

STRATEGIZING THE ARE TRANSITION

by: Jason Newman, Assoc. AIA

As an Architect Licensing Advisor, the majority of questions I have received recently all revolve around the same topic: the transition to ARE 5.0. Although the transition is still over a year away, it is important for ARE candidates to be aware of the potential implications of transitioning now so they can prepare themselves to be in the best position possible when the transition comes around. Although I cannot fully explain all the factors that will influence one's decision, I am hoping that this article will help identify the fundamental considerations and what important information is out there to help candidates make a well-informed decision in the best interest of their long-term licensure goals.

First off, if you are a candidate who has completed four or more divisions under ARE 4.0, just finish in 4.0...plain and simple. With four exams behind you, you will not be able to finish the ARE in less than six exams anyway. ARE 4.0 will continue to be offered until July 2018 (simultaneously with ARE 5.0), and candidates already authorized to test at the transition will **NOT** automatically be forced into ARE 5.0. Yes, having one less exam in front of you sounds awfully attractive in many ways; however, a big part of preparing for the ARE is finding an effective way to study, learn, and absorb the material. By this time you have likely developed strong study methods for the format of ARE 4.0. Keep the rudder straight and the finish line in your sights. Onward!

For candidates who are at the front end of their ARE journey, however, transitioning to ARE 5.0 could be a very beneficial strategy. One of the most critical factors when considering a potential transition into the new ARE system is **TIMING**. Regardless of exam details, how the transition plays into your long-term licensure goals is a huge factor. ARE 5.0 is scheduled to launch in late 2016 and for many candidates (myself included) ARE 5.0 simply will not come at the right time to sync with our long-term goals. Although ARE 4.0 does involve taking seven divisions, "cooling off" for several months to try and catch the transition correctly could have negative consequences. Your five-year rolling clock will continue to tick while you wait for the transition to come along, and some candidates may find that waiting for the transition actually prolongs their completion of the ARE.

In terms of finding the most advantageous way to transition, the secret is out! Those who have seen the *NCARB ARE Credit Model* have likely realized that if you sequence your

exam divisions correctly and transition at the right time, you can end up only having to take **FIVE** exams. By taking Construction Documents (CDS), Program Planning and Practice (PPP), and Site Planning and Design (SPD) in 4.0, then transitioning into ARE 5.0, you would only be required to pass Project Planning & Design and Project Development & Documentation to complete the ARE. In terms of finding the path through the ARE which requires the least number of exam divisions, this is the way to go.

There are some major factors that need to be considered with this path as well. If a candidate chooses to complete CDS, PPP, and SPD in 4.0 and then transition, the two remaining divisions in ARE 5.0 appear to be cover a deal of material as they will draw content from 4 and 6 of the existing division in ARE 4.0 (see NCARB Credit Model). These exam divisions appear to cover a broad range of material compared to the content divisions of 4.0, and you may need to go back and review select areas from exams you have already passed in addition to learning the new material.

The other fundamental consideration for ARE candidates is your personal study methods and your comfort with the separation of divisions of 4.0. At this point, there is no way to determine whether ARE 5.0 will be easier or more difficult - all we can be sure of right now is that it will certainly be different. The current seven divisions will be re-aligned (not to be confused with "melted down") into six new divisions:

1. Practice Management
2. Project Management
3. Programming & Analysis
4. Project Planning & Design
5. Project Development & Documentation
6. Construction & Evaluation

It is important to note that this does not mean that there will be a reduction in exam content. For example, one of the most publicized changes of ARE 5.0 is the elimination of the graphic vignettes. In ARE 5.0, candidates will still be tested on the knowledge and skills required to complete the vignettes of 4.0; however, those skills will be tested in different ways. Several new question types will be integrated into the exam which will require analytical thinking beyond selecting one of four potential answers. **Case studies** are anticipated to be implemented which will require candidates to assess multiple

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pieces of information and make evaluative judgments. **Hot spot** questions will ask candidates to identify the correct location, or "hot spot," on a response image (ie: Draw the correct location of the vapor barrier on the following detail). The full *ARE 5.0 Test Specification* is now available for download on the NCARB website. Candidates who are considering the transition should review the NCARB Test Specification and the content alignment for each division to determine if they are comfortable with the format of the new exam prior to making their decision.

There is no universal "best case scenario" in terms of navigating the ARE transition. The decision of whether or not a candidate should depends on the candidate, their long term licensure goals/schedule, and their preferred study methods. However, as an Architect Licensing Advisor I can offer a few common suggestions:

1. Get signed-up to test prior to ARE 5.0. If you have not acquired your authorized to test with the State Architectural Registration Board, get it! When ARE transitions in late 2016, all new candidates will be forced into ARE 5.0; however, candidates who are authorized to test at the time of the transition will have their choice to transition, not transition, or transition at a later date. ARE 4.0 and ARE 5.0 will be offered concurrently until July of 2018. Having your Authorization to Test prior to the launch of ARE 5.0 preserves your ability to choose! Obtaining your authorization to test can be done right in your NCARB Record under *Examination*.

2. If you want to start your exams now in ARE 4.0 but you are considering trying to take advantage of the transition, take CDS, PPP, and SPD first. Having these **THREE** exams completed prior to transitioning will earn you **FOUR** exams in

ARE 5.0. Once you have these three down, re-evaluate your experience with the format of ARE 4.0, your schedule and your long term goals, and see if it makes sense for you.

3. Do not take the decision to transition lightly. **ONCE YOU TRANSITION TO ARE 5.0, YOU CANNOT GO BACK TO ARE 4.0.** Candidates should consider their decision from all angles to make sure they are making a well informed decision. Familiarize yourself with the resources provided by NCARB, and of course, discuss any questions you may have with an Architect Licensing Advisor! (ldp@wmaia.org)

Helpful ARE Resources:

ARE 5.0 FAQ's:

http://www.ncarb.org/ARE/-/media/Files/PDF/Brochure/ARE5_FAQs.pdf

ARE 5.0 Test Specifications:

<http://www.ncarb.org/ARE/-/media/Files/PDF/Special-Paper/ARE5-TestSpecification.pdf>

ARE Credit Model / Transition Plan:

<http://www.ncarb.org/ARE/ARE5/ARE5-CreditModel.aspx>