

RIBA response to The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions: Call for Evidence

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

The RIBA is a 40,000-strong professional institute representing 85% of registered architects in the UK as well as a significant number of international members.

Part 1

What are the qualification requirements for the profession?

The typical route to qualifying as an architect in the United Kingdom is a combination of academic studies at university and professional experience within a practice. It involves studying for a minimum of five years at university, and undertaking a minimum of two years professional experience in architectural practice before final qualification. This includes three key stages of study (referred to as Parts 1, 2 and 3) on courses validated by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and accredited by the Architects Registration Board (ARB); the first stage being a three year undergraduate degree which will provide students with a graduate qualification even if they do not continue with architecture as a profession.

Are there non-graduate routes into the profession?

Candidates are required to have successfully completed recognised qualifications that are both validated by the RIBA and accredited by the Architects Registration Board (ARB) in order to register as an architect in the UK. In addition to the typical route outlined above, there is also an established work-based and self-study route, the RIBA Examination in Architecture for Office-based Candidates. It is possible for candidates working in practice to complete modules on a specially devised programme which is validated by the RIBA and accredited by the ARB at Parts 1 and 2. Candidates would then be expected to complete a standard Part 3 qualification in order to complete their qualification as an architect. Although this programme is run by a university (Oxford Brookes) on behalf of the RIBA, candidates do not undertake degree studies and do not receive an academic award upon completion.

How many are training to enter the profession at any point in time?

The RIBA Education Statistics indicate that in 2007/08 the total number of students registered on Part 1 and 2 courses was 13,778. This does not include those undertaking professional experience nor those registered on Part 3 programmes. For 2007/08 the number of candidates that passed Part 3, and therefore became eligible to register with the Architects Registration Board as an architect and join the RIBA as a Chartered Architect was approaching 1000.

Are there routes for people to enter the profession mid-career from other professions?

If candidates hold qualifications in a design or technology related discipline closely related to architecture, then they may be able to undertake an assessment for equivalence to Part 1 or if appropriate Parts 1 and 2 with the Architects Registration Board (ARB). The RIBA recognises ARB recommendations at this stage. Candidates may then progress their studies on a recognised Part 2 course; or undertake a Part 3 qualification once they have met the required criteria.

Mature students who are not eligible to undertake this assessment for equivalence, for example if their academic credits did not meet the requirements, but whose qualifications and experience are broadly related to architecture, may be able to apply for exemption from some of the modules of a Part 1 course. Decisions on advanced standing and credit transfer are made on an individual basis at the discretion of Schools of Architecture.

Even if mature students don't possess the usual admissions requirements, some schools are happy to make an assessment on other grounds, especially through a portfolio. Some universities and higher education colleges run foundation courses and access courses to enable mature students to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to join an undergraduate course in architecture.

Those interested in entering the profession mid-career may consider part-time study which will normally involve attendance at university for one day per week. Alternatively the RIBA Examination for Office-based Candidates, as described above, offers an established route to qualification for mature candidates working in architectural practices who are unable to attend courses in schools of architecture.

How many people receive scholarships each year, how much are these worth and how are they allocated?

The RIBA administers a number of trust funds supporting undergraduate students, specialist postgraduate study, architectural researchers and related educational projects. These include a range of prizes, scholarships and bursaries to support and reward students and graduates. The total number of recipients for these awards is in the region of 65 students and graduates per year.

Candidates are assessed on the quality of application demonstrating the applicant's drive, intelligence, aptitude and appropriateness for receipt of the award.

In addition to the RIBA, there are a number of agencies and other external organisations that may help students, potential students of architecture or those undertaking postgraduate courses who are experiencing difficulty in securing funding to support their studies. Students may also be able to apply for scholarships, grants and bursaries directly from their university.

How many internship and/or work experience opportunities are available?

Prior to applying to university students may apply to architecture practices directly for work experience opportunities. Many architects will take on school or college students for one or two weeks' work experience to help in career and university course decisions.

As part of the formal route to training as an architect, students are required to undertake a minimum of two years professional experience in architectural practice, before becoming eligible to complete their qualification by taking a recognised examination in Professional Practice and Management (Part 3). The student records their experience under the terms of the RIBA's Professional Experience and Development Record and are monitored by an employment mentor and also a member of staff from the student's School of Architecture.

Students are expected to find their own jobs, and the RIBA does not run a placement scheme; though of course offers assistance and advice where necessary.

Do you know of any relevant academic or other studies of the profession?

N/A

There are two documents prepared by CABA on ethnicity and the built environment:

<http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/minority-ethnic-representation-in-the-built-environment-professions.pdf>

<http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/architecture-and-race-students.pdf>

Part II: Evidence on current issues or barriers to the profession

Statistics

The RIBA requests an annual statistical return from all UK providers of architecture education recording numbers of applications and acceptances, gender balance, and ethnicity.

In 2007/08, women made up 42% of all students on part 1 RIBA validated courses, 21% of part 1 entrants are of non-white origin, 35% of part 2 entrants to RIBA validated courses are women, and 18% of part 2 entrants are of non-white origin. Full statistics - [here](#)

The Construction Industry Council has collated statistics from across the construction sector on diversity but currently the construction industry institutes including architecture do not collate information on social economic groups or similar.

Barriers - Education and entry to Schools of Architecture

- 1. Financial barriers** – difficult to encourage people to invest in a lengthy, expensive education when the financial recompense at the end is uncertain.
- 2. Length of course** - Students from ethnically diverse backgrounds, or those where university education is not a given in their family, may have greater difficulties adapting to the challenges of study at Higher Education level because there is less implicit knowledge of what may be involved, and how sustained the commitment to professional courses such as architecture has to be. It is particularly challenging for mature students, who may have family and other financial commitments.
- 3. University league tables** - are developed from two criteria (among others) important for their influence on diversity and accessibility to the profession - research, and A2 grades at the point of entry to HE. Post 1992 universities tend to score far less well in research assessments, and to have a more inclusive attitude to admissions (i.e. ask for lower A level tariffs). This affects their placing in the league tables, whereas the Russell Group universities (who routinely ask for 3 or more As at A2 level) score very well because they have the choice of the most traditionally able entrants - and a rich seam of research income which then cross-subsidises teaching.

Funding of Higher Education - may mitigate against the success of recruitment of lucrative non EU overseas students can skew admissions policies in HE; with an overseas student 'worth' up to 5 times their UK equivalent, the marketing of courses

outside the UK is a commercial necessity to some universities, but not necessarily an incentive to real accessibility and opportunity.

Part III: Current initiatives, programmes and policies to ensure fair access to the profession

Current good practice to widen access to architecture

There is no provision in the standard secondary school curriculum for informing pupils about architecture or the built environment. The RIBA has therefore offered a number of projects seeking to engage this group with the work of architects, emphasising its social and environmental value:

1. In collaboration with Arts Inform (a London based arts education company) we have developed links with schools to develop areas of the national curriculum highlighting architecture and architects.
 - a) paired schools in the Kings Cross area with local practitioners who led sessions with 14-18 year olds proposing local community projects; ten schools took part, and there is a proposal being developed to offer the participating architects CPD credits once this programme is developed nationally.
 - b) programme for Architecture Week 2007 '*Greening London*' - partnered schools with practising architects to look at environmental improvements and urban landscaping which were then exhibited at the RIBA.
 - c) Arts Inform with the RIBA, V&A, and City and Islington Sixth Form Centre to pilot an education programme exploring the links between post 16 courses in art and design, graphic arts, photography and design technology and the RIBA archive of architectural drawings and photographs.
2. Architects for Change and RIBA have developed a programme:
 - a) Partnering with the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust to deliver a mentoring scheme for 16-19 year olds.
 - b) Commissioning research into levels of inclusion for those with disabilities as entrants, students and practitioners.
 - c) Promoting schemes encouraging those who have left the profession for a variety of reasons to return to practice.
 - d) Architects for Change members are STEMNET ambassadors and visit specifically inner city, lower income schools to teach design.
<http://www.stemnet.org.uk/>
3. The RIBA has collaborated with the Social Mobility Foundation for over two years in providing structured internships and work experience for A-level pupils identified by their schools as high achievers, but who are financially disadvantaged.
4. Architecture is a long course, and requires more than usual financial challenges in terms of the acquisition of materials, computer hardware, and 3D software applications. The RIBA has consistently supported student endeavour with offers of hardship funds for eligible students, available by application to the Education Trust Fund.