

## A Message from NCARB to all ARE candidates

NCARB's mission is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public by assuring that those licensed as architects meet the qualifications to practice independently. The ARE is one tool we utilize to serve our mission.

All NCARB exams are created under strict security and held in confidence. All exam questions and vignettes are also registered under the US Copyright Act. Before beginning any test, you are required to accept a 'Confidentiality Agreement' which prohibits any disclosure of exam content.

As you may have heard, several candidates have recently been contacted regarding ARE Forum posts that have crossed the line from 'helping' to divulging content from the exam. Some candidates have received a warning letter from me. Others are being referred to the NCARB Committee on Professional Conduct (PCC). This committee will review each incident and make a disciplinary recommendation to the NCARB Board of Directors. Depending on the severity of the disclosure, these candidates may have their exam score cancelled and/or all of their eligibilities suspended for six months to three years or more. In addition, the disciplinary action is reported to the candidate's registration board. In the past three years, there have been eight cases heard by the PCC related to examination discipline. The candidates affected have had testing privileges suspended and scores cancelled for dissemination of exam content. **At the next PCC meeting, there will be eight cases being reviewed related to candidates posting inappropriate content on the ARE Forum.**

For the first time in ARE history, we have felt it necessary to "turn off" some of the content that has been disclosed on this web site. The amount of information exposed was so severe that we no longer feel confident that a candidate who receives these questions or vignettes is being accurately evaluated for competency. Where the exposure is substantial, NCARB is now forced to expend significant sums replacing examination questions that can no longer be used because of this exposure; **we can and will exercise all of our legal rights to recover our damages from those who exposed the content.** In addition to violations of their 'Confidentiality Agreement', individuals would also be charged with civil violations of the US Copyright Act.

I am sure you are thinking, "Why do I care about this? I just want to get my exams done."

Well, here are **four reasons why you should care:**

- The ARE depends on a pool of items from which we create every exam. This pool is limited. Every time we have to remove an item from the pool, it reduces our ability to protect the integrity of the exam. If enough content is divulged by candidates, **we will be forced to stop delivering an entire division for a significant period of time to protect the content and this could, under certain circumstances, delay everyone's ability to complete the ARE.**

- Many candidates have asked why we have a six-month wait to retake a failed division. A waiting period protects the pool of items as you are never allowed to see the same version of a division if you retest. Thanks to your fellow candidates who did not abide by the 'Confidentiality Agreement', we have now been forced to turn content off. If divulging content continues, **we will be forced to lengthen the re-take waiting period.**
- The development and operational costs to deliver the ARE in computer based format are significantly higher than the income we receive from candidates who are testing. A large portion of the development and operational costs of the ARE is actually subsidized by NCARB record holders. If we need to replace compromised content, **NCARB will consider passing this expense on to our candidate population.**
- The ARE is, likely, the last component needed for you to receive your license to practice. NCARB is not here to keep people out of the profession. However, it is our responsibility to accurately assess the competence of all who attempt to become licensed. If a person passes the ARE due to studying actual exam content on a web site, and not because they are truly competent, we are not providing our mandated responsibility to the public and a needed service to the profession.

ARE candidates utilize various tools to prepare for the examination. The ARE Forum is one of many. It is only human to want to help your fellow interns through the process. Next time you sit down to write a review of your most recent exam division, please remember that there is a fine line between 'helping' and 'cheating'.

"Helping" means:

- Sharing what study guides you used;
- Discussing concepts highlighted in study material;
- Reviewing graphic solutions to the NCARB Practice Program and noting obvious errors;
- Supporting each other and celebrating each other's success.

"Cheating" means, quite simply, discussing with others anything that you saw on your exam. This includes:

- Identifying terms or concepts contained in exam questions;
- Sharing answers to questions you had on your exam;
- Referring others to "check out" information you saw on your exam;
- Identifying program elements including building names, building heights, setbacks, parking requirements, etc... and code requirements from your graphic vignettes;
- Asking others to repost content that has been removed from the ARE Forum, or any other web site.

Doing any of the above risks having your exam score(s) cancelled, eligibilities suspended and significantly (if not permanently) delaying your architectural registration. **It also could expose you to legal action.** In short, if you follow the guidelines above, you will not hear from me in the future. If you do not abide by the rules set forth in the 'Confidentiality Agreement', you will be hearing from me.

**If you have any doubts about what you are posting, don't post it.** If you have any questions about what is acceptable to post, please contact us at [are@ncarb.org](mailto:are@ncarb.org).

Sincerely,  
Erica Brown, AIA  
Director, Architect Registration Examination  
National Council of Architectural Registration Boards