

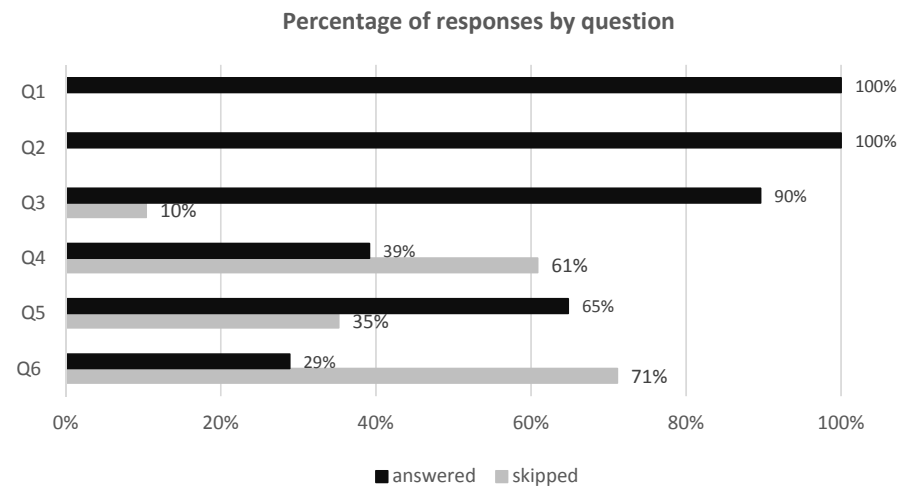
Have your say: Review of the National Standard of Competency for Architects

2020 NSCA survey results



Participants

- 963 participants from 8 states/territories have provided their responses.
- Responses decreased to 377 for open-end question 4, and 278 participants for open-end question 6

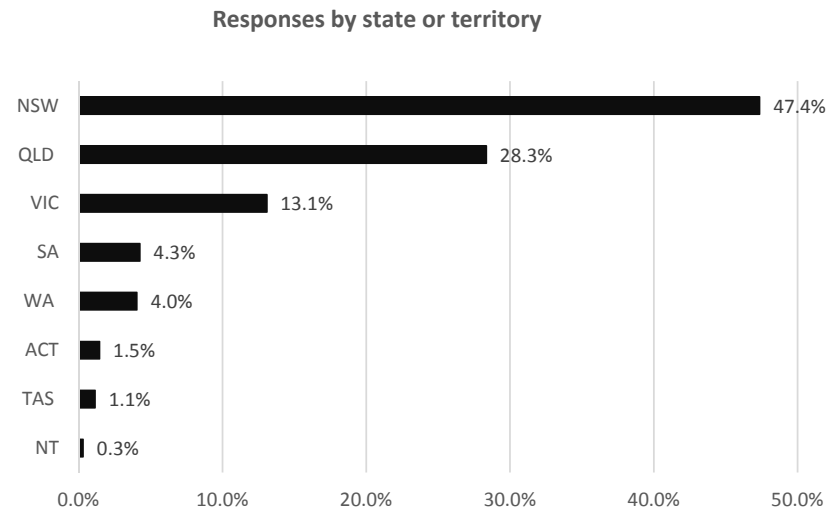




Participants

Q1 – Please tell us what State or Territory are you currently in?
(N=963)

- The majority of responses have been provided from participants residing in NSW (N=456, 47%), followed by those living in QLD (N=273, 28%) and VIC (N=126, 13%).





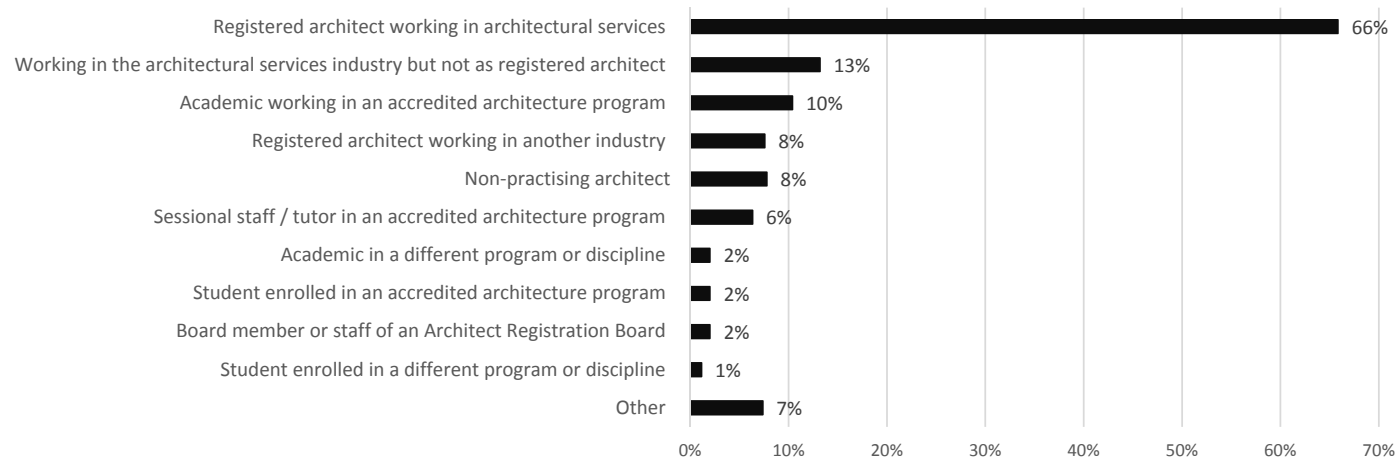
Participants

Q2 – Please indicate your current involvement in the profession.

You may choose as many options as are applicable. (N=963)

- The majority of participants are practicing registered architects (N=629, 66%), followed by practitioners in architectural services industry not being registered architect (N=127, 13%) and academics working in an accredited architecture program (N=100, 10%).

Percentage of selected involvement in the profession



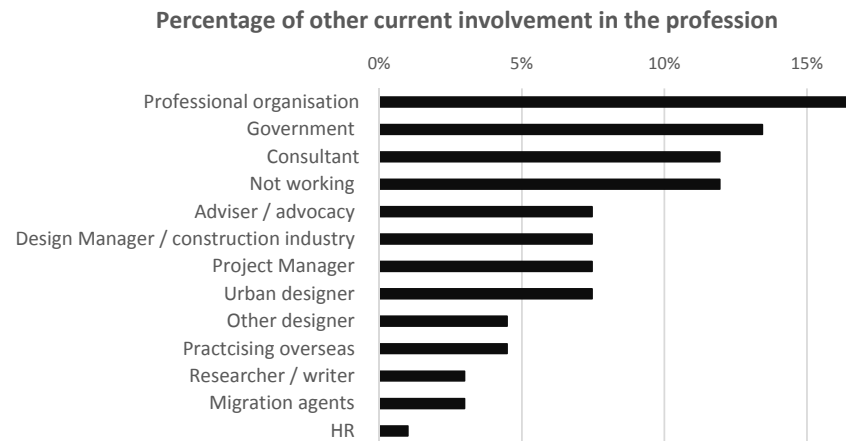


Participants

Q2 – Please indicate your current involvement in the profession.

You may choose as many options as are applicable. (N=67)

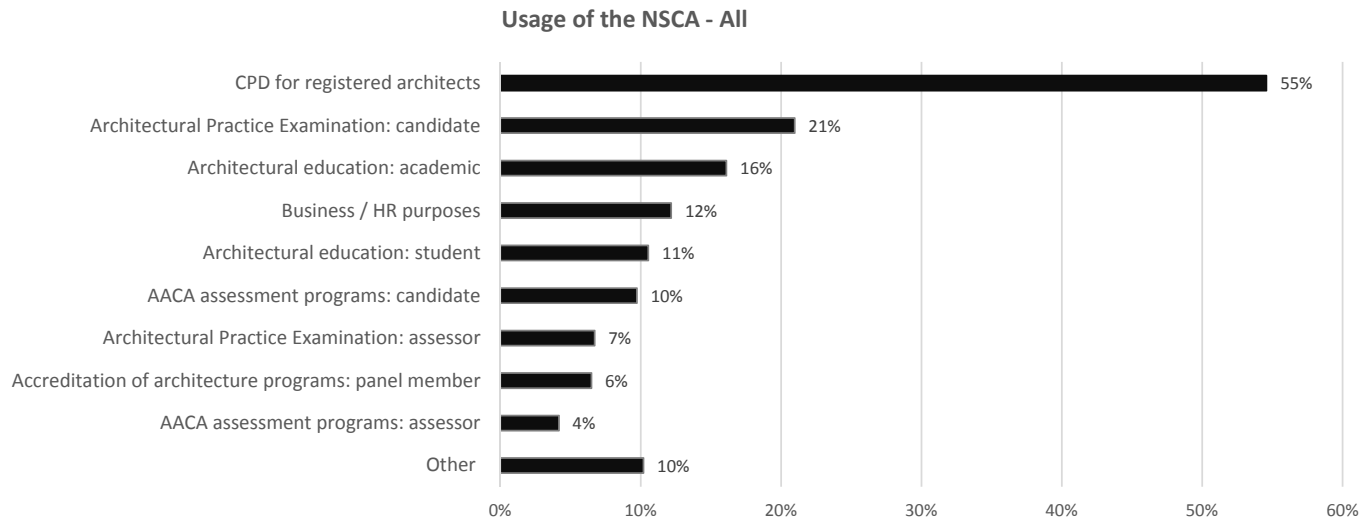
- The group of 'Other' (N=84, 9%) includes members of professional organisations (N=11), government employees (N=9), special consultants (N=8), Design Managers in the construction industry (N=5), Project Manager (N=5), adviser (N=5) and urban designer (N=5).





Q3 – Please indicate how you used the NSCA during the period 2015 to 2020.
You may indicate multiple uses of the Standards. (N=863)

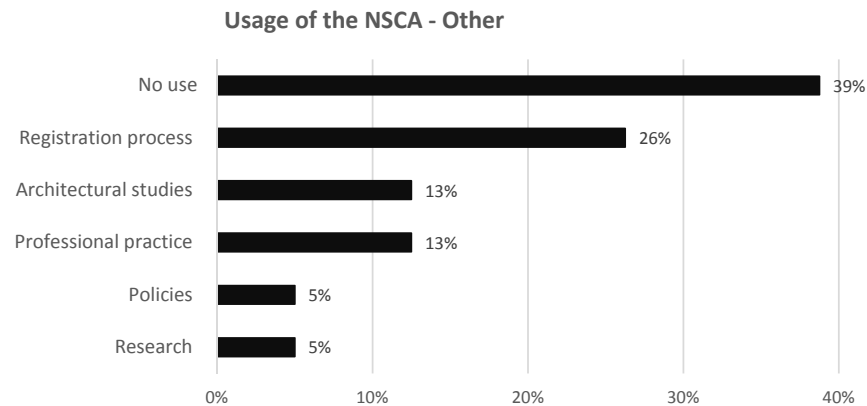
- The majority of responses indicate a use of the NSCA for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) purposes (N=471, 55%) which is an obvious result as the largest group of respondents are practising architects.
- APE candidates form the second group (N=181, 21%), followed by academics in architectural education (N=139, 16%).
- 12% (N=105) use the standards for business/HR purposes, followed by Architecture students (N=91, 11%).





Q3 – Please indicate how you used the NSCA during the period 2015 to 2020. You may indicate multiple uses of the Standards. (N=80)

- Comments on ‘other’ use of the NSCA relates to the pathway to registration, professional practice as well as policies and research. Thirty-one indicated no use of the NSCA, of which four mentioned to be non-practising architects.
- A few academics responded in the question that they apply the standards for development of architectural programs (N=2), accreditation (N=7) and course assessment (N=1).



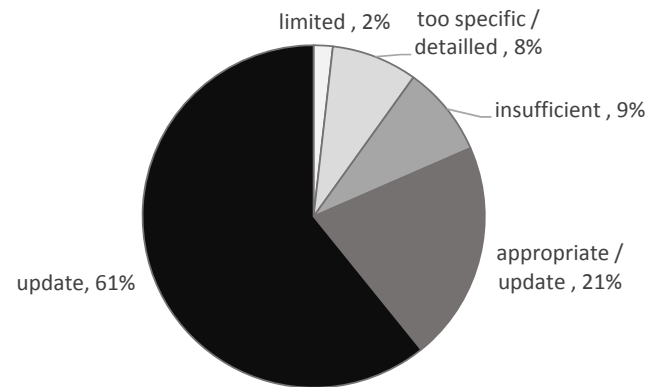


Q3 – Please indicate how you used the NSCA during the period 2015 to 2020. You may indicate multiple uses of the Standards. (N=80)

Architectural studies	Accreditation of architecture programs	7		
	Development of architectural programs	2		
	Course content / assessment criteria	1	10	13%
Registration process	Mentoring	9		
	Guide to registration	3		
	Self-education	2		
	PALS convenor	2		
	ARB	2		
	AACA NPrA scenario writer	1		
	Exam preparation	1		
	APE delivery	1	21	26%
	Professional practice	Performance reviews	3	
Staff development (non-registered)		2		
Employment contracts		2		
Practice / scope of services		1		
Practice tutorials		1		
Code of practice		1	10	13%
Policies	Policy design and review	2		
	Policies / regulatory function	1		
	Government / review of practitioners regulations	1	4	5%
Research	Review of NSCA	2		
	Analysis of current issues in our industry	1		
	Research / symposium	1	4	5%
No use	No use	27		
	No contact as non-practising architect	4	31	39%
			80	

Q4 – Please make a brief comment on the extent to which the current NSCA broadly reflects the role of an architect. (N=317)

- The largest group of respondents are registered architect practitioners (N=224), followed by 56 academics and 35 registered architects working in other industry.
- 30% (N=95) found that the NSCA is an appropriate standard, but the majority of respondents demand changes or updates (N=222, 70%).
- The majority group demanding changes can be subdivided into: 'update' (N=135, 61%), 'appropriate standard / update' (N=46, 21%), 'insufficient' (N=19, 9%), 'too specific / detailed' (N=18, 8%) and 'limited' (N=4, 2%).





Q4 – Please make a brief comment on the extent to which the current NSCA broadly reflects the role of an architect. (Feedback comments: N=311)

- Of all comments, 311 have been grouped into categories as below and 6 comments didn't deliver any concrete suggestions (including 'out of date', 'misses critical aspects' and 'should be more consistent').
 - Contemporary practice (N=112, 36%)
 - Practice – update (N=46, 14.8%)
 - Design-related – consider (N=92, 29.6%)
 - Practice-related – consider (N=20, 6.4%)
 - Profession – consider (N=6, 1.9%)
 - NSCA performance criteria – change (N=32, 10.3%)



Q4 – Please make a brief comment on the extent to which the current NSCA broadly reflects the role of an architect. (Feedback comments: N=311)

• **Contemporary practice (N=112, 36%):**

Diversity of role / expertise	58	18.6%
Current roles and responsibilities / contemporary practice	26	8.4%
Changing / diverse mode of practice	25	8%
Government roles	3	1%
	112	36%

The most frequently given comments refer to the diversity of the architect’s role of contemporary practice while the NSCA defines a more traditional role and smaller scale practice. 15 comments refer particularly to working in a larger practice / larger scale projects and therefore a lack of experience across all competencies. 9 also indicated that the role has become less or different and therefore there are issues with the registration process (logbook). 3 referred to government roles which can’t relate to the traditional work stages of an architect.

The categories (excluding government roles) can form one large group (109, 35%) emphasising the more diverse and changed mode of practice.



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Comments include, for example:

- Commercial sector / practice in a large firm is very different, different experiences, rather specific, not balanced across all phases / issues with logbook requirements;
- Consider wide range of project types;
- Changed relationship with stakeholders / architect is no longer the main consultant;
- Consider specialist fields / government roles;
- Protect architects in extended field of profession.



Q4 – Please make a brief comment on the extent to which the current NSCA broadly reflects the role of an architect. (Feedback comments: N=311)

- **Practice – update** (N=46, 14.8%):

Contract administration	22	7.1%
Procurement	20	6.4%
Practice Management	4	1.3%
Design / Project Management skills	3	1%
	46	14.8%

Excluding the comments on the diversity of the role, the majority of comments addresses a decreasing role or fewer/no involvement in contract administration (22, 7.1%), followed by the need to update procurement methods (20, 6.4%) as industry has moved to Design & Construct agreements. 4 (1.3%) suggest to include less practice management. Others suggest to include quality control / risk management skills as well as Project Management skills (each 3, 1%).



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Design / Project Management skills	3	1%
	46	14.8%

Comments include, for example:

- contract administration: fewer involvement, many exclude this service
- procurement (20): Update to contemporary procurement and delivery, Design and Construct, decreasing role
- practice management (4): Less involvement
- quality control / risk management skills (3): Focus on quality control instead of project process, risk framework; time and money
- Design / Project Management skills (3): Architects become Project Managers



Q4 – Please make a brief comment on the extent to which the current NSCA broadly reflects the role of an architect. (Feedback comments: N=311)

- **Design – consider (N=92, 29.6%):**

Environmental responsibilities / sustainability	17	5.5%
Economy/society, ethical responsibilities, current needs	16	5.1%
Construction / international standard / technological innovation	14	4.5%
Urban design / urbanisation	11	3.5%
Cultural diversity / responsibility	6	1.9%
Design excellence	6	1.9%
Innovation / future perspectives	6	1.9%
Historical consideration / heritage / restoration	5	1.6%
History / Theory	3	1%
Social sciences / research	3	1%
Landscape	2	0.6%
Refurbishment / adaptive re-use	2	0.6%
Wellbeing	1	0.3%
	92	29.6%

Of comments that suggest additional subjects or considerations to be included in the NSCA, the majority refers to environmental responsibilities or sustainability (5.5%), followed by current needs / social aspects and ethical responsibilities (16, 5.1%), and Construction skills / standard (14, 4.5%). Also the latter topic can be linked to environmental aspects, considering energy efficiency / building performance and international building standards. 11 (3.5%) suggest that Urban Design should be included to better prepare and train architects as they work in the public domain on large scale projects and are involved master planning.



Q4 – Please make a brief comment on the extent to which the current NSCA broadly reflects the role of an architect. (Feedback comments: N=311)

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Landscape	2	0.6%
Refurbishment / adaptive re-use	2	0.6%
Wellbeing	1	0.3%
	92	29.6%

Comments include, for example:

- Urban design / urbanisation: Design in context, public domain / project scale, master planning, urban design and planning, also regional; all done by architects who are not trained;
- Design excellence: Maintain design quality in changing mode of practice;
- Construction / international standard / technological innovation: Energy efficiency/building performance, improve Construction skills / education, Construction and maintenance, innovation



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Wellbeing	1	0.3%
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- Environmental responsibilities / sustainability: Sustainable material/design, climate change/carbon reduction, emphasise our role and impact on environment
- Refurbishment / adaptive re-use: Fewer new buildings
- Social sciences / research: Consider as otherwise purely building designer, social responsibility/community, research methods
- Economy/society, ethical responsibility, current needs: Change emphasis
- Cultural diversity / responsibility: Indigenous perspectives



Q4 – Please make a brief comment on the extent to which the current NSCA broadly reflects the role of an architect. (Feedback comments: N=311)

- **Practice – consider** (N=20, 6.4%):

Soft skills	6	1.9%
Business skills / risk	5	1.6%
Experience	5	1.6%
Quality control / risk management	3	1%
Finance / property economics	1	0.3%
	20	6.4%

Additional practice-related skills that have been proposed to be considered from education to registration and continuing education are soft skills (leadership, negotiation and team work skills; 6, 1.9%), as well as business skills and risk management (5, 1.6%). Some (5, 1.6%) suggests that the NSCA as it is detailed across the nine areas requires work experience.

Comments include, for example:

- Soft skills: Leadership skills, emotional intelligence / negotiation skills, team work
- Business skills / risk: Business management, how to operate profitable businesses
- Experience: Add work experience, wholistic understanding requires experience, performance criteria are also based on experience, specifically site experience



Q4 – Please make a brief comment on the extent to which the current NSCA broadly reflects the role of an architect. (Feedback comments: N=311)

- **Profession – consider** (N=6, 1.9%):

Mentoring / professional development	3	1%
Promote profession / architect's role	2	0.6%
Allow two-tier registration	1	0.3%
	6	1.9%

Comments relevant to the pathway to registration and continuing education refer to mentoring (3, 1%) and possible recognition for CPD. Two wish that the architect's role and responsibilities are promoted to the public, and one comment suggests to consider a two-tier registration option as common in other countries.

Comments include, for example:

- Mentoring / professional development: More guidance, scope of architect's role, communication of knowledge
- Allow two-tier registration types: Offer registration category for employed architects as in other countries



Q4 – Please make a brief comment on the extent to which the current NSCA broadly reflects the role of an architect. (Feedback comments: N=311)

- **NSCA PC – change** (N=32, 10.3%):

Too complex / too long / too repetitive	14	4.5%
Understanding / make clear / simplify	9	2.9%
Update to reflect whole process	5	1.6%
Update wording / improve / old-fashioned	3	1%
Include quantitative measurement protocols	1	0.3%
	32	10.3%

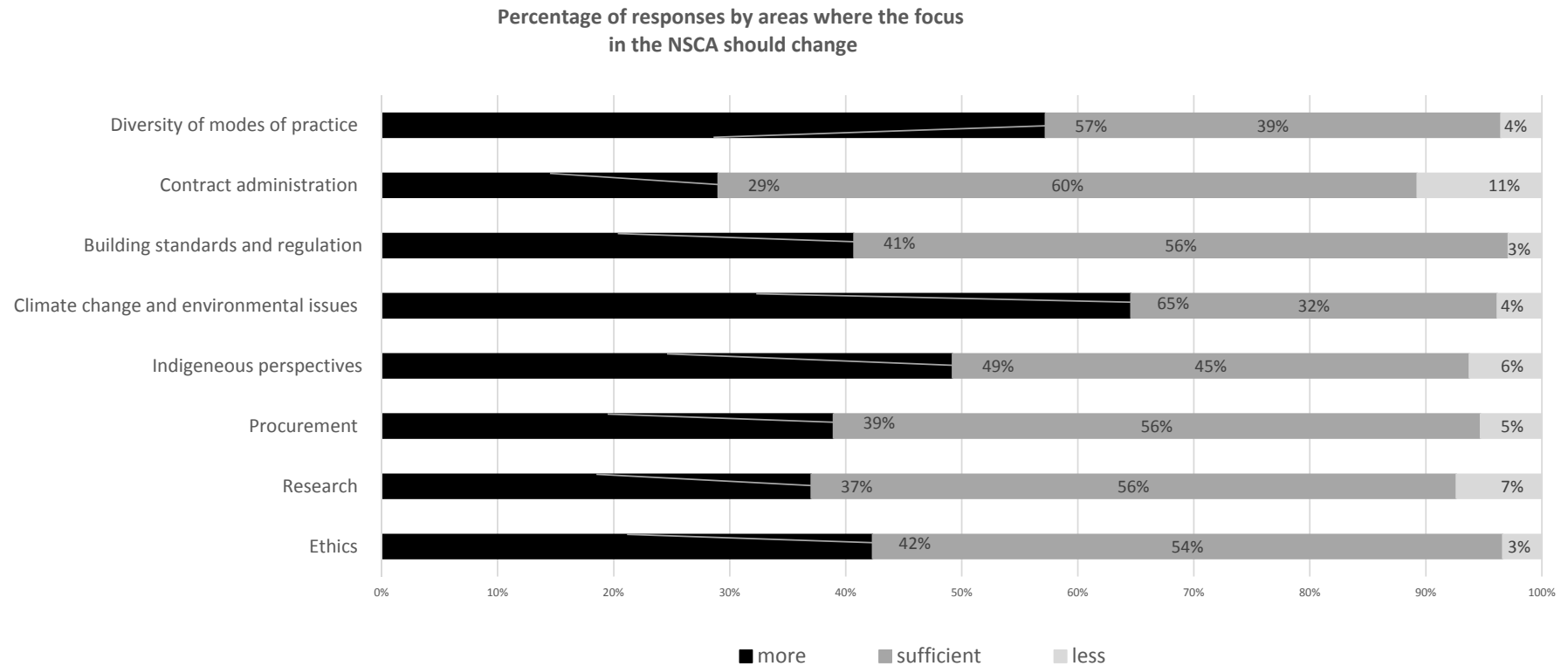
Ten percent of all comments suggest changes of content or wording of the NSCA performance criteria. The majority (14, 4.5%) refers to the content being too complex, long and repetitive. Others (9, 2.9%) suggest to simplify the text and make the criteria more understandable, or to update all to reflect the whole process as there is too much focus on Design which sets too narrow boundaries for education (5, 1.6%). One (1, 0.3%) suggests to include quantitative measurement protocols (no further details).

Comments include, for example:

- Too complex / too long / too repetitive: No exhaustive list, but diversity, too repetitive, overarching criteria only / too detailed;
- Understanding / make clear / simplify: Update education process to ease understanding, less academic;
- Update to reflect whole process: Encompass education through to registration, too narrow for education, too much focus on Design and Documentation;



Q5 – Please indicate areas where you consider the focus in the NSCA should change.
(N=624)





Q5 – Please indicate areas where you consider the focus in the NSCA should change.
(N=624)

- The majority of survey responses sees a need to **do more** about **environmental issues** (65%), relationship to **diverse mode of practice** (57%) and deal with **social issues such as indigenous perspectives** (56%).*
- **Contract administration** appears less relevant to practitioners and has been judged by most as **sufficiently considered** (60%). Similarly, **building standards, procurement and research** (56% each) as well as **ethics** (54%) are considered as sufficiently considered. Contract administration received the highest percentage of 'less' ratings (11%) indicating the lowest weighted average (2.18).
- Ratings from registered architects, the largest group for this question (N=432), were most similar to the overall ratings (N=624)
- Architecture students (N=10) and sessional staff (N=46) provided the highest ratings for more consideration of environmental issues and indigenous perspectives
- Architecture students (N=10), academics of accredited Architecture programs (N=86) and non-registered practitioners (N=57) provided the lowest ratings for contract administration, indicating sufficient consideration.
- The largest differences in comparison to the overall ratings appear in ratings were provided by academics of accredited Architecture programs (N=86) as well as sessional staff (N=46). Academics overall wanted more consideration of the diversity of modes of practice, environmental issues, indigenous perspectives and research; and sessional staff members also want more procurement and ethics. They ranked contract administration and building standards lowest.



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

Of all 963 survey respondents, 685 skipped this section. Of the remainder, eight referred to feedback given in previous sections without a comment, and others indicated 'no comment'. Valuable feedback (N=25), non-relevant to the NSCA, has been collected for a later discussion.

The feedback given by 188 participants (20%) lead to 269 comments, as many have addressed more than one specific topic.

Altogether, **95.9% of the given feedback suggests changes, seven participants have provided positive and four negative feedback.**



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

- Of all 258 comments, 209 have been summarised and grouped into the top 10 of recurring topics as below.

- **Performance criteria** (benchmark, scenarios, wording) (N=48, 18.6%)
- **Changing / common practice** (N=37, 14.3%)
- **Environmental responsibilities** (leadership) (N=23, 8.9%)
- **Context** (including urban, cultural, evidence-based design) (N=17, 6.6%)
- **Contract administration / procurement** (N=16, 6.2%)
- **Social responsibilities** (equity / public interest) (N=15, 5.8%)
- **Assessment** (weighting, clarify criteria, inconsistency) (N=13, 5.0%)
- **Professional services coordination** (project management skills) (N=11, 4.3%)
- **Cultural responsibilities** (N=8, 3.1%)
- **Leading role** (architect's role in industry) (N=7, 2.7%)
- **Future perspectives** (N=7, 2.7%)
- **Construction skills** (N=7, 2.7%)



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA? (N=269)

- **Performance criteria**

48 comments (18.6%) refer to changes of content or wording of the NSCA performance criteria. The majority (12, 4.7%) suggest to simplify and change the wording (and domains) to avoid interpretations. Some also seek notes on the meaning or examples. The comments are very similar to the feedback given in previous sections (too complex/narrow/detailed):

- remove repetitive performance criteria
- allow for flexibility
- rephrase to make criteria relevant to project stages
- Review *PC 4.5 Investigation and integration of appropriate structural, construction, service and transport systems in the project design*. It is too complex to be mapped against a student project
- broaden, less construction focus (emphasise activities that are not associated with construction)



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

- **Environmental responsibilities**

23 comments (8.9%) suggest that architect's bear an environmental responsibility and have to take on a leading role.

Comments refer to sustainability, building performance and materials, energy and waste, and low carbon future.



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

- **Context** (including urban, cultural, evidence-based design)

17 comments (6.6%) emphasise an overall contextual understanding. Some of these comments refer to:

- evidence-based design / design in context
- include urban design and master planning
- a deeper cultural understanding and social / local contexts
- include history/theory as well as social sciences
- emphasise precedent analysis for concept development and the influence of culture, history and theory on a project brief
- understanding of place and its context
- landscape



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

- **Contract administration and procurement**

16 comments (6.2%) refer to the changing mode of practice and its influence on contract administration and procurement methods. Some of the comments include:

- consider new procurement methods and construction contracts as a client-architect agreement is used only by a minority
- consider how to teach procurement (real-world scenarios) and to what level of detail
- we deal with new forms of procurement, include also relevant Communications and soft skills
- remove contract administration (PARC/PALS can deliver)
- broaden section *E8 - Project Delivery: Construction Stage* beyond contract administration for a better building outcome



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

- **Social responsibilities**

15 comments (5.8%) refer to an architect's leading role to represent the public interest. Key words include social responsibility, equity, public interest, seeking this to become a core competency.

- **Assessment**

13 comments (5.0%) suggest a weighting for performance criteria to ease assessments and to clarify criteria as well as to avoid inconsistencies between assessors.



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

- **Professional services coordination** (process, project management skills)

11 comments (4.3%) indicate that graduates have to be trained better for understanding and managing the design and building process. Some of the comments refer to:

- process / project management skills and delivery: set milestones, include, for example, approvals of drawings
- include professional services
- include building services coordination to *PC 6.2 Continuing coordination and integration of information and project material from relevant consultants specialists and suppliers*



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

- **Cultural responsibilities**

8 comments (3.1%) refer to an architect's cultural responsibilities: to emphasise an overall understanding of cultural issues, but also more specifically concerning First Nations people and land management.

- **Leading role**

7 comments (2.7%) emphasise an architect's role in the industry, to bring back the architect's role (instead of Design and Construct), and to protect the architect's role.



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

- **Future perspectives**

7 comments (2.7%) aim at future perspectives, demanding a more aspirational framework for future perspectives (not historical practice), emphasizing critical thinking, research and innovation.

- **Construction skills**

7 comments (2.7%) demand the improvement of construction and detailing skills and knowledge of materials.



Q6 – Do you have any other feedback on the current NSCA?
(N=269)

Other feedback includes, for example, the need to emphasise ethical aspects of professional practice and to encourage collaborative thinking as well as the understanding of clients. A lack of soft and people skills was mentioned.

Some suggest to recognise refurbishment and work on heritage buildings as design work due to an established built environment and that fewer new buildings will be built.

Others suggest to emphasise not only Construction skills, but also structural knowledge, and also to include Interior Design and sketching.