

# Applying for Accreditation

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Institutions voluntarily seek accreditation of an interior design program from the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA). The institution granting the culminating degree must invite CIDA to review an educational program. The initial request that CIDA conduct an accreditation review of the interior design program must come from the chief executive officer of the institution or an institutional administrator authorized to act on behalf of the chief executive officer.

Formal application may be made according to the program's schedule for seeking accreditation; however, application materials must be submitted a year or more prior to an intended site visit date.

**Accredited programs are not required to submit an application prior to review for re-accreditation.**

## Determining Program Readiness

Success in seeking accreditation is dependent on the program's ability to demonstrate compliance with CIDA Standards. For this reason, programs are encouraged to undertake a thorough self-study of compliance with Standards prior to applying for accreditation. CIDA provides Guidance for Self-study to assist programs in organizing self-study efforts.

CIDA also conducts annual workshops to assist programs interested in seeking accreditation. Contact the CIDA office for information about upcoming workshops.

## Application

Applicants must use the accreditation application form provided or duplicate the format. To receive the application form, contact the CIDA office.

The application must be accompanied by:

- A brief (no more than 2 page) description of methods used to assess program readiness for seeking CIDA accreditation. The program should address if and how CIDA Standards were used to assess readiness.
- Documentation that institutional and program eligibility requirements are met. If this information is documented in institution publications, a copy of the publication(s) may be submitted as evidence, with the appropriate pages tagged. Otherwise, copies of original documents or a letter from a representative of the institution must be submitted indicating compliance with all criteria.
- The application fee in US dollars (Refer to CIDA's Accreditation Policy and Procedure, Fees)

Applications missing any of the above items are returned to the program.

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## Institutional and Program Eligibility

A program seeking accreditation must demonstrate that it is housed within an institution that is accredited or recognized by:

- An institutional accrediting body that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Higher Education, or
- A provincial ministry of education in Canada, or
- The appropriate higher education agency or authority in the institution's country of origin.

A program seeking accreditation must demonstrate that:

- It culminates in a minimum of a bachelor's degree.
- A minimum of thirty semester credit hours of diverse college-level general education courses are required for graduation from the program. These credit hours must be attained from an institution that has been recognized by the appropriate institutional accrediting body; they may be taken prior to or concurrently with discipline-specific course work. (Refer to Definition of General Education and Documenting General Education below)
- A minimum of two classes has graduated from the program prior to submission of the application. The majority of student work displayed as evidence of student achievement should be produced from the current curriculum. Program outcomes are best assessed based on an on-going curriculum that has produced a body of work for review.
- It collects and publishes reliable information to the public regarding student achievement, including aggregate data addressing attrition and retention, graduation rates, job placement rates, and acceptance into graduate programs. (Refer to Student Achievement Data below)

In addition to demonstrating the institutional and program eligibility requirements above, programs housed in institutions **located outside the United States and Canada** must demonstrate that:

- The higher education agency or authority in the institution's country of origin acknowledges the institution is seeking CIDA accreditation for the interior design program.
- The institution acknowledges that CIDA Standards are educational standards based on interior design practice in the U.S. and Canada. CIDA does not seek input from the interior design profession outside the U.S. and Canada in forming standards for interior design educational programs; therefore, measurements may or may not reflect professional preparation required in countries outside the U.S. and Canada.

A program located in a non-English-language institution must confirm that:

- All program documents (published materials as well as course outlines, handbooks, project statements, etc.) and communications with CIDA are to be provided in English for purposes of the accreditation process.

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## Definition of General Education

General education courses provide a diverse, well-balanced, and inclusive foundation for professional studies which complement the capacities for lifelong learning and understanding of the human experience. The intent of requiring general education courses is to ensure students develop quantitative reasoning and critical thinking skills.

General education courses are defined as those college or university studies intended to provide general knowledge and to develop general intellectual capacities (such as reason and judgment). Professional studies courses (e.g., business) cannot be designated to fulfill the general education requirement because they are focused on skill development for specific purposes. Courses that might generally be considered interior design course work also do not fulfill the general education requirement.

Courses in the humanities, arts, technologies, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, and/or other disciplines could be considered as general education courses. Courses designated to fulfill the general education requirement for eligibility should be of this nature.

## Documenting General Education

Programs located in an institution accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by the US Department of Education need not provide additional proof of meeting the general education requirement.

Programs not housed in an institution accredited by a regional accrediting body must submit a comprehensive list of general education courses that fulfill the 30 semester credit hour requirement. Course descriptions must be included and should pertain only to those courses accepted general education. Courses not accepted as general education for program completion should not be included. Material published in regard to program completion must clearly identify courses that are/are not accepted by the program for completion of the general education requirement. If general education course work is completed at a different institution and transferred into the program seeking accreditation, a complete description of the evaluation process and criteria used to ensure transfer credits meet CIDA's definition of general education must be included in documentation.

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## Conversion to Semester Credit Hours

If the program does not use semester credit hours, a statement explaining how required hours convert to semester credit hours must be included. Concisely address how this requirement is stated in the catalog; how it is documented in student records; if these are transfer credits, how they are evaluated and by whom, etc. Describe how the program ensures that these hours are completed prior to or concurrently with interior design coursework.

For the purpose of accreditation, a semester credit hour is defined as: one (1) lecture hour per week for a minimum of 13 weeks, two (2) studio contact hours per week, or 45-54 clock hours of internship. A semester is no less than 13 weeks in length. To convert quarter credit hours to semester credit hours, multiply the quarter credit hours by  $2/3$ , e.g. 3 quarter hours  $\times 2/3 = 2$  semester credit hours.

## Student Achievement Data

In accordance with guidelines established by The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), all programs wishing to apply for and maintain CIDA accreditation must collect and publish student data to ensure the public has access to clear and reliable information addressing various aspects of program enrollment and student achievement. This information must be current and be easily accessible on the program website. This data may also be found in the course catalogue.

The data that is published must be specific to the program seeking to apply for or maintain CIDA accreditation and cannot be combined with other academic programs or institutional data. The data presented must be drawn from at least one or more of the past three academic years, and cannot be averaged with data older than three years.

Since the intent of this requirement is to present a clear and easily understood profile to the public, the program must provide a clear context for the data so that readers understand which academic years are represented and how the numbers have been calculated. For instance, when addressing acceptance into graduate programs, programs should disclose the number or percentage of students who applied and were accepted, as opposed to only providing the number or percentage of students who were accepted.

At a minimum, programs must present aggregate data addressing each of the following: attrition/retention; graduation rates; job placement rates disclosing discipline related vs. non-discipline related; and acceptance into graduate programs. If any of these items are missing, the program will be considered as not having met the qualification and will be required to provide the information. Additionally, all of the data must be directly accessible in one location on the program's website as opposed to directing readers to links to multiple data reports.

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## **Eligibility of Programs Delivered through Alternate Methods**

Application for accreditation is open to programs that are delivered through alternate methods, such as distance education. If the program demonstrates that it meets all eligible institution and eligible program requirements, the program may be reviewed for accreditation. The program shall be required to undergo a review similar to that of a site-based program, including hosting a site visit and preparing a display of student work for evaluation as described in CIDA's policy and procedure, Section VI. Site Visit.

Programs delivered through alternate methods may be considered distinct from the same program taught through traditional methods, even in the instance when the programs are housed in the same institution and use the same curriculum. Refer to Alternate Delivery Methods below.

## **Eligibility of Multiple Programs or Programs with Multiple Degrees**

A program is defined by CIDA as a sequenced curriculum of interior design and related professional coursework that includes a minimum of 30 semester credit hours of general education and results in a degree.

An institution with more than one interior design program on different campuses must apply for each program separately. The programs will be reviewed for accreditation separately.

An institution with: a) more than one interior design program on the same campus, but located in different academic units and b) each program having a somewhat different curriculum from the other(s), must apply for each program separately. The programs will be reviewed for accreditation separately.

An institution with a program that is a) located in one academic unit and b) has variable curricula sequences, each culminating in a different degree (for example, B.S. & B.A., B.A. & M.A.) should submit documentation prior to applying for accreditation that details the curriculum for each degree. The Accreditation Commission will make a determination on how the program should proceed with the application and review process.

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## Alternate Delivery Methods

Delivery method is a distinguishing feature of programs. An institution that offers courses through alternate delivery methods should submit documentation prior to applying for accreditation addressing specific aspects of the program's curriculum and structure. The Accreditation Commission will determine how the program should proceed with the application and review.

The Accreditation Commission will consider the extent to which the courses offered through each delivery method share common learning experiences, student learning outcomes, and resources in order to determine whether two distinct programs result from the alternate delivery method of some courses.

The following Information must be submitted to the Commission:

- How many courses required for graduation from the interior design program, including courses taken in other departments, are offered in more than one format?
- Are students able to enroll in courses from any delivery method? If so, are there guidelines or parameters regarding the number of courses that students can take from each delivery method?
- What processes and/or assessments are used to ensure that learning experiences are comparable in courses offered through multiple delivery methods?
- Documentation of variations in course content and learning experiences, if any exist, between on-line and campus-based courses.
- Documentation of variations in institutional or program policy and procedure, if any exist, between alternate delivery and campus-based courses or programs.

## Application Review and Acceptance

CIDA's Accreditation Commission reviews application materials to determine whether an institution and program meet eligibility requirements. The Accreditation Commission may accept or deny applications based on documentation submitted by the institution or program, or may request further documentation that the institution or program meets eligibility requirements.