resourced programmes of study.

Professional practical experience

Practical experience must be reformed to ensure that students have access to the necessary experience in order to access the register:

1. **Practices must recognise their role in the training of future generations.** This means that any outcomes-based approach to practical experience must be coupled with the necessary support and time to achieve those outcomes. Any educational reform must address this aspect of an architecture student’s training.
2. **Non-traditional practice-based routes must be encouraged and supported.** Academia and Practice, working together, must have the opportunity in the framework to innovate in the development of new routes to the register.
3. **Early-career professionals must not be left in an unfocussed cycle of practical experience** which does not provide them with appropriate experience. The practical training aspect of architectural education must have outcomes that can be achieved within the set timeframe.

Competency outcomes

Architects are the only regulated profession within the construction industry and play a key role in realising Government commitments of reaching net zero, improving building safety and levelling up across the country. The future generation of architects need to be appropriately skilled, competent, and knowledgeable to address these complex issues. Students must be adaptable because ongoing learning and engagement is essential for the profession to remain capable in a dynamic world.

1. **The competences required of students must be compatible with the length of time of study.** We must expect a certain level of competence, however we cannot expect a graduate, on their first day of practice, to be able to do everything. Graduates must be adaptable and able to respond to new challenges and environments.
2. **Students must be able to integrate their skills and knowledge into the design process.** The design studio is the best place for this integration and application of knowledge. Overloading of outcomes will result in siloed teaching and a decrease in integration and application.
3. **Recognition of the ongoing education and professional development of an architect is important.** Continued professional development must be undertaken following graduation to ensure that skills remain current.
4. **Inconsistency between ARB prescription and RIBA validation criteria must be avoided** as this would impose an unacceptable burden on education and training providers. The ARB should adopt the established RIBA Themes and Values as the overarching framework.