

ARE

Will the new ARE resolution affect you?

How is ARE 4.0 scored?

Why did the exam fee increase?

YOUR TOUGHEST QUESTIONS ANSWERED HERE

The last year has been a busy one for the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®). ARE 3.1 candidates were transitioned into ARE 4.0, several candidates were sanctioned for breaching the Confidentiality Agreement, and a new resolution that requires candidates to test at least once every five years was passed. Erica J. Brown, AIA, Director, Architect Registration Examination, answers your questions about the new ARE resolution, the transition, scoring, and security—and how they impact you.

WHO DEVELOPS THE ARE?

The development of the ARE is a lengthy process that involves thousands of hours of work by hundreds of volunteer architects from all over the United States and Canada. Several times a year, the various exam

committees meet to write questions, evaluate scoring engines, and make recommendations related to the long-term future of the ARE. For more information about how exam items are developed, be sure to read “Fresh Eyes on the Exam” on page 24.

WHY DOES THE EXAM KEEP CHANGING?

Architecture is a continuously evolving profession and the practice of architecture has changed considerably since NCARB launched the first registration exam in 1965. Exam content and format goes through deliberate, studied, and controlled evaluation on a regular basis. The content is updated to reflect current architectural practices, and technological changes are incorporated to more accurately assess the abilities of today’s candidate. It is important

to remember that 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 examination that measures the level of competency necessary to practice architecture independently.

WHO DECIDES WHAT CHANGES WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE EXAM?

NCARB’s exam committees research the proposed changes and make recommendations to NCARB’s Board of Directors. All changes to the ARE are approved by the NCARB Board.

NEW RESOLUTION

WHAT IS THE NEW FIVE-YEAR RESOLUTION?

The ARE Rolling Clock, which took effect on 1 January 2006, requires exam candidates to pass all divisions of the ARE within five years of the date they passed their first non-exempt division. Any divisions passed before 1 January 2006 were exempt. At the Annual Meeting in June, the Member Boards passed a resolution that will make any division passed prior to 1 January 2006 invalid unless all divisions of the ARE have been passed by 1 July 2014. This gives those candidates who passed divisions prior to 1 January 2006 five years from the date the resolution was passed to complete all remaining divisions of the ARE.

The resolution also requires ARE candidates who have not taken any division of the ARE in five years to re-establish their eligibility through a Member Board under that board's current requirements.

WHY WAS THIS RESOLUTION PASSED?

Currently, there are nearly 10,000 candidates who have established their ARE eligibility, but have never tested or have not tested for more than five years. It is costly to manage these inactive candidates' authorization to test (ATT) indefinitely.

HOW WILL THIS RESOLUTION AFFECT ME?

As long as you take one division every five years—regardless of whether or not you pass—your authorization to test (ATT) will **not** be terminated. If you don't test at least once every five years, you will have to re-establish your eligibility with a Member Board under its current rules. Also, if you passed a division prior to 1 January 2006, you must pass ALL divisions of the ARE by 1 July 2014.

The bottom line is, once you establish your eligibility, make an ARE plan and stick to it. Work and life never slow down, so take the ARE as soon as you can.

ARE 4.0 TRANSITION

IF I WAS TRANSITIONED FROM ARE 3.1 TO ARE 4.0, HOW DO I KNOW WHICH DIVISIONS I STILL NEED TO PASS?

If you started in ARE 3.1 or an earlier version of the ARE, refer to the Transition Chart or Reverse Transition Chart on our web site to see what divisions you need to pass to complete ARE 4.0. You can also check the Prometric web site to see the divisions you are eligible to test in ARE 4.0. Prometric is not mailing out updated ATTs. If you would like to receive one, please call the ARE Helpdesk at 800/896-2272.

IF I FAILED A DIVISION IN ARE 3.1, WHEN CAN I START TESTING IN ARE 4.0?

If you failed any ARE 3.1 division, you can retake the equivalent division six months after your most recent fail. For example, if you failed Pre-Design on 1 May 2009 and Site Planning on 1 June 2009, you must wait until 1 December 2009 to take Programming, Planning & Practice in ARE 4.0. You will be able to schedule the equivalent ARE 4.0 divisions four months from the date of your most recent fail.

HOW DOES THE TRANSITION AFFECT MY ROLLING CLOCK?

It doesn't. Your rolling clock starts five years from the date you passed your first non-exempt division—even if you are required to retake an equivalent division in ARE 4.0. Once you pass one non-exempt division, you have five years to pass all remaining divisions. If you don't pass all remaining required divisions within the initial five-year period, you will be given a new five-year period from the date of the second oldest passed division. In addition to NCARB's Rolling Clock Policy, your jurisdiction may have its own retake limit/exam-validity time frame. You should contact your jurisdiction directly to determine your exam status under its rules and policies.

SECURITY

WHY ARE THE FEES BEING INCREASED?

In recent months, NCARB has had to turn off substantial amounts of exam content after several candidates posted ARE content on the internet. The cost to develop and replace the exposed content and handle the administrative and legal costs related to these incidents totals an estimated \$1.1 million. While the new fee structure will help offset the costs incurred as a result of exam disclosure, it still falls short of the actual cost of developing and administering the exam and monitoring its security.

Before a vignette or multiple-choice item is added to the exam it must be written, reviewed, edited, and thoroughly pretested. Prometric, NCARB's test consultant, evaluates the psychometric data on each pretested item to determine if it meets established requirements to be included on the exam. Any item—multiple-choice question or vignette—that isn't performing as expected is revised or thrown out. The rewritten items go back for another round of pretesting. Only items that perform acceptably during pretesting are included as a scored item in an actual exam. This process takes a minimum of two years from concept to becoming a scored item.

DOES NCARB MAKE A PROFIT FROM THE EXAM FEES?

No, the opposite is actually true. The ARE is heavily subsidized by NCARB. The income generated by the administration of the ARE covers only a portion of the expenses related to the development and administration of the examination. The remaining expenses are covered by income generated by other programs operated by the Council.

WHAT IS THE "CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT"?

NCARB develops and maintains the ARE on behalf of its Member Boards and owns all copyrights to the exam and its content. The content of the exam is developed, tested, and administered at great expense to the Council. Before beginning each test, you are required to accept the "Confidentiality Agreement," which prohibits any disclosure of exam content. This agreement is in place to protect

NCARB's investment and to ensure the ARE remains a valid and reliable process by which NCARB and jurisdictional boards ensure that those who practice architecture are qualified to do so.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATING THE CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT?

Violating the Confidentiality Agreement has serious consequences. They may include cancellation of test scores, suspension of test-taking privileges, exposure to civil damages in a court of law, and additional disciplinary action by your board of architecture.

In April 2009, the NCARB BOD acted upon eight different disclosure cases. One additional candidate's actions were acted upon at the August 2009 NCARB BOD meeting and 29 other candidates are currently under investigation. The punishments for these candidates ranged from one year of testing privileges suspended and two exam scores cancelled to five years of testing privileges suspended.

HOW DOES DISCLOSING EXAM CONTENT AFFECT OTHER CANDIDATES?

When candidates disclose information, NCARB works with Prometric to determine the impact on the exam. If NCARB needs to turn exam content off, all candidates are adversely affected. If we have to turn off substantial amounts of content, we won't be able to continuously administer the exam. This means that for a specific division, we may be forced to increase the current six-month wait following a failed exam to nine or 12 months.

Our development cycle takes two years from a vignette or multiple-choice item to become "live" in an exam. This process is very expensive. To replace lost content, we will need to modify our development cycle. To do this, we will re-evaluate exam fees for all candidates in all divisions.

WHAT CONSTITUTES "DISCLOSURE" OF EXAM CONTENT?

"Disclosure" means sharing the substance or details of any test questions, vignettes or other graphics or alleged answers with anyone

via electronic, written, oral means. This includes any attempt to reproduce, paraphrase, summarize, or describe any test content from memory after leaving the testing room.

Disclosure includes both an initial disclosure by a test taker and any further dissemination of ARE content by others. These prohibitions on disclosure also apply to forwarding, re-posting, or other disclosure of ARE content that others have disclosed.

HOW DOES THAT DIFFER FROM "CHEATING" ON THE EXAM?

The biggest difference is that "cheating" occurs during the course of your examination appointment. Disclosure typically occurs after your exam. NCARB considers cheating to include the unauthorized access to devices or materials outside the testing room during any scheduled or unscheduled break, the presence of unauthorized devices (whether in the "on" or "off" position) or unauthorized materials in the testing room, and the use of unauthorized devices or materials in the testing room. The use of, or reference to, any device or any written materials in the testing room is strictly prohibited and will be presumed to be for the purpose of assistance on the ARE.

HOW DOES DISCLOSING INFORMATION FROM THE EXAM UNDERMINE NCARB'S MISSION IS TO PROTECT THE HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF THE PUBLIC?

As a high-stakes licensure exam, the ARE is designed to measure the knowledge, skills, and abilities that architects must possess in order to safely practice architecture independently. Disclosure of the ARE content invalidates the reliability and defensibility of the exam and ultimately undermines the integrity of the process. If candidates pass the ARE because they were exposed to the exam content prior to taking the test, they could become licensed even if they are incompetent. This could endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the public, which is not good for the public or our profession.

EXAM SCORING

HOW DOES THE SCORING WORK TO DETERMINE A FINAL PASS OR FAIL SCORE?

Your multiple-choice items (including “Check-All-That-Apply” and “Quantitative-Fill-In-The-Blank”) are scored with each correct answer receiving one point and each incorrect or unanswered question receiving zero points.

Each graphic vignette is scored through a computer-based analysis of your solution to evaluate it against many predetermined requirements that are weighted based upon their importance or significance in that vignette. Based on your overall performance for each requirement, the vignette is reported as Acceptable, Indeterminate (Moderate Deficiencies), or Unacceptable (Major Deficiencies).

In ARE 4.0, NCARB uses a process called “conjunctive scoring” to combine your performance on the multiple-choice section and your vignette score(s) to determine your final division score. In this scoring model, you have the opportunity to compensate for an “Indeterminate” vignette performance if you perform well on the multiple-choice section.

Conversely, if you perform poorly on the multiple-choice section and well on the associated vignette(s), you may still be able to obtain a passing division score.

IF I FAIL A DIVISION, BUT MY VIGNETTE IS REPORTED AS “ACCEPTABLE,” DO I HAVE TO RETAKE THE GRAPHICS PART OF THE EXAM WHEN I RETEST?

If you fail a division, you must retake both the graphic and multiple-choice sections of that division. You will receive limited diagnostic information for each failed division. This diagnostic information indicates areas of relative strength and weakness based on the division’s content areas and vignettes. You can use this information to develop a study plan to address your weaknesses prior to retaking the division.

WHY CAN’T PROMETRIC JUST MAIL ME THE SCORE REPORT DIRECTLY?

Your individual jurisdiction grants you a license to practice architecture, not NCARB or Prometric. Therefore, the jurisdiction also controls the release of the score reports for its candidates according to its individual laws and regulations. For instance, some states will only release scores to candidates after the state board has reviewed them. Other jurisdictions enter all of your score-report data into their own candidate databases before mailing you a copy of the score report.

Since each state has different policies and procedures, final processing time can vary from candidate to candidate. Additionally, some jurisdictions participate in NCARB’s Direct Registration program. If you are a Direct Registration candidate, your score report is mailed directly to NCARB, recorded in our database, and then mailed to you.

WHY CAN’T I SEE MY SCORE INSTANTLY?

Your multiple-choice answers and vignette solutions are transferred electronically to Prometric for processing. There, your data is received by the Results Data Management (RDM) system, which separates the multiple-choice items and the graphic vignettes for scoring. Scoring sets (also known as “batches”) are compiled for all exams taken in the past two weeks. After the set is compiled, all of the multiple-choice items and vignette solutions are scored for that batch.

Scoring a set can take up to a week. All components of the ARE are scored by computerized scoring engines with multiple layers of quality control checks to ensure accuracy and reliability of the scores being reported to candidates and NCARB’s Member Boards. The multiple-choice items are scored rather quickly, but the vignettes take additional time to process through their quality control procedures.

Your ARE record is then updated with your exam score and a score report is printed and mailed to your jurisdiction (or to NCARB, if your jurisdiction participates in the Direct Registration Program). Upon receipt of your score report, your jurisdiction or NCARB will complete any final processing required and forward the official score report to you.

HOW CAN I STAY UP-TO-DATE ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ARE?

Go to our web site and sign up for the *ARE e-News*. This quarterly electronic publication will give you the latest news about the exam and important reminders. News about the ARE is also posted on the ARE Updates section of our web site: www.ncarb.org/ARE/ARE-Overview/ARE-Updates.aspx.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ARE?

You’ll find a great deal of information about the ARE on our web site at www.ncarb.org. You should also be sure read the most current version of the *ARE Guidelines*, which can be downloaded from our web site. If you have questions about scheduling or rescheduling a division, call the Prometric Candidate Services Contact Center at 800/479-6215. If you

have a question about your test experience, contact the ARE Helpdesk (as noted in the *ARE Guidelines*). Other questions about the ARE or ARE security should be sent to NCARB at are@ncarb.org. We’ll be happy to help you!