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# Ethics and Public Welfare Topics: A Guide to HSW Course Development

September 2024

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## Overview

Interpreting which topics qualify for Health, Safety, and Welfare (HSW) credit can be difficult, especially outside the realm of physical safety and physical health. Ethics, sociology, and social determinants of health\* are all topics that affect the public's health, safety, and welfare. NCARB's *Continuing Education Guidelines* and AIA's *Standards for Continuing Education Programs* support them as acceptable topics in courses earning HSW credit. This guide will explain how to include these and similar topics in continuing education courses.

\*Social determinants of health are defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the conditions in the environment where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect health, functioning, and quality of life, and include factors that can be influenced by the built environment and by design processes.

Continuing Education—including minimums in Health, Safety, and Welfare topics—is required by many jurisdictions and is required for AIA Members. NCARB represents the interests of the public, whose interests drive the HSW criteria. AIA is the largest continuing education reviewer and architecture membership organization in the United States. As such, NCARB's *CE Guidelines* and the AIA *Standards for Continuing Education Programs* are complementary and should be used in tandem when considering proposals for HSW courses.

- [AIA Standards for Continuing Education](#)
- [NCARB Continuing Education Guidelines](#)

## HSW framework for ethics and public welfare topics

For a course to qualify as HSW, it must always train the architect for the benefit of the *public*. The course should meet both the broad definition of HSW and include content that addresses any of the specific topics/subjects identified by AIA and NCARB to be approved for HSW credit.

1. Content must directly support the HSW definition<sup>1</sup>  
Definition (as stated by both NCARB & AIA, emphasis added): 1<sup>2</sup>
  - a. **Health** Those aspects of professional practice that improve the physical, emotional, and social well-being of occupants, users, and any others affected by buildings and sites.
  - b. **Safety** Those aspects of professional practice that protect occupants, users, and any others affected by buildings or sites from harm.
  - c. **Welfare** Those aspects of professional practice that enable equitable access, elevate the human experience, encourage social interaction, and benefit the environment.
2. Content must include one or more of the AIA CES acceptable HSW topics<sup>1</sup>  
A brief description of each topic listed is provided in AIA Standard S23-02. **Each topic is expanded in more detail in NCARB's Guidelines** on pages 7-9.
  - Practice Management
  - Project Management
  - Programming and Analysis
  - Project Planning and Design

<sup>1</sup> Standard S23-01. AIA Standards for Continuing Education Programs, Version 2018.10.15, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> NCARB Continuing Education Guidelines (July, 2019), p. 6.

- Project Development and Documentation
  - Construction and Evaluation
3. At least 75 percent of the content [and learning objectives] must be on HSW topics<sup>1</sup>

## Commentary

In considering how ethics and social determinants of health topics may qualify for HSW credit, it is important to remember the intended beneficiary. Acceptable courses are about addressing behaviors and mindsets versus risk mitigation for the firm or individual architect. Content approved by AIA for HSW continuing education must focus on the occupants, users, and any others affected by building and sites. When discussing issues related to ethics and sociology, the content must focus first on the public good and not internally on the design professional or firm. For example, a program addressing historical bias in urban planning from redlining could qualify for HSW credit. However, a program to develop inclusive hiring practices within a firm would not be eligible.

The *NCARB Continuing Education Guidelines* clearly list “ethics” and “design for community needs” as eligible topics for HSW continuing education. Topics that require moral analysis and often challenge the economic self-interest of the architect clearly fall within ethics. In the “redlining” example above, the study of the impact of historic and current theories and practices on historically marginalized communities clearly falls within *design for community needs*.

To meet the first requirement (Content must directly support the HSW definition), the definitions of Health, Safety, and Welfare clearly encompass topics of public health, socioeconomics, and community development under their broad umbrella. *Health* includes not only physical health but the emotional and social well-being of all those affected by the built environment. *Safety* addresses protecting the same broadly defined *public* from harm resulting from the built environment. (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is an appropriate example, which will be considered below. CPTD is a common—but now controversial—design approach intended to prevent harm. Now, courses on this topic might also address this design methodology's unintended negative consequences and harm, particularly toward marginalized communities.) Finally, *Welfare* explicitly includes equitable access in its definition and other intangible ways the built environment impacts society, socialization, and environmental responsibility.

To meet the second requirement, addressing one of the six topic areas, it is necessary to look at the more expansive definitions in NCARB's *Guidelines*.

**Practice Management** includes ethics and design for community needs (again, differentiating between internal firm practices and how those practices influence design)

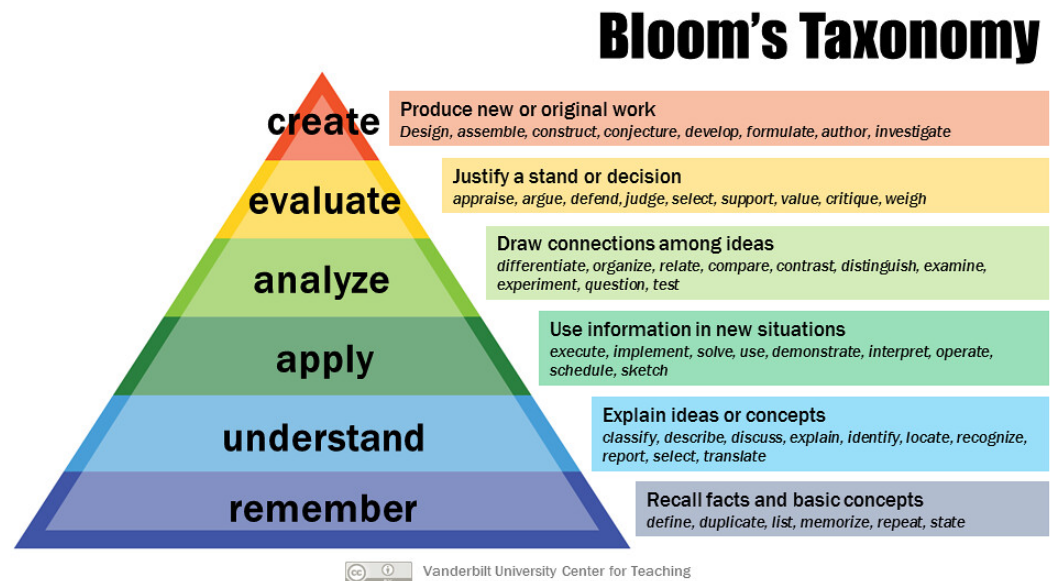
**Programming and Analysis** includes many topics that may connect to ethics or sociology: land-use analysis, programming, site selection, historic preservation, hazardous materials, resilience to natural and human impacts, and feasibility studies.

**Project Planning and Design** includes urban planning and accessibility

**Construction and Evaluation** includes post-occupancy evaluation

## Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, what will the learner be able to do as a result of completing the course? Try to focus not only on what they will “know,” but what new or improved skills or abilities they will have. Use Bloom’s Taxonomy to help develop robust learning objectives. Remember that 75% must specifically address HSW-eligible topics.



## Do’s and Don’ts

### DO

- Write learning objectives first, before writing the course description or content.
- Write learning objectives that clearly state what the participant will be able to do as a result of the course.
- Include a well-considered statement explaining the HSW justification. Reference the NCARB Subject and Topics in your justification.
- Always remember to focus on the public benefit of the content to be taught.

### DON’T

- Expect HSW credit for courses on internal office, hiring, or human resources.

The following fictional example included is adapted from several real resources and addresses one social determinant of health an architect might consider. Note especially learning Objectives 3 and 4. The example provides clear justification and references for Objective 3, which might be less immediately apparent. Objective 4 is an example of an inappropriate topic for HSW, but since only three of the four learning objectives must address HSW, this course would qualify.

## Example HSW-eligible Course Learning Objectives and HSW Justification

Course title: CPTED: Prevention or Persecution?

	<i>Submit to AIA</i>	<i>To help you think through it</i>	
	Learning Objective Participants will be able to...	Reference	HSW?
1	Explain the origin of the theory of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and the safety problems it seeks to address.	<b>HSW:</b> Safety <b>Subject:</b> Project Planning & Design <b>Topic(s):</b> Urban planning, site design, building design, safety and security measures	YES
2	List four CPTED methods that have been demonstrated to reduce crime measurably	<b>HSW:</b> Safety <b>Subject:</b> Project Planning & Design <b>Topic(s):</b> Safety and security measures	YES
3	Explain why some consider CPTED measures to be exclusionary and harmful, especially toward historically marginalized communities	<b>HSW:</b> Health <b>Subject:</b> Practice Management; Construction Management <b>Topic(s):</b> Ethics; Post-Occupancy Evaluation	YES
4	Explain how thoughtful application of CPTED principles can reduce firm liability	<b>HSW:</b> Not applicable <b>Subject:</b> Practice Management <b>Topic(s):</b> Risk management	NO

### HSW Justification (required)

This course addresses how site planning and architectural design can promote or hinder public safety through design decisions. In addition, it addresses issues of local culture and socioeconomics, which may be negatively impacted by this philosophy. *This content is eligible for HSW as it fits the definition of "Health," clearly impacting "the physical, emotional, and social well-being of occupants, users, and any others affected by buildings and sites." Specifically, the content of this course addresses topics relating to ethics and post-occupancy evaluation, in accordance with NCARB's Continuing Education Guidelines.*