



Board Policy

Continuing professional education – December 2004

The NSW Architects Code of Professional Conduct requires architects to undertake appropriate continuing professional education.

Part 5, 17 *Standards concerning continuing professional education*

(1) An architect should take all reasonable steps during each financial year to maintain and improve the skills and knowledge necessary for the provision of the architectural services that the architect normally provides through:

- (a) undertaking such activities that the Board is satisfied demonstrate the maintenance and improvement of the architect's skill and knowledge, or*
- (b) such other means as may be approved by the Board from time to time.*

Exemptions

(2) Subclause (1) does not apply to any non-practising architect.

The Board has determined that architects residing and practising overseas are also exempt from the requirement to undertake continuing professional education.

Framework for continuing professional education

Continuing professional education should:

- relate to practice as an architect
- be additional to activities already undertaken in the normal course of the architect's practice or employment.

Architects should undertake a minimum of 20 hours of continuing professional education each year. Hours may not be banked and 'rolled over' from one year to the next.

The minimum commitment of 20 hours is divided into two categories: *Informal self-directed and professional activities* and *Formal structured or accredited courses*. A minimum of 10 hours from each category is required.

An effective continuing professional education regime for architects should have as its basis the

National Competency Standards in Architecture which prescribe standards in four units:

Design

Documentation

Project Management

Practice Management

Each of these units is further divided into a detailed set of specific contexts, elements and performance criteria. Continuing professional education activities should be contained within one or more of these units and address the relevant context, element and performance criteria. Activities in each year should relate to a minimum of two competency units listed above. The Standards may be downloaded from the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia's website www.aaca.org.au.

Continuing professional education activities

Each year architects are encouraged to develop their own continuing professional education plan for that year which addresses the maintenance, development and enhancement of professional knowledge and skills.

The requirement to undertake continuing professional education should be seen as an opportunity to consider possible activities in light of individual career development needs, personal objectives and employment needs.

Architects will determine for themselves activities that are appropriate to their individual needs, subject to the requirement that the activity relates to the normal provision of architectural services and is within the framework described by the National Architecture Competency Standards.

Informal Category

Self-directed study and professional activities (minimum of 10 hours)

Examples include but are not limited to:

- self directed study of practice notes, technical magazines
- talks and presentations by peers
- structured visits to buildings and exhibitions
- design workshops, lectures and seminars



- authorship of published articles/books/papers etc
- involvement in mentoring programs
- participation in professional practice committees and advisory groups - through professional associations, regulatory authorities, government bodies such as Standards Australia
- raising awareness of architecture in primary and secondary schools.

A maximum of two hours only may be allocated to any one activity in the Informal category for the purpose of meeting requirements of the Code.

Formal Category

Structured courses (minimum of 10 hours)

This category includes learning activities with stated learning outcomes that are formally assessed or have significant interaction between the presenter and the learner. Examples include short courses and seminars, guided learning short courses with self-check questions and answers and formal courses of study at a recognised tertiary institution. A maximum of 2 hours may also be allocated to the formulation and facilitation of activities in the Formal category of activities.

Courses should deal primarily with matters related directly to the practice of architecture as described in the National Competency Standards in Architecture and be conducted by presenters with appropriate academic, technical or practical expertise.

Providers of continuing professional education

Providers of appropriate continuing professional education activities include the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, universities, professional and business associations and networks, and employers.

Currently, the Board will not be accrediting providers. Architects should assess the published information, the reputation of the provider, the quality of the product and the relevance of the subject matter to determine if a particular activity is appropriate to their needs.

Monitoring compliance and record keeping

Architects are required to declare that they have taken all reasonable steps to maintain and improve the skills necessary for the provision of architectural services that they normally provide when they complete their annual application for renewal of registration.

Due to the recent introduction of the Architects Act 2003, for the renewal period beginning 31 March 2005, architects will declare *an intention* to take all reasonable steps in the coming registration year to maintain and improve the skills and knowledge necessary for the provision of architectural services they normally provide.

Currently, architects are not required to substantiate their declaration with documentary evidence. However, architects should keep records of their activities for at least five years. Records should include date, activity, category of activity ie. Formal or Informal, hours claimed.

Audit on a rotational basis may be introduced by the Board in the future.

In investigating complaints concerning professional conduct, the architect will be required to produce evidence of participation in appropriate continuing professional education.

Comments on this policy are welcomed and should be forwarded in writing to the Registrar.

The Board's policy on continuing professional education will be monitored during the coming year and refinements made to reflect consideration of comments received and broader issues in the industry and regulatory environment.



FAQs for Architects

Continuing Professional Education: March 2005

Why has the Board introduced a policy on Continuing Professional Education (CPE)?

Part 5, Section 17 of the NSW Architects Code of Professional Conduct states that

(1) An architect should take all reasonable steps during each financial year to maintain and improve the skills and knowledge necessary for the provision of the architectural services that the architect normally provides through:

- (a) such activities that the Board is satisfied demonstrate the maintenance and improvement of the architect's skill and knowledge, or*
- (b) such other means as may be approved by the Board from time to time.*

(2) Subclause (1) does not apply to any non-practising architect.

The Board's policy was developed to guide architects and is based on a policy (the Joint Policy) developed by a Joint Working Party of the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA). The Board's CPE policy was endorsed by the Board in December 2004 and sent to all architects with their 2005 annual renewal of registration form. It is also available to download from the Board's website – *Forms and publications*.

Given the time constraints under which the policy was developed, the Board tried to balance the need to provide architects with a level of certainty regarding their CPE commitments at annual renewal with the desire to allow for consultation and feedback on the policy. Hence the CPE policy includes an invitation for comment from architects, and a commitment to monitor the implementation of the policy and refine aspects where necessary.

Why are there differences between the Joint Policy and the Board's policy?

There are some key differences between the Joint Policy and the Board's policy - for

example the Board considers that out of 20 hours total CPE, 10 hours of formal activities is considered reasonable, while the Joint Policy requires only 5 hours. The Board's policy does not have a weighting system unlike the Joint Policy which includes a weighting for formal activities. The Board determined not to include a weighting system because it wants a policy that is transparent and easy to understand.

How is the Board monitoring and reviewing the CPE policy?

The Board has established a Work Group to monitor the CPE and the professional indemnity (PI) policies, and to advise the Board on all matters relating to registration. Representatives from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Association of Consulting Architects join the Work Group for the deliberations on issues relating to CPE. The Work Group has identified the following key aspects of the policy it will address:

- testing whether a minimum of 20 hours of CPE, (10 hours of formal activities and 10 hours of informal activities), is the appropriate and reasonable amount for an architect to undertake for the purpose of annual renewal of registration
- developing further clarification on aspects of the policy– including a more detailed definition of formal activities and the criteria against which the Board will assess whether an architect has *taken all reasonable steps* to undertake CPE each year
- providing advice to architects on sources of appropriate continuing professional education
- developing a template for reporting CPE activities
- identifying strategies for checking compliance with the policy
- providing examples of how architects are accessing professional education activities



- identifying the ramifications for architects if they cannot certify at annual renewal that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet the CPE requirements
- considering other issues such as whether the authorship of published articles/books/papers should be eligible as a formal activity rather than an informal activity as is currently stated in the Board's policy.

The Board will be producing a series of newsletters and FAQs on these matters and seeking feedback from architects.

How do architects decide what is appropriate CPE?

Each year architects are encouraged to develop a CPE plan which addresses the maintenance, development and enhancement of their own professional knowledge and skills. Activities should relate to practice as an architect and be in addition to activities already undertaken in the normal course of the architect's practice or employment. Activities in each year should relate to a minimum of two units in the National Architecture Competency Standards – Design, Documentation, Practice Management and Project Management. The Standards can be downloaded from the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) website www.aaca.org.au.

Currently the Board is not accrediting providers of CPE. The Board will publish guidance for providers on the categories of CPE activities and will advise architects about the sources of CPE.

When deciding which courses or activities are appropriate to their needs architects need to exercise professional judgement. They should assess the published information about the activity, the reputation of the provider, the quality of the product and the relevance of the subject matter to determine if a particular activity is appropriate to individual needs. The Royal Australian Institute of Architects provides information for their members about CPE as well as providing a listing of formal and informal activities available. The Association of

Consulting Architects also provides advice to their members on these matters.

What type of activities fall under the category of formal CPE?

Continuing professional education activities in the formal category must have stated learning outcomes that are formally assessed or have significant interaction between the presenter and the learner. They should be conducted by presenters with appropriate academic, technical or practical expertise. They may be internet based.

Accredited courses relating to any aspect of the practice of architecture conducted by TAFE, universities or Registered Training Organisations are formal activities.

Short courses offered by professional associations, architect networks, employers etc that relate to the practice of architecture, that have stated learning outcomes and are formally assessed are included in the formal category. Assessment may be in a variety of forms, for example a test, self-check questions and answers, a paper submitted at the end of the activity.

Other activities that do not include formal assessment but involve *significant interaction between the presenter and the learner* may also be included in the formal category.

Significant interaction in any relevant activity is where there is direct communication between the presenter and learner, requiring the learner to actively participate in exercises, case studies, workshops, role-plays, discussions and so on. There should be feedback from the presenter to the learner in relation to the activity.

Typical examples of activities with significant interaction include:

- small groups undertaking case studies and/or written exercises with feedback from the presenter
- a web-based tool or CD Rom that requires learner interaction and input, for example, the completion of a set activity



- participation in formalised group discussions involving a case study relevant to architecture or industry practices
- 'in house' training where the learner is required to complete specified tasks or activities.

An architect shall be entitled to claim two hours of formal activity each time they have been involved in the preparation and facilitation of a CPE activity.

What are informal activities?

An informal activity relates to practice as an architect and is in addition to activities already undertaken in the normal course of practice or employment but does not include any form of assessment. To determine whether activity qualifies as being informal CPE an architect should check that:

- learning outcomes can be identified
- the activity is intended to be educational, and is not part of normal employment practices
- new knowledge and skills are being acquired or being shared with peers
- consideration has been given to how this new knowledge may be applied to practice.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- self directed study of practice notes, technical magazines
- talks and presentations by peers
- structured visits to buildings and exhibitions
- design workshops, lectures and seminars
- authorship of published articles/books/papers etc
- conferences
- involvement in mentoring programs
- participation in professional practice committees and advisory groups - through professional associations, regulatory authorities, government bodies such as Standards Australia
- raising awareness of architecture in primary and secondary schools.

A maximum of two hours only may be allocated to any one activity in the Informal category.

Can architects include attendance at courses and activities run by non-architectural organisations?

Architects will access both formal and informal CPE from a range of providers – employers, professional and business associations, universities, TAFE and private providers of training. If an architect undertakes an activity relevant to the practice of architecture as part of an industry-licensing requirement, then this activity may be included as part of the architect's CPE commitments for the purpose of registration as an architect.

What records of continuing professional education should be kept?

Records of CPE activities should be kept for at least five years and should include date, activity, location, category of activity - formal or informal - and hours claimed. The Board will provide a template for architects to use which will be available for download from the Board's website from April 2005, or by contacting the Board's office.

How will the Board assess whether an architect has "taken all reasonable steps" to undertake appropriate CPE?

For the 2005 annual renewal period architects are required to declare that they will take all reasonable steps to undertake appropriate CPE. At annual renewal on 31 March 2006, architects must declare that they have done so. The Board will develop criteria against which it will assess whether an architect has taken all reasonable steps to undertake appropriate CPE, taking into account difficulties faced by architects in regional NSW, unforeseen personal circumstances etc.

This is the first of a series of FAQs and Information Sheets for Architects on Continuing Professional Education. Further updates will be published on the Board's website.