

## **BAA - Interior Design Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***What is an interior designer?***

An interior designer is a person who designs the myriad of spaces which make up what we call the “interior built environment”. In essence, interior designers are part of a team who create all the built spaces which we inhabit and occupy in our lives. Other members of the team could include architects, lighting engineers, psychologists, structural engineers, landscape engineers, etc. Interior designers create spaces which function appropriately, are in conformity with relevant life safety laws and which are aesthetically pleasing. *You might think of it as ‘interior architecture’*. It is a multi-faceted profession in which solutions are created from both a creative and technical perspective. Successful interior designers are problem solvers and creative thinkers.

### ***What is the difference between an interior decorator and an interior designer?***

The practice of interior design encompasses a much broader scope of reference and responsibility than that of an interior decorator. Interior decoration is the application of decorative finishes such as wallpaper, fabrics, furniture, etc. Interior decorators generally work in residential situations.

By contrast, an interior designer is:

“A professional who identifies, researches and creatively solves problems to interpret the function and quality of interior environment. A designer is responsible for performing services relative to interior spaces, including programming, design analysis, space planning and aesthetics, using specialized knowledge of interior construction, building codes, equipment, materials and furnishings. Designers are formally trained to prepare drawings and documents relative to the design of interior spaces in order to enhance and protect the health, safety and welfare of the public.” (Source: NCIDQ website)

In Ontario, the title “Interior Designer” is protected under a provincial Titles Act. This means that it is illegal to call yourself an interior designer unless you have successfully completed your education at a recognized school, have passed a series of professional exams, and are a registered member of the Association of Interior Designers of Ontario (ARIDO).

### ***What are the highlights of the program at Algonquin?***

Our program is focused on training students to become leaders within the interior design profession. Graduates are eligible to become registered members of the Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario (ARIDO). The BAA – Interior Design program is a 4-year program of study which includes a strong critical thinking component and which is enhanced with a 20-week paid co-op, a focus on international aspects of interior design and several areas of specialization within the field.

We offer students a strong design foundation in the first year of study followed by 3 years of study in specific design specialties such as corporate, healthcare, sustainable, retail and hospitality design. At the end of your education you will have a strong foundation in all aspects of design as well as an understanding of which area of specialization appeals to you specifically. Because we are an applied degree, we teach students technical skills as well as theory. Our

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graduates are ready to “hit the road running” and are able to contribute in their place of employment immediately.

***Is the Interior Design program at Algonquin College accredited?***

Yes, our program is one of only a very few programs in Canada which is accredited by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (formerly FIDER) to the First Professional Level. The Council for Interior Design Accreditation only accredits those programs which have met rigorous standards with regard to professional interior design education. More information about the Council can be found at [www.acredit-id.org](http://www.acredit-id.org)

***Why should I come to a college rather than a university to complete a baccalaureate degree?***

Colleges have only recently been given ministerial consent to offer baccalaureate degrees. While we have only been granting a Bachelor of Applied Arts – Interior Design degree for 3 years, we have been in the business of preparing highly qualified, employment-ready graduates for over 25 years. We know what training our industry expects and we have the faculty to deliver it. Some other specific reasons to complete a degree in interior design here include:

- Valuable co-op work experience and hands-on training as well as a strong foundation in theoretical knowledge
- A Council for Interior Design Accreditation (formerly FIDER) accredited program, to the first professional level.
- A degree in which both theory and application is taught enabling graduates to gain immediate employment and rapidly advance in the interior design profession.
- A 95% graduate employment rate\* in the interior design industry.
- Small class sizes with individual, hands-on attention to each and every student.
- A highly nurturing environment where faculty and students work together to gain knowledge.
- Extensive studio learning with emphasis on understanding the fundamentals of design.
- An environment in which faculty and students are on a first-name basis.
- A faculty which consists of both experts in theory and research and practitioners working in the field.
- An extraordinary team of full-time and part-time faculty who are ready to work with students beyond the classroom structure to ensure their success.
- A highly active Advisory Committee of professionals working in the field who are actively engaged in helping to educate our students.

Student growth and exploration in all areas of design is encouraged. We are a small program offering personalized attention to each student. Where would you get that at a university?

\*Source: Algonquin College Graduate Employment Report 2004.

***I noticed you have more semesters (levels) than the typical program. How does this work?***

Our academic year is typically broken up into three semesters per year, with a one-week break between semesters. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> year, however, consists of 4 semesters followed by a 20-week paid co-op experience. We organized our curriculum this way to enable us to cover the breadth of the interior design body of knowledge, yet still enable our students to have a substantial co-op opportunity.

***What are the admission requirements for the BAA – Interior Design program?***

At Algonquin, we recognize that for some students, the admission process may seem daunting. If you have any questions, please be sure to contact one of the people listed below for further information. *We will be happy to guide you through the process.*

Entrance requirements include 6 Grade 12U level courses, including Grade 12U English and Grade 12U Mathematics. A broad, general education and wide range of interests and experiences are desirable for success within the program and as professional interior designers. Prior participation in an art, design or architectural drawing program is an asset, but is not essential. Candidates who meet the academic requirements will be asked to prepare a portfolio presentation for review by interior design faculty.

***What is a portfolio? Why do I have to prepare one?***

A portfolio is a sampling of your best pieces of art, design and technical skills.

The purpose of a portfolio review is to help us determine your suitability for the type of education available within the BAA – Interior Design program. For this reason, in addition to the inclusion of your own work, our portfolio requirements also include the preparation of a short essay, and a “home drawing/creativity test” which enables us to evaluate each candidate evenly.

*You will receive specific information about what to include in a portfolio, how to present the work in your portfolio, the “home drawing/creativity test” and the essay topic directly from our Registrar’s Office once you have applied to the program through OCAS.*

***Do you offer scholarships?***

The college does not offer scholarships but does offer an entrance bursary of \$1,000 dollars for applicants entering an applied arts degree. There are also several awards available to students in this program.

***I already have an interior design diploma. How can I upgrade my current credential to an applied degree?***

We are currently in the process of developing a series of bridging courses which will enable graduates with diplomas to upgrade their current credential. The bridging courses will cover areas of curriculum which are not normally part of a diploma program, and will enable you to enter the baccalaureate program at an advanced level. Courses in the bridging program, while not yet confirmed, will likely cover areas of study such as critical thinking and academic writing, history of art and design, liberal arts elective(s), and broad perspectives in interior design.

The level of entry into the baccalaureate program, upon completion of the bridging program, will be determined on an individual basis. Candidates for advanced standing who have been working in the interior design industry may also be eligible for a transfer of credit with regard to the mandatory 20-week co-op program. This will be evaluated on an individual basis.

***Who do I contact for more information?***

For ontariocolleges.ca information or information about academic prerequisites (high school credits, etc.) contact Bonnie Larabie, Client Service Officer, Registrar’s Office at [larabib@algonquincollege.com](mailto:larabib@algonquincollege.com) or 613-727-4723, ext. 5191.

For specific questions about the BAA – ID program (curriculum, transfer credits, what to put in a portfolio, etc.) contact Dorothy Stern, External Coordinator, BAA – ID program at [sternd@algonquincollege.com](mailto:sternd@algonquincollege.com) or 613-727-4723, ext. 5747.

For information about your portfolio submission (e.g. where to send it, etc.), please contact the School of Media and Design at [design@algonquincollege.com](mailto:design@algonquincollege.com) or 613-727-4723, ext. 7657.

You can also visit our web site at [www.algonquincollege.com/MediaAndDesign](http://www.algonquincollege.com/MediaAndDesign)