Determinants of Success Research Study

Identifying the Factors that Lead to Successful Performance on the Landscape Architect Registration Examination

A Study Conducted by Professional Testing, Inc. for the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards, October 2011
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Project

At this time, there is a lack of quantitative/qualitative data that identifies the determinants of candidate success on the Landscape Architect Registration Examination (L.A.R.E). The principal goal of the research project is to define and, if possible, weigh the determinants for success on the L.A.R.E. and to provide greater insights for the profession and regulatory community on which to base policy, practice, and support decisions.

Research Methods

This study consisted of three phases. During the first phase, the research team interviewed members of three specific stakeholder groups via telephone. The results of the phone interviews were used to develop the survey in phase two of the study. The survey was administered after four separate administrations of the L.A.R.E. over the course of one year. The final stage of the study was the statistical analysis, whereby the data collected from the electronic survey was analyzed to determine what factors best predict successful performance on the L.A.R.E.

Overall, five statistical models were analyzed based on the five areas that were identified as contributing to successful performance on the L.A.R.E.: Education Factors, Work Experience Factors, Preparation Factors, Skills Factors, and Testing Environment Factors.

Key Findings

Education and work experience factors seemed to have the greatest impact on candidates’ performance on the L.A.R.E. Preparation and skills factors contributed to successful performance on some of the exams, while testing environment factors had little to no impact on candidates’ performance.

Education Factors

The level of education obtained by exam candidates positively impacted both Sections A and B of the L.A.R.E. The higher the level of education obtained by exam candidates, the better they did on the Section A and B exams.
For the Section C exam, those who obtained a degree from a program accredited by the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) or the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects* (CSLA) scored much higher (on average, 212.98 points higher) than those who obtained a degree from a nonaccredited program.

Candidates who took college courses in Planting Design or History of Landscape Architecture scored higher on the Section E exam.

**Work Experience Factors**

Work experience factors contributed to successful performance on all but the Section C exam. The number of years spent working in landscape architecture had a negative impact on both the Section A and B exams, indicating that the longer one waited to take the Section A or B exams after graduation, the lower the performance on those two exams.

Diversified work experience contributes positively to successful performance on the L.A.R.E. Experience in stormwater management and governmental work experience had a positive impact on the Section A exam, experience in planting design had a positive impact on the Section B exam, experience in institutional projects had a positive impact on the Section D exam, and experience in large-scale residential and land planning had a positive impact on the Section E exam.

**Preparation Factors**

Sections A, C, and E were impacted by preparation factors. Candidates who studied alone were more successful on the Section A exam, and candidates who split their time studying both alone and in groups performed better on the Section C exam. Those who utilized the ASLA practice problems** scored higher on the Section C exam than those who did not utilize the ASLA practice problems. Lastly, the longer the amount of time spent studying, the better the performance was on the Section E exam. For every one month increase in time spent studying, exam candidates scored on average 69.56 points higher.

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* CSLA accredits programs through LAAC (Landscape Architecture Accreditation Council).

** When the L.A.R.E. was five sections, CLARB provided practice problems for Sections C and E to ASLA for ASLA’s exam prep page. These practice problems no longer exist.
**Skills Factors**

In terms of perceived skill, those who considered themselves “technical thinkers” scored higher on both the Section B and D exams. Those who identified themselves as having good spatial reasoning skills performed higher on the Section B and E exams. More time spent drawing on a computer had a positive impact on the Section C exam, while more time spent designing by hand had a positive impact on the Section E exam.

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**Key Takeaway**

Based on the findings of this study, candidates should consider the following actions to optimize their performance on the L.A.R.E.:

- Obtaining a landscape architecture degree from an LAAB- or CSLA-accredited institution.
- Taking the L.A.R.E. closer to college graduation rather than waiting to gain more years of experience in landscape architecture.
- Gaining *diversified* experience in the years spent working in landscape architecture.
- Increasing study time both alone and in groups.
- Utilizing the ASLA practice problems.
- Spending time drawing on a computer, but designing by hand.

For more information, please contact the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards at 571-432-0332 or info@clarb.org.

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