YOUR GUIDE TO
2020 ARE Changes and Online Proctoring

NCARB
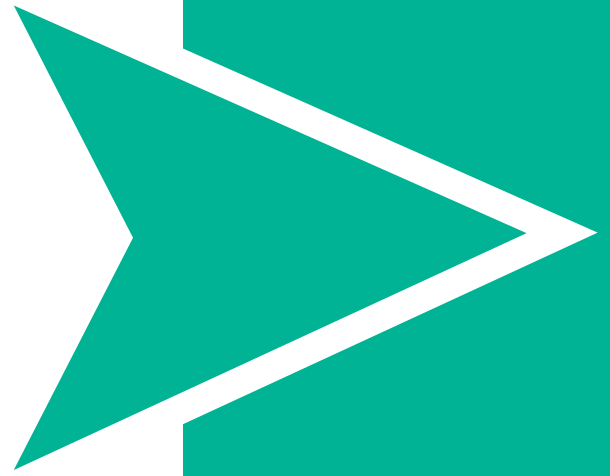
NCARB

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In December 2020, NCARB launched the option for candidates to take the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®) via online proctoring. Candidates continue to have the option to test in person through Prometric's global network of test centers. Regardless of how candidates choose to test, all candidates will receive the same exam.

To enable online proctoring while maintaining the exam's essential reliability and rigor as a measure of candidate competency, several changes to ARE 5.0's navigation, timing, and policies went into effect when online proctoring launched. These changes are in effect for all in-person and online exams going forward.

The following provides additional information about the changes to ARE 5.0. Keep in mind, the exam's overall content—including the division structure, item bank, and objectives—remains the same. Candidates should take the updated, full-length demo exam to become familiar with the new navigation, tools, and format.

ARE® 5.0

EXAM CHANGES

➤ Reduced Items Per Division

In an effort to continue to increase the efficiency of the licensure process, NCARB reduced the total number of items candidates will see in each division of ARE 5.0.

Practice Management	PcM
Number of Items	**65**

Project Management	PjM
Number of Items	**75**

Programming & Analysis	PA
Number of Items	**75**

Project Planning & Design	PPD
Number of Items	**100**

Project Development & Documentation	PDD
Number of Items	**100**

Construction & Evaluation	CE
Number of Items	**75**

Key things to know:

- **The majority of removed items were "pretest" items.** Each division of the ARE includes several "pretest" items—new items in the testing stage of development. These items are indistinguishable from regular items, but do not contribute to your score. To reduce the exam's length without impacting rigor, there are now fewer pretest items per division of the ARE.

- **Reducing the number of items per division did not make the exam easier.** Reducing the length of the test is based upon recommendations from NCARB's independent psychometricians, but the changes do not impact the exam's difficulty. NCARB has adjusted the cut scores for each ARE 5.0 division to ensure the ARE is a fair test of competency.

➤ Test Duration Per Division Adjusted Slightly

Changes in the number of items per division did not have a significant impact on exam timing as **candidates are being given more time per item on each division and more break time per division**.

Practice Management — PcM
Appointment Time	**3 HR 20 MIN**
Test Duration	**2 HR 40 MIN**

Project Management — PjM
Appointment Time	**3 HR 40 MIN**
Test Duration	**3 HR**

Programming & Analysis — PA
Appointment Time	**3 HR 40 MIN**
Test Duration	**3 HR**

Project Planning & Design — PPD
Appointment Time	**5 HR**
Test Duration	**4 HR 5 MIN**

Project Development & Documentation — PDD
Appointment Time	**5 HR**
Test Duration	**4 HR 5 MIN**

Construction & Evaluation — CE
Appointment Time	**3 HR 40 MIN**
Test Duration	**3 HR**

Key things to know:

- **Candidates have more time per item.** Because the reduction in the number of items is proportionally larger than the reduction in test time, candidates have more time to consider each item.

- **Timing considers the changes to navigation and tools.** The additional time in relation to the number of items gives candidates the necessary flexibility to review items and use updated tools, such as the digital whiteboard.

➤ Optional Break Time Expanded; Items Locked When a Break is Taken

Candidates' optional break time has been expanded to 30 or 45 minutes, depending on the division. In addition, candidates can use this time for multiple short breaks or one long break during their appointment.

Candidates can review any previously viewed items before they take a break. **However, upon returning from a break, candidates are unable to review or edit items seen prior to a break.** Those items will be locked for the duration of the test appointment. Candidates are required to click the on-screen break tool anytime they take a break.

Division	Optional Break Time	
Practice Management	30 MIN	PcM
Project Management	30 MIN	PjM
Programming & Analysis	30 MIN	PA
Project Planning & Design	45 MIN	PPD
Project Development & Documentation	45 MIN	PDD
Construction & Evaluation	30 MIN	CE

Key things to know:

- **Candidates have more break flexibility.** The new break structure allows candidates more flexibility in terms of when and for how long to take a break, both in-person and when testing online.

- **Locking items after breaks is essential for exam security.** Because NCARB cannot control the break activities of candidates who test via online proctoring, locking items maintains the exam's security.

- **Candidates should plan to review items before taking a break.** Candidates can review any previously viewed items before they take a break. Candidates should adjust their testing strategy to review any flagged items prior to taking a break, since they will be unable to return to these items.

➤ Adjusted Cut Scores

Because the number of scored items changed, NCARB adjusted new cut scores for each ARE division. NCARB and our psychometrician experts used previous cut scores as a reference when setting the new cut scores to help minimize the time needed to set cut scores and allow NCARB to benchmark the current exam rigor.

➤ Reduced Rescheduling Fees

NCARB waived rescheduling fees from mid-March through December 2020. NCARB reinstated fees for rescheduling exam appointments beginning on January 1, 2021, at a reduced rate.

Days Before Exam Appointment	Fee
0-3 BUSINESS DAYS	Rescheduling Not Permitted
4-15 BUSINESS DAYS (before Noon ET)	$55
16-30 BUSINESS DAYS (before Noon ET)	$40
30 OR MORE BUSINESS DAYS (before Noon ET)	$0

Key things to know about the cut score process:

• NCARB does not expect pass rates to change dramatically. The changes being made to enable online proctoring are not intended to make the exam easier or harder; therefore, pass rates for the updated exam are expected to align with previous ARE 5.0 pass rates.

• Score reports were delayed while cut scores were set. Now that cut scores for all six ARE 5.0 divisions have been adjusted, score reports are being released as normal, and provisional feedback is available at the end of each ARE appointment.
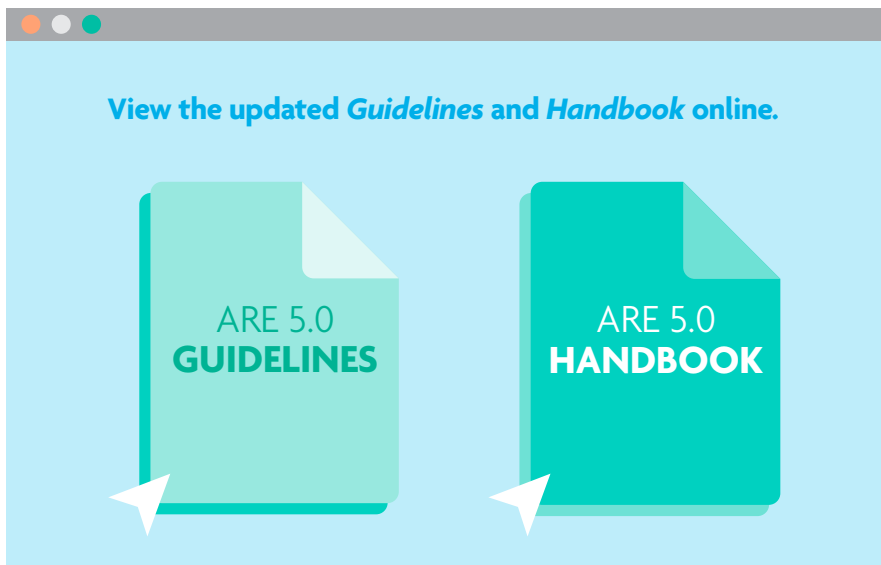
Key things to know about the reduction of rescheduling fees:

• Rescheduling fees apply to both online and in-person appointments.

➤ Exam Resources

NCARB has updated its free tools and resources to help candidates prepare for the exam. These include the *ARE 5.0 Guidelines*, *ARE 5.0 Handbook*, demonstration exam, and Test Prep study videos.

We also created several videos to help candidates navigate the new format and tools, including tips for using the digital whiteboard, available on our YouTube channel!

View the updated *Guidelines* and *Handbook* online.

ARE 5.0
GUIDELINES

ARE 5.0
HANDBOOK

Key things to know:

- **The updated *ARE 5.0 Guidelines* includes the requirements for taking an online proctored exam.** These include both technical and environmental requirements from both NCARB and Prometric. Candidates are required to review and understand all requirements prior to scheduling an online proctored appointment.

- **The objectives outlined in the *ARE 5.0 Handbook* have not changed.** However, NCARB has added additional details about the relative percentage of the exam each objective comprises.

- **The demo exam provides the full ARE experience.** With 75 items and a three-hour duration, the demo exam offers the same tools, functionality, and navigation that candidates will experience on test day.

In addition, both the *Guidelines* and *Handbook* have been updated to be more accessible and mobile-friendly.

➤ Updated Exam Candidate Conduct Policy

NCARB has modified the Exam Candidate Conduct policy to better reflect expectations in a dual-delivery (online proctored and in-person) world. The new policy is now in effect and available on the NCARB website.

➤ Digital Whiteboard Replaced Physical Scratch Paper

Whether candidates are testing in person or online, the whiteboard serves as virtual scratch paper when taking an ARE division. Before testing, candidates should practice using the whiteboard by accessing the demonstration exam in My NCARB.

Once candidates have navigated to an item on the exam, they can open the whiteboard by selecting it from the toolbar. Candidates can add text, create shapes, or draw using the pencil tool; and candidates can add space by creating additional pages or zooming in and out.

Key things to know:

- **Candidates must have a consistent exam experience regardless of test delivery.** In order to maintain fairness across delivery modes, NCARB needs to ensure candidates are provided the same tools while testing, whether they are testing online or onsite.

- **NCARB must ensure the security of exam content.** The ARE is an essential measure of candidate competency used by all 55 U.S. licensing boards. Allowing physical scratch paper for candidates testing via online proctoring would introduce a major security risk for exam content. It is more difficult to monitor the use and disposal of loose paper when candidates are testing from a remote location, as opposed to in a test center.

- **A "clean desk" policy is recommended by testing experts.** The replacement of scratch paper follows best practices in testing recommended to NCARB by our psychometrician experts. Requiring a "clean desk" is the most reliable way to ensure that candidates are not violating the ARE Candidate Agreement. The desire to make online proctoring available may have moved the timeline for this decision forward, but it is not the only reason behind the change.

➤ Other Changes While Testing

To improve the candidate testing experience, NCARB has made changes to ARE 5.0's references, PDF reader, and some multiple-choice items.

- **References:** Structural resources or formulas needed to solve a particular item are now included in the item.

- **PDF Reader:** NCARB and our test development consultant have upgraded the PDF reader used for case studies to improve the candidate experience and enable faster loading times.

- **Multiple-choice items can include three or four response options.** Some multiple-choice items only include three response options, while others include four response options. This change eliminated easily dismissed response options that served no assessment value, and eases some of the timing burden placed on candidates.

- **Candidate privacy is maintained.** Similar to the ARE's content, personal information, recorded sessions, and other sensitive data are stored securely on Prometric's advanced network.

➤ Exam Accommodations

NCARB offers testing accommodations for candidates with documented disabilities and temporary medical conditions. The process to apply for accommodations has not changed with the launch of online proctoring , and candidates can find a quick guide at ncarb.org/accommodations.

Key things to know:

- **Not all accommodations are available via online proctoring.** The nature of online proctoring means that not all exam accommodations can be offered for online testing, such as a reader or sign language interpreter. Candidates can reach out to NCARB staff for more information about their specific accommodation.

- **Accommodations must be approved prior to scheduling an appointment.** If you would like to request an accommodation, you must receive approval before you schedule your appointment (whether online or in-person).

➤ Exam Delivery Moving to PSI
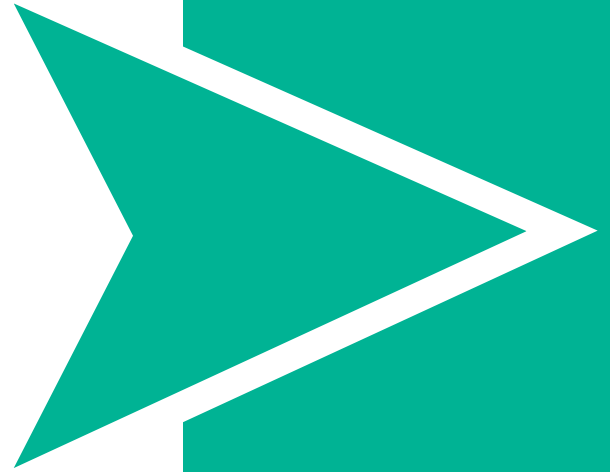
NCARB will switch to a new test administration vendor, PSI, in 2021. PSI offers both in-person and online proctored exam appointments. More information around the migration to PSI will be available in early-2021. .

Key things to know:

- **NCARB will use PSI's third-party testing locations in addition to PSI's proprietary test centers.** This will significantly expand the number of physical test centers available to ARE candidates.

- **More information on how to look up your local PSI test center location will be provided in the spring 2021.**

ARE® IS MOVING IN 2021!

ONLINE PROCTORING SETUP REQUIREMENTS

Before you schedule an online-proctored appointment, please take the time to make sure your computer and testing environment meet all the requirements established by both NCARB and Prometric. These requirements help ensure that all ARE divisions are administered under comparable conditions, and that the results represent a fair and accurate measurement.

You can find the full list of requirements in the *ARE 5.0 Guidelines*, as well as the highlights below:

➤ Systems Requirements

The ARE requires a combination of Prometric's systems requirements plus some additional requirements from NCARB designed to accommodate the ARE's graphic elements. These include:

- **Operating System:** Windows/MacOS

- **Web Browser:** Latest Google Chrome

- **Audio:** Microphone must be enabled at all times, and headphones are not allowed

- **Screen setup**: Laptop or desktop computer in a single monitor configuration; tablets or dual-monitor configurations are NOT acceptable. Laptops are required to be plugged directly into a power source and UNATTACHED from a docking station.

- **Screen Resolution:** A minimum of 1920 x 1080 pixels

- **Monitor Size:** 19-inch or larger monitor (using a smaller monitor will reduce image clarity, and may hinder your testing progress)

- **Webcam:** External webcam with the flexibility and cord length to provide a 360-degree view of your testing environment, and a minimum resolution of 640 x 480 pixels. Your camera should have the ability to autofocus to allow the proctor to fully visualize your ID, your surroundings, and yourself during the check-in process and throughout testing.

- **Internet Speed:** A minimum of 3 mbps of dedicated bandwidth

- **Internet Connection Type:** An ethernet cable connection is strongly recommended, but if you use wi-fi, be sure you have a strong signal throughout your exam administration

- **Cables:** All cables connected to the computer and/or peripheral devices must be accessible and visible for full inspection prior to testing.

- **Mouse:** To maintain the exam's security, candidates are not permitted to use stylus pens or tablets.

Tip: If you wish to use a single external monitor configuration with a laptop, connect a computer monitor cable directly from your external monitor to your laptop and close the laptop screen. You will not be able to use the laptop's integrated webcam or keyboard.

$50 Rebate for First Online Proctored Appointment

To help offset the cost of meeting the system requirements for testing via online proctoring (such as the external webcam), NCARB is providing all candidates who schedule their first online appointment with a $50 e-gift card. Every ARE candidate is eligible to receive one rebate. This gift card will be issued automatically after a candidate schedules their first online proctored appointment. Candidates who do not schedule an online proctored appointment are not eligible.

The gift card will be delivered to the email address on file in your NCARB Record.
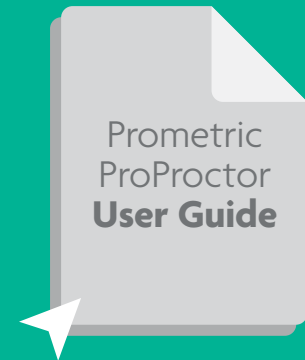
➤ Environmental Requirements

In addition to the technical requirements, your testing environment must meet the requirements within the Prometric ProProctor User Guide. Please ensure the room you plan to test in meets all of the following conditions, and any others outlined by Prometric:

- **Indoors:** You must test indoors in a walled environment. Plan to cover any glass windows or walls with a bed sheet or blinds.

- **Privacy:** You must have a private space, preferably with a single closing door. No people or animals can be present in the room while you test. If your testing room does not have a door, you can block the entrance with a bed sheet.

- **Lighting:** Your testing environment must be well-lit.

- **Quiet:** Your room must be free of background noise.

- **Workspace:** Your computer must be placed on a table or desk. You cannot test with your computer in your lap.

- **Free from distractions:** The room must be as uncluttered as possible. Your workspace and the surrounding area must be free of:
    - o   Cell phones or other electronic devices
    - o   Calculators
    - o   Paper or notepads
    - o   Books or study resources
    - o   Purses
    - o   Food or drinks
    - o   Tobacco or other smoking products

Prometric
ProProctor
User Guide
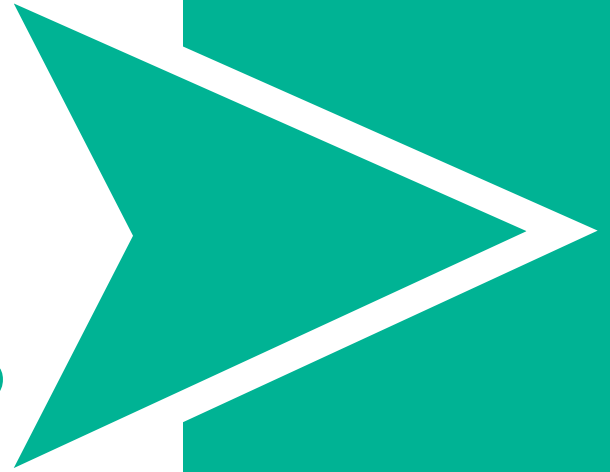
STUDY GUIDE

➤ Schedule a Test Run

NCARB has worked with Prometric to create a "test run" resource for candidates preparing to take an online proctored exam. Through their NCARB Record, candidates can schedule a free, 30-minute trial appointment with Prometric to confirm their computer and testing space meet the requirements for online proctoring.

Before scheduling a test run, candidates should be aware of the following:

- The test run is designed to help identify potential problems with the online testing setup. Candidates should schedule the test run far enough in advance of their actual ARE appointment that they are able to implement a solution or reschedule if necessary.

- Candidates should be prepared to use the exact same setup for the test run appointment that they are planning to use for their actual ARE appointment. It's also recommended that candidates take the test run at the same time of day as they plan to take the ARE.

- The test run will operate on Prometric's ProProctor application, just like the actual exam. Download and install ProProctor prior to the test run appointment.

- During the test run appointment, candidates will go through the ARE check-in process with a real Prometric proctor.

- Candidates will also see a short, unscored "quiz" as part of the test run, but are not required to complete it.

- If candidates run into technical trouble during the test run, work with Prometric's technical support using the chat tool on Prometric's ehelp site for further assistance resolving the issue.
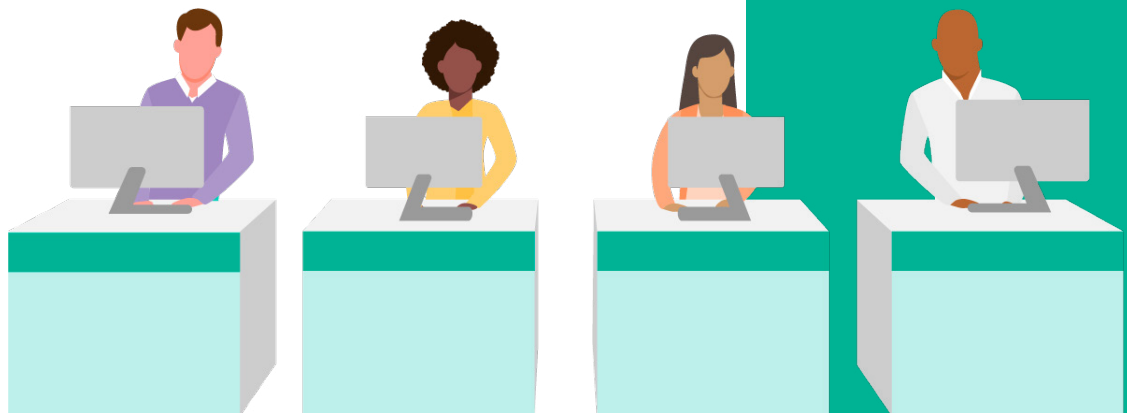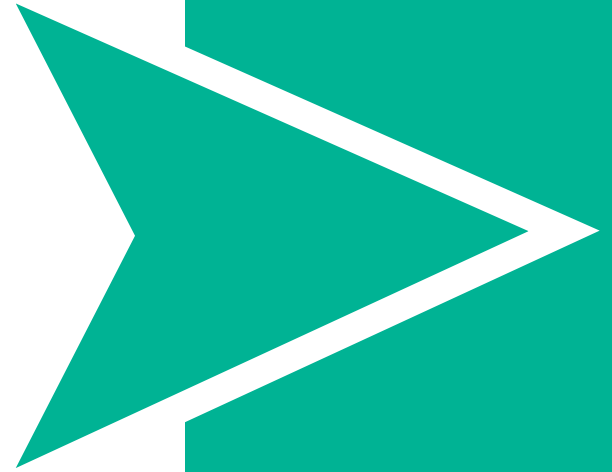
HOW NCARB DEVELOPS EXAM CHANGES

The ARE is an essential part of the licensure process, and enables licensing boards to carry out their work to protect the public by providing a reliable assessment of candidate competency. Because of this, NCARB takes the ARE very seriously, and no changes are made to the exam's navigation, content, or delivery without serious consideration.

The ARE is developed by hundreds of volunteer architects, who collaborate with NCARB's examination team (including staff architects) and psychometrician experts to ensure the ARE is reliable, rigorous, and fair. NCARB uses the psychometric services of Alpine Testing Solutions, who provide expertise regarding examination best practices. Any software needed for the exam delivery is developed in partnership with Zoomorphix Systems.

When NCARB makes changes to the exam, any updates are reviewed at the staff, psychometrician, volunteer, and Board of Director level before being announced to candidates. With the help of our psychometrician experts, NCARB monitors exam performance to ensure any changes aren't unfairly impacting candidates.

FAQS

Why did NCARB launch online proctoring?

NCARB has been exploring the option to enable online proctoring for some time. The pandemic has highlighted the need for test delivery flexibility. With a possible spike in COVID-19 cases expected this fall and winter, candidates could experience more test center closures, further impacting their licensure progress. Because of this, NCARB is working to launch online proctoring in 2020 to provide access to the ARE for candidates who are not comfortable testing onsite or have underlying health conditions that limit their ability to test during the ongoing health crisis.

What do I do if there's a technical issue during my online-proctored exam?

If you need assistance at any time during your exam, you will be able to contact your online proctor through Prometric's secure testing browser. If you are disconnected from your exam during your appointment, you will be able to reboot your computer, run the system check, and re-launch your exam using the "Launch exam" button in Prometric's browser. You must go through the whole check-in process again; however, your exam will re-start from the point where it was disconnected. If you experience any technical issues during the exam itself—including with the digital whiteboard—please let NCARB know at ncarb.org/contact.

What happens if my internet or computer crashes during the exam?

If your computer or internet crashes during your exam, your exam will "pause" while the issue is resolved, without locking any items. If you log back into Prometric's system within 30 minutes, you will be able to resume testing at the point where the exam paused. If you are unable to log back in within 30 minutes, please contact Prometric for next steps.

How can I take an ARE 5.0 practice test?

You can access the free ARE 5.0 Demonstration Exam, which includes 75 items from across the six ARE 5.0 divisions, at ncarb.org/demoexam.

How can I confirm my testing setup meets the online proctoring requirements before my online exam appointment?

NCARB offers a free "test run" resource through Prometric that allows you to schedule a 30-minute trial appointment with a live Prometric proctor. During this time, you'll go through the exam check-in process to confirm your computer and testing space meet the requirements for online proctoring. Learn more