

APEC Professional Services and Mutual Recognition Community of Practice

Session 7 – Wednesday 27 September 2023 – 10:30AM to 12:00PM (AEST)

Using digital and online platforms to support mutual recognition

Session 7 Discussion Summary

During Session 7, we looked out how the Architectural Services sector is using digital and online platforms to support mutual recognition.

Overview of discussion

The session commenced with some introductory remarks by Mr Paul Howorth, the Community of Practice facilitator. These remarks provided some high-level context about why this topic is important for the Community of Practice. Mr Howorth recalled previous recent work that has looked at the use of digital and online platforms, particularly with respect to digital credentialling.

Next, the session received a presentation from Ms Kathlyn Loseby, CEO, Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA). In her presentation, Ms Loseby overviewed and demonstrated how AACA is using digital and online platforms to enable and implement the recognition of foreign architects from economies that have reached mutual recognition agreements with Australia. This presentation was very well received by the session, demonstrating an end-to-end digital solution for the recognition process that has delivered efficiencies for all stakeholders.

Finally, a facilitated question and answer discussion about Ms Loseby's presentation and the topic more broadly.

A link to the presentations made at Session 7 can be found here:

<https://auapecestudycentre.wordpress.com>

Summary of key discussion points

The following key points emerged from facilitated discussion of the above themes:

Presentation – Digital and online platforms to support MRAs

Ms Kathlyn Loseby, CEO, Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (ACA)

The key points arising from Ms Loseby's presentation were:

- Background about the role of ACA as the body providing confidence in the standard of architectural services in Australia, including the recognition of foreign architects
- A quick overview the seven existing MRAs and other similar agreements between Australia , Canada; Hong Kong, China; Japan; New Zealand; Singapore; the United Kingdom; and the United States. , , and
- A demonstration of the end-to-end digital solution that the ACA has developed to improve and support the recognition process for foreign architects, and the implementation of mutual recognition more generally
- The demonstration showed how the complexity of the recognition process has been broken down into manageable steps, and made accessible to all of the key parties involved in the process:
 - Applicants can commence the process by navigating to the relevant mutual recognition process for their economy and making and lodging an online application
 - The application process takes applicants step by step to enter and upload information and documentation about their education, qualifications, registration, migration details, interview scheduling, project details, other legal requirements such as declarations and consents, and payment
 - Once an application is lodged, the ACA receives and reviews all of the submitted information and documentation, and progresses the application also via an online process
 - Processing the application includes follow up on further documentation where required, confirming and holding interviews (via online video conferencing) and notifications to applicants about the progress and outcome of their application
 - The system enables ACA to operate manage the recognition process entirely online, across different mutual recognition channels, and collects data that populates a dashboard so it can track and analyse every part of the process
 - The system has been built using off-the-shelf, customisable digital platforms and products and is relatively inexpensive to build and operate

Facilitated discussion

During the facilitated Q and A discussion that followed the presentation, the following points were raised:

- Does the platform allow for scale, for example, as more MRAs are established? Yes, all of the platforms and products used by the system are designed to be able to scale as volume requires. It is as simple as setting up additional MRA channels using and modifying the same template processes
- How are cross-border data and privacy concerns managed? Noting that there are many different data and privacy standards that could apply, the ACCA's policy is to default towards meeting the highest available standard at any given time, which the digital platforms and products used also meet. The system also includes clear advice to applicants about how data collected will be used and protected, and asks for their consent to hold and use their data for the relevant purposes
- What have been some of the lessons learned from the process of developing the system? It is important to have a detailed step-by-step understanding of how the various digital platforms and products to be used work, what they can and can't do, and how they can be adapted or customised to suit the recognition process. It is best to engage an ICT professional at the outset to develop the brief for what is required. And it is also important to retain an ICT profession during the building and first six months of operating the system, so that the inevitable round of initial trouble shooting is efficiently handled. Staff much prefer working with the online system now that all teething issues have been addressed. It is much more efficient.
- Can you add additional functions to the system? What else are you looking at doing with it? Yes, additional functions can be added. AACA is looking at some of these, such as automating interview scheduling; enabling the direct uploading of further documentation once an application has been lodged; introducing a 'chat bot' to manage questions from users out of hours / in different time zones; and harnessing data for more targeted marketing.

The terms of reference for the Community of Practice are available on the [APEC Projects Database](#).