



Professional Associations  
**RESEARCH NETWORK**

## **PARN Collective Response to the Call for Evidence**

October 2020



## Introduction

As a community of professional bodies which work to improve the quality of life and the competitiveness of UK plc, we welcome the opportunity to provide a constructive response to this consultation. While 2020 has been a traumatic year, it has highlighted the key role that the UK professions have played in navigating COVID-19 and must continue to play as we navigate the challenges and opportunities of Brexit.

This collective submission in response to the BEIS Call for Evidence concerning The Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Regulation of Professions, has arisen out of a meeting of the regular CEO Forum for professional bodies run by the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN).

PARN is a non-profit membership organisation for professional bodies, offering expertise, experience, and perspective on key issues in the sector through research, consultancy, networking, events, and training. PARN has 120 members and has been operating since 1998.

At that CEO Forum meeting on 24 September it was decided that PARN would submit a collective response that would complement individual submissions by professional bodies, but would not prevent any professional body from making its own submission. At an extraordinary meeting of the CEO Forum on 7 October the collective response was discussed. A draft submission of this collective response was then sent to professional bodies for comment and formal endorsement. The collective evidence provided here is the draft sent out with minor adjustments in response to comments.

PARN and its members are keen to engage with the government and would be happy to help enable relevant civil servants and ministers to better understand the breadth and depth of UK professional bodies and consider opportunities to better collaborate to support UK plc. This could be arranged through a future meeting of the PARN CEO Forum. In addition, I would be very pleased to discuss this submission with anyone from BEIS if clarification or further detail is required, as well as to gain views on how this submission has been received which could be fed back to the professional bodies who responded and endorsed this submission.

Andy Friedman  
CEO and Founder of PARN

## Collective Response to the Call for Evidence

1. We recognise that the UK government has been interacting with several professional bodies recently, particularly through the Professional and Business Services Council. However there is a strong opinion among most professional bodies that this government, along with successive previous governments, should better understand and appreciate the value of professional bodies to the economy and the society of the UK, and the role they are playing and can play in international trade and mobility agreements.
2. The UK competitive advantage in professional services is underlined by the qualifications and standards provided by UK based professional bodies.
3. Professional standards are maintained and kept up to date by regulation of individuals based on principles enshrined in professional codes of conduct and supported by complaints and disciplinary procedures and continuing professional development programmes run by professional bodies. Along with professional indemnity insurance they protect consumers and the public, reducing the need for complex and inflexible rules on specific actions of individuals. This well-developed system of professional regulation in the UK has been incorporated into many international regulatory systems.
4. These standards and supports for standards are funded primarily by professionals themselves through autonomous professional bodies, and so do not burden the public purse.
5. Professional bodies contribute to the success of UK universities by accrediting courses and to UK based companies by raising the proportion of qualified and regulated staff employed.
6. Professional bodies are also exporters in their own right through their international memberships, the training and examining they provide to foreign nationals who aim to achieve UK qualifications and registration, accreditation of foreign universities and training organisations, as well as through publications and specialised projects, including professional regulatory standards.
7. The UK government should support vocational qualifications offered by UK professional bodies, for example by recognising these qualifications in competence and capability frameworks operating in the UK public sector. Government advertisements encouraging apprenticeships and acquisition of technology skills should be supplemented by advertisements advocating acquisition of professional qualifications.
8. Greater appreciation of what is already in place by UK based professional bodies should discourage the UK government from 'reinventing the wheel' in its pursuit of vocational training and skills development agendas.
9. We call on the UK government to champion and value UK professional standards and their development by UK based professional bodies, particularly the value of the Charter mark, through the activities of embassies and trade missions and in trade negotiations and through criteria for procurement of services by the UK government.
10. There is reluctance to see new government legislation on professional regulation when there are good procedures and practices in place already. Legislation is slow to adapt to changing circumstances and the technological environment for professional service delivery is rapidly changing. Professional body regulations both in terms of competence and skills and in terms of ethical practices are well developed. In addition, there are well developed procedures for ensuring that those procedures are up to date. This can involve occasional large-scale surveys and other major data gathering exercises, but also regular ongoing procedures, such as feeding intelligence gained from complaints and disciplinary procedures into updates of qualifications and ethical codes.

11. The UK government should consider new international arrangements in partnership with UK professional bodies, recognising the experience and knowledge they have of their sectors; for example, by inviting a wide range of professional bodies to join trade visits on a rotation basis (post COVID-19).
12. Most UK based professional bodies have global memberships and participate in international organisations and networks for their professions. Many already have appropriate recognition mechanisms for recognition of international members. We recommend these body-to-body negotiations to be respected and supported. However there are particular professions with existing high government involvement in regulation and where competition among UK professional bodies is great (as in accounting), where there is at least one professional body for which government led negotiations on recognition of professional qualifications across the UK and the EU is preferred to body-to-body negotiations.
13. There is a concern that possible new centralised systems will cut off local experience and knowledge from standards and qualifications development which are appropriate for particular professions.
14. We recognise there may be advantages in more coordination of professional standards across professions, but that this should be based on professional bodies sharing best practice among themselves, which could be supported by government.

## Endorsement from Professional Bodies

Organisation
Association of Accounting Technicians
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
Association of Corporate Treasurers
Chartered Banker Institute
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
Chartered Institute for Securities and Investment
Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors
Chartered Institute of Housing
Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
Chartered Institute of Public Relations
Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors
Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation
Chartered Quality Institute
General Teaching Council for Scotland
Institute of Chartered Foresters
Institute of Conservation
Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine
Institute of the Motor Industry
Institute of Translation and Interpreting
Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management

International Compliance Association
Law Society of Scotland
Market Research Society
National Counselling Society
Nautical Institute
Nuclear Institute
Pensions Management Institute
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Royal Society of Chemistry
Royal Town Planning Institute
Society for Endocrinology
Society for the Environment
Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners

Thank you for considering this response.

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