

NCARB Certificate Portfolio Applicant Guide

Congratulations! We have confirmed your eligibility for the NCARB Certificate Portfolio, part of NCARB's education alternative for certification. As you complete your portfolio, please use this guide to understand the process for the preparation, submission, and review of your portfolio.

The NCARB Certificate Portfolio

The NCARB Certificate Portfolio allows you to meet the requirements of the *NCARB Education Standard* by demonstrating learning through your experience as a registered architect. You must include descriptions and documentation as evidence of learning in relation to the subject areas you are assigned. The *NCARB Education Standard* includes five subject areas:

1. General Education
2. History and Theory and Human Behavior
3. Building Practices
4. Design
5. Professional Practice

Your portfolio is customized per your education background and will identify subject area assignments based on your Education Evaluation Service for Architects (EESA) report. For applicants who were not required to obtain an EESA, all subject areas are assigned.

To access your portfolio, please log in to [My NCARB](#), select NCARB Record, go to the "Education" tab, and select the "NCARB Certificate Portfolio" link.

Requirements

You are required to provide evidence of learning through a prescribed number of exhibits for each assigned category within the relevant subject area. An exhibit includes three critical elements:

1. Descriptions

You must describe how you gained learning through experience as a registered architect. These experiences must relate directly to the documentation submitted and your specific education deficiencies. Descriptions must also include your involvement, how decisions were made, challenges you faced, etc. It is important to tell the story for each exhibit to give the reviewer context and also to provide enough information to be able to make a proper assessment.

2. Documentation

There are a number of experiences that can result in learning at the appropriate level. These experiences may include but are not limited to various aspects of practice, architectural projects, professional responsibilities, seminars and training programs, continuing education, and professional volunteer and community activities. You may recreate missing steps in the design process for the purpose of telling the story—for example, a bubble diagram completed during the schematic design phase that may have been thrown out or misplaced. Any recreation of documents must be identified/acknowledged as such in your annotations or descriptions.

3. Annotation

You must annotate your documentation. **Portfolios without annotation will be returned for revision.**

The purpose of annotation is to:

- Explain personal experience and involvement with a specific aspect of a project
- Point out key aspects of a specific document
- Highlight critical areas of design and decision-making or problem resolution
- Summarize key points of the document relative to the description

Your exhibits should be prepared with close reference to category definitions and performance criteria, which are conveniently located within the portfolio template. For each exhibit, you are required to answer these questions as part of your description:

- Why did you choose this document?
- What did you learn from it?
- How does it relate to the specific category?

Selecting Projects

Each exhibit must be linked to a single project or activity. However, a project or activity can be linked to multiple exhibits. While you can include multiple projects and activities per category, keep in mind there is a recommended minimum number of exhibits for each category.

All uploaded documents must be annotated. Annotation facilitates the review process by pointing out key aspects of a specific document, highlighting areas of design and decision-making, and emphasizing elements of your description relative to the category. Adding labels to drawings is NOT sufficient annotation. You may only upload documents in PDF format, so be sure to add your annotation to the documents prior to uploading them to your portfolio.

Due to the typically collaborative nature of architectural projects, it is important for you to clarify your specific individual responsibilities for projects that are the result of a team effort. It is important that you do not rely upon a title alone, such as “Project Architect,” or a single statement of authorship as evidence of your level of responsibility for a project.

Please Note:

Your portfolio may only include projects completed post-licensure for the project duration. Projects outside of your jurisdiction(s) of registration must have been completed under the supervision of an architect licensed in that jurisdiction.

Quality over Quantity

Each subject area category includes a list of suggested documents to use for preparation of your exhibits. You are not limited to this list, but are encouraged to provide evidence that addresses the category definition and performance criteria. Each category has a recommended minimum number of exhibits, and each subject area has a maximum number of total exhibits. For example, the recommended minimum number of exhibits for Structural Systems is three, and a maximum of 30 exhibits for the Building Practices subject area. See the full chart on the next page.

Subject Area / Category	Min.	Max.	<i>Suggested Documents</i>
General Education <i>Communication Skills</i>	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations • Articles authored • Construction Change Directives • Official correspondence with authorities having jurisdiction • Any writing exploring design • Project programming document • Reports • Proposal requests • Business letters
<i>Humanities & Arts</i>	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel articulating learning opportunities • Evidence of foreign language skill • Research reports on historical context of a project • Sketchbook documentation • Book report • Service on board (civic, music, arts, etc.)
<i>Quantitative Reasoning</i>	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building egress / travel distance analysis • Built-up roof drainage analysis • Permit application review • Change order log management • Structural load analysis / calculations • Solar analysis and building orientation studies • Construction cost estimate • Analysis of site cut and fill • Project budget • BOMA rentable / usable floor area calculations • Zoning compliance including FAR calculations, lot coverage, and parking
<i>Natural Sciences</i>	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar orientation analysis / daylighting / wind • Travel documentation • Water shed principles and analysis

<i>Social Sciences</i>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials research • Mold study analysis • Plant selection for the environment / climate • Geotechnical report analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documentation showing how the work meets a social need • Project master planning • Feasibility studies • Community service project • Design review presentations • Zoning presentations / review • Project programming documents • Site selection studies (community, access, orientation, historical context, climate, etc.)
Total Exhibits	11	15
History & Theory and Human Behavior <i>History & Theory</i>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in historical societies • Observation study informing project program • Written description of building or site with relative significance (historical, theoretical, architectural) • Projects for which historical precedents informed the design • Travel documentation • Articles authored on subject of History and Theory • Documentation of research conducted on project site
<i>Human Behavior</i>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Occupancy Evaluation • Planning / zoning presentation • Master planning • Documentation demonstrating an understanding of the principles of cultural diversity • Site and/or building access plans • Urban renewal studies / analyses

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service on planning / zoning commission • Space planning / furniture design and layout
Total Exhibits	6	10
Building Practices <i>Structural Systems</i>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawings showing integration and coordination of structural systems with other building systems • Wood framing load analysis • Beam calculation • Floor plans / sections indicating primary structural system and secondary elements employed • Seismic or wind bracing load path examples • Describe the process of evaluation and selection of a structural system
<i>Environmental Control Systems</i>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of project with LEED certification • Thermal performance analysis on building skin • Moisture management control for building skin • Passive solar analysis • Site analysis / site plan • Building HVAC system selection analysis • Description of sustainable principles incorporated in a project • Drawings demonstrating ability to integrate and coordinate mechanical or other environmental systems with the architecture and other building systems • Plans / sections analyzing primary elements of the HVAC system and the climatic influences on building form
<i>Construction Materials & Assemblies</i>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exterior wall details • Building skin selection / analysis • Energy modeling report • Describe method for choosing appropriate finishes and materials

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe material assemblies and provide examples • Sustainable principles related to environmental impact as incorporated into a project • Building section • Finish schedule • Samples of specifications in support of materials selected • Exterior wall section / elevation design studies
<i>Building Service & Building Enclosure Systems</i>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevations / wall sections with key assemblies • Vertical transportation systems • Fire suppression system • Mechanical systems alternatives analysis • Electrical distribution analysis • Exterior wall moisture management • Room lighting layouts • Plumbing fixture count computation • Curtain wall research / selection analysis
<i>Technical Documentation</i>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural supplemental instruction • 3D modeling • Construction details • Building sections illustrating building systems • Construction document examples • Plans / specifications coordination • Project specifications • Wall sections
<i>Financial Considerations</i>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction project budget • Project schedule including design and construction activities • Value engineering analysis • Design project budget • Change order documentation • Project funding model • Financing study • Life-cycle cost study • Project feasibility study

Total Exhibits	21	30
<p>Design <i>Fundamental Design</i></p>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written documents substantiating design proposal • Floor plan, elevation sketches, or diagrams showing organizational elements such as solid/void, public/private, and transparency/opacity • Narrative of design concept and process • Sketchbook studies, bubble diagrams showing design thought process • Letter to building official communicating code issue / resolution / relief • Documentation of interaction with regulatory and planning agencies • Project feasibility study
<p><i>Programming and Site Design</i></p>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming document • Material selection strategy • Floodway / flood plain analysis • Site comparison studies • Preliminary project schedule • Hazardous material analysis / design impact • Zoning code analysis • Code related correspondence or documents showing life-safety components • Site plans / sketches showing analysis of a site pointing out environmental conditions that influence design • Sketches comparing two or more systems for a specific design, including openings and glazing, building envelope, materials evaluated relative to sustainable principles • Traffic analysis /design impact • Site analysis addressing orientation, topography, access, circulation, solar, adjacency, climate

<p><i>Research and Investigative Based Design</i></p>	<p>4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming document • Analysis of multiple sites to accommodate a specific design • Building section • Floor plans or elevations / sections with analysis of ordering systems such as balance / symmetry, geometry, hierarchy, and layering • Case study analysis • Site cost analysis • Code evaluation and description of effect on design • Sketches or diagrams comparing two or more systems considered for a project
<p><i>Integrated Design</i></p>	<p>4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming document • Analysis of multiple sites to accommodate a specific design • Building section • Floor plans or elevations / sections with analysis of ordering systems such as balance / symmetry, geometry, hierarchy, and layering • Case study analysis • Site cost analysis • Code evaluation and description of effect on design • Sketches or diagrams comparing two or more systems considered for a project
<p>Total Exhibits</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>Professional Practice <i>Stakeholder Roles in Architecture</i></p>	<p>3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example of contracts executed • Code research / ADA accessibility / local zoning • Evidence of project meetings involving multiple stakeholder contributions on a project • Documentation of correspondence demonstrating collaboration within a project team, including client input • Post-occupancy survey

<p><i>Project Management</i></p>	<p>2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project proposal outlining needs, timeline, and consultants required • Contract development • Cost estimates, life-cycle cost analysis • Describe project delivery methods considered for a project • Project team assembly • Project schedules (phasing, time requirements, bench marks) • Project fee development • Project specifications document • Methods used for consultant selection
<p><i>Business Management</i></p>	<p>2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee manual development • Business plan strategy / outline • Human resources • Professional development strategies • Description of marketing strategy • Firm business brochure
<p><i>Laws and Regulations</i></p>	<p>2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of accessibility standards, barrier-free design guidelines, environmental regulations, life safety requirements, building code provisions • Service on a public rule-making or review body • Discuss requirements for professional liability insurance (100 words) • Demonstrate how local tax laws and zoning affect design and/or services you provide • Discuss how an architecture practice act affects the services you provide (100 words) • Provide evidence of advocacy service at local, state, or national level
<p><i>Ethics and Professional Conduct</i></p>	<p>1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your understanding and application of ethics and professional conduct (350 words) • Take and pass the NCARB Professional Conduct Monograph

Total Exhibits	10	15
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Activities

Activities include anything unrelated to a specific project, such as work experiences, life experiences, workshops, seminars, continuing education courses, or other professional activities. Evidence of attending continuing education courses must include a detailed description of what you learned, how it applies to the category being addressed, and, where possible, how you applied what you learned to a specific project. A copy of Learning Objectives is not sufficient evidence of learning.

Submission

Once you submit your portfolio, you will be unable to make additional edits until your portfolio has been reviewed and returned. NCARB will be notified of your submission and will assign two architects from our pool of trained reviewers to independently evaluate your portfolio.

1. Your reviewers will look over your submitted exhibits and return the portfolio to you if they need clarification or additional information. You should receive your evaluated portfolio within one month.
2. If the portfolio is returned to you with issues raised by the reviewer(s), you can address them through additional explanations or exhibits. If an issue is unclear or problematic, you can contact NCARB for assistance.
3. Your reviewers will evaluate the updated issues and either mark them as resolved or return them to you for further clarification. Once all issues are resolved, your portfolio will return to NCARB for final approval.
4. There is no submission deadline; however, you are required to meet the *Education Standard* in effect at the time of submission.

Please Note:

- All submissions become part of your NCARB Record. NCARB reserves the right to verify information and/or documentation submitted.
- All confidential information should be redacted prior to submission.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that your portfolio conforms to all requirements and that all information and documentation is accurate and complete.
- You are encouraged to clarify any questions you may have with the Experience + Education Directorate prior to submitting your portfolio at educationalalternative@ncarb.org.

Reciprocity

Many architects apply for an NCARB Certificate to seek reciprocal registration in other U.S. jurisdictions. Reciprocal registration requirements vary, and not all jurisdictions accept an NCARB Certificate issued upon satisfaction of the education requirement through the education alternative program. NCARB's [licensing requirements tool](#) includes the basic requirements of each jurisdiction, and includes links to each jurisdiction's website for more information. Because requirements may change, it is important to confirm requirements with the jurisdiction in which you are seeking reciprocal registration.

Questions? Contact our Customer Relations team [on our website](#) or at 202-879-0520.