

RIBA



Royal Institute
of British Architects

Protection of Title

August 2007

Protection of the title ‘Architect’ in the UK

Part 1: Protection of title

Introduction

In some countries, including the United Kingdom, the title ‘architect’ is legally protected and practitioners of architecture are required by law to register at a statutory registration body if they wish to use it.

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1. The Law

In the United Kingdom the Architects Act 1997 [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1997/1997022.htm] (following on from earlier legislation dating back to the 1930s) requires any person in the UK who practices architecture using the title 'architect' to be registered at the **Architects Registration Board (ARB)** [www.arb.org.uk/]. Only those persons who have prescribed qualifications from a recognised school of architecture (including the RIBA Part III examination – practical experience – or its equivalent) can be registered by the ARB. Registered Architects have completed at least seven years academic and practical training and are highly skilled and qualified professionals.

2. Chartered Architects

All practising 'architects' in the UK must be registered at the ARB, but not all of them are members of the RIBA. Only a fully qualified RIBA member is entitled to call him or herself a 'Chartered Architect' [http://www.riba.org/go/RIBA/Member/Joining_29.html] and use the 'RIBA' affix after his or her name [[www.riba.org/fileLibrary/pdf/P1_Advertising_\(GN3\).pdf](http://www.riba.org/fileLibrary/pdf/P1_Advertising_(GN3).pdf)] E.g.

**John Smith RIBA
Chartered Architect**

However, if Mr John Smith is practising in the UK, he *must also* be registered at the ARB. If not, Mr Smith (and any one else like him) is breaking the law, and could be prosecuted (see below).

3. What constitutes practising 'architecture'

The ARB has issued a guidance note (on Section 20 of the Architects Act 1997) which includes a list of the type of activities it will treat as 'practice or business related to architecture'. These are :-

- Arbitration
- Building contracting
- Building services engineering
- Conservation
- Expert Witness
- Interior Design
- Project Management
- Space planning
- Structural engineering
- Surveying

This list is not exhaustive, merely illustrative of those activities the ARB regards as demonstrating the practice of architecture. Therefore, any person undertaking any of these functions while calling him or herself an 'architect' is legally required to be registered.

4. Checking RIBA Membership and ARB Registration

- i. RIBA members are included in the on-line **RIBA Members Directory** <http://members.riba.org/memdir/> which is regularly updated. If you cannot find the name, you can phone the Membership Department on 020 7307 3800.
- ii. You can check whether the person is registered at the Architects Registration Board by searching the **ARB Register** on-line at <http://search.arb.org.uk/> or phone the ARB on 020 7580 5861

5. Misrepresentation

- i. While the great majority of architects practising architecture in the UK are members of the RIBA, not all of them are, nor necessarily is someone who uses the title 'architect' registered at the ARB. It is therefore important to check the status of the person about whom you are concerned.
- ii. **Reporting Misuse of Title (breach of the Architects Act 1997)**
If you discover that someone is using the title 'architect' while not on the Register of Architects, you should contact the ARB (tel. 020 7580 5861; address: 8 Weymouth Street, London, W1W 5BU, e-mail: info@arb.org.uk) with your evidence. If necessary, the ARB will prosecute and the court can impose a substantial fine on those found guilty.

You could also report the misuse of title to your local **Trading Standards office**. <http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/consumers/consumers.cfm> as occasionally the TSO will prosecute as well.

- iii. **Misrepresentation of RIBA membership**

If you discover that a person is using the title 'Chartered Architect' and the RIBA affix without being a member of the Institute, please write to the Membership Department at 66 Portland Place, London, W1B 1AD with the evidence, (e-mail: Membership&ClientServices@inst.riba.org), and we shall take the necessary steps to ensure that the person concerned ceases the misrepresentation.

6. Maintaining competence

All architects practising in the UK are expected to ensure that their competence, skills and knowledge are maintained and constantly updated through **Continuing Professional Development** (CPD) www.riba.org/go/RIBA/Member/CPD_495.html. At the RIBA, CPD is both a Code of Professional Conduct (see [Part 3, Section 6](#)) and membership requirement. The Institute operates, and monitors compliance with, a CPD scheme which includes a core curriculum of subjects which the RIBA regards as essential, and obliges members to undertake at the very least, a specified minimum number of hours (35) of CPD every year. A health and safety element is compulsory.