



**2026-27 Graphic Design
Program Handbook**

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Program Overview	5
1.1 Message from the Program Director	5
1.2 Purpose of the Handbook	5
1.3 Program Accreditation Information	5
1.4 Description of the Program and Areas of Study	5
1.5 Program Learning Outcomes	6
1.6 Career Pathways	6
2. Admission and Enrollment	7
2.1 Program Eligibility Requirements	7
2.2 Program Application Process	7
3. Faculty and Staff Directory and other Key Offices	8
3.1 Instructor Contact Information, Office Hours, and Availability	8
3.2 Staff Contact Information	8
3.3 Contact Information for Key Offices	8
4. Student Support Services	8
4.1 Advising	8
4.2 Career Services	8
4.3 Counseling Services	9
4.4 Tutoring and Academic Support	9
4.5 Financial Aid and Scholarship Opportunities	10
5. Academic Policies and Expectations	11
5.1 Academic Integrity and Code of Conduct	11
5.2 AI Usage	11
5.3 Student Attendance and Participation Expectations	12
5.4 Student Complaint and Grievance Procedures	12
5.5 Grading Policies and Standards	12
5.6 Non-Discrimination and Accessibility Policies	13
6. Curriculum and Course Descriptions	14

6.1 Program and Course Requirements and Credit Hours.....	14
6.2 Pre-requisite Courses.....	14
6.3 Required Core Courses	14
6.4 Elective Options	15
7. Work-Based Learning Requirements	16
7.1 Work-Based Learning (i.e., Internships, Clinical Experiences, Apprenticeships, Co-op Programs).....	16
7.2 Eligibility and Application Process	16
7.3 Expectations and Responsibilities of Students	16
7.4 Evaluation Process of Work-Based Learning Sites	17
8. Industry Specific Expectations	17
8.1 Rules and Ethics.....	17
8.2 HIPAA Confidentiality	18
8.3 Legal Standards.....	19
8.4 Professional Standards	19
9. Facilities, Equipment, and Safety Guidelines	20
9.1 Lab and Classroom Expectations.....	20
9.2 Equipment Usage and Maintenance.....	21
9.3 Safety Policies and Emergency Procedures	21
10. Industry Certifications and Licensure.....	23
10.1 Available Certifications through the Program.....	23
10.2 State and National Licensing Requirements	23
10.3 Certification Exam Preparation Resources n/a	23
11. Graduation and Program Completion Requirements	23
11.1 Graduation Checklist.....	23
11.2 Capstone Projects or Final Assessments	24
12. Appendix & Additional Resources.....	24
12.1 Forms and Templates	24
12.2 Academic Calendars	25
12.3 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)	25

12.4 Note Pages.....26



Graphic Design Student Handbook

1. Introduction and Program Overview

1.1 Message from the Program Director

Welcome to the Graphic Design Program at Metropolitan Community College – Penn Valley. You are about to begin an exciting journey into the world of visual communication. Our vision is to cultivate strong creative thinkers who are equipped with the technical, conceptual, and professional skills needed for success in this competitive field.

In this program, you'll be challenged to solve real-world design problems, expand your creative voice, and prepare for either immediate entry into the design industry or transfer to a four-year institution. The faculty and staff are here to support you; take full advantage of open labs, critiques, internships, and professional guidance. We are thrilled to see your growth and look forward to the amazing work you will create.

1.2 Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook is a resource designed to guide you through the Graphic Design A.A.S. program. It contains essential information about program requirements, learning outcomes, career pathways, and academic policies. Use it as a roadmap to plan your courses, prepare for assessments, and track your progress toward graduation.

1.3 Program Accreditation Information

The Graphic Design A.A.S. degree is part of the MCC-Penn Valley Arts & Communication Division. MCC is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), ensuring that your degree meets rigorous academic and professional standards. For more details, visit: hlcommission.org

1.4 Description of the Program and Areas of Study

The Graphic Design A.A.S. program provides a hands-on, interactive learning environment using the latest technology such as Apple Macintosh computers and Adobe Creative Cloud software. Students are exposed to both traditional and digital media, developing skills in:

- Graphic design and layout
- Typography and branding
- Digital design and imaging
- Web and interactive design
- Portfolio development and professional practice

Graduates leave with conceptual, technical, and professional readiness for careers in applied arts or further education.

1.5 Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the program, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate proficiency with industry-standard software and tools.
- Apply critical thinking and technical skills to solve visual communication problems.
- Collaborate effectively with peers to complete design projects.
- Demonstrate strong time management, written, and oral communication skills.
- Apply professional ethics, project management, and business practices in design work.
- Produce a portfolio of work that reflects creativity, professionalism, and industry standards.

1.6 Career Pathways

Graduates of the MCKC Graphic Design A.A.S. program pursue careers such as:

- **Graphic Designer** – creating visual solutions for print and digital media.
- **Web & Interactive Designer** – designing user-friendly websites, apps, and digital interfaces.
- **Digital Imaging Specialist / Photo Retouching** – editing, restoring, and preparing images for professional use.
- **Print Production Artist** – preparing files for offset, digital, and large-format printing processes.
- **Brand Identity Designer** – developing logos, visual systems, and brand guidelines.
- **Advertising & Marketing Designer** – producing campaigns, social media graphics, and promotional materials.
- **Social Media Designer / Content Creator** – designing graphics, motion assets, and campaigns tailored for platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and LinkedIn.
- **Packaging Designer** – creating product packaging, labels, and point-of-purchase displays.
- **Motion Graphics Designer** – designing animated graphics for video, broadcast, and online media.
- **UI/UX Designer (with further training/experience)** – shaping user experiences and interfaces in digital products.

- **Art Director or Creative Director (with significant professional experience)** – leading creative teams and shaping visual strategy.

Employment opportunities exist in a wide range of industries and environments, including:

- Advertising agencies and marketing firms
- Graphic design studios and creative consultancies
- In-house corporate design and communications departments
- Printing companies, signage shops, and production houses
- Publishing companies (magazines, books, digital publications)
- Packaging and product design industries
- Broadcast, film, and multimedia production companies
- Nonprofits, educational institutions, and government organizations
- Startups and small businesses seeking strong visual branding
- Freelance practice or independent studio ownership

Career Growth and Professional Development

Many graduates begin in entry-level designer or production roles and advance into positions such as senior designer, project manager, or art director. With experience and continuing education, some move into specialized areas like UI/UX, motion design, or social media strategy. Others choose entrepreneurial paths, establishing their own freelance business or creative agency.

2. Admission and Enrollment

2.1 Program Eligibility Requirements

To be admitted into the Graphic Design A.A.S. program, students must meet general MCC admission requirements and:

- Complete GDES110 – Digital Design Applications I with a grade of C or higher.
- [6.10013 DP Transfer Credit](#)
- [6.10014 DP Academic Forgiveness](#)
- [6.10015 DP Credit for Prior Learning](#)

2.2 Program Application Process

- Apply to MCC through the online application system at mckc.edu/apply
- Meet with an MCC-Penn Valley advisor to review academic goals and program requirements. Advisors can assist with placement testing, degree planning, and transfer options.
- Register for GDES110 – Digital Design Applications I as your entry-level core class. This course is the foundation of the program and prepares you for the required Technical Skills Assessment.

- Complete the Technical Skills Assessment with a minimum score of 70%. Students who do not meet the benchmark may retake the test in a future semester.
- Upon successful completion of GDES110 with a C grade or higher, students may register for GDES160 – Graphic Design I and continue with the design course sequence.

3. Faculty and Staff Directory and other Key Offices

3.1 Instructor Contact Information, Office Hours, and Availability

Graphic Design Program Coordinator
Renate Ferreira renate.ferreira@mcckc.edu
816-604-4757 | Carter Arts Center 205

3.2 Staff Contact Information

n/aa

3.3 Contact Information for Key Offices

- **Graphic Design Program Coordinator**
Renate Ferreira renate.ferreira@mcckc.edu | 816-604-4757
- **Humanities Division Chair**
Jennifer Copeland; jennifer.copeland@mcckc.edu | 816-604-4220
- **MCC-Penn Valley Advising and Counseling / Business & Registration Center**
816-604-1000

4. Student Support Services

4.1 Advising

Students are encouraged to meet regularly with the Graphic Design Program Coordinator or their advisor to plan their semester schedule and track degree progress.

4.2 Career Services

MCC students have access to Career Services designed to help prepare for professional success during and after the Graphic Design program. Services include:

- **Career Coaching:** One-on-one meetings with career advisors to identify goals and career pathways.
- **Resume & Portfolio Review:** Guidance on crafting professional resumes, cover letters, and industry-standard design portfolios.
- **Internship Opportunities:** Access to internships with Kansas City–area design firms.
- **Job Search Support:** Help with job postings, networking, and connecting students to AIGA Kansas City and other professional organizations.

Students are strongly encouraged to use these resources throughout their program, especially while preparing for GDES264: Portfolio & Practice and the final portfolio review.

4.3 Counseling Services

MCC provides in-house counseling services to support the emotional, social, and personal well-being of students. These services include:

- **Personal Counseling:** Free, confidential sessions with licensed counselors to address stress, anxiety, grief, or other personal challenges.
- **Crisis Intervention:** Immediate support for students in urgent situations.
- **Referral Services:** Connection to community resources for specialized or long-term counseling needs.
- **Workshops & Groups:** Opportunities to attend stress management, wellness, or academic success workshops.

Students may contact the MCC-Penn Valley Counseling Center at 816-604-1000 for appointments. In addition, MCC offers online counseling and wellness resources via the MCC student portal, giving students 24/7 access to self-help tools and professional hotlines.

4.4 Tutoring and Academic Support

The Academic Support Center provides tutoring and study resources to help students succeed in both general education and program-specific courses. Support services include:

- **Tutoring Programs:** Free tutoring in subjects such as writing, communication, and software (Adobe Creative Cloud programs available in Graphic Design Mac labs).
- **Study Groups:** Peer-led or instructor-guided study groups for exam prep, project collaboration, and software mastery.
- **Workshops:** Sessions on time management, note-taking, test preparation, and portfolio development.
- **Technology Support:** Assistance with MCC systems, Canvas, and design software troubleshooting.

Academic Intervention Policy (7.40020 DR) MCC has a formal Academic Intervention policy designed to support students at risk of academic failure or withdrawal. Key points include:

- **Early Alerts:** Faculty may issue an early alert when a student demonstrates patterns of low attendance, missed assignments, or poor performance.
- **Intervention Process:** Students flagged for intervention will be contacted by advisors or support staff to develop an **academic success plan**.
- **Remediation Resources:** This plan may include tutoring, study groups, counseling referrals, or adjustments in course load.
- **Follow-up Monitoring:** Advisors track progress to ensure the student is improving and has access to ongoing support.
- The goal of this policy is not punitive; it is designed to keep students engaged, supported, and on track to complete the Graphic Design program successfully.
- [7.40020 DR Academic Intervention](#)

4.5 Financial Aid and Scholarship Opportunities

MCC provides a variety of financial resources to support students in reaching their academic goals. These include federal, state, institutional, and private aid programs, as well as scholarships specifically for graphic design students.

Types of Aid Available

- **Federal Financial Aid** (FAFSA-based): Grants, loans, and work-study opportunities.
- **State Aid:** Missouri student financial assistance programs (e.g., A+ Scholarship).
- **Institutional Scholarships:** MCC Foundation scholarships, departmental awards, and talent-based scholarships.
- **External Scholarships:** Opportunities from organizations such as AIGA, AAF-KC, and community foundations.

Eligibility Criteria

- Completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each academic year.
- Maintenance of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), including GPA and completion rate.
- Enrollment in the Graphic Design A.A.S program.

Application Instructions

1. Complete FAFSA at fafsa.gov using MCC's school code.
2. Apply for MCC scholarships through the MCC Scholarship Portal.
3. Contact the **Financial Aid Office** for support with verification, appeals, or special circumstances.

- [7.25020 DP Satisfactory Academic Progress of Financial Aid Recipients](#)
- [7.25050 DP Satisfactory Academic Progress of Veterans Benefits Recipients](#)
- [7.30000 BP Student Financial Aid](#)

5. Academic Policies and Expectations

5.1 Academic Integrity and Code of Conduct

The MCC Graphic Design program expects students to demonstrate honesty, professionalism, and ethical behavior in all coursework. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized use of generative AI tools within the Adobe Creative Suite and elsewhere, and unauthorized collaboration.

Consequences may include assignment failure, course failure, or referral to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

- [6.10010 BP Academic Standards](#)
- [6.10011 DP Grading Standards, Coursework and Final Examination](#)
- [6.10012 DP Grade Change](#)
- [6.10014 DP Academic Forgiveness](#)
- [7.20000 BP Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [7.35010 BP Code of Student Conduct](#)
- [7.35010 DP Code of Student Conduct](#)
- [7.40010 BP Freedom Due Process and Disciplinary Action](#)

5.2 AI Usage

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, Midjourney, or other generative platforms) can be powerful learning aids but must be used responsibly and ethically.

Acceptable Uses

- Brainstorming ideas, creative prompts, or mockups.
- Researching design concepts or historical references.
- Enhancing, but not replacing, original student work.

Unacceptable Uses

- Submitting AI-generated design work as original student work.
- Using AI to bypass assignment requirements or misrepresent authorship.
- Plagiarizing AI outputs without proper citation.

5.3 Student Attendance and Participation Expectations

Graphic Design is a deadline-driven industry; attendance and active participation are critical. Students are expected to:

- Attend all scheduled classes, arrive on time and remain in class for the entire scheduled studio time.
- Participate in critiques, discussions, and collaborative projects.
- Notify instructors in advance when absences are unavoidable.
- Complete all assignments by deadlines. Late work is generally not accepted unless otherwise specified in the course syllabus.
- [6.10017 DP Withdrawal and Audit Enrollment Status](#)
- [7.30050 DP Medical Discretionary Withdrawal](#)
- [7.35020 DR Student Attendance](#)

5.4 Student Complaint and Grievance Procedures

Students have the right to a fair and respectful learning environment. If concerns arise, the following steps should be taken:

1. **Informal Resolution:** Discuss the issue directly with the instructor or staff member involved.
 2. **Formal Complaint:** If the issue remains unresolved, the student may submit a written complaint to the Division Chair.
 3. **Appeal:** If the complaint cannot be resolved at the Chair level, the student may submit a written complaint to the Dean of Instruction.
- [7.20300 OP Student Complaints](#)
 - [7.20400 DR Student Rights and Privacy](#)
 - [7.20400 OP Student Rights and Privacy](#)
 - [7.40030 BP Status of Suspended or Expelled Student](#)

5.5 Grading Policies and Standards

Grades in the Graphic Design program are based on technical skill, creativity, professionalism, and adherence to project requirements. Assessment methods include:

- **Projects & Portfolios:** demonstrating mastery of design principles and software.
- **Exams & Quizzes:** testing knowledge of design history, terminology, and processes.
- **Critiques & Presentations:** evaluating communication, professionalism, and growth.
- **Participation & Attendance:** reflecting engagement in studio learning.

Students may appeal final grades through the Grade Change or Academic Forgiveness processes outlined in MCC policy.

- [6.10012 DP Grade Change](#)

5.6 Non-Discrimination and Accessibility Policies

The Metropolitan Community College Graphic Design Program is committed to fostering a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable learning environment for all students. Discrimination or harassment of any kind is not tolerated. The program upholds MCC's commitment to equal access, diversity, and nondiscrimination in accordance with federal law and institutional policy.

Commitment to Equity

- MCC prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status.
- The program actively promotes diversity in design education and values the unique perspectives of students from all backgrounds.

Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

- Students are protected under MCC's Non-Discrimination and Harassment policies.
- Any student who experiences harassment, sexual harassment, or discrimination should report the incident to the MCC Title IX Coordinator or Dean of Students.
- The college will take immediate and appropriate action to investigate and resolve complaints.

Disability Support Services (DSS)

MCC provides accommodations for students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to educational opportunities. Services may include:

- Extended testing time and alternative testing environments
- Note-taking assistance or alternate media formats
- Accessible classroom locations and seating arrangements
- Assistive technology and software
- Other individualized accommodations as determined through DSS

Students must **self-identify** and provide documentation to the **Disability Support Services Office** to receive accommodations. Faculty work collaboratively with DSS to implement approved plans.

Service and Emotional Support Animals

In alignment with MCC policy, students with disabilities may be accompanied by service animals or emotional support animals as a reasonable accommodation. Students must follow MCC guidelines for registering and maintaining animals on campus.

- [7.30030 BP Non-Discrimination and Harassment Student](#)

- [7.30030 DP Non-Discrimination and Harassment Student](#)
- [7.30035 BP Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Student](#)
- [7.30035 DP Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Student](#)
- [7.20100 DR Disability Support Services](#)
- [7.20100 OP Disability Support Services](#)
- [7.20200 DR Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals](#)
- [7.20200 OP Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals](#)

6. Curriculum and Course Descriptions

6.1 Program and Course Requirements and Credit Hours

The Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) in Graphic Design requires a total of 63 credit hours. This includes:

- **General Education Requirements** – foundational courses in English, communication, history, and social sciences.
- **Program-Specific Core Requirements** – courses in design foundations, software applications, typography, web design, and portfolio preparation.
- **Electives** – selected art or design courses to enhance specialization and broaden creative skills.

Students must maintain a grade of C or higher in all core design courses to progress through the sequence

6.2 Pre-requisite Courses

Before enrolling in advanced classes, students must successfully complete:

- **ART 103** – Design Foundations (or concurrent enrollment for some courses)
- **GDES 110** – Digital Design Applications I (C or higher required)
- **ENGL 90 / placement exam** – as a prerequisite for ENGL 101 and some design courses

6.3 Required Core Courses

Graphic Design Courses

- **GDES 110 – Digital Design Applications (3 credits):** Introduction to Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign.
- **GDES 115 – Introduction to Graphic Arts (3 credits):** Overview of graphic communications industry, production methods, and current trends.

- **GDES 150 – Digital Design Applications II (3 credits):** Intermediate application of design software (prerequisite: GDES 110).
- **GDES 160 – Graphic Design (3 credits):** Fundamentals of typography, layout, and client-centered problem-solving.
- **GDES 210 – Graphic Design II (3 credits):** Advanced design concepts with emphasis on production methods and design trends.
- **GDES 220 – File Preparation (3 credits):** Prepress processes, digital file accuracy, and output standards.
- **GDES 245 – Web Design (3 credits):** Introduction to visual design for websites, HTML/CSS, and interactive media.
- **GDES 250 – Graphic Design III (3 credits):** Professional-level design projects emphasizing problem-solving and client needs.
- **GDES 255 – Web Design II (3 credits):** Advanced web design including animation and motion graphics.
- **GDES 264 Graphic Design Portfolio & Practice (3 credits):** Development of a professional portfolio, interviewing techniques, and career preparation.

Digital Imaging and Printmaking (choose one from each category)

- **ART 247 or GDES 280 – Digital Imaging / Advanced Color Correction (3 credits)**
- **ART 250 – Printmaking or ART 254 – Silk Screen Printing I (3 credits)**

6.4 Elective Options

Students are required to complete **one elective (3 credits)** from ART or GDES. Options may include:

- **ART 111, 112, 113 – Advanced Drawing**
- **ART 170–173 – Ceramics I–IV**
- **ART 220–223 – Painting I–IV**
- **ART 230–233 – Sculpture I–IV**
- **ART 239–243 – Photography I–IV**
- **GDES 290 – Graphic Design Internship (Graphic Design Coordinator approval needed)**

Guidelines for Selection: Choose electives that complement your career goals (e.g., photography for media design, painting/sculpture for fine arts focus, or GDES290 internship for industry experience).

- Discuss elective options with your advisor to ensure alignment with degree completion and transfer pathways

7. Work-Based Learning Requirements

7.1 Work-Based Learning (i.e., Internships, Clinical Experiences, Apprenticeships, Co-op Programs)

Work-based learning (WBL) is not required but provides students who are interested with the opportunity to apply classroom instruction to real-world professional environments. For the Graphic Design program, this typically takes the form of an internship or cooperative work experience completed during the final year of study.

Definition and Purpose:

Work-based learning bridges academic study and industry practice by allowing students to:

- Gain hands-on experience in professional design settings.
- Develop skills in client communication, teamwork, and project management.
- Build a professional portfolio showcasing real-world work.
- Network with industry professionals for potential employment.

Examples of Work-Based Learning Opportunities:

- Graphic Design internships (on-site or remote)
- Freelance design projects approved by the program coordinator
- In-house campus design work (e.g., MCC marketing or student events)
- Community-based design service projects

7.2 Eligibility and Application Process

Eligibility Requirements:

- Enrollment in the Graphic Design A.A.S. program with a minimum GPA of 2.5.
- Successful completion of GDES210 – Graphic Design II (C or higher).
- Approval from the Program Coordinator prior to registration.

Application Steps:

1. Meet with Program Coordinator to discuss placement options and career goals.
2. Prepare a professional resume and portfolio demonstrating readiness for field work.
3. Identify potential sites (students may suggest sites, or the coordinator may assign from MCC's network of design partners).
4. Obtain formal approval before beginning work.
5. Register for GDES290 – Graphic Design Internship (3 credits) once placement is confirmed.

7.3 Expectations and Responsibilities of Students

During an internship or work-based experience, students are expected to uphold professional standards consistent with MCC and industry expectations.

Professional Conduct:

- Arrive on time, meet deadlines, and communicate proactively with supervisors.
- Maintain confidentiality and respect all client or company policies.
- Dress appropriately for the workplace and represent MCC professionally.
- Take initiative in assigned projects and seek constructive feedback.

Attendance & Reporting:

- Maintain regular attendance at the internship site.
- Track hours worked and submitting progress logs as required.
- Meet periodically with the faculty supervisor or coordinator to review goals and progress.
- Submit a final reflection and portfolio documentation of completed work at the end of the term.

Failure to meet professional expectations may result in removal from the site or a failing grade for GDES290.

7.4 Evaluation Process of Work-Based Learning Sites

Work-based learning sites are evaluated regularly to ensure alignment with MCC's academic standards and the industry's best practices.

Evaluation Components:

- **Site Review:** The program coordinator verifies that the site provides meaningful, educationally relevant work experiences in the design field.
- **Student Feedback:** Students complete a post-internship evaluation detailing their learning outcomes and overall experience.
- **Supervisor Evaluation:** The site supervisor provides feedback on student performance, professionalism, and skill application.
- **Faculty Review:** The coordinator assesses all documentation, project samples, and reflections to determine final grades.

Continuous Improvement:

Sites that demonstrate strong mentorship, diverse project exposure, and adherence to professional ethics are prioritized for future partnerships. Sites failing to meet program expectations may be reviewed or discontinued.

8. Industry Specific Expectations

8.1 Rules and Ethics

The Graphic Design field demands a high level of ethical awareness, professionalism, and respect for intellectual property. Students in the MCC Graphic Design program are expected to uphold standards that reflect both academic integrity and professional practice.

Ethical Guidelines:

- **Originality and Honesty:** All design work must be original. Plagiarism or unauthorized use of another designer's work is a serious ethical and legal violation.
- **Copyright and Fair Use:** Respect copyright laws and properly attribute all source materials, including imagery, typography, and digital assets.
- **Client Confidentiality:** Treat all client information as confidential and avoid sharing sensitive materials without permission.
- **Professional Representation:** Conduct yourself with integrity, reliability, and respect when engaging with clients, peers, and instructors.
- **Social Responsibility:** Consider accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and inclusivity in all design work. Designers influence public communication and must use that influence responsibly.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

Students may not use AI-generated design work or imagery as their own. All submitted projects must represent the student's personal creative effort and technical skill. The use of AI tools (such as ChatGPT) must follow the MCC Graphic Design Program AI Use Policy as well as Metropolitan Community College's institutional policies regarding AI in academic work.

- AI may be used only for approved purposes such as research, brainstorming, or ideation, and must be disclosed when used as part of a project.
- Submitting AI-generated work as original artwork constitutes academic dishonesty and may result in disciplinary action under MCC's Academic Integrity and Code of Conduct policies.

8.2 HIPAA Confidentiality

Although HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) primarily applies to healthcare fields, design professionals are still responsible for safeguarding confidential client and organizational information.

Students must:

- Treat all client and institutional data—such as business plans, brand strategies, or personal identifiers—as confidential.
- Avoid sharing client materials, drafts, or proprietary assets outside approved channels (class critiques or authorized presentations).
- Obtain written permission before displaying client work publicly, including in online portfolios, social media, or promotional materials.
- Follow nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) or confidentiality clauses when required by an internship or freelance assignment.

Maintaining confidentiality demonstrates professional integrity and builds trust with clients and industry partners.

8.3 Legal Standards

Graphic design professionals are governed by laws that protect intellectual property, promote fair business practices, and uphold accessibility and consumer rights.

Students and graduates must comply with:

- **Copyright Law:** Protects original creative works (art, photography, typography, and text). Always obtain licenses or permissions for third-party assets.
- **Trademark Law:** Prohibits use of registered logos, slogans, or brand marks without authorization.
- **Privacy and Publicity Rights:** Require written consent before using a person's image, likeness, or personal story.
- **Accessibility Standards:** All digital and print media should meet fundamental accessibility guidelines for readability, contrast, and ADA-compliant design.

Violations of these standards can lead to legal penalties, loss of credibility, or academic disciplinary action.

8.4 Professional Standards

Professionalism in design extends beyond creativity—it includes conduct, communication, and presentation in all environments, including the classroom, design lab, and workplace.

Conduct Expectations:

- Arrive on time, prepared, and ready to work. Treat every class and project as professional practice.
- Meet deadlines and manage multiple projects responsibly.
- Demonstrate respect toward instructors, classmates, clients, and guest speakers.
- Participate in critiques with constructive, design-based feedback.

Dress Code:

- Dress appropriately for client meetings, class presentations, and internship settings.
- Maintain a clean, professional appearance that reflects readiness to work in a creative industry environment.
- For studio or lab settings, wear practical clothing suitable for art materials or equipment use.

Communication and Collaboration:

- Use professional language and tone in all email, Canvas, and in-person communication.
- Collaborate respectfully in group projects and maintain accountability for assigned tasks.
- When representing MCC or the Graphic Design program in public or online spaces, uphold a professional and inclusive presence.

9. Facilities, Equipment, and Safety Guidelines

9.1 Lab and Classroom Expectations

The Graphic Design program provides access to specialized Mac labs, classrooms, and studio spaces equipped with professional-grade hardware and industry-standard software. Access is reserved for enrolled Graphic Design majors only. Students are expected to maintain a safe, respectful, and professional learning environment always.

General Lab Etiquette:

- **Respect shared spaces.** Keep workstations clean and organized for the next user. Dispose of trash and recyclables properly.
- **Absolutely no food or drink is allowed in the Mac labs at any time.** This includes water bottles, coffee, snacks, or any sealed beverages. Food and drink may only be consumed outside of lab areas. Spills can permanently damage equipment and will result in disciplinary action if policies are not followed.
- **Be considerate of others.** Keep conversation volume low, use headphones for personal audio, and avoid disruptive behavior.
- **Save your work frequently** to your designated cloud or USB-C drive. MCC is not responsible for files lost due to system errors or unsaved sessions.
- **Arrive prepared.** Bring required supplies, drives, and materials to every class. Lockers are available for storing personal supplies.
- **Use time wisely.** Labs are for coursework and approved design projects only — no personal entertainment, gaming, or unrelated internet use.
- **Open Lab Hours:** Check posted schedules for available times outside class to complete assignments and access equipment.

Cell Phone Policy:

- Phones must be silenced or turned off during class and lab sessions.
- Texting, personal calls, or social media use during class time is not permitted unless directly related to a course activity.
- Students who need to take an urgent call should quietly step out of the classroom or lab.
- Repeated cell phone use during instructional time will result in a participation grade penalty and may lead to disciplinary action.

Professional Conduct:

Treat every class as a professional studio environment. Instructors and peers are to be treated with the same respect expected in an industry workplace. Critiques and feedback sessions are part of your professional growth. Students are expected to engage constructively, arrive on time, and participate fully.

The MCKC Graphic Design labs are equipped with professional-grade technology and materials. Proper care and use of this equipment are essential to maintaining access and ensuring the longevity of college resources.

9.2 Equipment Usage and Maintenance

Computers and Software:

- Always sign in using your MCC College Adobe/Creative Cloud account — not a personal account.
- Log out after each session to protect your files and the system.
- Do not install unauthorized software, plug-ins, or fonts on college computers.
- Report technical issues immediately to your instructor or lab aide.

Printing and Output Equipment:

- Follow posted guidelines for using large-format printers, scanners, or specialty devices.
- Obtain instructor approval before printing final projects to ensure correct file setup (bleeds, color profiles, resolution, etc.).
- Never leave printed materials or supplies unattended on the print tables.

Tools and Supplies:

- Return all shared tools (rulers, X-Acto knives, cutting mats, etc.) to their proper storage areas after use.
- Replace blades carefully and dispose of used ones in the designated sharps container.
- Label all personal materials clearly with your name.
- Never remove materials or equipment that do not belong to you.

Safety Practices:

- Use cutting tools, adhesives, and other studio materials with care.
- Report any injuries, spills, or equipment damage immediately.
- Follow all posted safety signs and instructor instructions when using any machinery or chemicals.
- Maintain awareness of exits, first aid kits, and emergency procedures posted in the lab.

Damage or Misuse:

Intentional misuse, theft, or damage to college property will result in disciplinary action. Continued access to labs and equipment is contingent upon following all policies and procedures.

9.3 Safety Policies and Emergency Procedures

The safety of all students, faculty, and staff in the Graphic Design program is a top priority. The following guidelines ensure that everyone can work in a secure, organized, and prepared environment while using lab and studio facilities.

General Safety Rules:

- Follow all posted safety instructions and any additional directions provided by instructors or lab aides.

- Keep walkways, designated exits, and work areas clear of backpacks, cords, and other obstructions.
- Use tools, art supplies, and cutting instruments responsibly and only for their intended purpose.
- Immediately report any injuries, equipment malfunctions, or unsafe conditions to your instructor or the lab aide.
- Do not attempt to repair or adjust electrical or mechanical equipment unless authorized by a faculty member.

First Aid and Accident Procedures:

- Minor injuries (such as small cuts or burns) should be reported immediately. First aid kits are located in each Mac lab and classroom.
- For serious injuries or medical emergencies, call Campus Police at 816-604-1200 (Penn Valley) for immediate response.
- Remain with the injured individual until help arrives and follow the instructor's directions.
- Complete an Incident Report Form with your instructor following any accident or injury.

Emergency Procedures:

In the event of an emergency, follow college-wide protocols and instructor directions.

- **Fire or Evacuation:** Exit the building immediately through the nearest marked exit. Do not use elevators. Gather outside at the designated assembly area.
- **Severe Weather:** Move to the designated shelter area inside the building (away from windows). Remain there until the all-clear signal is given.
- **Lockdown or Active Threat:** Follow the "Run, Hide, Fight" protocol as outlined in MCC emergency training. Silence phones, lock doors, and stay out of sight if sheltering in place.
- **Power Outage:** Remain calm and stay in your workstation until further instruction. Save work frequently to prevent data loss.

Health and Chemical Safety:

- Use spray adhesives, fixatives, and solvents only in designated ventilated areas.
- Wash hands thoroughly after handling materials or cleaning supplies.
- Keep art materials sealed and always labeled.
- Dispose of waste and used blades in appropriate containers.

Emergency Contacts:

- MCC Campus Security (Penn Valley): 816-604-1200
- Emergency (Police/Fire/EMS): 911
- Program Coordinator: Renate Ferreira – renate.ferreira@mccckc.edu
- Division Office (Humanities): 816-604-4220

10. Industry Certifications and Licensure

10.1 Available Certifications through the Program

While the MCKC Graphic Design A.A.S. degree does not currently require professional certification, students have the opportunity to pursue industry-recognized credentials that complement their coursework and strengthen their employability.

Recommended Certifications:

- Adobe Certified Professional (ACP) in:
 - Adobe Photoshop
 - Adobe Illustrator
 - Adobe InDesign

These exams validate proficiency with Adobe Creative Cloud applications, which are used extensively throughout the Graphic Design program.
- AIGA Membership (Student Level) – provides professional development resources, networking, and design industry connections.

10.2 State and National Licensing Requirements

Graphic Design is a creative profession that does not require state or national licensure for employment. However, professionals are expected to uphold all applicable copyright, intellectual property, and accessibility laws as part of ethical practice.

Students pursuing work in specialized areas such as web accessibility, UX design, or digital media may seek optional professional certificates from organizations such as W3C (Web Accessibility Initiative) or Interaction Design Foundation.

10.3 Certification Exam Preparation Resources

n/a

11. Graduation and Program Completion Requirements

11.1 Graduation Checklist

To qualify for graduation from the MCKC Graphic Design A.A.S. program, students must:

1. Complete all required coursework (63 credit hours) with a grade of C or higher in all GDES and ART courses. A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 is required for graduation.
2. Meet all General Education requirements outlined in the degree plan.
3. Pass the required Technical Skills Assessments at 70% or higher (GDES160 and GDES210).
4. Complete and present a final professional portfolio in GDES264 – Graphic Design Portfolio & Practice.
5. Apply for Graduation through the MCC student portal by the posted deadline.

6. Settle all outstanding financial obligations (tuition, fees, library materials, etc.).

Students should meet with their advisor or the Program Coordinator (Renate Ferreira) during their final semester to confirm completion and verify degree requirements.

11.2 Capstone Projects or Final Assessments

The Graphic Design A.A.S. degree culminates with GDES264 – Graphic Design Portfolio & Practice, serving as the program’s capstone experience.

Capstone Objectives:

- Develop and refine a professional portfolio showcasing a range of print, digital, and branding projects.
- Prepare a resume, cover letter, and personal branding package.
- Participate in a final portfolio review conducted by industry professionals and faculty.
- Participate in a gallery exhibit of student-produced coursework.
- Demonstrate creative problem-solving, conceptual strength, technical proficiency, and presentation skills.

12. Appendix & Additional Resources

12.1 Forms and Templates

The following forms and templates are provided to support students throughout the Graphic Design program. These resources are available on the MCC Graphic Design SharePoint and in Canvas course shells for each class.

Commonly Used Forms:

- **Course Registration Planning Sheet**
Used to map out your semester schedule and ensure that prerequisites and sequencing requirements are met for the A.A.S. degree.
- **Technical Skills Assessment Form**
Required for entry into GDES160 (Graphic Design I) and for advancement after GDES210 (Graphic Design II).
- **Internship Application Form (GDES290)**
Completed prior to beginning a work-based learning experience. Includes site information, student learning objectives, and supervisor contact details.
- **Internship Evaluation Form**
Completed by both the student and the site supervisor at the end of the internship experience. Used to document hours, performance, and learning outcomes.
- **Portfolio Review Checklist (GDES264)**
Used to evaluate readiness for final portfolio review. Covers design quality, technical proficiency, professional presentation, and career materials.

- **Graduation Checklist**
Step-by-step guide for confirming degree completion, applying for graduation, and submitting final portfolio review documentation.
- **Advising & Degree Audit Worksheet**
Helps track completed courses, electives, transfer credits, and remaining requirements. Students should review this with the Program Coordinator each semester.

12.2 Academic Calendars

The official Metropolitan Community College Academic Calendar outlines all important academic dates, including semester start and end dates, registration deadlines, withdrawal periods, holidays, and final exam weeks.

Students should review the academic calendar each term to stay informed about critical deadlines that may impact grades, enrollment, or financial aid status.

Access the Current Academic Calendar: mccckc.edu/academic-calendar

Key Academic Milestones:

- **Fall Semester:** August – December
- **Spring Semester:** January – May
- **Summer Session:** June – July

Important Dates to Remember:

- Registration opens several months before each term begins.
- Tuition payment deadlines vary by enrollment date—check the calendar and your student account for exact dates.
- Withdrawal and refund deadlines differ by course length (16-week, 8-week, or short-term).
- College closures for holidays and breaks are noted on the calendar and Canvas course announcements.

Students are responsible for monitoring the MCC Academic Calendar regularly and communicating with instructors or advisors regarding any scheduling or registration concerns.

12.3 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Who should I contact for advising or course planning?

A: Contact Renate Ferreira, Program Coordinator for Graphic Design, at renate.ferreira@mccckc.edu or 816-604-4757.

Q: Can I use personal Adobe accounts for class projects?

A: No. All coursework must be completed under your MCC Adobe account. Personal accounts may not have access to licensed assets or shared files required for class projects.

