

# **Quality Assurance for Continuing Education Activities for the Architecture Profession in Canada**

*National Standards for  
Continuing Education Activities and Providers*

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Prepared for the Continuing Education Harmonization Task Force

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# 1. Definitions

## 1.1. **Quality Assurance**

Quality Assurance is the adoption of a system of activities, including standards and criteria, to assure that the delivery of Continuing Education to architects is consistent and satisfies its stated purpose.

## 1.2. **Continuing Education Activities**

Continuing Education Activities are those activities which an architect undertakes for professional learning in order to keep current, master new skills, plan for the future and meet professional responsibilities. These activities include learning through the following modes:

### Individual Learning

- professional reading
- Internet research or taking courses online
- reviewing video and audio cassettes, DVD's or CD-ROMs
- individual research
- professional writing
- delivering speeches and giving presentations not related to the architect's own practice
- touring architectural sites or manufacturing facilities
- participating in professional association activities
- mentoring

### Group Learning

- attending conferences and workshops
- taking courses
- developing and teaching courses
- participating in seminars and discussion groups
- participating in a teleconference or video conference or online courses

## 1.3. **Continuing Education Provider**

A Continuing Education Provider is an individual, company, organization, group or association that offers educational activities or programs to architects.

## 1.4. **Core Learning Activities (Formation dirigée)**

Core learning activities are educational opportunities that provide a fundamental level of knowledge relevant to the practice of Architecture throughout Canada and:

- a) focus on the following subject matter:
  - Legal Issues and Legislation related to Architectural Practice and the Construction Industry
  - Building Technology
  - Planning and Design
  - Practice of Architecture and Business Management
  - Project Management

- Environment and Energy
- b) are a minimum length or duration of one (1) hour, and;
- c) are developed, or reviewed and approved, and delivered by a provincial/territorial Association, the RAIC, or an approved Continuing Education Provider in conformity with the Quality Assurance Standards agreed to by all provincial/territorial Associations and the RAIC, and;
- d) Attendance at Core Learning Activities must be reported by the Association or the RAIC to the licensing authority.

**1.5. Self-directed Learning Activities (Formation libre)**

Self-directed learning activities are educational opportunities that have been selected by an individual member, which in their professional opinion:

- a) Relate to the practice of Architecture or business at either at broad or detailed level and are relevant to the individual member's specific situation, and;
- b) Satisfies either a provincial/territorial Association's general criteria for Self-directed learning activities (if applicable) or the Quality Assurance Standards, and;
- c) Are a minimum length or duration of one (1) hour, and;
- d) Are reported personally to the provincial/territorial Association by the individual member.

**1.6. Distance Education (*from the AIA Continuing Education System*)**

*"Distance Education is defined as a method of instruction where there is a separation of place and/or time between the instructor and learner, between fellow learners, and/or the learners and the learning resources. These programs may use a multiple set of delivery methods, used alone or in combination."*

## 2. Introduction

The Provincial and Territorial Associations of Architects (Associations) and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) adopted a series of principles regarding continuing education at a Roundtable held in September 2005 in Toronto. The “Summary of Decisions” agreed to at that Roundtable is found in Appendix A to this document.

The existing framework and the decisions anticipate two levels of national (pan-Canadian) continuing education activities:

1. Core Learning Activities
2. Self-directed learning

At this time, it is proposed that **quality assurance criteria apply only to the Core learning activities**. There are several reasons for this:

- it will be difficult to apply criteria to an extremely wide range of individual, self-directed, learning activities;
- standardized criteria for quality assurance will facilitate reciprocity with respect to acceptance and recognition of “Core” courses in other provinces;
- standardized criteria will assist providers and Associations in the development of new continuing education courses for “Core activities”

In addition, quality assurance criteria will apply to Continuing Education Providers who develop and deliver “Core” Learning Activities.

## 3. Quality Assurance Criteria

### 3.1. Content of Core Learning Activities

#### 3.1.1. Topics of Core Learning Activities

All Core Learning Activities, shall be within one of the following topics:

- Legal Issues and Legislation related to Architectural Practice and the Construction Industry
- Building Technology
- Planning and Design
- Practice and Business Management
- Project Management
- Environment and Energy

#### 3.1.2. Length of Core Learning Activities

Core Learning Activities shall be a minimum of one hour in length.

#### 3.1.3. Course or Activity Evaluation

All Core Learning Activities must be evaluated by those participating in the activity. Appendix B contains a sample Evaluation Form.

#### 3.1.4. Outline of Core Learning Activities

All Core Learning Activities shall include a printed outline which contains the following minimum information:

- a list of the learning objectives
- the method of delivery
- a brief description of the content
- a list of resource material
- the duration of the activity in hours

#### 3.1.5. Currency of Content for Core Learning Activities

All time-sensitive material shall be identified (such as codes, standards, regulations, etc.) with a date. All material and information contained in the Core Learning Activities shall be current and the latest published or available.

#### 3.1.6. Interactive Learning Component

All Core Learning Activities shall include an **interactive** component. This permits learners to interact with one or all of the following:

- the instructor
- other learners, or
- the learning resources.

The following are examples of interactive learning:

- case studies;
- discussions with instructor or other learners;

- group exercises or “break-out” discussion groups , round tables or focus groups;
- hands-on activity or interactive computer software or workbook exercises;
- problem-solving exercises;
- simulation or role-playing

### **3.1.7. Review of Content and Dispute Resolution**

The Chairs of the provincial/territorial Continuing Education Committees reserve the right to thoroughly review any Core Learning Activity in its entirety to ensure that it qualifies as a Core Learning Activity. Members of the Committee or their designated representatives will conduct the review. The purpose of this review is two-fold:

1. to ensure that the Core Learning Activity is applicable to all regions of Canada;
2. to provide a random, independent audit of a few Core Learning Activities.

The Chairs of all the Continuing Education Committees of each Association shall comprise an informal committee for resolution of disputes related to reciprocal recognition of Core Learning Activities.

## **3.2. Delivery of Core Learning Activities**

### **3.2.1. Providers of Core Learning Activities**

All Core Learning Activities shall be developed and delivered by a Continuing Education Provider who complies with the criteria outlined in this report.

### **3.2.2 Distance Education**

Where feasible, all Core Learning Activities shall include a mode of delivery for distance education *in addition to* any live, real-time or face-to-face mode of delivery. The following are acceptable modes of distance learning:

- Audio/video tape
- Interactive CD-ROM or other software
- Video/Teleconference
- Internet based-learning
- Cable TV
- Correspondence course

### **3.2.3 Self Assessment**

All Core Learning Activities delivered through a mode of distance learning shall contain a test or series of questions for self-assessment or self-evaluation by the participants or learners.

## 4. Continuing Education Providers

### 4.1. Approval of Providers

All Continuing Education Providers for Core Learning Activities shall be solicited by, or approved by, an Association or the RAIC. By default, all Core Learning Activities developed and delivered by the Associations or the RAIC shall be considered approved.

### 4.2. Qualifications of Providers

**4.2.1** All instructors and course developers shall be professionals within their sphere of instruction with an appropriate license or membership in a professional association, or recognized in their field of expertise. The following are considered appropriate backgrounds:

- independent expert or consultant
- in-house expert
- industry representative
- practitioner in the field
- university faculty member

The providers shall submit the necessary curricula vitae and other relevant documentation to support their qualifications

**4.2.2** The provider shall have experience in the delivery of continuing education to professionals and shall submit documented success of this delivery.

**4.2.3** The trainer shall have available trainers or instructors in the location(s) proposed.

**4.2.4.** The provider shall have the ability to provide some form of distance learning as outlined above.

**4.2.5** The provider shall have the capacity to develop other related programs.

**4.2.6** In addition to these qualifications the provider must demonstrate:

- a willingness to train architects for delivery of the course to their peers;
- a willingness to evaluate the success of the activity or course and share this evaluation with the associations and make the necessary adjustment for future delivery.

## 5. Appendix A

### Summary of Decisions

#### **1 Decision for implementation in the short term:**

Transition towards a common unit of measure: **Hours**.

#### **2 Decision for implementation in the short term:**

To transition towards a common nomenclature of continuing educations around three types of activities:

- **Core** architectural learning activities typically referred to as “Core”. Core courses are those in the areas as described in the Quality Assurance document  
There are 6 categories of contents listed therein;
- **Self-Directed** Learning Activities – learning activities reported by the Association member;
- **Province / Territory Specific learning** – Learning that is unique to the specific jurisdiction. These are most often regional topics or issues that present themselves on an **exceptional** basis, and are often legislative or regulatory in nature. We agreed that his type of learning activity would not be considered as a part of reciprocal continuing education.

#### **3 Decision for implementation in the short term:**

**Recognition of each other’s core continuing education activities, nationally.**

Recognition of Provincial/Territorial Associations as well as the core continuing education courses from the RAIC.

#### **4 Decision for implementation in the short term:**

**Each Association retains the ability to approve core continuing education activities**

The decentralized model. It was also agreed that a “dispute resolution” mechanism is required. The discussion indicated that such a dispute resolution mechanism could take the form of an annual Continuing Education Round Table whose mandate would be to resolve differences, issues thereby ensuring coherence and quality control of core continuing education courses.

#### **5 Decision for implementation in the medium / long term:**

- Develop a single access point of continuing education activities (the big database in the sky concept); and
- Develop a single point of registration across multiple jurisdictions

#### **6 Decision:**

To apply “distance learning” to Association’s Continuing Education activities. Ideally, all continuing education activities would be available in this format.

## 6. Appendix B

### Session Evaluation Form

Session Title:

Date and Location:

**Overall, I found the session:**

Excellent       Very Good       Good       Fair       Poor

**The Presenters' knowledge of the topic and ability to communicate was:**

**Presenter A** (*print name*) \_\_\_\_\_

Excellent       Very Good       Good       Fair       Poor

**Presenter B** (*print name*) \_\_\_\_\_

Excellent       Very Good       Good       Fair       Poor

**Presenter C** (*print name*) \_\_\_\_\_

Excellent       Very Good       Good       Fair       Poor

**The visual aids were:**

Excellent       Very Good       Good       Fair       Poor

**The venue was:**

Excellent       Very Good       Good       Fair       Poor

**If there were one thing I would improve, it would be:**

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**General Comments**

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**Suggestions for future offerings:**

We would like your assistance in identifying the current and future needs of the architectural profession. Please list below a topic or speaker you would like to see presented.

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## **7. Appendix C: Process of Approval of Core Courses** *(to be developed)*

## **8. Appendix D: Process of Accreditation of Continuing Education Providers** *(to be developed)*