

# New law in place to strengthen UK professions

- New law enshrines the autonomy of UK regulators to decide whether an individual with overseas qualifications is fit to practise a regulated profession in the UK
- The Professional Qualifications Act ensures UK regulators can recognise the qualifications of skilled professionals from around the world – not just the EU – so the world’s best can make their way to the UK to boost prosperity
- the law will make it easier for UK professionals to practise overseas, thanks to new trade deals and more consistent information sharing between UK and overseas regulators

A new approach to recognising professional qualifications gained overseas is now in force following Royal Assent, the government has announced today (Thursday 28 April).

The Professional Qualifications Act revokes the previous EU system for how certain professional qualifications gained overseas are recognised in the UK.

The previous EU-derived system often gave preferential treatment to holders of qualifications from the European Economic Area and Switzerland. These arrangements were unreciprocated since the UK left the EU. Under the new system, which is better suited to the UK’s own needs, UK regulators have the autonomy to decide on the right approach to recognising overseas professional qualifications.

The freedom of UK regulators of professions, such as the Architects Registration Board and the General Medical Council, to decide who is fit to practise is now enshrined in UK law for the first time. This ensures UK regulators can make recognition decisions in the best interests of their profession – upholding the UK’s high professional standards.

Labour Markets Minister Paul Scully said:

We’re freeing our professions from outdated EU arrangements so they can decide for themselves which individuals hold the qualifications, skills and experience to meet the UK’s high standards.

Making sure regulators have the powers to uphold standards is a huge step forward in making the UK the best place to work and do business.

Minister for Investment Lord Gerry Grimstone said:

The Professional Qualifications Act helps deliver a Global Britain by bolstering regulators' ability to strike ambitious international agreements, helping UK professionals get their qualifications recognised around the world.

This will spread UK skills, knowledge and innovation further across the globe, providing a boost to UK businesses exporting their services.

The Act supports the UK's world-leading professions to export their services and strengthens the UK's ability to negotiate and implement ambitious deals on the recognition of professional qualifications.

It also helps UK professionals to be recognised abroad by ensuring UK regulators can strike recognition deals with overseas counterparts including those in Australia and New Zealand following our new trade deals with those partners.

By improving information sharing between regulators and making professions' entry requirements clearer, the Act also helps aspiring professionals understand how to be recognised in the UK.

Hugh Simpson, Chief Executive and Registrar of the Architects Registration Board (ARB), said:

The UK is a global leader in architecture and we are delighted at the passing of new legislation to help facilitate UK architects to practise globally and for international architects to work in the UK.

The Professional Qualifications Act will enable ARB to enter agreements with regulators in other countries so that UK architects can more easily register and practise internationally and international architects can register and practise in the UK. These Mutual Recognition Agreements, in which we are already in advanced stages of negotiation with the USA, Australia and New Zealand, will ensure standards are maintained and the public can remain confident that only suitably qualified and competent architects can practise in the UK.

The Act applies across the UK and provides for the devolved administrations to make regulations within devolved legislative competence.

The Act also includes targeted measures to improve the regulation of professions across the UK. This includes increasing transparency around entry and practice requirements and improving information sharing between regulators. Taken together, this will help professionals navigate the regulatory landscape through greater transparency around entry and practice requirements.

The Act's key provisions will come into effect between now and the Autumn and the government will work closely with regulators and other stakeholders on the dates for commencement and to make sure regulators are well prepared.

The Act strengthens the UK's ability to negotiate and deliver ambitious arrangements on the recognition of professional qualifications with current and future trade partners. It means the government can further empower UK regulators to strike deals on recognition with their overseas counterparts, helping UK professionals get their qualifications recognised internationally.

The Act helps aspiring professionals understand how to access UK professions and helps UK professionals seeking to get their qualifications recognised to practise overseas. This will include through the continued provision of an assistance centre to help professionals navigate this.

The government will continue to consult and work in partnership with regulators to uphold their autonomy and UK standards, and to ensure the new approach remains up to date.