

Understanding Research Excellence in Architecture

Introduction	1
Context – architecture research	1
Key characteristics of architecture research	1
Authorship	1
Portfolio	2
Publication	2
Creative Works	2
Architecture Journals	2
Books and Book Chapters	3
Exhibitions	3
Awards and Prizes	3
Competitions	4
Quality and Esteem	5
Quality Table	5
Esteem Indicators	6
Appendix	6

Introduction

This document describes how the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) recognises research quality in architecture. The aim of this document is to supplement the Institute's Research Policy with specific detail about how to understand and measure excellence in research for the discipline of architecture. While this document has been created with an awareness of the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) guidelines it provides an independent view of how excellence in research in architecture is understood and peer reviewed by the profession. The document provides advice for understanding the relative quality of various research outputs including creative works and research published in professional journals.

This document was developed between July 2005 and September 2009. The content of the document was reviewed by a wide reference group that included esteemed colleagues from both academia and practice. The production of the document was managed by the National Education Committee (NEC) under the direction of NEC Chair. Three national workshops contributed to the content of the final document: Archivision 2006, Archivision 2007 and a special workshop session of the August 2006 NEC bi-annual meeting. During 2006 the basic thesis of the document was discussed at the annual Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia (AASA) conference attended by the Heads of Schools of architecture programmes in Australasia. The final draft was completed in August 2009 aligning the document with the structure of the ERA.

Context – architecture research

This document seeks to provide a framework for understanding research that is undertaken using a design methodology and for understanding the contribution to research of professional journals that are recognised by the profession and discipline as key journals of record.

Key characteristics of architecture research

Authorship

The Institute accepts and acknowledges joint authorship in architecture research. Architecture projects are often complex and large. Multiple research contributions can therefore occur in a single project and in its documentation. For example, an architecture journal article, book chapter or book can include authorship from collaborating designers (authors of the published designs), from a critic and from a photographer as well as technical

innovations. For this reason it is important that in the ERA assessment process, a clear case is made in relation to the type and extent of authorship being claimed for any published work.

The Institute recognises critical texts published in recognised professional journals as significant to the fabric of the research environment for architecture.

Portfolio

In some cases, (for example critical reviews in professional journals), a single publication may be insufficient to demonstrate a substantial research contribution.

A portfolio collection of such publications however, may clearly demonstrate a sustained critical enquiry leading to innovative insights and therefore a portfolio of published critical reviews or photographic portfolio can demonstrate a significant research contribution. A portfolio of photographic essays or critical reviews is a creative work.

Publication

Publication of architecture research in recognised forms provides evidence of peer review and acknowledgment of research contributions. Recognised forms of architecture research publication include professional journals, academic journals, books, book chapters, exhibitions and exhibition catalogues. In terms of peer review the discipline adheres to long standing and rigorous process for identifying and disseminating information about works that challenge boundaries and extend the body of knowledge. This document seeks to describe key aspects of that process.

Creative Works

Significant creative works can constitute the highest levels of achievement in architecture research. The significance of contributions is established and communicated in the discipline through competitions, awards and prizes, professional journals, exhibitions, books published by recognised publishers and traditional academic publications.

Architecture Journals

The Institute recognises those journals that provide a critical and editorial (rather than advertorial) forum guided by an editorial board comprised of representatives with strong track record and high peer esteem. Highly regarded architecture journals, both national and international, are essential components of university library collections because of their value in documenting contributions to

the discipline. It is appropriate that professional journal contributions by writers, authors of building designs and photographers are included either as single works or as portfolios within the ERA peer review process for creative works. The Institute maintains that such works are fundamental components of research in architecture. Substantive creative works (portfolios and/or substantial single creative works) can be equivalent to the highest levels of research output.

Books and Book Chapters

Book chapters and books that publish architecture work are recognised as research if the publication has as its primary intent the documentation of a sustained critical enquiry either through text or by curated projects. Books and book chapters that do not move beyond a description of architecture projects are not recognised as research output.

The quality of books and book chapters can be determined by the level of peer recognition of the publisher and by the level of peer esteem of contributing authors, editors and those whose commendations are published with the work (for example as a preface to the work).

Exhibitions

Exhibitions of architecture research are recognised as research output. Curated solo exhibitions and curated exhibitions that include multiple architects are both recognised as significant research output. The quality of research attributed to curators of such exhibitions is determined by the discipline standing of the host organisation and by the peer esteem of any panel that appointed the curator. For example, the Australian exhibition at the Venice Architecture Biennale is regarded as the highest level of research output at a national level with international significance because of the reputation of the Venice Biennale and the peer esteem of the Australian selection panel. The quality of the research attributed to those architects that have their works included in the exhibition is determined by the regard in which the discipline holds the host organisation and the peer esteem of both the curator and co-contributors.

Awards and Prizes

Awards and prizes can be assessed using similar principles to those described for architecture journals. In the case of awards and prizes peer review usually happens through judging panels that identify submitted or solicited works of merit and describe the qualities of the work in published citations. The Institute recognises as legitimate forms of peer review awards programs and prizes that

have a critical rather than advertorial objective and for which judging panels are comprised of esteemed peers. The awards, commendations, prizes and citations are substantial evidence of research output. The Pritzker Prize, of which Australian architect Glenn Murcutt was the 2002 laureate, is an example of a prize that acknowledges a career contribution to the discipline at the highest international level. There has only been one Australian laureate. The Institute national awards program recognises, through awards and commendations, contributions firstly on a state basis (regional/national recognition) and secondly at the highest level of national achievement. The quality of research recognised through awards and prizes is determined by the discipline profile of the award/prize and to the peer esteem of the judging panel.

Competitions

The quality of design research recognised through design competitions can be understood according to similar principles as those described for awards and prizes. Many competitions offer a forum for anonymous refereeing in the sense that authorship remains anonymous throughout the judging process in many competitions. The Prague National Library Competition 2006 is an example of such a competition. Short-listings, commendations and awards made through these kinds of competitions should be recognised as research output that has been peer reviewed. In some instances invited competitions may be more highly regarded than open competitions in that invitations to submit are based on an established track record. Success in local competitions in which a limited number of practitioners prepare design propositions to be judged by a jury (that includes esteemed peers) are examples of research output but at a low level. Competitions judged by judging panels that do not include esteemed peers are not recognised as research output. Awards, commendations, short listings, and citations earned through international competitions that are well documented in highly rated journals and have judging panels of high international esteem are examples of research output at a high international level. In many cases significant competitions, such as the 1996 international competition for Federation Square in Melbourne, Australia, occur in two or more stages. Each stage of the competition provides opportunity for new research output since at each new stage the design enquiry shifts based on a process of critical reflection of previous stages. Stage two results are generally more highly rated than stage one results and so on.

Quality and Esteem

High quality design research usually results in multiple outputs including professional journal articles, exhibition, awards and other publications. Therefore multiple high quality outputs in one or more forms are strong indicators of quality at the highest level and are indicators of esteem.

Quality Indicators Table

Rating	Description	Discipline Examples (in no particular order)
Highest	Research that is world leading in its field or makes an equally exceptional contribution in an area of particular significance to Australia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio of work acknowledged at an international level through means such as a peer reviewed monograph or book chapter published by a highly regarded architecture publisher 2. Curated international exhibition with catalogue (either as the curator or significant contributor) 3. Award, short-listing or commendation in a significant* international competition 4. Award, short-listing or commendation in a significant* international award or prize 5. National Institute architecture award 6. Award in a significant* national competition 7. Architecture work included as the basis of a principal article in a highly regarded international architecture journal 8. Author of a portfolio of critical journal articles published in highly regarded international journals
Very High	Research that meets world standards of excellence in its field or makes an equally excellent contribution in an area of particular significance to Australia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Short-listing in a significant* international competition 2. Commendation in a significant* national competition 3. Commendation in Institute national architecture awards program 4. Architecture work published as the basis of a principal article in a highly regarded national architecture journal 5. Author of a portfolio of critical journal articles published in highly regarded national journals
High	Research that is recognised internationally as excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which nonetheless falls short of the highest standards of excellence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competition entry included in an exhibition of selected works from a significant* international competition 2. Short listed entry in a significant national competition
Good	Research that is recognised as methodologically sound in its field and of high originality, significance and rigour	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Award in State section of the Institute national awards program 2. Portfolio of critical journal articles published in recognized but not highly

		<p>rated national or international journals (ie not in the top two categories of rating)</p> <p>3. Work included in a recognized but not highly rated national or international journal (ie not in the top two categories of rating)</p>
--	--	--

* Significance can be established through quality and esteem indicators, as identified in the Background Statement of the Field of Research (FoR), and the statement identifying the research component of the research output, based on the peer standing of juries, curators, editorial boards, and critics as relevant to the particular output.

Esteem Indicators

The Institute recognises the following as indicators of esteem:

- Editorial role of A* or A ranked journal
- Editorial role of a recognized professional journal
- Contribution to a prestigious work of reference
- Curatorial role of a prestigious event
- Recipient of a prestigious prize, commission or award (national/ international)
- Invited membership of a selection panel for a prestigious prize, commission or award (national/ international)
- Invited keynote address at a prestigious conference or event
- Recipient of the Institute's Gold Medal where the citation identifies that the award is made on the basis of creative works or other research contribution
- Recipient of the Institute's Education Medal where the citation identifies that the award is made on the basis of creative works or other research contribution
- Recipient of a nationally competitive research fellowship
- Elected Fellowship of a Learned Academy (national/ international)

Appendix

2009 Revisions

In August and September 2009, the Research Policy and 'Understanding Research Excellence in Architecture' supplement were revised take into account recent changes to Australian Government Policy- the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) initiative. During that process advice was sought from:
 Professor Alec Tzanes, UNSW and former National President, Australian Institute of Architects
 Professor Richard Johnson, JPW, UNSW and Gold Medalist, Australian Institute of Architects
 Professor Carey Lyon, RMIT and former National President, Australian Institute of Architects
 Howard Tanner, Immediate Past President, Australian Institute of Architects
 Professor Leon van Schaik AO, RMIT
 Professor Ian McDougal, University of Adelaide
 Professor Paul Berkemeier, University of Sydney and Australian Institute of Architects National Councilor
 The Institute also invited comment on the final draft from Australian Deans of the Built Environment and Design (ADBED) and the Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia (AASA)