

# Harmonizing Standards and Outcomes

## An Analysis of Assessment Cogency in Environmental and Interior Design

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### 01 Context

This project aimed to examine the existing alignment of **NASAD** (National Association of Schools of Art and Design) Essential Competencies, **CIDA** (Council for Interior Design Accreditation) standards, **SLOs** (Student Learning Outcomes), and the **learning goals for coursework** in the Environmental and Interior Design program (EDI).

The intent of this work was to identify areas in which standards, expectations, and outcomes are lacking, mis-aligned, or contradictory. The end goal was to understand how standards are both emphasized and lost by the time the content is delivered to students as a course.

The method of approach for this project was to perform an in-depth cross analysis of the myriad of competencies, standards, and goals associated with and governing the program. This revealed aspects of both alignment as well as discrepancies. The outcomes of this work illustrate opportunities for harmonization.

This programmatic self study will facilitate key conversations among EDI faculty on how to enhance student learning and readiness for the industry, while demonstrating the program's commitment to academic excellence for future programmatic evaluations.

### 02 NASAD :: CIDA

The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) requires that EDI meet specific curricular criteria and competencies. However, the program is also required to meet standards established by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) to be considered a professional, industry aligned program. The standards for each of these accrediting agencies were cross-referenced to understand how they align.

#### Cogency

**Broad Application:** Both NASAD and CIDA emphasize the importance of mastering design principles across varied applications, ensuring students are well-equipped for both technical challenges and human-centered design solutions.

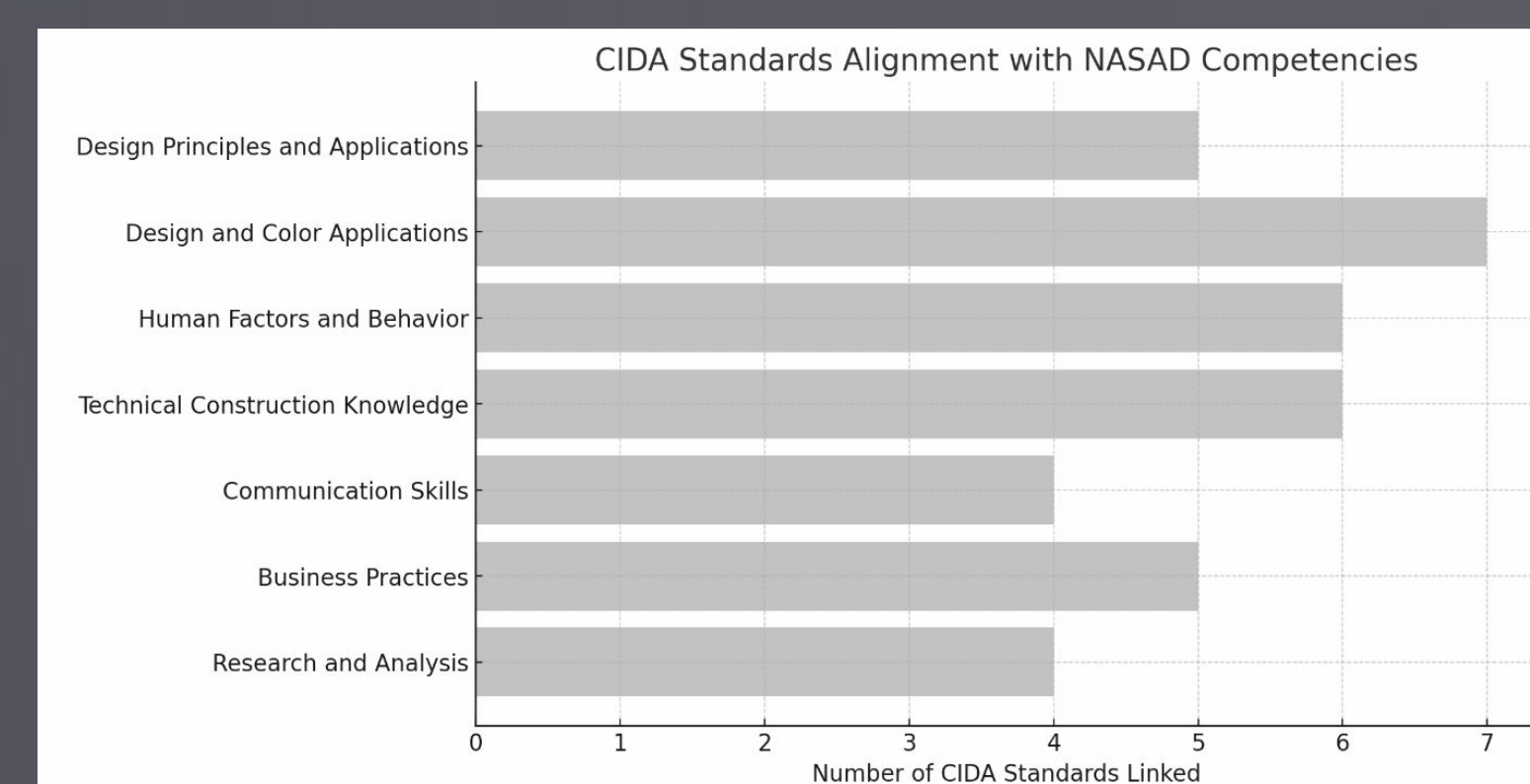
**Human Factors:** There's a consistent integration of human behavior knowledge into design practices, a testament to the holistic approach in preparing students for real-world design challenges.

**Professional Readiness:** The curriculum underpins professional and business practices, preparing students comprehensively for the industry's practical and professional demands.

#### Discrepancies

**Range of Application:** Some competencies, like design and color principles, link to a broader spectrum of standards compared to more specialized areas such as technical construction knowledge, which focuses primarily on construction and environmental systems.

**Detail and Specificity:** There's variability in how competencies are linked to standards; detailed technical competencies are often tied to specific standards, while broader skills like communication are addressed more generally.



Intersection of NASAD competencies and CIDA standards.

### 03 CIDA :: EDI SLOs

EDI aims to teach students how to become creative problem-solvers and critical thinkers who excel in environmental design by fostering: 1. Openness to new ideas and the ability to question the status quo; 2. Understanding learning is the essential component in problem-solving; 3. Acknowledgement of historical, cultural, contextual, psychological, behavioral impacts of design; 4. Awareness of social responsibility, building stewardship, multicultural diversity, and ecology; and 5. Advanced visual communication skills for conceptualizing, articulating, describing, and actualizing design. The goals were cross-referenced with the NASAD and CIDA standards to understand how they align.

#### Cogency

**Global and Holistic Approach:** Both the SLOs and CIDA emphasize global perspective and consider social, cultural, and ecological contexts in design (Standard 4), which aligns with EDI goals of understanding the broad impacts of design and building stewardship.

**Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Communication:** Teamwork (Standard 5) and effective communication (Standard 9) resonates with EDI's aim to develop visual comm skills, ensuring grads collaborate across disciplines and articulate design concepts clearly.

**Historical and Cultural Awareness:** Acknowledging historical and cultural aspects in design (Standard 10) aligns with EDI's goal of understanding historical, cultural, and contextual impacts of design.

**Ecological and Social Responsibility:** CIDA emphasizes light and color theories, human wellbeing, and environmental systems (Standards 12, 14, 16), which mirror EDI's focus on ecology and social responsibility.

#### Discrepancies

**Scope and Depth of Application:** While CIDA provides specific guidelines on various design aspects, EDI goals suggest a broader, more philosophical approach to learning and problem-solving. For instance, CIDA focuses on technical skills and applied knowledge, whereas the SLOs emphasize openness to new ideas and lifelong learning, which may not be as explicitly covered in the standards.

**Specificity in Professionalism:** EDI goals encompass broad competencies like social responsibility and stewardship, which are more specific in CIDA standards through business practices and professional roles (Standard 6). The breadth of application in EDI goals does not always translate into the specific competencies outlined in the CIDA standards.

**Environmental Design versus Interior Design:** The EDI program's focus on 'environmental design' suggests a broader context than 'interior design' covered by CIDA. This could lead to differing emphases on scale and type of projects, which may not be entirely captured by CIDA standards.

**Advanced Visual Communication Skills:** While communication is addressed in the CIDA standards, EDI's emphasis on 'advanced' skills suggests a depth that might exceed the general approach outlined in the standards.

### 04 EDI SLOs :: Coursework

Finally, this study examined the syllabi for five, select core courses to see if the standards and criteria maintain cogency at the instructional and coursework level. The courses examined were the Environmental Factors series (EDI 255, 256, 353), a sophomore studio (EDI 252), and an academic course called Design Issues (DES 248). The learning goals and coursework were considered in the analysis. Since only a select number of core courses were selected for this study, only cogency was analyzed and not discrepancies (as some courses not included in this study may address identified gaps).

#### Cogency

**Broad Application:** CIDA emphasizes global context, collaboration, and communication, which are reflected in EDI SLOs and reinforced in courses such as DES 248 and EDI 252 through projects and presentations, ensuring students are well-versed in design principles across varied applications.

**Human Factors:** There is a strong alignment in the focus on human-centered design across CIDA standards, EDI SLOs, and courses like EDI 255 and EDI 256. This demonstrates an integrated approach to understanding human behavior and environmental design practices.

**Professional Readiness:** Courses like EDI 252 prepare students for industry through the inclusion of practical assignments that encompass knowledge of industry standards, regulations, and guidelines, aligning with CIDA standards on business practices, construction, and regulations.

### 05 Summary

This project uncovered coherence and discord between educational intentions and the practical delivery of the curriculum to students. Key takeaways:

**Educational Synchronicity:** EDI manifests a commitment to integrating diverse pedagogical elements, striving to balance NASAD's broad competencies with CIDA's precise standards, fostering a curriculum that supports both theoretical inquiry and practical application.

**Bridging the Gaps:** Areas of misalignment, such as the depth of historical context and the pragmatic application of construction knowledge, signal opportunities for curricular enhancement.

**Global and Ethical Orientation:** The emphasis on global awareness, eco-responsibility, and collaboration aligns with the goal of nurturing designers capable of ethical and informed contributions to the global design community.

**Enhancement of Professional Readiness:** Discrepancies suggest a call to infuse the program with experiences and knowledge that close the gap between broad educational philosophies and the specialized skills demanded by the professional design landscape.