

Our Ref. : LARB/AACSB/140825.tl

25 August 2014

Director of Architectural Services
 Architectural Services Department
 Queensway Government Offices,
 66 Queensway,
 Hong Kong.
 (Attn: Miss Rebecca Chau)

Dear Madam,

Proposed Change to the Definition of “qualified landscape architect” in the Architectural and Associated Consultants Selection Board (AACSB) Handbook

Your letter dated 4 August 2014 refers. LARB has explored several options of the definition:

- (1) HKILA Members or Fellows;
- (2) HKILA Members or Fellows OR RLA under LARO;
- (3) HKILA Members or Fellows AND RLA under LARO;
- (4) RLA under LARO.

LARB found that only Option (4) would be in line with the existing registration system stipulated by law, with the interest of the profession and the public, and with the international perspective Hong Kong’s success has based on. The reasons area as follows:

Protection of Title under Law – Section 29 of the Landscape Architects Registration Ordinance (LARO) stipulates that only a person whose name is on the Register under LARO can use the title “landscape architect”, “registered landscape architect” or “R.L.A.” in Hong Kong.

LARB’s Role under Law – As described in Section 7(b) & (c) of LARO, LARB shall set and review the qualification standards for registration as a registered landscape architect and related registration matters, and shall advise the Government and HKILA on registration matters. Section 12(1)(a) of LARO empowers LARB to register a person who is not necessarily a Member or Fellow of HKILA. Section 12(1)(b) of LARO also requires a person to have “1 year’s relevant professional experience in Hong Kong” before his/ her application to LARB. This applies to both applicants with HKILA professional qualifications and applicants with other qualifications. Over the years, LARB has received applications from applicants who have working experience in Hong Kong and have foreign professional qualifications. Some of these applicants were very experienced landscape



architects outside Hong Kong, and a few of them were even well-known internationally for their outstanding achievement in landscape architecture. LARB assessed these applicants' professional knowledge and experience, and interviewed them in a format similar to the Oral Examination of HKILA's Professional Practice Examination (PPE). LARB would reject an application if the applicant failed to demonstrate sufficient professional knowledge and experience in Hong Kong's statutory or administrative requirements, practice notes and guidelines. It is impossible to make an "apple-to-apple" comparison between HKILA PPE and LARB's assessment as they have different prerequisites. But if one insists on a comparison, LARB's assessment is not of a less stringent standard than HKILA PPE by statistics.

Interest of the Profession & the Public – Currently, out of 154 landscape architects in Hong Kong, nine (9) have been registered using professional qualifications from foreign landscape architectural bodies. In the past two years alone, LARB received quite a number of applications from applicants with professional qualifications from foreign landscape architectural bodies, including a number currently working for Hong Kong SAR Government. It seems a trend that more and more landscape architects will be registered using foreign professional qualifications. The Government can always impose additional requirements to meet specific needs of a particular project for the benefits of the stakeholder. However such discretion must be exercised in a fair, reasonable manner that has taken interest of the profession into consideration. LARB has already received a complaint from an owner of a local landscape architectural firm on excluding landscape architects who are not HKILA Members or Fellows from the definition of "qualified landscape architect" in AACSB's Handbook. Unnecessarily limiting the choice of the Government on the selection of landscape architectural consultants will ultimately harm public interest, as most public bodies and some large private corporates tend to follow the Government.

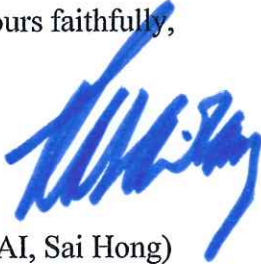
Fitting into the Global LA Community - Compared with other construction professions in Hong Kong, landscape architect is the youngest, smallest profession that remains largely unknown to the general public. Up to 1 June 2014, there are only 154 landscape architects (compared to over 3000 architects) in Hong Kong. The actual increase in RLA has been extremely slow over the years, persistently failing to meet the ever increasing local demand. Compared with landscape architectural bodies in other developed countries, HKILA and LARB are also one of the youngest and the smallest. Some of these foreign landscape architectural bodies even have more stringent university education requirement, mentorship arrangement and examination systems than HKILA. Our young, small landscape architect profession in Hong Kong should welcome members from these older, larger foreign landscape architectural bodies to practise in Hong Kong as long as they meet the requirements of LARO. Shutting the door for an industry that requires international perspective has never been a formula for the success of Hong Kong.



LARB

Except one appointed by the Chief Executive of HKSAR Government, all members of LARB are also members of HKILA and are appointed by the Council of HKILA in accordance with Section 3 of LARO. Yet, LARB has considered various aspects of the issue beyond our personal interest. We urge you to reconsider our recommendation.

Yours faithfully,



(LAI, Sai Hong)

Chairman

Landscape Architects Registration Board of HKSAR

c.c. Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects (Attn: WONG Tak Yip, President)
Association of Landscape Consultants (Attn: Mr. Patrick LAU, Chairman)
Secretary for Development (Attn: Miss Kathy NG, PAS(GLTM))