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Function

The specification is a detailed document/set of information with the primary function to define precisely and succinctly the quality of materials and systems, the standard of workmanship, and the processes necessary for constructing a built environment asset.

Specifications are not a standalone documents. They are to be read in conjunction with the other contract documentation, including the conditions of contract, drawings/model, quantities, schedules, etc.

For built environment projects, the specification is often referred to as the building specification or the construction specification.

Role

A specification communicates design decisions that cannot be expressed in graphic form on design documentation such as drawings or models. Specifications complement, without duplication, information in the design documentation. Used together, they express the designer's intentions.

The specification is the governing document that helps to ensure that the final product meets the required standards and quality. By specifying the materials, components, testing, products, assemblies, and techniques to be used, the specification helps to eliminate ambiguity and reduce the risk of misunderstandings during the construction process. This in turn improves the quality of construction as it helps to ensure that the finished asset meets the required standards and is built appropriately. The specification also helps to ensure that the building is constructed in accordance with relevant building codes, regulations, and industry standards, which helps to improve the overall quality of the final product.

The specification has many roles, including:

- a document expressing design decisions.
- a document demonstrating compliance with statutory requirements.
- an estimating document.
- a tendering document.
- a legal (contractual) document.
- an on-site working document.
- a dispute settlement document.
- a project management tool.

Form

Specifications may be written using one or more of the following methods:

- **Reference:** By referring to a published document, such as a Standard, Norm, Reference Specification, or manufacturer's technical manual. The reference is made project specific with the addition of project-specific information.
- **Performance:** By prescribing the desired end result and the criteria by which the result will be judged for its acceptability.
- **Prescriptive:** By prescribing in detail the materials, workmanship and installation procedures to be used.
- **Direct/Proprietary:** By stating a proprietary trade name or product that can perform at the levels needed.

Legality

The specification takes effect through regulation, legal or industry precedence, or inclusion as part of the construction contract documents.