

2026 GRAPHIC DESIGN

Program Standards

CONTENT STANDARD 1.0: PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

Performance Standard 1.1: Student Leadership in Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) and Professional Associations

- 1.1.1 Explore the role of professional organizations and/or associations in the Graphic Design industry.
- 1.1.2 Define the values, roles, and opportunities provided through career technical student organizations.
- 1.1.3 Engage in career exploration and leadership development.

CONTENT STANDARD 2.0: THE GRAPHIC DESIGN INDUSTRY

Performance Standard 2.1: History and Influence of Graphic Design

- 2.1.1 Describe the history and evolution of technology, art movements, and societal trends and how they impact graphic design/visual communication.
- 2.1.2 Describe the importance of visual/digital media on today's society and culture.

CONTENT STANDARD 3.0: FOUNDATIONS OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

Performance Standard 3.1: Elements of Design

- 3.1.1 Describe the concepts and terminology related to color theory.
- 3.1.2 Identify deliberate applications of color, line, shape, texture, size, and value in graphic works.

Performance Standard 3.2: Principles of Design

- 3.2.1 Identify the principles of design (e.g., balance, contrast, alignment, rhythm, repetition, proximity, movement, harmony, emphasis, unity) in graphic works.
- 3.2.2 Interpret how the principles of design work in a variety of design techniques.

Performance Standard 3.3: Typography

- 3.3.1 Identify anatomical components and qualities of type (e.g., point size, x-height, ascenders, descenders, counters, baseline).
- 3.3.2 Apply formatting to type (e.g., kerning, tracking, leading) to achieve deliberate graphic effects.
- 3.3.3 Construct graphic works, using a variety of font families and pairing concepts.

Performance Standard 3.4: Layout

- 3.4.1 Describe the effective use of negative space, composition, message structure, and graphics, as applied to graphic works.
- 3.4.2 Manipulate layout settings (e.g., measurement, grids, columns, rule of thirds, bleed) to create graphic works.
- 3.4.3 Compare layout techniques and specifications for print format (e.g., magazines, yearbooks) to digital media format (e.g., mobile devices, tablets).
- 3.4.4 Describe the importance, components, and goals of creating a user interface (UI) (e.g., layouts, buttons, icons, typography, colors, menus) in order to craft a positive user experience (UX) (e.g., usability, functionality, emotional impact, accessibility).
- 3.4.5 Describe visual hierarchy and its effective use to direct the viewer's eyes in graphic design compositions.

CONTENT STANDARD 4.0: GRAPHIC DESIGN PRODUCTION

Performance Standard 4.1: Pre-production-Concept Development

- 4.1.1 Generate project ideas through creative techniques (e.g., brainstorming, sketching, thumbnails, roughs, mock-ups, wireframes, storyboards).
- 4.1.2 Describe the importance of developing a message for a specific audience.

- 4.1.3 Define the elements of a project (e.g., size, format, software, deadline).
- 4.1.4 Compare the features of vector artwork versus raster images and the situations in which one is more effective than the other.

Performance Standard 4.2: Production-Creation and Manipulation

- 4.2.1 Collect and organize digital media content (e.g., photos, graphics, video), using a variety of devices and sources.
- 4.2.2 Apply nondestructive image editing techniques, including the use of selection tools, layering and masking to manipulate images.
- 4.2.3 Apply techniques of image composition, cropping, use of vector paths, and raster channels to intended effect.

Performance Standard 4.3: Post-Production

- 4.3.1 Describe the process and benefits of proofreading, editing, preflighting, and using proper prepress techniques to create graphic works shared with different audiences.
- 4.3.2 Maximize production values by adjusting resolution, aspect ratio, compression, and file formats for various media outputs including web, video, audio, motion graphics, and print to intended effect.
- 4.3.3 Apply current industry standard color modes in graphic works, using color systems and tools (e.g., RGB, HEX, LAB, CMYK, HSB, color books) to intended effect.
- 4.3.4 Ensure accurate color reproduction in both digital and print media through the effective application of grayscale, spot color, and process color, according to project specifications.
- 4.3.5 Manage project organization, formats, and deliverables to ensure that it is technically sound, reproducible, and aligned with client or platform expectations.

CONTENT STANDARD 5.0: CONTENT STRATEGY

Performance Standard 5.1: Branding and Corporate Identity

- 5.1.1 Analyze the link between branding and corporate identity, including the purpose of branding and its importance for both a business and its constituents.
- 5.1.2 Create visuals that consistently represent brand identity across multiple media formats.

Performance Standard 5.2: Social Media

- 5.2.1 Describe the positive and negative effects of social media.
- 5.2.2 Compare a variety of social media platforms in relation to target audiences.
- 5.2.3 Define key terms and metrics (e.g., engagement, analytics, influencers) of social media.

CONTENT STANDARD 6.0: ETHICAL AND LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO GRAPHIC DESIGN

Performance Standard 6.1: Copyright and Intellectual Property Law

- 6.1.1 Describe laws governing intellectual property (e.g., copyrights, trademarks) and software licensing.
- 6.1.2 Describe consequences of violating copyright, privacy, and data security laws.
- 6.1.3 Describe fair use factors and applications.
- 6.1.4 Describe Creative Commons (CC) licenses and the importance of using a release form.
- 6.1.5 Discuss artificial intelligence's (AI's) emerging impact on the field of graphic design (e.g., content creation, image and audio generation, streamlining workflow).

CONTENT STANDARD 7.0: CREATIVE PORTFOLIO

Performance Standard 7.1: Portfolio Development

- 7.1.1 Describe the importance, strategies, and goals of developing a creative portfolio.
- 7.1.2 Define the elements of a creative portfolio based on industry standards.
- 7.1.3 Create a portfolio that is dynamic and includes variety.

Performance Standard 7.2: Evaluating Portfolios

- 7.2.1 Describe the elements of the critique process, including demonstrating respect for peer work and the ability to give and receive professional and constructive criticism.
- 7.2.2 Conduct peer-evaluations and self-evaluations, using a rubric or formulating verbal responses to discuss design choices.

CONTENT STANDARD 8.0: COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Performance Standard 8.1: Communication Skills for Visual Communications

- 8.1.1 Demonstrate professionalism in all client interactions (e.g., communication, appearance, social media, online platforms).
- 8.1.2 Create a design presentation for a graphic design project that includes design rationale (i.e., explanation of choices), using industry terminology.