



Holly Mattson
CIDA
225 Michigan St NW, Unit 1034
Grand Rapids, MI 49501
holly@cida.org

October 13, 2026

RE: Public Comment on the Proposed CIDA 2028 Professional Standards

Dear Holly Mattson,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the standards that will shape interior design education for the next decade. I am a credentialed interior designer with over 15 years of experience, a graduate of a CIDA-accredited program, and a tutor of students and practitioners for nearly 10 years. I am also the founder of The Green Tape Measure, a North Carolina non-profit that conducts research on interior design education, examination, and regulation.

I support the draft Standards as a whole. The comments below are intended to strengthen them so that graduates are prepared for practice. They draw on my professional experience, reports from practitioners and recent graduates, and GTM's research, *Interior Design & Architecture: A Comparative Analysis of Education & Examination*. All code and standards references refer to U.S. standards.

1. Program Identity & Resources (pp. 18-19)

Program naming (a, b, c). CIDA-accredited programs titled "interior architecture" may mislead the public and students into believing they are architecture programs and that graduates are "interior architects." I recommend that accredited programs be titled "interior design."

Faculty qualifications (h). Instructors should hold credentials appropriate to the courses they teach, such as NCIDQ for commercial studios and CKBD for residential studios. GTM's research shows that architecture education and examination focus on the building envelope and overall building form, and do not address the occupant-level knowledge required of interior designers.

Faculty composition (j, k). How will CIDA verify that more than half of studio courses are taught by faculty with an interior design degree or NCIDQ certification? I also recommend that residential studios be taught by faculty holding NKBA credentials (such as CKBD), since NCIDQ is oriented toward commercial practice.

Program chair (l, m). The chair of an interior design program should be an interior designer with an interior design credential (NCIDQ, CKBD).

2. Learning Environment & Student Experience (p. 21)

Feedback opportunities (a). Projects with real sites and real clients gave me my strongest learning experiences and also showed the public what interior designers do. Could the Standards require that a minimum share of projects involve a real site or client?

Technical equipment (f). The footnote refers to software "commonly used within the interior design profession." Please name AutoCAD and SketchUp explicitly. Tutoring students has shown me that many programs emphasize Revit, while practitioners doing interior renovation work still rely heavily on AutoCAD and SketchUp.

Career opportunities (g). Students should learn that interior designers work *with* architects, not *for* them, and that architecture firms are one of many paths. Others include interior design firms, set design, project management, and space planning for property owners.

Professional role models (h). Please specify the backgrounds of role models and their role in the curriculum (instructor, visiting faculty, project critic). Students are impressionable. One emerging designer recently told me she believed she must join ASID or IIDA to practice, which is not the case.

Professional experience (i). I strongly recommend requiring an internship or job shadowing. My own required internship shaped my career direction and taught me AutoCAD standards that are not taught in school.

3. Design Foundations & Contexts (p. 24)

Daylight (c). Interior designers do not place exterior windows, but they must understand window types and how daylight varies by orientation and season in order to plan spaces appropriately.

Electric lighting (d). Beyond principles, students should learn application and coordination with electrical engineers: preparing reflected ceiling plans, reading engineering drawings, and understanding switching.

History (e, f). Interior design history should receive greater emphasis than architectural history, including furniture and interiors.

Drawing (h, i). Programs should continue to teach basic hand drafting and sketching, which remain expected in practice.

4. People & Planet (p. 27)

Human health and well-being (a). At a minimum, students should learn universal design, anthropometrics, ergonomics, and other human factors principles. These are heavily tested on credentialing exams and are central to interior design.

Standards and guidelines (c). Knowledge of WELL and LEED is an expectation in practice and should be introduced early.

Indoor air quality and thermal design (d, e). Students should also learn mitigation strategies, including material and finish selection, ventilation, plants and living walls, allergens, relevant standards (e.g., ANSI), thermal zones and thermostat placement, and supply and return placement.

Acoustics (h). Acoustics is critical when designing non-loadbearing partitions and ceilings. Students should understand terms such as STC, NRC, and NIC.

5. Regulatory Contexts & Building Systems (p. 30)

Laws, codes, regulations (a). The IBC, ADA, BIFMA, ANSI, and ASTM should be part of the curriculum. Students need not memorize them but should know the basics (e.g., exit separation) and how to navigate an online code book.

Structural and construction typologies (c). Students must be able to recognize load-bearing or structural conditions that require an architect or engineer. For example, commercial construction documents often require notes directing the contractor to X-ray post-tensioned slabs before core drilling.

Building systems (d, e, f). Every CIDA program should include a dedicated building systems studio covering what interior designers select and place (outlets, lighting, plumbing fixtures) and how to coordinate with MEP engineers. Students should understand "shell," "core," and "tenant" space, and how to select and locate plumbing fixtures efficiently (e.g., chases, back-to-back fixtures).

Fabrication (g). Students should understand the difference between interior details designers provide (e.g., cabinet sections) and what fabricators provide in shop drawings.

Life safety (h). Students should learn the basics of a life safety plan, which commercial interior designers prepare as part of a construction set.

Accessibility (i). Students should be able to locate and read the ADAAG and the accessibility provisions of the IBC.

Construction documents (j, k). Students should see complete interior design construction sets, including consultants' drawings (e.g., MEP), and learn that required set contents are determined by the jurisdiction's building department.

6. Design Synthesis (p. 34)

Surveying (a). Students should receive hands-on training in surveying and documenting an existing interior space for renovation.

Space planning (e). Some students equate space planning with furniture placement. It is the planning of space within a building shell, primarily interior partitions, with furniture often shown as placeholders to convey use and room size.

Design process (d). The process as written omits contract administration, construction administration, and post-occupancy evaluation. Interior design does not end at design development.

Team collaboration (j). Studios should be team-based and, where possible, include other majors (construction management, architecture, engineering). Each discipline's contributions should reflect what its students actually learn in their own curricula, not instructors' personal views of professional boundaries.

7. Professionalism (p. 37)

Professional Organizations & Regulation (a, b, c). Students should receive balanced, accurate information about the professional landscape. ASID and IIDA are membership organizations that engage in legislative advocacy, whereas CIDQ is the body that administers the NCIDQ examination. Membership in any organization is not required to practice. Students should also be introduced to NKBA and DSA and their credentials for residential practice, and should gain equal respect for all practice settings. Regulation should be taught as a subject of objective study that covers the full range of perspectives, not as advocacy messaging.

"Reasonable regulation." I ask that "reasonable regulation" not be taught as an established professional principle in any CIDA-accredited program. It is a legislative advocacy position, not a body of knowledge or a competency. GTM analyzed 1,302 testimonies on 11 interior design bills in 8 states during the 2020s. Of these, 1,203 supported "reasonable regulation" and 99 opposed it. Architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) professionals and interior designers working under them gave 51% of the supporting testimony and 64% of the opposing testimony. Interior design firm owners and employees, the profession being regulated, gave only 12% and 14%. Meanwhile, restrictions on interior designers have increased and interior design representation on regulatory boards has lagged. Presenting this position to students as settled risks shaping their views on a contested policy question before they enter practice. I would be glad to share the full dataset and methodology with CIDA.

Documentation and Management (i). If Section 6 will not address post-design-development work, this section should cover contract administration, plan check and permitting, construction administration, and post-occupancy tasks, all of which are essential phases of an interior design project.

Thank you for considering these comments. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss them or to share GTM's research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Wright". The ink is a light grey or blue color.

Amy Wright
Founder & Executive Director
The Green Tape Measure Foundation