

COURSE CATALOG

AIGA Professional Design Certification



About the Certification

Thank you for your interest in the AIGA Professional Design Certification. This certification, launched in 2023, was created for designers at every level who are committed to expanding their careers and the profession in all design modalities, including but not limited to graphic design, visual communications, interactive and web design, and UI/UX.

Becoming a certified AIGA Professional Designer or certified AIGA Design Leader allows you to be a part of building standards for the design profession while enhancing your personal brand.

In this catalog, you will learn about the types of certification, steps to become certified, coursework, and assessment criteria.

There are three steps to become certified:

- 1 | Choose the track that suits your needs:** AIGA Professional Designer (1+ years experience) or AIGA Design Leader (7+ years experience), then purchase the Certification at my.aiga.org/merchandise.
- 2 | Complete the AIGA Professional Foundations Certificate** online learning and assessment components.
- 3 | Schedule and pass your AIGA Portfolio Assessment** according to the assessment timeline in the catalog.

If you have additional questions, please refer to the FAQ page on our website, or contact the AIGA Learning Team at learn@aiga.org.

We are excited to support you in the next step of your career journey!

AIGA Learning Team

AIGA Professional Designer (AIGA-PD)

vs.

AIGA Design Leader (AIGA-DL)

The AIGA Professional Design Certification has two tracks:
AIGA Professional Designer and AIGA Design Leader. Which one is right for you?

Prerequisite Requirements

At least one year of professional experience in design

Career Stage

Entry to Manager Level

Time Commitment

30 hours online

Learners will have one year to complete the Portfolio Assessment (Virtual)

Portfolio Assessment Timeline

June and November (Virtual)

Coursework*

AIGA Foundations Certificate:

Standards of Professional Practice ✓

Business for Designers ✓

Law for Designers ✓

Design Foundations ✓

Cost

AIGA member: \$849 | Non member: \$1,099

Prerequisite Requirements

At least seven years of professional experience in design

Career Stage

Director Level and Above

Time Commitment

30 hours online

*Learners will have one year to complete the Portfolio Assessment (In-Person). ***

Portfolio Assessment Timeline

March and October (In-Person at AIGA Conferences)

Coursework*

AIGA Foundations Certificate:

✓ Standards of Professional Practice

✓ Business for Designers

✓ Law for Designers

✓ Design Foundations

Cost

AIGA member: \$1,945*** | Non member: \$2,145***

Benefits of Certification

Differentiate yourself in a competitive marketplace for job opportunities and clients

Receive the AIGA Certified Designer distinction and virtual badge

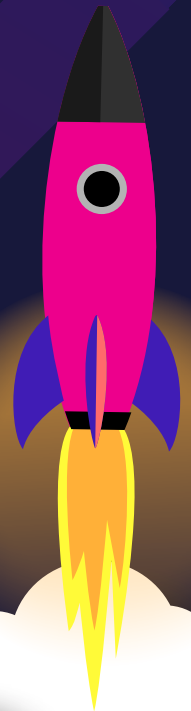
Help create accountability and professional standards for design

Commit to your craft and professional practice

*Coursework for both the AIGA-PD and AIGA-DL are identical.

** Portfolio Assessment requires in-person commitment at an annual AIGA Conference, which provides access for a deeper, in-person learning experience.

***Includes hotel accommodations for in-person Portfolio Assessment. A conference ticket is not included in Certification pricing and must be purchased at the time of enrollment.



Pathways to Certification

Becoming an AIGA Certified Professional Designer is a multi-step process.

Read more to learn about each step within the Certification.

**STEP
1**

AIGA Professional Foundations Certificate Course

**STEP
2**

AIGA Portfolio Assessment

**STEP
3**

Continued Learning and Commitment to the Design Profession

AIGA Professional Foundations Certificate: Course Listing

STEP 1

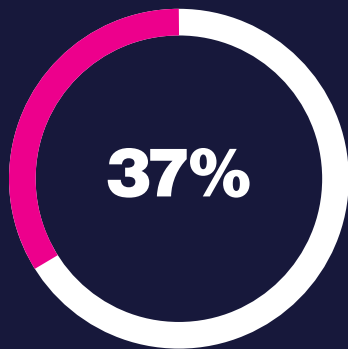
AIGA Professional Foundations Certificate Course

Step 1 of the AIGA Professional Design Certification is the same for all applicants and is composed of a knowledge/learning assessment completed that will cover four areas of focus as part of AIGA Professional Foundations Certificate.

These four areas of focus—Design Foundation, Business Fundamentals of Design, Law for Designers, and Standards of Professional Practice—are meant to provide (and assess) a designer's knowledge pertaining to the business and professionalism side of design as well as design foundations.

AIGA Business Fundamentals for Designers

(11 Hours)



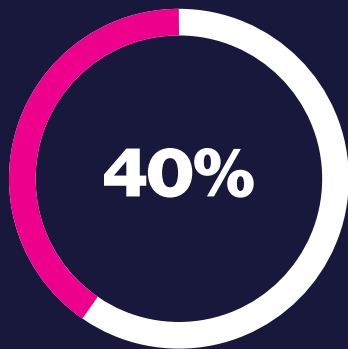
Course Description: This course provides a thorough overview of key business concepts—applicable to freelance designers and designers working in large organizations or with small businesses. The course explores concepts related to effective leadership, management, team development, business strategy, strategic thinking, and the financial side of the business. Learners will gain an understanding of basic people and project management skills and practice applying their learning in real-world scenarios and case studies.

Learning Objectives—After successfully completing this course, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Identify leadership styles and methods
- ✓ Define strategic communication
- ✓ Recognize best practices for leading and managing teams
- ✓ Examine methods for strategic planning in marketing
- ✓ Define emotional intelligence and describe its role in effectively managing teams and client relationships
- ✓ Describe relevant accounting terms
- ✓ Identify key HR terminology and common HR tasks
- ✓ Define the steps that make up the accounting cycle
- ✓ List methods for managing performance
- ✓ Explain the role of finance in the entrepreneurial process
- ✓ Describe coaching methods for effectively coaching team members
- ✓ Recall the importance of budgeting and financial planning
- ✓ Name key elements of effective negotiation
- ✓ Identify and explain the three major pricing strategies
- ✓ Differentiate between project management methodologies
- ✓ Define and distinguish between fixed and variable costs
- ✓ Explain project planning principles
- ✓ Develop a basic financial plan
- ✓ Define business strategy and describe steps for strategic planning
- ✓ Explain the factors and assumptions involved in break-even analysis
- ✓ Describe the entrepreneurial mindset

AIGA Design Foundations

(12 Hours)



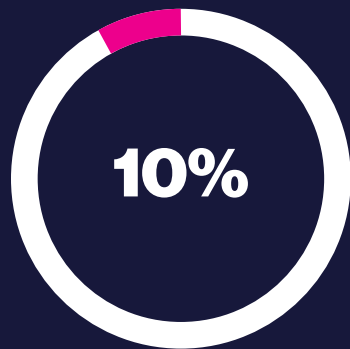
Course Description: Designers are often required to wear many hats—innovator, leader, and problem-solver, just to name a few. This course provides design professionals with an overview of key design principles and practices, providing a shared language for describing the creative and complex role that designers play within their organizations. The course also explores methods for fostering innovation, solving complex problems with design, and communicating the value of design with data. The course is designed for early-career and seasoned professionals alike, offering engaging instructional content for designers at all levels.

Learning Objectives—After successfully completing this course, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Define key concepts relevant to effective design practices
- ✓ Name areas of specialization and potential career paths for designers
- ✓ Describe the application of design in different contexts
- ✓ Identify elements of design and how to apply them in practice
- ✓ Explain basic web design principles and how to apply them
- ✓ Describe basic UX principles and how to apply them
- ✓ Define prototyping and recognize prototyping strategies
- ✓ Differentiate between qualitative and quantitative research methods
- ✓ Explain the role of data in design and define key terms related to data analytics
- ✓ Explain common analytics for business and quality improvement
- ✓ Describe methods of ensuring the quality of data
- ✓ Explain basic data management techniques
- ✓ Examine methods for promoting creativity and innovation in teams and organizations
- ✓ List and describe the stages of design thinking
- ✓ Recognize key project management principles and how to apply them to design projects
- ✓ Recall common tools and technologies for design and describe how different tools are used in day-to-day design tasks and practices

AIGA Law for Designers

(3 Hours)



Course Description: Designers across all specializations and industries must have a working knowledge of relevant laws and basic legal concepts. This course covers legal topics relevant to designers, including copyright and intellectual property, contracts and nondisclosure agreements, and legal requirements for accessible design. Through this course, designers will learn about laws most relevant to their work.

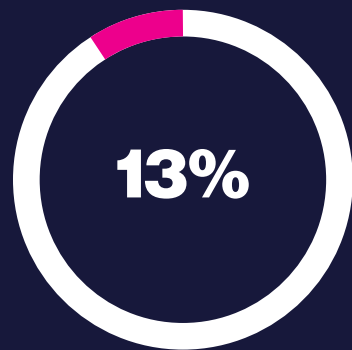
Please note: This course covers the basics of law but is not meant to provide legal advice. If you require legal advice or other expert assistance, please seek the services of a professional. While every designer should be familiar with relevant legal issues, there is no substitute for having qualified legal counsel.

Learning Objectives—After successfully completing this course, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the major areas of federal regulation most relevant to the field of design
- ✓ Describe basic legal terminology and elements of the larger legal environment
- ✓ Identify key elements of copyright law and define fair use
- ✓ Explain the major legal protections for intellectual property rights
- ✓ Describe ADA and Section 508 compliance
- ✓ Explain common goals of accessibility laws and guidelines
- ✓ Recognize different legal structures in business
- ✓ List key differences between independent contractors and employees
- ✓ Define the legal elements involved in forming a contract
- ✓ Define nondisclosure agreements

AIGA Standards of Professional Practice

(4 Hours)



Course Description: This course introduces designers to concepts related to standards of practice, including ethics, accessibility, and diversity and inclusion. Because design is often intertwined with the culture, brand, and vision of an organization, designers play a key role in promoting ethical and inclusive business practices. This course equips designers with the foundational knowledge necessary to make a positive impact in their organizations and their work. Through a series of interactive exercises and case studies, designers can test their knowledge and apply what they're learning to real-world scenarios.

Learning Objectives—After successfully completing this course, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Describe the standards of professional practice for designers
- ✓ Define key terms related to ethics, accessibility, and diversity and inclusion
- ✓ Recall common ethical frameworks
- ✓ Identify warning signs of ethical problems
- ✓ Name common characteristics of ethical leadership
- ✓ Describe key goals of accessibility
- ✓ Identify principles of accessible design
- ✓ Apply accessibility principles to design concepts
- ✓ Describe the relationship between accessibility and inclusive design
- ✓ Determine best practices for promoting inclusivity in the workplace
- ✓ Define unconscious bias
- ✓ Identify elements of inclusive leadership practices

Portfolio Assessment Criteria

STEP 2

AIGA Portfolio Assessment

Upon completion of the AIGA Professional Foundations Certificate, you will then need to complete Step 2 of the AIGA Professional Design Certification, the Portfolio Assessment. Each track (AIGA-PD and AIGA-DL) has two opportunities per year to complete the portfolio assessment. Please refer to the assessment criteria on the next page for preparation.

AIGA-PD

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points Awarded	Examples
Ability to define problem/purpose/goals ✓ Presented problem, purpose, and goals of projects ✓ Demonstrated critical thinking skills	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share project brief • Explain creative choices
Ability to justify creative choices ✓ Explained main creative choices made ✓ Articulated choices that address business needs ✓ Explained choices were validated ✓ Demonstrated creative problem solving skills	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain your creative choices • Explain your research and findings
Ability to explain design process ✓ Explained process used (standardized; adaptation) ✓ Demonstrated curiosity ✓ Designed for accessibility	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain your design process • Explain your creative choices
Ability to explain design outcomes ✓ Articulated the measurable outcomes (qualitative and quantitative) brought to client or employer ✓ Articulated impact brought to users or society more broadly ✓ Demonstrated strategic thinking around outcomes	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain your research
Ability to advocate for the team ✓ Explained individual role and team roles	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify project team • Identify your role in the project
Demonstrated professionalism ✓ Produced high quality design work that met or exceeded expectations ✓ Showed effective communication (oral and written) skills ✓ Presentation was organized, clear, concise, and well-formatted <small>[poor communication or organization (i.e., multiple/repetitive errors such as typos; spelling; careless communication or organization of work; inarticulate or can't explain the work). Also late arrival for portfolio assessment session without a reasonable explanation or have taken more than 10% longer than time allotted for presentation during portfolio assessment session]</small>	6 (2 each)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As evidenced in portfolio samples • As evidenced in case study
MAX POINTS	19	
PASSING POINTS	13	Equivalent of about 70%+

AIGA-DL

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points Awarded	Examples
Ability to define problem/purpose/goals ✓ Presented problem, purpose, and goals of projects ✓ Demonstrated critical thinking skills ✓ Demonstrated strategic thinking skills	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the project brief • Explain your creative choices • Describe the impact of this project • Explain your strategy
Ability to justify creative choices ✓ Explained main creative choices made ✓ Articulated choices that address business needs ✓ Explained how choices were validated ✓ Demonstrated creative problem solving skills	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain your creative choices • Explain your research • Explain your strategy • Describe the impact of this project • Explain the challenges encountered and how you overcame them
Ability to explain design process ✓ Explained process used (standardized; adaptation) ✓ Demonstrated curiosity ✓ Designed for accessibility ✓ Demonstrated initiative and risk taking	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain your design process • Explain your creative choices • Explain your strategy • Describe the impact of this project • Explain the challenges encountered and how you overcame them
Ability to explain design outcomes ✓ Articulated the measurable outcomes (qualitative and quantitative) brought to client or employer ✓ Articulated impact brought to users or society more broadly ✓ Demonstrated strategic thinking around outcomes	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the impact of this project • Explain your strategy
Ability to explain research insights ✓ Shared insight gained while conducting research ✓ Explained methods used in the research ✓ Explained application of insight ✓ Showed ability to assess and analyze information	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain your research • Explain your strategy • Describe the impact of this project

AIGA-DL

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points Awarded	Examples
Ability to advocate for the team ✓ Explained individual role and team roles ✓ Demonstrated collaboration skills	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the project team • Identify your role in the project • Explain the challenges encountered and how you overcame them
Ability to advocate for the discipline ✓ Raised the profile of Design within organization or with client ✓ Showcased the value of the Design profession ✓ Demonstrated capacity to mentor designers and/or give back to the design community	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As evidenced in cover letter
Demonstrated professionalism ✓ Produced high quality design work that met or exceeded expectations ✓ Showed effective communication (oral and written) skills ✓ Demonstrated a commitment to continuous learning and improvement in design ✓ Articulated attributes of leadership ✓ Demonstrated effectiveness of leadership in body of work ✓ Presentation was organized, clear, concise, and well-formatted <small>[poor communication or organization (i.e., multiple/repetitive errors such as typos; spelling; careless communication or organization of work; inarticulate or can't explain the work). Also late arrival for portfolio assessment session without a reasonable explanation or have taken more than 10% longer than time allotted for presentation during portfolio assessment session]</small>	12 (2 each)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As evidenced in portfolio samples • As evidenced in case study
MAX POINTS	34	
PASSING POINTS	23	Equivalent of about 70%+

Continued Learning and Commitment to the Design Profession

STEP 3

Continued Learning and Commitment to the Design Profession

Committing to your professional practice and ongoing learning, which can include:



Attendance
at the annual
AIGA Design
Conference



Continued
learning through
AIGA Certificates
for Creatives



Other AIGA-
approved training

AIGA Membership

The AIGA Professional Design Certification demonstrates an ongoing commitment to your craft, as well as the design profession. Membership in AIGA is a great way to stay connected with your peers upon completion of the Certification. As an AIGA member, you will receive access to benefits including professional development, continuing education, discounted rates to exclusive programs and events, access to virtual webinars, leadership opportunities, special members-only savings—and unique connection opportunities with a network of mentors, influential designers, design educators, and industry leaders.

Learn more about certification and membership at
aigadsgn.org/getcertified

