NCARB

ARE 5.0:
FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS

What is ARE 5.0?

In early 2013, the NCARB Board of Directors voted unanimously to approve the development of ARE 5.0, the next version of the examination. As part of ARE 5.0 development, NCARB is investigating the incorporation of dramatic new breakthroughs in graphic testing methods and the use of case studies. The new performance item type questions, along with other refinements and enhancements to the examination, will allow the determination of a candidate's competency while not requiring the present outdated CAD software system.

Why is NCARB developing a new version of the exam?

The ARE is in a constant state of evolution, and NCARB makes significant annual investments in research and development to ensure that the exam remains relevant to current practice, psychometrically justifiable, and legally defensible. NCARB and its volunteer committees are committed to using and implementing effective testing methodologies in order to test a candidate's ability to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare.

When will ARE 5.0 be released?

ARE 5.0 is anticipated to launch in late 2016.
We should know an official launch date in the next year.

How many divisions will be included in ARE 5.0?

The structure includes six divisions:

1. Practice Management
2. Project Management
3. Programming & Analysis
4. Project Planning & Design
5. Project Development & Documentation
6. Construction & Evaluation

Each of the divisions will be standalone, single test administrations. The new Test Specification approved by the NCARB Board of Directors, is *available here*.

Why is the division structure different from ARE 4.0?

These divisions are a change from the current seven division structure in an effort to align the divisions of the ARE with the more commonly defined professional architecture activities of practice management, project management, and project design. The Test Specification was strongly informed by the results of the *2012 NCARB Practice Analysis of Architecture*. This comprehensive study included multiple surveys designed to engage architects—the most appropriate representatives of the profession—in the evaluation of tasks and knowledge/skills required of an independent practitioner.

Will there still be graphic vignettes on the exam?

ARE 5.0 is expected to take advantage of new tools and technology in the testing industry. The division structure for ARE 5.0 incorporates graphics throughout the exam through new performance item types like hot spots (candidates are presented a question asking them to identify the correct location, or "hot spot," on a response image) instead of through the current graphic vignettes. These new item types allow for testing at higher levels of cognition through analytical, synthetic, and evaluative exercises—which will be more like what an architect does as part of regular practice.

Are other new item (question) types being incorporated into the exam?

In addition to the new performance item types under consideration, case studies are also anticipated to be implemented. These will consist of a scenario with a related set of resource documents (e.g., drawings, specifications, code resources). Case studies require candidates to assess multiple pieces of information and make evaluative judgments, a better reflection of the practice of architecture, as often no one decision is made in isolation of other factors.

How is the transition to ARE 5.0 different from the transition to ARE 4.0?

For the transition to ARE 5.0, dual delivery of both ARE 4.0 and ARE 5.0 will last longer—at least 18 months. Additionally, candidates will have the ability to self-transition to ARE 5.0 when it is most convenient for them during the dual delivery. There will also be more interactive tools available for candidates to help determine their individual path forward.

What does dual delivery mean?

Dual delivery means that both ARE 4.0 and ARE 5.0 will be offered at the same time. Candidates who started in ARE 4.0 will have at least 18 months after the launch of ARE 5.0 to finish in that version before they are transition to ARE 5.0. However, candidates who started in ARE 4.0 will have the option to choose to start testing in ARE 5.0 anytime after it launches.

What does self-transition mean?

Once ARE 5.0 launches, ARE 4.0 candidates will be able to make the individual choice as to whether to keep testing in ARE 4.0 or transition their eligibilities to ARE 5.0. The ability to self-transition will allow candidates to control how they strategically complete the ARE. Once you transition to ARE 5.0, however, you must finish the exam in ARE 5.0.

If I don't self-transition, how long can I keep testing in ARE 4.0?

The last day ARE 4.0 will be available in test centers is 30 June 2018. After this day, any remaining ARE 4.0 candidate will be transitioned to ARE 5.0.

How was ARE 4.0 mapped to ARE 5.0?

NCARB's Examination Committee, consisting of subject-matter expert, architects and psychometricians from our test development consultant, mapped the content in ARE 4.0 to ARE 5.0. Grounded in the science of testing, they used the *2012 Practice Analysis of Architecture* as a guide to compare ARE 4.0 to ARE 5.0 to look for a reasonable level of alignment. You can view the credit model *here*.

How much will each ARE 5.0 division cost?

The cost of each ARE 5.0 division is still being determined. The Council expects to release the fee structure sometime in 2016.

When will ARE 5.0 study materials be available?

Study materials will be available in early 2016, allowing ample time for any candidate to prepare for a division of ARE 5.0. ARE 5.0's test specification (what each division will test) has already been released and is available to download *here.*

What can I do right now to prepare for ARE 5.0?

Keep testing in ARE 4.0! The average candidate finishes the ARE in two years—meaning most candidates currently testing will be done with ARE 4.0 before ARE 5.0 even launches.

Does NCARB have any suggested strategies for preparing for ARE 5.0?

Yes. A good strategy for any candidate who thinks they may transition to ARE 5.0 is to focus on passing three critical divisions in ARE 4.0, which will maximize credits in ARE 5.0:

1. **Construction Documents & Services**
2. **Programming, Planning, & Practice**
3. **Site Planning & Design**

If you pass these three divisions in ARE 4.0, you will only need to take two additional divisions in ARE 5.0—Project Planning & Design and Project Development & Documentation. If you take this path, you could finish the ARE in only five divisions!

When determining your testing strategy to prepare for ARE 5.0, it is important to know your Rolling Clock dates. It may be in your best interest to finish the exam now to ensure exam credits do not expire.

Is ARE 5.0 going to be harder?

No. ARE 5.0 will not be easier or harder than ARE 4.0. It is going to be different in that NCARB will be using different question types to assess a candidate's understanding of the knowledge and skills being tested through the ARE.

Will ARE 5.0 have more questions than ARE 4.0?

The exact number of questions in each division of ARE 5.0 is still being determined. Final details about how each ARE 5.0 division is structured will be released in early 2016.

I am currently testing, should I wait for the launch of ARE 5.0?

No. Your Rolling Clock will still tick in the time between now and the launch of ARE 5.0. You should look at what divisions you have currently passed and make a plan to pass the remaining divisions. If you believe you may be affected by the transition to ARE 5.0, you should make sure you test strategically going forward.

Is NCARB going to shorten the six-month retake policy for ARE 5.0?

NCARB is constantly evaluating all of the policies that govern its programs—including the retake policy. At this time, the six-month retake policy remains in affect.

When will I get my score in ARE 5.0?

More information about how candidates will receive score reports will be available in 2016.

Is ARE 5.0 the right path forward for the examination?

All of the proposed item types for ARE 5.0 have been judged by outside testing experts to be psychometrically justifiable for purposes of the program. The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999) requires test developers to collect evidence that supports the intended interpretations and uses of test scores. Such evidence is typically collected to ensure that the test is measuring the intended knowledge and skills (validity), in a consistent manner (reliability) that is appropriate for all examinees (fairness).

The proposed direction for ARE 5.0 was informed by:

- Multi-year efforts by the Research & Development Subcommittee with additional support from the Graphics Grading Subcommittee

- Expert psychometric advice

- Research conducted by a multi-disciplinary staff project team

- Emerging technology, including interviews of industry leaders

- Results of the *2012 NCARB Practice Analysis of Architecture*

Why will it take so long for ARE 5.0 to launch?

NCARB is committed to a thorough and sound design process. The important contributions of the psychometric experts who advise us, and of the architects who serve on our volunteer committees, will continue in the coming months—and years—as ARE 5.0 moves from concept to development. ARE 5.0 is anticipated to launch in late 2016, and the next few years will be devoted to development and integration testing.

The Council is committed to transparency throughout the development process, and our goal is to provide plenty of advance notice to candidates as important decisions are made about the future of the ARE.

Who are the volunteers that help develop the ARE?

ARE 5.0 is being developed by practitioner volunteers from across the United States, ranging from recently licensed to experienced architects, from large firms to small firms, from education to private practice, all of which allow the future exam to reflect the broad aspects of current practice. These architects voluntarily serve on ARE-related committees that fulfill critical functions such as: setting standards for the exam; development and implementation of the practice analysis; exam research and development; writing, editing, and pretesting items; developing and applying grading criteria; and updating the test specification.

How can candidates stay informed about the development and implementation of ARE 5.0?

Leading up to the launch of ARE 5.0 in 2016, NCARB will provide ongoing updates to candidates about the development of ARE 5.0 as well as tips and resources to help prepare for the transition to the future exam.

In the coming months, updates will include invitations to webinars, announcements about preparation resources, and more. Subscribe to ARE Updates to receive notification when new information is available. *Subscribe now!*