THE GREEN TAPE MEASURE

Measuring Advancement with Facts.

Interior Design & Architecture:

A Comparative Analysis of

Education & Examination

A Data-Driven Study

Published 2026 based on 2025 Study

www.thegreentapemeasure.org

Version 2 - October 2026

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About The Green Tape Measure

Who We Are

The Green Tape Measure (GTM) is a registered, volunteer-run North Carolina non-profit located in Raleigh. We conduct industry research and educate stakeholders on the distinct scope, education, skills, and impact of an interior designer. GTM is volunteer-led and operates independently of any professional association. We speak exclusively to U.S. regulatory and educational contexts.

Our Mission

GTM is on a mission to champion the next generation of interior designers. By providing objective data, research, and educational resources to the public, we are expanding career paths and protecting public safety — ensuring the profession is recognized, regulated, and respected.

We operate on three core pillars:
1) Research: Conduct data-driven investigations into design industry standards, deregulation, and safety outcomes, proving design's impact on public health, safety, and welfare.
2) Educate: Providing resources and interactive, engaging content to the public so as to clarify the scope of the profession and the vital importance of professional regulation.
3) Advance: Advocate for fact-based career protections, professional recognition, and equitable licensing for interior designers.

GTM's tagline is simple and precise: Measuring Advancement with Facts.

Founding

GTM is the brainchild of Amy Wright, an NCIDQ-credentialed interior designer with over 15 years of commercial renovation experience, a background in set design, and a commitment to transparent, evidence-based advocacy. Originally founded in 2025 as an educational and training resource for interior designers, GTM expanded to its current mission and structure in 2026.

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About the Study

Background

Interior designers and architects are both credentialed design professionals who shape the built environment and thus directly impact public safety.

Yet decades of legislative and regulatory history have resulted in a landscape in which architects frequently receive blanket exemptions from interior design regulation — often on the basis of assumed equivalency in training and competency.

At the time of this writing, all US State interior design bills include an exemption for architects.

Why Does it Matter

Two primary reasons exist for why blanket exemptions should be better supported with data:

1) **Public Safety**: The design of the interior environment directly impacts whether occupants can actually exit a space or building in an emergency.
2) **Market Share**: Logically, if architects can perform interior design work, what reason would clients or companies have for hiring an interior designer?

Exempting one profession from requirements placed on another devalues the work of the regulated profession while possibly exposing the public to unqualified designers.

Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1) Are Architecture and Interior Design distinct professions?
2) What overlap, if any, exists between the two professions?
3) Are the exemptions for architects in interior design regulations justified?

As documented in these pages the overlap is far less than is commonly assumed.

GTM's core research findings: Only 8% interior design coursework in top architecture programs. Only 26% of the ARE has NCIDQ content — representing approximately 30% of the NCIDQ.

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Who is this Analysis For

This comparative analysis was undertaken to provide an objective, data-anchored resource for three audiences:

The Public — individuals who hire interior designers or architects, or who interact with designed commercial and residential spaces, deserve to understand how each professional is trained and what their licensure examination actually tests.

Professional Associations — organizations representing architects, interior designers, engineers, and allied design professions benefit from accurate data when developing policy positions, making statements about scope of practice, or evaluating certification pathways.

Regulators and Legislators — state licensing boards, legislative committees, and public safety agencies that draft, amend, or enforce professional practice statutes need empirical evidence to evaluate whether existing regulatory structures protect the public — or simply protect market incumbents.

Methodology

GTM analyzed publicly available curriculum information from ten CIDA-accredited interior design bachelor's programs and ten NAAB-accredited professional architecture programs. We categorized each program's required coursework into six comparable subject categories (Fundamentals, Systems, Graphics & Technology, Professional Practice, and project-type studios), computed approximate credit hours per category, and calculated category percentages.

For examinations, we used published content outlines from CIDQ (for the 2025 NCIDQ exam series — IDFX, IDPX, and PRAC) and NCARB (for the 2025 ARE 5.0 — all six divisions). We mapped each exam section to a broad subject category, computed weighted time and question distributions, and identified sections with content that appears in both examinations.

All data is drawn directly from public sources. No data has been generated, estimated, or extrapolated beyond the methods described herein.

Important distinction: Task name similarity does not equal competency equivalency. Both exams may use the word "codes" or "project management," but the depth, context, and professional application tested in each differ significantly. GTM's analysis distinguishes what tasks are named versus what competencies are actually trained.

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Section 1: Interior Design Education

1.1 About CIDA Accreditation

The Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) is the recognized accrediting body for interior design and interior architecture programs at the bachelor's and master's level in the United States and Canada. As of 2025, CIDA accredits approximately 170 programs globally[1]. A CIDA-accredited degree is the standard educational pathway to NCIDQ examination eligibility and professional recognition.

CIDA accreditation standards address student learning outcomes across design fundamentals, human-centered design, technical knowledge, professional practice, communication, and global context. Programs must demonstrate that graduates are prepared for entry-level professional practice with a strong emphasis on health, safety, and welfare.

1.2 Schools Selected and Why

GTM selected ten CIDA-accredited interior design bachelor's programs in the United States for this analysis. Selection criteria included: institutional type diversity (public university, private university, specialty design school), program reputation, and publicly available curriculum documentation.

School	Location	Degree	Interior Design Hours*
Auburn University	Auburn, AL	B.S.	76 hrs
Cornell University	Ithaca, NY	B.S.	72 hrs
Drexel University	Philadelphia, PA	B.S.	91 hrs
Fashion Institute of Technology	New York, NY	B.F.A.	72 hrs
Florida State University	Tallahassee, FL	B.S.	77 hrs
Kansas State University	Manhattan, KS	B.S.	86 hrs
New York School of Interior Design	New York, NY	B.F.A.	94 hrs
Pratt Institute	Brooklyn, NY	B.F.A.	72 hrs
Syracuse University	Syracuse, NY	B.F.A.	69 hrs
University of Cincinnati	Cincinnati, OH	B.S.	96 hrs

Table 1.1 — CIDA-Accredited Interior Design Programs Reviewed
**Hours are approximated based on curriculums provided.*

[1] CIDA. "Today's Students. Tomorrow's Leaders." CIDA (2026). Available at: https://cida.org. Accessed 10 Jun. 2026.

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1.3 School Program Overviews

Auburn University — B.S. in Interior Design

Auburn University's program is housed within the Department of Consumer and Design Sciences in the College of Human Sciences and includes courses emphasizing human-centered research methods, sustainable design, and real-world client collaboration, with a required 9-credit professional internship. **Only the top 55-60 first-year students are admitted into the full program.**[2]

- CADS 1000 Introduction to INDS (3 hours)
- CADS 1100 INDS Studio: Design Principles (3 hours)
- CADS 2000 Global Consumer Culture (3 hours)
- CADS 2100 INDS Studio: Space Planning and Process (4 hours)
- CADS 2150 Project Management for Interior Designers (1 hour)
- CADS 2200 INDS Studio: CAD (3 hours)
- CADS 2300 History of Interior Design I & II (6 hours)
- CADS 2400 Interior Materials and Components (3 hours)
- CADS 2550 Lighting and Environmental Systems (3 hours)
- CADS 3200 INDS Studio: Residential (4 hours)
- CADS 4200 Interior Design Capstone Seminar (1 hour)
- CADS 4950 Interior Design Internship (9 hours)
- CADS 5100/5300 INDS Studio: Contract (8 hours)
- CADS 5150 Global Issues in Interior Design (3 hours)
- CADS 5200 Interior Design Portfolio (3 hours)
- CADS 5350 INDS Studio: Advanced Design Project (4 hours)
- CADS 5400 INDS Studio: Design for Health & Wellness (4 hours)
- Professional Electives (11 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	16
Fundamentals	16
Graphics	3
Prof. Practice	19
Residential	4
Systems	18
TOTAL	**76**

Table 1.2 — Auburn University 2024-2025 Catalog[3]

[2] Auburn University. "Department of Consumer and Design Sciences: Interior Design Degree Programs." Auburn University (2025). Available at: https://humsci.auburn.edu/interiordesign/degree.php. Accessed: 27 Sept 2025.

[3] Auburn University. "Interior Design (INDS)." Auburn University (2025). Available at: https://bulletin.auburn.edu/archivedbulletins/2024-2025/undergraduate/collegeofhumansciences/departmentofconsumeranddesignsciences/interiordesign_major/. Accessed: 27 Sept 2025.

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Cornell University — B.S. in Design + Environmental Analysis

Cornell University's Bachelor of Science program is housed within the Design + Environmental Analysis (DEA) program in the College of Human Ecology's Department of Human Centered Design. This unique program combines creative studio-based training with evidence-based research. Also, a **STEM-certified curriculum**, it explores how the built environment impacts daily experiences, human behavior, health, and sustainability.[4]

- DEA 1101 Visual Literacy and Design Studio (4 hours)
- DEA 1110 Making a Difference: By Design (3 hours)
- DEA 1140 Principles of Design Computing (3 hours)
- DEA 1150 Design Graphics and Visualization (4 hours)
- DEA 1501 Introduction to Environmental Psychology (4 hours)
- DEA 2025 Impactful Graphics: Visual Communication for Social Impact (3 hours)
- DEA 2510 History of Design Futures (3 hours)
- DEA 2730 Human Centered Design Methods (3 hours)
- DEA 4040 Professional Practices and Ethics (2 hours)
- DEA 4050 Design Portfolio and Communication (3 hours)
- DEA 4590 Problem-Seeking Through Programming (3 hours)
- DEA 4800 Ethical Design: Engine of Positive Change (3 hours)
- FSAD 1350 Fibers, Fabrics, and Finishes (3 hours)
- Design Innovation & Strategy Courses (~12 hours)
- Sustainable Futures Courses (~12 hours)
- Health and Well-Being Courses (~12 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	14
Fundamentals	12
Graphics	20
Prof. Practice	2
Residential	5
Systems	19
TOTAL	**72**

Table 1.3 — Cornell University 2024-2025 Catalog[5]

[4] Cornell University, College of Human Ecology. "Design + Environmental Analysis." Cornell University (2025). Available at: https://www.human.cornell.edu/hcd/academics/undergraduate-study/design-and-environmental-analysis (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[5] Cornell University. "Cornell University 2024-2025 Courses of Study." Cornell University (2025). Available at: https://ecommons.cornell.edu/entities/publication/9fc52056-6bd9-4adf-a2e2-141a3e9f0ab7, Accessed: 27 Sept 2025.

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Drexel University — B.S. in Interior Design

The Drexel University's Interior Design program explores the "behavioral, technological, environmental, and aesthetic aspects of interior design" through its design studios. A defining highlight of this four-year program is its **six-month co-op experience**.[6]

- ARCH 141/142/143 Architecture and Society I, II, & III (9 hours)
- INTR 160 Visualization I: Computer Imaging (3 hours)
- INTR 211 Textiles for Interiors (3 hours)
- INTR 220 Visualization II: Orthographic (3 hours)
- INTR 225 Environmental Design Theory (3 hours)
- INTR 241 Visualization III: Digital (3 hours)
- INTR 245 Visualization IV: 3D Modeling (3 hours)
- INTR 250 Interior Materials (3 hours)
- INTR 300 [WI] Visual Culture: Interiors (3 hours)
- INTR 305 [WI] Visual Culture: Furniture (3 hours)
- INTR 322 Interior Studio I (4 hours)
- INTR 323 Interior Studio II (4 hours)
- INTR 331 Residential Design Studio (4 hours)
- INTR 341 Visualization V: Methods (3 hours)
- INTR 342 Hospitality Design Studio (4 hours)
- INTR 350 Interior Detailing (3 hours)
- INTR 351 Interior Lighting (3 hours)
- INTR 430 Commercial Design Studio (4 hours)
- INTR 440 Health & Wellness ID Studio (4 hours)
- INTR 441 Furniture Design (4 hours)
- INTR 445 Contract Documentation for Interior Design (3 hours)
- INTR 450 [WI] Professional Practice (3 hours)
- INTR 451 Interior Systems (3 hours)
- INTR 491/492/493 Senior Project I, II, III (9 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	22
Fundamentals	21
Graphics	15
Prof. Practice	6
Residential	11
Systems	16
TOTAL	**91**

Table 1.4 — Drexel University 2024-2025 Catalog[7]

[6] Drexel University. "Interior Design". Drexel University (2025). Available at: https://drexel.edu/westphal/academics/undergraduate/INTR/ (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[7] Drexel University. "Drexel University Westphal College of Media Arts & Design Catalog 2024-2025." Drexel University (2025). Available at: https://deptapp16.drexel.edu/catalog/archive/pdf/2024/Drexel-University_UG-Westphal-College-of-Media-Arts-and-Design-2024-2025.pdf (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Fashion Institute of Technology — B.F.A. in Interior Design

The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) offers a 2+2 structure in which students must first complete a two-year Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Interior Design before advancing to the final two years of the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) curriculum. This program emphasizes **"human-centered and evidence-based design."**[8]

- ID 117/118 - Interior Design Studio I & II (10 hours)
- ID 122/227 - History, Theory, & Criticism I & II (4 hours)
- ID 173/174 - Visual Representation I & II (6 hours)
- ID 219 - Interior Design Studio III (5 hours)
- ID 262 - Professional Practice I (2 hours)
- ID 281 - Interior Design Studio IV (5 hours)
- ID 282/283 - Design Technology I & II (6 hours)
- ID 315 - Interior Design Studio V (4 hours)
- ID 316 - Interior Design Studio VI (4 hours)
- ID 324 - Design History, Theory and Criticism II (2 hours)
- ID 347 - Lighting Design (2 hours)
- ID 381/382 - Design Technology III & IV (8 hours)
- ID 413 - Interior Design Studio VII (4 hours)
- ID 462 - Professional Practice II/Internship (3 hours)
- ID 496 - Senior Thesis Design Project: Programming (3 hours)
- ID 498 - Senior Thesis Design Project (4 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	12
Fundamentals	16
Graphics	12
Prof. Practice	5
Residential	5
Systems	22
TOTAL	**72**

Table 1.5 — FIT 2024-2025 Catalog[9]

[8] FIT. "Interior Design." Fashion Institute of Technology (2025). Available at: https://www.fitnyc.edu/academics/academic-divisions/art-and-design/interior-design/index.php (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[9] Associate and Baccalaureate Degree Programs. "2024-2025 Undergraduate Catalog." Fashion Institute of Technology (2025). Available at: https://catalog.fitnyc.edu/pdf/2024-25-undergraduate.pdf (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Florida State University — B.S. in Interior Design

The Bachelor of Science in Interior Design at Florida State University (FSU) blends design theory, history, and technical training. Students learn to balance aesthetic sensibilities with safety, universal accessibility, and environmental sustainability. **Progression into upper-level courses is restricted to at most 36 students.**[10]

- ARH 2051 History and Criticism of Art II (3 hours)
- IND 1203/1204 Design Fundamentals I & II (6 hours)
- IND 1206 Intro to Interior Design (3 hours)
- IND 2300/2310 Graphic Techniques I & II (6 hours)
- IND 2620 Responsible Design (3 hours)
- IND 3217C Studio I (4 hours)
- IND 3431 Lighting (3 hours)
- IND 3440C Furniture Design (4 hours)
- IND 3465/3469 Computer-Aided Design I & II (6 hours)
- IND 3474 Construction Documents (3 hours)
- IND 3470 Construction Systems (3 hours)
- IND 3480 Materials & Methods (3 hours)
- IND 3529/3533 Portfolio Development I & II (2 hours)
- IND 4101/4131 History of Interiors I & II (6 hours)
- IND 4218C Studio II (4 hours)
- IND 4242C Studio III (4 hours)
- IND 4243C Studio IV (4 hours)
- IND 4245C Studio V (4 hours)
- IND 4506 Business Practices for Interior Designers (3 hours)
- IND 4947 Internship (3 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	12
Fundamentals	18
Graphics	14
Prof. Practice	6
Residential	8
Systems	19
TOTAL	**77**

Table 1.6 — FSU 2024-2025 Catalog[11]

[10] FSU Fine Arts. "Undergraduate Programs in Interior Architecture & Design." FSU (2025). Available at: https://interiordesign.fsu.edu/programs/interior-design/ (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[11] Florida State University "2024-2025 General Bulletin Undergraduate Edition." Florida State University (2025). Available at: https://registrar.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu3886/files/documents/archive-bulletin-undergraduate/2024_gen_bulletin.pdf (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Kansas State University — B.S. in Interior Design

Kansas State University's interior design program is the only four-year CIDA-accredited program in Kansas. Rooted in human ecological and design theories, the program focuses on creating evidence-based, sustainable indoor environments that enhance human **health, safety, and well-being**.[12]

- IAID 299 - History of Furniture (3 hours)
- ID 210 - Design and Behavior in the Interior Environment (3 hours)
- ID 225/245 - Interior Design Studio 1 & 2 (8 hours)
- ID 300 - Global Experiences in Interior Design (6 hours)
- ID 310 - Construction Methods and Materials for Interior Design (4 hours)
- ID 315/415 - Digital Visualization I & II (4 hours)
- ID 320/360 - History of Interior Design I & II (6 hours)
- ID 325 - Interior Design Studio 3 (4 hours)
- ID 330 - Textiles for Interior Design (3 hours)
- ID 345/425/445/545/645 - Interior Design Studio 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8 (20 hours)
- ID 399 - Interior Design Practicum (2 hours)
- ID 435 - Systems and Technology for Interior Design I (3 hours)
- ID 530 - Interior Design Practices and Procedures (3 hours)
- ID 599 - Interior Design Internship (4 hours)
- ID 600 - Interior Design Study Tour (3 hours)
- ID 630 - Topics in Advanced Interior Design Theory (3 hours)
- ID 651 - Design for Supportive Environments (4 hours)
- INDD 292 - Design Thinking (3 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	16
Fundamentals	27
Graphics	16
Prof. Practice	9
Residential	4
Systems	14
TOTAL	**86**

Table 1.7 — KSU 2024-2025 Catalog[13]

[12] KSU. "Interior Design Degree - Shape Your Future." Kansas State University (2025). Available at: https://www.k-state.edu/academics/majors-programs/interior-design-degree/ (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[13] Kansas State University "2024-2025 Undergraduate Course Catalog." Kansas State University (2025). Available at: https://www.k-state.edu/academics/courses/catalogs/archive/undergraduate/2024-2025%20UG%20catalog.pdf (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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New York School of Interior Design — B.F.A. in Interior Design

The Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Interior Design at the New York School of Interior Design (NYSID) is a comprehensive program combining extensive, career-focused interior design training with a solid foundation in liberal arts. Students learn to blend **aesthetic creativity with technical expertise**, preparing them to meet corporate safety codes, systems demands, and environmental sustainability requirements.[14]

- 134/234/334/231 Residential Design I, II, & III; Kitchen & Bath Design (13 hours)
- 101/102 Historical Styles I & II (4 hours)
- 111/112 Modern Architecture & Design I & II (4 hours)
- 114 Sustainability & the Built Environment (2 hours)
- 119 Textiles for Interiors (2 hours)
- 128 Basic Drafting (3 hours)
- 132/236 Construction Documents I & II (6 hours)
- 141 Color for Interiors (2 hours)
- 147 Hand Drawing and Rendering I (2 hours)
- 165 Environment & Behavior (2 hours)
- 175 People, Place, and Culture (2 hours)
- 180 Visual Concepts (2 hours)
- 181/355 Design Process & Design Theory (4 hours)
- 187 Materials & Methods of Construction (2 hours)
- 228/328 Professional Practice I & II (4 hours)
- 230/288 Codes, Building Systems (4 hours)
- 232/292/392 Presentation Techniques I, II, & III (9 hours)
- 283/383 Lighting I & II (6 hours)
- 286/386/476 Contract Design I, II, & III (9 hours)
- 340/442 Architectural Woodwork Detailing; Furniture Design (6 hours)
- 418/487 Thesis Preparation & Thesis (6 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	15
Fundamentals	20
Graphics	20
Prof. Practice	4
Residential	13
Systems	22
TOTAL	**94**

Table 1.8 — NYSID 2024-2025 Catalog[15]

[14] NYSID. "Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design." New York School of Interior Design (2025). Available at: https://www.nysid.edu/bachelor-of-fine-arts-in-interior-design (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[15] New York School of Interior Design. "Academic Catalog 2024-2025." NYSID (2025). Available at: https://issuu.com/nysid/docs/nysid2024-25academiccatalog (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Pratt Institute — B.F.A. in Interior Design

The Pratt Institute Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Interior Design is designed to prepare students for leadership and innovation in the design field. The curriculum approaches **interior space as an "integral element of the built environment,"** emphasizing a balance between architectural scale, human proportions, and creative spatial solutions.[16]

- FDC-140 - Visualization/Representation (3 hours)
- FDC-141 - Visualization/Representation/Concept (3 hours)
- FDC-150 - Space, Form, Process (3 hours)
- FDC-160 - Light Color Design Lab (3 hours)
- FDC-161 - Light Color Design Studio (3 hours)
- FDC-180 - Time and Movement (3 hours)
- HAD364 - History of Interior Design (3 hours)
- HAD History of Art and Design Elective (3 hours)
- INT-201/202 - Design Studio I & II (6 hours)
- INT-217 - Assemblies & Environments (3 hours)
- INT-218 - Color Materials Lighting (3 hours)
- INT-233/234 - Language of Drawing I & II (6 hours)
- INT-301/302 - Design Studio III & IV (6 hours)
- INT-325 - Emergent Platforms (3 hours)
- INT-326 - Materials Methods Meaning (3 hours)
- INT-342 - Time Culture Context (3 hours)
- INT-401 - Design Studio V (3 hours)
- INT-402 - Design Studio VI-Thesis (3 hours)
- INT-405 - Design Research Strategies (3 hours)
- INT-419 - The Working Set (3 hours)
- INT-441 - Positioning Practice Portfolio (3 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	12
Fundamentals	24
Graphics	15
Prof. Practice	3
Residential	3
Systems	15
TOTAL	**72**

Table 1.9 — Pratt Institute 2024-2025 Catalog[17]

[16] Pratt Institute. "Interior Design, BFA." Pratt Institute (2025). Available at: https://www.pratt.edu/design/interior-design/interior-design-bfa/ (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[17] Pratt Institute. "Undergraduate Academic Catalog." Pratt (2025). Available at: https://coursedog-static-public.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/pratt_colleague/Undergraduate%20Academic%20Catalog%202024-2025.pdf (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Syracuse University — B.F.A. in Environmental & Interior Design

The Environmental and Interior Design program within the College of Visual and Performing Arts functions similar to a real-world design firm. The curriculum heavily emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach, combining a rigorous liberal arts foundation with technical training in **sustainable design practices, human well-being, and professional industry standards**.[18]

- DES 101/102 - Digital Tools for Designers I & II (6 hours)
- DES 103 - Analog Design Tools (3 hours)
- DES 113 - History of Modern Design: 1850-Present (3 hours)
- DES 114 - Design, Cultural Traditions and the Environment (3 hours)
- DES 248 - Design Issues (3 hours)
- DES 304 - Collaborative Design (3 hours)
- DES 451 - Community Projects Studio (3 hours)
- EDI 104 - Fundamentals of Environmental + Interior Design (3 hours)
- EDI 144 - Drafting for Designers (3 hours)
- EDI 251 - Environmental Design I (3 hours)
- EDI 252 - Environmental Design II (3 hours)
- EDI 253/254 - Design Presentation and Techniques I & II (6 hours)
- EDI 255/256 - Environmental Factors I & II (6 hours)
- EDI 351 - Environmental Design III (3 hours)
- EDI 353 - Environmental Factors III (3 hours)
- EDI 354 - Professional Practice for Designers (3 hours)
- EDI 452 - Environmental Design Capstone Project (6 hours)
- Art/Design History Elective (6 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	12
Fundamentals	15
Graphics	18
Prof. Practice	6
Residential	6
Systems	12
TOTAL	**69**

Table 1.10 — Syracuse University 2024-2025 Catalog[19]

[18] Syracuse University. "Course Catalog: Environmental and Interior Design, BFA." Syracuse University (2026). Available at: https://courses.syracuse.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=38&poid=19309&returnto=4788&redirect (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[19] Syracuse University. "Undergraduate Course Catalog 2024-2025." Syracuse University (2025). Available at: https://coursecatalog.syracuse.edu/pdf/2024-2025-su-undergraduate-course-catalog.pdf (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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University of Cincinnati — B.S. in Interior Design

In addition to being **within the same college as Architecture and sharing a common curriculum** with it the first 3 semesters, a major differentiator of the University of Cincinnati's program is its cooperative education (co-op) model, which balances intensive on-campus studio work with multiple semesters of paid, professional field experience.[20]

- INTD2002 Interior Design Studio II (6 hours)
- INTD2031/4031 Professional Practice II & III (3 hours)
- INTD2061 Materials and Fibers / Construction (3 hours)
- INTD3001/4001 Interior Design Studio III & IV (12 hours)
- INTD3014 Interior Design Advanced Communication Skills (3 hours)
- INTD3021/4022 Interior Design History Theory Criticism I & II (6 hours)
- INTD3061 Furniture/Millwork (3 hours)
- INTD4081 Interior Lighting (3 hours)
- INTD5001/5002 Senior Capstone Studio I & II (12 hours)
- PD1071 Introduction to COOP for Interior Design (1 hour)
- SAID1001/1002 Design Lab I & II (11 hours)
- SAID1011/1012/2013 Communication Skills I, II, & III (9 hours)
- SAID1021 Modernism & Form: History of Architecture 1750 to Present (3 hours)
- SAID1031 Human Dimension of Space (3 hours)
- SAID1061/2062/2063 Design Science I, II, & III (9 hours)
- SAID2001 Design Studio I (6 hours)
- SAID2022 Ritual & Space (3 hours)

Category	Hours
Commercial	24
Fundamentals	35
Graphics	3
Prof. Practice	4
Residential	12
Systems	18
TOTAL	**96**

Table 1.11 — Cincinnati 2024-2025 Catalog[21]

[20] University of Cincinnati. "Interior Design." University of Cincinnati (2025). Available at https://webapps2.uc.edu/ecurriculum/DegreePrograms/Home/MajorMap/10817 (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[21] University of Cincinnati. "One Stop." University of Cincinnati (2025). Available at: https://classes.catalyst-services.uc.edu/browse/ (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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1.4 Curriculum Summary: Hours by Subject Category

The following table summarizes the approximate distribution of required hours across six subject categories for each of the ten schools reviewed. Hours correlate to credit hours. General education requirements (English, math, social sciences) are excluded unless directly related to Interior Design. Art History classes are also excluded unless explicitly required as major coursework (i.e. FSU). Otherwise, only design-discipline major requirements are included. Unless clearly noted, it is assumed that at least one studio course is devoted to residential design.

	AU	CU	DU	FIT	FSU	KSU	NYS	PI	SU	UC
Commercial	16	14	22	12	12	16	15	12	12	24
Fundamentals	16	12	21	16	18	27	20	24	15	35
Graphics	3	20	15	12	14	16	20	15	18	3
Prof. Practice	19	2	6	5	6	9	4	3	6	4
Residential	4	5	11	5	8	4	13	3	6	12
Systems	18	19	16	22	19	14	22	15	12	18
TOTAL	**76**	**72**	**91**	**72**	**77**	**86**	**94**	**72**	**69**	**96**

Table 1.12 — Interior Design Program Hours by Subject Category Summary

Below is a general description of what we included in each category. Please note that **there is overlap between categories**. Placement of a course in a particular category(ies) means that it mostly focused on that specific area based on the information provided in the course description at the time of this analysis.

Commercial: Covers studio projects of various sizes and complexity emphasizing evidence-based design, programming, HSW (health, safety, welfare), and codes & regulations for public spaces (i.e. workplaces, healthcare, and/or hospitality interiors)

Fundamentals: Includes building blocks of interior design such as elements & principles of design, color theory, interior design history, human factors and human behavior, spatial design, and the design process.

Graphics: These are courses focusing on drawing, technology, and presentation, such as graphic communications, software (CAD, SketchUp, Revit, Adobe CS), and presentation formats.

Professional Practice: Includes ethics, business administration, contract documents, internships, and employment preparation, such as NCIDQ exam practice.

Residential: These are studio projects focusing on inclusive and universal design approaches for children, older adults, and disabled individuals & programming and space planning for living environments.

Systems: Covers acoustics, codes and regulations, construction processes, daylighting, finishes, IAQ (indoor air quality), lighting, materials, MEP (mechanical, electrical, plumbing), site analysis, sustainability, textiles, and thermal comfort.

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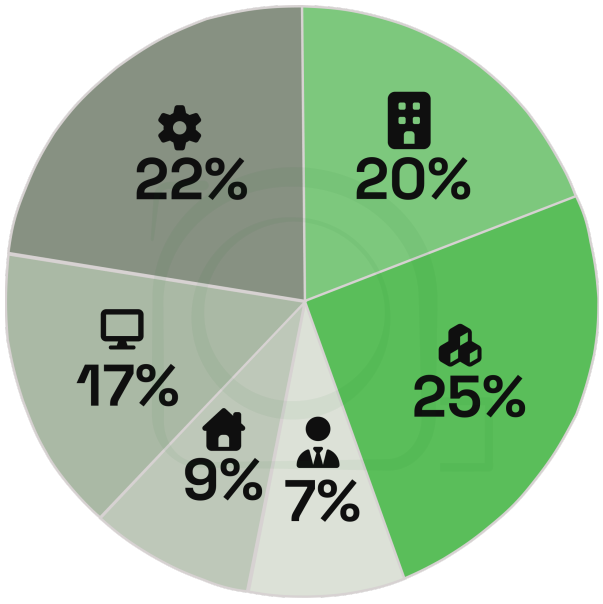
1.5 Average Distribution — Interior Design Education

Across the ten programs reviewed, the average interior design bachelor's program devotes approximately 81 hours of interior design coursework. The distribution of those hours across subject categories reflects the depth of interior-specific training:

Subject Area	Avg. Hrs	%
Fundamentals	20 hrs	**25%**
Building Systems	18 hrs	**22%**
Commercial Projects	16 hrs	**20%**
Graphics & Technology	14 hrs	**17%**
Residential Projects	7 hrs	**9%**
Professional Practice	6 hrs	**7%**
TOTAL	**81 hrs**	**100%**

Table 1.13 — Average Interior Design Curriculum Distribution (81 Major Hours)



Graph 1.1 — CIDA Degree Categories

Interior design curricula are structured around the interior environment: how humans experience and inhabit space, what materials and systems govern that experience, and how designers plan, document, and execute projects **within building envelopes**. The largest portions of the curriculum are devoted to design fundamentals (25%) and building systems as they apply specifically to interiors (22%), followed by commercial studio projects (20%) and graphics/technology (17%).

Important context: Interior design programs do not train students in site design, structural engineering, civil engineering, urban planning, or exterior building envelope systems. These are intentionally outside the scope of interior design practice.

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Section 2: Architecture Education

2.1 About NAAB Accreditation

The National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) is the sole agency authorized to accredit professional degree programs in architecture in the United States. A NAAB-accredited degree (typically the B.Arch. or M.Arch.) is a prerequisite for architectural licensure in most U.S. jurisdictions. NAAB accreditation standards address student performance criteria across several areas including design, technical knowledge, professional practice, and leadership.[22]

It is important to note that the B.Arch. is a professional degree requiring typically five years of full-time study, while many architecture programs also offer 4-year pre-professional B.S. or B.A. degrees that are not sufficient on their own for licensure. In order to make an accurate comparison with CIDA-accredited undergraduate degrees, GTM's analysis focuses only on NAAB-accredited undergraduate architecture programs.

2.2 Schools Selected and Why

GTM selected ten NAAB-accredited architecture bachelor's programs in the United States for this analysis. Selection criteria included: institutional type diversity (public university, private university, specialty design school), program reputation, and publicly available curriculum documentation.

School	Location	Degree	Architecture Hours*
Boston Architectural College	Boston, MA	B. Arch.	96 hrs
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo	San Luis Obispo, CA	B. Arch.	161 hrs
Cornell University	Ithaca, NY	B. Arch.	124 hrs
Pennsylvania State University	State College, PA	B. Arch.	123 hrs
Rhode Island School of Design	Providence, RI	B. Arch.	111 hrs
Rice University	Houston, TX	B. Arch.	137 hrs
Syracuse University	Syracuse, NY	B. Arch.	117 hrs
Tulane University	New Orleans, LA	B. Arch.	117 hrs
University of Notre Dame	Notre Dame, IN	B. Arch.	112 hrs
Virginia Tech University	Blacksburg, VA	B. Arch.	122 hrs

Table 2.1 — NAAB-Accredited Architecture Programs Reviewed
**Hours are approximated based on curriculums provided.*

[22] NAAB. "Accreditation." NAAB (2026). Available at: https://www.naab.org/accreditation/about-accreditation (Accessed: 13 June 2026).

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2.3 School Program Overviews

Boston Architectural College — B.Architecture

The Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) program at the Boston Architectural College (BAC) is an 11-semester undergraduate degree that integrates rigorous academic coursework with **mandatory, real-world professional practice**. This immersion allows students to accelerate their path toward NCARB licensure while learning directly from a faculty of practicing architects and design leaders in the Boston area.[23]

- ARC1001/1002/1003/1004 Studios (21 hours)
- ARC1011/1012 Degree Project Studio I & II (12 hours)
- DME2000 Spatial Thinking (3 hours)
- DME2100 Representation Workshop (3 hours)
- FND1003/1004 Foundation Studio I & II (6 hours)
- FND1005 Design Representation (3 hours)
- FND1006/1008 CityLab, CityX (3 hours)
- FND2007 Community Practice (3 hours)
- FND1010 Making and Modeling (3 hours)
- FND2011 Sustainable Material Assemblies (3 hours)
- HTC1050/2003 + 1 History of Architecture & Design (9 hours)
- TSM1004/2005 Structures I & II (6 hours)
- TSM1044/1045 Practice & Project Management (2 hours)
- TSM1046 Construction & Evaluation (1 hour)
- TSM2001 Sustainable Systems (3 hours)
- TSM2002 Building Systems (3 hours)
- TSM2006 Detailing & Construction (3 hours)
- TSM2019 Human Factors, Programming, and Codes (3 hours)
- XDS1000 Advanced Interdisciplinary Studio (3 hours)
- Design Elective: Design Media or Workshop (3 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	15
Fundamentals (Interiors)	6
Graphics	12
Prof. Practice	12
Projects	36
Systems	9
Systems (Interiors)	6
TOTAL	**96**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**12**

Table 2.2 — BAC 2024-2025 Catalog[24]

[23] BAC. "Bachelor of Architecture." Bachelor of Architecture Curriculum. Boston Architectural College (2025). Available at: https://the-bac.edu/academic-programs/bachelor-of-architecture/bachelor-of-architecture-curriculum (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[24] Boston Architectural College. "2024-2025 Catalog." The Boston Architectural College (2025). Available at: https://the-bac.edu/Documents/Departments/Academic%20Support/Registrar/Registration%20Information/BAC%20Catalogs/2024-2025_BAC_Catalog_8.13.2024.pdf (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo — B.Architecture

The Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) program at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo is rooted in the university's famous "Learn by Doing" philosophy in which the program balances hands-on design laboratory experience with technical and pragmatic application. Housed within the College of Architecture and Environmental Design (CAED), it emphasizes **collaboration with Landscape Architecture , Construction Management, City & Regional Planning, and Architectural Engineering.**[25]

- ARCE 211/212 Structures I & II (6 hours)
- ARCE 225/315 Introduction to Structural Systems & Design (7 hours)
- ARCE 316 Structural Integration (4 hours)
- ARCH 101 Survey of Architectural Education and Practice (3 hours)
- ARCH 131/132/133 Design & Visual Communication 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 (12 hours)
- ARCH 207/241/242 Architectural Technology Fundamentals 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 (12 hours)
- ARCH 217/218/219 History of World Architecture (12 hours)
- ARCH 251/252/253 Architectural Design 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 (15 hours)
- ARCH 307/341/342 Architectural Systems Integration 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 (12 hours)
- ARCH 351/352/353 Architectural Design 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 (15 hours)
- ARCH 443 Issues in Contemporary Professional Practice (4 hours)
- ARCH 451/452/453 Architectural Design 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 (15 hours)
- ARCH 481/492 Senior Architectural Design Project & Thesis (18 hours)
- Architectural History Seminar (4 hours)
- EDES 123 Principles of Environmental Design (4 hours)
- Professional Electives (18 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	28
Fundamentals (Interiors)	12
Graphics	4
Prof. Practice	13
Projects	63
Systems	35
Systems (Interiors)	6
TOTAL	**161**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**18**

Table 2.3 — Cal Poly 2024-2025 Catalog[26]

[25] Cal Poly. "Architecture: Undergraduate Programs." California Polytechnic State University (2025). Available at: https://architecture.calpoly.edu/about/undergraduate (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[26] Cal Poly. "2022-2026 Academic Catalog." Cal Poly (2025). Available at: https://catalog.calpoly.edu/previouscatalogs/2022-2026/ (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Cornell University — B.Architecture

The Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch.) program within Cornell University's College of Architecture, Art, and Planning (AAP), **a STEM program**, emphasizes a deep foundation in design, history, theory, technology, and representation. It also offers global study opportunities at Cornell in Rome and/or AAP's New York City center.[27]

- ARCH 1101/1102 Design I & II (12 hours)
- ARCH 1501/2502 Representation I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 1611/2616 Environmental Systems I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 1612 Structural Concepts (3 hours)
- ARCH 1801/2802 History of Architecture I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 2101/2102 Design III & IV (12 hours)
- ARCH 2302/3302 Architectural Analysis I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 2613 Structural Systems (3 hours)
- ARCH 2614/3615 Building Technology I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 3101/3102 Design V & VI (12 hours)
- ARCH 4101/4102 Design VII & VIII (12 hours)
- ARCH 5101/5902 Design IX & X (14 hours)
- ARCH 5201 Professional Practice (3 hours)
- ARCH 5911 Pre-thesis Methods Workshop (2 hours)
- ARCH electives - building tech, history, theory (21 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	33
Fundamentals (Interiors)	6
Graphics	6
Prof. Practice	3
Projects	52
Systems	18
Systems (Interiors)	6
TOTAL	**124**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**12**

Table 2.4 — Cornell 2024-2025 Catalog[28]

[27] Cornell. "Undergraduate Architecture Program." Cornell University (2025). Available at: https://aap.cornell.edu/academics/architecture/undergraduate (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[28] Cornell University. "2024-2025 Courses of Study." Cornell University (2025). Available at: https://ecommons.cornell.edu/entities/publication/9fc52056-6bd9-4adf-a2e2-141a3e9f0ab7 (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Pennsylvania State University — B.Architecture

The Bachelor of Architecture program at The Pennsylvania State University features a comprehensive worldview, including a **fourth-year semester abroad** in Rome.[29]

- AE 210/211/421/422/424 Architectural Structural Systems Courses (15 hours)
- ARCH 121/122 Visual Communications I & II (4 hours)
- ARCH 131/132 Basic Design Studio I & II (8 hours)
- ARCH 203/204 Materials & Building Construction I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 210 Ideas Across Time in Architecture & Urbanism (3 hours)
- ARCH 231/232/331/332 Architectural Design I, II, III, IV (24 hours)
- ARCH 311W Architectural & Planning Theories (3 hours)
- ARCH 431 *not in course catalog - assuming studio* (6 hours)
- ARCH 451 Architectural Professional Practice (3 hours)
- ARCH 480 Technical Systems Integration (3 hours)
- ARCH 491 Architectural Design Research & Studio (6 hours)
- ARCH 499A Rome Study-Architectural Design (6 hours)
- ARCH 499B Architectural Analysis (3 hours)
- ARCH 499C Urban Studies (3 hours)
- ARCH Additional Studio (6 hours)
- ARCH electives (18 hours)
- ARTH 201/202 Art History Courses (6 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	29
Graphics	4
Prof. Practice	6
Projects	42
Projects (Interiors)	6
Systems	28
Systems (Interiors)	8
TOTAL	**123**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**14**

Table 2.5 — Penn State 2024-2025 Catalog[30]

[29] PSU. "Architecture, B.Arch." The Pennsylvania State University (2025). Available at: https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/colleges/arts-architecture/architecture-barch/#programrequirementstext (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[30] PennState. "University Bulletins 2025-25 Architecture (ARCH)." PennState (2025). Available at: https://bulletins.psu.edu/archive/2024-2025/university-course-descriptions/undergraduate/arch/ (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Rhode Island School of Design — B.Architecture

The Bachelor of Architecture (BArch) program at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) fuses intensive studio practice with rigorous critical thinking. Fully integrated into a world-class art and design community, the program emphasizes **architecture as a poetic, social, and ethical act**.[31]

- ARCH 2101 - The Making of Design Principles (6 hours)
- ARCH 2102 - Architectural Design (6 hours)
- ARCH 2108 - Urban Ecologies (6 hours)
- ARCH 2141 - Architectural Projection (3 hours)
- ARCH 2142 - Architectural Analysis (3 hours)
- ARCH 2191 - Professional Practice (3 hours)
- ARCH 2196/2197/2198 - Thesis (12 hours)
- ARCH 2199 - Professional Internship (3 hours)
- ARCH 21ST - Advanced Studio (12 hours)
- ARCH 2252 - Phenomena (3 hours)
- ARCH 2253 - Architectural Anatomy (3 hours)
- ARCH 2254/2255 - Structural & Enclosure Design (6 hours)
- ARCH 2256 - Environmental Design (3 hours)
- ARCH 2278 - Building Assembly and Systems Design (3 hours)
- ARCH 22ST - Advanced Topic Studio (SEI) (3 hours)
- FOUND 1001/1002 Drawing I & II (6 hours)
- FOUND 1003/1004 Design I & II (6 hours)
- FOUND 1005/1006 Spatial Dynamics I & II (6 hours)
- LAEL 1005/1022 - World Architecture, Modern Architecture (6 hours)
- THAD H101/H102 Global Modernisms, History of Arch. & Design (6 hours)
- Major Electives (6 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	36
Graphics	9
Prof. Practice	15
Projects	30
Systems	16
Systems (Interiors)	5
TOTAL	**111**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**5**

Table 2.6 — RISD 2024-2025 Catalog[32]

[31] RISD. "Architecture Bachelor's Program." Rhode Island School of Design (2025). Available at: https://www.risd.edu/academics/architecture/bachelors-program (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[32] RISD. "Courses." Rhode Island School of Design (2025). Available at: https://risd-archive24-25.catalog.prod.coursedog.com/courses?page=1&cq (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Rice University — B.A. + B.Architecture

The Rice University School of Architecture is composed of two consecutive degrees **spanning six years**. Students complete a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture before advancing to the two-year Bachelor of Architecture professional degree program, in which students are placed in a **9-to-12-month paid internship** at prominent design firms.[33]

- ARCH 101/102 Principles of Architecture I & II (12 hours)
- ARCH 201/202 Principles of Architecture III & IV (12 hours)
- ARCH 207 Technology I (3 hours)
- ARCH 309/314/316 Technology II, III, & IV (9 hours)
- ARCH 225 Introduction to Architectural Thinking (3 hours)
- ARCH 301/302 Comprehension I & II (12 hours)
- ARCH 345/346/352 Architectural History Courses (9 hours)
- ARCH 401/402 Advanced Topics I & II (12 hours)
- ARCH 403 Degree Project Seminar (3 hours)
- ARCH 423 Professional Practice (3 hours)
- ARCH 500 Preceptorship Program (30 hours)
- ARCH 601/602 Advanced Option Studio I & II (20 hours)
- ARCH Electives (9 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	33
Graphics	-
Prof. Practice	33
Projects	44
Systems	24
Systems (Interiors)	3
TOTAL	**137**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**3**

Table 2.7 — Rice University 2024-2025 Catalog[34]

[33] Rice. "Architecture." Rice University (2025). Available at: https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/architecture/architecture/ (Accessed 27 Sept 2025).
[34] Rice. "Course Catalog - 2024-2025." Rice University (2025). Available at: https://courses.rice.edu/courses/!SWKSCAT.cat?p_action=cata (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Syracuse University — B.Architecture

The Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) program at Syracuse University features a three-year core sequence followed by two years of advanced, self-directed research. The program operates around an intensive, collaborative design studio model where students work closely with faculty to explore the built environment. Additionally, the program offers **global travel pathways** at dedicated centers in locations like New York City, Florence, and London.[35]

- ARC 107/108 Architectural Design I & II (12 hours)
- ARC 121 Introduction to Building Systems (3 hours)
- ARC 133/134 Architectural History I & II (6 hours)
- ARC 141 Introduction to Architecture (3 hours)
- ARC 181/182 Representation I & II (6 hours)
- ARC 207/208 Architectural Design III & IV (12 hours)
- ARC 211/311 Structures I & II (6 hours)
- ARC 222/322 Building Systems I & II (6 hours)
- ARC 242 Architectural Theory (3 hours)
- ARC 307 Architectural Design V (6 hours)
- ARC 407/408/409 Architectural Design VI, VII, & VIII (18 hours)
- ARC 423 Advanced Building Systems (3 hours)
- ARC 498 Directed Research (6 hours)
- ARC 585 Professional Practice (3 hours)
- ARC Advanced Electives (6 hours)
- ARC History Electives (6 hours)
- Professional Electives (12 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	24
Graphics	9
Prof. Practice	12
Projects	48
Systems	19
Systems (Interiors)	5
TOTAL	**117**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**5**

Table 2.8 — Syracuse University 2024-2025 Catalog[36]

[35] Syracuse University. "Architecture B.Arch." Syracuse University (2025). Available at: https://www.syracuse.edu/academics/programs/architecture/ (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[36] Syracuse University. "Undergraduate Course Catalog: Architecture." Syracuse University (2025). Available at: https://coursecatalog.syracuse.edu/archive/2024-2025/undergraduate/architecture/#coursestext (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Tulane University — B.Architecture

The Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) at the Tulane School of Architecture and Built Environment seamlessly balances a rigorous studio-based design education with a **foundational grounding in the liberal arts**. Students engage deeply with the complex climate and urban challenges of humankind.[37]

- ARCH 1110 Introduction to Architecture (3 hours)
- ARCH 1011/1012 Architecture Studios (12 hours)
- ARCH 1111/1112/2113/2114 History/Theory (6 hours)
- ARCH 2021/2022 Architecture Studios (12 hours)
- ARCH 2311/3312/4512 Design Media I, II, III (9 hours)
- ARCH 2211 Site Strategies (3 hours)
- ARCH 2212 Materials & Methods (3 hours)
- ARCH 2213 Building, Climate, Comfort (4 hours)
- ARCH 3031/3032 Architecture Studios (12 hours)
- ARCH 3214 Structural Systems (4 hours)
- ARCH 3215 Integrated Building Systems (4 hours)
- ARCH 3511 Professional Concerns I (3 hours)
- ARCH 3130 Architectural Research Methods (3 hours)
- ARCH 4041/4042/5051 Advanced Research Studios (18 hours)
- ARCH 5980/5990 Thesis Research & Studio (9 hours)
- ARCH History/Theory Elective (3 hours)
- Architecture Electives (9 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	30
Graphics	9
Prof. Practice	9
Projects	48
Systems	15
Systems (Interiors)	6
TOTAL	**117**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**6**

Table 2.9 — Tulane University 2024-2025 Catalog[38]

[37] Tulane. "Bachelor of Architecture." Tulane School of Architecture and Built Environment (2025). Available at: https://architecture.tulane.edu/academics/architecture/barch (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[38] Tulane University. "2024-2025 University Catalog." Tulane University (2025). Available at: https://catalog.tulane.edu/archive/2024-2025/ (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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University of Notre Dame — B.Architecture

The University of Notre Dame School of Architecture integrates humanistic principles with a deep respect for sustainability, regional culture, and community stewardship. The program features an immersive **third year spent entirely in Rome**, where students study classical design and urban morphology directly from historic masterworks.[39]

- ARCH 10211: Global History of Architecture (3 hours)
- ARCH 11011/11021/34012/34022/41011: Graphics I, II, III, IV, & V (16 hours)
- ARCH 20111/21011: Intro to Architecture I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 20211/20221/34312/34322: Architectural History I, II, III, & IV (12 hours)
- ARCH 20411/40421: Building Technology I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 20511: Structural Mechanics (3 hours)
- ARCH 21111/21121: Design I & II (12 hours)
- ARCH 34112/34122: Design III & IV (12 hours)
- ARCH 34311: Roman Urbanism & Arch. I (3 hours)
- ARCH 40411/50419: Environmental Systems I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 40511: Structural Design for Architects (3 hours)
- ARCH 40521: Applied Structural Systems (3 hours)
- ARCH 41111/41121: Design V & VI (12 hours)
- ARCH 50711: Professional Practice (3 hours)
- ARCH 51111/51121: Design VII & VIII (12 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	30
Graphics	16
Prof. Practice	3
Projects	42
Systems	15
Systems (Interiors)	6
TOTAL	**112**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**6**

Table 2.10 — Notre Dame 2024-2025 Catalog[40]

[39] ND. "School of Architecture, Undergraduate Program." University of Notre Dame (2025). Available at: https://architecture.nd.edu/academics/undergraduate-program/ (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[40] University of Notre Dame. "Select a Term." University of Notre Dame (2025). Available at: https://bxeregprod.oit.nd.edu/StudentRegistration/ssb/term/termSelection?mode=courseSearch (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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Virginia Tech University — B.Architecture

The Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch.) program at Virginia Tech, a **STEM-designated program**, blends artistic exploration with technical discipline. The curriculum starts with a shared Foundation Program that unifies several design disciplines before students transition into advanced, dedicated architectural design labs.[41]

- ARCH 1015/1016 Foundation Design Labs (12 hours)
- ARCH 2015/2016 Architecture II (14 hours)
- ARCH 2034 The Art of Building (2 hours)
- ARCH 3015/3016 Architecture III (14 hours)
- ARCH 3054 Building Analysis (2 hours)
- ARCH 3065/3066 Building Materials and Assemblies (6 hours)
- ARCH 3115/3116 Histories of Architecture (6 hours)
- ARCH 4004/4014 Architecture IV (15 hours)
- ARCH 4034 Building Cities (3 hours)
- ARCH 4044 Professional Practice (3 hours)
- ARCH 4055/4056 Environmental and Building Systems (6 hours)
- ARCH 4075/4076 Building Structures I & II (6 hours)
- ARCH 4114 Ideas, Concepts, and Representations of Architecture (3 hours)
- ARCH 4514 Thesis Inquiry (3 hours)
- ARCH 4515/4516 Architecture V (12 hours)
- ARCH 4524 Thesis Documentation (3 hours)
- ESM 3704 Basic Principles of Structures (3 hours)
- ARCH electives (9 hours)

Category	Hours
Fundamentals	26
Fundamentals (Interiors)	6
Graphics	3
Prof. Practice	12
Projects	44
Projects (Interiors)	7
Systems	18
Systems (Interiors)	6
TOTAL	**122**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**19**

Table 2.11 — Virginia Tech 2024-2025 Catalog[42]

[41] VT. "School of Architecture, Bachelor of Architecture." Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (2025). Available at: https://arch.vt.edu/undergraduate/bachelor-of-architecture.html (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[42] VT. "2024-2025 Undergraduate Catalog." Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (2025). Available at: https://www.registrar.vt.edu/content/dam/registrar_vt_edu/documents/2024-2025%20UG%20Catalog.pdf (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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2.4 Curriculum Summary: Hours by Subject Category

The following table summarizes the approximate distribution of required hours across six subject categories for each of the ten schools reviewed. Hours correlate to credit hours. General education requirements (English, math, social sciences) are excluded unless directly related to architecture. Art History classes are also excluded unless explicitly required as major coursework (i.e. PennState). Otherwise, only architecture coursework is included in this study.

	BAC	CAL	CU	PSU	RISD	RU	SU	TU	UND	VTU
Fundamentals	15	28	33	29	36	33	24	30	30	26
Fundamentals (Interiors)	6	12	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Graphics	12	4	6	4	9	0	9	9	16	3
Prof. Practice	12	13	3	6	15	33	12	9	3	12
Projects	36	63	52	42	30	44	48	48	42	44
Projects (Interiors)	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	7
Systems	9	35	18	28	16	24	19	15	15	18
Systems (Interiors)	6	6	6	8	5	3	5	6	6	6
TOTAL	**96**	**161**	**124**	**123**	**111**	**137**	**117**	**117**	**112**	**122**
TOTAL INTERIORS	**12**	**18**	**12**	**14**	**5**	**3**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**19**

Table 2.12 — Architecture Program Hours by Subject Category (Major Requirements Only)

Below is a general description of what we included in each category. Please note that **there is overlap between categories**. Placement of a course in a particular category means that it mostly focused on that specific area based on the information provided in the course catalogs at the time of this study.

Fundamentals: Covers design thinking, building-level spatial, environmental design theory, architectural theory, force and energy studies, and research methods.

Graphics: Focuses on drawing, drafting, software, modeling, and fabrication.

Interior Design: May include acoustics, codes & regulations, color theory, daylighting, heating/cooling strategies, human factors, indoor air quality, lighting, mechanical/electrical/plumbing systems, and thermal comfort. Course descriptions covering one or more of these topics are included in this category. **This category does not include professional practice or graphics/technology.**

Professional Practice: Covers networking, professional development, project management, construction administration, community engagement, and design roles.

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Projects: Emphasize site & zoning restrictions, tectonics, landscape architecture, urban design, systems selection, building form and structure, building scale, thesis projects and research. Unlike interior design, we did not subdivide this category into residential and commercial projects. Descriptions provided in course catalogs were highly theoretical overviews.

Systems: Includes building construction assemblies, urban systems, architectural detailing, master planning, structures, building-level sustainability strategies, topography, landscape design, building envelope, site analysis, and vertical transportation.

2.5 Average Distribution — Architecture Education

Across the ten programs reviewed, the average accredited architecture professional degree devotes approximately **122 hours of major coursework**. Architecture programs are substantially larger than interior design programs, reflecting the broader scope of practice that includes site design, structural design and engineering coordination, exterior envelope systems, urban planning, and civil engineering integration.

Subject Area	Avg. Hrs	%
Projects	45 hrs	**37%**
Projects (Interiors)	1 hr	**1%**
Fundamentals	28 hrs	**23%**
Fundamentals (Interiors)	3 hrs	**2%**
Building Systems	20 hrs	**16%**
Building Systems (Interiors)	6 hrs	**5%**
Professional Practice	12 hrs	**10%**
Graphics & Technology	7 hrs	**6%**
TOTAL	**122 hrs**	**100%**
TOTAL INTERIORS OVERLAP	**10 hrs**	**8%**

Table 2.13 — Average Architecture Curriculum Distribution (122 Major Hours)

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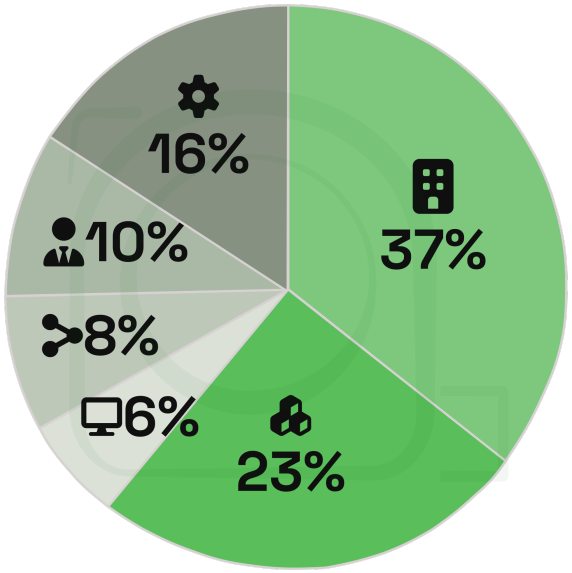
Architecture programs concentrate heavily on design projects and fundamentals. While Graphics & Technology only accounts for 6% of coursework, this is based on course descriptions only - it is highly likely that students gain additional knowledge of graphic representations in their studio projects, even if the studio descriptions did not indicate it.

Interior design content appears in all architecture programs but as a small fraction of the total curriculum. **We were generous with the interior design hours and included interior design overlap *anywhere* course descriptions noted or even implied interior design content.**



Graph 2.1 — NAAB Degree Categories

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Section 3: Interior Design Examination (NCIDQ)

3.1 About the NCIDQ

The NCIDQ examination is administered by CIDQ (Council for Interior Design Qualification) and consists of three parts (as of 2025): the Interior Design Fundamentals Exam (IDFX), the Interior Design Professional Exam (IDPX), and the Practicum Exam (PRAC). Together, the three parts constitute the national standard for interior design licensure and certification in the United States and Canada.

The NCIDQ examination is grounded in regular practice analyses that assess the tasks, knowledge, and competencies required of entry-level interior designers. The examination emphasizes health, safety, and welfare — particularly as they relate to the interior environment, including egress, life safety codes, accessibility, building systems coordination, and material specification.

Candidates must have at least 60 interior design education credit hours or an architecture degree and complete a minimum number of hours of supervised professional experience before sitting for all three parts of the examination.[43]

Exam Part	Duration	Questions	Format
IDFX Interior Design Fundamentals Exam	180 min	125	Multiple Choice
IDPX Interior Design Professional Exam	240 min	175	Multiple Choice
PRAC Practicum Exam	240 min	120	Fill-in-the-Blank, Hot Spot, Drag & Place
TOTAL	**660 min**	**420 questions**	

Table 3.1 — NCIDQ Examination Overview

The total cost to take the exam one time (exam and application fees) is about $1,375 plus $605 if the candidate requires CIDQ's "Alternative Review Process". Pass rates vary by year and exam but are usually anywhere from 50% to 65%.[44]

We evaluated the Exam PDFs CIDQ provided on their website and subdivided the content into 9 core areas: codes & regulations, project management, construction & building systems, programming, drawings, selections, professional business practices, human behavior, and sustainability.

[43] CIDQ. "NCIDQ Exam Eligibility Pathways." CIDQ (2025). Available at: https://www.cidq.org/for-exam-candidates/eligibility/ (Accessed 27 Sept 2025).
[44] CIDQ. "About the Exams." CIDQ (2025). Available at: https://www.cidq.org/for-exam-candidates/about-the-exams/ (Accessed 27 Sept 2025).

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3.2 Detailed Section Data by Exam Part

IDFX – Interior Design Fundamentals Exam[45]

The IDFX focuses heavily on Health, Safety, and Welfare (HSW) and is structured for designers just entering the profession.

We subdivided three sections of this exam in order to evaluate HSW testing in more detail:

- Materials & Finishes: Based on the description provided, codes and standards constitute at least half of the content of this section.
- FF&E & Lighting: The description implies that about half of the questions are related to non-life-safety elements, and the remaining amount are split between codes and sustainability.
- Drawings: For this test, the description shows heavier emphasis on understanding the different sheets within a construction set than on building codes.

Section	%	Questions	% of Total Exam	Subject
Programming & Site Analysis	10%	13	3%	Programming
Human Behavior	10%	13	3%	Human Behavior
Communication Methods	10%	13	3%	Programming
Life Safety & Universal Design	20%	25	6%	Codes & Regulations
Materials and Finishes (Other)	5%	6	2%	Selections
Materials and Finishes (Code-Related)	5%	6	2%	Codes & Regulations
FF&E & Lighting (Selections)	7%	9	2%	Selections
FF&E & Lighting (Code-Related)	4%	5	1%	Codes & Regulations
FF&E & Lighting (Sustainability)	4%	5	1%	Sustainability
Drawings (Creating)	14%	17	4%	Drawings
Drawings (Code-Related)	6%	7	2%	Codes & Regulations
Professional Development & Ethics	5%	6	1%	Professional Practice
Part Total	**100%**	**125**	**30%**	

Table 3.2 — IDFX Breakdown

[45] CIDQ. IDFX Interior Design Fundamentals Exam. CIDQ / NCIDQ Exam (2025). Available at: https://www.cidq.org/_files/ugd/0784c1_db232724506941b69fd9e9860e2f4dcd.pdf (Accessed 27 September 2025).

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IDPX – Interior Design Professional Exam[46]

The IDPX incorporates project management into many test questions in addition to building codes knowledge.

Percentages for each section reflect those in CIDQ's document with further subdivision as follows:

- Project Assessment: In addition to calculating square footages, there also appears to be equal weight on sustainability strategies and regulations, especially as related to accessibility and occupancy types.
- FF&E Integration: Questions are predominantly about managing projects but the provided description implies some testing on accessibility and building codes.

Section	%	Questions	% of Total Exam	Subject
Project Assessment	5%	9	2%	Programming
Project Assessment (Sustainability)	5%	9	2%	Sustainability
Project Assessment (Codes)	5%	9	2%	Codes & Regulations
Project Process, Roles, & Coordination	15%	26	6%	Project Management
Professional Business Practices	10%	17	4%	Professional Practices
Codes & Regulations	20%	35	9%	Codes & Regulations
Building Systems & Construction Integration	15%	26	6%	Construction & Building Systems
FF&E Integration (Project Management)	8%	14	4%	Project Management
FF&E Integration (Codes)	2%	4	1%	Codes & Regulations
Contract Administration	15%	26	6%	Project Management
Part Total	**100%**	**175**	**42%**	

Table 3.3 — IDPX Breakdown

[46] CIDQ. IDPX Interior Design Professional Exam. CIDQ / NCIDQ Exam (2025). Available at: https://www.cidq.org/_files/ugd/0784c1_5ea7c90e67c64fe4bee6a7eb6f379138.pdf (Accessed 27 September 2025).

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PRAC – Practicum Exam[47]

The PRAC's primary purpose is to ensure interior designers can design to code and with respect for the humans that will occupy the spaces they design. There is heavy emphasis on HSW as it covers codes and regulations extensively. Typically, designers are provided with examples focused on contract environments (i.e. offices, multi-family).

We further subdivided the following sections of the exam:

- Programming, Planning, & Analysis: Though the majority of this is diagramming, there are some questions dedicated to accessibility and life safety. There is also some mention of human factors.
- Contract Documents: It is indicated in the provided description that a large portion of contract documents questions concern the creation of the drawings themselves. However, there is some additional testing in the area of codes and lighting selections.

Section	%	Questions	% of Total Exam	Subject
Programming, Planning, Analysis	9%	11	3%	Programming
Programming, Planning, Analysis (Codes)	4%	5	1%	Codes & Regulations
Programming, Planning, Analysis (Human Factors)	2%	2	1%	Human Behavior
Codes & Regulations	30%	36	8%	Codes & Regulations
Building Systems & Construction Integration	25%	30	7%	Construction & Building Systems
Contract Documents (Drawings)	18%	22	5%	Drawings
Contract Documents (Selections)	7%	8	2%	Selections
Contract Documents (Codes)	5%	6	1%	Codes & Regulations
Part Total	**100%**	**120**	**28%**	

Table 3.4 — PRAC Breakdown

[47] CIDQ. PRAC Practicum Exam. CIDQ / NCIDQ Exam (2025). Available at: https://www.cidq.org/_files/ugd/0784c1_0c91281951bd42e289659c19687f41a4.pdf (Accessed 27 September 2025).

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3.3 NCIDQ Summary Charts — All Three Parts Combined

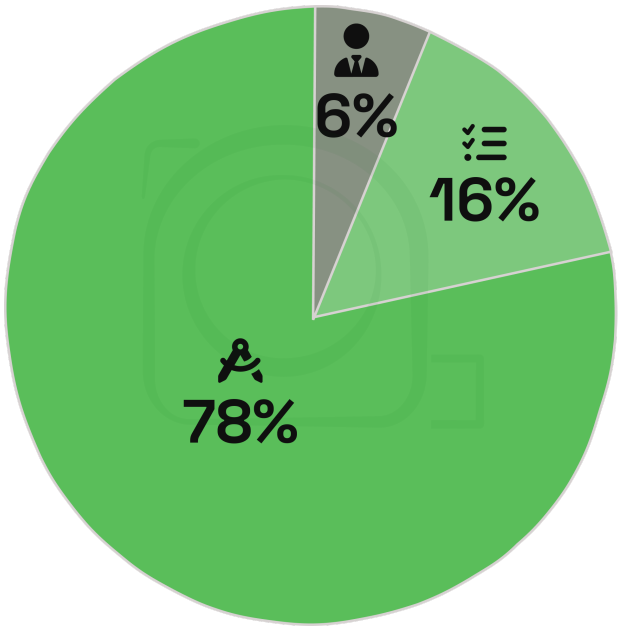
The following table summarizes the distribution of the exam content into the 9 areas we defined earlier. We then further simplified this into 3 sections for comparison with the ARE: Professional Practice, Project Management, and Design.

Subject	Questions	%	Subject
Codes & Regulations	138	33%	Design
Project Management	66	16%	Project Management
Construction & Building Systems	56	13%	Design
Programming	46	11%	Design
Drawings	39	9%	Design
Selections	23	6%	Design
Professional Practice	23	6%	Professional Practice
Human Behavior	15	3%	Design
Sustainability	14	3%	Design
Total	**420**	**100%**	

Table 3.5 — NCIDQ Categories Distribution

Subject	Questions	%
Design	331	78%
Project Management	66	16%
Professional Practice	23	6%
Total	**420**	**100%**

Table 3.6 — NCIDQ Primary Categories Distribution



Graph 3.1 — NCIDQ Primary Categories

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Section 4: Architecture Examination (ARE 5.0)

4.1 About the ARE

The Architect Registration Examination (ARE) is developed and administered by NCARB (National Council of Architectural Registration Boards) and is the national examination required for architectural licensure in all U.S. jurisdictions. ARE 5.0 consists of six divisions covering the full scope of architectural practice from business management through construction administration.[48]

Most U.S. jurisdictions require an NAAB-accredited degree to take the ARE and obtain a license. However, NCARB is currently advocating for multiple pathways to licensure in order to relieve the financial burden many emerging architects face.[49]

Exam Part	Duration	Questions	Format
Practice Management	160 min	65	Multiple Choice, Check-All-That-Apply, Hotspot, Drag-and-Place, Fill-in-the-Blank
Project Management	180 min	75	
Programming & Analysis	180 min	75	
Project Planning & Design	245 min	100	
Project Development & Documentation	245 min	100	
Construction & Evaluation	180 min	75	
TOTAL	**1,190 min**	**490**	

Table 4.1 — ARE Examination Overview

The total cost to take the exam one time (exam and application fees) is about $1,500 plus a $103 NCARB record fee. Pass rates vary by year and exam part but are usually anywhere from 50% to 65%.[50] [51]

We evaluated the Exam PDFs provided on NCARB's website and subdivided the content into 9 core areas: codes & regulations, project management, construction & building systems, programming, drawings, selections, professional business practices, human behavior, and sustainability.

[48] NCARB. "How to Earn Your Architecture License." NCARB (2025). Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/become-architect/earn-license (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).
[49] NCARB. "Understanding Multiple Pathways." NCARB (2025). Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/become-architect/pathways-to-practice/understanding-multiple-pathways (Accessed 27 Sept 2025).
[50] NCARB. "Fees." NCARB (2025). Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/fees#ExamFees (Accessed 27 Sept 2025).
[51] NCARB. "ARE 5.0 Pass Rates." NCARB (2025).Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are/pass-rates (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).

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4.2 Detailed Section Data by Division

Practice Management (PcM)

This section focuses solely on the ethics and regulations related to operating an architecture practice. Therefore, we placed this section entirely under our Professional Business Practices category.[52]

Topic	%	Questions	% of Total Exam	Category
Business Operations	23%	15	3%	Professional Practice
Finances, Risk, & Development of Practice	32%	21	4%	
Practice-Wide Delivery of Services	25%	16	3%	
Practice Methodologies	20%	13	3%	
Part Total	**100%**	**65**	**13%**	

Table 4.2 — ARE Practice Management Overview

Project Management (PjM)

Given the title of this section and its focus entirely on the management of architectural projects, we placed this under our Project Management category. This exam covers risk and quality control, project scheduling, and the development of office standards and project teams.[53]

Topic	%	Questions	% of Total Exam	Category
Resource Management	11%	8	2%	Project Management
Project Work Planning	20%	15	3%	
Contracts	28%	21	4%	
Project Execution	20%	15	3%	
Project Quality Control	21%	16	3%	
Part Total	**100%**	**75**	**15%**	

Table 4.3 — ARE Project Management Overview

[52] NCARB. "ARE: Practice Management." NCARB (2025). Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are/prepare/practice-management (Accessed 27 September 2025).
[53] NCARB. "ARE: Project Management." NCARB (2025). Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are/prepare/project-management (Accessed 27 September 2025).

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Programming & Analysis (PA)

While both interior designers and architects conduct surveys and other programming activities, they each focus on different aspects of the project. Interior designers conduct surveys of the spaces their design will impact while architects research the entire building and site. Since spaces are within a building, there are logically some areas of overlap between the professions.

However, as the descriptions of each section of the exam reveal, this overlap is minimal and predominantly within analysis, building codes, and accessibility. Within programming, both professions conduct in-depth analysis and consider zoning limitations, areas lacking accessibility, and what codes are required for the jurisdiction. While interior designers do have some training in site analysis, architects conduct this in much greater depth due to its impact on the overall building.[54]

Topic	%	Questions	% of Total Exam	Category
Environmental & Contextual Conditions (Sustainability)	6%	5	1%	Sustainability (ARCH)
Environmental & Contextual Conditions (Other)	11%	8	2%	Programming (ARCH)
Codes & Regulations (Architecture Only)	4%	3	1%	Codes & Regulations (ARCH)
Codes & Regulations (Interiors Overlap)	15%	11	2%	Codes & Regulations (ID)
Site Analysis & Programming	24%	18	3%	Programming (ARCH)
Building Analysis & Programming	40%	30	6%	Programming (ID)
Part Total	**100%**	**75**	**15%**	

Table 4.4 — ARE Programming & Analysis Overview

[54] NCARB. "ARE: Programming & Analysis." NCARB (2025). Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are/prepare/programming-analysis (Accessed 27 September 2025).

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Project Planning & Design (PPD)

This exam section tests candidates on their knowledge of the design of "sites and buildings." While some overlap exists, the emphasis on the "building" and "site" references architecture. Per the descriptions, we estimated interiors overlap as follows:

- Codes & Regulations: NCIDQ tests on codes relevant to the design of *interior spaces*. While there will logically be some similar testing on the ARE, this section's description emphasizes "site" and "building design."
- Building Systems, Materials, & Assemblies: The "determination of systems" such as MEP, structural, conveying, and fire suppression, are not tested on the NCIDQ. However, "acoustics, communications, lighting, security" are clear areas of overlap. There is also logically some overlap in "materials and assemblies," especially regarding interior non-loadbearing wall construction.
- Project Integration of Program & Systems: Areas such as "building configuration" and "environmental and contextual conditions" are architectural scope but there is some overlap in the integrations of systems and program requirements.[55]

Topic	%	Questions	% of Total Exam	Category
Environmental Conditions & Context (Sustainability)	5%	5	1%	Sustainability (ARCH)
Environmental Conditions & Context (Other)	8%	8	2%	Programming (ARCH)
Codes & Regulations (Architecture)	9%	9	2%	Codes & Regulations (ARCH)
Codes & Regulations (Interiors)	10%	10	2%	Codes & Regulations (ID)
Building Systems, Materials, & Assemblies (Architecture)	17%	17	4%	Construction & Building Systems (ARCH)
Building Systems, Materials, & Assemblies (Interiors)	5%	5	1%	Construction & Building Systems (ID)
Project Integration of Program & Systems (Architecture)	19%	19	4%	Construction & Building Systems (ARCH)
Project Integration of Program & Systems (Interiors)	16%	16	3%	Construction & Building Systems (ID)
Project Costs & Budgeting	11%	11	2%	Project Management
Part Total	**100%**	**100**	**21%**	

Table 4.5 — ARE Project Planning & Design Overview

[55] NCARB. "ARE: Project Planning & Design." NCARB (2025). Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are/prepare/project-planning-design (Accessed 27 September 2025).

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Project Development & Documentation (PDD)

In this section, candidates are tested on their knowledge of systems and their integration. This includes understanding what constitutes complete construction documentation, appropriate material selection, and construction methods. Both NCIDQ and ARE candidates are tested in these areas:

- Integration of Building Materials & Systems: Interior designers are not tested on the sizing of systems, but they do coordinate these systems and integrate strategies for acoustics, lighting, security, and communications. Conveying and fire suppression are areas in project design/development not tested on the NCIDQ.
- Construction Documentation: Change management, drawing coordination, and design documentation of the spaces are tested on the NCIDQ while items related to overall building and site design are not.
- Project Manual & Specifications: We estimate about 50% overlap here since both professions provide specifications but the content of those will differ.
- Codes & Regulations: Adherence to the IBC and other jurisdictional requirements is tested on both exams.[56]

Topic	%	Questions	% of Total Exam	Category
Integration of Building Materials & Systems (Architecture)	23%	23	5%	Construction & Building Systems (ARCH)
Integration of Building Materials & Systems (Interiors)	11%	11	2%	Construction & Building Systems (ID)
Construction Documentation (Architecture)	11%	11	2%	Drawings (ARCH)
Construction Documentation (Interiors)	24%	24	5%	Drawings (ID)
Project Manual & Specifications (Architecture)	8%	8	2%	Selections (ARCH)
Project Manual & Specifications (Interiors)	7%	7	2%	Selections (ID)
Codes & Regulations (Interiors)	11%	11	2%	Codes & Regulations (ID)
Construction Cost Estimates	5%	5	1%	Project Management
Part Total	**100%**	**100**	**21%**	

Table 4.6 — ARE Project Development & Documentation Overview

[56] NCARB. "ARE: Project Development & Documentation." NCARB (2025). Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are/prepare/project-development-documentation (Accessed 27 September 2025).

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Construction & Evaluation (CE)

Construction administration (bidding/negotiation, construction observation, reviewing submittals, and similar) are tested on both exams. Logically in practice, the type of projects designers oversee will differ dramatically between interiors and overall buildings. Since design firms typically hire project managers for this task, we have placed this entire section under project management.[57]

Topic	%	Questions	% of Total Exam	Category
Preconstruction Activities	20%	15	3%	Project Management
Construction Observation	35%	26	5%	
Administrative Procedures & Protocols	35%	26	5%	
Project Closeout & Evaluation	10%	8	2%	
Part Total	**100%**	**75**	**15%**	

Table 4.7 — ARE Construction & Evaluation Overview

[57] NCARB. "ARE: Construction & Evaluation." NCARB (2025). Available at: https://www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are/prepare/construction-evaluation (Accessed 27 September 2025).

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4.3 ARE Summary Charts

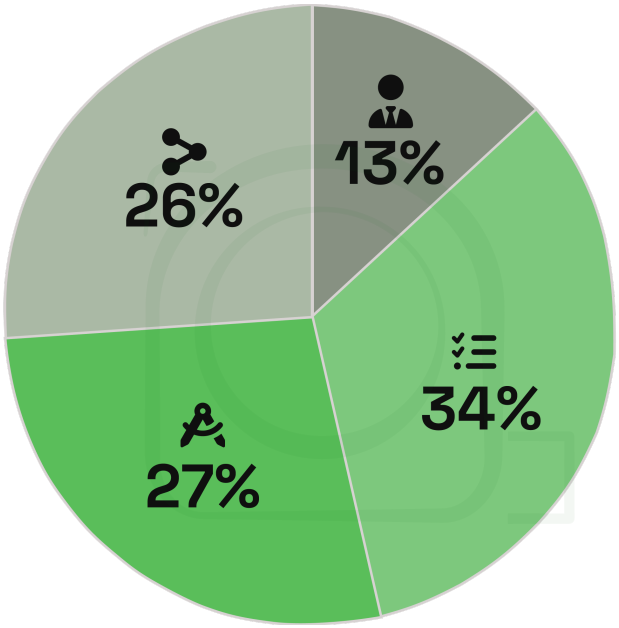
The following table summarizes the distribution of the exam content into the 9 areas we defined earlier. We then further simplified this into 4 sections for comparison with the NCIDQ: Professional Practice, Project Management, Design (ARCH), and Design (ID).

Subject	Questions	% of ARE	Overlap Questions	% Overlap	Subject
Codes & Regulations	44	9%	32	7%	Design
Project Management	166	34%	-	-	Project Management
Construction & Building Systems	91	19%	32	7%	Design
Programming	64	13%	30	6%	Design
Drawings	35	7%	24	5%	Design
Selections	15	3%	7	1%	Design
Professional Practice	65	13%	-	-	Professional Practice
Human Behavior	-	-	-	-	Design
Sustainability	10	2%	-	-	Design
Total	**490**	**100%**	**125**	**26%**	

Table 4.8 — ARE Categories Distribution

Subject	Questions	%
Design (Architecture)	134	27%
Design (Interiors)	125	26%
Project Management	166	34%
Professional Practice	65	13%
Total	**490**	**100%**

Table 4.9— ARE Primary Categories



Graph 4.1 — ARE Primary Categories Distribution

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Section 5: Overlap Analysis

5.1 Overview: The Case for Distinction

The primary goal of this analysis was to determine whether interior design is truly distinct from architecture, and if their overlap warrants using architectural credentials in place of interior design licenses.

The data shows **interior design is a distinct profession** deserving regulation and employment opportunities that respect that distinction. In other words, **architecture credentials are not a substitute for interior design qualifications**.

5.2 Education Overlap

How We Measured

GTM compared the subject categories represented in both architecture and interior design curricula. Using course descriptions available on each program's website or course catalog, we identified coursework in architecture programs that mentioned project design, systems, or fundamentals subjects found in interior design programs. We excluded overlap in professional practice and graphics/technology.

While we support mandatory work experience, we cannot measure what a student actually gains in an internship (i.e. are they grabbing lunch/coffee or working directly on projects?). In regards to graphics/technology, subjects such as drawing, sketching, rendering, and software, while vital to being a designer, are also taught across other degree programs (i.e. art, engineering) and not directly related to public safety, Therefore, **we analyzed classroom instruction in areas of design unique to the curriculums of architecture and interior design**.

Rounding: Numbers were rounded down to a whole number if its value after the decimal is 4 or less and rounded up if 5 or more.

Summarizing the Data

The table on the next page shows a summary of overlap hours and percentages within each subject category. As stated previously in this report, **we were generous with this overlap and included any course whose description mentioned a topic found in interior design curriculums**.

As a reminder, not all degree programs included overlap in each area. For instance, only Boston Architectural College has a dedicated human factors course. The majority of overlap is found in systems-related courses, specifically those teaching construction materials and methods, heating/cooling strategies, acoustics, and life safety.

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Subject Area	ID Program Hrs	Arch. Program Hrs	Architecture & Interior Design Overlap			
			Hours	% of ID Subject	% of Total ARCH Hrs	% of Total ID Hours
Fundamentals	20	31	3	15%	2%	4%
Graphics	14	7	-	-	-	-
Profess. Practice	6	12	-	-	-	-
Projects	23	46	1	4%	1%	1%
Systems	18	26	6	33%	5%	7%
Totals	**81**	**122**	**10**		**8%**	**12%**

Table 5.1 — Curricular Overlap: Interior Design Content in Architecture Programs

Key Findings

The data illustrates the key differences between CIDA and NAAB programs, highlights how universities categorize architecture and interior design, and indicates the relative rigor of each curriculum.

The following is unique to CIDA programs:

- Color theory
- Human behavior
- Human factors
- Interior design history
- NCIDQ exam practice
- Space planning
- Spatial design
- Studios dedicated to specific project types (i.e. workplace, healthcare, hospitality, residential)
- Textiles
- Universal design

The following is unique to NAAB curriculums:

- Building envelope design
- Building form, structure, and scale
- Building systems selection
- Force and energy studies
- Landscape architecture
- Master planning
- Structural design and engineering
- Tectonics
- Topography
- Urban design, planning, and systems
- Vertical transportation

This distinction between degree programs is also reflected in the distribution of degrees among universities. **Only 36% of universities with NAAB programs also have a CIDA accredited interior design program**. However, 12% of these schools do not have both programs under the same college or school. As demonstrated by the table on the next page, the universities included in our study reflect this segregation of interior design and architecture. In addition, the term “interior architecture” appears both within and separate from interior design, though CIDA remains the only organization accrediting interior architecture programs.[58] [59]

[58] NAAB. “Program Profiles.” NAAB (2025). Available at: https://naab-dir.weaveaccreditation.com/ (Accessed: 27 Sept 2025).
[59] CIDA. “Accredited Programs.” CIDA (2025). Available at: https://cida.org/accredited-programs (Accessed 27 Sept 2025).

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School	Degree	College	Dept/School
Auburn	Architecture*	Architecture, Design, & Construction	Arch, Planning, & Landscape Arch.
Auburn	Interior Arch. (non-CIDA)*	Architecture, Design, & Construction	Arch, Planning, & Landscape Arch.
Auburn	Interior Design	Human Sciences	Consumer & Design Sciences
BAC	Architecture	-	Architecture
BAC	Interior Design*	-	Interior Architecture
Cal Poly	Architecture	Architecture & Environmental Design	Architecture
Cornell	Architecture	Arch., Art, & Planning	Architecture
Cornell	Interior Design	Human Ecology	Human Centered Design
Drexel	Interior Design	Media Arts & Design	-
FIT	Interior Design	-	Art & Design
Florida State	Interior Design	Fine Arts	Design
Kansas State	Interior Design	Architecture, Planning, & Design	Interior Architecture & Industrial Design
NYSID	Interior Design	-	-
PennState	Architecture	Arts & Architecture	Architecture
Pratt	Architecture*	-	Architecture
Pratt	Interior Design	-	Design
RISD	Architecture	Architecture + Design	Architecture
RISD	Interior Design (non-CIDA)*	-	Interior Architecture
Rice	Architecture	-	Architecture
Syracuse	Architecture	-	Architecture
Syracuse	Interior Design	Visual & Performing Arts	-
Tulane	Architecture	-	Architecture & Built Environment
Cincinnati	Interior Design	Design, Architecture, Art, & Planning	Architecture & Interior Design
Notre Dame	Architecture	-	Architecture
Virginia Tech	Architecture	Arch., Arts, Design	Architecture
Virginia Tech	Interior Design*	Arch., Arts, Design	Design

Table 5.2 — Colleges and/or departments housing each program
**Degree shown here for comparison in this table only. Not elsewhere in this report.*

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Though not a full CIDA-accredited degree, the studied architecture program, Virginia Tech, with the most interior design hours shares its college with an accredited interior design program:

School	Interior Design	ID in Same College as ARCH	Overlap Hours
Boston Architectural College	yes	no	12
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo	no	-	18
Cornell University	yes	no	12
Pennsylvania State University	no	-	14
Rhode Island School of Design	yes (non-CIDA)	no	5
Rice University	no	-	3
Syracuse University	yes	no	5
Tulane University	no	-	6
University of Notre Dame	no	-	6
Virginia Tech University	yes	yes	19

Table 5.3 — Architecture programs with and without an interior design degree

The data is not consistent but it may be worth further investigation if architecture and interior design students benefit from being in the same college.

A final key finding, detailed in the table on the next page, indicates that CIDA degrees may be more rigorous than NAAB degrees due to mandatory internships and competitive portfolio reviews.

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School	Degree	Internship	Portfolio Review
Auburn University	Interior Design	yes	yes
Boston Architectural College	Architecture	yes	yes
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo	Architecture	no	no
Cornell University	Architecture	no	no
Cornell University	Interior Design	no	no
Drexel University	Interior Design	yes	no
Fashion Institute of Technology	Interior Design	yes	yes
Florida State University	Interior Design	yes	yes
Kansas State University	Interior Design	yes	yes
New York School of Interior Design	Interior Design	no	no
Pennsylvania State University	Architecture	no	no
Pratt Institute	Interior Design	no	no
Rhode Island School of Design	Architecture	yes	no
Rice University	Architecture	yes	no
Syracuse University	Architecture	no	no
Syracuse University	Interior Design	no	no
Tulane University	Architecture	no	no
University of Cincinnati	Interior Design	yes	no
University of Notre Dame	Architecture	no	no
Virginia Tech University	Architecture	no	yes

Table 5.4 — Programs with mandatory internships & competitive portfolio reviews after admission

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5.3 Examination Overlap

How We Measured

GTM reviewed all published section descriptions for the NCIDQ (IDFX, IDPX, and PRAC) and the ARE 5.0 (all six divisions). We identified ARE sections or objectives where content explicitly appears in the NCIDQ content outline — including codes and regulations, building systems coordination, and programming. **We excluded Project Management and Professional Practice from this overlap and focused solely on where design knowledge is tested in both exams**.

Rounding

With exception of the below instances, numbers were rounded down to a whole number if its value after the decimal is 4 or less and rounded up if 5 or more. Any deviations from standard conventions were to maintain accurate totals. Numbers chosen were based on their proximity to the .5 decimal place.

For the NCIDQ, the IDFX is 30% of the exam (125/420 questions), IDPX 42% (175/420), and PRAC 28% (120/420).

- **Table 3.2 (page 37) & Table 3.3 (page 38):** Under the "% of Total Exam" column, "Materials and Finishes" (Other, Code-Related), "Codes & Regulations," and "FF&E Integration" (Project Management) were rounded up.
- **Table 3.4 (page 39):** Under the "% of Total Exam" column, "Programming, Planning, Analysis" (Human Factors) was rounded up to 1% so a value would be displayed. Consequently, "Codes & Regulations" was rounded down.
- **Table 3.5 (page 40):** "Selections" and "Professional Practice" were rounded up and "Human Behavior" was rounded down.
- **Table 3.6 (page 40):** "Design" was rounded down and "Professional Practice" rounded up.

For the ARE exams, Practice Management is 13% of the exam (65/490 questions), Project Management 15% (75/490), Programming & Analysis 15% (75/490), Project Planning & Design 21% (100/490), Project Development & Documentation 21% (100/490), and Construction & Evaluation 15% (75/490). To maintain 100% total among these values, Project Planning & Design and Project Development & Documentation were rounded up.

- **Table 4.4 (page 43):** "Site Analysis & Programming" under the "% of Total Exam" column was rounded down.
- **Table 4.5 (page 44):** Under the "% of Total Exam" column, "Building Systems, Materials, & Assemblies (Architecture) was rounded up.
- **Table 4.6 (page 45):** Under the "% of Total Exam" column, "Project Manual & Specifications (Interiors)" was rounded up.
- **Table 4.7 (page 46):** Under the % column, "Project Closeout & Evaluation" was rounded down.

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Summarizing the Data

The table below shows a summary of overlap hours and percentages within each category. **Overlap may be overestimated as we made logical assumptions based on the information available.**

Subject	NCIDQ Qs	% of NCIDQ	ARE Qs	% of ARE	Q's w/ID Content on ARE*	% of NCIDQ
Codes & Regulations	138	33%	44	9%	32	8%
Project Management	66	16%	166	34%	-	-
Construction & Building Systems	56	13%	91	19%	32	8%
Programming	46	11%	64	13%	30	7%
Drawings	39	9%	35	7%	24	6%
Selections	23	6%	15	3%	7	2%
Professional Practice	23	6%	65	13%	-	-
Human Behavior	15	3%	-	-	-	-
Sustainability	14	3%	10	2%	-	-
	420	**100%**	**490**	**100%**	**125**	**~30%**

Table 5.5 — Exam Overlap: Interior Design Content in ARE
**Overlap excludes Project Management and Professional Practice*

Key Findings

Interiors related design content on the ARE may include:

- Codes & regulations related to zoning, accessibility, egress, occupancy, and life safety
- Building analysis and programming
- Acoustics
- Lighting
- Interior materials and specifications
- MEP and structural coordination
- Construction documents change management, interior partitions, and what constitutes a complete set

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It is important to contextualize the “125 questions” finding. The shared topics included in the list above are areas where both professions have a common interest in the safe delivery of built environment projects. But "shared topic" does not mean "equivalent competency."

For example: both exams address "codes." However, the NCIDQ tests codes as they apply specifically to interior spaces — finish flammability, interior egress, accessibility of fixtures and millwork, fire-rated interior partitions — while the ARE tests codes across the entire building and site, including exterior setbacks and structural load requirements.

Even more, our analysis shows that the **NCIDQ places substantially more weight on knowledge of codes and regulations** than the ARE, while the ARE tests about twice as much as the NCIDQ on project management and professional practice.

This means that despite there being overlap in code knowledge between the exams, we are only making an assumption that some of this overlap includes regulations related to interior spaces.

Other topics, such as programming and building systems coordination, carry similar weights in both exams.

Human Behavior, a vital part of interior design, is not explicitly stated as being tested on the ARE.

Overall, our analysis shows that **the ARE only covers 30% of the design content in the NCIDQ**.

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5.4 What the Overlap Means

Education

The data presented demonstrates the following:

- Degree Distinction: A 10-hour (8% of the 122 architecture hours) course total does not equate to an entirely separate professional degree.
- Technical Rigor: Interior design and architecture degrees share equal technical complexity.
- MEP Systems: CIDA graduates are uniquely qualified to read, coordinate, and place fixtures related to mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- Codes & Regulations: Interior design programs deliver extensive training in life safety, accessibility, and building codes.
- Building Science: Interiors curriculums offer deep instruction in construction methods, sustainability, and acoustics.
- Human Factors: All studied interior design degrees mandate human behavior coursework, compared to only one architecture degree.
- Scale & Focus: Interior design optimizes the immediate human experience, whereas architecture focuses on overall building form.

Our report clearly demonstrates that an architecture degree is not a substitute for an interior design degree.

Examination

When compared to the NCIDQ, the ARE is lacking the following critical interior design elements:

- Human behavior
- Sufficient testing of interiors codes and regulations (approximately 70% fewer questions than the NCIDQ)
- ~70% overall less coverage of interior design topics

This data should not be a surprise. Architecture is a very broad field covering many aspects that do not appear at all in interior design, such as building enclosures, vertical transportation, structural design, and intensive site analysis. **An architectural license is simply not sufficient to also cover the knowledge required for an interior design credential**.

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What We Advocate For Based on this Report

Balanced Paths to Licensure

- Flexible Multiple Pathways: Reward interior design degrees with reduced work experience.
- Alternative Routes: Allow non-degree candidates to qualify through additional training.

Fair and Equal Standards

- No Architect Exemptions: Require architects to meet identical interior design licensing standards to practice it.
- Distinct Hiring Practices: Recognize that architecture degrees do not substitute for interior design degrees.

Unrestricted Scope of Work

- Remove structural limits on interior designers regarding square footage, occupancy types, building systems, and egress.
- Permit independent, unlimited collaboration with other licensed professional disciplines.
- Trust designers to identify and hire specialized professionals (such as structural engineers) when needed.

Reciprocal Statutory Definitions

- Ensure legal definitions of architecture and interior design are mutually exclusive and clearly defined.
- Explicitly state in statutes that architecture does not encompass interior design if the reverse holds true.
- Either ban the use of “interior architect” and “interior architecture”, or protect practitioners who have earned CIDA-accredited “interior architecture” degrees from being penalized or barred from using their preferred title by licensing boards.

The bottom line: An architecture license does not make a practitioner qualified to practice interior design any more than an interior design license makes a practitioner qualified to practice architecture. The two professions have distinct scopes, training, and competency requirements. Equitable regulation requires recognizing both.

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All data in this study was drawn from publicly available sources.

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Revisions

Version 1 (6/18/2026)

Version 2 (10/31/2026)

About the Study

1. **Page 7:** Simplified the wording of the “core finding.”

Section 1: Interior Design Education

1. **Table 1.13 (page 21), Rounding:** Commercial Projects increased to 20% and Professional Practice was reduced to 7%.
2. **Graph 1.1 (page 21), Rounding:** Graph values along with the text to the right of it were updated per the changes in Table 1.13.

Section 2: Architecture Education

1. **Tables 2.2-2.13 (pages 23-34) Overlap Clarification:** In order to support the numbers in Table 5.1 on page 49, Tables 2.2 to 2.13 have been updated with rows indicating the number of overlap hours per subject area. The total overlap hours has been moved to the bottom of these tables.
2. **Table 2.11 (page 32) Corrections:** VTU table column totals for individual categories have been revised to match Table 2.12 (page 33).

Section 3: Interior Design Examinations (NCIDQ)

1. **Tables 3.2 & 3.5 (pages 37, 40), Rounding:** Some percentages have been revised to comply with rounding conventions:
    a. Table 3.1: FF&E & Lighting (Code-Related), FF&E & Lighting (Sustainability), Professional Development & Ethics.
    b. Table 3.5: Codes & Regulations, Sustainability
2. **Table 3.5 (page 40), Rounding:** “Human Behavior” has been rounded-down in order to avoid the total inaccurately reading as 101%.
3. **Table 3.5 (page 40), Typo:** Removed the word “Part” in the “Total” cell.

Section 4: Architecture Examination (ARE 5.0)

1. **Tables 4.3-4.5, & 4.8 (pages 42-44, 47), Rounding:** The following values were updated to reflect common rounding conventions:
    a. Table 4.3 & 4.5, %: Resource Management, Project Quality Control, Environmental Conditions & Context (Sustainability, Other)
    b. Table 4.4, % of Total: Codes & Regulations (ARCH), Site Analysis & Programming

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   c. Table 4.8, % of ARE: Codes & Regulations, Project Management, Programming, Selections
   d. Table 4.8, % Overlap: Codes & Regulations, Construction & Building Systems, Selections. These updates also increased the total to 26%. This new total has also been updated at the bottom of page 7.
2. **Table 4.8 (page 47), Missing Data:** Added the value for total "% Overlap" and an "Overlap Questions" column.
3. **Table 4.9 (page 47), Rounding:** Removed the approximation of questions and adjusted the rounding of percentages accordingly.
4. **Graph 4.1 (page 47), Rounding:** Updated the pie chart to reflect the adjustments to Table 4.9.

Section 5: Overlap Analysis

1. **Pages 48 & 53 Rounding:** Added our rounding standards.
2. **Table 5.5 (page 54), Rounding:** NCIDQ and ARE percentage columns were updated per the changes made to Tables 3.5 and 4.8. A tilde was added to the 30% total since 125 divided by 420 equals 30% while summing the individual rows equals 31%. The second note under the table was removed.
3. **Page 55:** Updated the final sentence to read "30%" to align with Table 5.5.
4. **Page 56, MEP Systems clarification:** Added "fixtures related to."
5. **Page 56, Examination clarification:**
   a. For simplicity, updated the first bullet point to read "8% of the 122 architecture hours."
   b. Added "interiors" to the second bullet point and added a tilde at the start of the third bullet point.

Additional Version 2 Revisions

1. Added this Revisions page.
2. Updated the Table of contents.

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Contact The Green Tape Measure

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Reach Us

Website: www.thegreentapemeasure.org
Email: info@thegreentapemeasure.org
Phone: 919-229-9864

Mailing Address:
The Green Tape Measure
2920 Forestville Road, Suite 100 PMB 1294
Raleigh, NC 27616

Social Media

LinkedIn: @gtmeasure
Instagram: @gtmeasure

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