

# New laws to ensure the UK has the skills it needs

- Laws will support the UK government's commitment to making the UK the best place in the world to work, trade and do business
- regulators, including those in devolved administrations, to continue to have autonomy to determine professional standards and assess who meets these standards
- empowers regulators to license highly skilled professionals from around the world, enabling them to practise in the UK in line with skills needs

New laws to allow skilled professionals from around the world to have their qualifications recognised in the UK have been introduced to Parliament today (Wednesday 12 May).

By being able to recognise qualifications from professionals around the world, the Professional Qualifications Bill will further strengthen UK professions' reputation for excellence and help to ensure the UK can address where the demand for skills is not currently being met.

Much of the UK's current framework for recognising professional qualifications derives from EU law. Currently, regulators must have routes to recognising professional qualifications from the European Economic Area (the EU, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and Switzerland.

Workers with professional qualifications from outside these areas can face hurdles to getting their qualifications recognised in the UK. This can include higher application fees or, in some cases, no means to recognition at all.

Now the UK has taken back control of its laws from the EU, the government is introducing new legislation so skilled professionals can have their qualifications recognised in the UK where they meet UK standards. Regulators will have the autonomy to assess qualifications, and to pursue arrangements with counterparts in other countries in the interests of their professions.

An example would be if a regulator like the Architects Registration Board agreed a mutual recognition agreement with international partners. This would support UK businesses and professionals to win and provide architecture services in new markets such as the Middle East or Asia by helping UK architects have their qualifications recognised overseas.

The Bill gives devolved administrations powers to equip their regulators with the ability to enter into arrangements with international partners. This will help all parts of the UK to take advantage of the UK's global trading status.

The new laws will help meet the demands of individual professions in different parts of the UK by identifying professions that will benefit from access to global talent. Identifying where there is demand for skills from

overseas will be for the UK government and devolved administrations to decide and legislate for.

The Professional Qualifications Bill, introduced to Parliament today, will establish an effective regulatory framework for professional qualifications that meets the needs of all parts of the country and supports UK professionals to deliver services overseas.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Having left the European Union, this vital piece of legislation will ensure skilled professionals from around the world are able to have their qualifications recognised in the UK, allowing us to attract the brightest and best as we build back better.

These laws will not only bolster the UK's standing as a great place to work and trade, but will strengthen our Union by creating a clearer framework for recognising professional qualifications that meets the skills needs of each part of the UK.

Minister for Investment Lord Gerry Grimstone said:

British professional qualifications are globally recognised as the gold standard, adding to our global reputation for professionalism.

Our new laws are freeing regulators from EU restrictions and opening up routes to attract professionals who meet UK standards from around the world, re-enforcing the UK as the best place to work, trade, and do business.

Our proposals give regulators the autonomy they need to ensure all professionals in the UK meet the rigorous standards expected in all parts of the UK.

Helen Brand OBE, chief executive of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), said:

This Bill will be very helpful in facilitating recognition of professional qualifications and trade in professional services. This is therefore a much welcome development as a catalyst to future Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), particularly in relation to mobility and trade in services, issues that matter a great deal to our members.

The legislation will also support the UK's ambitious international trade agenda by equipping regulators of professions with the tools to enter into recognition agreements with overseas regulators where they want to do so.

The new laws will also strengthen working across the Union by supporting regulators in each home nation to share information with their counterparts, ensuring professions are regulated effectively in all parts of the UK.

This complements measures within the UK Internal Market Act which ensure qualifications from one part of the UK are recognised across the country so the devolved administrations can set their own rules and standards, but still welcome the trade of businesses based anywhere in the UK.

An assistance centre will continue to provide an enquiry service which will cover both UK wide and devolved professions, helping businesses and professionals to understand the steps they need to take to have their professional qualifications recognised in the UK and abroad.

Today's announcement follows the government acting on an unprecedented scale to protect jobs, livelihoods, businesses and public services throughout the pandemic. The government is building on this through its flagship Plan for Jobs that will increase job opportunities in all parts of the UK backed by £30 billion of investment, and the Plan for Growth that will lay the foundations for a recovery driven by the private sector, spreading investments and opportunity throughout the UK.

The Professional Qualifications Bill follows extensive engagement with the industry including engagement with regulators, trade associations and academics from all parts of the UK as well as a written [Call for Evidence](#).

- The EU's Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive 2005 (MRPQ Directive) forms the basis of the UK's system to recognise professional qualifications gained overseas. Following the UK's exit from the EU, and the conclusion of the transition period on 31 December 2020, the UK is no longer bound by the MRPQ Directive
- a regulated profession is one in which there are restrictions to pursuing the activities or a subset of activities of the profession, such as for doctors, and/or restrictions for using a professional title, such as the use of 'architect'
- across the UK there are over 160 professions regulated by law, by more than 50 regulators, plus a range of other professions regulated voluntarily
- the Bill will equip regulators to make agreements with counterparts in other countries. To support this, the UK government has also published [guidance to help regulators enter such agreements](#) and will provide support going forward
- in 2020, UK exports of services were worth £267.1 billion, representing 46.2% of total UK exports