



## **2020 Review of the National Standard of Competency for Architects (NSCA) Release of the Revised NSCA for stakeholder comment Consultation Guidance**

### **1. Invitation to provide feedback**

The AACAA commenced a project in January 2020 to review the National Standard of Competency for Architects (NSCA).

The revised NSCA has been released for consideration by stakeholders.

Stakeholders are invited to consider the revised NSCA and provide written comment to the AACAA at [2020ReviewNSCA@aaca.org.au](mailto:2020ReviewNSCA@aaca.org.au) by no later than **1<sup>st</sup> March 2021**.

All written submissions received at [2020ReviewNSCA@aaca.org.au](mailto:2020ReviewNSCA@aaca.org.au) will receive an email acknowledgement of receipt within two working days of submission.

Extensions to the submission date will not be possible.

### **2. Background**

The terms of reference of the current review are the extent to which the NSCA:

- broadly reflects the role of an architect across the diversity of modes of practice
- represents the needs of regulators and reflects current and emerging risks across the profession as a whole
- is fit for purpose as the benchmark for AACAA assessment programs.

An Expert Reference Group comprised of nominees from stakeholder organisations was established to provide professional advice to the project. Membership includes:

- Dr Tanja Glusac (WA) – Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia Nominee
- Ms Charmaine Kai (QLD) – Association of Consulting Architects Australia Nominee
- Mr Bill Krotiris (VIC) – nominated by the Architect Registration Boards as having current practice experience
- Dr Kirsten Orr (NSW) – nominated by the Registrars of the Architect Registration Boards as having experience with regulation
- Emeritus Professor Alec Tzannes AM (NSW) – Australian Institute of Architects Nominee.

Early in the project the Expert Reference Group agreed that the essential components of the current NSCA are sound but recognised the need to reframe the NSCA so that it:

- reflects the knowledge, skills and competencies required of architects now and into the immediate future;
- reframes architectural services away from the traditional linear framework of services described in accordance with traditional modes of delivering architectural projects to one with a clearer focus on the architects' design responsibilities to clients and society;
- is acknowledged as the basis for a proportionate, effective regulatory model which ensures that only competent practitioners are eligible for registration and to remain on the State and Territory Registers of Architects in order to provide assurance and confidence to the public about the expected professional standard of architects in Australia;
- is flexible enough to reflect core competencies applied across varied competency profiles; and
- reflects an explicit ethical focus - particularly around societal obligations of architects with respect to climate change and acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the design process, and cultural diversity more broadly.

An overview of the project, project stages and timeframes, and links to all project communications can be found [here](#) on this AACA webpage.

Key project stages and work completed to date are summarised in the table below.

Project Stage	Description of work completed
Stage 1: January-March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison of relevant national and international performance benchmarks</li> <li>• Survey to gather views from across the profession on threshold issues for consideration.</li> <li>• Expert Reference Group established and first meeting conducted</li> </ul>
Stage 2: April-May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of survey outcomes and relevant national and international research and data</li> <li>• Development of issues paper to inform consultation with stakeholder groups</li> </ul>
Stage 3: June-July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal input from stakeholders based on review of the Issues Paper</li> </ul>
Stage 4: August- early December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option analysis</li> <li>• Drafting of detailed revisions to the NSCA</li> <li>• Development of an implementation strategy for the revised NSCA across AACA programs</li> </ul>

The majority of stakeholder feedback received during Stage 3:

- Supported the issues identified in the Paper as being appropriate to form the basis of further changes to the NSCA
- Supported the recommendations for change to the NSCA identified in the Paper, based on the assumption that the changes would address the issues identified in the paper.

Expertise from outside of the AACA informed the detailed re-drafting of the NSCA.

### 3. Revised NSCA consultation draft

The revised NSCA includes some introductory paragraphs that explain the purpose and focus of the NSCA.

Five key recommendations guided the reframing of the NSCA. A summary of how those recommendations have been addressed is noted in the table below.

Recommendations noted in the Issues Paper, 1 June 2020	How the recommendation is addressed in the revised NSCA
<b>Recommendation 1.</b> Conceive the NSCA as a Framework of Professional Competency viewed through specified Professional Capabilities.	The structure and coverage of the Professional Capabilities ( <i>Professionalism, Communication and Environmental and Ethical Practice</i> ) are reflected in the re-framed Performance Criteria so that the Professional Capabilities are an integrated component of all AACA Assessment Programs.
<b>Recommendation 2.</b> Retain four Units of Competency with a refocus on the architect's primary responsibilities in design and in design project delivery.	The four units of Competency are: <i>Practice Management and Professional Conduct, Conceptual Design, Detailed Design and Documentation and Design Delivery, Management and Execution.</i>
<b>Recommendation 3.</b> Revise Performance Criteria to reduce repetition - focussing less on the linear project phases and more on the core component of professional obligations of the architect in relation to design services to clients; acknowledging that the functional aspects of these obligations may apply differently across projects depending upon the project type, scale and context of risk and liabilities.	The Performance are grouped directly under one of the four Units of Competency and have been re-framed to focus on the delivery of professional services by an architect. The number of Performance Criteria has been reduced from 70 to 60.
<b>Recommendation 4.</b> Remove Elements, the current subgrouping of Performance Criteria under the four units of competency, in order to reduce linearity and repetition in the NSCA	Elements have been removed from the revised NSCA.
<b>Recommendation 5.</b> Review language and organisation of the Performance Criteria in order to improve user understanding of how Performance Criteria are applied at differing levels across the contexts of the competency.	Performance Criteria have been reframed as they apply across the three Competency profiles – <i>Graduate of Architecture, Registered Architect and Architect – post registration.</i>

## 4. Development of an Implementation Strategy for the revised NSCA

AACA has commenced the development of an Implementation Strategy to support transition to the revised NSCA once it is approved by the Architect Registration Boards. Initial work has included:

- Consideration by the AACA's National Advisory Panel and the Accreditation Management Committee
- Internal work to identify the required work and lead-up timeframes
- Initial consideration of a transition period where AACA Programs allow Providers or Candidates to complete the assessment program against either the 2015 or 2021 edition of the NSCA, and at what timeframe assessment against the 2021 edition of the NSCA becomes mandatory.

The Performance Criteria current in the 2015 edition of the NSCA are included in the revised NSCA consultation document for ease of reference and comparison. A more comprehensive document mapping linkages between the current 2015 Performance Criteria and the 2021 Performance Criteria will be developed to support transition to the revised NSCA across AACA assessment programs.

## 5. Next steps: final project stages

Following completion of the current consultation stage, the final stage of the project is summarised in the table.

Project Stage	Description of work
Stage 6: March –June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consideration of consultation feedback and preparation of a Project Report</li><li>• Presentation of Project Report and revised NSCA to the Architect Registration Boards</li><li>• Acceptance of revised NSCA by the Architect Registration Boards</li><li>• Revised NSCA prepared for publishing</li><li>• Revised NSCA published with implementation schedule and communication strategy</li></ul>

**Enclosure:** [Revised National Standard of Competency for Architects \(NSCA\) - Consultation Draft](#)