



HB 1148 - Architect Practice Act Amendments

AN ACT Relating to architect's practice act; amending RCW 18.08.310; amending RCW 18.08.320; amending RCW 18.08.350; and amending 18.08.360.

Licensing Amendments

In Washington, the Washington State Board for Architects ("Board") establishes rules for architect licensure and the practice of architecture as applicable under RCW 18.08. Washington's Board is one of 55 state and territorial architectural licensing boards that make up the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB). NCARB develops and administers national programs for licensure candidates and architects and has established a national standard for architect licensing. The amendments to Section 3 would bring Washington's Architect Practice Act into alignment with this national standard for architect licensing. Specifically, the draft legislation would:

Remove one year of elective work experience required for licensing

Under current Washington law, architect licensure applicants must complete a minimum of three years of practical experience under a structured training program instituted by the Board. (At least half of an applicant's experience must be earned while employed by a qualified architecture firm under the supervision of an architect.) This requirement followed NCARB's recommendation until 2015, when NCARB streamlined its licensing standards. Before 2015, the training program required 3,740 core hours plus an additional 1,860 elective hours for a total of 5,600 hours, which is what Washington continues to follow today. The streamlined standards removed the elective hours, leaving 3,740 hours as the national standard.

HB 1148 removes the three years' practical work experience requirement from the training program and requires instead "practical architecture work experience in a structured training program approved by the Board." The Board would define what this looks like in Washington. The result would be a Washington state law that conforms to the current NCARB national standard, or 3,740 core hours of work experience in the training program. Essentially, one year and 1,860 elective hours would be removed from the required training. The Board has requested that the language be broad and refer only to a "structured training program" so that it can make adjustments to its requirements in the future without having to amend the Act.

This change reflects a commitment to the core content of NCARB's practical experience program. The Board recommends removing the third year of work experience elective hours because it has determined that these hours do not have significant learning value to applicants. Streamlining the hours allows candidates to focus on developing competency in tasks necessary for the practice of architecture.

Remove current requirements for a linear path to licensure

Section 4 removes the requirement that the education, experience and examination portions of architect licensure happen sequentially. Under the new language, each of these components may be completed simultaneously or on an overlapping basis. This change was made by NCARB for students enrolled in a National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB)-accredited degree program; the Washington Board has approved making the change for all licensee candidates in the state. (Washington is unusual in that it provides alternative paths to licensure for candidates with only a high school diploma or a diploma from a non-NAAB-accredited college. This change allows all of these candidates to complete the education, experience and examination portions of architect licensure simultaneously.)

Other Amendments

Removal of the term “intern” for licensure candidates with degrees

In 2016, the American Institute of Architects updated its policy around the use of the title “intern.” The new policy specified that, while “intern” remains a supported title for students working in an architectural office while pursuing an architecture degree, it should not apply to those who have earned an accredited architecture degree and are currently working for a firm while pursuing licensure. For those individuals, AIA supports two titles: “architectural associate” or “design professional.”

Accordingly, Section 1 removes the title of “intern architect” for someone with an accredited architectural degree and replaces it with “architectural associate.” In that same section it replaces the phrase “structured intern program” with “structured training program.”

Further defining the practice of architecture

Section 2 specifies that the practice of architecture includes “any service or work that requires architectural training and experience.” Recently, a handful local jurisdictions in the state have permitted structural engineers to seal an entire set of drawings for a building permit, including those that fall within the “practice of architecture.” Such “cross-stamping” is not permitted under the engineers’ practice act, RCW 18.43. Section 2 uses the same language in RCW 18.43 and applies it to the architects’ statute. The intent is to provide clarity to building officials around the state regarding which drawings are required to be sealed by architects and which require an engineer’s seal.