



THE JOURNEY DOESN'T END AT GRADUATION: WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE ROAD TO LICENSURE

(3-minute read)

By: Grace Feeser

Graduating with a degree in Architecture is a big deal. Studio all-nighters, last-minute model builds, and critiques are finally behind you. But before you get too comfortable, there's one more journey ahead: becoming a licensed architect. The good news? It's totally doable. The bad news? It can be a lengthy process.



The path to licensure is guided by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), and it boils down to three main steps: education, experience, and exams. Simple in theory, just a bit more involved in practice.

You've already checked off the first box by earning your degree. If you graduated from a program accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), you're in great shape. That accreditation is basically your golden ticket, confirming you've met the education requirements needed to move forward in most states.

Next up is the Architectural Experience Program (AXP). This is where things start to feel real. AXP is all about gaining hands-on experience in the field while working under a licensed Architect. You'll log hours in everything from drawing sets and client meetings to site visits and

construction coordination. It's where you go from "I learned this in school" to "Oh, this is how it actually works." Bonus: you're getting paid while doing it.

Then there's the Architect Registration Examination (ARE). The ARE is a series of six to seven divisions, depending on your state, which test your knowledge across different areas of practice, from project management to building systems. It might sound intimidating, but here's the trick: don't try to tackle it all at once. Break it down, set a schedule, and treat each exam like its own mini project. You've survived studio, this is just a different kind of challenge.

One of the biggest misconceptions about licensure is that you must rush through it. You don't. Some people knock it out in a couple of years, others take a bit longer. Both are completely fine. The key is to stay consistent. Log your AXP hours regularly, chip away at the exams, and keep moving forward (even if it's one step at a time).

If you're starting your career in Pennsylvania, you'll eventually apply through the Pennsylvania State Architects Licensure Board. Each state has slight variations in requirements, so it's worth keeping an eye on what your specific jurisdiction expects. But overall, the process remains pretty consistent thanks to NCARB.

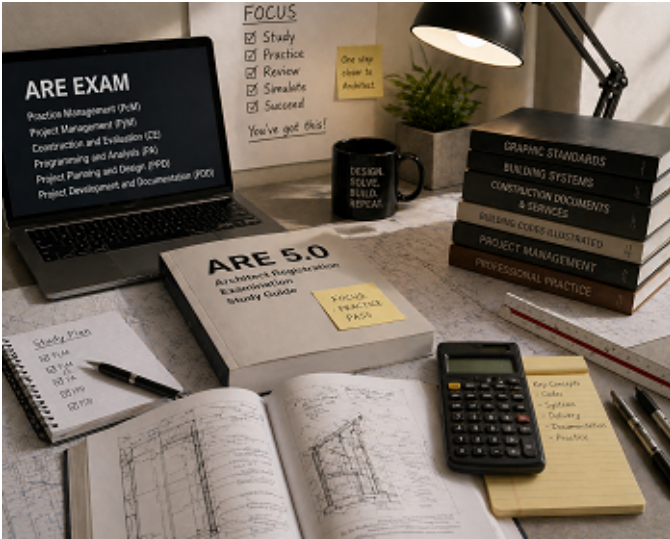
And here's something that doesn't get talked about enough: lean on the people around you. Your coworkers, project managers, and mentors have all likely been through this before. Ask questions. Get advice on study materials. Learn from their mistakes so you don't have to make the same ones.

At the end of the day, getting licensed isn't just about passing exams or checking boxes. It's about earning the ability to lead projects, sign drawings, and shape the

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world around you in a bigger way. It's a process, sure, but it's also a pretty exciting one.

So, take a breath, grab a coffee (you'll still need those), and get started. You've already proven you can do hard things.



Architectural Designer, Grace Feeser, graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from Marywood University in 2022. She is now actively working toward licensure by completing her AXP hours and progressing through the ARE. When she's not behind her desk or reading a textbook, Grace enjoys spending time with friends, family, and her dog, Vader.

Additional Resources:

<https://www.ncarb.org/gain-axp-experience>

<https://www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are>

<https://www.blackspectacles.com/blog/what-is-the-are>