Canberra Accord

Introduction

Signed in April 2008, the Canberra Accord is a document by seven accreditation/validation agencies in architectural education. It is intended to facilitate the portability of educational credentials between the countries whose accreditation/validation agencies signed the Accord. It does not address matters related to professional registration or licensure. This promotional material is designed to provide information to three groups:

- Individuals who will have completed their professional architectural education beginning 1 January 2010 in a program accredited/validated by one of the signatory systems;
- Leaders and staff of signatory agencies or organizations;
- Leaders and staff of regulatory agencies responsible for professional licensure or registration in architecture.

The Accord came into effect on 1 January 2010.

The following signatories are the founding members of the Canberra Accord:

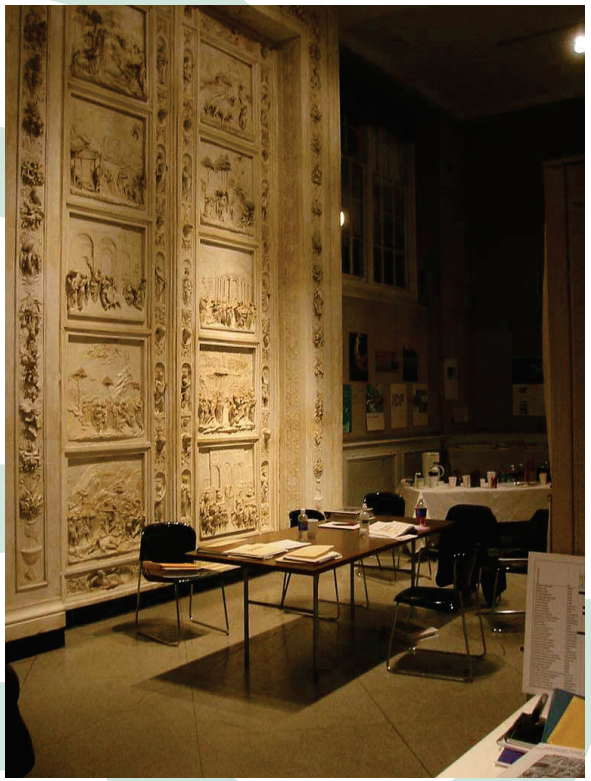
- Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA)
- Canadian Architectural Certification Board/Consiel canadien de certification en architecture (CACB-CCCA)
- Consejo Mexicano de Acreditacion de Ensenanza de la Arquitectura/Comite para la Practica Internacional de la Arquitectura (COMAEA/COMPIAR)
- Korea Architecture Accrediting Board (KAAB)
- National Architecture Accrediting Board (NAAB) (U.S.)
- The National Board of Architectural Accreditation of China (NBAA)
- Australian Institute of Architects (The Institute)

History

In May 2006, the National Architectural Accrediting Board, the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, and the American Institute of Architects convened the First International Invitational Accreditation/Validation Roundtable in Washington, DC. Leadership from the architectural accrediting agencies of the US, Australia, Canada, China, Mexico, Korea, the United Kingdom, and the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA), as well as leaders from the International Union of Architects (UIA) attended.

The purpose of the roundtable was to determine whether these agencies had sufficient interest and equivalency between their systems of accreditation/validation to enter into an accord on accreditation/validation in architectural education. The development of this multilateral agreement was inspired by the Washington Accord for engineering, an agreement founded in 1989 by bodies responsible for accrediting engineering degree programs in Australia, New Zealand, UK, Canada and the US. It recognizes the substantial equivalency of programs accredited in the Washington Accord and recommends that graduates of programs accredited by any of the signatories be recognized by the other signatories as having met the academic requirements for entry to the practice of engineering.

Canberra Accord was developed based on Washington Accord for engineering with the same intent.



University of Illinois Team Room, taken by Stephan Pappas, AIA

Following the initial discussion in Washington in 2006 and further Roundtable meetings in Canada (2007) and Canberra (2008), on 1 January 2010, the Accord became operational after all founding members agreed that architectural education should have a similar vision to that of engineering as both professions share similar academic and professional entry requirements and the need for professional mobility.

What is Accreditation/Validation/Recognition?

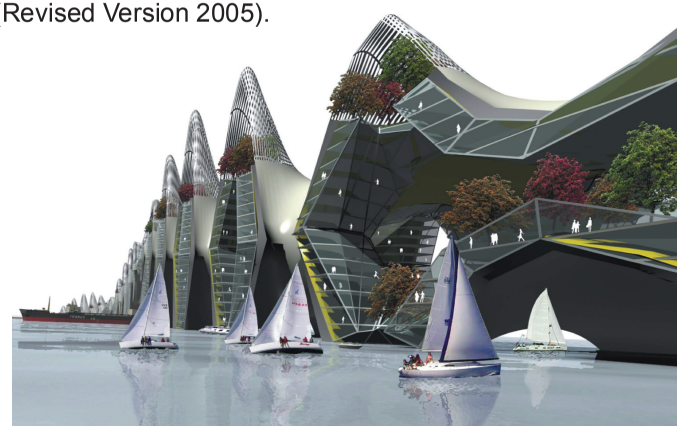
Generally speaking, accreditation is a voluntary quality assurance process under which services and operations are evaluated by a third party against a set of standards set by the third party with input and collaboration from peers within the field. Today, accreditation is distinguished by five components:

- It is provided through private agencies;
- It requires a significant degree of self-elevation by the institution or program, the results of which are summarized in a report to the agency;
- A team conducts a visit;
- Recommendations or judgments about accreditation are made by experts and trained peers; and
- Institutions have the opportunity to respond to most steps in the process [1]

MArch student presentation. Caribbean School of Architecture, Kingston, Jamaica

Specialized accreditation/validation/recognition controlled by members of the discipline to be evaluated rather than by a government agency or ministry of education is a relatively new practice outside Australia, UK, Canada and the US. As increasing the portability of professional and academic credentials in all fields becomes a policy issue with growing importance, it is incumbent upon those in accreditation/validation/recognition agencies across the world and within unique disciplines, like architecture, to lead the way in easing the movement of professionally educated individuals across borders.

The Canberra Accord is a transparent peer review system for determining substantial equivalence of architecture degree programs. It is considered to be reflective of the core principles of the UNESCO/UIA Charter for Architectural Education (Revised Version 2005) and the relevant sections of the UIA Accord on Recommended International Standards on Professionalism in Architectural Practice (Revised Version 2005).



Project: "Co-rational Design and Investigations into the Potential of Mathematical Equations" by 2006 RAIA & COLORBOND steel Student Biennale Joint Winner: Steven Swain, RMIT University

It is important to note that the Canberra Accord has specifically developed a set of rules and procedures based on best practice model with contribution from six accreditation/validation/recognition bodies and it is aligned with the UNESCO/UIA Charter for Architectural Education (revised version 2005) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education's Guidelines of Good Practice[21]. To ensure signatory systems are meeting Canberra Accord standards, each system is required to undertake a review every six years. The Signatory System will be assessed by a review team (comprised of two signatory members) followed by confirmation of signatory countries (excluding the system being reviewed).

1 The Handbook of Accreditation, Third Edition. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Higher Learning Commission

2 Lewis R. INQAAHE. Guidelines of Good Practice, published by International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, revised edition 2006. See www.inqaahe.org.

What is Substantial Equivalency?

Substantial equivalency identifies a program as comparable in educational outcomes in all significant aspects, and indicates that it provides an educational experience meeting acceptable standards, even though such program may differ in format or method of delivery. It not accreditation.

The Canberra Accord focuses exclusively on benchmarking the substantial equivalency of established accreditation systems and qualifications of the schools they directly accredit/validate/recognize. While it does not address matters related to professional registration or licensure, signatories are expected to engage with the bodies responsible for the practice of architecture in their respective jurisdictions, and to promote the recognition of the systems and qualifications covered by the Accord. The Accord does not affect additional requirements imposed by local regulation and accepts that individual jurisdictions will retain control over requirements for registration/licensure.

Portability of Qualifications

In addition to contributing to the quality of architectural education through benchmarking, the core aim of the Accord is to recognise the increasingly international context within which architects now work and to facilitate the portability of educational credentials between signatory domains, and in so doing, to aid professional mobility.

Accord Procedures

For prospective applicants:

In some countries the Canberra Accord can provide a gateway to fast track recognition of architects' qualifications among signatory countries. In others the Accord may offer enhanced standing to member systems. Prospective applicants should check their Canberra Accord status with local authorities and determine and what types of arrangements have been put in place in relation to other signatory members.

While architects' registration requirements vary from one jurisdiction to another, the Canberra Accord signatory members believe it is the right platform to develop best ways to verify education qualifications, in particular in benchmarking architecture standards as well as dealing with overseas architects who wish to have their academic qualifications verified by accrediting authorities.

For prospective system members:
To meet the stringent Canberra Accord requirements, signatory systems are required to undertake a review every six years. The following review dates have been scheduled for Canberra Accord signatory systems:

2010	Consejo Mexicano de Acreditación de Enseñanza de la Arquitectura (COMAEA) Mexico and Korean Architectural Accrediting Board (KAAB), Korea
2011	National Board of Architectural Accreditation of China (NBAA), China
2012	The Canadian Architectural Certification Board/Conseil Canadian de certification en architecture (CACB/CCCA), Canada
2013	National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), US
2014	Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA)
2015	Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute), Australia

New members are encouraged to join the Canberra Accord. Any enquiries relating to new membership should be addressed to the Canberra Accord Secretariat Michiel Bourdrez, email: mbourdrez@naab.org

A list of qualifications can be found at www.canberraaccord.org and is updated annually.

The Canberra Accord applies to **Accreditation Systems** only for the Schools that they accredit and **does not apply to countries as whole or geographic regions**.

While Canberra Accord recognizes equivalency of accreditation/ validation/recognition systems in architectural education among signatory members, each signatory system has different mechanisms in place in the implementation of the Canberra Accord, and it is recommended that you first check with your local agencies.

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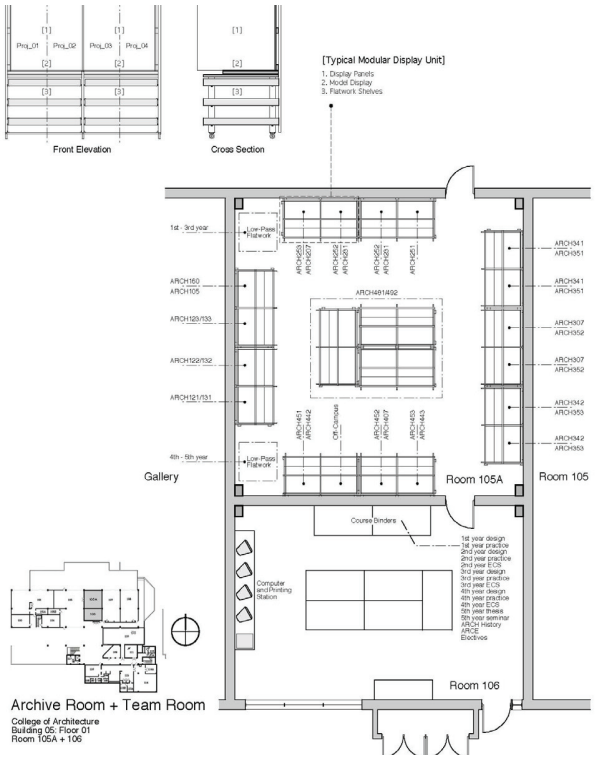

California State Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo, provided by Tom Fowler, IV, AIA, NCARB

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