



Examination Alternative Project (EAP) - FAQs

1. Why is ARIDO Developing an alternative to the current exam requirement?

ARIDO currently accepts that applicants who have successfully completed the NCIDQ exams have satisfied an examination requirement as a final requirement to become an ARIDO Registered Members.

Under the ARIDO/OAA Direct Regulation Model, the current requirements of education, experience, and examination to qualify as an Interior Designer, will provide Registered members with a licence to practice a protected scope of interior design.

ARIDO's role as a qualifying body will therefore be accountable to provincial government, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) and the Ontario Fairness Commissioner for assessing if individuals have met the requirements for registration into the Interior Design profession. ARIDO will be accountable for ensuring the validity, reliability, and fairness of assessments it uses to satisfy the requirements it is mandating, and it must also have authority to oversee and alter the requirements to qualify as it relates to fair access.

ARIDO has agreed with OAA that an alternative to the NCIDQ exams should be developed as a Canadian option. This Canadian Alternative would be a second option, in addition to the NCIDQ exams, for satisfying the examination requirement.

To this end, ARIDO has launched a project to develop a Canadian Alternative to the current NCIDQ exams. The goal is to ensure a fair and equitable path to qualification as an Interior Designer in Ontario.

2. Will the NCIDQ Exams continue to be recognized to qualify as a Registered Interior Designer in Ontario?

Currently, the OAA allows for two options to meet the final requirements for one to become a licensed Architect in Ontario. Candidates may take the NCARB exam, administered in North America, or the EXAC exam, a Canadian option.

ARIDO has agreed with OAA that an alternative to the NCIDQ exams should be developed as a Canadian option. This Canadian Alternative would be a second option, in addition to the NCIDQ exams, for satisfying the examination requirement.

Ultimately, each candidate for Registered membership in Ontario will have complete autonomy to choose which requirement they will take, the NCIDQ examinations or the new Canadian Alternative.

ARIDO recommends the NCIDQ examinations for those Interior Designers who will pursue and take responsibility for interior design work in the United States.

3. What steps has ARIDO taken to ensure mitigation of any conflicts of interest during the development of the Canadian Alternative?

ARIDO has screened all participants of the development group to ensure no involvement on their part in the development of the NCIDQ examinations. As this project is intended to develop an alternative to the current examination requirement, and not a duplication of it, ARIDO's intent is to develop an alternative that considers alternative ways to assessing interior design competencies.

It was therefore important for ARIDO to eliminate any bias that may exist at the development group level to ensure that an openness to different approaches and methods of assessment of competencies be explored.

It was also important for ARIDO to ensure that no conflicts of interest were breached with the ongoing development of the NCIDQ exams, in particular as the NCIDQ exams will continue to be recognized as meeting the final requirement to become a Registered member in Ontario.

4. What is ARIDO developing as the Canadian Alternative?

With the intent to continue to recognize the NCIDQ examinations as a final requirement to become Registered in Ontario, it was an important focus of this project to look at alternative methods of assessing competencies. ARIDO's intent in developing the alternate focused on identifying a different approach from the current examination requirement while maintaining the rigour required to assess one's minimum competencies in order to protect public interest. ARIDO has engaged a Competency Consultant to lead this project. This project will also build upon previous competency development work such as the ARIDO Intern Competency Review System (ICRS) and the Interior Design Experience Requirement (IDER).

As advancing equity, diversity and inclusion is an important commitment for ARIDO as the regulatory body of interior design in Ontario, it was equally important to examine barriers that exist in most regulatory frameworks in qualifying practitioners. A Canadian Ph.D. Consultant who is an Education Policy Research as well as an Education EDI Specialist in Higher Education was engaged to actively audit the development process under the lens of equity, diversity and inclusion.

5. For those who choose the EAP for meeting the examination requirement, How does this impact an ARIDO Qualified member's ability to apply for membership in other Provinces? If ARIDO is now offering an alternative to the NCIDQ exams in order to meet the examination requirement, can another Province reject an ARIDO qualified member from applying for membership in another Province?

While ARIDO is creating an alternative to the NCIDQ exams, this alternative may not be adopted or recognized by other Interior Design Regulatory bodies in Canada. While the Provinces work together to ensure unity in standards set for qualifying in Canada as an Interior Designer, there may be some variations in what's recognized.

All other Provincial Regulatory Bodies outside Ontario, will be responsible for deciding if the EAP will be recognized in their jurisdiction to becoming qualified by meeting the examination requirement.

The Canadian Free Trade Agreement was designed to facilitate the free movement of people, goods, services, and investment within Canada to establish an open, efficient, and stable domestic market.

It benefits Canadians and businesses by:

- improving internal trade, and
- making it easier for certified workers, such as trades people and professionals, to practice their regulated occupation in other provinces or territories.

“Labour Mobility” refers to the ability of certified workers to practice their regulated occupation, throughout Canada, wherever opportunities to work in that occupation exist. Labour Mobility provisions of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement state that certified workers have to be recognized as qualified to work by a regulatory body in another province or territory which regulates that occupation, without having to go through significant additional training, work experience, examination, or assessment, unless an exception has been posted.

An ARIDO Qualified member who applies for Qualified membership to another Provincial Regulatory Body may only be asked to complete the registration certification and/or licensure process by the other Province. However, under Labour Mobility, the ARIDO Qualified member should not be required by the other Provincial jurisdictions to be reassessed on their competencies or abilities to practice his/her occupation.

Other Provincial Regulatory Bodies may create licensure and/or certification categories to regulate an occupation in their jurisdictions; however, these authorities cannot deny certification of an out-of-province applicant that is practicing the same scope of practice for that occupation in another jurisdiction regardless of differences in these certification categories.

Other Provincial Regulatory Bodies can ask out-of-province applicants to meet requirements to be registered, certified and/or licensed in their jurisdiction; however, material requirements for additional training, experience, examinations, or assessments must not be required of an out-of-province applicant unless a labour mobility exception has previously been approved by government and publicly posted.

Exceptions may be approved when there is a significant difference in occupational standards resulting in a significant scope of practice difference for an occupation. The exception must be based on a legitimate objective such as the protection of public security, health, and safety.

Governments have posted exceptions to Labour Mobility for a small number of occupations where there are significant variations in occupational standards between some provinces and territories. Currently, the occupation of interior design has not been listed as an exception for any other provincial jurisdiction in Canada.

Those ARIDO members who will be pursuing interior design projects in the United States, should consider the NCIDQ exams in meeting the examination requirement. This will assist in meeting the qualifications requirements in state jurisdictions within the United States.

6. How does ARIDO intend to prevent a potential or perceived conflict of interest in administering the competency alternative while also directly qualifying members who meet all the requirements for Registered membership?

Direction Regulation Model

It is not uncommon, in Canada, for regulatory bodies to oversee and confirm requirements needed to qualify for a regulated profession. Under the ARIDO/OAA Direct Regulation Model, ARIDO will be responsible for assessing whether individuals meet the requirements needed to qualify to be licensed as an Interior Designer. This holds ARIDO accountable to the provincial government, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA), and the Ontario Fairness Commissioner, ensuring that individuals have met the necessary qualifications criteria.

A core responsibility of ARIDO will be to oversee the validity, reliability, and fairness of the assessments used to satisfy qualification requirements. Additionally, ARIDO must possess the authority to alter these requirements in the interest of fair access.

In order to ensure that ARIDO meets its accountability, it has built its qualifications requirements to anticipate its legislative obligations under the [Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006, S.O. 2006, c. 31](#). That act provides more information about the General and Specific Duties expected of regulatory bodies and is the audit criteria used when the Office of the Fairness Commissioner of Ontario (OFC) regularly reviews regulatory bodies. ARIDO works with a clear understanding of the interpretations set out in the [OFC Four Principles](#): Transparency, Objectivity, Impartiality, and Fairness.

In addition, ARIDO aligns with best practices and relevant standards for assessment that are applicable to all professions.

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, 2014. Developed jointly by: American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME)

ARIDO also recognizes the best practices and guidance provided in other professional certification standards:

ISO/IEC 17024:2003(E) Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons

(NCCA) ST 2021 NCCA Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs

Updated Provisions Under FARPACTA

On November 14, 2023, the provincial government introduced Bill 149, the Working for Workers Four Act, 2023. If passed, this legislation would add new provisions to section 10(2) of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006 (FARPACTA), as well as add regulation-making authority for the government. Currently, section 10(2) reads as follows:

If a regulated profession makes its own assessment of qualifications, it shall do so in a way that is transparent, objective, impartial and fair, and if it relies on a third party to assess qualifications, it shall take reasonable measures to ensure that the third party makes the assessment in a way that is transparent, objective, impartial and fair.

The bill would authorize the government to enact regulations to identify the minimum requirements that a regulatory body and/or third party assessor must take to show that they have assessed applicant qualifications in a way that is transparent, objective, transparent and fair.

These measures would include any requirements respecting contracts that the regulated profession enters into with the third party. For more information, visit the [Ontario Fairness Commissioners website](#). ARIDO will continue to monitor these developments to ensure the development of the EAP aligns with any new regulations and provisions.

7. How does ARIDO intend to ensure applicants are as qualified through the EAP as candidates confirmed by the current exams?

One of the objectives of the project was to review the purpose, appropriateness, and relevance of the current examination requirement.

In developing the new option for the examination requirement, ARIDO has defined and validated the competencies required for the practice of interior design and identified which competencies, and the level, that need to be confirmed during the final qualifications requirement.

Additionally, with the addition of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion consultant mandated with audited the development process, it was identified which forms of traditional “assessment” were more likely to establish barrier to entry to professions for diverse and underrepresented groups. The development process was intentional in identifying more innovative and reliable ways of confirming competencies all intended to remove existing barriers to qualifying and paving new qualifications pathways for diverse and underrepresented groups. It was equally important to identify ways to confirm competencies that were relevant and reflective of the profession of Interior Design.

ARIDO is committed to the periodic review of the new option and current exams to ensure that they continue to meet the competencies defined for the examination requirement during the Examination Alternative Project.

8. What is meant by competency and competency-based assessment?

Competency refers to a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors and other characteristics that an individual needs in order to perform work duties and tasks properly.

Competency-based assessment, according to the OFC, is a tool to measure applicants’ ability to apply their skills, knowledge and judgment in the context of their profession or trade.¹

In the qualification process, competency-based assessment is a way to measure competence through methods like written, oral, practical and observational evaluations.²

For the new option under development to meet the examination requirement, the competency assessment process concludes with an Entrance Interview. This interview, a type of oral assessment frequently used in professional licensing, evaluates applicants’ skills and readiness. Through set questions, applicants will demonstrate their abilities, and interviewers assess applicant responses against clear standards, ensuring they meet criteria for professional practice.

¹ [Glossary](#), The Office of the Fairness Commissioner

² International Organization for Standardization and International Electrotechnical Commission. (2012). ISO/IEC 17024:2012 Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons. Geneva, Switzerland: ISO.

9. What makes this a uniquely "Canadian" exam?

Similar to past projects like the Intern Competencies Review System (ICRS) or the Interior Design Experience Requirement (IDER), ARIDO is actively involving the interior design community from across Canada in the Examination Alternative Project. This involvement includes:

- Getting practitioner feedback on the Examination Requirement and barriers to qualification
- Involving a Review Group to confirm the solution
- Allowing an Open Comment Period
- Pilot Testing of the new option

By having active participation from interior designers across Canada, we aim to ensure that the solution is relevant and appropriate to the practice of interior design in Canada.