



Overseas Qualifications Assessment (OQA) Stage 1 - Provisional Assessment

Guide for Applicants

Read this Guide if you are applying for OQA Stage 1 then download the [application form](#)



Overseas Qualifications Assessment for registration as an Architect

To register as an architect with a state or territory architect registration board in Australia, generally applicants must have completed an [Australian accredited architectural qualification](#) (or successfully completed the AACA's Overseas Qualifications Assessment) before sitting the [Architectural Practice Examination \(APE\)](#).

See here for all [pathways to registration](#) as an architect in Australia.

AACA's Overseas Qualifications Assessment Process, conducted in 2 stages, determines how individual overseas academic qualifications compare with a current Australian accredited qualification in architecture. Once an applicant's qualification has been deemed comparable he/she is eligible to undertake the Architectural Practice Examination, successful completion of which is required before applying for registration as an architect with a state or territory [architects registration board](#).

Stage 1 - Provisional Assessment

- **Eligibility:** Applicants must have completed an architectural qualification awarded by institutions outside of Australia, and may reside in Australia or overseas.
- **Professional Experience:** Not assessed. Evidence of work experience will not be taken into account.
- **Outcome:**
 - Successful applicants are provided with an outcome that also meets the requirement of a Skills Assessment for immigration purposes.
 - Unsuccessful applicants receive a letter indicating the unsuccessful outcome. No guidance is provided about how to upgrade the qualifications.
- **Timeframes:** Applications are generally finalised within 12 weeks.

Stage 2 – Portfolio submission and interview

- **Eligibility:** Applicants must have completed Stage 1 (irrelevant of the outcome) and be a lawful resident in Australia
- **Professional Experience:** Can be used in the project examples provided in the portfolio.
- **Outcome:**
 - Successful applicants are provided with a Skills Assessment letter for migration purposes (if required) and a letter that acts as an authority to enrol to complete the Architectural Practice Examination (APE).
 - Unsuccessful applicants are provided written advice as to where they are deficient and how to upgrade their qualifications¹.
- **Timeframes:** Applications are generally finalised within 8 to 12 weeks.

Combined Application (Stages 1 and Stage 2 completed concurrently)

- **Eligibility:** Applicants must have completed an architectural qualification awarded by institutions outside of Australia and be a lawful resident in Australia
- **Professional Experience:** Can be used in the project examples provided in the portfolio
- **Outcome:** SAME AS FOR STAGE 2
- **Timeframes:** Applications are generally finalised within 8 to 12 weeks.

1. Having addressed the deficiencies identified by AACA, unsuccessful Applicants may complete the specified study and then submit evidence to AACA and an amended qualifications assessment and Skills Assessment will be issued at no additional cost. Time limitations do apply.

1. Criteria for provisional assessment of overseas qualifications

AACA assesses academic qualifications in architecture obtained overseas to determine whether they are equivalent to a current Australian accredited academic qualification in Architecture.

An [Australian accredited architecture qualification](#) is one that is approved under law by an Australian registration authority and has been accredited through the Australian and New Zealand Architecture Program Accreditation Procedure (ANZ APAP). The relevant performance criteria are set out in the [National Standard of Competency for Architects \(NSCA\)](#).

Qualifications must be completed through a coursework degree of a minimum duration of 10 semesters (full-time equivalent). AACA does not assess qualifications obtained by research.

Please note: Many overseas qualifications include a compulsory period of practical experience. This does not contribute to the minimum period of study.

In forming its opinion on the status of an academic qualification compared to an Australian accredited academic qualification in Architecture, applications are considered on a case-by-case basis using the following criteria:

- Education system in the country in which the qualification(s) was obtained compared to the Australian education system;
- Status of the awarding institution compared to an Australian institution offering an accredited architectural program;
- Academic duration of the qualification(s) (minimum 10 semesters full time equivalent coursework, excluding any practical components);
- Structure of the coursework program compared to an Australian accredited academic qualification in architecture, including the weighting given to individual units and core areas of study (by credit points and/or contact hours);
- Content of the individual units of study compared to an Australian accredited academic qualification in Architecture; and
- Grading system used compared to an Australian accredited academic qualification in Architecture.

It must be clearly demonstrated that your qualification adequately covers the following 7 prescribed core areas of study:

- Design Studies and Design Integration
- Documentation and Technical Studies
- History and Theory Studies
- Practice and Project Management, Implementation and User Studies
- Environmental Studies
- Communication Studies
- Elective Studies

An explanation of what is covered by each of these core areas of study is provided at Section 7 of this Guide.

2. Eligibility

Applicants must have completed an academic qualification in architecture awarded by institutions outside of Australia. Multiple qualifications can be included in the application form.

Applicants may be residing in Australia or overseas however those residing in Australia are strongly encouraged to consider submitting the [OQA Combined Application](#).

There are no English language proficiency requirements for the Stage 1 – Provisional Assessment, though the application form and cover letter must be completed in English.

3. Assessment Process

- a. **Submission.** The submission is lodged in hard copy to AACA.
- b. **Receipt of Application.** AACA will email a receipt to the nominated contact, normally within 2 business days of having received the application.
- c. **Application Verification.** The application and supporting documentation is reviewed by AACA for completeness. Processing of the application will not commence until all required information has been received, documents are appropriately witnessed and certified, and payment has been confirmed. Should deficiencies be identified, AACA will contact the applicant (or their nominated agent) to seek clarification or additional information.
- d. **Desk-top assessment.** AACA completes a desk-top assessment of the qualification/s and makes a decision on comparability to an accredited Australian academic qualification in Architecture based on the criteria outlined in Section 1 of this Guide.
- e. **Outcome.** When the assessment is complete, AACA will post an Outcome Letter to the nominated contact at the address specified at Section 2 of the Application Form.

Where the application is assessed as **provisionally comparable** to an accredited Australian academic qualification in architecture, a **Skills Assessment** for Migration Purposes will be issued. Note that due to security issues, Skills Assessment letters are only issued in hard copy.

Where the qualification/s have been assessed as being **provisionally not comparable** to an accredited Australian academic qualification in Architecture, a letter indicating the unsuccessful outcome will be issued.

All OQA applicants should note that once an applicant is resident in Australia, Stage 2 of the Overseas Qualifications Assessment must be completed before an applicant will be eligible to complete the Architectural Practice Examination ([APE](#)) and then be eligible to register as an architect.

A not comparable outcome in the OQA Stage 1 **does not** preclude an applicant from undertaking the Stage 2 of the Overseas Qualifications Assessment once an applicant is resident in Australia.

- f. **Appealing a decision.** Applicants have the right to appeal decisions made by the AACA. The appeal must be lodged within 3 months of the issue date of the assessment outcome letter. Further information regarding appeal may be accessed [here](#).

4. Submission Requirements

4.1 General guidance

All documentation must be submitted in hard copy in unbound, loose-leaf format and must be clearly legible.

Do not submit the original of any documents. AACAA does not return any documents at the completion of the assessment process. Documents are securely destroyed in line with AACAA's privacy and document retention policies.

Where indicated, documents must be certified and translated. Further guidance on certification is provided at Section 5 and further guidance on translation is provided at Section 6.

As this is an assessment of qualifications only, no references (third-party comments) or evidence of work experience will be taken into account.

AACAA reserves the right to contact educational and governmental institutions and agencies for additional information and/or verification of the authenticity of any documents.

If forged, altered or falsified documents are submitted to AACAA at any time, the application will not proceed, no refund of fees will be made and the relevant authorities may be notified.

4.2 Submission Requirements

Applicants are required to submit the following documents in hard copy in a single submission to AACAA:

1. **Cover letter** (maximum 2 x A4 pages) addressing why you think your academic qualification(s) is equivalent to an Australian accredited academic qualification in Architecture in terms of academic duration; structure of the coursework program; core areas of study; and the content of the individual units of study. Refer to the criteria provided at Section 1. When relevant, the cover letter should also address:
 - a. Any gaps in the course syllabus provided.
 - b. Any period of study completed at a different institution, such as through a student exchange.
2. **OQA Stage 1 Application Form** completed in English, with the Applicant's Declaration at Section 8 signed and dated by the applicant, and witnessed. AACAA prefers that the application form be completed electronically, but will accept application forms completed by hand.

Section 7 of the application form is the **Self-Assessment Matrix**. This requires applicants to map the course content of their academic qualification(s) according to the 7 core areas of study prescribed for an Australian accredited qualification in Architecture. See Section 7 of this Guide for an explanation as to what is covered by each of the 7 core areas of study. See Section 8 of this Guide for an explanation as to how to complete the Self-Assessment Matrix.

3. **Certified copies of degree or diploma** for each academic qualification in the original language, as officially issued by the relevant institution or authority.
4. **Certified copies of Academic transcript** for each academic qualification in the original language, as officially issued by the conferring institute or authority. An academic transcript is a list of all the units completed for the qualification, including weighting of each unit (in hours or credit points) and the marks obtained by the applicant.
5. **Course syllabus** for each academic qualification in the original language, as officially certified by the relevant institution or authority. The course syllabus

should include a summary of the content of each unit of study. The syllabus must be relevant to the years that the qualification was undertaken. See Section 4.3 of this Guide for additional guidance.

6. **Evidence of Registration** as an architect with an authorised body (if applicable). *Must be certified.*
7. **Evidence of change of name** (if applicable). *Must be certified.*
8. **Authorising letter for agent** signed by you authorising another person to act on your behalf (if applicable).
9. **English translations** of any of the above documents (3 to 8) that are in a language other than English. See Section 6 of this Guide for guidance on translations.
10. **Payment of fee.** If paid in Australia by electronic transfer, provide evidence of payment, such as a PDF copy of the confirmation of payment. Otherwise, attach the payment.

4.3 Additional guidance on the submission of course syllabus

The syllabus may be submitted via one of the following means:

- a. In hard copy, certified. See Note 1 below.
- b. Digitally on CD or USB and enclosed with the hard copy application. See Note 2 below.
- c. Digitally via a file-hosting service such as Dropbox. See Notes 2 and 3 below.
- d. URL, where the relevant syllabus is directly available from the official university website without any log-in requirements. See Note 3 below.

Notes on submission of course syllabus:

1. If submitted in hard copy, the syllabus should be certified.
2. When provided digitally, either on CD or USB or via a file hosting service, this must be supported by a cover letter from the university confirming the veracity and relevance of the syllabus to the years that the qualification was undertaken by the applicant.
3. When provided via a file hosting service or URL please also email the link to mail@aca.org.au.
4. Where an academic qualification includes units completed at a different institution, such as part of an exchange, excerpts of the course syllabus from this institution covering those units should also be provided. Explain this in your cover letter.
5. Inability to supply a copy of the relevant course syllabus be addressed in the cover letter, with a request to proceed with the application without this important information.

5. Certification of Documents

A certified copy is a copy of an original document that is certified as a true copy by an authorised person.

To have your copies certified you must give both the original and the copy of the document to the person certifying the documents. Each page of the document must be certified separately, and must clearly show:

- the words 'certified true copy of the original';
- the signature of the certifying officer; and
- The name and address or provider/registration number (where appropriate)

of the certifying officer legibly printed below the signature. It must be possible for AACA to contact the certifying officer from the details provided.

In Australia, documents may be certified by a Justice of the Peace, Legal Practitioner or an Admissions Officer at an Australian university.

Outside Australia, applicants should contact the closest Australian High Commission, Australian Consulate or Australian Embassy for details of people who can certify documents in that country. Recognised Public Noteries may certify documents.

6. Translation of Documents

Any documents in a language other than English must be translated into English. The documents must be translated in full and certified copies of those translations submitted with the application.

If the documents are translated in a country other than Australia, the translator must be approved by the authorities in the country where the translation is made. The International Federation of Translators

www.fit-ift.org provides a list of certified associations.

Translators in Australia are accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). See www.ausit.org for a list of members.

7. Core Areas of Study

Each of the 7 core areas of study is described below.

1. Design Studies and Design Integration

Demonstrate an ability for propositional, imaginative, iterative, integrated thinking to synthesise complex architectural designs; an ability to support decision-making using evidence-based, reasoned argument and judgement; an ability to draw upon a knowledge of and the capacity to integrate design procedures, precedents, systems and construction processes; and an ability to synthesise this knowledge to problem solve and provide creative design solutions.

2. Documentation and Technical Studies

Demonstrate an understanding of the visual and contextual qualities of structural systems, construction elements, materials and building components; an ability to apply technical design processes and integrate structure, construction technologies and services systems into design solutions; and an ability to understand the role and characteristics of technical documentation and specifications in the development of buildable solutions.

3. History and Theory Studies

Demonstrated knowledge of architecture, its history and precedents; an ability to draw upon, interpret, integrate and apply this information, including heritage and conservation rationales, to modern design solutions; and an ability to research and evaluate emergent knowledge as it becomes necessary to fulfil the profession's role in society.

4. Practice and Project Management, Implementation and User Studies

Demonstrate an understanding of architecture's status as an ethical service-oriented profession committed to responsible care for the inhabited environment; an understanding of the principles of business management and their application to the built environment, project procurement and professional consultancy and an awareness of the relevant codes, regulations and standards for planning, design, construction, health, safety and use of the built environment.

5. Environmental Studies

Demonstrate a knowledge of people, environments and culture and the future impacts of architectural proposals on the lives of the people and the quality of environments affected; an understanding of ecological sustainability, urban planning and local demography and resources; and the ability to synthesise this knowledge to inform design solutions.

6. Communication Studies

Demonstrate an ability to communicate with a variety of audiences in appropriate ways; an understanding of the various means used to communicate ideas; and an ability to prepare and read visual presentations, including drawings, diagrams, other graphic techniques and modelling using manual and electronic means.

7. Elective Studies

Demonstrate an awareness of broader cultural context in which architecture is practiced; and/or an understanding of the specialisations associated within the architecture discipline.

8. Instructions for completing the Self-Assessment Matrix

The aim of completing the Self-Assessment Matrix (Section 7 of the Application Form) is to map the content of your qualification(s) against **the 7 core areas of study** prescribed in the *Australian and New Zealand Architecture Program Accreditation Procedure (ANZ APAP)* for an Australian accredited qualification in Architecture.

Unit Code

Enter the unit number as it appears on your academic transcript and in the course syllabus.

Unit Name

Enter the name of the unit of study as it appears on your academic transcript and in the course syllabus.

Qualification No.

Allocate each of your academic qualifications its own number (eg. 1, 2) for identification. Allocate the qualification that you completed first as '1', and the qualification that you completed next as '2'.

Year No.

Record the Year No. as the consecutive year of your study in which you completed each unit. For example, if your first qualification was 3 years and you completed the unit of study in the second year, enter a '2'. If your second qualification was 2 years and you completed the unit of study in the second year, enter a '5'. **Note:** Do not write the year of study (e.g. 2017).

Credit Points

Enter the Credit Points allocated to the unit of study as it appears on your academic transcript and in the course syllabus. Note that different countries use different credit point systems. AACAA will take this into account in assessing your application.

Contact Hours

Enter the number of hours spent in class receiving tuition. This is usually specified in the course syllabus. It does not include additional time spent completing assignments. If this is not specified in the course syllabus, then you may provide an estimate. You should note in your cover letter if these details are an estimate or from the course syllabus.

Mode of Delivery

Record the way in which the tuition was presented. This is usually specified in the course syllabus. Common modes of delivery for academic qualifications in Architecture include lecture, tutorial, design studio, workshop, online.

Syllabus Provided

Indicate yes or no.

Grade

Enter the grade you received for this unit of study as it appears on your academic transcript. Note that different countries use different grading systems. AACAA will take this into account in assessing your application.

9. Outcome of Stage 1 Provisional Assessment

See earlier description of possible outcomes at Section 3e.

Applicants should retain the outcome letter issued at the completion of the Stage 1 (irrelevant of the outcome). AACAA only issues one outcome letter at the conclusion of the Stage 1.

The Provisional Assessment conducted in the OQA Stage 1 is an opinion on the status of your academic qualification(s) and does not guarantee employment in Australia in the occupation of 'Architect'.

To become eligible to register as an architect in Australia you are required to have a recognised qualification in Architecture (obtained by completing Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Overseas Qualifications Assessment (OQA) process) and then pass the AACAA Architectural Practice Examination (APE).

Following completion of Stage 1, applicants may submit a Stage 2 application, regardless of their Stage 1 outcome, as long as they are lawful residents in Australia.

10. Information for Migration

The AACAA is the authority nominated by the government of Australia for assessing overseas architecture qualifications for the purpose of migration to Australia under the Australian Government Skilled Migration Program, for the occupation 'Architect', ANZSCO code 232111.

Where the OQA Stage 1 application is assessed as **provisionally comparable** to an accredited Australian academic qualification in architecture, a **Skills Assessment** for Migration Purposes will be issued. Note that due to security issues, Skills Assessment letters are only issued in hard copy.

Applicants seeking to migrate to Australia should include a certified copy of the **Skills Assessment** letter with their application to the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

AACAA's qualifications assessment does not guarantee a visa outcome or employment.

Information on the migration process is available from the Australian Government's Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) website, www.border.gov.au.

Please note: If you have an accredited academic qualification from an Australian School of Architecture please use the Application for Verification of an accredited Australian academic qualification, obtainable from the Forms and Fees page of the [AACAA website](#). A list of Australian accredited architecture qualifications can be found [here](#).

11. Fees

See the [AACAA Forms and Fees](#) web page for the current fee.

Once an application has been submitted fees are not refundable.

The fee is payable to AACAA by one of the following methods:

- a bank cheque in Australian dollars drawn by a bank outside Australia that has bank clearance arrangements with an Australian bank
- a foreign draft drawn on an Australian Bank in Australian dollars
- a bank cheque drawn by an Australian bank
- a money order issued by Australia Post

For electronic funds transfer from an Australian bank account, AACAA's bank account

details are:

Account Name	AACA
BSB	032-727
Account Number	13-2465

Enter your family name and date of birth in the description field and submit the receipt with your application.

AACA does not accept cash, travellers' cheques or payment by credit card or electronic funds transfer from international bank accounts.

12. Agents

Privacy provisions prohibit AACA from discussing applications with other people (third parties) unless specifically authorised to do so.

Should you wish to, provide a letter authorising a nominated person (by name) to act as your agent.

13. Timeframe

Assessment of applications will normally be completed within 12 weeks.

Outcome letters are posted by mail and may take some time to arrive when posted to addresses outside of Australia. Please wait at least 12 weeks after receiving your receipt before contacting AACA about the progress of your application. AACA will contact you if more information is needed.

14. How to Submit

Completed applications should be posted to this address:

Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA)
PO Box A2575
Sydney South NSW 1235
Australia

If using a courier, provide this street address to the courier:

Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA)
Suite 3, Level 5
75 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Australia

Applications may be dropped off in person to the AACA Office during standard office hours of 9am to 5pm. When submitted in person, applications are treated as a standard mail delivery and are not immediately checked or receipted by the AACA Office.

Contacting AACA



Architects Accreditation Council
of Australia (AACA)
PO Box A2575
Sydney South 1235
Australia



+612 8042 8930



mail@aaca.org.au



www.aaca.org.au