



BULLETIN 12: REGISTERING WITH ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS

2ND REVISION: OCTOBER 2009 (REPLACES AUGUST 2006 REVISION)

This bulletin sets out the basic rules, processes and procedures for application for registration in British Columbia as an architect through alternative qualifications assessment. Accepting such applicants remains at the discretion of Council on the advice and recommendation of staff, the Registration and Licensing Board, and its reporting committees.

Revisions made in this latest update are mostly editorial. Two changes of note are included. First, the requirement for six months of work experience referred to in paragraph 1.2 used to refer to British Columbia work experience. It now refers to Canadian work experience. Second, specific reference to administrative fees has been removed. A listing of applicable fees can be found in Bulletin 1 posted on the AIBC website.

This bulletin has been adopted by resolution of AIBC Council.

Note about reciprocity: Applicants registered in British Columbia through alternative qualifications assessment will be recognized for registration in all other Canadian jurisdictions, but not necessarily in U.S. jurisdictions.

OVERVIEW

The operative sections of the *Architects Act* dealing with admission to the profession are sections 36 and 37 respectively.

Section 36 reads as follows:

(1) A person who is at least age 19, who produces evidence satisfactory to the council of identification, good moral character, his or her qualifications and, if the person has practised as an architect, of good professional conduct, and any further information required by the council, and who passes examinations required by the institute or the council is entitled, on payment of the fee for registration, to be registered under this Act, if the person is

- (a) a member of an organization governing the practice of architecture in a jurisdiction where the architectural training required for admission is approved by the council, is entitled to practise architecture in that jurisdiction, or
- (b) a graduate of a school of architecture in a course approved by the council and who, after graduation and before the application for membership, has for a cumulative total of 3 years been actively engaged in the practice of architecture or employed in the office of a member of the institute or a practising architect approved by the council.

(2) The council may reduce the 3 year period referred to in subsection (1)(b) to not less than 2 years if the applicant has other related experience that the council accepts as part of the 3 years

Section 37 reads as follows:

The Council may admit to registration in the Institute a person nominated* in writing for membership by 5 members of the Institute and who has passed an examination** required by Council, if the person has:

- (a) for 15 years, been employed in the office of a member or members of the Institute;
- (b) for 15 years, been employed in the office of a person outside British Columbia who, in the opinion of the Council, is a qualified and capable architect; or
- (c) for 8 years, practised as a qualified architect outside British Columbia.

The specific clauses of Section 37 of the *Architects Act*, as well as the interpretation of Sections 36 and 37 read as a whole and in the context of the legislative scheme, provide the obligation and mandate of the AIBC as the regulatory body for architecture in British Columbia to recognize persons working (or eligible to work) in the profession, who either have not met the usual requirements for registration through prescribed education, experience and examination or who have done so in jurisdictions not otherwise recognized in British Columbia under reciprocity and/or inter-recognition agreements. These provisions allow the AIBC to test for equivalency and to admit those people who can objectively and credibly demonstrate they meet all of the standards for admission through alternatively obtained means.

*An applicant meets the requirement for nomination through provision of letters of reference from current members of the institute in good standing (MAIBCs). The institute recognizes that for some applicants new to the jurisdiction, five letters from MAIBCs may not be possible, so a minimum of two reference letters is required upon application. The remaining three references can be from the three members of the Oral Assessment Panel described later in this bulletin.

**The term “examination” as referenced in the *Act* refers to the evaluation and review of the applicant’s experience and qualifications demonstrably equivalent to the standard education, experience and examinations required of an Intern Architect in the Internship in Architecture Program (IAP). *For further information about the IAP, please refer to the IAP manual available in the Intern Architect section of the AIBC web site: www.aibc.ca, or contact the AIBC staff.*

EVALUATION

1.0 Process

Applicants for alternative qualifications assessment must provide necessary documentation to support their application and illustrate their abilities and equivalency to the education, experience, and examination required of registrants under the “traditional” or “mainstream” route of entry consisting of a CACB accredited degree, the Intern Architect Program, and the Architectural Registration Examinations (ARE) set and administered through the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) and the Canadian Architectural Licensing/Registering Associations.

The typical evaluation process involves the following steps:

- Applicant downloads application materials, guidelines and instructions from the AIBC website.
- Complete and correct application package, portfolio and applicable fees are submitted to the AIBC. The applicant assumes full responsibility to ensure completeness and correctness of her/his application package and to include all materials required of her/him at the time of application. Incomplete packages will not be processed and may be returned to the applicant without assessment.
- Staff performs an initial review of the application and makes recommendations to the Qualifications Committee. Staff will screen-out applications which clearly do not meet assessment criteria. All other applications will be referred to Qualifications Committee.
- Application is assigned to Qualifications Committee for further review. A member of the Qualifications Committee may contact the applicant for more information or to help her/him prepare for the oral assessment. Unless the application is deemed not to meet assessment criteria, in which case it is rejected at this stage, the candidate will be invited to attend an oral assessment interview.
- Applicant attends an oral assessment interview with three Qualifications Committee members to assess equivalency to education, experience, examination requirements for entry. The possible results from the oral assessment are:
 - 1) Recommendation to proceed to oral review once all other requirements (professional development courses and work experience) are met; or
 - 2) Applicant must complete additional requirements as determined by oral assessment panel and either return for another oral assessment or provides proof of completion to the AIBC before progressing to oral review panel; or
 - 3) Application is rejected.
- Applicant completes six mandatory professional development courses prior to the oral review (see Bulletin 15).
- Applicant attends an oral review examination to determine understanding of regulation and practice of architecture in British Columbia.
- Registration is granted.

1.1 Education

The first step in the review of an applicant's qualifications begins with education. It is understood that not all alternative qualifications applicants will necessarily have completed a formal degree in architecture. If an applicant has a degree in architecture and has not worked as a licensed/recognized architect for at least seven (7) years, or such other time as may be determined by the Registration and Licensing Board, s/he must get her/his education assessed (certified) by the Canadian Architectural Certification Board (CACB). If the applicant does not have a formal degree in architecture or if certification of education through CACB is not possible, assessment for equivalency may be possible through the alternative qualifications assessment route and will be determined through analysis of the application materials and portfolio information and through the oral assessment interview.

1.2 Experience

Applicants must document and demonstrate all relevant architectural work experience. Applicants are expected to have a breadth of professional experience in architectural practice including local and current experience. Further, a professional development component will be evaluated.

1.2.1 Local and current experience

Included in the work experience requirement is the need to have **local and current Canadian** work experience. This requirement is met by demonstrating at least six months of acceptable work experience in Canada working under the direction of a registered/licensed Canadian architect. While the “local” work experience may be obtained anywhere in Canada, it is highly recommended that it be obtained working in B.C. or on projects located in B.C. The reason for this is that when the applicant undertakes the oral review exam at the end of the process, she/he will be assessed on their knowledge and understanding of how architecture is regulated and practised in British Columbia.

Such work experience must fall within three years of the date of application for registration. It should be noted that six months (approximately 940 hours) of local and current Canadian work experience is a *minimum* prerequisite for application. This experience should be a well-balanced combination of categories A, B and C, as outlined in Part II, Section 2.2, of the Internship in Architecture Program Manual, available in the Intern Architect section of the AIBC web site: www.aibc.ca. Upon completing the review of an applicant’s qualifications, the Oral Assessment Panel may recommend the applicant obtain additional local and current experience prior to registration.

1.2.2 Professional Development

All B.C. architects are expected to demonstrate commitment to professional development and current knowledge/expertise in the practice of architecture. B.C. architects are expected to demonstrate professional attitude and aptitude in their role as architects not only as practitioners but also within the community at large.

Like all architects, alternative qualifications applicants are required to demonstrate professional development. All applicants must take six of the eight professional development courses offered by the AIBC. Four of these courses are non-discretionary (they must be taken). Two courses must be chosen from the remaining four “discretionary” choices. These professional development course requirements are also required of applicants seeking registration through the Internship in Architecture Program. The courses are listed in the Professional Development section of the AIBC web site.

1.3 Examination (technical knowledge, design ability and ability to practise)

1.3.1 Written Examination: As outlined earlier in this bulletin, one of the requirements for registration is examination. The examination requirement for registration through the “traditional” or “mainstream” IAP is completion of each of the divisions of the ARE. A brief description of each of these divisions may be found on the NCARB web site at www.ncarb.org.

One of the purposes of the oral assessment is to determine whether an applicant has equivalent knowledge and understanding to that tested by and through the ARE examinations. If the oral assessment panel determines that an applicant does not meet the test of equivalency, one possible outcome could be a requirement to successfully write one or more ARE divisions, or such other examinations as determined by the Registration and Licensing Board.

1.3.2 Oral Review: An oral review is required for all alternative qualification applicants. Oral reviews are held three times per year, under the auspices of the Registration and Licensing Board (see Bulletin 15).

1.4 Registration

After successful completion of an oral review and upon receipt of the annual dues, the applicant will be eligible for approval by the Registration and Licensing Board for recommendation to council for registration as a member of the AIBC.

REFERENCE LETTERS

As part of the application process, applicants are required to obtain letters of reference from members of the Institute. For Section 37 (c) applications, additional letters of reference from the applicant’s country of origin are welcome. MAIBCs writing letters of reference must carefully consider the endorsement they provide, indicating clearly and specifically the qualities, skills and experience they believe to be possessed by the applicant they are nominating. The applicant and the reference should carefully consider the importance and significance of this application process.

Potential applicants, and their referees, may contact the AIBC for additional guidelines regarding required documentation and topics likely to be reviewed by the oral assessment panel.

FEES

Council has authorized the AIBC administration to set fees annually. Two separate fees are payable upon submission of application package: (1) application fee and (2) alternative qualification assessment fee. Fees are listed in Bulletin 1, available under the AIBC Documents section of the website at (www.aibc.ca).

The AIBC does not provide legal, accounting or insurance advice and expressly disclaims any responsibility for any errors or omissions with respect to legal, accounting or insurance matters that may be contained herein. Readers of AIBC documents are advised to consult their own legal, accounting or insurance representatives to obtain suitable professional advice in those regards.