

# **Review of the National Competency Standards in Architecture (NCSA)**

## **Summary of the major issues raised in the consultation on the draft National Standard of Competency for Architects**

Submissions were received from architects, regulators, educators and administrators from around Australia regarding the draft National Competency Standard for Architects issued in January 2014. Many submissions were detailed and common themes emerged. The most common themes raised in the consultation and how the Review Group's response are included below.

### **Concern regarding a decrease in the number of Performance Criteria**

The Review Group is of the view that the revised Standard provides a richer description of the complexity of architectural practice in a succinct format that can easily be understood by users of the Standard, architects, educators, assessors, graduates, students and the general public. To assist stakeholders the Review Group has produced a matrix comparing the performance criteria in the draft Standard against the NCSA.

### **Audience, uses of the standards and information for users**

The preamble has been expanded to explain in simple terms the Standard and uses. The final document will hyperlink to detailed information about processes mentioned in the preamble to cater for the range of audiences.

A matrix will be developed showing which components of the Standard are relevant to AACA processes including accreditation of architecture programmes, assessment of architecture programmes for equivalence to an Australian architecture programme, the mandatory competencies for logging experience for eligibility for the Architectural Practice Examination.

The AACA has confirmed that a Work Group including representatives from stakeholders will be formed to provide guidance on the use of the Standard.

### **Consistency of language**

The Standard had been reviewed to ensure consistency of terms to describe aspects of the Standards. Further refinements will be made depending upon the response received in this final consultation round.

### **Transition period**

An adequate transition period will be allowed for guidance material to be developed for the use of the Standard in AACA processes. Communication with key stakeholders will also occur at this time.

### **Definitions**

The current Preamble includes an expanded explanation of the Standard.

The National Competency Standard for Architects sets out the required competency for registration as an architect in Australia. In essence the Standard describes the required competency to be demonstrated for the broad range of activities and responsibilities that can be undertaken by an architect. Many architects specialise post-graduation but the Review Group is of the view that this generalist standard is required at registration.

The Definition of Terms includes the definition for a complex project as the context for assessment of competency against the Standard.

Identification of Performance Criteria to be met at the outcome of an architecture program for the purpose of accreditation will be described in the guidance material to be developed post finalisation of the Standard.

### **Linear process**

The practice of architecture is a complex endeavour with a wide variety of skills and knowledge expected of an architect. The demonstrable capacity to undertake the full range of functions/tasks reasonably required of an architect is the benchmark standard of competency. The National Competency Standard for Architects does not prioritise any element or Performance Criteria, all have equal weight and all must be demonstrated to meet the Standard.

The arrangement of the Elements provides a framework to describe the Performance Criteria. It is not intended to be a description of the order or extent of how a project should be undertaken.

### **Contexts**

The current draft of the Standard has been revised so that what was formerly termed Contexts have been re-named Knowledge Domains and the definitions refined in response to feedback received.

The Knowledge Domains are presented in a graphic Matrix set against the Performance Criteria. While all of the Domains, as a collective of underlying knowledge, should be considered when determining whether a Performance Criteria has been met, the Matrix gives priority to those Domains with specific relevance to particular Performance Criteria. Typically, numerous Knowledge Domains would be relevant to an individual criterion.

### **Project management v project delivery**

The unit title project management has been deleted as the Review Group considers that the term project management is confusing as it is a specialisation and activity group rather than fully describing the competency required of an architect to ensure Project Delivery.

Performance criteria in the unit Project Delivery focused on procurement, the contractual framework and systems established in the contract stage to achieve timely, efficient and cost effective project delivery.

### **Detailed design**

Aspects of competency relating to Detailed Design have been included in the Unit Documentation rather than in the Design unit because the distinction between design and documentation is becoming more and more blurred, and Detailed Design can be considered a significant part of the Documentation procedure and system.

### **Business practices**

The Unit Practice Management has been revised so that it focusses on the delivery of professional architectural service in the interests of the client and stakeholders. Detailed business practices that have no direct bearing of the capacity to offer efficient and appropriate services to the client have been deleted from the Standard.

### **BIM and other specific technologies and processes**

Specific technologies and systems have not been described in the NSCA, as the Review Group is of the view that specifying technologies limits the flexible application of the Standard. It is also considered reasonable that technologies and systems will develop, evolve and change into the future. The competent architect will be abreast of, and engage with the appropriate systems to suit the time and nature of the architectural activities. The language in the Standard and the Knowledge Domains allow users of the Standard to incorporate assessment of specific technologies as appropriate.

NCSA Review Group  
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