RIAI GUIDANCE

MOVING BETWEEN PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

Access to the profession of Architect in the EU member states, EEA countries and Switzerland is governed by national legislation and standards must comply with the European Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (2005/36/EC). The Directive sets the minimum standard for the professional recognition of architects within the EU.

For these reasons, it is essential that all students, graduates and educators are aware of how recognition works.

Educational Systems

Qualifications in architecture within the EU vary in structure and length but the median duration of the qualification is five years. In most countries, this is augmented by a period of practical professional experience and/or a professional practice examination.

Most EU Member States have a two-stage process: the academic phase, which is based on accreditation/prescription of the final degree; and a period of professional training usually described as "practical professional experience". Some qualifications may include more than one award, for example a B.Sc., followed by a B.Arch or M.Arch award. However, since the B.Sc is an undergraduate non-professional programme, this lower level qualification is not generally recognised on a standalone basis. Only the final, higher qualification, e.g. B.Arch or M.Arch, is accredited and prescribed for access to the profession.

Where a student moves from one educational institution to another within the EU/EEA before completing the final award, the educational institution to which the student moves is responsible to ensure that he or she will, on the point of graduation, meet the minimum standards for a prescribed architectural qualification nationally and at EU level (Article 46 of Directive 2005/36/EC).

Within Europe, the UK is the exception to the rule, where architectural education and training are divided into three rather than two stages. This is called Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3. In the UK system the first, lower level qualification is accredited on a standalone basis.

When graduates proceed either to seek registration as an architect, or to gain access to a professional practice examination in Ireland, or a similar process elsewhere in the EU, they require confirmation that their qualifications are recognised by the State in which they were awarded.

While professional bodies are very active in the field of architecture, it is important to ensure the qualifications are recognised by the relevant Registration Body and/or Competent Authority. Often these are the same organisation as the Professional Body (such as the RIAI) but in some cases they are separate. For example, the Architects Registration Board, known as the ARB, has been designated as Registration Body and Competent Authority for architects in the UK, which has the responsibility for ensuring that the provisions set out within EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications are met, while the RIBA is the Professional Body only.
Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications

The Directive provides great advantages for architects because architecture is a listed profession.

While the requirements for professional qualification recognition vary from State to State, the most common requirement is a qualification listed in Annex V.7 of the Directive plus an ‘accompanying certificate’ (generally referring to a professional assessment of experience requirements) indicating eligibility to register in the Home State. In the Directive, this system is called ‘Automatic Recognition’.

A person who achieves qualifications in his or her home country, which are listed in Annex V.7 of the Directive can seek recognition as an architect in any EU/EEA Member State through ‘Automatic Recognition’, which means that no additional assessment is required.

Recognition is also possible under the ‘General System’ where the above conditions cannot be met. This is applicable in cases where qualifications were gained in one or more EU/EEA countries. If the receiving State identifies, that the qualifications indicate a significant ‘gap’ compensation measures may be applied. These take the form of aptitude testing or an adaptation period.

Moving between programmes of study in the Republic of Ireland

In Ireland prescribed degree courses in architecture take five years of full-time study. Sometimes the five years of study are split into a three-year course followed by a two-year course, or a four-year course followed by a one-year course. Only the final award (after five years) is formally accredited or recognised.

As long as:

- the period of formal study is at least five years;
- the ECTS credit value is at least 300; and
- the required standards are met having been confirmed by the educational institution making the final award,

there is no bar, in terms of recognition, on students moving between programmes of study in architecture which are accredited and prescribed within the State so long as the receiving education institution can confirm that the required standards are covered through the combined programmes.

Moving from Irish to UK programmes of study (including Northern Ireland)

When it comes to registration in the UK, a UK graduate must be able to show UK Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3 qualifications to be eligible for ‘Automatic Recognition’.

Without an ARB prescribed UK Part 1 the ARB cannot confirm completion of a ‘stand alone’ Part 2 to any other authority in Europe or Ireland.

If a student completes an Irish B.Sc. in Architecture and then undertakes a UK Part 2 the Irish prescribed award in architecture will remain incomplete and the UK authorities (the Architects Registration Board, ARB) will require the student to undertake a UK prescribed Part 1 examination. Details of the examination can be found here: [http://www.arb.org.uk](http://www.arb.org.uk). The cost of the examination in 2017 was a minimum of STG £1,671.00.

Brexit: Consideration should be given to the possible effect the UK’s departure from the EU may have which will only be known once the negotiations have been concluded.
Moving between EU/EEA programmes of study (excluding UK)

If a student completes an Irish B.Sc. in Architecture and then seeks to transfer to a Masters in Architecture (or a B.Arch.) in another EU country (other than the UK) they would ultimately be recognised on the basis of the final qualification received in the other country.

It would be up to the University attended in that country to ensure that the combination of the first qualification from Ireland and the final qualification awarded by them would meet the requirements of the European Directive on Professional Qualifications and the applicable national standards in that awarding country. On graduation, the student would need to meet the standards for recognition of the State in which he or she graduates in order to benefit from recognition in Europe under the ‘automatic recognition regime’.

Moving from Irish to Non-EU programmes of study

If a student completes an Irish B.Sc. in Architecture and then transfers to a Non-EU programme of study, at the time of recognition in Ireland this Non-Irish professional qualification is assessed under Directive 2005/36/EC for its equivalence to Irish entry level qualifications for the purpose of access to an Irish prescribed post-graduate qualification in Professional Practice.

Graduates who complete a post-graduate Professional Level/Licensing examination outside the EU/EEA are assessed on experience and familiarity with Irish Law, Contract procedures, Irish Building Regulations etc. and must demonstrate the knowledge, skills and competence necessary for independent practice as an architect in Ireland.

Article 3 of Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications provides for professionals with non-EU degrees in Architecture recognised in one EU Member State to work in others. However, the provision does not take effect until the professional has three years of working in the state where the recognition is first granted certified.

Further Information

Further guidance on becoming an architect in Ireland is available on the RIAI website at http://www.riai.ie/education/careers/becoming_an_architect/

Further guidance on becoming an architect in the UK and Northern Ireland is available on the ARB website at http://www.arb.org.uk/


RIAI contact details

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