

Architectural Association

School of Architecture

**AA Professional Practice and Practical Experience
Examination (ARB/RIBA Part 3)**

Handbook 2025/26

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Professional Practice Part 3 is the final course and examination formally recognised by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) which allows candidates to register with the Architects Registration Board (ARB) and practice using the title Architect.

The seminars are also available to registered professionals wanting to refresh their practice knowledge through continuous professional development (CPD).

The seminar course encourages your engagement throughout and attendance in person is required. All candidates should be self-motivated, join a study group and engage in self learning outside of the lecture hall.

The course is offered in two formats: in the Autumn, full-time over two weeks; and in the Spring on Saturdays starting in early January for ten weeks. The latter is for those candidates who prefer to study over a longer period or who may have difficulty with weekday attendance.

The course is followed by the examination in each session. Candidates are not required to take the course and the examination in the same session and many candidates find it extremely helpful to familiarise themselves with the syllabus through attending the course and then sit the examination at a subsequent session. Candidates who have attended the course may attend seminars in the course immediately prior to the examination without additional charge.

Timeline indicating the autumn and spring seminar programmes and examination periods. Refer to website for actual dates.

2.0 PURPOSE and ELIGIBILITY

The examination assesses whether a candidate is competent to practice architecture in the United Kingdom. The definition of competence is set out by meeting the minimum standards provided in the ARB/RIBA Professional Criteria for Part 3. [ARB PC1-5](#)

Examination candidates are not required to attend the course and the examination in the same cycle. Candidates are encouraged to attend seminars in the course preceding the exam to update and revise. Attendance in person may be restricted depending on availability and those candidates registered for the programme will be given priority. Candidates wishing to sit examination are required to have the relevant professional practice experience before undertaking the examination. Section 5 refers.

2.1 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The seminar programme

All candidates are welcome to attend the seminars.

ARB/RIBA Part 1 and Part 2

All candidates wishing to sit the examination should provide evidence of their academic qualifications and, if appropriate, having been awarded Parts 1 and 2 from a recognised institution in the UK.

Overseas/non-recognised UK qualifications

Candidates with overseas/non-recognised UK qualifications should first contact ARB to clarify their status and pathway. Candidates should provide a 'letter of equivalence' from ARB.

Evidence of English Language competence

Candidates who do not have English as a first language must submit evidence of English language competence. This is not required if a candidate has carried out their Part 2 or a degree in the UK or has spent a number of years in practice in the UK. The minimum standard is IELTS 6.5 with at least 6.0 in each category. Scanned images of the original certificates must be submitted at least two weeks prior to entry onto the course.

Candidates' visa status

Candidates subject to UK visa regulations must declare their status during registration. Identity information may be disclosed to UKVI as evidence of the AA's compliance with candidate monitoring arrangements and sponsorship conditions.

Notification of disability and provision of supporting evidence

Candidates who have a medical or other condition or disability they wish to be considered must advise the Head of Part 3 in writing at the time of registration for the seminar course and provide supporting formal assessment documentation produced by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner or other authority. Prospective candidates should be aware that the physical characteristics of the AA premises in protected buildings currently impose some limitations.

2.2 CONDITIONS

The following conditions apply:

1. All examination candidates must have completed the AA Part 3 Seminar Course in full.
2. The maximum time allowed between taking the course and exam is two years (from Spring 26) after which the candidate is required to pay for the seminar course again.
3. The maximum number of attempts at the AA Part 3 examination that a candidate may make is three. Exceptional circumstances may determine that the maximum number of attempts will be reduced.
4. The ARB does not currently restrict the sequence in which candidates achieve Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3. The AA permits entry to the Part 3 examination to candidates who have yet to achieved passes at both Parts 1 and 2 or at their equivalent.
5. Applicants are required to join the AA as members.

3.0 APPLICATION PROCEDURES

3.1 APPLICATION

COURSE and EXAMINATION

Candidates should register for the course and the exam separately via the online links on the website. A place is secured on receipt of payment in full. Candidates should note that, while reasonable efforts are made to accommodate all, there is no guarantee of being able to register for any specific session.

Once exam registration is complete each candidate will be allocated a tutor/PSA. Candidates wishing to withdraw from the examination should do so at least two weeks prior to the issue of Paper 1. Candidates withdrawing in the two weeks prior to the issue of Paper 1 will forfeit their examination fee unless proof of extenuating circumstances is provided. Candidates should register for the next exam of their choice. Please refer to website for current fees.

4.0 THE SEMINAR PROGRAMME

4.1 THE SEMINARS

The course is offered in two formats: in the Autumn, full-time over two weeks; and in the Spring on Saturdays starting in early January for ten weeks. The latter is for those candidates who prefer to study over a longer period or who may have difficulty with weekday attendance. All are encouraged to attend in person and contribute to professional debate and developing their professional opinions.

The course is followed by the examination in each session. Candidates are not required to sit the examination immediately and many candidates find it extremely helpful to familiarise themselves with the course and then sit the examination at a subsequent session.

The seminars are also available to registered professionals wanting to refresh their practice knowledge through continuous professional development (CPD).

5.0 THE EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT

5.1 OVERVIEW

Please refer to the Programme Guide available via the website.

The requirements for Part 3 are specific UK requirements for registration and elements of these criteria are included within the General Criteria with the effect that professional aspects leading to Part 3 should be contained within courses meeting the General Criteria.

The examination provides those who wish to practise in the UK under the professional title of 'Architect' with an opportunity to demonstrate that they have sufficient knowledge and experience to be admitted to the Register held by the ARB.

Well in advance of the exam, candidates are encouraged to set up study groups. The AA will provide contacts at the start of the course, but candidates should take the initiative in setting up such groups, which are known to be helpful in sharing experience and understanding of practice issues, providing mutual support in examination revision.

PROFESSIONAL TUTOR/PSA

The PSA role is to support the professional development of candidates. Each PSA will lead a group of 12 candidates and provide formative feedback on the draft PES prior to submission. They will conduct four group tutorials to prepare for the written examinations and oral.

5.2 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE SUBMISSION (PES)

Examination candidates submit a draft to the PSA) for comment. The PSA will offer feedback on content, style and presentation. The PES enables the PTSA and Head of Part 3 to review the candidate's qualifications, experience and readiness for the exam. Once complete, the PES is to be uploaded to the portal in a single pdf file titled: *name_surname PES* and this will be sent to the examiners for assessment.

It is submitted in the following order:

1 Professional Curriculum Vitae

A single A4 side of the candidate's experience in academia and practice.

2 Career Experience schedule

A summary of experience - the template is downloaded from the Part 3 webpage.

3 Career Appraisal

The career appraisal is a 2000-word maximum critical review of your personal professional development.

The career appraisal essay may include:

- Undergraduate and post graduate studies
- Early years in practice
- The project initiation process and turning concepts into buildings
- Success in running a project in construction
- Your ideas and aspirations regarding the future

The appraisal should be critically reflective and offer best/better practice proposals for those areas of academia, practice and associated processes where the candidate identifies improvements are required. You should include references and you must cite the source of any text/images that have been used or copied. Illustrations and diagrams are welcomed.

4 Records of Practical Training

RIBA Professional Experience Development Record (PEDR) www.pedr.co.uk

or

Certificate of Professional Experience (CPE) available to download:

www.aaschool.ac.uk/academicprogrammes/parttime/part-3

Professional Experience and Development Record 'PEDR'

Work practice and practical training are fundamental elements in the development of professional competence recognised in the rules laid down by the RIBA. While each candidate must have 24 months' minimum to be eligible to sit the examination, it is not the duration but the quality and diversity of experience that is of importance. Candidates are advised to complete records up to the written examination thereby presenting the most recent and arguably most relevant experience. PEDRs may be submitted after the PES deadline to allow candidates time to source their practice mentor signatures.

The PSA will review and sign PEDR records of candidates completed during their period of registration at the AA. Retrospective PEDRs (defined as those prior to joining the course) will be charged at as noted on the website. For candidates working part-time the above rules also apply but must be adjusted in terms of the full-time equivalent time period.

PEDRs should be submitted in a single pdf, reverse chronological order with a summary sheet as front cover.

Certificate of Professional Experience 'CPE'

The CPE is only applicable for candidates who have a minimum of 6 years' experience outside 5 years' academic study, have achieved a greater level of responsibility. The CPE is available to download from the website. Please refer to the CPE guidance.

5.3 FORM OF EXAMINATION

The AA Professional Practice and Practical Experience Examination (ARB/RIBA Part 3) is examined through the following:

- 1 PES – see section 5.2 above
- 2 Written Papers 1, 2 and 3 – see section 5.4 below.
- 3 Oral Examination – see section 5.5 below.

5.4 Written examination papers 1, 2 and 3

These written papers together cover the ARB/RIBA Professional Criteria at Part 3.

A project scenario is provided and this is used as a framework for Papers 1, 2 and 3. Paper 1 is issued immediately after the seminar series and defines the formal beginning of the examination and is undertaken over a period of three or four weeks. The questions focus on matters relating to the scenario, and may cover programming, appointment and the

regulatory framework. Candidates should expect to carry out a significant amount of desk research and analysis.

Papers 2 and 3 are each 3.5 hours and are framed around a series of unfolding events based on the scenario. Each paper contains three scenarios and associated questions.

The candidate should be the sole author; The AA has a zero-tolerance policy towards plagiarism, collusion and cheating. AA Academic Regulations apply.

5.5 Oral examination

This is the concluding part of the examination, conducted as a professional conversation within 45 minutes. Examiners take a role similar to a professional client and may ask a candidate to consider scenarios in the context of professional conduct and competence. They will cover the Professional Criteria, their experience, PES and scenario-based questions based on the examination papers.

The oral is an opportunity for candidates to attempt to recover what may have been an imperfect performance in their written papers. Candidates are expected to continue to revise during the period between the end of the written examination and the oral.

5.6 ASSESSMENT

Please refer to AA Part 3 Programme Guide available via the website.

A successful candidate must be able to demonstrate that they have reached the appropriate levels of knowledge, understanding and ability required by the ARB/RIBA Professional Criteria for Part 3. Each part of the examination provides opportunities for candidates to demonstrate knowledge and competency. The examination and assessment process favours those who are well prepared.

All candidates receive confirmation via email in the week after the oral examinations. The names of successful candidates are sent to ARB. Candidates are advised to register with the ARB as soon as possible for those who delay registration for a significant period may be required to re-take the examination.

5.7 POST EXAM MEETING

Unsuccessful candidates are provided with written feedback and are encouraged to discuss this with the Head of Part 3 to decide their next steps. The purpose of the meeting is to clarify the feedback and provide the candidate with the opportunity to discuss plans for improving their performance. It is not a forum for appeal. Head of Part 3 who may consult the examiners

5.8 APPEAL

All results are final so candidates cannot appeal the judgement of the AA Examination Board. Appeals can only be made on the basis of maladministration or by misconduct in the examination proceedings should a candidate believe this has contributed to their failure.

Grounds for appeal should be put in writing to the Head of Part 3 and the Chief Professional Examiner within 14 days of the results being published. All written appeals will be considered by the AA School Director, Registrar and Chief Professional Examiner. If appropriate, the candidate will be invited to attend a discussion to clarify their grounds for appeal. Candidates will be formally notified of the outcome of any appeal proceedings.

If an appeal relating to maladministration and/or misconduct is upheld, the most probable outcome will be for the candidate to be re-examined by a new examiners' panel at the earliest practical opportunity. As a result of an appeal, any offer that is made by the AA Part 3 Board of Examiners will remain valid for 2 years from the date of the offer, unless otherwise stated in writing by the Head of Part 3. A fee of £350.00 is charged, in advance, for the appeal process. Should the appeal be upheld, the fee will be returned to the appellant.

READING LIST

The publications listed constitute a core summary. Candidates are advised to extend their research and reading considerably further.

Key:

CIS Digital version available via your AA email address <https://collections.aaschool.ac.uk>

Book Book available from AA Library on Professional Practice

Programme shelf eBook - AA Library online <https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/resources/library>

PROFESSIONALISM, ETHICS, CODES OF CONDUCT

Online ARB, The Architect's Code: Standards of Conduct and Practice, 2025 [The-Architects-Code-of-Conduct-and-Practice.pdf](#)

Online RIBA, Code of Professional Conduct, RIBA Publishing, 2021

Online ARB Fire and Life Safety [ARB Fire and Life Safety](#)

Online ARB Environmental Sustainability [ARB Environmental Sustainability](#)

CIS RIBA, A Client's Guide to Engaging an Architect, RIBA Publishing, 2016

CIS Brookhouse, S, Part 3 Handbook 4th ed RIBA Publishing. 2020

Book Spector, T, The Ethical Architect The Dilemma of Contemporary Practice, Princeton Arch Press, 2001

Book Fisher, T, Ethics for Architects: 50 Dilemmas of Professional Practice, Princeton Arch Press, 2010

Book Susskind R and D, The Future of the Professions, Oxford University Press 2015

Book Jolliffe E and Crosby P, Architect The Evolving Story of a Profession, RIBA Publishing 2023

Book Apps, Peter, Show Me The Bodies How We Let Grenfell Happen, One World 2022

Book Rowlands, Carys and Dixon, Alasdair Ben, RIBA Ethical Practice Guide, RIBA Publishing 2023

LAW

Online The Architect's Act 1997, Stationery Office, 1997 as amended.

Book Speaight KC, Anthony, Architect's Legal Handbook Routledge 2025

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT, TEAM ORGANISATION

CIS Thompson Matt, Handbook of Practice Management 10th ed. RIBA Publishing, 2024

CIS Ostime, N, Architect's Job Book, 11th ed. RIBA Publishing, 2020

CIS Marks K, HR for Creative Companies, RIBA Publishing, 2016

Book Graeber, D Bullshit Jobs A Theory, Allen Lane 2018

- CIS Foxell, S. Starting a practice: A plan of work. 3rd ed, RIBA Publishing 2021
CIS Farrell Peter, Brookhouse Stephen, Good Practice Guide: Fees RIBA Publishing 2025

ARCHITECTS APPOINTMENT CONTRACTS

- CIS RIBA, 2020 Professional Services Contracts: RIBA Publishing, 2024

PLANNING AND BUILDING REGULATIONS

- Online National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF](#)
CIS Town and Country Planning Act 1990 [Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#)
Online The Planning Portal, www.planningportal.gov.uk
Online The Building Regulations Approved Documents [The Building Regulations](#)
Online Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: final report, May 2018
[The Hackitt Report](#)
Online The Building Safety Act 2022, [BSA 2022](#)

HEALTH AND SAFETY, CDM, ACCESSIBILITY

- Online HSE, The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, www.gov.uk
Book Boys, Jos, Disability, Space, Architecture A Reader Routledge, 2017
Book Bentley-Gockmann, Dieter, RIBA Health and Safety Guide 2023, RIBA Publishing

PROCUREMENT, CONTRACTS, CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION, PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- CIS JCT Standard Building Contracts 2024 – and associated guides
CIS JCT Tendering Practice Note 2024
CIS Lupton, S, Stellakis M, Which Contract? Ed. RIBA Publishing, 2019
CIS Lupton, S, Stellakis M, JCT Contract Guides: 2024
Online The Procurement Act 2023 [The Procurement Act 2023 Guide Gov.UK](#)

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- Online Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
Online Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
Book Brown, H and Marriott, A, ADR: Principles and Practice, Sweet and Maxwell, 2012

CONTACT DETAILS

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