

Architecture Review Board (ARB)

Terms of Reference

University of Ottawa

Approved by ARB December 2019

Purpose

The purpose of the Architecture Review Board (ARB) is to help ensure that digital initiative objectives, solution approaches, and solution architectures are aligned with the overall University strategy and action Plan, IT strategy, enterprise architecture principles, and university policies, standards, and best practices.

Overview

The ARB operates as a formal peer review process to ensure that projects are strategically and architecturally aligned and utilize best practices and university policies/standards with respect to business capabilities, information management, security and privacy, integration, user experience, application design, and infrastructure. The ARB process, decisions and outcomes are transparent with materials published and made accessible to university staff.

The ARB guides the project initiation, solution approach, and solution architecture. This includes projects from all services and faculties. The ARB is not purely a technical committee. Its membership consists of individuals that represent and discuss both the business of the University, and the technical impacts on the University digital landscape.

The role of the ARB is to make relevant and timely decisions or recommendations in order to stimulate the critical dialogue that will lead to better and more informed architecture decisions. The ARB ensures transparency and an increased level of collaboration within the institution.

The ARB is accountable to the University Information Governance Council (UIGC). The University Information Governance Council acts as an escalation point if consensus on recommendations and directions at ARB are not reached.

The Office of the CIO (Enterprise Architect) and the Architecture Working Group (AWG) provide guidance on architecture governance and oversees the processes that underpin architecture review process.

Mandate

The ARB is the approval authority for principles, IT policies and standards, and strategic architecture roadmaps.

The primary mandate of the ARB is to make recommendations to ensure that proposed projects and solutions are aligned with the University's enterprise architecture principles, reference models (e.g. higher education capability model), and IM/IT policies and standards.

The ARB operates a project gating process with peer review and approval at various stages of the project lifecycle (initiation, solution approach, solution architecture review). The specific requirements at each gate will evolve over time as recommended by the Architecture Working Group and approved by the ARB.

The ARB directly supports the IM/IT governance process at the University and it keeps a visionary perspective toward long-term strategies. The security of digital assets of the University is a major concern it considers throughout its deliberations. The ARB ensures institutional objectives are appropriately supported by digital initiatives and services, and makes strategy, information management, security and privacy, integration and infrastructure recommendations to projects and programs. It weighs the complexity and wide range of needs at the University when assessing the project initiation and solution proposals.

Every initiative should directly support the University's direction for the digital future. In making recommendations to projects and programs, the ARB considers long term implications on overall user experience, system interoperability, protection of classified information, and sustainability. The ARB is the prime venue for discussing the scope, impacts on business capabilities, solution approach (reuse, buy, build), and solution design.

Specific objectives

In practice, this responsibility is carried out by performing the following functions for the review of business-led technology projects:

- Applies an overall University perspective in the evaluation of issues or concerns related to digital initiatives.
- Guides architecture deliverables, makes decisions and recommendations regarding large-scale digital initiatives.
- Reviews and approves enterprise architecture reference models and roadmaps, and IM/IT Policies and Standards. The ARB may also review IM/IT Procedures where necessary.
- Reviews, makes recommendations and endorses the business and IT designs and components (including business capabilities, information structures, IT infrastructures, systems and applications).
- Establishes, owns and manages the content of the Enterprise Architecture Strategy (i.e. principles, standards, policies, guidelines and reference models).
- Grants possible exceptions for deviations from the Enterprise Architecture Strategy.
- Recommends changes and enhancements to project and solution scope, solution approach, and technical architecture to best achieve University goals.
- Reviews and makes recommendations to ensure the University is compliant with legal and regulatory requirements as they pertain to IM/IT;

Membership

Voting Members

The Chair of the ARB is the Enterprise Architect. Vice-Chair will be assigned on a rotating basis. The Secretary General's office provides administrative support in the form of an ARB Secretary.

- Enterprise Architect (Chair)
- Deputy CIO
- Business Architect

- Security Architect
- Application & Integration Architect
- Infrastructure Architect
- Director, Information Management (Office of the Secretary General)
- Senior Director, IT Solutions
- Senior Director, Infrastructure
- Up to 3 representatives from Faculties and Services (See appendix for complete list)

Quorum

To have quorum for decision-making, a minimum participation is required of:

- Majority of members present at the meeting

Meetings

The committee will meet monthly with additional ad hoc meetings as deemed necessary by the Chair.

The ARB Secretary is responsible for ensuring the maintenance of the agenda, minutes and action items.

ARB voting members are expected to have the authority and responsibility to act on behalf of the areas they represent. They are to take a broad, inclusive enterprise perspective and advocate for all aspects of IM/IT.

Any stakeholder and University staff member may observe the proceedings of the ARB and access agendas, minutes and presentation materials.

Proceedings:

- In the event that a member cannot attend a meeting, substitutions must be approved in advance by the chair.
- Guest participants can observe proceedings, except in specific cases where sensitive or confidential issues are discussed.
- Members strive to make decisions by consensus. If full consensus is not possible, dissenting positions are identified and assessed for further evaluations. If consensus cannot be reached, a simple majority to those voting in favor of the motion shall pass a motion. The Chair shall only vote in the event of a tie vote among voting members.
- Meeting agendas and presentation materials are circulated at least one week in advance of meetings.
- Members and observers may attend in person or on MS Teams.
- Meeting minutes will be taken to record all decisions, recommendations and action follow-up requests, and approved by ARB members.

Working Groups

Architecture Working Group

Architecture Working Group (AWG) is responsible for making recommendations to the Architecture Review Board with respect to architecture deliverables, project gating requirements, architecture reference models and standards, and the ongoing evolution of the enterprise architecture program.

Architecture Working Group Members:

- Enterprise Architect
- Business Architect
- Security Architect
- Application & Integration Architect
- Infrastructure Architect
- Director, Information Management (Office of the Secretary General)
- Solutions Architects and Data Architects assigned to solution portfolios (e.g. Facilities, HR/Finance, TLSS)

Roles and Responsibilities

The Architecture Review Board is the peer review body responsible for reviewing and making recommendations proposed projects, with respect to strategic alignment, solution approach, and technical architecture

The University Information Governance Council is the senior administrative group charged to make recommendations to the Administration Committee regarding IM/IT principles, strategic directions, and IM/IT investments.

The CIO is the senior administrator responsible for University strategy and policy development regarding Information Technology (“IT”), and for overseeing the IT decision-making framework. The Office of the CIO manages the IT decision framework by enabling oversight of the IT environment and the decision-making process.

The Secretary-General is responsible for University strategy and policy development regarding Information Management (“IM”) and for overseeing the IM decision-making framework. The Office of the Secretary-General manages the IM decision framework by enabling oversight of the IM environment and the decision-making process.

Other Committees and groups impact IM/IT decisions and are important consultative groups. Liaison with these groups is enabled through the CIO and others participating in the IM/IT Decision Framework.

Annual Self-Review

Once in every 12-month period, the ARB shall devote at least part of one meeting to a review of its policies, practices, and procedures over the preceding 12 months.