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Recommended Guidelines for the UIA Accord On Recommended International Standards of Professionalism in Architectural Practice Policy on Demonstration of Professional Knowledge and Ability

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INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ARCHITECTS



Accord Policy on Professional Knowledge and Ability

That the acquired knowledge and ability of an architect have to be proven by providing adequate evidence. This evidence must include the successful completion of at least one examination at the end of the practical experience/training/internship. Necessary components of professional practice knowledge and ability that are not subject to an examination have to be proven by other adequate evidence. These include such subjects as business administration and relevant legal requirements.

Introduction

Professional learning involves both study in an academic institution at university level and structured, monitored and assessed experience in the workplace. The demonstration of professional knowledge and ability may require collaboration between education and practice, and between the academic institute and qualified practicing architects.

The broad list of knowledge and abilities is published in the UIA/UNESCO Charter on Education and in other Guidelines. Levels of learning vary, from an "awareness," to an "understanding" to "an ability to" do a particular professional task. Some subject areas are usually learned in the university environment, while others are often learned while working in an architect's office or in other areas of the built environment.

Methods of assessment of knowledge and ability vary. University courses may be examined by a critical assessment of project work, written documents, multiple choice or essay examinations, and in other ways. Experience in aspects of professional practice may be examined through the evaluation of case studies, the assessment of learning experience recorded in a record of professional practice (logbook), in written and design examinations, and/or in a professional interview with experienced members of the profession. The appropriate mix of techniques will vary from country to country based on institutional structures and other cultural differences. However, it is important that the title "architect" is only conferred upon individuals who can demonstrate the successful completion of a university level academic program and a period of assessed practical training or the equivalent.

There is a view that architecture is an holistic discipline. The ability to assess and integrate a range of knowledge and skills is often assessed through the design studio. The aim of the studio is both to develop skills in producing an appropriate and attractive design and also to learn and demonstrate skills, for example, of critical reasoning and architectural professional judgment.

The UIA Recommended Model

1. Academic Professional Education

Candidates for registration as architects should complete an academic professional education at university level as recommended in the UIA/UNESCO Charter on Education.

The precise form for the assessment of knowledge and ability is usually left to the provider of the program, and in most cases this is the university. Standards of academic assessment should be ensured through the application of the policies recommended in the Commission Guideline on Accreditation/Validation /Recognition.

2. Internship/Professional Experience

Accord policy identifies the need for a period of monitored and assessed professional experience prior to registration

Techniques for the examination of professional experience vary widely among jurisdictions. In many countries it takes the form of recording the time spent in an office under the supervision of an architect. In some jurisdictions the emphasis is now shifting to systems which assess and record learning outcomes, rather than just time spent. Techniques for recording learning may include monitored and assessed logs of candidate activity, critical case studies of paradigm projects, case studies of projects undertaken by the candidate, examinations of professional practice knowledge and ability, and/or interviews with experienced professional practice examiners.

3. The Final Professional Examination/Assessment

In some jurisdictions an assessment of knowledge and ability takes place in the form of a centrally administered written paper, examination, specific design exercises and/or an interview with professional practice examiners. Professional experience should be assessed to determine learning outcomes in accordance with UIA recommendations. Centrally administered assessment systems should avoid imposing unnecessarily complex or redundant systems on students. In countries which have validated and broadly compatible academic professional programs, the UIA favors a final examination/assessment providing its scope is restricted to areas which have not already been assessed through other means, whether prior to the award of a recognized academic qualification in architecture, or through assessed professional experience. In countries which have a broad range of academic courses which may not be externally validated by the profession, the UIA favors a comprehensive final professional examination/assessment which tests core knowledge and ability as well as professional maturity. All candidates for registration must submit to an assessment of professional knowledge and ability or be able to demonstrate the equivalent of a qualification achieved in their home jurisdiction.

4. Learning Outcomes

Competency relates mainly to knowledge and ability which are relevant irrespective of where or when an architect practices, as reflected in the adoption of the UIA/UNESCO Charter on Education. However, there are differences in the knowledge base, which is required for competent practice at a particular time or location. For example, while an awareness of the existence of contract law may be globally relevant to architects in practice, the knowledge of a particular country's legal system may be domain specific; while an understanding of "lateral stability" is global in its relevance, knowledge of geo-technical conditions and methods for design against earthquakes may be domain specific.

The UIA believes that the demonstration of professional competence should focus on the development of general and transferable knowledge and skills, for these are the learning outcomes which remain relevant to the professional over time and irrespective of the location of practice. The need for continuing professional development is acknowledged by the UIA and the architect's code of conduct usually requires that architects should only undertake commissions where the required knowledge and ability are present. The UIA does not favor the re-examination of knowledge and ability, which have already been examined.

5. Examination/Assessment Requirements Should Be Competency Based

The UIA opposes restrictions on Examination/Assessment, which are not competency based.

6. Incremental Assessment Versus Repeat Examinations

While acknowledging that architecture is in a sense an holistic discipline involving complex professional judgments, the UIA believes that examination can be undertaken at planned stages in the student's development. It is usual that these stages are:

- During and at the end of the period of academic professional study, marked by the award of academic degrees;
- At the end of the professional experience period; and/or
- Through a final examination which, depending on the character of previous assessments, may be of a general nature or restricted to domain specific knowledge.

7. Demonstrating Competence to a Relevant Authority

The relevant authority will need to be satisfied that the required standards have been met before allowing registration of title, function and/or membership of the professional institute. This will require the authority to:

- Adopt standards for competency, such as those recommended by the UIA, other multinational documents, or an internationally compatible national standard;
- Assess standards of competency of academic achievement in architecture, internship/professional experience, and domain specific knowledge, either through participation in or through the receipt of recommendations from an independent accreditation/validation agency.

The scope and standard of competency at all stages of an architect's education and professional training should be subject to regular accreditation/validation by an objective panel which can sanction programs and report its findings to registration bodies/professional institutes.

8. Monitoring the Changing Requirements for Architectural Education and Training

Architectural education and professional training must undergo continuous change and review if it is to keep pace with the changing nature of practice and expectations of the public. Concern with sustainability, health and safety, and access for the disabled are all examples of education and practice, which have changed significantly in a decade. The scope and method of demonstrating competency must be reviewed regularly if it is not to risk stagnating development within the profession. Overly prescriptive competence guidelines which are not reviewed regularly run the risk of discouraging vitality and innovation in architectural education. Overly vague guidelines provide little in the way of consumer protection in determining the scope or level of competence that the public may expect from a practicing architect.

The UIA recommends that in order to ensure contemporary relevance a comprehensive review of the criteria and procedures for accreditation/validation of architectural education and professional training should take place about every 5 years.