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## **SUPPORT FOR ARCHITECTURAL GRADUATES**

I am prompted by the opinions of ONE MALAYSIAN ARCHITECT (*The Star*, Nov 20), BE FAIR (*The Star*, Nov 24) and JON (*The Star*, Nov 26) to recall that, contrary to common belief, the purpose of a professional legislation such as the Architects Act, is to protect the public, and not members of the profession.

As such, the standard of professional qualifying examinations such as the Part III Professional Examination (Part III) conducted by the Board of Architect Malaysia (Lembaga Arkitek Malaysia, LAM) must remain credible to justify the public's confidence and trust in the profession, and the duties and responsibilities that the public entrusted to them.

In this regard, Part III has clearly served the architectural profession of Malaysia very well. Since its inception, the professional qualification has firmly established itself as the benchmark on the level of competency of the architectural profession, and has continued to be held in high regard by the industry, both locally and abroad.

Most importantly, Part III and the title that comes with it are as valued by our public today, at a time when other professions now require their fully registered members to complete further professional competency examinations, to qualify to practice independently.

Given this recognition for Part III, it really isn't in the interest of the profession, especially for future Professional Architects, to consider easing Part III's standard, knowing very well that this will lead to a devalued qualification, and title, in a profession that may as a result, be very much reduced in standing. Part III is fundamentally an experience-based examination. To successfully attempt the examination, the candidates must demonstrate the skill, knowledge, maturity, i.e. 'competency', covering the full scope of basic architectural services, which the candidates are expected to acquire during their minimum two-year work experience or 'practical training' after graduation.

The current model of practical training prescribed by Part III is still deeply rooted in the mentor-apprentice relationship, but with changing modes of practices in both private and public sectors, the idea of relying on the work places to deliver a complete practical training is getting more difficult to realise.

Furthermore, with the increasingly varied methods of project delivery, and the tendency for graduates to 'specialise' on selected aspects of the architectural practice at this early stage of their career, only the more determined graduates are able to complete the 'right' experience covering the full scope of basic architectural services, during the usual two year practical training. In reality, most graduates will require a longer period.

With this realisation and since 2002, PAM has taken the initiative to organise a series of tutorials yearly for candidates of Part III to supplement their work experiences.

For many years, these tutorials provided an excellent opportunity for the candidates to review their work experiences with senior practicing architects, and to fill in the gaps in their practical trainings. Recently, we have been alerted that very few participants now came with reasonable exposure to professional practice to be able to participate fruitfully in the tutorials. Faced with this, PAM has immediately decided to reformat the tutorials to a more formal and structured "Graduate Course on Professional Practice" next year.

The slow progression of the current generation of architectural graduates to registered Professional Architects is not unique to Malaysia. I recall raising this concern at the last Annual General Meeting of the Malaysian Institute of Architects (Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia, PAM) in August this year, and called on PAM to actively support these graduates, to sustain the architectural profession in Malaysia.

In line with this, the newly elected PAM Council has lined up a series of programmes for next year focusing on the graduates and the young architects, including Graduates Orientation Workshop, Graduate Course on Professional Practice, Professional Practice Dialogues and Symposium, Young

Architects in Heritage and Conservation, Emerging Architects Lectures, Exhibitions and Master Classes, in addition to a new series of the popular PAM CPD seminars refocusing on professional practice and business of architecture.

PAM will continue to reach out and engage the architectural graduates, to support them in their progression to Professional Architects, and we invite the graduates to reciprocate with ideas, suggestions and by participating as PAM Members.

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