

# National Register Access Consultants

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## Information and application pack

September 2013

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# 1 Introduction

The National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC) is an independent register of accredited Access Consultants and Access Auditors who meet professional standards and criteria established by a peer review system. It is the only UK-wide accreditation service for individuals who undertake access auditing and access consultancy. The NRAC also has Affiliates who support the NRAC, but are not registered by the NRAC to carry out access work.

The NRAC is a resource for those seeking professional advice on how to make improvements to the built environment in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, which superceded the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005. The online database of Members facilitates the selection of reputable, accredited access auditors and consultants. However, the NRAC does not promote, endorse or recommend individual Members or organisations to clients seeking access consultancy or audit services.

All members of the NRAC (Members) are required to adhere to a Code of Practice, hold professional indemnity insurance and undergo annual continuing professional development. The NRAC is also a learning network that provides support and information to its Members and Affiliates.

NRAC documents are available in alternative formats on request.

For any further information or queries about the application process, please contact the NRAC office on 020 77822 8282, by email on [info@nrac.org.uk](mailto:info@nrac.org.uk) or access the NRAC website [www.nrac.org.uk](http://www.nrac.org.uk)

## 2 Background and Management

The NRAC was established as a project of the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) in early 2000. CAE is a charitable company limited by guarantee.

The NRAC is advised by a voluntary Management Board that includes representatives from the Access Association, RNIB, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

To fulfil the requirements of charity law, the Management Board is a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees of CAE.

The NRAC was funded by central government for the first two years through the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) continue to take a keen interest and have representatives as observers at Management Board meetings.

The NRAC is managed on a day-to-day basis by the NRAC Manager, who is appointed and employed by CAE. The NRAC Manager is line managed by the Chief Executive of CAE. The NRAC is based in the offices of CAE and is the legal responsibility of CAE.

### **3 Contact details**

NRAC Manager                      Alexandra Smedley

#### **National Register of Access Consultants**

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## 4 Membership

### 4.1 Membership types and standards

There are two types of membership of the National Register of Access Consultants- NRAC Consultant and NRAC Auditor. The membership type indicates the scope of access work the individuals are registered to carry out.

**NRAC Auditors** have expertise in identifying access problems and give general advice on solutions. They possess a basic knowledge of construction. They provide a professional service to business, public and other undertakings by:

- comprehensively identifying and reporting on access issues as developed in the client brief. These may be audits or appraisals, and may include general advice on solutions.
- providing access related policy/strategy advice, including design appraisals, development of Access Statements, access plans, access related strategies and policies.

Using his or her professional judgement, an NRAC Auditor should be able to identify the access requirements specific to the physical environment, and within the appropriate legislative context, considering all relevant factors. These will include legal requirements, client needs, best practice guidelines, practicality and user requirements.

**NRAC Consultants** can make recommendations/provide solutions of a technical and policy nature as well as identifying access problems. They possess a greater degree of construction understanding than NRAC Auditors. They can be engaged by clients as either an Auditor or a Consultant.

An NRAC Consultant provides a professional service as described for NRAC Auditors above and, in addition, is able to provide more detailed technical advice on solutions and strategic advice on policy issues.

An NRAC Consultant is able to seek the advice and input of relevant experts and professionals to further the progress of access related recommendations.

In rendering such services to clients, NRAC Consultants and NRAC Auditors carry a heavy burden of responsibility and an obligation to maintain the highest standards of integrity and competence.

Entry to the NRAC is based on a rigorous assessment of skills and experience through written submissions and an interview by a panel comprising Members of the NRAC. The competences and experience that must be demonstrated to gain membership are set out in **Section 6** of this document. They focus on knowledge of the needs of people with a range of disabilities, relevant legislation, current good practice, design requirements and technical standards.

**There are no set training requirements or courses that lead directly to membership of the NRAC. However, applicants are strongly recommended to undertake formal access training.**

The NRAC actively encourages Members to increase their skills and progress to Consultant status should they wish to do so.

There is also **Affiliate** status available. Affiliates are individuals or organisations that are interested in access issues and want to support the NRAC or those who wish to become an auditor or consultant in the future. They are not registered by the NRAC to undertake access consultancy or access auditing work. Further information on affiliate status is described in *section 5*.

## **4.2 Benefits for Members**

- **marketing**  
NRAC Members have their contact details supplied to clients by the NRAC via the online database of members, and through telephone and email enquiries made to the Secretariat. The NRAC Secretariat promotes the NRAC in various fora.
- **quality standard**  
The NRAC provides official recognition of Members' access related consultancy/auditing skills. They may use the accreditation NRAC Auditor or NRAC Consultant after their names as proof of this recognition.
- **news bulletin**  
The NRAC monthly news bulletin provides the latest information on legislation, products, seminars, technical matters and training opportunities. It is also an opportunity for Members to communicate matters of interest to other members and Affiliates of the NRAC.

- **CPD events**

The NRAC organises a number of CPD events for Members and Affiliates. These one-day events include sessions on relevant topics, discussion groups and the opportunity to discuss issues with the NRAC Management and meet other Members and Affiliates.

- **professional Indemnity Insurance (PII)**

The NRAC has negotiated preferential PII rates for NRAC Members with insurance brokers Caunce O'Hara, Towergate and Custodian. NRAC Members are required to carry professional indemnity insurance for access related work.

- **learning networks: email discussion groups: Maitalk and Yahoo Groups**

Members can join two email discussion groups, Maitalk for Members only and Yahoo Groups for both Members and Affiliates. The discussion groups provide opportunities for Members to exchange views and advise each other when queries arise. The discussion groups provide a space for free and frank discussion and debate, the sharing of experience and information and the exploration of ideas and opinions. They are widely used and very popular.

### **4.3 How clients use the NRAC**

The NRAC assists clients, free of charge, to identify and locate Auditors and Consultants, suitable for their requirements, based on geographical locations, specialisations and areas of expertise of Members indicated on the online database on [www.nrac.org.uk](http://www.nrac.org.uk).

The NRAC assists clients to use the search facility. It provides only the information that is on the online database and does not influence the choice of Members in any way.

Clients can use the search facility on the online database, or request these in print, or by email from the NRAC, telephone: 020 7822 8282

Further information on how to select an auditor/consultant is provided in the document, *Client Guide*, which can be downloaded from the website or in print from the NRAC Manager as above.

## 5 Affiliates

Affiliate status is intended for two groups of people:

- those who have an interest in the access field and would like to receive some of the benefits that are available to Members, but do not necessarily want to become NRAC Auditors/NRAC Consultants
- those who may wish to seek membership of the NRAC at a later date, but do not currently have the training or experience to do so

Affiliate status is open to any individual or organisation and it does not represent a quality standard. There is no assessed application for Affiliates.

Affiliates receive the monthly news bulletin, which provides the latest information on legislation, products, seminars, technical matters and training.

Affiliates are also invited to conferences and other events organised for Members and Affiliates. These events include sessions on relevant topics, discussion groups and the opportunity to discuss issues with the NRAC management and meet other members.

Affiliates may also join the Yahoo Group electronic discussion forum (NRACUK) for both NRAC Members and Affiliates.

Affiliates adhere to a brief Code of Practice for NRAC Affiliates. Affiliates are not Members of the NRAC and may not represent themselves as such. They are not accredited to undertake access consultancy or access auditing work. If an Affiliate misrepresents themselves to clients as a Member of the NRAC, disciplinary proceedings will take place and the Affiliate status will be withdrawn.

The annual fee for Affiliates is £60, which is payable pro rata in advance to the end of the current financial year. For international Affiliates, this is £65.

There is a reduced rate for access/disability groups and unwaged individuals of £12.

To apply for affiliate status, please complete an application form, which you can request by post, or download from the NRAC website, [www.nrac.org.uk](http://www.nrac.org.uk) and send it with the appropriate fee to the NRAC Manager.



## 6 Core competences and skills requirements

Applicants must fulfil all of the core competences and skills requirements required for the type of membership for which they are applying

### 6.1 Access Auditor: Core competences and skills requirements

#### Understanding of user needs

UA1	Understanding of the needs of a range of users and potential users of an environment
UA2	Understanding of the importance of consulting with users and/or potential users, and experience of such consultation

#### Experience and ability in the access field

EA1	Experience of comprehensively identifying barriers and hazards to accessibility within an environment by physical inspection
EA2	Experience of carrying out access related work

#### Knowledge of construction processes

CA1	Basic understanding of the construction process and construction related issues
CA2	Ability to understand basic technical drawings and specifications

#### Knowledge and understanding of good practice and standards in relation to access

TA1	Knowledge and understanding of current guidance and best practice in the access field, including BS8300 and the relevant parts of the Building Regulations
TA2	Knowledge of range of good practice guidance for a variety of elements and building types
TA3	Appreciation of the non-physical issues which may impact on the accessibility of an environment, such as management issues.
TA4	Understanding the importance of an access policy and access strategy
TA5	Understanding of Access Statements and their application

#### Legal Understanding

LA1	Understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equality Act 2010 and associated regulations and Codes of Practice</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant Building Regulations</li> <li>• The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, 2001 (SENDA) 2001</li> </ul>
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### **Professional Understanding**

PA1	Ability to prepare reports to an appropriate technical and professional level
PA2	Understanding of the range and limitations of services offered by an Access Auditor
PA3	Understanding of the legal obligations and liabilities associated with offering expert advice
PA4	Competent written and verbal communication skills

## **6.2 Access Consultant: Core competences and skills requirements**

### **Understanding of user needs**

UC1	Understanding of the needs of a range of users and potential users of an environment
UC2	Understanding of the importance of consulting with users and/or potential users, and experience of such consultation

### **Knowledge of construction processes**

CC1	Understanding of the construction process and construction related issues
CC2	Ability to read and understand technical drawings and specifications

### **Knowledge and understanding of good practice and standards in relation to access**

TC1	Knowledge and understanding of current guidance and best practice in the access field, including BS8300 and the relevant Building Regulations
TC2	Knowledge of a range of good practice guidance for a variety of building elements and building types
TC3	Appreciation of the non-physical issues which may impact on the accessibility of an environment, such as management issues.
TC4	Ability to develop access policies and strategies in consultation with clients
TC5	Understanding of Access Statements, Action Plans and their application
TC6	Understanding of the technical and structural constraints of access solutions
TC7	Understanding of the means of escape requirements for disabled people including BS 9999, BS9991, Part B and legal framework involved in dealing with fire

TC8	Ability to carry out design appraisals for new buildings and building alterations
TC9	Ability to test and progress recommendations; knowledge of approval and procurement processes

### Legal Understanding

LC1	<p>Understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality Act 2010 and associated Codes of Practice</li> <li>• Approved Document Part M and relevant section of Part B, Fire Safety</li> <li>• Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA)</li> <li>• The Building Regulations</li> </ul>
LC2	<p>Understanding of the implications of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning legislation and guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990</li> <li>• The Town and Country Planning Act (1990)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Health and Safety Legislation</li> <li>• Occupier Liability Acts, OLA 1957 and OLA 1984</li> <li>• Landlord and tenant duties</li> <li>• Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1995</li> <li>• Fire Regulations and the Fire Precautions Act 1971</li> <li>• The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005</li> <li>• Highways Act 1980</li> </ul> <p>in relation to access issues</p>

### Problem identification and solving

SC1	Ability to identify barriers and hazards to accessibility within an environment by physical inspection, and from drawings and specifications
SC2	Ability to recommend access solutions to barriers and hazards identified above, in line with current guidance and best practice
SC3	Ability to identify situations not covered by current guidance and best practice, and make recommendations accordingly
SC4	Ability to apply current guidance and/or best practice beyond construction related activities
SC5	Appreciation of aesthetic aspirations and technical, time and cost implications and constraints faced by design teams and clients and the ability to take these into account when recommending solutions

## Professional Understanding

PC1	Understanding of the legal obligations and liabilities associated with offering expert advice
PC2	Understanding the need for professional agreements and terms of appointment
PC3	Ability to prepare reports to an appropriate technical and professional level
PC4	Understanding of the range and limitations of services covered by professional indemnity insurance, and offered by an Access Consultant at all stages of a construction project
PC5	Experience of communicating technical access issues to both technical and non-technical groups and individuals.
PC6	Competent written and verbal communication skills

## 7 Application process

The application process assesses applicants' knowledge and experience against the core competences and skills requirements set out above.

The application process is the same for Auditor and Consultant membership. However, the core competences and skills requirements differ for each membership type.

The NRAC is flexible about how applicants have acquired the requisite skills and does not necessarily require formal qualifications.

There are two stages to the application process:

- **Stage one** assesses the basic access knowledge and experience of an applicant. It is assessed by the NRAC Manager through a completed application form and accompanying documentation.
- **Stage two** assesses the applicant's knowledge and experience in further detail. This is conducted by a panel (the Assessment Panel) made up of existing NRAC Members. It is done through assessment of written submissions and an interview by the panel.

The process is split into sections to avoid applicants having to go through the whole application process if they do not have the requisite knowledge and skills.

Applicants who demonstrate to the Assessment Panel that they have fulfilled the core competences and experience objectives will be recommended for membership. Unsuccessful applicants may appeal against the decision (**see section 7.3**).

## 7.1 Stage one application

Applicants need to:

- decide whether to apply for Auditor or Consultant status and complete the appropriate application form for their type of membership.
- enclose documentation to support the information given on the application form
- enclose the stage one application fee of £75.00

Applicants should study the core competences and experience objectives in **section 6** to decide which type of membership to apply for. The requirements for membership are based on skills and experience rather than qualifications.

**Guidance** on the different sections of the form is given below:

- **Experience with user groups:** Applicants need first hand awareness of accessibility issues to understand the reasons for technical standards and guidance. This experience could include membership of an access group, experience of consulting with user groups, or any experience/ training that develops understanding of needs of a wide range of disabled people. Quality of experience is more important than quantity. This experience should be described on the application form, listing names of groups, projects, training, and relevant dates.
- **Recent and continuous access development/training:** Applicants should have undertaken training and professional development in the access field, which should include components or modules on disability awareness, Equality Act and legislative context, current good practice, technical standards and guidance. It should also include the ability to read plans. Applicants should have undertaken at least five days of continuing professional development within the last two years. It is unlikely that one short course will be sufficient to gain the necessary knowledge and skills for NRAC membership.
- **Access-related experience:** Applicants should have carried out a minimum of 4-5 access related pieces of work, which may include access audit reports, design appraisals, access statements, work as an access officer, policy guidance, or any work with a specific access dimension. A list of work undertaken should be provided with the application form.

This should be the applicant's own individual work and their role should be identified within it.

- **Construction knowledge:**

Auditors require a basic knowledge of construction processes, which includes:

- the ability to read basic plans of buildings
- knowledge of relevant Building Regulations and standards
- ability to liaise with construction professionals

The construction knowledge requirement for a consultant is satisfied by demonstrating an understanding of:

- the processes and principles applicable to the design and construction of buildings and the built environment
- the technical and structural constraints of access solutions

This may be acquired through formal professional qualifications or significant practical experience, provided that this is demonstrated through the written submission and during the interview to the satisfaction of the Assessment Panel.

### **7.1.1 Assessment of stage one applications**

The NRAC will normally respond to a Stage One application, within three weeks of receiving it, by letter, telephone or email, either to notify the applicant that they have successfully completed Stage One and to invite them to proceed to Stage Two, or to ask for further information in support of their Stage One application.

**Please note completion of stage one of the application process does not constitute accreditation or 'part' membership.**

## 7.2 Stage two application

Those who have successfully completed the first stage of the application will be invited to progress to stage two. Stage two applications should be submitted within six months of completing stage one.

Stage two is a more rigorous assessment of applicants' skills and experience against set core competences and skills requirements. The process allows applicants to demonstrate that they possess the required abilities through written submissions and a professional interview. The competences and experience are more important than the route by which they were attained.

### 7.2.1 Written submissions

Applicants must complete and submit initially one paper copy and one electronic copy (and if invited for interview three further paper copies) of the following documents to the NRAC:

- a one-page (single side A4) summary/CV of professional experience and qualifications
- an experience appraisal
- a core competence report
- a written submission on a piece of access related work, which demonstrates key aspects of core competences
- an application fee of £175 . The fee is £100 in case of a re- application, or an appeal against a unsuccessful Stage Two application (see Section 6.3). Please make cheques payable to the National Register of Access Consultants, or NRAC.

Guidance for the documentation required is as below:

#### 1 Curriculum Vitae

This is a one page (one side of A4) summary of the applicant's background, experience, qualifications and training.



## 2 Experience Appraisal report

This document should give an overview of the applicant's experience and training specific to access-related work and should be a maximum of 1,000 words. The report should:

- indicate experience in terms of the size and variety of access related projects worked on, the responsibilities assumed and the outcomes where known.
- include details of training received, membership of access groups, personal experience of disability, or other information relevant to access work

A sample experience appraisal report is attached below: It is for guidance only and is not the only acceptable format.

### **Experience appraisal report**

#### **Introduction**

As one of the Access Consultants at xxx organisation, I have been closely involved in approximately Xno. access projects, including audits of existing buildings/external environments, design appraisals, preparing access plans and access statements, and development of policy and strategy advice on access.

I provide advice on a broad range of issues from clarifying complex aspects of the Equality Act 2010 to providing detailed design advice on a specific layout of an accessible reception desk.

I have experience of working as an Access Consultant on a diverse range of building types including: education buildings (eg .....); hospitals (eg .....); museums and galleries (eg .....); historic buildings (eg .....)

Most of the consultancy relates to and is motivated by the Equality Act 2010 however; I have also responded to other requirements, for example funding bodies such as the Arts Council (Lottery funded projects) or Higher Education Funding Council of England, Part M Building Regulation and industry-specific access standards.

I have successfully delivered ..... no training days.

### **Access consultancy experience**

I have carried out approximately .....no separate access consultancy jobs while at .....organisation. In addition to these, I have been involved in many more during the initial tendering/quoting or strategy development stages. My experience in schemes is further extended through regular telephone contact with a whole range of construction and non-construction professionals, the public and other access auditors and consultants.

The following provides a sample of the range of work I have undertaken:

#### **Listed buildings**

Brief synopsis of audits approximately 100 words

#### **Education buildings**

Brief synopsis of audits approximately 50 words

#### **Training courses attended**

- A
- B
- C
- D

#### **Employment history**

Text

#### **Membership of access groups**

Text

#### **Miscellaneous**

Text

### **3 Core Competence Report**

This should set out how the applicant meets the core competence and experience requirements set out in Section 6. The applicant does not need to address each individual criterion, but give a general description of their knowledge and experience under each section heading.

#### 4 Access-related piece of work

This work (or works) should be carefully chosen to demonstrate that you meet the core competence and experience requirements. It could include one or two of the following (a single submission, however, is preferred), though other access-related work will be considered:

- an audit report
- a design appraisal
- an access statement
- a policy document

Brief guidance on submission of an audit report is given below:

- it should refer to the relevant part of the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation and the client's obligations under these.
- it should demonstrate knowledge of a range of disabled user needs.
- it should refer to management issues in addition to building fabric issues
- the premises should be a moderately sized building of more than one storey, and of sufficient complexity to demonstrate a range of access issues.
- the submission should include detailed measurements and references to relevant design guidance and technical standards.
- it should be a critical analysis of issues rather than a checklist.
- the work(s) should preferably have been produced by the applicant within the preceding six months to demonstrate knowledge of current guidance and good practice.
- it should include photographs and plans as relevant

Applicants for Auditor membership do not need to go into detail on recommendations. Applicants for Consultant membership should provide much more detail in terms of prioritised/categorised recommendations (how the recommendations are prioritised/categorised, and on what basis, is at the applicant's discretion).

For either category, observations on means of escape need not go beyond the identification of problems/barriers on existing means of escape. Applicants for Consultants may give general advice on the management of means of escape.

The NRAC Manager will carry out an initial scrutiny of the applicant's written submission to ensure that it meets basic criteria to go forward to the Assessment Panel. If it does, the applicant will be asked to submit a further three copies of their submission and be invited to interview. The initial scrutiny of the written submission should take approximately three weeks from the date of submission to the NRAC. Please note the invitation to interview is no guarantee of acceptance of the written submission by the Assessment Panel.

If the written submission is judged not to meet the basic criteria, the applicant will be told why and invited to make a new submission within two months.

### **7.2.2 Professional interview**

An Assessment Panel consisting of three Members of the register will review the written submission and interview the applicant. The NRAC Manager will be present during the interview as an independent observer but will not take part in it or the assessment panel decision making process.

The NRAC Manager will arrange an interview location, date and time in consultation with the applicant. The interviews are currently held every few months in London and in Leeds. Other locations in the UK may be established depending on applicant demand and assessor availability.

The applicant will be informed of the composition of the Assessment Panel and asked if they have an objection to any member of the panel. Information imparted at the interview will be confidential and not be disclosed by the members of the panel, who all sign a confidentiality agreement.

Applicants will have an opportunity to state any access requirements or adjustments that they require prior to the interview date.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. The applicant needs to start by giving a 5-10 minute verbal presentation to the panel. The presentation is informal and is an opportunity to expand on the applicant's abilities and experience in the access field. Visual aids are not permitted, unless requested as a reasonable adjustment for the applicant.

The panel will evaluate the applicant's skills and experience against the requisite core competences and skills requirements. The applicant will also be questioned on his/her written submission and responses given.

At the end of the interview, the applicant will be invited to comment on whether the interview was conducted fairly, and will be given an opportunity to ask questions, elaborate on any answers given, or make an additional statement.

### 7.2.3 Post interview

The panel will make one of the following decisions:

- **accept as Member** (Consultant or Auditor, depending on the application)
- **accept as Auditor** rather than Consultant Membership applied for.
- **defer membership**, subject to completion of another piece of access related work or CPD work to be assessed by the original assessment panel.
- **do not accept as Member** Recommendations on CPD will be provided to assist towards a future reapplication.
- **upgrade to Consultant status from Auditor status**
- **do not upgrade to Consultant status from Auditor status** Recommendations on CPD will be provided to assist towards a future reapplication.

**Unsuccessful applicants** will be given advice on how to acquire the necessary additional skills and experience. They may reapply for membership or an upgrade to Consultant status, after a recommended period of time, for a reduced fee of £80.00

**Successful applicants** will be sent an *Information pack for Members*. Registration is dependent on completing the following formalities:

- an undertaking to adhere to the NRAC Code of Practice
- completing a database entry form (see *section 8* on Specialisations)
- paying the annual membership fee of £160 for NRAC Auditors and £210 for NRAC Consultants (pro rata until the end of the current financial year). See *section 9*.
- providing evidence of Professional Indemnity Insurance cover

On completion of these, Members' details are then entered on the online database of the NRAC and they will be sent a membership card.

**Deferred applicants** will be given one chance to submit a new access-related work to be assessed by the original assessment panel. This must be completed and submitted to the

NRAC within two months of the interview. The applicant will not have to re-attend an interview.

The assessment panel may make CPD training recommendations in conjunction with their decision. Applicants will be informed in writing of the result within seven working days. You may also telephone the NRAC Manager the day following the interview to obtain the result of your application.

### **7.3 Appeals regarding unsuccessful applications**

If an applicant is not satisfied with the process or procedures of an Assessment Panel, the appeal procedure is as follows:

- The applicant must notify his or her wish to appeal, in writing to the NRAC Manager, along with the grounds for the appeal, within four weeks of the relevant decision.
- A refundable deposit of £100 will be required to cover the cost of the referral of the application.
- A three-member Appeal Panel (fixed for a year) will decide if there are adequate grounds for an appeal.
- If the appeal is allowed, the Appeal Panel will re-interview the candidate based on the original submission.
- In the case that a candidate appeals against a deferral, or the outcome of a deferral, and the appeal is allowed, the candidate will have to attend an interview with the Appeal Panel.
- The Appeal Panel will meet when required, usually once a quarter.
- If the appeal is not successful, the applicant will be informed of the reasons for the decision. The appeal fee will not be refunded.
- The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final and binding. Applicants may reapply to the NRAC after a period recommended by the interview panel.

### **7.4 Upgrading from Auditor Member to Consultant Member**

Auditor Members of the NRAC who have increased their knowledge and experience of construction processes since being first accepted onto the Register may apply to upgrade their status from Auditor to Consultant. A Member wanting to upgrade must be able to

demonstrate that the core competencies and skills requirements for a Consultant Member are fulfilled as set out in Section 6.

Upgrading from Auditor to Consultant follows the same format as a Stage two application (see 7.2 more details). Members who wish to undertake this need to submit three copies of the following documents to the NRAC:

- a one-page (single side A4) summary/CV of professional experience and qualifications
- an experience appraisal
- a core competence report
- a written submission on a piece of access related work, which demonstrates key aspects of core competences
- an application fee of £175. Please make cheques payable to the National Register of Access Consultants, or NRAC.

An Assessment Panel consisting of three Consultant Members of the register will review the written submission and interview the Member applying to upgrade. The NRAC Manager, or Assistant, may be present during the interview but will not take part in it.

The interview will follow the standard NRAC format, but the questions will focus on the applicants' competence as a Consultant Member.

**Successful Applicants** will get their details changed on the online Members' database and will be sent a new membership card and certificate. They will need to pay the increase in the annual membership fee pro rata.

## **8 Information for Members**

Details of Members of the NRAC are available to clients online ([www.nrac.org.uk](http://www.nrac.org.uk)), or via the NRAC (email [info@nrac.org.uk](mailto:info@nrac.org.uk), telephone 020 7822 8282).

### **8.1 Professional specialisations for database of Members**

The NRAC online database for clients indicates Members' professional specialisations, experience and expertise. Successful applicants are asked to enter these on the database entry form sent to them.

The specialisations allow clients to identify and locate Members with the most appropriate skills and experience relevant to their needs. The current categories are as follows:

### **Experience of the following building types and elements**

- Retail & banking
- Hotels
- Health
- Education
- Arts
- Leisure
- Sports
- Signage and way-finding
- Tourism
- Places of worship
- Housing
- Offices
- Manufacturing/ industrial
- Historic/listed buildings
- Countryside
- Transport environments
- Military establishments
- Landscape architecture

### **Areas of expertise**

- Access Statements/ Access Plans
- Design appraisals
- Policy and strategy work
- Expert witness / Legal advice
- Design work
- Landlord and Tenant Act
- Training
- Website and communications
- Assistive technologies
- Corporate portfolios
- Risk Assessments
- Urban Planning

### **Personal experience of disability**

This list is not exhaustive and Members may add categories with the agreement of the NRAC Manager.

In addition, Members may make a statement of 60-70 words about their background, experience and qualifications, or provide alternative contact details, to be displayed with their entry on the website.

The specialisation section of a Member's entry on the Register may be updated at any time by a Member on request to the NRAC Manager.



Members are also asked to indicate whether they are prepared to act as mentors to Stage One applicants, by being shadowed while conducting access audits.

**Members have a duty not to misrepresent their specialisations and experience when submitting information.**

This is a self regulated process. Clients should assure themselves that Members have the required knowledge and experience for the type of work to be carried out.

## **8.2 Conditions for Membership**

All Members are required to:

- undertake a minimum period of continuing professional development annually (which can include being part of an NRAC Assessment Panel)
- hold the correct amount of professional indemnity insurance cover for the work they undertake
- pay an annual membership fee to the NRAC as set out in *Section 9*
- adhere to a Code of Practice

The requirements for CPD and PII are described in more detail below.  
The Code of Practice in the Information Pack for NRAC Members.

### **8.2.1 Training/continuing professional development (CPD)**

It is a condition of membership that Members are required to undertake a minimum of 15 hours of CPD per year. A record of CPD needs to be submitted annually for membership renewal.

CPD is defined as the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner's working life.

Activities contributing to CPD include formalised training courses and less formal educational activities that contribute to the technical or professional experience of the member. Other examples of accepted CPD are regular attendance at Access Association meetings or other access forums, participation in technical guidance working groups such as the British Standards and a limited amount of self learning through associated journals and publications. Volunteering to be part of an Assessment Panel for NRAC applicants or as the presenter at the Towards Membership workshops are important roles that also fulfil CPD requirements.

### **8.2.2 Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII)**

All NRAC Members are required to have Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) cover in relation to access related work they undertake as Members of the NRAC.

The Secretariat has negotiated preferential rates for Auditor and Consultant Members of the NRAC with insurance brokers Caunce O'Hara and Towergate.

Successful applicants are required to provide proof of PII cover before they are registered as NRAC Members.

This is not necessarily required at interview stage, but needs to be provided along with other registration information required of successful applicants.

### **8.3 Procedure for reinstatement of lapsed NRAC Members**

If the period of lapsed membership is one year or less, then the lapsed Member can be reinstated on payment of the membership fee for the lapsed year, on receipt of payment and CPD record.

If the lapsed period is over one year, the lapsed Member would need to submit, along with an application fee of £80.00,

### **Written submission**

- 1 Cover letter outlining what experience, training and CPD the individual has undertaken during the gap in membership period.
- 2 Updated CV/ experience appraisal

### **Re-interview**

The applicant may have to attend a new interview if the above is not satisfactory. The interview would be based on assessing if the applicant had kept up-to-date in the access sector over the intervening period.

### **Interview result:**

- If the panel feels the applicant has kept up-to-date, they would be reinstated and pay the normal pro rata membership fee to the end of the financial year.
- If the panel feels that the applicant has not kept up-to-date, then the applicant would need to go through the Stage 2 process again, paying the standard fee of £140 and submitting a new written submission.

## **8.4 Electronic discussion forums**

The electronic discussion forums provide opportunities for Members and Affiliates to exchange views and advise each other when queries arise. There are two electronic discussion forums available:

- the Maitalk forum is a closed forum for NRAC Members only.
- the Yahoo group forum is a closed forum for NRAC Members and Affiliates.

## 9 Fees

### Applications

Stage one	£ 75	Stage two appeals	
Stage two	£175	(refundable if upheld)	£100
Upgrade to Consultant	£175	Reapplications	£100

### Membership

The annual fees are:

	Available for work	Not available for work
<b>Access Consultants</b>	£210	£110
<b>Access Auditors</b>	£160	£110

Members who do not wish to advertise their services through the NRAC will not receive the marketing benefits of membership. Members who opt for this type of membership are usually those who work for local authorities or other organisations that do not permit outside contracts to be undertaken. For this reason, these Members pay a reduced fee (see above). They still receive all the other benefits of membership. The Members' entries on the NRAC's online database will state that they are not available for work.

### Affiliates

Individuals or organisations

<b>Standard</b>	£60.00
<b>International</b>	£65.00

Access/disability groups and unwaged individuals

<b>Reduced fee</b>	£12.00
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For new Members or Affiliates, fees are payable pro-rata until the end of the financial year, 31 March. The successful applicant will be informed of the relevant fee.

### Renewal

Annual fees are payable at the start of the financial year. The Manager will contact Affiliates and Members annually regarding renewal. Renewal of Membership is dependent on fulfilling the conditions of membership as described above.

Late payment charges are in place as following;

- Payments made between 1st June and the 30th June will be subject to an additional administration fee of £20;
- Payments made after the 1st July will be subject to an additional administration fee of £40.

**If you envisage any problems with submitting your subscription payment within this timeframe, perhaps because of delays caused by your company's administration system, please contact the NRAC Manager who will be able to arrange for a standard invoice to be issued.**

These proposed measures are intended to encourage prompt payment, reduce NRAC administration and also help to defray additional costs caused to the majority of members by those who do not pay their subscriptions within a reasonable timeframe. The position of members who have not paid their subscriptions by the 30th July each year will be decided by the NRAC Management Board on a case by case basis.

### **Opportunity for Stage Payment of Subscriptions**

In adopting this new system, the NRAC Management Board is also fully aware that some members may be experiencing difficulties at the current time in meeting the subscription fee in one payment. To help those members who may be affected, the following scheme is also being set up for subscriptions.

- **Providing a request is submitted to the NRAC Manager and a first stage payment is received before the 30 April each year**, members will be able to make equal stage payments for their subscription fee over 10 months;
- **No additional administration cost will be charged for stage payments** but to keep costs to a minimum, members will be expected to send payments before the first day of each month and do so without further requests being issued. The preferred payment method will be by Standing Order rather than cheque.

Failure to make continuing and prompt scheduled stage payments will result in an invoice for the full amount that remains due being issued and payment will be expected in full.

### **Payments**

All the details required to establish a standing order or make a BACS transfer for your NRAC subscriptions will be shown at the foot of the renewal invoice. Please ensure that you include your name and membership number as the reference on such transactions so that your payment can be easily and correctly allocated.

To cancel membership or affiliate status, Members and Affiliates need to inform the NRAC in writing.

## **10 Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures**

The way in which a complaint is dealt with will depend on the nature of the complaint. Complaints might be concerning the conduct of the admissions panel, the conduct of the NRAC Manager, general administration or against a Member's professional behaviour.

### **10.1 Complaints against the NRAC**

For complaints against the NRAC, the complainant will be required to:

- notify the NRAC Manager of the nature of the complaint
- the NRAC Manager must inform the Management Board as soon as the complaint is received
- the Management Board, which consists of representatives from various disability and professional organisations, will investigate the complaint and take any necessary action should the complaint be upheld

These complaints may be in relation to administration, procedural matters or other aspects of the NRAC.

### **10.2 Complaints against Members**

For a complaint to be upheld against a Member, their actions must have been in breach of the Code of Practice. (This document is held by every Member and is available on request from the NRAC Secretariat)

The disciplinary procedures are closely related to the Code of Practice to which each Member must agree to adhere to. Disciplinary proceedings will occur when a Member does not adhere to the conditions within the Code of Practice. This will be drawn to the attention of the NRAC Manager when a complaint is received. The NRAC will take proactive steps to maintain quality.

When a complaint is received concerning a member of the NRAC, the NRAC Manager will:

- notify the Member that a complaint has been received within 10 days
- request the Member's response to the complaint to be submitted within 28 days
- submit the initial complaint and response to the Disciplinary Panel (which will be similar in construction to the admissions panel). The complaint may be settled at this stage depending on the particulars of the complaint. This may be due to the minor nature of the complaint, or if the facts of the complaint are not disputed. A decision will be reached within 28 days of receipt of the Member's initial response.

If the complaint is not settled at this stage, the Disciplinary Panel will investigate the matter further. The Member may be required to attend a disciplinary hearing to discuss the complaint within a further 28 days. A decision will be made within seven days and both parties will be notified in writing of the Disciplinary Panel's decision.

If the Disciplinary Panel find against the Member, appropriate action will be taken. Due to the variety of complaints and circumstances that may arise, it cannot be stated exactly what this action will be all cases. However, if the member is found to have committed a serious and deliberate breach of the Code of Practice, they will be expelled from the NRAC.

## 11 Summary of application process

### Consultant or Auditor Member?

NRAC Auditors are qualified to primarily identify barriers to access, while Consultants have greater construction knowledge and can go further in the type of solutions recommended to access barriers

### Stage one application

Basic screening process

£75 fee to NRAC

*Requirements:*

- knowledge of range of user needs
- access related experience (4-5 projects)
- access related training/CPD (5 days in last 2 years)
- construction knowledge (basic for Auditors, more for Consultant membership)

Passing does not confer part accreditation or part membership

### Stage two application

Assessment of written submission and professional interview

£175 fee to NRAC (£100 if reapplying)

*Requirements*

(submit within 6 months of passing stage 1)

initially 1 copy and, if invited for interview, a further 3 copies each + 1 electronic copy of:

- CV
- experience appraisal
- core competence report
- access-related work. Can be:
  - Audit report
  - Design appraisal
  - Access statement
  - Policy / strategy work
  - Other relevant



## **A Initial scrutiny of written submission**

If fulfils basic criteria, proceed to B

If not will be given guidance and invited to re-submit within 2 months.

## **B Interview and assessment**

Peer review by three existing Members

Interviews held in London and in Leeds.

45 minutes long. 10 minute presentation by applicant followed by interview. Decision made on day.

Interview assesses core competences:

- understanding of user needs
- knowledge of legislative context
- ability to identify barriers to access and provide solutions
- knowledge of design guidance, technical standards and current good practice
- construction knowledge (greater level required for Consultant application)
- professionalism and communication skills

## **Post interview**

Possible decisions are:

- recommend as Auditor or Consultant or upgrade to Consultant
- accept as Auditor only
- defer until submission of new satisfactory access-related work; no new interview required.
- do not recommend or upgrade; guidance for reapplication provided; can reapply for reduced fee of £100.

Applicants may appeal against decision.

## **New Members**

- pay annual membership fee: £210 Consultant, £160 Auditor
- undertake to adhere to Code of Practice
- provide details for online database
- provide proof of PII cover
- undertake 15 hours CPD per year
- carry out NRAC interviews on voluntary basis