



## NATIONAL PROGRAM OF ASSESSMENT (NPrA)

### Applicants Guide

Architects Accreditation Council of Australia

Candidates for the National Program of Assessment are:

- Individuals who have substantial skills and experience in the architectural services sector but do not have an Australian accredited qualification in architecture or overseas equivalent.
- Successful completion of the National Program of Assessment allows entry to the Architectural Practice Exam

To apply please visit the AACA [website](#).

## Key documents

Refer to AACA website for the following documents:

- 2021 National Standard of Competency for Architects (NSCA)
- 2021 NSCA Explanatory Notes
- NPrA Assessment Rubric / NSCA Summary Statements
- Relevant Work Experience Spreadsheet Template

## Timetable

### Applications

Refer to AACA website for the following dates:

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Stage 1 Applications Close  
Stage 2 Candidate Offers Distributed  
Stage 2 Closing date for acceptance of offers  
Stage 2 Program Brief Distributed

### Questions and Answers

Refer to AACA website for the following dates:

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Q & A Period  
Q & A distributed to candidates  
CENSUS - Closing date for withdrawal (partial refund)

### Stage 2 Submissions and Assessment

Refer to AACA website for the following dates:

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Part 1 Initial Conceptual Design deadline  
Part 2 Final Submission deadline  
Results distributed to candidates

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The [National Program of Assessment](#) (NPrA) is a competency-based assessment, which provides a pathway to the Architectural Practice Examination for those who have substantial skills and experience in the architectural services sector but do not have an Australian accredited qualification in architecture or overseas equivalent.

The successful completion of the National Program of Assessment does not provide a qualification; its sole purpose is to grant access to the Architectural Practice Examination, completion of which is required before applying for registration as an architect in Australia.

Submissions in the National Program of Assessment are assessed against relevant components of the 2021 National Standard of Competency for Architects (NSCA).

The relevant NPrA Performance Criteria are comparable to the technical abilities expected of a graduate from a five year full-time /10 semester (or part-time equivalent) program of study.

Candidates should familiarise themselves with the 2021 NSCA, the 2021 NSCA Explanatory Notes and the 2023 NPrA Assessment Rubric / NSCA Summary Statements, before submitting their application.

The National Program of Assessment is an 'assessment by project' process which is design focused and assesses the candidates' response to a design brief for a complex architectural project conceived by the AACA.

Candidates communicate their ideas and design responses to that brief and present an architectural project they have conceived and developed on their own. In their response to the AACA design brief, candidates are also expected to elucidate on fundamental project co-ordination and initial practice management matters.

The National Program of Assessment comprises two stages:

Stage 1: Eligibility

Stage 2: Response to the Design Brief (Part 1 and Part 2)

## 2. ELIGIBILITY

### Academic Requirement

Relevant post school study.

### English Language Proficiency

If English is not the candidate's first language, or the applicant did not complete secondary school or tertiary education in English an overall score of 6.5 on the IELTS scale or equivalent is required.

Alternatively, the AACA may accept a statement from a current employer in Australia that the candidate has sufficient written and spoken skills in English to operate to the standard required of an architect in Australia.

### Relevant Work Experience

A minimum of seven years full-time work experience (or equivalent) in the last ten years in architectural, planning, building or other related fields\*; three of the seven years must be under the direction of a **registered** architect in an architect's office, at least two years of the three years must be in a registered architect's office **in Australia**.

*\* Generally, work experience in related field relates to a field in the construction industry of or closely relating to architectural firms - this may include a builder, an engineer, an interior designer, a landscape architect or building designer but excludes a project manager, a cost consultant and a building certifier.*

### Currently resident in Australia

Provide evidence.

## 3. STAGE 1

### 3.1 Submission Requirements

Stage 1 applications must be submitted using the online application platform in electronic format with a maximum file size of 20mb – **in A4 pdf format**.

### Academic Requirement

Evidence only of the highest level of education completed.

### English Language Proficiency (if required)

### Relevant Work Experience

To be lodged via the Work Experience Spreadsheet template.

### **A Summary Curriculum Vitae (CV)**

Maximum of two A4 pages.

#### **Statement of Claim - Refer Sub-Sections 3.2 to 3.5**

(Maximum 1500 words – **A4 pdf format in single document**)

Reference four to six projects which have been identified in the submitted Work Experience spreadsheet.

For each project:

- Provide a brief description of the project together with the applicant's involvement and role in the project.
- Indicate which of the following Professional Capabilities were applied:
  - Professionalism
  - Communication
  - Environmental Practice
- Indicate which of the following Units of Competency (2021 NSCA) were demonstrated:
  - Practice Management and Professional Conduct
  - Project Initiation and Conceptual Design
  - Detailed Design and Construction Documentation
  - Design Delivery and Construction Phase

An applicant's overall experience must demonstrate an understanding of the 43 Performance Criteria (2021 NSCA) which are included under the 4 Units of Competency.

*The NPrA Assessment Rubric/NSCA Summary Statements will be completed by candidates who progress to Stage 2.*

#### **Email contact details for two referees**

One referee should be an architect registered in Australia. Please include the registration number in the online form. Referees may be contacted by the AACA.

All copies of documents sent to the AACA must be high quality scans with a Statutory Declaration stating the documents are bona fide.

## 3.2 Professional Capabilities

Professional capabilities encapsulate the knowledge, skills and attributes that underpin professional education in architecture and practice as an architect in Australia. The NSCA groups these into three core areas – Professionalism, Communication and Environmental Practice. These broad capabilities are relevant to all modes of architectural practice and inform the ongoing professional education of architects. They provide the umbrella for the Units of Competency and are reflected across the Performance Criteria as a whole.

#### **Professionalism**

Professionalism encompasses the capacity to understand and enact the role and responsibilities of architects within evolving architectural, social, cultural, ethical, legal, technical and business contexts. This includes understanding community values and obligations around equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusion, embedding these within the provision of architectural services, and understanding how they impact Country, colleagues, clients, stakeholders and broader communities. At its core, this capability involves maintaining and developing professional competency over the course of a career in architecture.

### **Communication**

Communication capabilities encompass the ability to clearly convey and explain the roles and responsibilities of an architect, to coherently and respectfully communicate within workplace and project contexts and to articulate the value an architect contributes.

### **Environmental Practice**

Environmental practice capabilities encompass a holistic approach to creating and caring for living environments. This includes the ability to understand, analyse and assess the impacts of design decisions and delivery processes on the natural and built environment, to care for Country and community, to minimise carbon impact, and to support the transition to a carbon-neutral built environment.

## 3.3 Units of Competency

Four Units of Competency outline the required knowledge and skills involved in the practice of architecture.

### **Practice Management and Professional Conduct**

This unit of competency encompasses a holistic understanding of the organisation of the profession, practice and business of architecture, with the objective of providing value through sustainable, timely and effective professional services in accordance with the ethical and legal obligations of an architect to clients, colleagues, employees and to broader communities.

### **Project Initiation and Conceptual Design**

This unit of competency encompasses the intelligent, creative, iterative and culturally responsive processes of initiating a project and the early stages of design. This involves research, analysis and the exploration of approaches, design ideas and alternative solutions. It leads to a design concept that meets the client's brief, respects Country and is capable of compliance with planning controls and construction codes.

### **Detailed Design and Construction Documentation**

This unit of competency encompasses the process of developing the design through research, detailed assessment of options and the integration of technical solutions, value and cost control processes to maintain or enhance the design intent. The final design proposal is cohesive, fully described and resolved to achieve value and cost objectives, and compliance with planning controls and construction codes.

### **Design Delivery and Construction Phase Services**

This unit of competency encompasses the provision of services to support project delivery through construction. This may occur through a variety of building procurement methods and construction contracts. The form of construction contract may establish different expectations and obligations upon the architect and may include contract administration services. Typically, all contract types include the timely and cost-effective management of design delivery, review and inspection processes.

## 3.4 Performance Criteria

**Performance Criteria** describe discrete aspects of architectural practice and are organised under the Units of Competency. Each Unit has a corresponding set of criteria for each of the three competency profiles.

The NSCA does not prioritise any unit or performance criteria. The ordering of the performance criteria does not suppose a particular mode of practice or project type.

## 3.5 Example Projects

### Example Project 1

*I was involved in xxxx project, an alterations and additions project to an existing federation home in xxxx. I was involved in the project from the beginning of the developed design stage, assisting in the early design and client meetings, and assisting in developing the construction documentation and administration of the contract.*

*The construction was complex due to xxxx. The construction details and method involved significant co-ordination between the architect, builder, and structural engineers.*

*Finally, I was involved in many key design and selection decisions throughout the project and was solely responsible for developing two-dimension perspective images throughout the project to assist the clients to visualise the design.*

- **Professional Capabilities:** Professionalism, Communication, and Environmental Practice
- **Units of Competency:** Project Initiation and Conceptual Design, Detailed Design and Construction Documentation, Design Delivery and Construction Phase Services

### Example Project 2

*The client's brief was to construct a glass pavilion to the rear of the property on a site that falls steeply from front to back and is heavily planted with natural bush and native trees to house a master bedroom suite and living area along with some alterations to the existing dwelling.*

*I was involved in the concept design stage as a participant working closely with my Practice Director and continued working on the project through to its successful development application approval. Due to the existing heritage listing, we had to work closely with several specialist consultants such as heritage consultants, acoustic engineers, and arboriculture consultants. I was involved in the project at detail design stage, tender and contract documentations and in the contract administration.*

- **Professional Capabilities:** Professionalism, Communication, and Environmental Practice
- **Units of Competency:** Practice Management and Professional Conduct, Project Initiation and Conceptual Design, Detailed Design and Construction Documentation, Design Delivery and Construction Phase Services

### Example Project 3

*The brief of this project was for a new 36-storey multi-residential development with multi-story carpark and roof terraces. The site was located very near to the central business district and the project involved demolition prior to construction.*

*The design involved the development of an integrated theme reflected through every aspect of the design, from the overall look of the development through to the design of the individual units. I worked on the project in the initial feasibility stage with the project team.*

- **Professional Capabilities:** Professionalism, Communication, and Environmental Practice
- **Units of Competency:** Project Initiation and Conceptual Design

## 4. STAGE 2

### Part 1 – Project Initiation and Preliminary Conceptual Design

Within approximately ten weeks of the distribution of Q & A responses, candidates must submit their Project Initiation and Preliminary Conceptual Design in response to the design brief to [npra@aaca.org.au](mailto:npra@aaca.org.au)

Details of the submission and content requirements are included in the Brief:

**1. Project Initiation: Research and Analysis** – Refer to relevant Section in the Brief.  
Single A3 pdf format document (min 300 dpi – max 32 mb).  
(Multiple files will not be accepted and will not be eligible for assessment)

**2. Preliminary Conceptual Design** – Refer to relevant Section in the Brief.  
Single A3 pdf format document (min 300 dpi – max 32 mb).  
(Multiple files will not be accepted and will not be eligible for assessment)

Submission is required at the mid-way point in the program. Candidates are advised that this requirement is to track sole authorship of the final submission and ensure progress in accordance with the timetable. **Note that no assessment is provided, however, candidates are encouraged to seek their own professional feedback from a qualified independent registered architect prior to their Stage 1 submission.**  
Revisions will not be accepted after the deadline.

The documents provided in this submission are expected to align with the final submission (Part 2 - Conceptual Design and Detailed Design) and will be considered in the final assessment.

The Part 1 submission (2 documents ONLY as indicated above) must be uploaded to the AACA website link provided.

No revisions, submissions or supplementary information will be accepted after the deadline.

### Part 2

- **Conceptual Design and Detailed Design**
- **Practice Management and Professional Conduct**

Details of the submission and content requirements are included in the Brief:

**1. Table of Contents** (including page numbers) listing of all the documents and corresponding page numbers.  
Single A4 pdf format document (min 300 dpi).  
(Multiple files will not be accepted and will not be eligible for assessment)

**2. Conceptual Design and Detailed Design** – Refer to Section in the Brief  
Single A3 pdf format document (min 300 dpi – max 50 mb).  
(Multiple files will not be accepted and will not be eligible for assessment)

### 3. Report

Single A4 pdf format document (min 300 dpi – max 32 mb).

*(Multiple files will not be accepted and will not be eligible for assessment)*

- **Design Statement** - Refer to Section in the Brief
- **Practice Management and Professional Conduct** - Refer to Section in the Brief
- **Project Budget** – Refer to Sections in the Brief

### 4. NPrA 29 Rubric/NSCA Summary Statements [Template provided]

Single A4 pdf format document (min 300 dpi).

*(Multiple files will not be accepted and will not be eligible for assessment)*

Included with the Brief documents. This document indicates how the submission responds to each of the 2021 NSCA Performance Criteria.

*Note: Candidates are strongly encouraged to study and understand this document, together with the associated 2021 NSCA and the Explanatory Notes, early in the process. It is not recommended that completion of this document is left to last, as considerable effort and understanding is required and it is often underestimated by candidates. The responses should be integrated into the various components of the submission. The responses provided by candidates in this document, when reviewed in conjunction with the other submitted documents, form the basis of the assessment. Note the pass requirement noted for each of the 8 categories at the bottom of each sheet.*

*To further assist, AACA recommends that candidates review the various ACUMEN practice notes available and/or complete a PALS course and /or join the Architects Institute of Australia (AIA) where eligible.*

### 5. Statutory Declaration [Template provided]

Single A4 pdf format document (min 300 dpi).

*(Multiple files will not be accepted and will not be eligible for assessment)*

Included with the Brief documents. This form indicates **sole authorship** of the NPrA submission by the candidate, however, independent professional feedback is encouraged.

The Part 2 submission (**5 documents ONLY as indicated above**) must be uploaded via the AACA website link provided.

*Please note that a person who is not a registered architect in Australia is not entitled to use the title “Architect” in any correspondence or documentation.*

#### Notes:

- NPrA submission requirements may vary depending on the Brief. Final submission requirements will be included with the Brief Documents
- Candidates must include their NPrA Candidate Number on all submissions and correspondence.
- Submissions should be uploaded to AACA drop box in compliance with the instructions issued with the Brief documents.

Submitted materials are retained by the AACA during the assessment process and will be deleted at the completion of the assessment.

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|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | NPrA candidates should keep a copy of submitted material for their records.   |
| 4.1 Assessment of Submissions | An eligible experienced panel of Assessors is appointed to assess the candidates' submissions. The Assessors report to the CEO of the AACA.<br><br>The Assessors recommend whether there is sufficient evidence of the achievement of the required NSCA Performance Criteria as demonstrated in the submissions.  |
| 4.2 Outcome of Assessments    | The AACA will distribute the results of the assessments generally within 7 weeks of final submission deadline.<br><br><b>Successful</b><br>Where a submission is successful, candidates must include their AACA Assessment Notice to the relevant registration board to gain access to the Architectural Practice Examination (subject to eligibility criteria), successful completion of which is required before applying for registration.<br><br><b>Not successful</b><br>If a submission is assessed as not successful, the areas in which a participant is deficient will be identified and forwarded to the candidate. |

## 6. PREVIOUS CANDIDATES

Previously successful NPrA Stage 1 candidates in previous 3 years (e.g., for 2023 that would be 2020-2021-2022) remain automatically eligible for a Stage 2 application, by-passing a further Stage 1 application.

NPrA candidates who have been unsuccessful in two successive programs will be required to gain an additional three further years of relevant work experience under the supervision of an architect before re-applying.

This requirement applies equally to applicants who have either been unsuccessful with their submission OR who have failed to submit without exemption being granted.

Applicants who have officially withdrawn (within the prescribed withdrawal period), or who have been granted official deferral will be exempt.

## 7. TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS

Translators in Australia are accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). See <http://www.ausit.org/> for a list of members. Scan both the original document and the translation and submit with your application.

## 8. APPLICATION FEES

Refer to AACA website for the following applicable fees:

Stage 1 - Application for Eligibility  
Stage 2 - Submissions in response to the design brief  
Stage 2 - Appeal

Refunds:

Stage 1 - **Fees are non-refundable.**  
Stage 2 – Partial refund (before the census date)  
**Note: No refunds will be provided after the census date.**

All fees are GST free. AACAA only accepts online credit card payments, by VISA or MASTERCARD. Payment can be made through the online submission platform. Applicants will receive an email confirmation and payment receipt after payment is successfully made. Payment details are protected during transmission using 256-bit SSL encryption. AACAA does not store any part of the credit card number, expiry date or CCV number on our server.

If you have any questions regarding online payments, please email AACAA at [mail@aaca.org.au](mailto:mail@aaca.org.au) or call us on (02) 8042 8930 or +61 2 8042 8930 (outside Australia).

## **9. HOW TO SUBMIT**

Refer to AACAA website for the online Stage 1 application form.

Online final submission guidance will be issued with the Stage 2 Brief documents.

## **10. EXTENSIONS AND APPEALS**

Applications for extension of time for lodgement of Submissions or an Appeal will only be considered for reasons of ill health or other exceptional circumstances. A medical certificate must be provided.

Unsuccessful participants may appeal to the AACAA against the outcome of the National Program of Assessment. The appeal must be lodged in writing to the CEO of the AACAA and received in the AACAA office within 28 calendar days from the date on the e-mail notifying the result. An appeal fee will apply. Causes external to the assessment of the Program will not normally constitute acceptable grounds for appeal. For example, insufficient time due to personal or other reasons is not considered a valid reason for appealing the outcome of the assessment.

## **11. ASSISTANCE**

For further assistance, please contact us by email [npra@aaca.org.au](mailto:npra@aaca.org.au)