**Architectural Education Access Evaluation –
Invitation to Tender**

To be supplied to:	Architects Registration Board (ARB)
Project:	Research to evaluate the impact of ARB's education reforms on access to the architects' profession
Team:	Policy and Communications
Release Date:	19/05/2025
Supplier Response Date:	13/06/2025

Invitation to tender and summary

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) intends to commission work to develop an impact evaluation framework with which to evaluate the impact of its recent reforms to the initial education and training of architects (IET). In particular we wish to assess the impact on those accessing the profession so that ARB can determine whether the reforms, once implemented, improve the gender, ethnic and socio-economic diversity of those accessing education and training, and ultimately joining the profession.

ARB is the regulator of architects in the UK. We ensure only those who are suitably competent are allowed to practice as architects. One of the ways we do this is by approving the architecture qualifications required to join the Register of architects.

In 2021 ARB launched a major review of the way it regulates the initial education and training of architects (IET), in the face of mounting evidence that change was needed. The review revealed that the sector strongly supported change to the IET framework. The vision that ARB set out for this review included:

- ensuring that anyone joining the Register is equipped to design a built environment that reflects the needs of society so that people can live safe and live well, and helps tackle the fundamental challenges that our planet faces;
- allowing for flexibility and innovation by bodies that provide education and training, ensuring the UK remains an attractive place to study; and
- enabling anyone with the right competencies to become an architect by a route that is right for them.

Following several years of research and consultation, in 2023 ARB announced that it would:

- introduce new Academic and Professional Outcomes to replace the current Criteria and Attributes, and make key topics that sit across the competency domains (such as life safety and sustainability) more visible;
- continue accrediting qualifications at masters' level or equivalent that meet ARB's Academic Outcomes, and professional qualifications that are accredited as assessing ARB's Professional Outcomes. While undergraduate degrees in architecture will remain regulated by the higher education sector, they will no longer be accredited by us;
- adopt a new accreditation procedure that is based on a proportionate, risk-based methodology, and produce a handbook for accredited providers; and
- appoint a commission with an independent chair to provide options and advice to ARB on the key challenges of professional practice experience identified through the consultation. It will be tasked with making recommendations to ARB on how to improve fair and consistent access to quality practical experience, and the recommended new minimum requirements for relevant experience.

ARB has recently begun to implement these changes. One of the key objectives of these reforms is to make the pathway to the Register more accessible to candidates; in order to tell if this is happening, we need to be able to develop a firm base of evidence by which we can measure whether our reforms are improving access to education and training, and ultimately the profession. A 2023 Board paper set out ARB's intention to commission research to help evaluate the impact of these education reforms, alongside the other papers on the reforms.

We are looking for a research agency, or an academic or other organisation with research expertise, to design an effective methodology / evaluation logic model to collect and analyse data to evaluate the success of our policy proposals, in light of the objectives above. Further, we would expect to understand how the proposed method can be integrated into our day-to-day operations and those of any organisations supporting the data collection (for example, learning providers).

It will be important that the methodology / evaluation logic model can isolate and track the improvements ARB's education reforms make to access to the profession. This means the research will need to take account of factors that ARB cannot directly influence – such as structural issues in society, and how these interact with other factors, including the funding for the higher education sector. The research will also need to take account of existing trends and structural shifts. We know from our own data analysis that the makeup of the architects profession is already becoming more diverse year on year. For example, our report Architects Today found that whilst women account for only 31% of the profession, in 2021 they accounted for almost half of the new architects joining the Register and a similar figure in 2023. The new evaluation approach will need to help us understand whether our changes to education and training are supporting or even building upon this and other existing trends.

We would be looking for a summary of the methodology / evaluation logic model, followed by a breakdown of the most appropriate methods to apply to the research along with any other considerations or criteria relevant to the above research objectives.

The research findings will also be made available to stakeholders, likely by publications, in the interests of transparency.

Metrics and measures of success

A successful proposal will achieve the following research objectives:

- propose a methodology / evaluation logic model by which ARB can measure the impact of its education reforms on the characteristics of those accessing qualifications that are accredited by ARB, accessing Professional Practical Experience, and ultimately joining the Register;
- take account of structural factors and existing trends of the proposed model, so the research can evaluate the specific contribution ARB's education reforms make to improving access to the profession;
- use ARB's existing data to offer an initial assessment of ARB's progress in improving access to the profession, and potential barriers to progress;
- identify any additional data ARB should seek to monitor and an appropriate methodology by which this data can be collected and analysed to deliver insights to; and
- recommend next steps for ARB to conduct the evaluation, such as the frequency of the data collection and analysis, noting the timelines for implementing the education reforms, with options for ARB to manage the data and methodology in-house on an ongoing basis, or the need to commission a third party.

Please note that we will only consider tenders from tenderers that are committed to paying the UK living wage, including a London living wage where appropriate.

Budget and timeline
The total budget available for this project is £50,000 (including VAT). We would expect the results to be delivered to ARB within six months of the contract being appointed.

Background

ARB is an independent professional regulator, established by Parliament as a statutory body, through the Architects Act 1997. We are accountable to the Government.

The Act gives ARB a number of core functions to:

- ensure only those who are suitably competent are allowed to practise as architects. We do this by approving the architecture qualifications required to join the Register of architects;
- maintain a publicly available Register of architects so anyone using the services of an architect can be confident that they are suitably qualified and are fit to practise;
- set the standards of the Code of Conduct the profession must meet and take action when any architect falls below the required standards of the Code of Conduct;
- set requirements for and monitor the continuous professional development that architects must undertake, in order to provide assurance to the public about the continuing competence of the profession; and
- protect the legally restricted title 'architect'.

ARB publishes data on the makeup of the architects profession regularly here.
[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data](#)

In 2022, ARB published more detailed analysis of the makeup of the profession includes trends over time and intersectional data, available here.
[Architects Today: Analysis of the architect's profession in 2022](#)

In 2024, ARB published independent research into culture and misconduct in the architects' profession which revealed concerning trends, some of which start in education and training, available here.
[Workplace Culture](#)

ARB has published standards that accredited learning providers must meet, and a handbook to help interpret the standards. These include guidance on data that must be collected and shared with ARB.
- [Standards for Learning Providers](#)
- [Accreditation Handbook](#)

Timetable

Tenderers should be aware the procurement process will follow the below timetable.

Activity	Expected dates
Invitation to tender on Central Digital Platform live	19/05/2025
Deadline for clarification questions	30/05/2025
Invitation to tender on Central Digital Platform closes	13/06/2025
Contract awarded	04/07/2025

Contract award Evaluation Criteria

The below criteria and selection rational will be used to assess all tender bids. We advise all tenderers to ensure their bids align with our criteria below. Please note that tender documents should be no more than 15 pages.

	Evaluation Criteria – Written Tender	Weighting (%)
1.	**Evidence of having designed similar evaluation methodologies previously.** Guidance to tenderers: Provide a summary of previous work on a similar project and how that project relates to this tender, including outputs delivered (e.g. published reports) and outcomes (e.g. an organisation's processes or policies changed).	20
2.	**Demonstration of a clear understanding of the context and need for research and the proposed methodology, which clearly outlines a detailed research design and demonstrates how the aims of this study will be met.** Guidance to tenderers: Outline your understanding of the rationale for undertaking the research. The tender should set out a detailed account of the methodology to be used in the project and rationale for the approach. Include which sources will be used for secondary data analysis, how accessed and what information will be obtained. Include information on the suitability of the methodology, on the quality and appropriateness of the approach. This might include suggestions about sampling frames, sampling methods, mode of administration, whether data would be quantitative or qualitative, expected sample sizes and response rates (as well as methods used to improve these). Set out how the data gathered will be analysed. Identify the data ARB should collect in the future in order to assess its ongoing impact.	40
3.	**Staff roles and suitability of staff for those roles.** Guidance to tenderers: Provide a list of the staff that will be involved in the project at all levels, their specific role in this project, their relevant experience and expertise (e.g. with reference to similar projects they have been involved in), their estimated time to be spent on the project and the length of time they have been working with your organisation. State the name of the project manager and a designated deputy. Designate a quality assurer and detail how they will ensure that all the deliverables are delivered to standard.	10

| 4. | **Understanding of, and ability to meet, project timetable and dependencies/risks to the highest quality**

Guidance to tenderers: Provide a detailed timetable for carrying out the work based on the proposed approach and method set out in the tender documents.

Highlight in particular any deadlines you identify as critical from the specification.

Describe how this project will be managed to ensure quality at all stages. An initial risk assessment should be provided covering the main risks to the project and how these risks will be managed.

Provide information on the data security processes, including storage and transmission of personal data and data protection that will be followed (where appropriate). | 10 |
| 5. | **Value for money**

Guidance to tenderers: The total cost should be quoted in sterling (excl. and incl. VAT).

Separate aspects of the study are to be individually priced and attributed to specific members of the project team along with the estimated number of days clearly stated and day rates for project team included (exc. VAT). | 20 |

The scoring rationale is detailed below:

	Evidence provided	Score	Rank
Bidder is likely to be able to meet the needs of the Organisation.	Evidence of relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to provide the services relative to the contract is consistent, comprehensive, compelling, directly relevant to the contract in all respects and highly credible.	5	**High Confidence**
	Evidence of relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to provide the services relative to the contract is sufficient (in qualitative terms), convincing, and credible.	4	**Confidence**
Small risk that bidder will not be able to meet the needs of the Organisation	Evidence of relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to provide the services relative to the contract has minor gaps, or to a small extent is unconvincing, lacks credibility or irrelevant to the contract.	3	**Minor Concerns**

Moderate risk that the bidder will not be able to meet the needs of the Organisation	Evidence of relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to provide the services relative to the contract has moderate gaps, is unconvincing.	**2**	**Moderate Concerns**
Significant risk that the bidder will not be able to meet the needs of the Organisation	Evidence of relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to provide the services relative to the contract has major gaps, is unconvincing in many respects, lacks credibility, or largely irrelevant to the contract.	**1**	**Major Concerns**
Bidder will not be able to meet the needs of the Organisation.	No evidence or misleading evidence.	**0**	**Not Acceptable**

Next steps

Please submit your proposal via email to corporate@arb.org.uk

For further correspondence or enquiries, please contact Sarah Thessman: saraht@arb.org.uk