

The logo for NCARB ARE SECURITY. It features a blue horizontal bar at the top. Below it, the letters 'N C A R B' are spaced out in a light blue font. Underneath that, the letters 'A R E' are stacked in a large, bold, light green font. At the bottom, the word 'SECURITY' is written in a bold, black font.

NCARB's mission is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public—how does disclosing information from the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®) undermine the mission? As a high stakes licensure exam, the ARE is designed to measure the minimum competence of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that architects must possess in order to safely practice architecture independently. The disclosure of content tested by the ARE diminishes the reliability and defensibility of the exam and ultimately undermines the integrity of the process. If someone passes the ARE because they were exposed to exam content prior to taking the test, they could become licensed even if they are not competent. This could endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the public, which is not good for the public or our profession.

#### What constitutes “disclosure” of exam content?

- Before you start taking any division of the ARE, you are required to agree to a Confidentiality Agreement. By accepting this agreement, you agree that you will not disclose any content contained in your examination with anyone else.
- “Disclosure” means sharing the substance or details of any test questions, vignettes or other graphics and/or alleged answers with anyone via electronic, written, or verbal means. This includes any attempt to reproduce, paraphrase, summarize, or describe any test content from memory after leaving the testing room.
- Disclosure includes both the initial disclosure by a test taker and any further dissemination of ARE content by others.
- These prohibitions on disclosure also apply to forwarding, re-posting, or other distribution of ARE content that others have disclosed.

#### How does that differ from “cheating” on the exam?

The biggest difference is that “cheating” occurs during the course of your examination. Disclosure typically occurs after your exam.

#### NCARB considers cheating to include:

- Unauthorized access to devices or materials outside the testing room during any scheduled or unscheduled break.
- Presence of unauthorized devices (whether on or off) or unauthorized materials in the testing room. Prohibited devices include, but are not limited to, calculators, cell phones, pagers, personal digital assistants, text messaging devices, audio or video recording devices, scanners, language translators, and other devices. Prohibited written materials include, but are not limited to, any notes, books or written material whatsoever, whether or not related to the ARE.
- Use of unauthorized devices or materials in the testing room. The use of or reference to any device or any written materials in the testing room is strictly prohibited and will be presumed to be for purposes of assistance on the ARE.

**Before taking any division of the ARE and seeing any questions on the exam, candidates are required to agree to the terms of the Confidentiality Agreement. What are the consequences of breaking the Confidentiality Agreement?**

1. A warning letter
2. OR any or all of the following:

# FAQS

**FACTUALLY ANSWERED QUESTIONS**

- Cancellation of score(s) for the division(s) disseminated and any subsequent division(s) taken prior to the end of any period of test authorization suspension.
- Suspension of test taking privileges for all divisions for up to five years, or such longer period as may be warranted in exceptional circumstances.
- Prohibit granting of an NCARB Certificate for up to three years from date of initial registration, or such longer period as may be warranted in exceptional circumstances.

**What are the most recent examples of disciplinary action taken by the Board of Directors?**

Recently, the NCARB Board acted upon eight different disclosure cases. The consequences for these candidates ranged from one year of testing privileges suspended and two exam scores cancelled to five years of testing privileges suspended.

**The Confidentiality Agreement says that a candidate agrees not to disclose any of the content of the exam “before, during, or after” the exam. How can does a candidate disclose material contained in an exam that they haven’t taken yet?**

Disclosure includes “forwarding, re-posting, or other distribution of ARE content that others have disclosed.” Actively seeking exam content or forwarding it once you acquire it is also a violation. While you may not have agreed to this Confidentiality Agreement yet, you are still in violation of U.S. copyright protection. Every question and vignette included on the ARE is copyrighted.

**How does a candidate help their peers without breaking the Confidentiality Agreement?**

After taking an exam, you are welcome to tell people about your experience when scheduling, at the test center, your score report, or how you prepared for the exam. When you are sharing your preparation experience, you may tell others what books, classes, or other resources you used. But do not attempt to paraphrase or describe any of the questions or vignettes on your exam.

**What can someone do to prevent cheating or disclosure of exam content on the internet?**

- If you come back from your test and want to share your experience, but don’t want to go too far, call NCARB and ask to speak to the ARE department. Someone there will be able to help you determine what you are and are not allowed to share.
- It is probably hard for most people to prevent other candidates from exposing exam content. But, as long as you aren’t asking for the information or passing it on once you find it, you are doing as much as you can.
- Discouraging inappropriate sharing of information by posting comments on known forums is also an option.

**Is a person obligated to report people who cheat or disclose exam content?**

NCARB has never asked candidates to report findings, but some have in the past. If you find what you suspect is exam content, please feel free to forward the information to the ARE department at [are@ncarb.org](mailto:are@ncarb.org) so we can ask the web site to remove the content.

**Through the internet a candidate can find lots of lists of things to study for each division. Why are some lists acceptable and others not?**

Listings of general information are usually fine. If someone says “I just got back from my test” or “I had a vignette and I solved it like this” they are likely crossing the line.

**What should a candidate do if someone asks for specific information about the exam?**

Feel free to share with them how you prepared for your exam, but remind them that you agreed to the Confidentiality Agreement and are going to abide by it.

**Will a candidate be notified if their post crosses the line before their testing privileges are suspended?**

Sometimes. If we learn that you have posted something that may be exam content, we will

evaluate it against your actual exam. If we determine that it wasn't actual exam content, you will likely get a warning letter. We would do this in hopes of preventing you from crossing the line in the future.

If we determine that it does contain exam content, your case will be forwarded to the NCARB Committee on Professional Conduct (PCC) for review and action. If your first post on a web site crosses the line, the first letter will be the notice that your case is being forwarded to PCC.

**At what point is an individual notified that they are being investigated?**

If we determine that you have disclosed content, we make every effort to notify you as soon as possible. Typically, this will occur within a few weeks of our discovery.

**When the investigation is complete, does the individual in question have an opportunity for defense?**

You will have the opportunity to respond in writing to defend your actions. Your response will be provided to the PCC for review when they discuss your case.

**Do these individuals have any opportunity to appeal their penalty?**

Once the PCC reviews a given situation, they will make a recommendation to the NCARB Board of Directors. The Board will then review the case and take final action. Action by the NCARB Board is final.

**How does disclosure of exam content affect candidates?**

When candidates disclose information, NCARB works with Prometric to determine the impact on the exam. If NCARB needs to turn exam content off, this impacts all candidates now and in the future. If we find that we need to turn off substantial amounts of content, our ability to continuously deliver the ARE is jeopardized.

- We may be forced to extend the current six-month mandatory waiting period following a failed exam to nine or 12 months.
- Our development cycle takes two years from a vignette or multiple-choice item to become "live" in an exam. This process is considerably expensive. To replace lost content, we will need to modify our development cycle. To do this, we may have to increase exam fees for all candidates in all divisions.

**Is NCARB going to increase the amount of time a candidate has to wait to retake a previously failed division?**

Not at this time, but should we feel that a division has been compromised, we will reconsider this option.