National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) to change Architect Registration Examination (ARE) licensing exam - to launch in late 2016

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The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) will transition plan to guide the implementation of major improvements and changes to the Architect Registration Examination (ARE), the test that all prospective architects must take to get their licenses. Architect candidates taking the current ARE 4.0 exam when ARE 5.0 launches will have the opportunity to receive credit for divisions passed in the current ARE 4.0 version.

According to NCARB, the new ARE 5.0 will launch in late 2016, while ARE 4.0 will remain available for at least 18 months after the launch. The extension of the old exam will allow candidates the option of either finishing all exam divisions in the familiar current format, ARE 4.0, or transition to the new exam.

"ARE 5.0 introduces an exciting new era for our licensure examination," said NCARB CEO Michael Armstrong. "For interns that will be testing when ARE 5.0 is launched, NCARB is making every effort to provide opportunities for a smooth transition while ensuring that all those seeking licensure are demonstrating the knowledge and skills the profession requires."

ARE 5.0: The Basics

The main things that architects and prospective architect candidates (interns) need to know:

* ARE 5.0 will launch in late 2016.

* It will include six standalone divisions, compared to the seven in ARE 4.0, that align to commonly defined professional architect activities of practice management, project management, and project design.

* The current "graphic vignette" software, which has been in use since the exam was computerized in 1997, will be replaced with new question types.

"Most interns taking the ARE complete all seven divisions in about two years," said examination director Jared Zurn, AIA, NCARB. "That means most interns testing now should keep testing and will likely be done with the exam before ARE 5.0 even launches. However, the Council wanted to provide as much advance notice about the transition to ensure those affected will have all the information necessary to develop a successful testing strategy."

ARE 5.0 Transition Plan

NCARB has announced the following plans to ensure a smooth transition to the new licensing exam:

* Interns who began testing in the current version of the exam have the ability to earn credits from the divisions that they passed for divisions in ARE 5.0.

* ARE 4.0 will continue to be delivered at least 18 months after the launch of ARE 5.0 to give candidates who have partially completed ARE 4.0 a chance to finish.

ARE 4.0 will be retired on June 30, 2018.

* Interns who began testing in ARE 4.0 will have the opportunity to transition to ARE 5.0 at any time after it launches.

"NCARB has learned a lot from our previous transition, and these steps should address many of the desires we hear from interns," said Zurn. "In addition to offering ARE 4.0 for at least 18 months after ARE 5.0 launches, NCARB will provide highly individualized tools and customer service to help interns decide when transitioning to ARE 5.0 is best for them and what their testing strategy should be to prepare."

ARE 5.0 Transition Credit Model

Subject-matter expert architects and NCARB's test development consultant Alpine Testing Solutions have mapped ARE 4.0's divisions to the new divisions of ARE 5.0 to ensure competency of candidates that may complete the ARE through a combination of both exams. To help candidates understand how they will receive credit for ARE 4.0 divisions in ARE 5.0, NCARB has created a graphic credit model. [Download]

Key takeaways for interns:

* With a strategic testing approach, interns testing during the transition can complete the ARE in five (5) divisions rather than six or seven.

* The most important divisions for interns to pass in ARE 4.0 are Construction Documents & Services; Programming, Planning & Practice; and Site Planning & Design.

* Interns need to be aware of their Rolling Clock dates for divisions that they have already passed, and make their testing plan accordingly.

What's Next

* In early 2015, NCARB will be creating more interactive tools to help interns plan for the transition. Interns will be able to use their current test history to see how exactly they will be transitioned to ARE 5.0.

* In late 2015, NCARB will release more information about the new question types that will be part of ARE 5.0.

* In early 2016, NCARB expects to release study materials and finalize examination details for ARE 5.0, including test fees.