

Supplementary Information [27 July 2020]

Transitional Arrangement for Recognising UK Architectural Educational Qualifications as Eligibility for Taking Professional Assessment in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Institute of Architect (HKIA) has issued the press release on “Transitional Arrangement for Recognising UK Architectural Educational Qualifications as Eligibility for Taking Professional Assessment in Hong Kong” on 22 July 2020. Following the issuance, we notice that many students are concerned about whether they can sit for the Professional Assessment jointly organised by HKIA and the Architects Registration Board (ARB) of the HKSAR upon their graduation from architectural programmes in the United Kingdom (UK) in the future. In this regard, HKIA would like to elaborate further.

Firstly, it is not HKIA taking the initiative to “de-recognise” UK architectural programmes.

After the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, HKIA had been liaising with the Architects Registration Board of the UK (ARB(UK)) for mutual recognition arrangement of architectural education. Unfortunately, there has been no positive response from ARB(UK). Since HKIA is a member of the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA), all along, basing on the CAA list of architectural educational qualifications recommended for recognition, HKIA can indirectly recognise UK architectural programmes unilaterally.

However, starting 1 February 2020, CAA revised its list of architectural educational qualifications recommended for recognition, with UK programmes being officially removed from the list. Consequentially, there is now no ground to continue including UK programmes in the list of professional architectural education programmes recognised by HKIA/ARB.

After due consideration, HKIA and ARB have decided to make special transitional arrangement for a period of two years. The transitional arrangement would apply to both pre-professional architectural degrees (Part 1) and professional architectural degrees (Part 2). HKIA/ARB would like to alert students who desire to enroll for Part 1 programmes in the UK within the two-year transitional period to pay special attention. The transitional

measures for Part 2 UK programmes (or programmes equivalent to professional architectural degrees) would also not be applicable from the academic year of 2022/23 or after.

Despite the above arrangement, architectural graduates from the UK in future would still be able to sit for HKIA/ARB Professional Assessment through another route.

Students enrolled for UK programmes in the academic year of 2022/23 or thereafter can apply for, upon their graduation, the Academic Qualifying Assessment (AQA) for assessing their eligibility for sitting for the HKIA/ARB Professional Assessment. It is the same route having been taken by other graduates with educational qualifications not on the list of programmes accredited or recognised by HKIA/ARB, such as graduates from Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Poland, Peru, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, etc.

AQA has been HKIA's well established mechanism for many years. Applicants are required to submit their school transcripts and portfolio for HKIA to assess the educational standard. There are a number of precedents of graduates from non-HKIA/ARB recognised programmes being able to go through the AQA and be allowed to take the Professional Assessment. According to the expert views of educators and HKIA veteran members who are experienced in qualification assessment, the UK programmes which were in the CAA list prior to February this year had been accredited by ARB(UK) (note: not by The Royal Institute of British Architects RIBA). Based on the established standard of these programmes, it is believed that their graduates would perform no worse than those graduated from other overseas programmes not on the HKIA/ARB list of recognition in passing the AQA to sit for the Professional Assessment.

As a summary, students who desire to pursue their architectural studies in the UK can still be eligible for taking the Professional Assessment through the AQA route.

In its latest revision, apart from UK programmes, CAA has also removed architectural programmes accredited by Australia and New Zealand from its list. HKIA has signed mutual recognition arrangement with the accreditation

authorities of Australia and New Zealand since 2010 and 2012 respectively. Under the agreement, graduates from Hong Kong's professional architectural programmes accredited by HKIA/ARB are being accepted by the Australia and New Zealand authorities of having standard equivalent to graduates of their recognised programmes, and can therefore sit for the architectural professional assessment in the two nations, and vice versa. As such, the changes in CAA recognition list would not affect graduates of HKIA/ARB recognised professional architectural programmes from Australia and New Zealand.