



AIGA Professional Foundations Certificate

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) designers knowledge pertaining to the business and professionalism side of design as well as design foundations.

It is important to note that these courses will not teach a learner how to design.

Following are the course names, descriptions, and learning objectives.

If you have questions about Step 1, please contact Learn@aiga.org.

| Course Name | % Total | Course Description | Learning Objectives—After successfully completing this course, learners will be able to: |
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| AIGA Business Fundamentals for Designers (11 Hours) | 37% | <p>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 begins by exploring key concepts related to effective leadership, management, and team development. Learners will gain an understanding of basic people and project management skills and practice applying their learning in real-world scenarios and case studies. Next, learners will dive into business strategy, examining the importance of strategic thinking and practicing different methods for strategic planning. Lastly, the course covers the financial side of business, giving a high-level overview of important accounting and finance terminology, which designers can use to better understand how design efforts fit into the larger financial goals and objectives of the organization. Designers who lead their own design firms or operate as sole proprietors will also gain important knowledge related to the financial success of their businesses. *</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify leadership styles and methods - Recognize best practices for leading and managing teams - Define emotional intelligence and describe its role in effectively managing teams and client relationships - Identify key HR terminology and common HR tasks - List methods for managing performance - Describe coaching methods for effectively coaching team members - Name key elements of effective negotiation - Differentiate between project management methodologies - Explain project planning principles - Define business strategy and describe steps for strategic planning - Describe the entrepreneurial mindset - Define strategic communication - Examine methods for strategic planning in marketing - Describe relevant accounting terms - Define the steps that make up the accounting cycle - Explain the role of finance in the entrepreneurial process - Recall the importance of budgeting and financial planning - Identify and explain the three major pricing strategies - Define and distinguish between fixed and variable costs - Develop a basic financial plan - Explain the factors and assumptions involved in break-even analysis |

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| AIGA Design Foundations (12 Hours) | 40% | <p>Successful organizations know the value of design. Because thoughtful design is a driver of organizational success, 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. Through interactive games and exercises, learners will engage with key concepts and apply their learning to real-world scenarios and case studies. The course is designed for early-career and seasoned professionals alike, offering engaging instructional content for designers at all levels who want to sharpen their understanding of design principles, tools, and best practices.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 |

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| AIGA Law for Designers (3 Hours) | 10% | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 |

| Course Name | % Total | Course Description | Learning Objectives—After successfully completing this course, learners will be able to: |
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| AIGA Standards of Professional Practice (4 Hours) | 13% | <p>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.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 |