Instructional Framework

Graphic Design

50.0409.00

This Instructional Framework identifies, explains, and expands the content of the standards/measurement criteria, and, as well, guides the development of multiple-choice items for the Technical Skills Assessment. This document corresponds with the Technical Standards endorsed on July 12, 2026.

Domain 1: Creative Process **Instructional Time: 60 - 70%**	
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)	• Building blocks of graphic design
6.2 Identify and apply principles of design (e.g., contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, hierarchy, balance, movement, emphasis, harmony, and unity)	• Foundational rules and guidelines for composition
6.3 Identify anatomical components and qualities of type (i.e., x-height, ascenders, descenders, etc.)	• Baseline • Cap height • Ligature
6.4 Identify categories of type (i.e., serif, sans serif, script, display, old style, modern, slab serif, etc.)	• Structure • Emotion/personality
6.5 Apply the principles of typographic composition (e.g., hierarchy, grids, leading, tracking, kerning, justification, gutters, margins, and whitespace)	• Density of type • Size • Contrast • Alignment

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)	• CMYK vs. RGB
	• Additive vs. subtractive
	• Color schemes
	  ○ Monochromatic
	  ○ Analogous
	  ○ Complementary
	  ○ Triadic

6.7 Apply basic color schemes (e.g., complementary, analogous, triadic, tetradic, split-complementary, and monochromatic)	● Color balance ● Creating harmony
6.8 Analyze the effect of color on human emotions, behaviors, and physiological responses (i.e., common associations, such as red representing passion, energy, or danger; applications, such as marketing intended to influence purchasing decisions; physiological effects, such as blue potentially lowering heart rate, etc.)	● Effects of color perception ● Impact of color choice
STANDARD 7.0 APPLY THE DESIGN 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.)	● Utilize the creative process
7.2 Identify demographic components (e.g., gender, age, income, education, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and location) and psychographic components (e.g., interests, frequency, beliefs, behaviors, and affiliations) to establish a target audience	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
7.3 Develop a project workflow that defines how tasks are executed, assigned, and moved forward from initiation to completion	● Use a brief (design, client, project, etc.) ● Scope of work
7.4 Explain key steps in applying user experience (UX) principles to produce a graphic design product for the target audience (e.g., motivation, functionality, and accessibility)	● Digital and print application
7.5 Explain the collaborative process to plan and execute graphic design work (e.g., creating a shared vision, setting clear guidelines, using real-time tools, providing feedback, and delivering a high-quality product)	● Define roles ● Work toward goals established by the group ● Creative process steps ○ Research ○ Brainstorm ○ Create ○ Revise ○ Edits based on client feedback ○ Present
7.6 Evaluate a project using constructive-criticism techniques (e.g., comparing the final product with the original needs and specifications and giving and receiving actionable feedback)	● Steps in the revision process ○ Revise ○ Edit based on client feedback ○ Present

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 explain how each relates to successful production	● Color gamut ○ Usage and purposes
8.2 Analyze the applications of vector-based and raster images	● Vector vs. raster ○ Anchor points vs. pixels ○ Scaling vs. pixelation
8.3 Create vector illustrations using industry-standard software (i.e., Adobe Illustrator, CorelDRAW, etc.)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
8.4 Use a digital camera to demonstrate composition techniques (i.e., the rule of thirds, diagonals, framing, balance, leading lines, repeating patterns and textures, symmetry, etc.)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
8.5 Execute a photo shoot according to the client's needs	● Client interview ● Logistics ○ Equipment ○ Location ○ Timeline
8.6 Apply nondestructive image editing techniques	● Layer masking ● Adjustment layers ● Smart objects
8.7 Composite raster images using a combination of layers, transparency, masking, selection tools, blending modes, filters, and special effects	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
8.8 Manipulate digital images using industry-standard software	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
8.9 Construct graphic works by utilizing and manipulating type in industry-standard software	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
8.10 Produce single-color and multicolor graphic works using industry-standard software	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*

8.11 Create single-page and multipage graphic works using margins, columns, grids, and bleeds	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
8.12 Demonstrate layout skills for digital media using industry-standard software	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*

Domain 2: Technology Production **Instructional Time: 15 - 20%**	
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., rulers, type gauges, X-Acto knives, computers, storage devices, printers, and input devices)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
5.2 Identify technological threats to technology devices and computer system networks that jeopardize data, infrastructure, and privacy (i.e., viruses, ransomware, phishing, AI-enabled attacks, etc.)	● Potential threats ○ Data breaches ○ Piracy ○ Malware ● Methods of protection ● Password protection
5.3 Utilize industry-standard software for graphic design functions (i.e., page layout, photo manipulation, illustration, editing, etc.) in accordance with best practices for security, quality, and operational efficiency	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
5.4 Identify industry-standard software used in graphic design (i.e., Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, InDesign, and Express; Affinity Designer, Photo, and Publisher; Canva; CorelDRAW, Procreate, etc.)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
5.5 Apply effective computer file management techniques (e.g., file naming, versioning, organization, storage, and backup)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
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, PNG, TIFF, EPS, and SVG)	● How resolution affects image size ● Advantages and disadvantages of each file type

5.7 Identify file transfer options based on security, compatibility, and control (i.e., physical media, cloud-based services, network transfers, peer-to-peer transfers, etc.)	● Advantages and disadvantages
5.8 Identify methods of data capture (i.e., digital cameras, video input devices, graphics tablets, scanners, keyboards, etc.)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
5.9 Differentiate among types and uses of digital cameras and accessories (i.e., point-and-shoot cameras, DSLR cameras, lenses, filters, lighting equipment, etc.)	● Peripherals and accessories
5.10 Select appropriate resolution, compression, and format for data capture	● Appropriate resolutions for data capture based on end product ○ Lossy vs. lossless
5.11 Differentiate among PPI, DPI, and LPI (e.g., resolution, machine pixels, and screen frequency)	● Pixels per inch (PPI) ○ Resolution ● Dots per inch (DPI) ○ Machine pixels ● Lines per inch (LPI) ○ 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)]	● Prepress ● Calibration
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.)	● Purpose of preflighting ● Purpose of packaging
9.2 Compare common printing processes, their market segments, and the advantages and disadvantages of each (e.g., offset, digital, screen printing, and packaging)	● Offset lithography ● Flexography ● Direct to film (DTF) ● Direct to garment (DTG)

9.3 Explore media and substrate options for a project, including environmental concerns, grades and classes, and specialty substrates (i.e., canvas, vinyl, metal, corrugated plastic, etc.)	• Size, weight, purpose ○ Common paper sizes (Tabloid, letter, A3, A4, etc.)
9.4 Apply binding and finishing options, including imposition	• Appropriate uses of different binding and finishing options and how it relates to end usage • Saddle stitch, coil binding, comb binding, perfect binding, etc.
9.5 Print, trim, and mount projects for professional presentation	• Appropriate printing, trimming, and mounting process for different forms of professional presentations
9.6 Create a PDF according to industry standards (e.g., proofing, printing, creating fillable forms, adding signatures and comments, and ensuring accessibility)	• Appropriate formats for different forms of digital delivery

Domain 3: Legal and Business Practices **Instructional Time: 10 - 15%**	
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	• Appropriate usage/rights
2.2 Analyze ethical and legal issues related to generative AI, plagiarism, and software licensing (i.e., fonts, stock photography, illustrations, etc.)	• Copyright (duration, beginning, and expiration) • Intellectual property • Proprietary rights • Creative Commons license • AI usage disclosure

2.3 Discuss the ethical, social, and legal consequences of violating copyright, privacy, and data security laws (i.e., monetary penalties, imprisonment, injunctions, financial restitution, etc.)	• Violation consequences
	  ○ Civil penalties
	  ○ Criminal penalties (fines and/or jail)

2.4 Explain fair use (i.e., authorship, credit lines, parody, news reporting, criticism, commentary, AI-generated images, etc.)	• Fair Use Factors
	  ○ Purpose
	  ○ Nature
	  ○ Amount

	○ Market Effect
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)	● Standards of Professional Practice ● Business Code of Ethics
2.6 Examine libel, censorship, and First Amendment rights related to graphic design	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
2.7 Explain the different permissions, usage, and rights agreements used in graphic design (e.g., model releases, property releases, licensing agreements, and content usage permissions)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
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)	● Various media communication ○ Email ○ Memo/letter ○ Social media/Internet ○ Presentation ○ Digital presentation
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.)	● Clear and professional communication ● Paying attention to all details ● Knowledgeable ● Follow through ● Go above and beyond ● Active listening techniques: ○ Body language ○ Eye contact ○ Repeat understanding of statements (summarize) ○ Ask questions ○ Limit distractions
3.3 Develop and deliver a presentation using appropriate industry vocabulary and terminology	● Speak clearly ● Body posture appropriate for presenting ● Eye contact ● Limit distractions ● Practice social norms appropriate for audience

	● Rehearse presentation
3.4 Develop clear, professional written communication using proper formatting, editing, and proofreading (e.g., emails, proposals, and contracts)	● Peer review/edit ● Conventions for various written communications ○ Appropriate application of greetings and signatures
3.5 Demonstrate professional dress, appearance, and behavior appropriate to job requirements and client expectations	● Impact of professional dress ● Formal vs. Business casual
3.6 Develop an ATS-friendly (Applicant Tracking System) résumé designed to satisfy AI screening and human hiring requirements	● Types of résumés ○ Chronological ○ Functional ○ Combination ○ Targeted ○ Creative ● Résumé components ○ Contacts ○ Objectives ○ Profile ○ Career Summary/Experience ○ Education ○ References
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)	● Digital vs. print ● Assessment portfolio ● Working portfolio
3.8 Develop a professional portfolio that provides evidence of skills and showcases work experience and talent (e.g., résumé highlighting educational outcomes and work experience; examples documenting the creative process; visual, published or printed work; and client-based projects)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
3.9 Develop portfolios intended for different purposes (e.g., employment, college admission, and client acquisition)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
3.10 Identify and evaluate a personal digital footprint (i.e., posting on social media, sending emails, filling out online forms, etc.)	● Longevity of digital footprint
3.11 Describe a healthy workplace environment (i.e., fair treatment and policies, open and transparent communication, flexible work policies	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*

and accommodations, opportunities for growth, continuous education and training, etc.)	
3.12 Apply time-management practices appropriate to all graphic design sectors	• Deadline management • Organizational skills • Multitasking • Prioritizing • Problem-solving • Flexibility
3.13 Identify key components of establishing a freelance graphic design business (i.e., professional portfolio, licenses and permits, contracts and contractual agreements, client onboarding and invoicing systems, processes for managing legal and tax compliance, etc.)	• Budget/billing • Business organizational structures

Domain 4: Media Industries **Instructional Time: 5 - 10%**	
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	• History of graphic design
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 design, prototyping, etc.)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
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.)	• Ethical responsibilities • Inform • Educate or entertain • Influence
1.4 Examine the impact of the graphic design industry on marketing and advertising practices (i.e., translating business strategy into visual messages, building brand identity, driving consumer action, etc.)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*

1.5 Identify professions and career pathways that incorporate graphic design skills (i.e., animation, social media, web design, UX/UI design, illustration, audio and video production, photography, printing, publishing, etc.)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
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	● OSHA safety standards
1.7 Identify graphic design styles, designers, and movements that have shaped visual communication and professional practice	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
1.8 Consider the implications of emerging trends in graphic design (i.e., demand for authentic imperfection such as messy doodles; accelerated workflows, such as text-to-image AI platforms and digital polish; or raw human textures, etc.)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
STANDARD 4.0 ANALYZE GRAPHIC DESIGN AS A VISUAL COMMUNICATION TOOL	
4.1 Identify art and design movements that influence graphic design	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
4.2 Research technologies that impact visual communication and graphic design practices	● Printing press ● Computer ● Design software ● Printing technologies ● Mobile technologies ● Internet technologies ● Artificial Intelligence
4.3 Examine the roles and responsibilities of graphic designers in communicating ideas, products, and brand identities	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
4.4 Examine the role and cultural significance of graphic design in historical and contemporary contexts	● Inform ● Educate ● Entertain ● Influence ● Propaganda

	• Advertising • Brand development
4.5 Describe how diversity (e.g., cultural, ethnic, and generational) influences design decisions and visual messaging	• Target audience • Demographics
4.6 Explore the use of graphic design to communicate, advocate, and promote awareness of complex or sensitive issues	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
4.7 Explain how effective storytelling principles enhance graphic design (i.e., mood boards, personas, user journeys, story structure, storyboarding, etc.)	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*
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	*The teacher committee reviewed the measurement criterion and determined that no additional clarification is required.*