AWI ARCHITECTURAL WOODWORK INSTITUTE
QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Architect's Complete Guide *to Woodworking's QCP*

Increasing numbers of architects across the US are turning to AWI-QCP (the Architectural Woodwork Institute's Quality Certification Program) as a means of ensuring that any interior architectural woodwork specified in their projects is completed to the highest quality standards by qualified woodworking firms.

In this guide, we'll explain more about what QCP is, what it does for architects, and which projects it's best to get QCP-certified. Find out how your peers are using QCP as a risk assurance tool that strengthens their work, and learn how easy it is to include QCP in your woodworking specifications even if you outsource this work.

If you have any questions as you read through this guide, we'd love to hear from you - please get in touch and we'll answer your questions.

Kind regards,

The QCP Team

Get in Touch

Ask a Question

Contents

- Find out more about QCP & the Architectural Woodwork Standards
- What QCP does for architects
- What AWI Standards mean for architects
- Hear from an architect who uses QCP
- How to specify architectural woodwork with QCP
- Common errors in specifying woodwork and how to correct them
- How to get accurate woodwork specs even when you outsource
- Which projects QCP certification is best for

What is QCP?

The Quality Certification Program (QCP) was developed by the Architectural Woodwork Institute (AWI). At QCP, we use both the Architectural Woodwork Standards - which the AWI helped to produce - and the AWI's updates to some of the standards, to hold QCP-licensed woodworking firms accountable for meeting and exceeding these standards.

Woodworking firms that hold a QCP license deliver on quality, integrity, and work ethic. They are true experts in their field, with the technical skills and knowledge that come not just from experience, but also from earning their QCP credentials.

We ***thoroughly vet woodworking firms*** through our extensive network of inspectors, who verify, consult on, and report compliance with the Architectural Woodwork Standards (AWS).

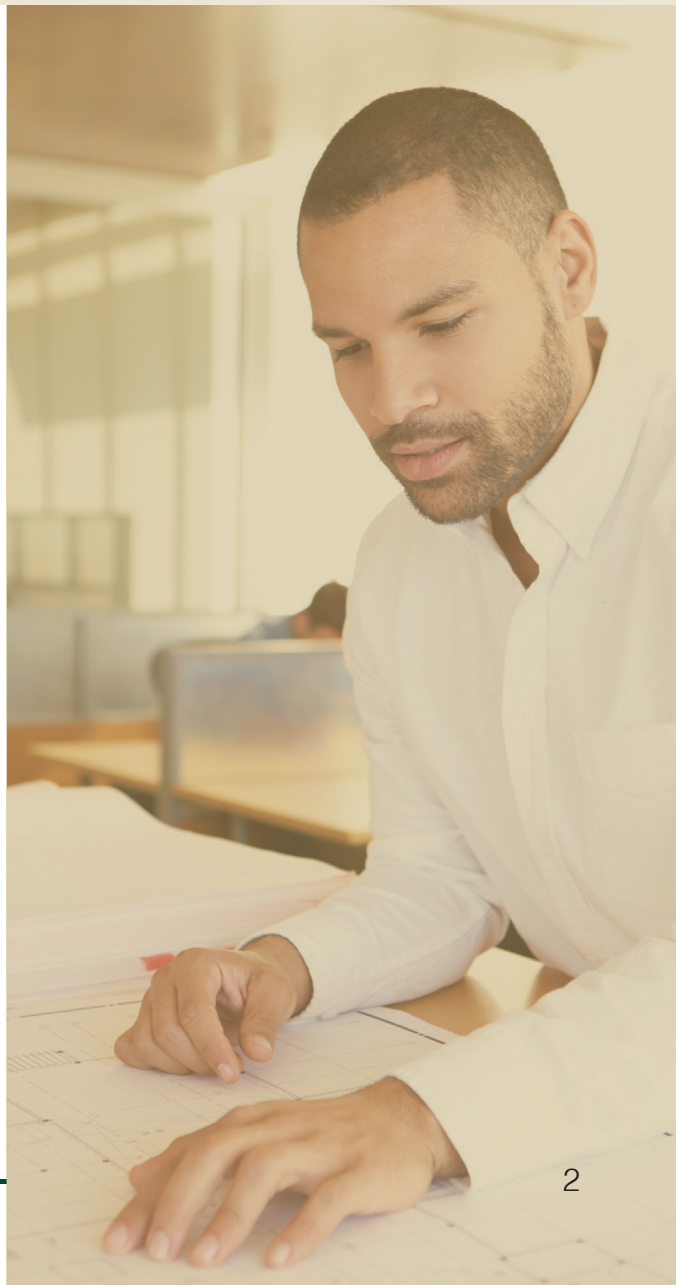
If you use a QCP-licensed woodworking firm on your projects, you have a *guarantee* that anything non-compliant will be addressed by the woodworking firm at no cost to you when inspected. QCP is your fallback - a complete risk assurance tool for architects.

How does QCP work?

QCP offers 35 different licenses for woodworking firms. These licenses cover the fabrication, finishing and installation of different types of architectural woodwork as they pertain to the Architectural Woodwork Standards as recognized by QCP. Woodworkers have to take two tests (one on the Standards and one on QCP policies), submit trade references, complete sample shop drawings, and undergo one plant visit and two previous project inspections in order to become licensed.

Once they've been through this rigorous process and they hold a QCP license, woodworking firms are able to get the projects they work on certified. This certification is the stamp of approval architects need to show that their projects meet industry best practice, conform to industry standards and are of the highest quality.

Additionally, the project certification process itself facilitates communication between all stakeholders, ensures specifications are met, and clearly conveys expectations with regard to project specs and execution procedures.



About the Architectural Woodwork Standards

The Architectural Woodwork Standards (AWS) were first produced jointly by the Architectural Woodwork Institute (AWI), the Woodwork Institute (WI), and the Architectural Woodwork Manufacturers' Association of Canada (AWMAC) in 2009. They were written for the specification, construction, and installation of interior architectural woodwork.

Since then, AWI has decided to pursue the development of their new standards using the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) process, a very open, structured and consensus-based process for standards development. What we have now is a number of AWS sections still in force, two new AWI ANSI standards, and three AWI-revised sections of the AWS.

These industry standards are the definitive reference manual aimed at simplifying and clarifying guidelines, information and principles required for the fabrication, finishing, and installation of architectural woodwork. The standards set industry best practices, provide technical and design illustrations, and address all facets of architectural woodwork from raw lumber and veneer through factory finishing and installation.

For architects, the standards help you to comprehensively and accurately specify interior woodwork elements.

If you'd like a more comprehensive overview of the Architectural Woodwork Standards

Dowload Our Free Guide

How does QCP help architects?

With the uncertainties that come along with construction projects, QCP project certification delivers strong recommendations for both the quality and integrity of your work. It gives your architectural projects a “mark of excellence” and assures your clients and contractor of your commitment to adhere to industry standards and best practices.

QCP project certification also helps you earn and maintain a competitive advantage. These credentials strengthen your reputation, open up bigger and better projects, and build confidence with your clients.

QCP as risk assurance

QCP project certification is a powerful risk management tool that verifies compliance with industry standards and provides recourse in the event that the woodwork fails to meet specifications when inspected.

It’s the foundation that enables you to have the confidence to take on big projects and deliver professional results. Having a team of QCP professionals on hand to collaborate on compliance and consistency ensures your work will stand out amongst the best in your industry.

QCP certification can help you:

- **Create client confidence** - build your reputation and demonstrate to clients that you deliver quality interior architectural woodwork
- **Deliver results that exceed expectations** - using the QCP benchmarks and verification procedures, your project will exemplify industry best standards and millwork consistency
- **Ensure quality results** - your collaboration with QCP industry experts and inspectors delivers quality project results

QCP costs

Registering a project for QCP certification is free.

A woodworking firm will include the cost for project certification labels in their bid. This cost is 0.5% of the total woodworking project cost or $500, whichever is greater. The maximum you will pay is $10,000.

It’s important that if you choose to include QCP project certification in your specifications, you need to ensure that all bids include it so that you are able to compare like-for-like bids. If you don’t ensure that QCP certification is included, you might be missing quality requirements that could greatly affect the final project outcome.

What the industry standards mean for architects

The AWI Standards specify information about the various types, measures, and quality of:

Submittals

Care & storage

Materials

Finishing

Millwork

Stairwork

Wood veneer

Doors

Casework

Countertops

Knowing and adhering to AWI Standards helps architects, contractors, woodworkers, and suppliers communicate effectively as they are all on the same page in terms of specifications, best practices, and materials. Confusion and mismatches are avoided. Architects also have a set format for shop drawings, allowing you to choose the exact materials you want or need.

It's also easier for architects to understand and communicate what they want in terms of specifications like the type of materials, color selections, measures or scale. If you're using a QCP-licensed woodworker, you'll have the confidence of knowing that your specifications will be properly adhered to and implemented in the project - and if they're not, you have recourse via QCP to get that addressed.

Compliance with the standards also means that architects can have confidence that the woodworking firm has met the minimum standards after inspections. The necessary corrections will be made without any additional expense to either the architect or the project owner, and it is the obligation of the woodworking firm to comply. Just this fact alone almost guarantees outstanding quality and shows the integrity of work ethic.

When it comes to quality assurance, architects do not need to do the inspections themselves to ensure the quality of work. Professional experienced inspectors will do it for them. This significantly reduces the burden of work.

As an architect, you probably have a large team working separate elements of a project to make it all come together. It is too difficult for you to be the expert in each and every trade that's fabricating and installing work on your project. By utilizing QCP, you get experienced woodworking inspectors who know what to look for and can identify if a project doesn't meet requirements. Again, this reduces the burden of work, as well as your risk.

Additionally, every QCP-licensed woodworking firm has been vetted by QCP. That means you don't have to undertake any checks or verifications yourself. You can simply choose a QCP-licensed woodworker near you, safe in the knowledge that they produce high-quality woodwork and adhere to industry standards.

Case Study: How an architect was saved by the Standards

Grant Golightly, Architect, Salt Lake City, UT

Grant managed a multi-million dollar project with the Salt Lake Mosquito Abatement District for a new campus where millwork was an important aspect of the interior design, and he needed assurance that the millwork met his specifications.

About the project

Grant Golightly: We have an ongoing problem with mosquitoes as many areas do, and we've had the privilege of working with a couple of mosquito abatement districts in the area. This particular project was for a mosquito research campus on about eight acres of property.

It was a unique project in that they also had a live-work unit where they could bring in students and other professionals involved in the discipline of mosquito abatement and similar fields. Built into that live-work unit was an active laboratory where they could perform experiments, testing, and counting.

There was a significant amount of laboratory millwork, and it was also an important aspect of the interior design. The durability, longevity, and quality of the product were really important.

How did you come to work with QCP?

GG: It was interesting because while I had a very involved role in this project, I wasn't the project manager. The actual PM went down the route of specifying the project as QCP, but then he left his role and we had a little bit of a hole. We were trying to figure out what he did, why he did it, how it came about. Coincidentally, we had a 'lunch and learn' with QCP around that time where the representative talked about cabinetry, millwork, and millwork standards and why it would be important to have a program like this in place.

And we happened to have been inspecting the millwork submittals for this project and we started

ARCHITECTURAL WOODWORKING

INDUSTRY TALK

WITH

AWI QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

You can also listen to this interview on our podcast

Click here

Left to right: Zach Deas, Deas Millwork, Grant Golightly, Architect, Randy Estabrook, Executive Director at AWI-QCP

wondering what kind of standard did we have in place? Did we have something that we could hold the contractor to, to make sure we get the quality? Luckily when we pulled up the specifications, it was very clear that QPC was very clearly defined in the specifications, which was a great relief.

The challenges

What was in the specs wasn't just providing Grade A millwork or some other nomenclature that doesn't have an enforceable standard behind it, but as we talked to QCP to figure out how to proceed, we found out the project had been registered but the proposed millwork provider was not QCP-licensed.

That added a bit of pressure to the project! We were panicked and a little nervous, but we had a great relationship with the owner and a great relationship with the contractor, so we told them our concerns and how we wanted to address them.

Our second challenge came in realizing we'd have to reject or revise the shop drawings and resubmit them under QCP. The problem was that there weren't any QCP-licensed woodworkers readily available that had participated during the bid process.

The solution

That the manufacturer that had provided the shop drawings decided that they had enough time in their critical path to get QCP licensing, so they began that process and they expedited it pretty quickly. They came out and had their shop inspected and provided the sample millwork that was required to achieve their license. It was a real relief to find out that they were willing to do that.

> ***It's possible that they could have provided top quality, top of the line cabinetry, but without an enforceable standard in place, how am I to know? My expertise is not millwork, I don't inspect millwork daily or even weekly or yearly for that matter. So I wouldn't know what to look for or what types of things should be required when it comes to some of these standards.***

Subsequently, they created the first batch of cabinetry. A QCP inspector came out and inspected it in the shop before it was delivered to the site and there were no non-conformities found in the report. That gave us a great sense of comfort, as an architect and an owner, to know that the product being provided met these standards and didn't have any deficiencies. We considered that to be a great win.

Getting value from QCP

When the second batch of cabinetry was delivered to the site before the QCP inspection occurred, it was noted on site that several of the cabinets had bulges or areas where screws had caused a little bit of deformity in the surface. By using QCP, we knew that this issue would be resolved at no cost or worry to us.

If we didn't have QCP in place and in our specifications, what would we have done? How could we have enforced a standard that didn't exist or wasn't specified? But because we had specified QPC, we were able to defend the quality of the product that was being installed

and provided, and basically educate the owner that we can either accept it, we can reject it and require a replacement, we can accept a credit for the deficiencies, or have an extended warranty. Those are things that we wouldn't have had without this in the specification.

QCP was something that gave us a foothold into what we expected and what we wanted to be delivered for this project. As a contractor, I'm sure it's frustrating to have to jump through inspection hoops, but the best projects are the ones that have accountability built into them, especially when everybody knows that upfront.

Inspecting woodwork is like inspecting anything else - testing concrete, framing inspections, etc. Some are very specific to lifesaving, some of them are specific to quality control, some are about aesthetics. I think to have a successful project you can't ignore any one of those elements.

What would have happened without QCP?

When you start getting into projects that really depend on woodwork for the function of the space, you really need high quality built into your standard. When you have projects that are at the upper echelon of millwork and cabinetry and woodworking skills, if you don't have a high level of standard in place, you don't know what you're going to get. You don't know how long it's going to last. You don't know what it's going to look like.

As I look back, it surprises me that there weren't more issues. But still, nothing compares to being able to pull out the standards and say, "No, right here on page 17 it says it's supposed to be this way, and you knew that. We knew that. Everybody knew that. What are we going to do to fix the problem?"

Has using QCP changed your processes?

Not really, but it has made us pay attention. It's made us care a little bit more. What it's given us is that opportunity to think about the importance of understanding what information we put in our drawings. The details that show the size and location of a cabinet alone isn't enough. Understanding the quality and workmanship that goes behind it is critical too, and giving us a leg to stand on when we ask for things. If this cabinetry had been delivered with these deficiencies I described earlier, the bulging, the screws and different things, and we didn't have this in place, how could we possibly expect to go back to the contractor or the millworks provider and say, "Well, this isn't good enough. This doesn't meet our standard." Well, what standard? How do you define that standard? What does it mean? And, to understand that what we put in the drawings, what we put in the specifications, has enforceable power.

You don't have to reinvent the wheel to put QCP specification in your plans. All it does is it puts a requirement that the millwork provider, manufacturer, the shop, and the installers are QCP-licensed. Then it really puts the burden on those individuals to make sure they meet those qualifications.

Why architects should consider QCP

QCP alleviates a lot of the pressure from you as the architect because you don't need to specify in great detail - you simply need to put in your specs that you want the project to be completed to the AWI Standards because the details are built into the standards. It gives you something to fall back on and something to hold the contractor to a standard, and give the deliverable that was expected to begin with.

I would just encourage anybody to make sure they are seeking out 3rd party assessments like QCP that give them the leverage and opportunity to give their clients what they expect, and what they deserve. I think that having standards in place like this helps everybody to do their best, give their best to the project, and make it the positive outcome for everybody.

How to specify

All you need to do to specify QCP is include this specification language in the Quality Assurance section of your project documents, both for fabrication and installation. As QCP language is embedded in MasterSpec and Speclink, it's ready for you to use.

QCP specification language

Unless otherwise indicated, comply with AWI's Architectural Woodwork Standards (Current Edition), including installation, for grades of interior architectural woodwork, construction, finishes and other requirements.

Provide AWI Quality Certification Program [Labels] [Certificates] indicating that the woodwork, [including installation,] complies with requirements of grades specified.

Include one of the following:

With a project number: This project has been registered as AWI-QCP project number_____.

OR

Without a project number: Upon being awarded work, the contracting firm will register the work for QCP certification.

Why use this specification language?

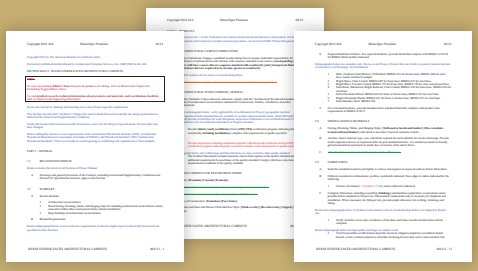
Using this language means that your woodworking firm will need to hold a QCP license, adheres to the current AWI Woodwork Standards, and will get your project QCP certified with project labels and certificates.

This language must be exact in order to avoid time-consuming questions or errors from woodworkers. It's also important to register your project while you're building out your specs so that there's one central source of information that everyone can use.

If you specify a project for QCP certification and it isn't upheld at the bid level, you run the risk of not securing quality assurance. Additionally, bids won't be compared like for like, so you'll have no recourse in the event of discrepancies in the woodwork's installation or finish.

Detailed specifications

The specifications below are documents taken from MasterSpec. These documents walk you through each section of specifying woodwork for certification, and throughout ask you to specify either WI or AWI. The content in blue simply tells you what you need to do with the next section, and all you need to do is delete as appropriate.



MasterSpec document example

You can use ***Division 6 of ARCAT*** to find, select, detail, and specify interior architectural woodwork.

QCP can support you through the specification process by reviewing your specifications, ensuring they are correct and smoothing the process for when specifications are sent to woodworkers. This means you'll receive fewer questions about your specs from woodworking firms, savings time and resources. You'll also receive more accurate bids.

The most common error in specifying and how to correct it

The most common error we see in architects' specifications are incorrect or incomplete references, i.e. that the architect specified a QCP-licensed woodworker but didn't specify labels for the project.

It's important to include labels in your specification so that your woodworker will order QCP labels once the project is registered. This means they are fully prepared to execute and certify your project as per your project documents.

If the project has already been awarded, it's very difficult to go back and get the labels you need that ensure your project is QCP-certified because it's possible that the original bid did not include QCP certification and therefore might not meet the necessary requirements. The firm who won the project may not be QCP-licensed, or may not be willing to apply for licensing. If a firm is not a licensed firm and has not started the QCP certification process at least 4-6 weeks prior to fabrication, the needed requirements for becoming QCP licensed will not be met and the project will not be eligible for QCP certification labels or certificates.

Certification project label example

Get accurate woodwork specs even when you outsource

With many architect firms outsourcing spec writing, it's important that the outsourced specifiers understand how to specify QCP and get the interior woodworking specifications right.

The best way to do this might be to meet with the specifier or get input from the client on quality expectations. It is best practice, and recommended, for you to ask your specifier to include QCP certification in specifications and to ensure that they know the quality of woodworking that you want in terms of the grade for aesthetics (custom or premium).

If you have a QCP project number, it's important to provide this to your spec writer so they can include it within the documentation. Anyone can ***register a project***, and it is free to do so at this stage of specification. This allows for a smoother process when the project kicks off, as both you and QCP, as well as all stakeholders, know the project status.

If you want to have the project inspected by QCP, rather than the QCP-licensed woodworking firm self-certifying the project, this also needs to be included in the specifications, so your specifier must be made aware to do this.

Your spec consultant may also approach you with these questions, but it helps if you raise that they need to put QCP in the specs with them to ensure that everything is included correctly.

Register a project Click here

Which projects QCP certification is best for

QCP certification can be an essential part of builds in these industries:

- Education (K-12, undergrad, and postgrad)
- Corporate interiors
- Institutions

And also in these types of buildings:

- Government
- Educational
- Institutional
- Performance

The different grades of project certification

There are two different grades of certification; custom, and premium. QCP doesn't certify economy grade projects, as they are typically "behind the scenes" or "back of house", and instead focuses on custom and premium grade projects which are usually exposed to view, either by a workforce and/or by the general public.

Custom and premium grades, as their names suggest, are high quality woodwork projects in terms of quality of materials, workmanship, and finish.

Premium grade is the highest grade, and tends to be used in the most visible and high-profile areas of a project, such as reception counters, boardrooms, and executive areas.

It's important for architects and woodworkers to discuss which grade best suits the project. It could be that a more utilitarian project simply doesn't need to be premium grade and would be more suitable for custom grade. Conversely, if you're working on an intricate court house, flagship office space or a new performance hall, for example, premium grade would be the better option to ensure the woodwork is of the highest quality.

Does getting QCP certification depend on the project cost?

We're often asked whether there's a certain project cost where it would be best to have QCP certification. The answer to that is it entirely depends on the objectives of the project - you might have a relatively small project but want it to be extremely high quality, in which case you'd probably choose to get certified to premium level to ensure your quality standards are met.

Conversely, you may have a big-ticket project that includes a lot of casework, such as a school, that you still want to be very high quality but doesn't require the perfection of premium grade. In that case, you could choose custom grade certification.

AWI ARCHITECTURAL WOODWORK INSTITUTE
QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

What's next?

Find a QCP-licensed woodworking firm and ***register your next project*** or ***learn more about registering*** a woodworking project.

awiqcp.org 571-222-6559