



Powered by people

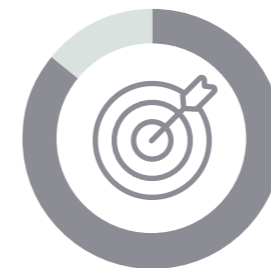
Building a post-Brexit immigration system
for UK architecture

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Introduction

The UK's architecture sector is a global powerhouse worth £4.8 billion to the UK economyⁱ, creating iconic buildings and thriving communities across the world. The biggest drivers of this success are the individual professionals working in architecture across the country. However, one quarter of architects living and working in the UK did not start their lives hereⁱⁱ but have come to join us – primarily from other European countries – to learn, to work and to contribute to our success.



86%

of architects think that access to international skills and talent is vital to the future success of the sector



80%

of the UK's international architects are from the European Union



83%

of practices employ less than 20 people

The benefit of the contribution of international architects is clear. Diversity in skills and talent have driven the UK's leading reputation for creativity and innovation, while language skills and global market knowledge have supported the UK's exporting power. **86% of architects think that access to international skills and talent is vital to the future success of the sector.**ⁱⁱⁱ

Following the UK's referendum on membership of the European Union in 2016, there are two large scale changes ahead to the way the UK's architecture sector can attract and retain international talent; first, through the end of freedom of movement with the European Union (EU) – changing the status of those EU nationals currently in the UK – and second, through reform of the UK's immigration system, changing the rules and processes for those migrating here from both within and outside Europe.

This will not just affect our future talent pipeline – **80% of the UK's international architects are from the European Union.**^{iv} Our research shows that the 2016 referendum has led many of these European architects to assess whether they want to continue to live and work here.

The UK's architecture sector is dominated by small practices, **with 83% of practices employing less than 20 people.**^v The UK's larger practices, who tend to undertake more global projects, are typically employers of large numbers of international talent. The prevalence of EU architects as part of the workforce means that many practices have benefitted from international talent without facing the burdens of the immigration system. Many practices and many architects are soon to encounter the immigration system for the first time.

Even without this context, the UK's flawed immigration system needs a new approach. It is widely acknowledged that the system, as currently stands, is broken - burdensome for business, distrusted by the public, it has failed to drive the UK's priorities or targets.

The power of the UK's architecture sector comes from drawing together the international and domestic workforce – diversifying skills, experience and creative perspectives. If the UK Government gets the future immigration system right, the architecture sector will continue to be able to welcome the international architects driving creativity and innovation so valuable in the 21st century global economy. If the UK Government gets it wrong, we will drive away these individuals and quickly lose the global pre-eminence of our architecture sector to nations that make a more attractive offer to international talent.

In 2018 the Royal Institute of British Architects surveyed over 600 international architects and held four roundtables across England to create a picture of the make-up and contribution of the sector's global talent. **Powered by people: Building a post-Brexit immigration system for UK architecture** draws upon these findings to make recommendations to ensure that the future immigration system is as responsive, flexible and practical as the people the country hopes to recruit.



Recommendations



A NEW APPROACH TO HIGH-SKILLED IMMIGRATION

To bring together decision-making on immigration, skills and international policy and drive a high-skilled and productive economy, UK Government must:

- 1 Make immigration a joint responsibility between the Home Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with a Minister for Immigration attending Cabinet
- 2 Collect data and report on the impact of high-skilled immigration, and the success of the immigration system to support recruitment and retention of an international workforce
- 3 Harness Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification agreements to boost UK export power and high-skilled immigration from across the world



THE POST-BREXIT OFFER TO EU ARCHITECTS

To ensure that EU architects currently in the UK are certain about their future in this country, UK Government must:

- 4 Confirm the details of the 'pre-settled status' and 'settled status' offer to EU nationals
- 5 Make the UK a welcoming nation for migrants, including through improving communications with EU nationals on the post-Brexit offer
- 6 Streamline the application process to 'pre-settled status' and 'settled status' for EU nationals



STREAMLINING IMMIGRATION FOR ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICES

To deliver certainty, stability and flexibility into the immigration system, and ensure that practices of all sizes across the country can benefit from international talent, UK Government must:

- 7 Abolish the cap on the number of available Tier 2 visas
- 8 Introduce regional flexibility in the salary thresholds within the Tier 2 system
- 9 Abolish the Resident Labour Market Test for high-skilled roles
- 10 Ensure that the Shortage Occupation List is responsive to the needs of the economy
- 11 Abolish the Immigration Skills Charge for high-skilled roles, and keep administrative costs to a minimum



THE OFFER FOR INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTS

To develop an immigration system that ensures that the UK can attract international talent and allow architects to develop careers in this country, UK Government must:

- 12 Ensure that the immigration system provides flexibility to travel and work abroad
- 13 Allow high-skilled professionals to switch roles and employers
- 14 Maintain Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) and (Exceptional Promise) visas, and extend the number of available visas to meet demand
- 15 Utilise Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification agreements to keep costs and administration burdens to a minimum
- 16 Streamline the application process within the immigration system



DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ARCHITECTS

To utilise the UK's world-leading architecture education system to drive a diversity of international and domestic talent for the future success of the architecture sector, UK Government must:

- 17 Introduce a two-year post-study work visa for international students in the UK
- 18 Commence the review of Routes to Registration



Architecture's international workforce – the findings

In 2018 the RIBA conducted a survey of over 600 international architects and held a series of roundtables across England to inform the debate on the UK's future immigration system. Our findings build on demographic information of the sector collected by the Architects Registration Board (ARB). This allowed us to create a clearer image of the sector's global talent – who international architects are, what attracted them to the UK, and how they contribute to UK.



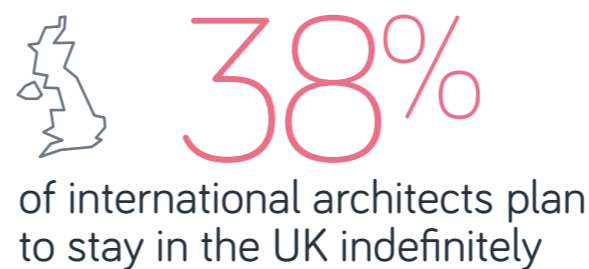
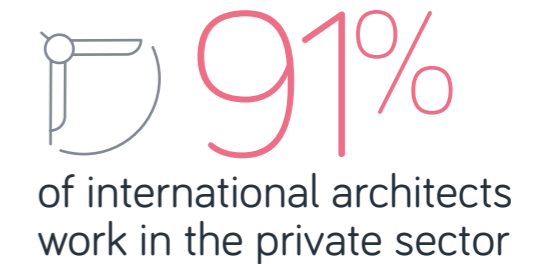
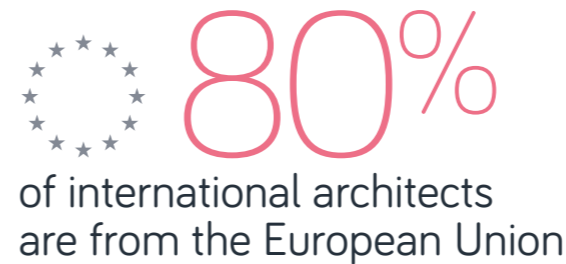
Although every international architect has their own story to tell, we were able to draw out the following key themes:

- There are **just over 10,000 international architects registered in the United Kingdom**^{vi}
- **80% of international architects are from the European Union**^{vii}
- International architects are disproportionately younger than the sector as a whole, **with half of international architects aged between 30 and 39**
- Many international architects are also leading and directing practices and projects, with **a third in senior roles**
- **International architects primarily work in the private sector (91%)**
- London-based practices dominate employment across the architecture sector, and this is no less the case for international architects – **67% of international architects are employed in**

London, with other hubs of architectural activity, such as the South East and South West of England, and the North West of England also recruiting international talent

- The UK is seen as a favourable destination because of **career opportunities, an attractive education system, and because of the dominance of English as an international business language**
- **38% of international architects plan to stay in the UK indefinitely**, although Brexit has changed the intentions of some. An additional **38% of international architects plan to stay in the UK for five years or less**
- International architects strengthen the sector's **international market knowledge and cultural understanding, and bring different technical expertise** to the UK

All statistics and quotes used in the report, unless cited, are drawn from findings of the RIBA's research.



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EEA Architects in the UK

40%
of registrations are
from Italy and Spain



KEY

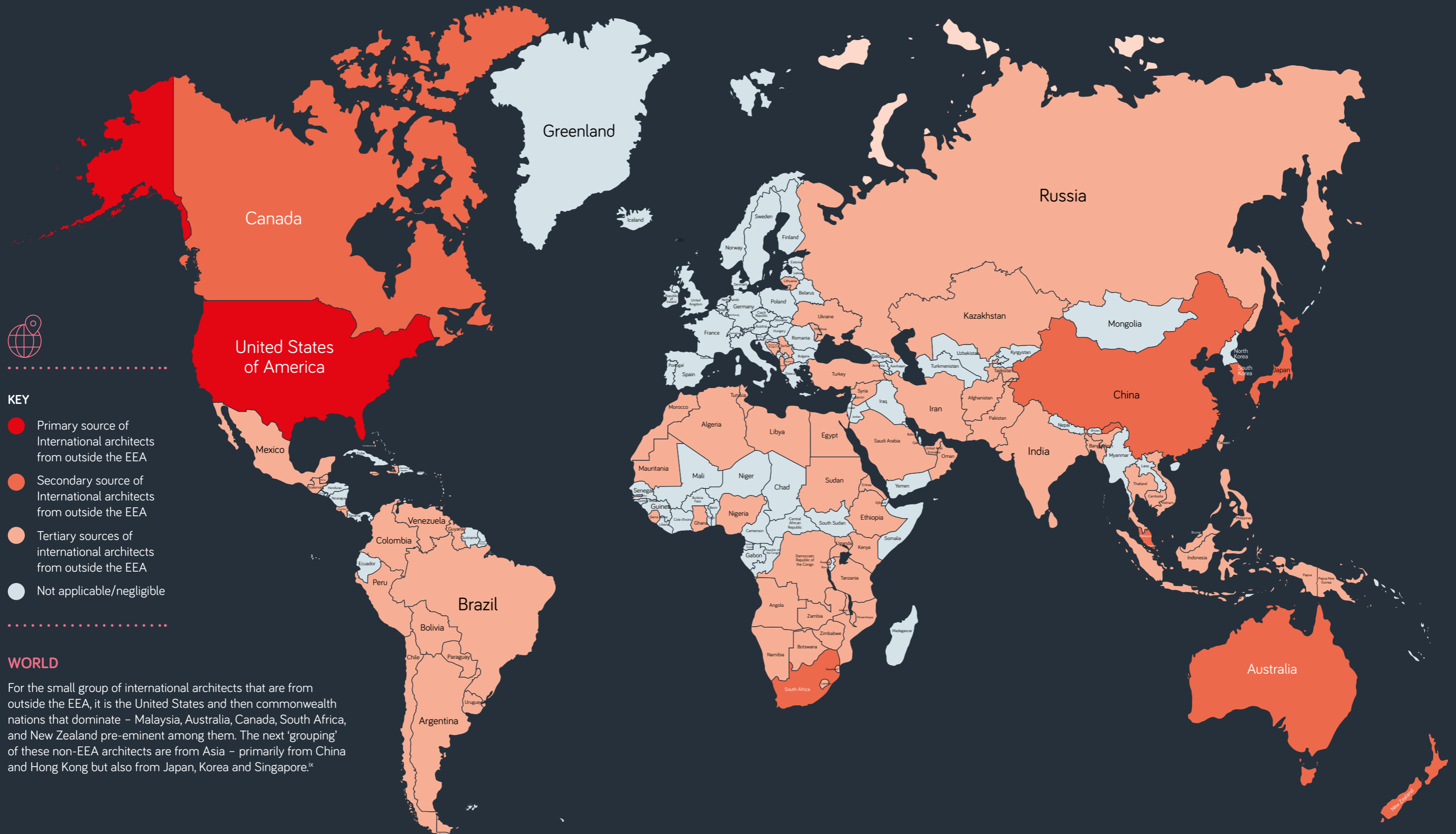
- Primary source of international architects living and working in the UK
- Secondary source of International architects living and working in the UK
- Tertiary source of international architects living and working in the UK
- Not applicable

WHO ARE THE INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTS WORKING IN THE UK?

EUROPE

The majority of international architects living and working in the UK are from the EU. This is led by Italian and Spanish architects who account for 20% of Europeans registered in the UK apiece. The Republic of Ireland and Germany provide the next largest sources of European architects.^{viii}

International architects from outside the EEA





WHO ARE THE INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTS WORKING IN THE UK?

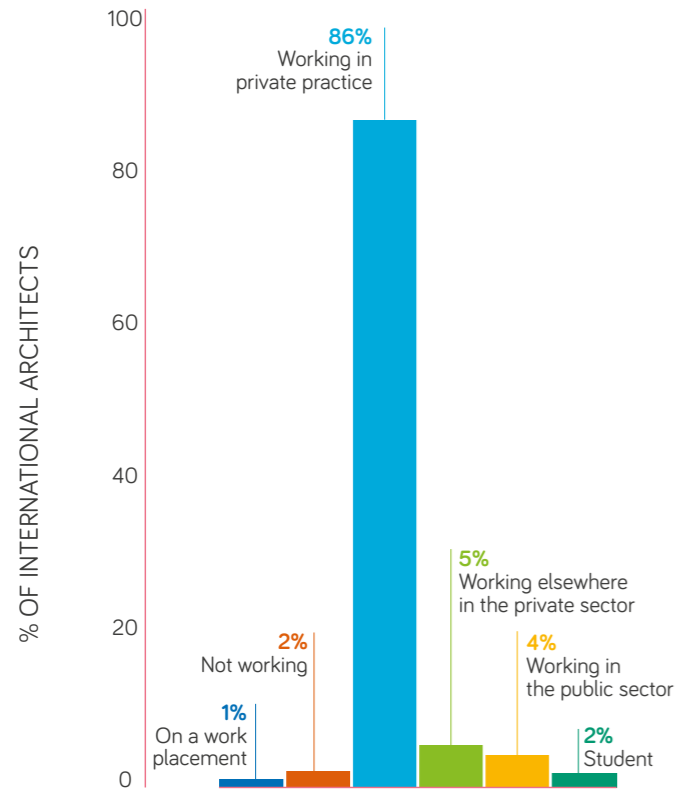
Age and role

International architects are younger than the sector average – around 50% of international architects are in their thirties.

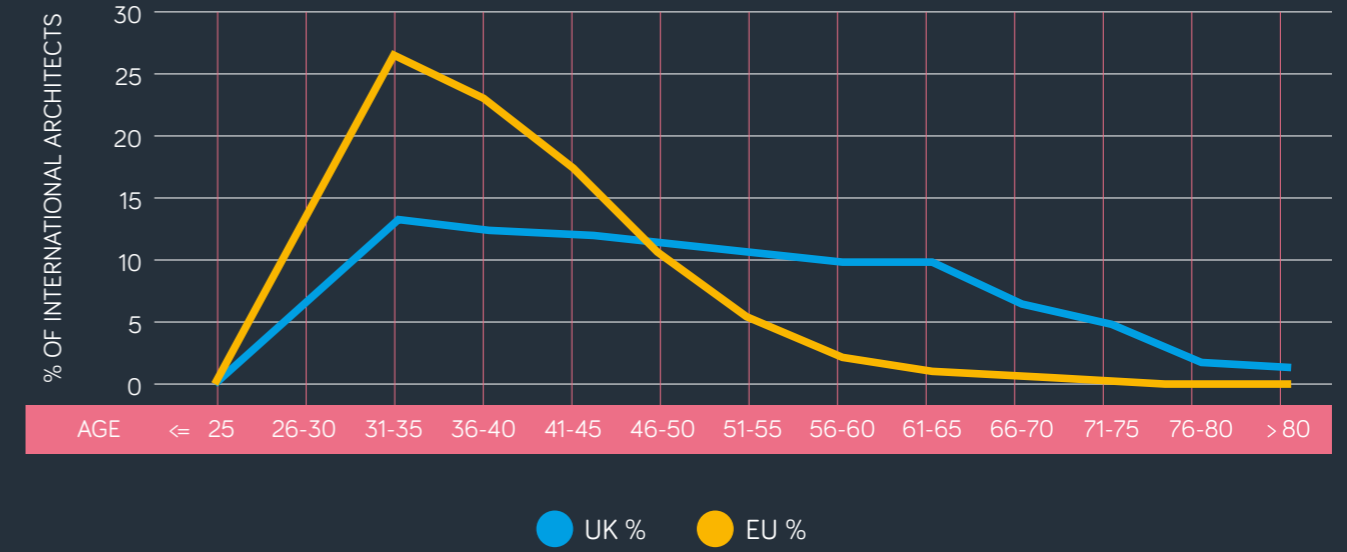
Many international architects come into the UK in their twenties or thirties to start or establish their careers or access the UK's education system.

The RIBA's survey shows that the majority of these individuals are working as qualified architects, with a further third in more senior roles.

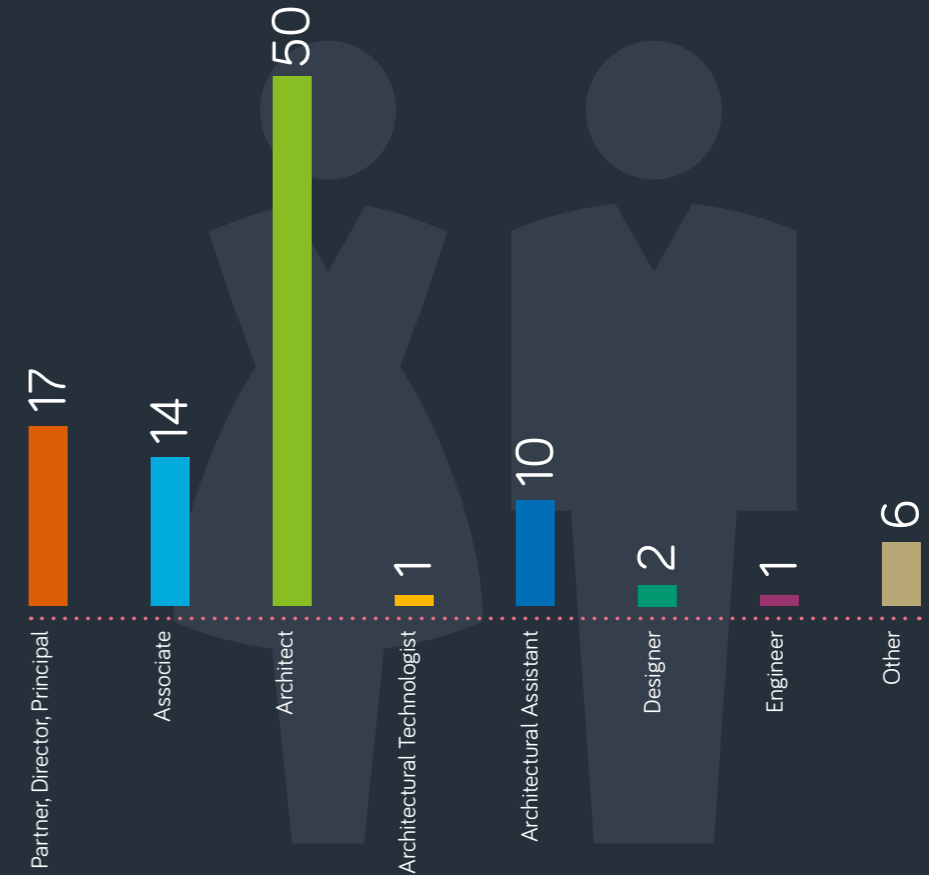
SECTORS WHERE INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTS WORK



AGE DISTRIBUTION OF UK AND EU ARCHITECTS



ROLES HELD BY INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTS %





London and the private sector are big draws

London dominates employment in the architecture sector, and this is also the case for international architects. 67% of international architects are based in the capital – this is driven by London's reputation as a global city, with greater numbers of large, internationally-focused practices. The South East, South West and North West of England – also attract higher levels of international talent.

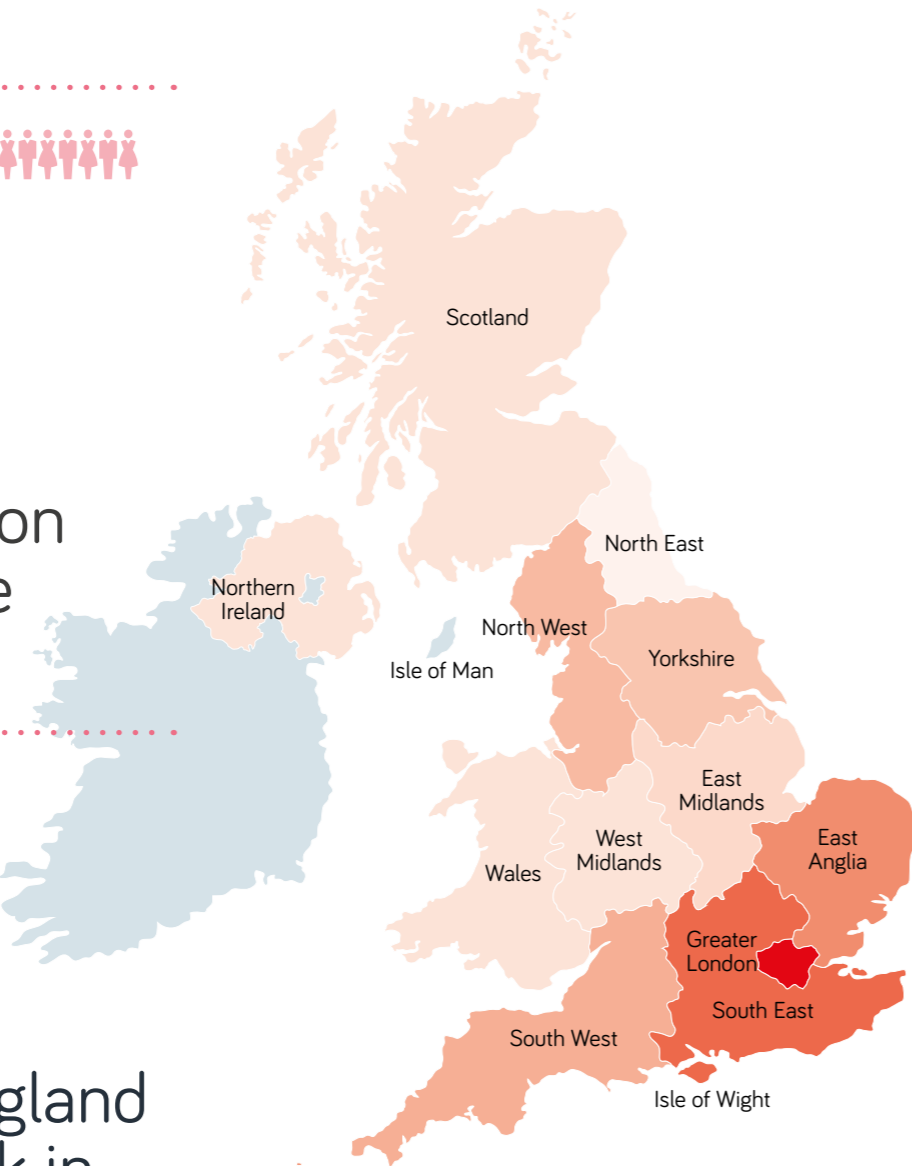
Although private practice dominates across the UK, a higher proportion of architects in the North of England and the Midlands work in the public sector (between 8 – 12%).



96%
of international architects in London work in the private sector

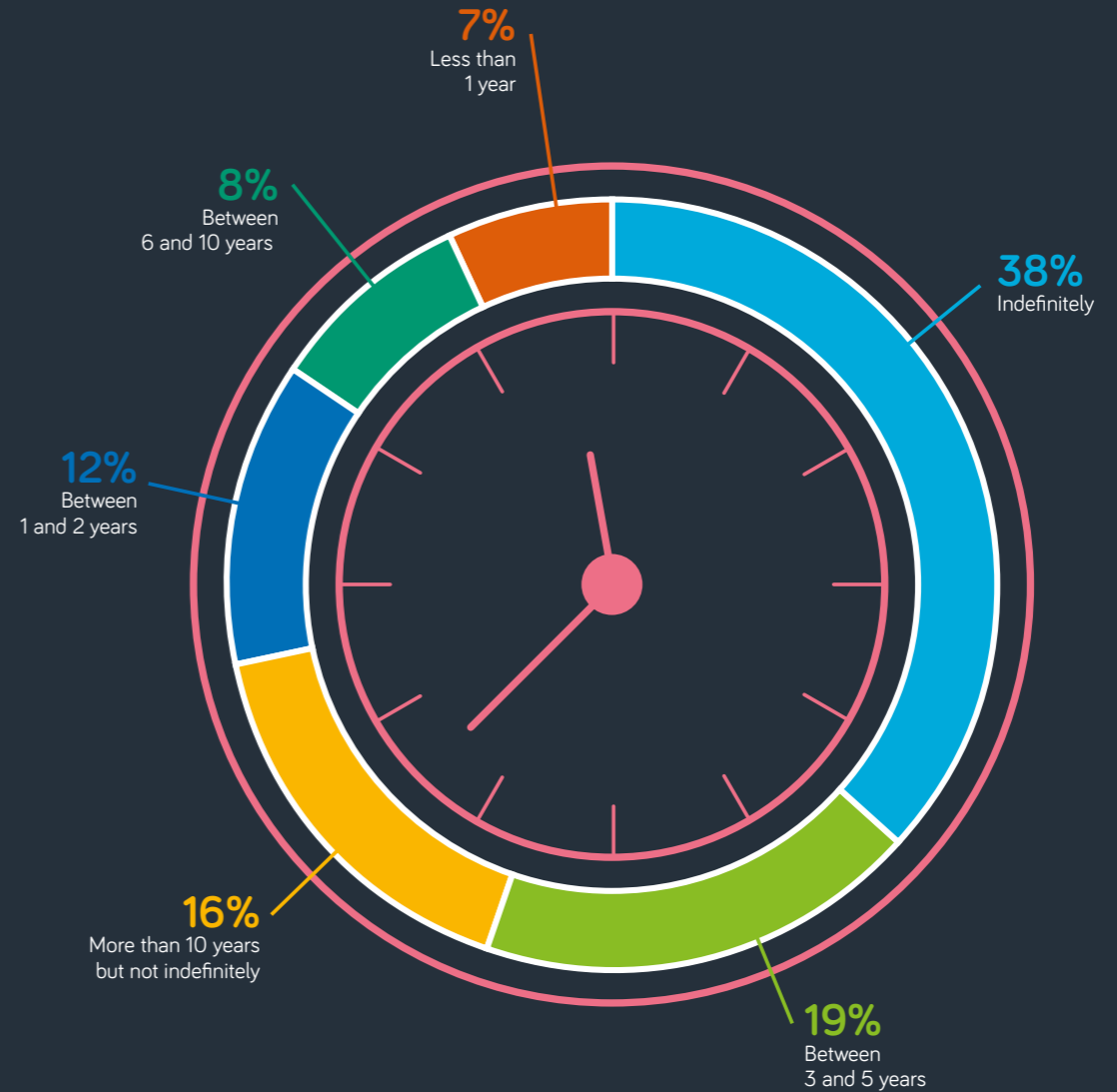


8-12%
in the North of England and Midlands work in the public sector



HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU EXPECT TO REMAIN LIVING IN THE UK?

% OF INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTS



Some plan for the short-term, some for the long-term – but plans can always change

Nearly 40% of international architects currently living and working in the UK are planning on staying indefinitely, although a significant number are considering changing plans as a result of Brexit.

A third of international architects see living in the UK as a temporary exercise – for the experience of working abroad or to build up skills and experience in the UK that can then be taken back home or elsewhere.

The UK has competition for international architects, with 91% stating that they would work in the EU if they could not work in the UK. The Americas and Australia are also popular destinations.

If they were to move elsewhere, 91% of international architects say they would consider going elsewhere in the EU, 35% says the Americas and 24% say Australasia.



IF YOU WERE TO LEAVE THE UK, IN WHICH AREA(S) OF THE WORLD MIGHT YOU LOOK FOR EMPLOYMENT IN ARCHITECTURE?

% OF INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTS

91

EU EXCLUDING UK



35

AMERICA (NORTH, SOUTH & CENTRAL)



24

AUSTRALASIA



17

ASIA



15

EUROPE EXCLUDING EU



14

MIDDLE EAST



2

AFRICA





WHAT DO INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTS BRING TO THE UK?

Diversifying cultural and global market perspectives

“ People act as a bridge between the project and the client. You wouldn't be able to export to Europe without the Europeans – the meetings are probably going to be in English but it's a cultural thing. ”

85% of international architects cited different cultural perspectives as a benefit that they bring to the UK's architectural practices.

This benefit is twofold – in supporting greater creative thinking within the UK's sector, and in providing understanding of culture and markets so critical in exporting architectural services.

Diversifying design and technical skills

“ Different schools of architecture don't teach in the same way. Some don't segregate the technical or structural side... as much as schools over here do. Within a larger office you find value in pulling this all together. ”

Nearly three quarters of international architects stated that their own, differing technical education is a benefit for UK practices. Different architectural traditions between countries, combined with diversity in architectural education and specialisms, mean that employing international talent can help boost a practice's technical and design skills.

Diversifying language skills

“ On site, being able to talk to a builder in their own language, or talk to the client in their own language, they respect you more; they see you differently. ”

“ Any company that wants to do a competition abroad will look around their office at the staff they have for doing the documents... it's facilitating access to the market. ”

Along with understanding of global markets, **42% of international architects point to their own language skills as a benefit to UK practices** undertaking work internationally. The paucity of language skills in the UK's resident population, and the challenge it poses for the success of our ability to trade is a widely understood barrier to UK export success and international architects are helping the UK make up for its own shortfalls.

85%
of international architects cite different cultural perspectives as a benefit to UK practices



WHY DO INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTS CHOOSE THE UK?

The UK's architecture sector offers career opportunities

“ I had a good job [at home] but it was in a very small office. I came here because I wanted to know how a big practice works... and the UK has many more large, international practices. ”

“ I wanted to be independent, which wasn't really an option with the economy in my country. ”

“ I originally came to the UK for work... I worked in practices in Japan, in Paris and have worked around the world. I came back to the UK two years ago to open my own practice. ”

Better career opportunities are a high driver of migration to the UK, **with 80% of respondents highlighting this as an attraction of working in the UK** – and **92% for those in the 30- 34 age group**. For some people, this was linked to a shortage of opportunities in their home nation, while others liked the opportunity to work on the range of domestic and international projects that is provided by many, particularly larger practices.

Experience of working overseas and the English language

“ I wanted to learn English as it's the international business language... for me it was between the US and UK – but I needed a visa for USA [and] it's also just an hour flight back home if you want to go back and see your family. ”

Half of respondents to the RIBA's survey stated that they wanted to experience working abroad. The UK is seen as an attractive destination for this experience for a number of reasons, including the prevalence of English as the international language of business and the global reputation of UK architecture.

The UK's education system

“ The qualification was the main reason I chose the UK, it's a very powerful qualification and is recognised in a lot of places outside of Europe. ”

For respondents under the age of 30 the UK's education system is a draw, with **42% of respondents stating that it attracted them to come to the UK**. Three of the world's top ten schools of architecture are based in the UK. European students have benefited from the ability to have qualifications gained from UK schools of architecture recognised across the EU under the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive.



A new approach to high-skilled immigration

The UK's membership of the European Union has allowed successive governments and political parties to abdicate serious responsibility from considering what immigration is for and why it matters. The public conversation on immigration has little considered what the country needs from its workforce, and how immigration, skills and international policy should subsequently be shaped. The result is an immigration debate that has for decades been marked by high levels of politicisation, and even higher levels of distrust. The UK needs to take a new, positive approach to immigration.

2



The UK Government's White Paper *The UK's future skills based immigration system* sets out its proposals for the new immigration system. These proposals are based on advice from the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), which makes improving the UK's productivity, skills and wages central concerns. This is an appropriate starting point if the Government is serious about building an economy fit for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

In architecture, immigration complements the skillset of the domestic workforce. This intellectual and creative power can be harnessed for the benefit of the wider UK economy but in order to support this, the UK Government and political parties must take a new approach to immigration, one which takes a flexible, information-led approach to workforce needs in order to improve productivity and quality of life. This will not be possible if the UK Government chooses to simply stretch the existing basis of policy-setting for immigration over millions more workers across the economy post-Brexit.

A new approach to high-skilled immigration needs to come from the top – starting with reformulating Departmental and Ministerial responsibility for immigration policy to ensure it is closely aligned with skills and labour needs. This new alignment must also cover the approach to immigration and UK architecture's export potential, especially where Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification agreements can drive new opportunities in both fields. To drive up trust in the immigration system, and to ensure that the new immigration system works in support of a high-skilled, productive economy, policy-making must be backed by greater levels of data than are currently collected.

To bring together decision-making on immigration, skills and international policy and drive a high-skilled and productive economy, UK Government must:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Make immigration a joint responsibility between the Home Office and the the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with a Minister for Immigration attending Cabinet

RECOMMENDATION 2: Collect data and report on the impact of high-skilled immigration, and the success of the immigration system to support recruitment and retention of an international workforce

RECOMMENDATION 3: Harness Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification agreements to boost UK export power and high-skilled immigration from across the world



The end of freedom of movement, and the establishment of a new system will put many more individuals, businesses and organisations in contact with the immigration system.





RECOMMENDATION 1:

Make Immigration the joint responsibility of the Home Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

“ There’s always a risk that [the offer] will be revised in five years’ time – I’m just thinking about what happened in Windrush, 20 years later ”

The immigration system for non-EU nationals has been shaped to try to control numbers. To this end it uses blunt instruments such as salary thresholds and caps, ameliorated through carve-outs in other parts of system (for example, through the Shortage Occupation List). To date this restrictive approach has not been a significant problem for sectors such as architecture that have attracted high levels of European talent – but it is not appropriate for a future system that will cover high-skilled immigration for both EU and non-EU nationals. There is a clear need for a reformed immigration system that both aligns with wider productivity and skills needs and re-establishes trust with both the international workforce and public.

The Home Office is responsible for setting immigration policy, alongside its responsibilities for crime, counter-terrorism, and policing. But the capability of the Home Office to manage immigration has come under significant criticism in recent years, most recently as a result of the Windrush scandal. The RIBA’s research shows that the reputation of the UK Government in managing immigration is now impacting on the confidence of many EU architects working in the UK, who are unsure or unconfident in the current system’s ability to deliver, despite Government assurances that their rights will be protected. In addition, as currently structured, the Home Office is not well-placed to enact decisions on wider economic and labour needs and has significant hurdles to overcome to become a trusted actor for the next generation of international talent.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has oversight of a range of policy areas relating to labour and workforce needs, and is best placed to bring together insight

and evidence from a range of UK Government departments (for architecture, this would be the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) to ensure that immigration policy is aligned and responsive to wider societal and economic demands.

Joint responsibility between the Home Office and BEIS would bring together the expertise needed to manage immigration on the ground, with an approach to policy-making that is directed towards creating a high-skilled, high-wage economy. This should be overseen by a Minister for Immigration attending Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Collect data and report on the impact of high-skilled immigration, and the success of the immigration system to support recruitment and retention of an international workforce

The MAC acknowledged that there is a shortage of data to measure the benefits and costs of immigration.^x This has real-world consequences – the post-graduate visa system, which was integral to ensuring that international architecture students could navigate the requirements of Part 1 and Part 2 of routes to qualification in the architecture sector, was cancelled in 2012 based on an erroneous media report about abuse of the system.^{xi}

The end of freedom of movement, and the establishment of a new system will put many more individuals, businesses and organisations in contact with the immigration system. There are bound to be teething problems given the scale of the change ahead.

If the UK Government wants to ensure that immigration supports a higher-skilled, higher-wage economy, and restore trust back in the immigration system this dearth of information must be addressed. This serves a dual purpose; ensuring that any reform is driven by the best available evidence and supporting an informed debate on immigration which centres on how it fits into the broader objectives of supporting a high-skilled workforce and more productive economy.

The UK Government must provide ongoing opportunities for sector bodies such as the RIBA to feedback on how the new immigration system works in practice.





RECOMMENDATION 3:

Harness Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification agreements to boost UK export power and high-skilled immigration from across the world

International architects are a boon to the sector's export power. **The UK is the largest exporter of architectural services in Europe, contributing £1 billion to the UK through embodied exports of services** across the world.^{xii} However, there are still a number of barriers to trade, meaning that the UK's excellent reputation for architectural exports is being carried by a select few practices. One of the largest of these barriers is in the difficulty for UK architects to register and practice as recognised architects in third countries.

The UK's new relationship with the European Union, and new deals with third countries, should be shaped to further facilitate the sector's export success through ensuring new visa arrangements feature as part of any trade deal. Striking Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification (MRPQ) agreements will both support a better system for immigration in architecture and boost exports.

MRPQ agreements are a priority concern for the RIBA and its members. First and foremost, the UK must strike a future arrangement with the EU which allows for a continued MRPQ agreement. European architects – who make up the majority of the international talent in the sector – are supporting the UK's global success. Additionally, the European Union is currently the second largest market for UK export activity.^{xiii}

The Department for International Trade has identified the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand as target markets for new trade agreements – three countries that already supply a number of architects to the UK. Setting up MRPQ agreements will enable UK practices to recruit more architects from these countries, supporting both the ability of UK practices to undertake work in these markets and providing the UK with an even richer set of skills and market experience on which to draw.



The UK's is the largest exporter of architectural services in Europe, contributing £1 billion to the UK through embodied exports of services





3

The post-Brexit offer to EU architects

Nearly 80% of international architects living and working in the UK are from the European Union (one fifth of the UK's registered architects). European architects work across the UK, contributing and leading the success of the UK's architecture sector. European architects need and deserve confidence and clarity post-Brexit.



47% of EU architects have considered moving away from the United Kingdom as a result of the referendum. This is affecting the sector now – the Architects Registration Board (ARB) has recorded **a 42% fall in new European architects registering in the UK since 2016.**^{xiv}

In June 2017, the UK Government announced that European nationals resident in the United Kingdom up to the point that the UK formally leaves the European Union will be able to apply for 'settled status' – for those with five years or more of residency in the UK – or 'pre-settled status' – for those who have been in the country for less time.

While there is interest in applying for settled status among EU architects – and particularly those who already intended to stay in the UK for the long-term – there is still serious concern about how the offer is being communicated. This is compounding broader concerns expressed by European nationals about how welcoming the UK is towards its international population.

The RIBA's research shows that the many European architects currently in the UK are waiting to see what the full offer and conditions of remaining in the UK will be before making a decision on their future. This time is therefore critical.

In order to ensure that the UK can retain its high-skilled European talent, the UK Government must ensure the post-Brexit offer to EU nationals is confirmed and communicated, and the process to apply quick, consistent and simple.

To ensure that EU architects currently in the UK – who contribute and lead the success of the UK's architecture sector – are certain about their future in this country, UK Government must:

RECOMMENDATION 4: Confirm the details of the 'pre-settled status' and 'settled status' offer to EU nationals

RECOMMENDATION 5: Make the UK a welcoming nation for immigration, including through improving communications with EU nationals on the post-Brexit offer

RECOMMENDATION 6: Streamline the process for applying to 'pre-settled status' and 'settled status' for EU nationals

80%

of international architects living and working in the UK are from the European Union

47%

of EU architects have considered moving away as a result of the referendum

42%

fall in European architects registering in the UK since 2016.



RECOMMENDATION 4:

Confirm the details of the 'pre-settled' and 'settled status' offer to EU nationals

57% of EU architects say that they will definitely or are very likely to take up the UK Government's settled status offer.

However, the delay in providing the full details of the offer and requirements for EU citizens, combined with recent high profile cases of problems within the immigration system has led to declining confidence among European architects.

While there is clearly an appetite by some EU architects to obtain settled status, there is still a great deal of confusion over the details of the offer. Some architects at the RIBA's roundtables reported that the immediate lack of information following the result of the UK's referendum on the future relationship with the EU in 2016 lead to them making erroneous decisions relating to their residence rights. This situation has not much improved since the offer of settled status was announced in 2017 – EU citizens campaign group The 3 Million has highlighted a number of areas where the UK Government is yet to clarify details of the future system, including application questions, the nature of security checks, and the right to vote.^{xv}

The settled status scheme is due to open in March 2019 but there is still a significant lack of detail around in the rules and requirements of the new system. The UK Government must as a matter of priority confirm the exact details of the pre-settled and settled status scheme. It must also be made clear that the offer made to EU nationals will not be rescinded in the future – these rights must be guaranteed and future-proofed, so that EU nationals can be confident and certain of their ability to build a future in the UK. Without this information the UK Government is forcing EU architects to make important decisions in a vacuum.

“The world isn't going to become less globalised – it is going to become more. I've already lived in three countries. I'm not considering moving on from the UK at the moment but for me it is an option.”

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Make the UK a welcoming nation for immigration, including through improving communications with EU nationals on the post-Brexit offer

“There's always been a sense of liberty about the UK... but a few years back it all started to be obsessive about immigration... if I knew what things are like, I wouldn't choose it again.”

“We still feel slightly in the dark. We get pieces of information and then they change.”

45% of international architects report feeling less welcome by the British public since the result of the EU referendum.

The RIBA's research shows that a mix of factors bring European architects to work abroad – but they often pick the UK because of career opportunities in the sector and its international reputation.

Many European architects at the RIBA's roundtables reflected that Brexit has forced them to consider their place in the UK and the other opportunities available to them elsewhere. The debate in the lead-up to the UK's referendum of membership of the European Union in 2016 became in some spaces deeply toxic, and this has understandably had an impact on European citizens living in the UK. With the UK due to leave the EU in March 2019, this should be the time for politicians and political parties to show leadership and ensure that the UK does not further lose high-skilled European architects or dissuade new European talent from entering the country.

The RIBA recommends that the UK Government, national and local governments, undertake a concerted programme of communications making European nationals aware of their rights under the settled status and pre-settled schemes. The Royal Institute of British Architects can support efforts to communicate





this information to EU architects – but we must be provided with clear and accurate information to enable this.

To ensure that we can build confidence for EU architects currently living and working in the UK, the RIBA recommends that the UK Government ensures that the details of how to apply for settled status and pre-settled status are made available in a range of formats and all European languages.

This needs to be combined with the UK Government leading on a new approach to immigration, by driving forward changes in the way that immigration is understood and accounted for. Allowing for fairer, information-led debate around the role of immigration will help the UK move past some of the more unsavoury discourse that took place in the lead-up to the 2016 referendum, which has alienated many EU architects working in the UK.



RECOMMENDATION 6:

Streamline the process for applying to 'pre-settled status' and 'settled status' for EU nationals

As soon as the UK Government has confirmed the details of its offer to EU citizens, it must make efforts to ensure that information on the process for applying as well as the application process itself is as clear and streamlined as possible.

The Home Affairs Select Committee has registered concern that the Home Office may not be ready to take on the administrative burdens associated with the levels of applications that are likely to occur through the settled and pre-settled status schemes. The Home Office must be able to utilise the sorts of technologies it is looking to develop for better information management and citizen-focused services to deliver short decision times and transparent information processing.

EU citizens have been waiting since June 2016 for details of the new system. The process, once initiated, must be swift and clear. The UK Government must provide certainty to EU nationals by making decisions on applications quickly – the Home Office should look to confirm a final decision within 10 days, at a maximum.

This has a secondary benefit for the future immigration system – if the UK Government is able to provide a swift, transparent and fair service for EU nationals, it should be able to apply this learning to improve the visa application process for the future immigration system as a whole.

45%
of international architects report feeling less welcome by the British public since the result of the EU referendum.



4

Streamlining immigration for architectural practices

The UK's architecture sector is dominated by small practices, with 83% of practices employing fewer than 20 people. However, employment in the sector is dominated by a few large practices – although only 6% of practices employ 50 people or more, but account for nearly 53% of all staff employment in the sector.^{xvi} Many of these large practices employ large numbers of international architects.



If the UK's immigration system is going to support a high-skilled, high-wage and critically – a productive – economy, it is imperative that employers can access skills and talent in a way that works for the needs of their business. Because of the project-based nature of the architecture sector, this means being able to recruit the right skills and talent quickly – whether these are technical, creative, or international knowledge and experience.

The existing immigration system, which uses caps, costs, thresholds and enforced delays to manage migration, works against supporting a highly-skilled international workforce where flexibility is valued. Many small practices do not have any HR capacity, meaning that senior members of staff have to manage hiring processes alongside working on projects. A complex, costly immigration system impacts these practices the hardest.

It also works against a workforce that actively attracts younger professionals at the beginning of their careers – **the average salary for international architects that have been in the UK for less than a year is £28,000**. This is below many of the existing thresholds within the Tier 2 system. If the future immigration system relies on the existing thresholds it will actively work against the recruitment of high-skilled, young professionals – particularly in smaller practices, and those outside of London.

Streamlining the future immigration system for architectural practices means providing a process that allows for clarity, speed and consistency of outcome. If the UK Government wants to ensure that the UK can fully benefit from high-skilled immigration, this process must work for both employers of high-levels of international talent, and small practices. This will only be allowed for if the UK Government abolishes some of the unnecessary and inefficient barriers which exist within the current system.

To deliver certainty, stability and flexibility into the immigration system, and ensure that practices of all sizes across the country can benefit from international talent, UK Government must:

RECOMMENDATION 7: Abolish the cap on the number of available Tier 2 visas

RECOMMENDATION 8: Introduce regional flexibility in the salary thresholds within the Tier 2 system

RECOMMENDATION 9: Abolish the Resident Labour Market Test for high-skilled roles

RECOMMENDATION 10: Ensure that the Shortage Occupation List is responsive to the needs of the economy

RECOMMENDATION 11: Abolish the Immigration Skills Charge for high-skilled roles, and keep administrative costs to a minimum

83%

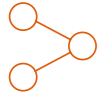
of practices employ 20 people or fewer

6%

of practices employ 50 people or more

5%

of Tier 2 applications in the sector were accepted in Nov 17 – Apr 18



RECOMMENDATION 7:

Abolish the cap on the number of available Tier 2 visas

The majority of high-skilled migrants enter the UK on a Tier 2 (General) visa, capped at 20,700 a year. These visas are allocated on a monthly basis, on a points-based system, meaning that whether an applicant is successful is dependent on the points allocation of other applicants in the same monthly cohort.

Between Winter 2017 and Summer 2018 there was widespread pressure on the Tier 2 visa system, which was partially ascribed to employers looking to recruit skilled migrants from outside the EU, where the number of EU applicants was dropping. As a result, **between November 2017 and April 2018 only 5% of applications made by architects under the Tier 2 visa system were accepted.**^{xvii}

The low success rate of architects in this time can be ascribed to an effective minimum salary threshold of £41,000 - rising to a high of £60,000 - due to the monthly cap and number of high-skilled applicants within the system. This does not just shut out new talent, it also harmed the ability to recruit for more senior roles - **the median salary for an architect with more than five years' experience is £39,140.**^{xviii} **The rising salary threshold meant that practices could not, in effect, recruit even experienced international architects during this time** because of wider pressures on the system, unrelated to the needs of those individual businesses.

The Migration Advisory Committee recommended that the cap on Tier 2 visas is abolished, because it restricts the inflow of high-skilled, economically beneficial migration, and because it creates unpredictability for employers.^{xiv} The Government's Immigration White Paper also proposes to abolish the Tier 2 visa cap. The evidence from the architecture sector bears this reasoning out. The cap on availability of Tier 2 visas must be abolished to support high-skilled immigration.

“ People say they wanted skilled migration, educated, technically-qualified people but then if you say ‘we only want people that earn more than X’ architects can fall through the gaps, especially the young ones. ”

“ Being based in a rural setting it can be difficult to recruit high quality candidates as people often have to relocate. We get a high proportion of candidates applying from the EU, perhaps because they primarily want to get experience working in the UK and are less concerned exactly where. ”

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Introduce regional flexibility in the salary thresholds within the Tier 2 system

The salary thresholds built into the Tier 2 (General) visa system are meant to indicate the skill level and experience associated with the role - and therefore the skills and experience of the successful applicant. This is the approach taken by the UK Government's Immigration White Paper and the Migration Advisory Committee in its own recommendations on the future migration system.

However, many sectors have found the current system's reliance on salary thresholds problematic - not only can the salary threshold rise or fall on a month-by-month basis because of the cap on the availability of Tier 2 (General) visas, but this flat approach is blind to the differences in wages and skills needs across the country and across roles.

Many international architects come to the UK closer to the beginning of their careers, and are therefore working in junior roles for junior salaries - and practices benefit from diversifying the skills and experience available to them in exchange for providing international architects opportunities to develop their careers. This is not to say that these architects are inexperienced - most qualified architects will have undertaken a significant degree of work experience and academic training before they begin their careers. However, the salary thresholds within the Tier 2 (General) system throttles the ability of many practices to hire non-EU architects under the existing system.





Appropriate salary rates for Architecture roles under the Tier 2 visa system

Role	Salary rates
Part 1 graduate	£21,600
Part 2 graduate	£23,800
Part 3 graduate/newly registered architects	£28,000
Experienced worker	£32,100

Under the Immigration Rules Appendix J, there are four salary thresholds relevant to architects – these salary rates are determined against average nationwide earnings for the role. However, the average salary for architects varies significantly by region.

As many international architects enter the UK at the beginning of their careers, this is the most useful starting point to evaluate the existing criteria for these salary thresholds. – **for architects with less than five years' experience, only in London and the South/South East of England are median average salaries greater than the salary threshold of £32,100.**^{xv}

Average salary also varies, as might be expected, by size of practice – **the median average salary for architects with less than five years' experience is below the salary threshold for practices that employ between 2 and 9 members of staff (55% of all UK practices).**^{xvi}

Extending the existing salary thresholds across EU and non-EU nationals risks making the skills and experience of international architects a benefit that only the largest, London-based practices can enjoy. Additionally, salary thresholds are not popular among international architects – while **30% of international architects saw eligibility based on skills and experience as important**, only **4% wanted to see eligibility based on salary.**

The Government's Immigration White Paper undertook to consult with businesses on the appropriate level for salary thresholds for the new immigration system. As part of this process, the UK Government must introduce regional flexibility within the Tier 2 (General) visa system – drawing on evidence from sector representatives and from a broader view of the impact of immigration on productivity and skills, outlined in Chapter 1. The UK Government could limit the degree of regional variation that could be allowed for, for example, by £2000 around appropriate salary rates. This would allow salary thresholds to be more responsive to regional skills and workforce needs.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Abolish the Resident Labour Market Test for high-skilled roles

The stated purpose of the Resident Labour Market Test (RLMT) is to ensure jobs are offered first to “settled workforce”, with a requirement on employers to demonstrate that they have advertised jobs appropriately and that there are no domestic workers that are suitable for the role.

To employ a worker under the Tier 2 (general) visa system, employers must advertise a role for at least 28 days, on the UK Government's jobs website, and through other recognised advertising routes (through a national newspaper or professional journal). For architecture, the result of the RLMT is simply to add delays on hiring appropriate international workers.

The Immigration White Paper has proposed abolishing the RLMT, based on the MAC's conclusion that there is little evidence to suggest that it supports the employment of domestic workers over international workers, and that it is unlikely that it provides any reassurance to the general population on this point. The RIBA supports this proposal.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Ensure that the Shortage Occupation List is responsive to the needs of the economy

The Shortage Occupation List (SOL) provides an easier route into the UK for some professions and sectors where skills gaps have been identified, allowing employers not to undertake a Resident Labour Market Test (RLMT), and by providing enough points through the Tier 2 (General) visa system to ensure that a certificate of sponsorship will be provided to the applicant. Architects are not currently covered by the SOL.

With the Immigration White Paper proposing to abolish the cap on Tier 2 visas and the RLMT, much of the benefit being listed on the Shortage Occupation List will be stripped away. The MAC stated that “it would not be sensible to design a policy that is overly reliant on the SOL” in determining who has the right to work in the UK, because of concerns over the responsiveness of the list in accounting for skills shortages, driven by a lack of quality information.^{xvii}

However, the White Paper proposes retaining the Shortage Occupation List. It is therefore imperative that the approach to the skills shortages is overhauled to be more flexible and responsive than the current system. It is right that the MAC should consult on the SOL ahead of the new immigration system coming into effect. If the UK Government is determined that



the SOL should remain a key feature in the future immigration system, it should look to make updates more frequently, and in response to ongoing skills needs across the whole economy. This should utilise evidence gathered from more thorough evidence gathering on the broader skills and labour needs of the UK as outlined in recommendations covered in Chapter 2 of this report.

The UK Government must also commit to a review of Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes to determine if these classifications are appropriate measures of skills and roles – the SOL utilises these codes to define roles and professions. The main SOC code for the profession ‘Architect’ is an overly broad definition that does not offer any further nuance in the range of technical skills or experience that a practice may require.

RECOMMENDATION 11:
 Abolish the Immigration Skills Charge for high-skilled roles, and keep administrative costs to a minimum

The Immigration Skills Charge (ISC) is meant to disincentivise employers from hiring migrant labour. Despite some confusion around the name, the receipts of this charge – unlike the Apprenticeships Levy – simply go to central government and does not go towards schemes intended to improve skills in the wider economy.

Architecture is a people-based sector – **60% of UK practice expenditure is on personnel.**^{xxiii}

Architectural practices hire international talent because they complement and expand skills and experiences, supporting innovation and productivity. It is right that employers, as the immediate beneficiaries of hiring international talent, cover the administrative costs associated with immigration. However, it runs counter to the UK’s stated objective to support high-skilled immigration to levy any additional charges.

The cost of immigration to UK employers		
	Small business ⁴	Large employer
Sponsor license (per year)	£536	£1,475
Application cost (per worker)	£575	£575
Certificate of sponsorship (per worker)	£199	£199
Immigration Skills Charge (per worker, per year)	£364	£1,000

The amount of ISC depends on the size of the organisation – but for small practices, those that dominate the UK’s architecture sector, every additional cost and time burden is a greater disincentive to hire international talent. The largest businesses – those who are most likely to hire the largest number of international staff – are already contributing to improving the broader UK skills base through contribution to the apprenticeship levy.

The available evidence suggests that high-skilled immigration improves productivity and innovation. Applying the ISC to high-skilled immigration simply acts as a tax on those employers that are best placed to make the most of international talent and skills – especially for smaller practices. The abolition of the ISC will support, in particular, smaller businesses to hire international talent and signal that the UK is open to international talent.

.....

60%
 of UK practice expenditure is on personnel.

⁴ Businesses or charities that employ 50 employees or fewer/with an annual turnover of £10.2 million or less



We are two directors and two staff; if I need to do administration and pay fees to bring an architect here ...it becomes more complicated. You end up with smaller practices being less able to recruit the best talent, which is a problem if you want to grow.





5

An attractive offer for international architects

If the UK wants to attract young and high-skilled professionals such as architects, we need to produce an offer that is attractive to international architects into the future, mindful that the EU and other nations will be competing with the UK for the same talent.



Immigration was one of the defining topics of the referendum debate. If the referendum was about resetting our relationship with the world, we must be mindful that it also provides an opportunity for the world to reset its relationship with us. The post-Brexit immigration system, and the ability for the UK to continue to attract international talent, will be critical to how this plays out in practice.

The RIBA asked international architects what they thought would make the future immigration system attractive. The response was clear – ‘flexibility’. This means a system that is responsive (not bureaucratic), that provides greater ability to move between employers, and to work in and out of the country. Introducing greater flexibility into the system does not just benefit international architects, but also supports employers.

To develop an immigration system that ensures that the UK can attract international talent and allow architects can develop careers in this country, the UK Government must:

RECOMMENDATION 12: Ensure that the immigration system provides flexibility to travel and work abroad

RECOMMENDATION 13: Allow high-skilled professionals to switch roles and employers

RECOMMENDATION 14: Monitor the success of Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) and (Exceptional Promise) visas, and extend the number of available visas to meet demand

RECOMMENDATION 15: Utilise Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification agreements to keep costs and administration burdens to a minimum

RECOMMENDATION 16: Streamline the application process within the immigration system

61%

of international architects think that flexibility to travel in and out of the UK is an important part of the future immigration system.

40%

of international architects plan to stay in the UK for the long-term; the ILR route will be an important one for the sector.



RECOMMENDATION 12:

Ensure that the immigration system provides flexibility to travel and work abroad

International architects value the ability to travel in and out of the UK with 61% of international architects stating that flexibility to travel in and out of the UK is an important part of the future immigration system.

This is not just for personal reasons – at the RIBA's roundtables many international architects voiced concerns that future travel restrictions would impact on their ability to work on international projects. The project-based nature of architecture may mean the length of time working on a project can be weeks, months, or even years – this can require being on site for various periods of time. Given that both practices and architects are clear about the connection between hiring international architects and the ability to export and undertake work abroad, the future immigration system should look to support, rather than curtail this activity.

The future immigration system should allow international architects and employers to support long periods working abroad without affecting immigration status. This also should not impact on applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) – while **38% of international architects plan to stay in the UK for the long-term the ILR route will be an important one for the sector.**

For applications for ILR, the individuals must not have spent more than 180 days outside the UK in a consecutive 12 month period across five years. This disincentivises international architects from taking project work abroad. The RIBA recommends that time spent working abroad for UK sponsoring employers is not accounted for in any travel restrictions to allow international architects to support important export work, while also working towards building a career and life in the UK should they choose to do so.

“I was actually thinking about more flexible living, traveling and working before Brexit, but now I'm realising that it won't be easy to make that decision. I'm between two camps – it's harder to be flexible, I'll have to choose a camp and it's putting me in a difficult position.”

“It's stressful on people with high expertise and who can offer a lot; being flexible is part of the game in architecture and especially in the UK it is essential. That's the beauty of being here.”

RECOMMENDATION 13:

Allow high-skilled professionals to switch roles and employers

Half of international architects say they want the future immigration system to make it easy to change employers and job. At the present time, the ability for an individual on a Tier 2 visa to change employer is dependent on whether their prospective new employer has a sponsorship license and, whether they have met the conditions required under the Resident Labour Market Test. These factors can potentially put months of delay on an employer looking to hire an international worker that has by all rights already satisfied the conditions necessary to live and work in the UK.

The Migration Advisory Committee suggested that the current system, which ties employees to employers, could be responsible for holding down wages because of this impact on competition and gives employers more power over workers within the labour market.^{xxiv} **80% of international architects came to the UK because of the career opportunities the architecture sector provides – it is clear that a system that dampens the ability to develop a career will make the UK a less attractive destination for international architects. It is important the system of in-country employer switches is not used to undermine the immigration system.**

Ensuring that switches can be undertaken swiftly would also be supported by the abolition of the Resident Labour Market Test, and other measures to ensure that the process of applying for visas is streamlined. The RIBA further recommends that applications for change in employer should be processed in 10 days at a maximum, where the role is in the same or associated SOC code.





RECOMMENDATION 14:

Maintain the success of Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) and (Exceptional Promise) visas, and extend the number of available visas to meet demand

Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visas cover two categories – Exceptional Talent and Exceptional Promise. Those who work in the UK on Tier 1 visas are able to benefit from much of the flexibility that we know that architects want from a general visa system – such as the flexibility to change roles, and start up a business.

There are 2000 places available under the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) and (Exceptional Promise) routes per year. As of January 2019, architects will be able to apply for the 250 places allocated through the Arts Council England with RIBA assessing applications under the architecture criteria.

The RIBA has welcomed the extension of Tier 1 visas to architecture. This will ensure that the UK competes to be the home for globally-recognised, world-leading architectural talent as well as the future leaders of the profession. This exceptional talent has already made a significant contribution to British architecture – of the **30 projects shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize in the last five years, 12 project lead architects were from outside the UK.**

The RIBA will be working to promote this new immigration route for architecture. The RIBA recommends that the UK Government maintains the Tier 1 immigration routes to architecture in the future immigration system, and increases the number of Tier 1 visas available through the Arts Council England if the route proves valuable.



Of the 30 projects shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize in the last five years, 12 project lead architects were from outside the UK.





RECOMMENDATION 15:

Utilise Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification agreements to keep costs and administration burdens to a minimum

Under the European Union's Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC), EU architects with recognised qualifications have been able to register and practice as architects in the UK with minimal administration and at the same cost (between £88 – £142, depending on the time of the application) as a UK qualified architect, and enables UK architects to register elsewhere in the EU on the same basis as local architects. This has been a significant benefit for European talent in the UK and supported UK architects to practice in the rest of the EU.

Non-EU architects who do not have their qualifications covered by the EU's Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification (MRPQ) agreement face much steeper barriers in getting their qualifications recognised – applicants must retake relevant Part 1 and Part 2 examinations with the Architects Registration Board (ARB), and then undertake Part 3 with a recognised school of architecture. This is a time-consuming process, and the costs run

“ I have 7 years of US architectural education and 12 years of experience working in architectural practices with nearly 9 of those in the UK... I cannot afford the time or money to take the testing required by ARB to be recognised as a UK-qualified Architect... “Architect” is a title that carries significant meaning for clients, the public, and professionals and the repercussions on a personal level of not being able to practice under this title border on humiliation, professionally. ”

into thousands of pounds. **60% of international architects from outside of the European Union stated that the current system of recognition of professional qualifications is a challenge to working in the UK.** A number of non-EEA architects will have qualified in the UK.

The cost and time burdens involved in registering as an architect in the UK fall on the individual. A future immigration system which is shaped to support access to high-skilled international talent must not allow barriers to be established in other parts of the system which affect their ability to work. For regulated sectors such as architecture, it is critical that routes to recognition of professional qualifications are low-cost and not administratively cumbersome. This can be achieved through striking suitable MRPQ agreements with the EU and partners with equivalent standards of architectural education as the UK.

While the UK Government and European Commission continue to negotiate our future relationship, and where the UK's architecture sector benefits from European skills and talent, a continued MRPQ agreement with the EU must be the first priority in establishing a globally open architecture sector. There are clear benefits to both the UK's and Europe's architecture sectors in doing so; for the UK we can continue to attract and retain the European talent which is so crucial to our success, while the EU benefits from the additional skills and experience these architects develop in the UK.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the UK Government has prioritised establishing new trade relationships with the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand. These countries provide a small but notable number of international architects currently working in the UK's sector as a suitable starting point for a new agreement.





RECOMMENDATION 16:

Streamline the application process within the immigration system

66% of international architects said that they want to see a future immigration system that was easy to apply to, with minimal administration. If the UK wants to attract young, international and high-skilled professionals such as architects, our first response should not be to hit them with a wall of paperwork (or lengthy PDF files), and inconsistent bureaucracy. The complexity of the existing system can be evidenced by the proliferation of law firms which exist simply to help applicants to pick through the complicated rules.

A streamlined approach to immigration must have a clear, consistent application process that is not needlessly burdensome. The UK Government has stated that the system for registering EU nationals will be technology-led and straightforward – an approach which appreciates that the existing immigration system is the opposite. At the present time it is hard for applicants to track progress of their application, and difficult to correct innocent mistakes which may lead to applications being declined. As a result, it can be hard for applicants and employers to know with certainty how swiftly an application will be dealt with. The future immigration system should use technology to drive greater transparency – for example, by providing applicants and employer sponsors transparency over the status of applications.

“When we were recruiting, there was an American who we wanted but my boss... said no – she had sponsored an Australian before and it was a nightmare with the paperwork and the risk is too big.”



A streamlined immigration system should not contain features that delay and frustrate the process of recruiting high-skilled international talent and various charges and hurdles which exist simply to turn employers away from hiring international talent. Although such measures may be politically expedient, for high-skilled sectors such as architecture, with a number of small employers, this simply further tips the scales in favour of larger employers.

Hiring practices may have to be more flexible in their approach to recruiting international talent post-Brexit. Under freedom of movement, EU architects can relocate to the UK without a job offer in place, making it easier to apply for roles and attend interviews. Practices may have to look at alternative methods of interviewing candidates in order to ensure that they can still attract and recruit international talent.

60%

of international architects from outside of the European Union stated that the current system of recognition of professional qualifications is a challenge to working in the UK.

66%

of international architects said that an immigration system that was easy to apply to, with minimal administration was an important feature in the future immigration system.



6

Developing the next generation of architects

The UK's education system should be the key to unlocking a greater diversity of domestic talent in the UK's architecture sector, and serves as a magnet to attract international talent. 3 of the world's top 10 schools of architecture are in the UK, and one third of students studying architecture are international.



“ The system of architectural education is much better here than my country's at the time, much richer and more diverse, and I was familiar with the language in the UK so it seemed like the logical choice. ”

Although European architects make up the majority of the international talent working in the sector, the majority of international students studying architecture in the UK are from elsewhere – *around half of international students studying Part 1 and Part 2 architecture are from Asia, and between 30 – 40% from the EU, depending on whether the course is Part 1 or Part 2.*

The number of international students falls between Part 1 and Part 2.^{xv} Some international students will move out of the route to qualification because they wish to change direction or study elsewhere, but for others it is because the current immigration system makes it difficult for them to undertake the period of work in the UK necessary to qualify as an architect.

The UK is a world-leader in architectural education. A fresh approach to immigration and skills should also ensure that the immigration and higher education agendas are closely linked so the UK can produce a diversity of talent – from home and abroad – for a thriving architecture sector, and ensure that the UK's higher education market remains attractive to international students.

To utilise the UK's world-leading architecture education system to drive a diversity of international and domestic talent for the future success of the architecture sector, the UK Government must:

RECOMMENDATION 17: Introduce a two-year post-study work visa for international students in the UK

RECOMMENDATION 18: Commence the review on Routes to Registration

3

of the world's top 10 schools of architecture are in the UK, and one third of students studying architecture are international students.



RECOMMENDATION 17:

Introduce a two-year post-study work visa for international students in the UK

Post-study work visas were abolished in 2012, amid widespread reports that the system was being abused. It was subsequently found that the reported levels of abuse within the system were over-exaggerated but the visas which supported international students to train as architects in the UK were not introduced.

In order to qualify as an architect in the UK, students must take two work placements that typically last between 1 – 2 years in order to progress to the next stage of qualification. The post-study work visa, which lasted for a period of two years, ensured that international students could work for practices without that practice having to go through the process of recruitment for the Tier 2 (general) system – meaning that the onerous administrative burdens and salary thresholds were avoided.

Role	Salary rates
Part 1 graduate	£21,600
Part 2 graduate	£23,800

Since the abolition of the post-study work visa, international students have had to switch between Tier 4 (student) visas, and Tier 2 (general visas) to progress through routes to qualification. Students, universities and practices have reported that this system has thrown up multiple problems, discouraging practices from taking on non-EU international students for part 1 and part 2 positions, and pushing these students out of the UK's education system.

As with the Tier 2 (General) system for skilled architects, the salary requirements for Part 1 and Part 2 students do not always match the available salaries for such roles across the country. **London is the only region of the United Kingdom where the average salary for a part 1 architects is above the Tier 2 salary threshold. The picture for Part 2 graduates is more positive.**



The Migration Advisory Committee suggested that the UK Government could explore an extension to the Tier 5 (Youth Mobility) visa in order to fill gaps in low-skilled work, in lieu of a reduction of salary caps on requirements in the Tier 2 system. The Youth Mobility Visa allows people between the ages of 18 – 30 from certain territories the ability to live and work in the UK for up to 24 months. An extension of this scheme could theoretically be used to cover some post-graduate work, but it must be applied for outside of the UK, and while it is not possible to switch between Tier 5 and Tier 2 or Tier 4, it would have almost no utility to the architecture sector.

The future immigration system must ensure that it is possible for international students to build experience – this is particularly critical in sectors such as architecture where switches between Tier 4 and Tier 2 are making it exceptionally difficult for non-EU students to qualify in the UK. The UK Government must re-introduce the post-study work visa.



London is the only region of the United Kingdom where the average salary for a part 1 architect is above the Tier 2 salary threshold.





RECOMMENDATION 18:

Commence the review on Routes to Registration

It takes at least seven years to qualify as an architect in the UK. The RIBA has long been concerned that the length of time that it takes to qualify as an architect, as well as the associated costs of education, mean that it is hard to attract a diversity of domestic talent into the sector. As a result, the RIBA has been advocating for a review of routes to registration to assess how the UK can strike the right balance between providing high-quality education and producing a system that attracts future talent.

In 2017, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government stated that the routes to registration review could not go ahead while it was unclear what the UK's future relationship with the European Union would be. Given that the UK is soon to formally leave the European Union, the RIBA sees no further reason not to formally begin the process of reviewing routes to registration.

The imperative to move forward with the routes to registration review is increased if the UK continues to see a decline in new entrants to the sector from Europe – the loss of skills from a drop in applications from this group is immediate. If the UK does not strike the right balance with the future immigration system then it may be hard to replace EU architects, and because of the length of time it takes to train new domestic talent serious skills gaps may emerge over time.

The RIBA has supported the establishment of new Level 6 and Level 7 apprenticeship routes within architecture, that will allow students to work and study, and reduce the burden of student debt. This is a welcome start – but greater flexibility must also be supported through academic routes.



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