

Creating Your ARE® Plan

In 1965, NCARB produced a seven-part, multiple-choice, machine-graded registration examination, plus a design and site-planning test. This exam was developed and made available to all 54 member boards in an effort to remove one of the roadblocks in the path of a simplified reciprocal registration process. Fast forward 43 years to the launch of ARE® 4.0 in July 2008. Much has changed in the field of architecture and, subsequently, with the exam, in those years.

The 1970s saw a “Qualifying Exam” issued to those without an accredited degree, and a “Professional Exam” for those with an accredited degree. An exhaustive “task analysis and validation study” was conducted in 1979, and this led to the development of a forerunner of the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®). At that time, candidates were required to take all nine divisions over a four-day period. The exam was only offered once a year in major cities across the U.S.—often in

large, poorly lit warehouses without air-conditioning. The final day of the exam was the 12-hour graphics division, and candidates were required to bring their own drafting board and tools.

In the late 1980s, as the practice of architecture moved into the computer age, the Council began to develop a computer-based exam. After a decade of research and development, the last paper-and-pencil test was issued in June 1996, and the computer-based exam was rolled out in February 1997. With the launch of the computer-based exam, candidates no longer had to take all divisions of the ARE at the same time. Another comprehensive study—the Architecture Practice Analysis Study—was conducted in 1999 and led to “evolutionary improvements” to the ARE. These improvements, such as the combined vignettes and the inclusion of “alternate item type” questions have been rolled out in phases in ARE 3.0, ARE 3.1, and soon

in ARE 4.0.

NCARB Member Boards recognize that the practice of architecture changes over time. Likewise, ARE content, its format, and its administration can change over time as well. In January 2006, the Rolling Clock was introduced, requiring that all divisions be passed within a reasonable period of time to better assure that the ARE remains a valid measure of the level of competence necessary to independently practice architecture. While some changes may occur within any five-year period, there is a lower likelihood that applicants will be tested under different forms of administration and methodologies than was the case when applicants had unlimited time in which to pass all divisions. The Rolling Clock is psychometrically appropriate, especially as the exam continues to evolve. Unlike other professions (including legal and accounting fields), architecture did not have a uniform, national rolling clock for examination prior to the implementation of this standard.

Plan it out!

There are many different ways to approach the ARE. Every candidate must take into consideration their own circumstances. Here are two sample ARE plans for transition candidates:

SARAH'S PLAN

Sarah passed her first division of ARE 3.1—*Construction Documents & Services*—on August 1, 2007. This means her rolling clock is set by that date, and she has until July 31, 2012 to complete the remaining divisions of the ARE.

Because Sarah has passed one division of the ARE before May 2008, she is considered a “transition” candidate. She will continue taking ARE 3.1 until June 2009. If she has not completed all nine divisions of ARE 3.1 by that date, she will be transitioned to ARE 4.0, and have until July 31, 2012 to finish the remaining divisions before her rolling clock expires.

While she knows she has five years to complete the ARE, Sarah has decided to try to complete as many divisions of ARE 3.1 as she can by June 2009. She decides to take the *Building Technology* division of ARE 3.1 in November of 2007. She knows she needs to pass that division to avoid the possibility of having to take *Building Design & Construction Systems*, *Building Systems*, *Construction Documents & Services*, and *Structural Systems* in ARE 4.0. Sarah knows that if she doesn't pass *Building Technology* the first time, she can take it again in six months, and if need be, she can take it again six months after that. That gives her three chances to pass *Building Technology* before she is converted to ARE 4.0.

Sarah decides to take *Site Planning* in December 2007 because she knows she needs to pass this division in ARE 3.1 to avoid the potential of having to take both *Site Planning & Design* and *Programming, Planning & Practice* in ARE 4.0. To finish the graphic portion of the exam, Sarah plans to take *Building Planning* in January 2008, and then take the rest of the multiple-choice sections.

Division	First Attempt	Second Attempt (if needed)	Third Attempt (if needed)
Construction Documents & Services	8/1/2007*		
Building Technology	11/4/2007	6/7/2008	2/7/2009
Site Planning	12/1/2007	6/28/2008	2/21/2009
Building Planning	1/5/2008	7/12/2008	3/1/2009
Mechanical & Electrical Systems	2/2/2008	8/12/2008	4/4/2009
Building Design / Materials & Methods	3/1/2008	9/6/2008	5/2/2009
General Structures	4/5/2008	11/1/2008	**
Lateral Forces	4/19/2008	12/6/2008	**
Pre-Design	5/5/2008	12/10/2008	6/16/2009

* This is the beginning date for Sarah's rolling clock. If she has not passed all current divisions of the ARE by July 31, 2012, she'll need to retake *Construction Documents & Services* (or its equivalent).

** Rather than retake both *General Structures* and *Lateral Forces* under ARE 3.1, Sarah decides to wait and take *Structural Systems* under ARE 4.0 in July 2009, knowing she will need to repeat content from *Building Technology*.

Throughout all versions of the ARE and its predecessors, the goal of the exam has remained the same: to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public by providing a psychometrically justifiable and legally defensible exam that measures the level of competency necessary to practice architecture independently. Over the years, changes have been made to the exam—after deliberate, studied, and controlled evaluation—for two essential reasons: to update questions so that they reflect current architectural practices

exception. To ease the transition for candidates, NCARB will deliver both ARE 3.1 and ARE 4.0 for a period of one year. This allows current candidates an additional year to complete ARE 3.1. Some transition candidates—candidates who have passed at least one division of the ARE by May 2008—have expressed a concern that they don't have the full five years of the Rolling Clock to complete the exam process. This is not true. Whether the candidate begins the exam process taking ARE 3.1 or ARE 4.0, they will have five years from the date they passed their first division to pass the remaining divisions of the exam. Candidates who have passed at least one division of the ARE 3.1 by May 2008 will continue to take the ARE until June 2009. At that point, if they have not passed all divisions, they will be transitioned to ARE 4.0, to complete the remaining divisions.

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and to utilize technology that more accurately assesses the abilities of the candidate.

Whenever there is a change in the exam, the transition from one version of the exam to another requires a period of adjustment for both those administering the tests and those taking them. The launch of ARE 4.0 is no

PAUL'S PLAN

Paul passed his first division of the ARE—*Pre-Design*—in October 2005. Because the rolling clock did not take effect until January 1, 2006, his rolling clock didn't start until he passed the *Construction Documents & Services* division on June 12, 2006. He must pass the remaining divisions of the ARE by June 11, 2011, or he'll have to retake *Construction Documents & Services*.

Paul's work and personal life keep him very busy. He knows that he'll do better on the exams if he allows plenty of time to study for each division. He decides to focus on learning

the graphic software (which he downloaded from the NCARB web site) and completing the graphic portions of ARE 3.1 before he is transitioned to ARE 4.0. Like Sarah, he has determined the best way to avoid having to take exams that repeat previously passed material is to complete *Building Technology* and *Site Planning* under ARE 3.1. Paul also determined that by taking *Structural Systems* under ARE 4.0, he won't have to take both *General Structures* and *Lateral Forces* under ARE 3.1. To complete all the divisions of the ARE within his five-year rolling clock period, he developed the following plan:

Division	First Attempt	Second Attempt (if needed)	Third Attempt (if needed)
Pre-Design	9/15/2004	3/22/2005	10/3/2005
Construction Documents & Services	12/6/2005	6/12/2006*	
Building Technology	9/2/2006	6/2/2007	2/2/2008
Site Planning	1/2/2008	7/12/2008	4/4/2009
Building Planning	5/3/2008	2/7/2009	
Schematic Design			9/3/2009**
Building Design & Construction Systems	11/7/2009	6/5/2010	1/9/2011
Building Systems	2/6/2010	8/7/2010	2/15/2011
Structural Systems	4/3/2010	10/9/2010	5/14/2011

* This is the beginning date for Paul's rolling clock. If he has not passed all current divisions of the ARE by June 11, 2011, he'll need to retake *Construction Documents & Services* (or its equivalent).
 ** Paul will be transitioned into ARE 4.0 in July 2009.

YOUR PLAN

When creating a testing plan, it is important to take into consideration your strengths and weaknesses, as well as your registration board's requirements. Refer to the ARE 4.0 transition chart on the NCARB web site and set goals for when you want to take each division. Every candidate's journey toward licensure will be unique. By mapping out a plan at the outset—and sticking to it—most candidates will be able to navigate through any bumps or turns that come their way, and reach their destination of completing the ARE within five years. In fact, the average candidate passes all divisions of the ARE in approximately two and a half years.