
Guidance Note 2

Use of the title “Architect” and its derivatives

The title Architect is a valuable and prestigious one, earned only after demonstration of high levels of competence and knowledge. For that reason, use of the title is restricted by legislation.

The primary purpose of the Architectural Practice Act 2009 (the Act) is to register architects, to regulate the practice of architecture and to protect the public interest.

The regulation of architects is governed by the Act a copy of which is available from the offices of the Board, or from the Boards website at www.archboardsa.org.au.

Some people are unaware that the title “Architect” is restricted in use by law in all Australian States and Territories (and most overseas countries) to practitioners registered with the registration boards established under State Acts of Parliament. The use of the title “Architect” and its derivatives by those not entitled to it frequently leads to formal complaints to the Architectural Practice Board of South Australia and the consequent expenditure of time and occasionally legal resources as the matter is resolved.

The holding of a degree in architecture alone does not allow a person or organisation to use the title “Architect”.

The most usual method of obtaining registration is for an applicant to acquire: -

- a minimum of 5 years approved academic study and
- a minimum of two years supervised and logged practical experience in a registered architect’s office and
- a pass in all sections of the Architectural Practice Examination.

The maintenance of strict standards which are enforced by a statutory authority rather than a professional body is regarded as extremely important in allowing consumers to make an informed choice and allowing Australian architects to gain overseas commissions. In addition, our local universities would not be able to attract overseas students to architecture courses without this statutory recognition.

Section 38 of the Act provides that it is illegal in South Australia to hold out a person, partnership or body corporate as an architect unless they are registered with the Board in South Australia. The maximum penalty is \$50,000 or imprisonment for 6 months.

Some limited exceptions are provided under Section 41 of the Act. Certain titles and descriptions are available in South Australia for example “Landscape Architect”, “Naval Architect” or “Computer Systems Architect”.

A person holding an architectural qualification may describe himself or herself as holding that qualification. It is therefore permissible for a person to state that he or she holds a particular professional degree, for instance a B Arch or M Arch. It is not however permissible under the Act for a person who is not a registered architect to refer to himself or herself as an architect except in the limited circumstances described above i.e. in relation to a Landscape Architect, a Naval Architect or Computer Systems Architect. **See: sections 40 and 41 of the Act.**

Furthermore, a person who has graduated from a tertiary institution with a degree in architecture, but who is not registered under the Act, must not describe himself or herself as a ‘graduate architect’. Pursuant to section 40(5) of the Act, the word “architect” is a prescribed word and, save in the limited circumstances referred to above, it is an offence to use the word “architect”. **See: sections 40 and 41 of the Act.** University graduates may use the term ‘Graduate of Architecture’ or ‘Graduate of Architectural studies’ without being in breach of the Act.

Persons wishing to use the title 'Architect' are urged to first obtain advice from the Board about whether such use or reference is legally permissible.

Please contact the Board if you require further information.

Frequently Asked Questions

I have a degree in architecture can I call myself an Architect?

No, it is the law in South Australia, as in the other states and territories of Australia, that only people who are registered as architects may use the title "architect" or description such as "architectural" which derive from it.

Can I use the title "Graduate Architect"?

No, this would be an offence against the Architectural Practice Act 2009. However, University graduates may use the term "Graduate of Architecture" or "Graduate of Architectural Studies" without being in breach of the Act.

Can I use the title 'Interior Architect' if I have a Bachelor of Interior Architecture?

No, this would be an offence against the Architectural Practice Act 2009. You can refer to yourself as an 'Interior Designer'.

Can I use the post-nominal of my tertiary qualification without being in breach of the Act?

Yes, the use of the approved post nominal for your tertiary qualification is permitted provided you do not use them in such a way as to imply that you are an architect.

E.g., B Arch or M Arch is permitted.

I have retired or ceased to practice can I still call myself an architect?

Yes, provided you maintain your registration with the Board. A reduced registration fee and an exemption from the Professional Indemnity Insurance requirement may be available in some circumstances. Please refer to the Board website www.archboardsa.org.au for further details.

I am registered in another Australian State or Territory; can I use the title Architect in South Australia?

Not until you are registered in South Australia as an architect, please complete an application for registration under Mutual Recognition. An application form is available from the Board's website www.archboardsa.org.au or by contacting the Board's office.

I am registered as an architect do I have to register my company or partnership also?

Yes, if the company or partnership wish to use the title architect they must also be registered with the Board to practise in South Australia.