

AACA Review of the ACADEMIC REVIEW OF EQUIVALENCE Process

Background Paper

The Review of Academic Equivalence (RAE) is the assessment of overseas *academic* professional architectural qualifications through an interview process, in which the interviewers examine in detail the content of the course leading to the qualification to determine the extent to which it delivers the competencies required. These are contained in *The National Competency Standards in Architecture - NCSA 01* (see AACA website: www.aaca.org.au), and form the basis for accreditation for Australian courses, as well as the assessment of overseas qualifications. The RAE does not assess practical experience.

The outcome of the RAE assessment will be either an Equivalent Qualification, where the qualification is found to meet the academic requirements for subsequent registration as an architect; or a Non-Equivalent Qualification, where the qualification does not meet the required standard for subsequent registration. AACA will advise applicants with a Non-Equivalent Qualification of the subject areas which are deficient so that further study in these areas may be undertaken at an Australian school of architecture in order to satisfy the academic requirement needed for registration. Alternatively applicants may apply to undertake the National Program of Assessment, which allows them to demonstrate equivalence through experience.

RAE applicants must attend the interview with an adequate portfolio of academic material completed as a student to enable assessment to be made against the Competency Standards. This material should include degree certificates, course transcripts, projects, drawings, final design projects, and other documentation illustrating course work undertaken in obtaining academic qualifications. The purpose of looking at the student work is to gauge the levels of competency expected from the course as evidenced by the applicant's student work.

A number of questions have arisen given the intention of the RAE and whether expectations and procedures remain relevant today. Issues that have been raised include the following:

- Is the process adequate for current RAE practice, technology and international academic contexts? Are the mechanisms appropriate for current circumstances?
- Is the portfolio material original and from the course or has it been prepared subsequent to the qualification? How can the author of the portfolio material be confirmed? Both these issues should be considered within the context of digital visualization becoming the primary mode of presentation.
- Does reliance on sighting undergraduate folio material disadvantage those who cannot bring examples to the RAE due to unavoidable circumstances?
- Should the consideration of academic equivalence be confined to: the primary professional architectural qualification only; the primary professional architectural qualification and postgraduate professional qualifications of an architectural nature; or should other qualifications related to architecture also be considered?
- Should other forms of architectural study/learning also be considered as augmenting professional architectural qualifications for the purposes of considering equivalence and, if so, how should this additional material be admitted?
- Other issues raised relate to the standard of RAE Assessors and maintaining a national uniformity of approach to the registration process.

This Background Paper should be read in conjunction with the Terms of Reference for the Review.

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Terms of Reference

The Review is to:

1. confirm the purpose of the RAE process;
2. address the definition of 'Academic Equivalence' in relation to the RAE process;
3. address the relationship of the RAE process to current practices, new technologies, and political contexts;
4. address the RAE process in terms of fairness and equity for all applicants;
5. address the procedures within the RAE process and the engagement of all State/Territory jurisdictions ensuring uniformity throughout Australia.