



GRAPHIC DESIGN

50.0409.00

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

An Industry Technical Standards Validation Committee developed and validated these standards on February 23, 2026. The Arizona Career and Technical Education Quality Commission, the validating authority for the Arizona Skills Standards Assessment System, endorsed these standards on July 11, 2026.

Note: Arizona's Professional Skills are taught as an integral part of the Graphic Design program.

The Technical Skills Assessment for Graphic Design is available SY2027-2028.

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STANDARD 1.0 ANALYZE THE GRAPHIC DESIGN INDUSTRY

1.1	Analyze the evolution and current state of the graphic design industry, including technology, processes, and production methods
1.2	Examine how graphic design has been influenced by social media and emerging technologies (i.e., platform-specific formats, motion design, visual information sharing, AI-driven workflows, AR and VR integration, 3D designs, and prototyping, etc.)
1.3	Analyze the societal, cultural, and economic impact of the graphic design industry (i.e., brand identity and sales, market size, UX and digital commerce, information accessibility, social campaigns, cultural representation, trend evolution, etc.)
1.4	Examine the impact of the graphic design industry on marketing and advertising practices i.e., translates business strategy into visual message, builds brand identity, drives consumer action, etc.)
1.5	Identify professions and career pathways that incorporate graphic design skills (i.e., animation, social media, web design, UX/UI, illustration, audio and video production, photography, printing, publishing, etc.)
1.6	Comply with safety standards applicable to the graphic design industry, including studio and classroom safety, equipment and tool handling, electrical safety, ergonomics, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) considerations
1.7	Identify graphic design styles, designers, and movements that have shaped visual communication and professional practice
1.8	Consider the implications of rising trends in graphic design applications (i.e., demand for authentic imperfection (messy doodles), accelerated workflows (text to image AI platforms, digital polish or raw human textures, etc.)

STANDARD 2.0 ANALYZE ETHICAL AND LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES WITHIN THE GRAPHIC DESIGN INDUSTRY

2.1	Differentiate among copyright, intellectual property, and proprietary rights in graphic design
2.2	Analyze ethical and legal issues related to generative AI, plagiarism, and software licensing (i.e., fonts, stock photography, illustrations, etc.)
2.3	Discuss ethical, social, and legal consequences in violating copyright, privacy, and data security laws (i.e., monetary penalties, prison, injunctions, financial restitution, etc.)
2.4	Explain fair use (i.e., authorships, credit lines, parody, news reporting, criticism and commentary, AI-generated images, etc.)
2.5	Differentiate between legal and ethical standards in graphic design decision-making, considering audience, purpose, and the use of AI-generated or AI-assisted imagery (e.g., branding vs. advertising vs. informational or editorial design)
2.6	Examine libel, censorship, and first amendment rights related to graphic design
2.7	Explain different permissions, usage, and rights agreements used in graphic design (e.g., model releases, property releases, licensing agreements, and content usage permissions)

STANDARD 3.0 APPLY PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS PRACTICES FOR SUCCESS IN THE GRAPHIC DESIGN INDUSTRY

3.1	Demonstrate professional communication skills appropriate for clients, collaborators, and business environments (e.g., written, verbal, and nonverbal skills)
3.2	Use interpersonal skills when communicating with colleagues, clients, and vendors (i.e., active listening, empathy, body language, openness, negotiation, problem-solving, conflict resolution, assertiveness, positive attitude, etc.)
3.3	Develop and deliver a presentation using appropriate industry vocabulary and terminology
3.4	Develop clear, professional written communication using proper formatting, editing, and proofreading (e.g., emails, proposals, and contracts)

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3.5	Demonstrate professional dress, appearance, and behavior for the job and client expectations
3.6	Develop an ATS-friendly (Application Tracking System) résumé designed to satisfy AI screening and human hiring requirements
3.7	Research professional portfolios that showcase technical skills, visual style, and marketable work (e.g., case studies; collection of writing, graphics, and projects; artifacts showcasing talents and skills; and summary of professional growth)
3.8	Develop a professional portfolio that provides evidence of skills and showcases work experience and talents (e.g., résumé that highlights education outcomes and work experiences and examples of work that show the creative process/visual work examples, published or printed work, and client-based projects)
3.9	Develop a portfolio intended for different purposes (e.g., employment, college application, and client acquisition)
3.10	Identify and evaluate personal digital footprint (i.e., posting on social media, sending emails, filling out online forms, etc.)
3.11	Describe a healthy workplace environment (i.e., fair treatment and policies, open and transparent communication, flexible work policies and accommodation, opportunities for growth, continuous education and training, etc.)
3.12	Apply time management practices appropriate to all graphic design industries
3.13	Identify key components for establishing a freelance graphic design business (i.e., professional portfolio, licenses and permits, contracts and contractual agreements, client onboarding and invoicing systems, and processes for managing legal and tax compliance)

STANDARD 4.0 ANALYZE GRAPHIC DESIGN AS A VISUAL COMMUNICATION TOOL

4.1	Identify art and design movements that influence graphic design
4.2	Research technologies that impact visual communication and graphic design practices
4.3	Examine the roles and responsibilities of graphic designers to communicate ideas, products, and brand identities
4.4	Examine the role and cultural significance of graphic design in historical and contemporary contexts
4.5	Describe how diversity (e.g., cultural, ethnic, generational) influences design decisions and visual messaging
4.6	Explore the application of graphic design as visual communication to communicate, advocate, and promote complex, sensitive issues
4.7	Explain how effective storytelling principles enhance graphic design (i.e., mood boards, personas, user journeys, story structure, and storyboarding)
4.8	Explain how graphic design functions as a visual communication tool by creating and evaluating design images that convey clear messages for specific audiences and purposes

STANDARD 5.0 UTILIZE INDUSTRY TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT AND COMPUTER HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

5.1	Demonstrate proper use and care of tools and equipment (e.g., ruler, type gauge, X-acto knives, computers, storage devices, printers, and input devices)
5.2	Identify technological threats to technology devices and computer system networks that jeopardize data, infrastructure, and privacy (i.e., viruses, ransomware, phishing, and AI-enabled attacks)
5.3	Utilize software that meets industry standards and establishes best practices for security, quality, and operational efficiency (i.e., page layout, photo manipulation, illustration, editing, etc.)
5.4	Identify industry-standard software used in the graphic design industry (i.e., Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, InDesign, and Express; Affinity Suit Designer, Photo, and Publisher Canva; CorelDRAW, Procreate, etc.)
5.5	Apply effective computer file management techniques (e.g., file naming, versioning, organization, storage, and backup)
5.6	Differentiate among graphic file formats according to compatibility, industry expectations, file size, resolution, color gamut, and medium (e.g., JPG, RAW, PSD, PDF, INDD, AI, GIF, and PNG)
5.7	Identify file transfer options for security, compatibility, and control (i.e., physical media, cloud-based, network, peer-to-peer, etc.)
5.8	Identify methods of data capture (i.e., digital camera, video input device, graphics tablet, scanner, keyboard, etc.)
5.9	Differentiate among types and uses of digital cameras and accessories (i.e., point-and-shoot, DSLR, lenses, filters, lighting equipment, etc.)
5.10	Select appropriate resolution, compression, and format for data capture
5.11	Differentiate among PPI, DPI, and LPI (e.g., resolution, machine pixels, and screen frequency)
5.12	Analyze color management systems (CMS) to ensure consistent, accurate colors across different devices [e.g., cameras, monitors, and printers) using profiles created by the International Color Consortium (ICC)]

STANDARD 6.0 APPLY GRAPHIC DESIGN CONCEPTS TO PRODUCE DESIGN SOLUTIONS

6.1	Identify and apply elements of design (e.g., line, shape, form, texture, pattern, color, value, space, and size)
6.2	Identify and apply principles of design (e.g., contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, hierarchy, balance, movement, emphasis, harmony, and unity)

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6.3	Identify anatomical components and qualities of type (i.e., x-height, ascenders, descenders, etc.)
6.4	Identify categories of type (i.e., serif, san serif, script, display, old style, modern, slab serif, etc.)
6.5	Apply the principles of typographic composition (e.g., hierarchy, grids, leading, tracking, kerning, justification, gutters, margins, and whitespace)
6.6	Identify additive colors (RGB – red, green, and blue) and subtractive colors (CMYK – cyan, magenta, yellow, and black/key) and explain their purpose (e.g., to create a wide spectrum of colors by mixing light, allowing for the display of vibrant, luminous, and varied colors on digital screens and in lighting applications)
6.7	Apply basic color schemes (e.g., complementary, analogous, triadic, tetradic, split complementary, and monochromatic)
6.8	Analyze how the psychology of color influences human emotions, behaviors, and physiological responses [i.e., common associations (i.e., red represents passion, energy, or danger), applications (i.e., marketing to influence buying decisions), and physiological impact (i.e., blue lowers heart rates)]

STANDARD 7.0 APPLY DESIGN TO THE THINKING PROCESS TO INCREASE SUCCESS AND PRODUCTIVITY

7.1	Generate project ideas using structured techniques and key methods (i.e., stakeholder communication, research, brainstorming, thumbnails, roughs, mock-ups, wireframes, etc.)
7.2	Identify demographic components (e.g., gender, age, income, education, socioeconomic, ethnicity, and location) and psychographic components (e.g., interests, frequency, belief, behaviors, and affiliations) with reference to establishing a target audience
7.3	Develop a project workflow that defines how tasks are executed, assigned, and moved forward from initiation to completion
7.4	Explain key steps in using user experience (UX) to design a graphic design product for the target audience (e.g., motivation, functionality, and accessibility)
7.5	Explain the collaborative process to plan and execute graphic work (e.g. create a shared vision, set clear guidelines, utilize real-time tools, provide feedback, and deliver a high-quality product)
7.6	Evaluate a project based on constructive criticism techniques (e.g., compare final product to original needs and specifications and give and receive actionable feedback)

STANDARD 8.0 CREATE PROBLEM-SOLVING VISUALS USING INDUSTRY STANDARD SOFTWARE

8.1	Differentiate among the color spaces (e.g., RGB, CMYK, Spot Color, L*a*b*, HSB, HSL, grayscale, and hex color) and how they relate to successful production
8.2	Analyze the applications of vector-based and raster images
8.3	Create vector illustrations using industry standard software (i.e., Adobe suite, CorelDRAW, etc.)
8.4	Use a digital camera to demonstrate composition techniques (i.e., rule of thirds, diagonals, framing, balance, leading lines, repeating patterns/texture, symmetry, etc.)
8.5	Execute a photo shoot according to client's needs
8.6	Apply nondestructive image editing techniques
8.7	Composite raster images using a combination of layers, transparency, masking, selection tools, blending modes, filters, and special effects
8.8	Manipulate digital images using industry standard software
8.9	Construct graphic works utilizing and manipulating type using industry standard software
8.10	Produce single- and multi-color graphic works using industry standard software
8.11	Create single- and multi-page graphic works utilizing margins, columns, grids, and bleeds
8.12	Demonstrate layout skills for digital media using industry standard software

STANDARD 9.0 DEMONSTRATE APPLICATION OF MEDIA OUTPUT

9.1	Preflight and package digital files for industry standard output (i.e., check for overset text, errors, missing elements, color issues, fonts, etc.)
9.2	Compare common printing processes, their market segments, and the advantages/disadvantages of each (e.g., offset, digital, screen printing, and packaging)
9.3	Explore medium options for a project, including environmental concerns, grades and classes, and specialty substrates (i.e., canvas, vinyl, metal, coroplast, etc.)
9.4	Apply binding and finishing options, including imposition
9.5	Print, trim, and mount projects for professional presentation
9.6	Create a PDF according to industry standards (e.g., proof, print, fillable, add signature and comments, and accessibility)

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