THE SACAP VALIDATION PROTOCOLS

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This updated protocol of the validation of architectural qualifications reaffirms the commitment of the South African Council for the Architectural Professions (SACAP) to quality architectural education in South Africa. This protocol supports the SACAP's overarching objective of transformation as well as the SACAP's vision for excellence in architectural education. The SACAP endorses an educational approach that develops candidates who are design-oriented, technically competent, people-centred and enables the spatial transformation of South Africa's historically segregated built environment. The validation protocol sets the standard of achievement to be attained and the method of peer assessment to be undertaken.

This protocol provides information for:

- Architectural Learning Sites (ALSs) that require new or continued validation.
- Architectural Learning Sites that are proposing new architectural qualifications.
- Validation Panel (VP) members.
- Validation Board (VB) members.

The SACAP steers and administers the validation system and processes. Architectural Learning Sites (ALSs) are responsible for preparing documentation and evidence for validation visits and for submitting proposals for new qualifications to the SACAP Educational Committee. The Validation Panel and the Validation Board are responsible for organising and conducting validation visits to new or existing ALSs and the Education Committee for reviewing proposed qualifications. The validation visit can be conducted either completely on-site (on-site validation visits), or partially on-site and partially online (blended validation visits).

The validation process is intended to be constructive, interactive and productive. Although there is a necessary focus on the achievement of minimum standards, recognition is given to the achievement of high standards and effective approaches. The guidelines for the endorsement and validation processes are specific and regulated to ensure consistency, quality and procedural clarity. However, the SACAP does not expect a homogenous educational environment but, rather, encourages innovation and a diversity of pedagogic philosophy, focus and content.

In terms of Clause 13 of the Architectural Profession Act (No. 44 of 2000), the SACAP has an obligation to:

- conduct validation visits to any accredited education institution which has a department, school or faculty of architecture and;
- either conditionally or unconditionally grant, refuse or withdraw validation to higher education institutions and their educational programs with regard to architecture.

The SACAP validation process is in line with updated international benchmarks, specifically the Canberra Accord on Architectural Education (Canberra Accord, n.d.), to ensure that the validated ALSs can deliver professionals to compete locally and abroad. The SACAP is a full signatory of the Canberra Accord, which means that South African graduates will be recognised by those countries that are signatories of the Canberra Accord. The SACAP candidacy program supports the drive for competent professionals being delivered into the South African economy.

The SACAP's Education Committee thanks everyone who has contributed to the compilation of this document, from the days of the 'The Purple Book' to the present 'Validation Protocols'.

2. GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

ALS REPORT	A reflective report compiled by the Architectural Learning Site and submitted to the SACAP prior to a validation visit.
ALS EVIDENCE PREPARATION	Evidence of teaching and learning materials, student work and assessments prepared by the Architectural Learning Site for evaluation by a SACAP Validation Board during a validation visit.
COMPETENCIES	A satisfactory state of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and the ability to apply these in a variety of situations.
SACAP COMPETENCIES	A matrix of competencies for architectural professionals compiled by the SACAP (APPENDIX A to this protocol) that outlines the required awareness, knowledge, skills and the ability to apply these.
SACAP REPORT	An evaluation report of an Architectural Learning Site compiled by the Validation Board after a validation visit.
SACAP VALIDATION PROTOCOL	A set of formal documents that outlines the official guidelines, processes and procedures for the validation of architectural qualifications.
VALIDATION	The confirmation by an officially approved body that learning outcomes or competencies acquired by an individual have been assessed against reference points or standards through pre-defined assessment methodologies.
VALIDATION RECOMMENDATION	The recommendation made by the Validation Board after the evaluation of an Architectural Learning Site.
VALIDATION BOARD	The Validation Board is a team of representatives drawn from the SACAP's Validation Panel and others nominated by relevant national authorities.
VALIDATION PANEL	The Validation Panel is a pool of suitably qualified and approved people from which members of a Validation Board are drawn for each validation visit.
VALIDATION REPORT	The evaluative report with a validation recommendation by the Validation Board issued after a validation visit.

ALS	Architectural Learning Site: A faculty, department or school of architecture at a higher education institution
CA	Canberra Accord
CHE	Council on Higher Education (South Africa)
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training (South Africa)
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee (South Africa)
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualification Sub Framework (South Africa)
HoD	Head of Department
IDOW	Identification of Work
NQF	National Qualifications Framework (South Africa)
RPL: Higher Education Institution Processes	The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process through which formal, non-formal and informal learning is measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system or workplace. (Source: National Policy for the Implementation of RPL: par 30). The aim is to make it possible to obtain formal recognition for knowledge gained throughout life, such as in workplaces and own reading or experiences. The RPL process also entails providing support to a candidate to ensure that knowledge is discovered and displayed in terms of a relevant qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework.
SACAP	The South African Council for the Architectural Profession
SAIA	The South African Institute of Architects
SAQA	The South African Qualifications Authority
VA	Voluntary Association
VB	Validation Board

VP	Validation Panel

3. HOW TO READ THE VALIDATION PROTOCOLS

The validation protocol consists of the main document and appendices. The main document provides an overview of the validation process respectively for existing ALSs, for the Validation Panel, for a Validation Board and for new ALSs, whilst the appendices provide explanatory details.

MAIN DOCUMENT		
A summative document that introduces the set of documents that constitute the SACAP validation protocols.		
VALIDATION CRITERIA		
	APPENDIX A	THE SACAP COMPETENCIES
Validation criteria are benchmarks that assist ALSs in the design of new qualifications, the evaluation of existing qualifications and preparation for a validation visit. These benchmarks also guide the SACAP Education Committee and Validation Panel in evaluating new and existing architectural qualifications.		
VALIDATION PROCESS, PREPARATION AND LOGISTICS		
	APPENDIX B	VALIDATION BOARD
APPENDIX B provides detailed information about the roles, duties and responsibilities of a VB. **APPENDIX B** outlines to the VB the approach to evaluation, provides an evaluation matrix, presents a pre-meeting agenda and provides detail for communicating the validation visit findings.		
	APPENDIX B.1	EVALUATION MATRIX
The evaluation matrix corresponds with the ALS report (**APPENDIX C**) and provides guidelines to a VB for the evaluation of the ALS.		
	APPENDIX B.2	SUBJECT/MODULE/UNIT REVIEW TEMPLATE
The subject review template is used together with the evaluation matrix (**APPENDIX B.1**) as guidance to a VB for the evaluation of the ALS.		
	APPENDIX B.3	VALIDATION REPORT TEMPLATE
The Final Validation Report (FVR) is the culmination of the validation visit. 8 weeks after the validation visit, a draft report should be ready which is then sent to the ALS for comments. Once comments are received, the Draft Validation Report (DVR) will be presented at the next Education Committee meeting for approval and the next Council meeting for ratification. A copy of the FVR is then sent to the ALS. The entire process should not exceed 6 months after the completion of the validation visit.		
	APPENDIX C	ALS REPORT
APPENDIX C contains the information required for the ALS Report, which is prepared by the ALS for submission to the SACAP prior to the validation visit. All parts of the ALS Report are related to the period since the previous validation visit.		
	APPENDIX D	ALS EVIDENCE PREPARATION
APPENDIX D outlines the extent, preparation and exhibition of evidence that needs to be accessible for evaluation by a VB during the validation visit. The ALS presents evidence of teaching and learning materials, student work and assessments of the year preceding the validation visit.		
	APPENDIX E	ALS NEW QUALIFICATIONS
APPENDIX E stipulates the information and documentation required for submission of new architectural qualifications to the SACAP for support and recommendation.		
	APPENDIX F	VALIDATION LOGISTICS
The head and staff of an ALS as well as a VB must review APPENDIX F well in advance of the validation visit, so that the operation of the validation visit is understood. This document sets out general procedures, the suggested timetable and information for preparing for the accommodation of a VB.		

		APPENDIX G	REVIEWS AND APPEALS

Appendix G outlines the review and appeals process available for the ALS, should the ALS wish to contest a validation visit outcome.

4. TRANSFORMATION OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION

Transformation of the architectural profession is a key objective of the SACAP. Transformation of the profession is imperative and is closely linked to transformation of architectural education. Transformation of education speaks to the ALS's ethos, structure, curriculum, demographic of students and staff and throughput of students. Although some progress has been made over the past two decades, more work needs to be done. The transformation of an ALS is part of the criteria considered when a VB makes a recommendation after a validation visit.

A common understanding of what is meant by transformation, diversity and inclusivity is important to ensure meaningful engagement. These concepts are defined below and serve as a starting point for achieving a common understanding of the transformation in education.

● INCLUSIVITY (UNESCO, 2017)

Inclusive education removes barriers limiting the participation and achievement of learners or students, respective of diverse needs, abilities, and characteristics and that eliminate all forms of discrimination in the learning environment. This approach prioritises the identification of and response to barriers and practices of discrimination within education which limit both participation and achievement. The goal is an education system which facilitates an environment where educators and students embrace and welcome the challenge and benefits of diversity.

● DIVERSITY (Ahmed, 2004)

Diversity refers to patterns of difference in terms of certain social categories. The foremost terms shaping discourses and policies related to diversity include race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, sexuality and age. The critical diversity approach acknowledges the role of power in constructing difference, and the unequal symbolic and material value of different locations. This approach locates difference within a historical legacy as an outcome of social practice and an engagement with the transformation of these oppressive systems.

● TRANSFORMATION (UCT, 2015, 2018; Soudien, 2010)

Transformation is viewed, on one hand, as seeking to remedy imbalances related to the representation of different race, class, gender, language groups. This approach to transformation prioritises numbers and representation. On the other hand, transformation is viewed as an issue related to historic privilege, power and marginalisation. Transformation then is an ideological process which engages and redresses histories of colonialism and apartheid. The emphasis here is on redress in relation to disparities related to political and economic power in society. These two elements are related, and often occur simultaneously.

An ALS under review will need to explain quantitative and qualitative indicators towards transformation. Guidelines for these are available in **Appendix B**. The SACAP calls to action each ALS to work towards inclusive pedagogic and epistemological space, to address the socio-economic challenges facing South Africa and the architectural professional and to make a concerted effort towards transformation in the ALS context. The ALS must include their response to this in the relevant section in the ALS report.

5. VALIDATION CRITERIA (DETAIL IN APPENDIX A, B.1, B.2)

The validation system enables the SACAP to evaluate the quality and relevance of architectural qualifications and the standard of achievement and competence of graduates of ALSs at higher education institutions. The priority of the SACAP is to benchmark architectural qualifications against the SACAP competencies (**APPENDIX A**) as the main criteria for validation. The SACAP competencies are a description of the required knowledge and skills and application required of architectural professionals. To this end, all application and validation documentation prepared by an ALS should identify how the SACAP competencies and standards are being met within the curriculum, pedagogic approach and assessment practices of the ALS. In reviewing the work of students, the lowest qualifying standards for graduation are of greatest concern.

In addition, the ALS should respond to validation criteria which focus on the ALS's ability to deliver architectural qualifications. This includes, but is not limited to, the quality, relevance of teaching and learning design, research, the nature of the ALS learning environment and the extent of available resources for both staff and students. These aspects are set out on the evaluation matrix (**APPENDIX B.1**) and the subject/module/unit review template (**APPENDIX B.2**).

6. VALIDATION PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

There are three main validation processes which are summarised below.

a. VALIDATION VISITS FOR CONTINUED VALIDATION

A Validation Board visits an ALS to review existing qualifications for continued validation. Validation visits are conducted every five years. The intention is that each ALS will be visited once during a Council's four-year term of office. The date for a validation visit will be confirmed by the Registrar of the SACAP, a full calendar year in advance. Clause 13 of the Architectural Profession's Act (No. 44 of 2000) states that if "the Council does not conduct a validation visit within that term of office; it must notify the Minister of the educational progress in architecture". The SACAP has made the Minister aware of the possibility that the five-year validation cycle might not coincide with the four-year term of office.

The validation visit can be conducted either completely on-site (on-site validation visits), or partially on-site and partially online (blended validation visits). The same process is followed for both, except that for the blended visit only 3 VB members, including the Chair, one professional member, and the Secretary, will visit the ALS for one DAY ONE only to complete a physical review of the ALS accommodation, and where necessary interview the leadership, staff and students, while all other meetings are conducted online. In the instance of a blended visit, an open day may be inserted between DAY ONE and DAY TWO to allow for the Chair, the professional member and the Secretary to travel.

A validation visit for a continued validation can have one of three possible outcomes:

i. UNCONDITIONAL VALIDATION

Where there has been a previous visit and validation of the ALS and its qualifications and the evidence presented are judged to have maintained the necessary standards, validation is continued for five years.

ii. CONDITIONAL VALIDATION

Where aspects of the ALS or its qualifications require improvement, continued validation may be subject to conditions. Remedial action will have to be taken and will be monitored. The ALS:

● must submit a report to the SACAP Education Manager each academic year;

- must request a revisit by a full Visiting Board within two years and submit evidence that the necessary improvements have been made;

- may request guidance and feedback from the SACAP in reaching the required improvements through:

  o submission to the SACAP of all external examiners' reports annually until the next visit;
  o appointment of new (or more) external examiners;
  o requesting an, interim, informal visit at by a VB sub-group (ordinarily the Chair, Secretary, and one or two other members).

iii. WITHDRAWAL OF VALIDATION

Withdrawal of validation is a last resort and applied only where exit level qualification outcomes have fallen below minimum standards, and where conditional validation will not be an effective solution. Students already registered in a qualification at the time of the validation visit will be able to complete the qualification and will still be recognised by the SACAP as candidate professionals from a validated ALS. New registering students should be made aware that the ALS is not validated until further notice.

b. VALIDATION VISITS FOR FIRST-TIME VALIDATION

New ALSs apply for validation visits for a first-time validation of new qualifications while existing ALSs should apply if they offer a qualification at a level they have never offered before. There are two separate processes, an informal advisory visit and an initial advisory visit, each with its own outcomes.

Where an **informal advisory visit** is sought at any time prior to the implementation of a new course, or stage of a course, prior to an initial validation visit, the outcomes may be:

i. CANDIDATE QUALIFICATION FOR RECOGNITION

This outcome recognises the potential of the ALS to be validated during a future initial validation visit but does not signify validation.

ii. DEFERRED RECOGNITION

Deferred recognition signifies that the ALS is not ready for a validation process and should re-apply for an informal advisory visit once ready.

An initial validation visit is to be conducted at the end of the first year of a new qualification. The outcomes of an **initial validation visit** can be one of two possibilities:

iii. UNCONDITIONAL VALIDATION

Where evidence presented is judged to comply with the necessary standards, validation is usually continued for five years.

iv. DEFERRED VALIDATION

Where evidence presented is judged as not complying with the necessary standards, outcomes may be deferred until the ALS has fulfilled requirements, for example:

- the provision of additional evidence (to be specified);

- the inclusion of some members of the VB at the end of year assessments to view the sample of an ALS's work and report back to the SACAP.

c. REVIEW OF NEW QUALIFICATIONS

Existing or new ALSs are to submit documentation of proposed qualification/s to the SACAP Education Committee prior to submission to the Council for Higher Education (CHE). The SACAP Education Committee reviews the submission and if the qualification/s meet/s the required standards it/they will be supported and recommended, after which the qualification may be submitted to the CHE.

7. VALIDATION PANEL AND VALIDATION BOARD (DETAIL IN APPENDIX B)

The validation process is dependent on reviewers to conduct each validation visit. To this end, the SACAP manages the Validation Panel and Validation Board. Refer to **Appendix G** for detailed information on the processes and procedures of the VP and the VB.

a. VALIDATION PANEL

The Validation Panel is a pool of suitably qualified and approved people from whom members of a Validation Board are drawn for each validation visit.

Members of the VP must be registered SACAP members. The VP must be representative in respect of gender, race, age, professional registration category, academic experience and practice experience. In addition, the VP should include members with experience in transformation, for academic development, student representatives and those with continental and international affiliations.

The VP selection process must be transparent so as to facilitate the nomination of suitably qualified people based on their experience while demonstrating capability as experts in the judgement of educational achievement in architecture. Members of the SACAP Education Committee and the SACAP Transformation Committee are automatically part of the VP. In addition, further nominations are received via:

- a general public call through the placing of advertisements;
- interested and affected parties including VA's and ALSs;
- direct invitation by the SACAP (through recommendations by the Chair of Education Committee after consultation with the Education Committee).

b. VALIDATION BOARD

A Validation Board is a team of representative people drawn from the SACAP's Validation Panel and others nominated by relevant national authorities.

i. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE WORK OF THE VB

The purpose of a VB is to conduct a validation visit to an ALS for new or continued validation, including visits to assess the ALS after conditional validation or withdrawal of validation. A VB reviews the evidence provided by the ALS to evaluate students' knowledge and skills against the SACAP competencies (**APPENDIX A**) and the SACAP's transformation objectives. VB's focus on the evidence presented and not specifically on the process of teaching and learning. The latter does, however, provide an important context against which the evidence is viewed. A VB must assess coursework and outcomes in terms of structure, credits, content, teaching and learning, practical and intellectual ability. A VB should

accept the prerogative of an ALS to formulate the teaching and learning design, policies and procedures. A VB's role is not to instruct the ALS how to conduct its academic business. Its role is to stimulate critical self-analysis, to afford practical help and to aid an ALS in achieving their educational objectives. Guidance and breakdown of tasks are included in **APPENDIX B**.

ii. COMPOSITION OF THE VB

In choosing representatives for a VB, it is essential to have a balance of appropriate experience and representation of the various interests and needs suited to the ALS's circumstances. International experience of a VB is encouraged. For the sake of succession and continuity, a VB should also comprise members representing diversity of gender, identity, race, age, experience, disability status, level of qualification and registration and keeping in line with Section 217B of the Constitution. Where possible:

● at least one of a VB members should be from the Education Committee, or any other committee in the SACAP with a specific education and transformation lens;
● at least one of a VB members should provide continuity from the previous visit to the specific ALS;

● members of a VB should be from the same geographical region as the ALS under validation, to save time and costs, but this geographical directive should not compromise the integrity of a VB.

VB's are appointed by the SACAP Education Committee from the members of the VP. The appointments are communicated to the head of the ALS. The head of the ALS must review and accept the nominations before selected members of a VB can be informed. VB members should be informed no later than three months prior to a planned validation visit. A VB member should not be informed of the identity of the ALS under validation until membership of a VB has been confirmed. Any conflict of interest should be declared by selected VB members before a VB is finalised.

iii. MEMBERS OF THE VB

The roles and responsibilities of each member of a VB are explained in detail in **APPENDIX B**.

For a validation visit, a VB must include a minimum of 5 members:

● Four professional members, of which one will be selected as the Chair of a VB.
    o 2 academics of a standing equal to or above the highest professional category to be validated;
    o 2 practitioners of professional standing equal to or above the highest professional category to be validated;
● A specialised secretary from the SACAP, where possible the SACAP Education Manager.

In addition, there may be the following observers:
● A post-graduate student representative of another region/ALS.
● An observer for training purposes and development skills who will not participate in the validation process.
● Representatives of the CBE or similar authorities.

When delegated representatives of other authorities, such as the CBE, accompany a VB as observers, that authority will carry the expenses. Representatives of such authorities are subject to prior approval from the SACAP. The extent to which observers may participate in the process will be at the discretion of a VB Chairperson.

For an advisory visit, it is recommended that a VB will consist of 3 academics of a standing equal to or above the highest professional category to be validated.

8. ALS: PROCESS AND PREPARATION FOR VALIDATION VISITS FOR CONTINUED VALIDATION

The aim of a validation visit to an ALS is to determine whether graduates of the ALS, who will apply for registration as candidates in any of the SACAP's four professional categories, meet the minimum standards of competencies and associated skills. The validation visit is an evidence-led, peer-reviewed and interactive evaluation of an ALS and its qualifications offered. The ALS prepares documentation (detail in **APPENDIX B**) and evidence (detail in **APPENDIX C**) which is reviewed by a VB which then makes a recommendation based on its findings.

In preparation for a validation visit, the ALS must consider budget, the preparation of the validation document, the compilation and presentation of the evidence, and the logistics of the visit. After the ALS receives a decision, feedback and/or recommendations from a VB, it may either accept or, in certain circumstances, request a review and appeal of a VB outcome. The following section describes the various steps and requirements of the validation process for the ALS while detailed information is available in the relevant Appendices.

a. BUDGET

The ALS is responsible for financing the visit. The validation fee should be agreed upon before the validation visit is conducted. The SACAP will assist the ALS in determining a budget for the visit. Failure to pay the amount determined by the agreed time will result in a penalty fee, or the cancellation of the visit. The validation fee covers costs and nothing more.

The SACAP is a full signatory of the Canberra Accord and may conduct validation visits without a designated international validator. However, should an ALS request an international representative to be part of the visit, this cost must be covered by the ALS.

When delegated representatives of the SACAP or other authorities, such as the CBE, accompany the VB as observers, that authority will carry the expenses.

b. DOCUMENTATION PREPARATION (DETAIL IN APPENDIX C)

The ALS compiles a single comprehensive validation document which is submitted to the SACAP no later than four weeks prior to the visit. **Appendix B** stipulates the requirements of this validation document. Failure to submit the required documentation in time or submitting incomplete or unclear information may lead to the cancellation of the visit and the possibility that the ALS may lose its validation.

c. PRESENTATION OF EVIDENCE (DETAIL IN APPENDIX D)

The ALS prepares and compiles evidence of academic and student work of the year preceding the visit. Evidence for each qualification and each year of study of a qualification is presented. This evidence is displayed during the validation visit. **Appendix C** stipulates the requirements for the compilation and presentation of evidence.

d. VALIDATION LOGISTICS (DETAIL IN APPENDIX F)

The ALS liaises with the SACAP to prepare for the validation visit and hosting the VB. Full details of the logistical preparation and the suggested timetable are available in **Appendix D**.

9. ALS: PROCESS AND PREPARATION FOR FIRST-TIME VALIDATION VISITS

An ALS preparing for an initial (first-time) validation visit of a new qualification, is advised to request an informal advisory visit at least one year before an initial validation visit. If the VB, at the informal advisory visit, is satisfied that the ALS will be ready for an initial validation visit within a year, then the new qualification/s at the ALS will be designated 'candidate qualification for recognition'. This designation is not yet equal to validation. Only once an initial validation visit, following the validation process as described under section 4 of this document, has been completed is a validation visit possible. Section 6 of this document outlines the possible recommendations a VB can make after the initial validation visit.

10. ALS: PROCESS AND PREPARATION FOR REVIEW OF NEW QUALIFICATIONS

Documentation for new architectural curricula are submitted to the SACAP for recommendation and support prior to the documentation being submitted into the DHET accreditation system. The support from the SACAP indicates the SACAP's confirmation of the alignment of the structure and content of the proposed qualification with the SACAP Competencies. The SACAP Competencies are contained in a separate document that is **APPENDIX A** to this protocol.

Validation of any new qualification at an ALS will only be considered once the qualification has been approved by the CHE and SAQA and has been implemented at a higher education institution. The process of initial validation is explained in section 5 of this protocol.

Application documentation should be submitted to the SACAP Education Manager. The documentation will be reviewed by the SACAP Education Committee and written feedback will be given within 4 weeks after submission. Once support from the SACAP Council has been granted, applicants may proceed to submit the qualification into the HEQC system for accreditation.

APPENDIX E sets out the requirements and format for submitting documentation for any new qualifications.

11. RESPONSIBILITIES

The costs incurred by both the ALS and a VB are significant, so every attempt should made to ensure that the validation visit proceeds smoothly and that there is no reason for the termination of the visit. Therefore, the ALS must be well prepared, be familiar with the process, must have all the necessary role players available, on time, and must have all information available, in a legible and accessible format at the onset of the visit or on request.

The VB must, similarly, be well prepared and familiar with the process, the ALS report, and other documentation prior to the visit. The ALS and VB members have the right to immediately appeal to the Chair should either the ALS or a VB act unprofessionally, for reasons including inter alia, non-attendance, distracting behaviour or observers having undue influence during the visit.

12. REFERENCES

Canberra Accord. 2020. [Online]. [n.d.]. Available: http://canberraaccord.org/ [July 1].(UNESCO, 2017)

(Ahmed, 2004)

(UCT, 2015, 2018; Soudien, 2010) National Policy for the Implementation of RPL: par 30