



B.S. INDS Writing Plan

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BACKGROUND

Our program is accredited; writing (communication) is part of our accreditation.

The B.S. Interior Design (INDS) program at Auburn University is accredited by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA). This accreditation makes our graduates eligible to sit for the NCIDQ exam, which is required in many U.S. states to practice as a licensed interior designer. Auburn's INDS program is a nationally-ranked program and its graduates practice all across the U.S. and abroad, so our accreditation is at the core of our curriculum decisions.

CIDA requirements for our program do include writing and other forms of communication; therefore, the CIDA assessment process is how we assess student writing in our major. CIDA's communication expectations are exhibited in the last page of this document; you can also access all current standards here: [CIDA Document](#). CIDA standards that address communication are described in terms of both 1) student learning expectations (SLE's comparable to SLO's / student learning outcomes) in standards 9a-9e and 2) program expectations (PE's) in standards 9f and 9g. For further details, refer to the last page.

We revised our curriculum, and most courses, so our faculty team revised our writing plan.

Our process for creating this writing plan began with 2018 leadership changes – a new program coordinator and new department head – which prompted the faculty team to come together and re-envision the next evolution of our program. The team consisted of the two tenure-track faculty and three full-time lecturers currently serving in the program. We also consulted current and former students, CIDA accreditation officers, Auburn administrators, and industry partners. We worked together to make decisions collaboratively, with the Program Coordinator as team leader. As a result of this year-long visioning and development process, and with buy-in from all aforementioned stakeholders, we submitted (in CIM) a revised curriculum and revisions on nearly every course we offer.

Writing wasn't an after-thought, but it turned out to take more discussion than any other CIDA standard and so it has been the last standard to be finalized by our team. In Fall 2018 we met to work through CIDA Standard 9, Communication, which also served as our "listening session" with members of the UWC. The outcomes from that meeting are reflected in this writing plan. The writing plan we are introducing here was developed to correspond with the revised curriculum and to more efficiently and effectively match University expectations for "significant writing experiences relevant to the major across the entire curriculum".

Identifies who was involved in creating the plan and makes it clear that this is not the work of a single individual working alone.

Background provides information about external accreditation standards and requirements, but also describes the reasons for updating the writing plan. The process for doing this work is clearly laid out and demonstrates an attitude of shared responsibility that signals to reviewers that creating the plan was taken as serious work, not just a bureaucratic requirement. Though longer than background sections for other writing plans, the details about the program are useful context for those outside the discipline. The underlining and bolding helps reviewers see the organizational structure and return to key points easily. The tone throughout is professional, clear, and easy to follow.



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PROCESS

Our faculty are engaged in the process of developing our writing plan; they are also engaged in integrating, teaching, revising, and evaluating writing/communication.

We are a studio-based program; studio courses have high contact hours and restricted enrollment. That means that every single semester that a student is enrolled in our curriculum they are working for at least 6 hours a week with each of their studio professors to apply what they are learning to real world problems. It is natural that this type of student-teacher relationship involves a lot of talking about, writing about, and of course drawing about the student's work. It was clear to us from the start of this discussion that we were already meeting our CIDA standards and writing expectations. The challenge has been to formally articulate how we are doing so – this writing plan gives us that opportunity.

The writing plan is not, however, the end of the conversation. Our accreditation standards change regularly, with revisions coming as often as once a year, which has meant that we have revisited our communication standard in at least one dedicated faculty meeting each year. We intend to continue this pattern of engaging the whole faculty team as we work on writing and other forms of communication each year. Writing is already part of our accreditation and therefore part of our assessment practices; we report on writing-related outcomes in our program assessment reports to the University and to the external CIDA accreditation body. Clearly our faculty are aware of our commitment to improving writing in our major, but we want to increase student awareness by including writing in one of our two INDS Business Meetings held each year for students. As the Spring 2019 meeting has already passed, we intend to begin specifically discussing our writing-related goals with students in our Spring 2020 INDS Business Meeting, and will address it yearly in Spring thereafter. We also address our commitment to writing in specific assignments, but we hope that adding a discussion to the Business Meeting will underscore that writing matters in their long-term career success and not just in specific assignment grades.

We have just completed a proposed curriculum revision, now under review in CIM. Our next step is to benchmark how well we are currently meeting our communication standards so that we can develop goals for improvement.

Our next CIDA accreditation review is tentatively planned for 2020, but the exact date will be determined by the accrediting body (sometimes it is pushed off by a year, due to scheduling). Between Spring 2019 and Spring 2020 we will be documenting how we meet standards related to communication; this documentation includes actual artifacts of student work (names omitted) as well as summary measures of student learning outcomes. We anticipate that we could provide an implementation report to the University Writing Committee in Spring 2020, summarizing benchmarking and goals development from the past year.

Although we are completely revising our curriculum, we are able to shuffle a lot of our writing- and communication-related assignments around from our old courses to new courses. This is efficient and appropriate given that our last CIDA site visit team assessed us as being fully compliant in Standard 9 Communication. The quality of our communication teaching has also been cited as top five in the nation among CIDA accredited schools by *DesignIntelligence*, the ranking publication for Architecture and Design programs. However, we are always improving and aware that writing about design is often a difficult task for design students to master. In addition to benchmarking, during the Spring 2019 to Spring 2020 cycle we are also enrolling our faculty team in teaching workshops and other continuing education opportunities focused on developing more transparent learning approaches and identifying more accurate measures of student learning outcomes. Most recently, several attended a TILT workshop hosted by the Biggio Center. We see these opportunities as a natural way to continue to improve our teaching and the quality of the education we provide in this nationally-ranked program.



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CURRICULUM MAP

Fall Year 1	Writing	Spring Year 1	Writing
CADS 1100 Interior Design Studio: Foundations <i>(coreq CADS 1000)</i>	Introducing 9b,c,d	CADS 2300 History, Theory, and Criticism of Interior Design 1	Reinforcing 9c
CADS 1000 Introduction to Interior Design		Note: Students who pass CADS 1000, CADS 1100 are eligible to apply for the major via a portfolio review process. Admitted students begin the major in Fall Year 2.	
Fall Year 2		Spring Year 2	
CADS 2100 Interior Design Studio: Space Planning & Process	Introducing 9e,f,g Reinforcing 9b,c,d	CADS 2500 Interior Design Studio: Residential <i>(prereq CADS 2100, CADS 2200)</i>	Reinforcing 9b,c,d,e,f,g
CADS 2200 Interior Design Studio: Computer-Aided Design		CADS 2600 Lighting and Environmental Systems	
CADS 2350 History, Theory, and Criticism of Interior Design 2 <i>(prereq CADS 2300)</i>		CADS 2400 Interior Materials and Components	
CADS 2150 Project Management for Interior Designers			
Fall Year 3		Spring Year 3	
CADS 3400 Interior Design Studio: Commercial <i>(prereq CADS 2200, CADS 2500)</i>	Introducing 9a Reinforcing 9b,c,d,e,f,g	CADS 3500 Interior Design Studio: Design for Health and Wellness <i>(prereq CADS 3400)</i>	Reinforcing 9a,b,c,d,e,f,g
CADS 3100 Portfolio and Professional Development		CADS 3200 Global Issues in Interior Design	
Semester Total		Semester Total	
CADS 5300 Interior Design Studio: Hospitality <i>(prereq CADS 3400)</i>	Reinforcing 9a,e,f Mastering 9b,c,d,g	CADS 5400 Interior Design Studio: Advanced Design Project <i>(prereq CADS 3400)</i>	Mastering 9a,b,c,d,e,f,g
CADS 4200 Interior Design Capstone Seminar <i>(prereq CADS 3400)</i>			

The curriculum map is tied to specific outcomes. Because courses at the same level are structured to introduce and reinforce the same outcomes, this way of organizing the curriculum map is logical and reviewers can still find what they are looking for. A revision that might have made this easier to follow would be to put the table after the detailed outcomes instead of before them (they are appended at the end).



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TEACHING STRATEGIES & ASSIGNMENTS

Our students learn about and practice producing more than one kind of writing relevant to the major. (1)

In the first and second year, students learn to communicate design ideas at a novice level using techniques like written concept statements, simple verbal design presentations, and visual collages of others' work. In the second year they learn basic forms of design drawing standards for construction documents as well as professional communication such as email and inquiry letters, telephone etiquette, and interpersonal communication skills for teamwork and problem-solving. They also learn a range of design communication technologies and techniques across multiple courses, and that is reinforced and eventually mastered as they move through the program. In the third year they begin to learn how to write about research and how to visually distill complex research ideas. They begin writing more complex business communications and completing increasingly complex construction documentation and specification materials. Between their third and fourth year they complete an e-portfolio and collateral documents to begin applying for internships and jobs including cover letters and email communication.

Our students have many opportunities to practice those kinds of writing and to revise based on feedback. (2,4)

The reason our curriculum map aligns standards to each semester rather than to one single course is because we are practicing these writing and communication types over and over again throughout the course of their education. They begin their evolution in introductory classes and move progressively through reinforcement and onto mastery. Our faculty have different preferences as to how they like to provide opportunities for revision, but across the curriculum each student gets to experience revision in three primary ways: 1) students are given opportunities to revise and resubmit the same assignment to improve that grade; 2) students are given opportunities to do the same assignment, with the same kind of writing and to the same audience, repeatedly during a single semester; and 3) students practice similar assignments across multiple courses, practicing the same skills but learning different successful and less successful approaches to various forms of design communication. We provide feedback in a couple of different ways, too, through peer review, repetition of similar assignments, and through iterative stages on a single assignment (the iterative process is an essential part to studio-based classrooms and learning). We also sometimes, but not often, revise from one format to another, such as writing an abstract or short paper and then later using feedback to expand that piece into a research poster.

Our students write for more than one audience or purpose. (3)

We practice writing and communicating to audiences such as: the professor, employer, prospective employer, clients, classmates and team mates, design colleagues and research colleagues, community and industry stakeholders, and the public. We also practice writing and communicating to inform, summarize, persuade, analyze/interpret, and to apply to a specific case. In the studio-based environment we practice over and over how to communicate through different mediums, to different audiences, and for different purposes within the context our professional practice.

We are continually assessing writing as part of our CIDA accreditation, and by necessity we use that assessment for continued improvement. (5)

Our writing assessment is also reported as part of our program assessment, and as we improve each area of assessment or revise how we present the information in each report we use what we have learned to improve the other areas. We see these various reports as naturally interrelated and valuable in the overarching goal of continuous improvement and growth toward excellence as we maintain our national ranking and reputation.

This section provides specific details connected to the principles the University Writing Committee uses as the criteria for approving writing plans. Though some of the information is repeated or implied in the outcomes, collecting the specifics together and tying to the outcomes makes the reviewers' job easier; no guessing or trying to read between the lines about what is or isn't happening in this program in relation to writing.

Though we have fewer specific details about how assessment of writing happens in this program, we have a clear statement that assures reviewers that assessment happens and that the program faculty are committed to continued improvement. The UWC encourages programs to fold assessment of writing into their regular program assessments as this program is clearly intending to do.

Professional Standards 2018

Standard 9. Communication

Interior designers are effective communicators.

Intent: This standard ensures that graduates are effective communicators and are able to deliver a compelling presentation visually and verbally, as well as in writing. Design communication also involves the ability to listen to and interpret external information. Effective communication builds a case, promotes validity, and is persuasive in content and style.

Student Learning Expectations

Students are **able** to effectively:

- distill and visually communicate data and research.¹
- express ideas and their rationale in oral communication.
- express ideas and their rationale in written communication.
- express ideas and their rationale developed in the design process through visual media: ideation drawings and sketches.²
- express project solutions using a variety of visual communication techniques and technologies appropriate to a range of purposes and audiences.

Program Expectations

The interior design program provides opportunities for:

- exposure to evolving communication technologies.³
- students to develop active listening skills in the context of professional collaboration.⁴

Guidance

The following guidance is provided to promote consistent understanding of the referenced criteria. Examples offered are for the purposes of illustration only and should not be construed as required or as an inclusive list of items that must be evidenced.

- Examples could include infographics, diagrams, charts, narrative techniques.
- Examples could include hand sketches, digital representations, and models.
- Examples could include software programs or technologies that may impact the future of interior design practice such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, sensor technology, robotics, interactive products, etc.
- Active listening requires listeners to evaluate what they are hearing from several points of view, including but not limited to: speaker credibility, logic and meaning of the message, underlying assumptions of the message, and value of the message. Examples of professional collaborators could include team members of allied disciplines, clients, or end users.

The underlined student learning levels in bold are defined to clearly communicate expectations. Refer to pages 9-10 for student learning level definitions.



Since this standard comes from the accrediting body, it does not employ the strong learning verbs that align with Auburn University's goals for high-quality assessment. However, the goals do align with the criteria the University Writing Committee uses to approve writing plans.

Breaking a general communication-related outcome into the component parts makes it easier to understand what the program means by "effective communicators."

This list also shows reviewers that a range of skills and genres are expected.