Environmental Design Research Association
Statement on the Proposed National Architecture
Accrediting Board 2014 Conditions for Accreditation

Proposed changes to guidelines involving human centered practice are detrimental to the profession and devalue the need for research-informed, humane, socially just, and meaningful design innovation in architectural education.

October 31, 2013 (McLean, VA) -- The Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA), the world's leading interdisciplinary organization on Environment-Behavior research, design, and outreach, is deeply concerned by the recently released 2014 first draft of proposed conditions for accreditation by the National Architecture Accrediting Board (NAAB). Originally founded in 1969 by architects and psychologists concerned with integrating people's needs in shaping the built environment and providing a research foundation for design education and practice, EDRA maintains its strong ties to membership within architecture communities, currently serving more than two-thirds of NAAB accredited programs.

As an engaged design research community representing an international membership of leading architects, educators, designers, artists, researchers, landscape architects, planners, policymakers, facility managers, students, environmental psychologists, and scientists, we are voicing our strong concerns with the amendments in the proposal. This draft defines the standards that professional degree programs in architecture are expected to meet in order to ensure that students are prepared to move forward to the next steps in their careers, including internship and licensure. The recent changes eliminate and truncate key criteria directly related to public health, safety, and welfare, as well as the kind of social research-based approach to architecture that has created innovative and inspired design with contextual relevance and fit, added value for clients, and improved quality of people's lives.

Ensuring that current and future architects have the capability and expertise to design human-centered environments is critical for the future of the profession. Leading design firms consider design research experience and expertise as powerful differentiators in today's highly competitive industry. The design research approach clients demand, seen in the healthcare and workplace environments for instance, requires explicit measurement of and participation by building users so that designers understand the impacts of their designs on humans. The 2014 draft omits and drastically reduces several human centered Conditions from the 2009 document that are central to the education

of architects as they join the profession in the 21st century, and will impact whether they will become successfully employed or not. These Conditions (see below) are also at the core of what EDRA believes in and advocates. Specifically, EDRA's concerns are as follows:

Realm A:

2009 NAAB ACCREDITATION CONDITIONS	2014 PROPOSED DRAFT CONDITIONS
A.5 Investigative Skills: *Ability to* gather, assess, record, apply, and comparatively evaluate relevant information within architectural coursework and design processes. **A.11 Applied Research:** *Understanding* the role of applied research in determining function, form, and systems and their impact on human conditions and behavior.	**A.3 Investigative Skills and Applied Research:** *Ability to* gather, assess, record, and comparatively evaluate relevant information and performance in order to support conclusions related to a specific project or assignment.

Proposed changes to Realm A remove Applied Research as a condition and include the words "applied research" in the title combined with investigative skills. This eliminates a focus on the intricate nature of action oriented human centered design research. The proposed language is also problematic in that it suggests gathering evidence to support a forgone conclusion or design decision rather than deducing a conclusion from evidence and foundational research.

Realm B:

2009 NAAB ACCREDITATION CONDITIONS	2014 PROPOSED DRAFT CONDITIONS
B.2 Accessibility: *Ability* to design sites, facilities, and systems to provide independent and integrated use by individuals with physical (including mobility), sensory, and cognitive disabilities.	**B.2 Accessibility**: Ability to design sites, facilities, and systems consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards or other appropriate jurisdictional requirements such as those of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

The change in B.2 streamlines the focus, and attaches ADA and other jurisdictional compliance, however it undermines focus on inclusion and misses a great opportunity to include language about design for the life span, or universal and inclusive design that moves beyond code compliance and broadens the emphasis significantly beyond physical mobility alone. This change also neglects to anticipate massive projected shifts in demographics and user needs and expectations. For instance, the Administration on Aging predicts that there are expected to be 72.1 million Americans above the age of 65 by 2030. This discerning demographic are the baby boomers who already are changing the landscape of aging in place. Architects with knowledge on how to assess and design for Boomers' needs and expectations are in demand.

Realm C:

2009 NAAB ACCREDITATION CONDITIONS	2014 PROPOSED DRAFT CONDITIONS
Realm C: Leadership and Practice: Architects need to manage, advocate, and act legally, ethically and critically for the good of the client, society and the public. This includes collaboration, business, and leadership skills. Student learning aspirations include: • Collaborating and negotiating with clients and consultants in the design process. • Integrating community service into the practice of architecture.	**Realm C: Professional Practice.** Graduates from NAAB-accredited programs must understand business principles for the practice of architecture, including management, advocacy, and acting legally, ethically and critically for the good of the client, society and the public. • Collaborating and negotiating with clients and consultants in the design process. • Understanding a professional code of ethics, as well as legal and professional responsibilities.

The changes to Realm C omit the aspiration to integrate "community service into the practice of architecture." This is a key issue that aspires to develop new ways of project delivery that facilitate architecture and design with communities. The proposed changes are also inconsistent with Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) and Building Information Modeling (BIM), both of which are highly valued because they facilitate inclusion, collaboration, and communication during project delivery among diverse stakeholders, including community members.

2009 NAAB ACCREDITATION CONDITIONS	2014 PROPOSED DRAFT CONDITIONS
C.1 Collaboration: *Ability* to work in collaboration with others and in multi-disciplinary teams to successfully complete design projects. **C.3 Client Role in Architecture:** *Understanding* of the responsibility of the architect to elicit, understand, and reconcile the needs of the client, owner, user groups, and the public and community domains.	**C.1 Stakeholder Roles In Architecture:** *Understanding* of the relationship between the client, contractor, architect and other key stakeholders such as user groups and the community, in the design of the built environment, and the responsibilities of the architect to reconcile the needs of those stakeholders.

The Collaboration condition (NAAB 2009-C.1) has been removed and instead referred to as an aspiration. Increasingly architects are asked to collaborate with a wide range of professionals as they respond to the increasing complexity and nature of contemporary environmental design challenges using sustainable development theories and practices that address social, environmental and economic dimensions. From the outset, designers are asked to prepare RFPs outlining methodologies and approaches for working effectively and collaboratively with others (stakeholders, communities, users) throughout all phases of the design and delivery process. Simultaneously, the Intern Development Program (IDP) necessary for practice of architecture prominently features collaboration and experience credit development in diverse settings. At a time of increased interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary teamwork during project delivery, learning to collaborate on teams is crucial to the practice of architecture.

Instead of Client Role in Architecture (NAAB 2009-C.3), the proposed C.1 in the NAAB 2014 draft focuses on stakeholder roles in architecture. This change reduces the perception and framing of interaction between architect, client, user, allied design team member into a "stakeholder" role in architecture. The vocabulary used (that of a stakeholder) fails to communicate the need to focus on eliciting and understanding user needs, becoming instead general. As such, this new language reduces and diminishes the impact and accountability that a disconnected architect can have on the lives of those s/he serves.

2009 NAAB ACCREDITATION CONDITIONS	2014 PROPOSED DRAFT CONDITIONS
C.2 Human Behavior: *Understanding* of the relationship between human behavior, the natural environment and the design of the built environment.	

This condition has been completely removed. A standard dedicated to human behavior communicates the critical and dynamic interrelationship between architecture and people. Environment-Behavior knowledge is essential to shaping environments that fit human needs, to the triple bottom line of sustainability, and to environmental justice. Engaging in human-environment research is central to the mission of architecture practice and architectural interventions to address problems. Omitting this standard will negatively and critically impact the ability of future architects to anticipate, meet, and reflect user needs and aspirations at a time when many of their clients are now demanding it. Maintaining this standard helps address and reduce social problems related to ill-conceived environments, as well as attains a holistic awareness of how all facets of context, design, occupancy, and overall impact intersect and depend on each other.

2009 NAAB ACCREDITATION CONDITIONS	2014 PROPOSED DRAFT CONDITIONS
C.9 Community and Social Responsibility: *Understanding* of the architect's responsibility to work in the public interest, to respect historic resources, and to improve the quality of life for local and global neighbors.	

This condition has been completely removed. For architectural practice to be relevant and flexible enough to respond to the expected economic, demographic, technological, political, and cultural changes of the next decades, the education of future architects must be strongly connected to communities—both locally and globally. This is evidenced by the increasing demand for engagement through such global and community networks as Public Interest Design (http://www.publicinterestdesign.org/), the SEED network (http://www.seednetwork.org/) and Architecture for Humanity (http://architectureforhumanity.org/.

Environmental Design Research Association

The EDRA Board of Directors is compelled to share its concern over the draft of the 2014 NAAB Conditions, as the proposed changes are not adequate to protect the health, life, safety, and welfare of the public, nor are they concurrent to the standards of engaged and responsible practice or global citizenship. It is essential that Accredited Architectural programs ensure students understand how to integrate research evidence into design decision-making, the critical relationships between humans and designed environments, the changing dynamics of people and environments, and are able to work collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams (integrative design teams). For these reasons, EDRA urges NAAB to reconsider and re-include these necessary criteria.

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About EDRA

The Environmental Design Research Association is an international, interdisciplinary organization founded in 1969 by architects and psychologists concerned with integrating people's needs in shaping the built environment. The organization is comprised of more than 500 members, 56% of whom are architects and architecture educators serving in more than 75 NAAB Accredited Architecture institutions; two-thirds of the currently NAAB accredited architecture programs in the U.S. As an international, interdisciplinary organization, EDRA exists to advance and disseminate environmental design research, thereby improving understanding of the inter-relationships of people with their built and natural surroundings toward creation and curation of environments responsive to human needs.