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<http://www.ncarb.org/en/Becoming-an-Architect.aspx>

# BECOMING AN ARCHITECT

Architects are licensed professionals trained in the art and science of the design and construction of buildings and structures that primarily provide shelter. Additionally, architects may be involved with designing the total built environment—from how a building integrates with its surrounding landscape to architectural or construction details that involve the interior of the building to designing and creating furniture to be used in a specific space.

An architect will create the overall aesthetic and look of buildings and structures, but the design of a building involves far more than its appearance. Buildings also must be functional, safe, and economical and must suit the specific needs of the people who use them. Most importantly, they must be built with the public’s health, safety and welfare in mind.

Thinking about becoming an architect? It’s important to remember that there are many aspects involved with this job. Their responsibilities require specific skills—designing, engineering, managing, supervising, and communicating with clients and builders. Architects spend a great deal of time explaining their ideas to clients, construction contractors, and others. Successful architects must have a thorough knowledge of the construct of a building, and be able to design and communicate their unique vision effectively.

[The Basics](http://www.ncarb.org/en/Becoming-an-Architect/Architecture-Basics.aspx)

Architects must be licensed before they can practice architecture as or call themselves an architect.
There are four main steps to becoming an architect. *(elsewhere NCARB defines 10 steps to licensure. Confusing!)*

##### Education

In most states, to become licensed, candidates must earn a professional degree in architecture from one of the more than 100 schools of architecture that have degree programs accredited by the [National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB)](http://www.naab.org/). However, each state [architectural registration board](http://www.ncarb.org/Getting-an-Initial-License/Registration-Board-Requirements.aspx) sets its own standards, so graduation from a [non-accredited program](http://www.ncarb.org/Studying-Architecture/Difference-Between-NAAB-Accredited-And-Non.aspx) may meet the educational requirement for licensing in a few states.

Three types of professional degrees in architecture are available:

* Bachelor of Architecture: Accredited degree programs awarding the B. Arch. degree must require a minimum of 150 semester credit hours, or the quarter-hour equivalent, in academic coursework in professional studies and electives.
* Master of Architecture: Accredited degree programs awarding the M. Arch. degree must require a minimum of 168 semester credit hours, or the quarter-hour 10 equivalent, of which 30 semester credit hours, or the quarter-hour equivalent, must be at the graduate level, in academic coursework in professional studies and electives.
* Doctor of Architecture: Accredited degree programs awarding the D. Arch. degree must require either an undergraduate baccalaureate degree or a minimum of 120 undergraduate semester credit hours, or the undergraduate-level quarterhour equivalent, and a minimum of 90 graduate-level semester credit hours, or the graduate-level quarter-hour equivalent, in academic coursework in professional studies and electives.

##### Internship

Most state architectural registration boards require architecture graduates to complete an internship in order to become licensed. The [Intern Development Program (IDP)](http://www.ncarb.org/Experience-Through-Internships.aspx) is a comprehensive training program created to ensure that interns in the architecture profession gain the knowledge and skills required for the independent practice of architecture.

Most new graduates complete their training period by working as interns at architectural firms. Interns in architectural firms may assist in the design of one part of a project, help prepare architectural documents or drawings, build models, or prepare construction drawings on CADD. Interns also may research building codes and materials or write specifications for building materials, installation criteria, the quality of finishes, and other related details.

##### Examination

All 54 U.S. jurisdictions require the completion of the [Architect Registration Examination (ARE)](http://www.ncarb.org/ARE.aspx). The examination is broken into seven divisions consisting of multiple choice and graphical questions. The eligibility period for completion of all divisions of the exam varies by state.

##### Licensure

All jurisdictions require individuals to be licensed (registered) before they may call themselves architects and contract to provide architectural services. During the time between graduation and becoming licensed, architecture school graduates generally work in the field under the supervision of a licensed architect who takes legal responsibility for all work. Licensing requirements include a professional degree in architecture, a period of practical training or internship, and passing the ARE. You must contact your registration board to find out their requirements and complete the licensure process.

Most states also require some form of [continuing education](http://www.ncarb.org/Continuing-Education.aspx) to maintain a license. Requirements vary by state, but usually involve the completion of a certain number of credits annually or biennially through workshops, formal university classes, conferences, self-study courses, or other sources including [NCARB monographs](http://www.ncarb.org/Publications/List.aspx?t=Monographs).