Use our tips and resources to create your personal plan for exam success.

The Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®) is a multi-division exam used to assess your knowledge and skills regarding the practice of architecture. As the national licensing exam, the ARE is designed to focus on areas of practice that affect the public health, safety, and welfare.

As you prepare to take the ARE, you’ll probably have a few questions. And we’re here to help you at every step along the way—with study resources, expert help, and more.
Understanding the Basics

The exam is designed to make sure you’re ready to practice independently, so ARE 5.0 features six divisions organized around the progression of a typical architecture project and the management of an architecture firm. These divisions also align to the six practice areas of the Architectural Experience Program® (AXP®).

The divisions can be taken in the order that suits you best, whether that means taking each division as you gain work experience in that area, or taking all six in a row.

ARE 5.0 Divisions

- Practice Management
- Project Planning & Design
- Project Management
- Project Development & Documentation
- Programming & Analysis
- Construction & Evaluation

Division Format

All six divisions of ARE 5.0 are organized the same way, although you’ll find that some divisions are longer and have more items (or questions) than others.

When you sit down to test, your appointment will begin with a couple introduction screens and conclude with a few reminders, plus an exit survey. You will even have the opportunity to find out how you did on the division before you leave the testing room.

In between the introduction and conclusion, you’ll take the content portion of each division, which includes two sections: individual (or discrete) items and case study items. You can answer the questions in any order you want, so feel free to skip items you would rather answer toward the end of the test or jump directly to the case study section. If you want to come back to an item, you can easily flag it for review.
Item Types

Each division includes a combination of multiple-choice, check-all-that-apply, fill-in-the-blank, hotspot, and drag-and-place items—you’ll find a variety of these as both individual items and case study items.

Did You Know?

All exam items are worth one point. **There is no partial credit for any item type.** You must respond correctly to each item element to receive credit.

Multiple Choice

Multiple choice items contain a question with four possible responses. Select the single response that correctly answers the question.

Check-All-That-Apply

Similar to multiple choice items, check-all-that-apply items contain a question followed by six possible responses. Select the two to four responses (depending on the prompt) that correctly answer the question.

Quantitative-Fill-in-the-Blank

Quantitative-fill-in-the-blank items contain a question followed by a box. Enter a **numerical** response in the box, and don’t worry about labels or commas—any appropriate units will be provided for you, and commas can be added if you want, but are not necessary.

Hotspot

Hotspot items contain a question followed by a graphic, like a diagram or drawing. Use your mouse to select the area or object in the image that is asked for in the question. Each hotspot item has an acceptable scoring area; if you place the center of the crosshair within the area, your response will be counted as correct.

Drag-and-Place

Drag-and-place items contain a question followed by a graphic, like a diagram or drawing, as well as a bank of design elements. Select one or more of these elements, drag them to the correct location, and place them on the graphic. If necessary, elements can be rotated by right clicking.
Case Studies

Case studies evaluate your ability to combine several pieces of information, which is how architects solve problems on a daily basis. For each case study, you’ll need to use the resources provided to gain an understanding of the architectural scenario.

You’ll be asked to respond to a series of items based on the scenario and resources provided. Each item in a case study is scored individually, and the items won’t build on each other—so you don’t need to answer one question correctly in order to be able to answer the next.

Case Study Strategy

Because you’ll need to evaluate the provided resources, case studies can take up more testing time than individual items. As you prepare, make sure you create a plan that’ll leave you with enough time, whether that means navigating to a case study at the beginning of an exam appointment or waiting until the end.

REMEMBER: You don’t need to read all the case study resources. Use the search function inside each resource to quickly navigate to the relevant information you need to answer the question.

What’s a Case Study?

Each case study focuses on one architectural scenario. You’ll be given a description, key information, and several supporting resources, and then asked a series of questions related to the scenario. See page 10 for more!
Study Resources

Ready to start studying? NCARB offers a number of free tools and resources on our website that you can use to prepare for the exam, including:

ARE 5.0 Handbook

This essential resource walks you through each division, providing specific objectives, sample questions, suggested references, and more.

ARE 5.0 Demonstration Exam

Want to practice navigating the exam format? Login to your NCARB Record to try our free demo exam. With 20 practice questions—including at least one of each item type—and all the tools you’ll see in the actual exam, the demo will help make sure you’re comfortable with the interface before you test.

ARE 5.0 Community

You don’t have to test alone—join the ARE 5.0 Community to share tips and advice with fellow candidates, talk to our exam experts, and look for study groups near you.

ARE 5.0 Test Prep Video Series

Our video prep series offers exclusive insight into each ARE 5.0 division with information on content, sample questions, and suggested references.

ARE 5.0 Guidelines

From scheduling to score reports, this helpful document explains important exam policies. Be sure to read the section on exam security and ID requirements before heading to your exam appointment!
Taking the Test

Eligibility

Before you can schedule an exam appointment, your jurisdiction's board of architecture will need to approve your eligibility to test. In most cases, you can request eligibility after you've met your jurisdiction's education requirement—when you're ready, go to the “Exam” tab in your NCARB Record to get started.

Scheduling

To take a division, you'll need to login to your Record, pay for an open seat, and then schedule your appointment. Appointments are available throughout the year at Prometric test centers.

If you fail, you'll need to wait 60 days before taking that division again, and you can only take each division a maximum of three times in any 12-month period.

Rolling Clock

After you pass a division, your score is valid for five years from your testing date. If you haven't passed all divisions of the ARE before that division expires, you'll need to retake the expired division.

Exam Cost

You must purchase a seat credit before you can schedule an exam appointment. Once you purchase a seat credit, it is valid for one year. You can use the seat credit to schedule one available exam appointment. Each seat credit costs $235.

Exam Security

We're serious about protecting the public’s health, safety, and welfare, and to do that, we have to protect the content of the ARE.

The exam is administered at Prometric test centers, where you’ll have to:

- Present a valid photo ID with a signature—the first and last name on your ID must completely match the first and last name in your NCARB Record or you will not be permitted to test
- Have your picture taken
- Have your fingertip scanned
- Be scanned by a metal detector
- Stow any personal items (including your cell phone) in a locker

Be sure to arrive at least 30 minutes early so you have enough time to check in. You can read the ARE 5.0 Guidelines for more details on what to expect at the test center, or to learn how to request testing accommodations.
Score Reports

Your ARE performance is reported as pass or fail only, with the result clearly labeled along the top of the first page.

On passing score reports, you won’t receive feedback on how you did—just that you passed (which is all that matters). The division’s expiration date—five years after the date of your exam—and other rolling clock information will be noted.

Failing score reports include descriptive feedback on page two. Your performance on each content area will be marked as level 1-4:

- **Level 1:** Performance at this level exceeds the minimum performance necessary to demonstrate competency.
- **Level 2:** Performance at this level meets the minimum performance necessary to demonstrate competency.
- **Level 3:** Performance at this level does NOT meet the minimum performance necessary to demonstrate competency.
- **Level 4:** Performance at this level is far below meeting the minimum performance necessary to demonstrate competency.

If you fail, use the descriptive feedback to guide your preparation for your retest. It’s a good idea to focus more of your studies on the content areas marked as Level 3 or 4. Be sure to spend a bit of time on any area marked with a Level 2, as you still have room for improvement.

**Did You Know?**

At the end of your appointment, you’ll have the option to view provisional feedback. This is an accurate indicator of whether you passed or failed, but keep in mind that it’s not official and doesn’t replace your score report.
Approved Test Prep Provider Program

We want to make sure you have all the study options you need—that’s why we created a program to evaluate third-party study materials.

Through our Approved Test Prep Provider Program, companies that create ARE 5.0 study materials can submit them to NCARB, where they’ll be reviewed by a team of volunteer architects.

If the resource appropriately covers the division’s key elements, it’ll receive our seal of approval, letting you know that it’s accurate and dependable.

Visit ncarb.org/ARE5 to learn more!

FAQs

What happened to ARE 4.0?

After 20 months of dual-delivery, ARE 4.0 was retired on June 30, 2018. Candidates who did not finish testing in 4.0 will need to complete their exam requirement in ARE 5.0.

Where can I find ARE 5.0 study materials?

You can find free study materials—including the ARE 5.0 Guidelines, the ARE 5.0 Handbook, and a series of ARE 5.0 test prep videos—by visiting ncarb.org/ARE5. Plus, check out our blog for additional exam resources!

We also launched the ARE 5.0 Community, where you can get real-time help from NCARB experts, share study tips with other candidates, and access all our tools and resources. Join the community at ncarb.org/are5community.

Will NCARB-approved materials improve my chances to pass the ARE?

While NCARB-approved materials are verified to appropriately cover the key elements of the division, passing the ARE typically requires a combination of education, experience, and studying. Therefore, NCARB does not guarantee that the use of approved materials will result in a passing score.
Why doesn’t NCARB provide more feedback on score reports?

On a failing score report, you will find descriptive feedback about your level of performance on each section of the division. Descriptive feedback is not provided on passing score reports as the exam is designed to assess your overall ability to practice architecture—not to be used as a tool for measuring one candidate against another.

When will I receive my score report?

Results for all divisions are typically processed within three business days of your test date. You’ll receive an email notification once your score has been processed and is available to view in your NCARB Record.

I passed the ARE. What happens next?

NCARB will evaluate your Record—if you have completed both the ARE and the AXP, we’ll check to see if you have met all the requirements for initial licensure in your selected jurisdiction. Once you have, we will automatically transmit your Record to that jurisdiction for licensure. If your jurisdiction has additional requirements, you may have to complete those before becoming licensed.

Where can I find the latest information about the ARE?

Stay up-to-date on the latest ARE news by subscribing to our free newsletters, ARE Update and Destination Architect, at ncarb.org/subscribe.

Who develops the ARE?

Hundreds of architects from across the country volunteer their services, expertise, and time to write, test, and analyze the ARE. In addition, we bring psychometricians (professionals in the world of testing and measurement) to the table to ensure the validity, reliability, and fairness of the exam meets national testing standards.
For more information on the ARE 5.0, visit:

ncarb.org/blog

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youtube.com/ncarborg

ncarb.org/are5community

And subscribe to the ARE Update: ncarb.org/subscribe
The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, in collaboration with licensing boards, facilitates the licensure and credentialing of architects to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.