

Business for Creatives

Level: 4

Career Cluster: Media Arts

Program: Design and Digital Arts

Pathway: Graphic Design

Aligns with: MGD 2068 Business for Creatives

Course Catalog Description

Equips students with the entrepreneurial, branding, and professional skills needed to launch and manage creative careers in freelance, studio, and business settings through digitally based workflows, online collaboration, and industry-standard tools.

Summary

Prepares students for careers in the creative industry by exploring business practices, freelance workflows, and professional development strategies through digitally based tools and platforms. Students learn to apply entrepreneurial concepts such as pricing, contracts, business structures, and marketing while developing a personal brand, portfolio, and professional identity package using online and industry-standard applications. The course emphasizes real-world applications, including creating digital business plans, resumes, and portfolios, managing client relationships through digital communication tools, and promoting creative services across web and social media platforms. Through industry insights, ethical practices, virtual collaboration, and career-focused projects, students build the knowledge and skills needed to transition into postsecondary education or professional work in graphic design and other creative fields.

Notes

The updated course reflects a significant expansion from the original course by moving from a primarily foundational overview of creative careers and freelance practices to a more comprehensive, industry-aligned entrepreneurship program. The original course focused on core topics such as basic business concepts, freelance workflows, pricing, contracts, and portfolio development within creative fields. In contrast, the revised course is more structured and extensive, with clearly defined learning strands covering business strategy, branding, marketing, legal considerations, professional communication, and client management within digitally based environments. Additionally, the new version strengthens CTE alignment by incorporating advanced components such as industry feedback and reflection, leadership development, work-based learning experiences, and a formal final assessment project. These updates emphasize real-world application, digital workflows, and career readiness, better preparing students for both postsecondary pathways and entry into creative industries.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Career Exploration and Postsecondary Opportunities

Objective: *Students will explore and analyze career pathways related to production management in graphic design by examining professional roles, digital tools, work environments, ethical and legal expectations, certifications, professional organizations, and Colorado postsecondary education options to make informed academic and career decisions.*

- 1) Identify employment opportunities in various fields with a focus in the area of digital graphic design and creative media.
graphic design
 - a. Recognize the work typically performed, digital tools and technology used, and nature of in-person, hybrid, and remote work environments.
 - b. Identify potential certifications within the careers
 - c. Find membership organizations associated with the careers
 - d. Understand the necessary education associated within the careers
- 2) Define professionalism within the context of graphic design
 - a. Criticism and evaluation
 - b. Presentation
 - c. Assessment
- 3) Recognize laws, regulations, and ethics significant to the fields of graphic design
- 4) Identify postsecondary opportunities offered in the state of Colorado
 - a. Technical college, community college, 4-year institutions
 - b. Certificates, associates, bachelor, and advanced degree opportunities

2. Creative Industry Overview and Career Pathways

Objective: *Students will analyze the current creative industry landscape by exploring digital design career paths, online market trends, and emerging opportunities in graphic design.*

- 5) Analyze the current state of the creative and graphic design industry.
- 6) Identify digital career pathways such as freelance designer, agency designer, in-house designer, UX/UI designer, and motion designer.
- 7) Compare traditional and emerging creative career models.
- 8) Evaluate how technology and remote work influence creative careers.
- 9) Predict future opportunities based on market trends and digital platforms.

3. Business Structures, Legal Basics and Licensing

Objective: *Students will evaluate business structures and legal requirements to determine appropriate options for creative professionals working in digitally based and traditional business settings.*

- 10) Differentiate among sole proprietorships, partnerships, and LLCs, including considerations for online and digitally based creative businesses.
- 11) Analyze advantages and disadvantages of each business structure.

- 12) Identify licensing, registration, tax, and digital commerce considerations for creatives.
- 13) Determine suitability for freelance work based on personal goals.
- 14) Explain risks and responsibilities associated with creative businesses.

4. Business Plans and Creative Strategy

Objective: *Students will apply strategic planning skills by creating digitally based business plans that align creative services with market needs.*

- 15) Explain the purpose of a business plan for creative professionals, including digitally based business models.
- 16) Create a basic digital business plan for a design service.
- 17) Analyze target markets, services offered, and value propositions.
- 18) Evaluate how strategy supports sustainable creative work.

5. Personal Branding and Business Identity

Objective: *Students will create a cohesive personal brand by developing a professional identity across digital platforms, online portfolios, and branded business materials.*

- 19) Create a digital business identity package including logo, branding elements, templates, and visual style assets.
- 20) Analyze how branding communicates professionalism and creative identity.
- 21) Apply brand consistency across resumes, portfolios, and online profiles.
- 22) Evaluate the effectiveness of personal branding choices.

6. Resumes, Cover Letters and Professional Documents

Objectives: *Students will design professional digital documents tailored to creative roles using digital design, formatting, and communication strategies.*

- 23) Design a professional, visually appropriate digital resume for creative positions.
- 24) Write targeted cover letters aligned to creative job descriptions and format them for digital submission.
- 25) Analyze how layout and typography influence professional communication.
- 26) Refine digital professional documents based on peer, instructor, and industry feedback.

7. Portfolio Development and Digital Presentation

Objective: *Students will develop professional portfolios by curating and presenting creative work primarily through digital platforms, while also preparing selected materials for in-person presentation when appropriate.*

- 27) Create a digital portfolio using web-based or interactive platforms.
- 28) Compile selected portfolio materials for in-person reviews while maintaining a primary digital portfolio presence.
- 29) Select work that demonstrates skill, growth, and specialization.
- 30) Analyze portfolio effectiveness based on audience and industry standards.

8. Marketing, Self-Promotion and Online Presence

Objective: *Students will apply digital marketing strategies to promote creative services and build visibility.*

- 31) Demonstrate self-marketing strategies using digital platforms.
- 32) Create promotional content for social media or websites.
- 33) Analyze how audience engagement impacts career opportunities.
- 34) Evaluate ethical and professional online behavior.

9. Copyright, Intellectual Property and Creative Ethics

Objective: *Students will apply legal and ethical principles related to ownership, attribution, and creative rights in digital design.*

- 35) Explain copyright protections as they apply to creative work.
- 36) Differentiate between copyright, Creative Commons, and fair use.
- 37) Analyze ethical responsibilities in digital creative work.
- 38) Apply proper attribution and licensing practices.

10. Freelancing, Pricing and Client Management

Objective: *Students will analyze freelance workflows by managing pricing, contracts, invoices, and client relationships through digital tools and online communication systems.*

- 39) Determine readiness for freelance work.
- 40) Analyze pricing models and project scopes.
- 41) Create digital invoices, proposals, and basic contracts.
- 42) Evaluate effective client communication strategies using email, messaging platforms, video meetings, and other digital communication tools.

11. Interviewing, Networking and Professional Interaction

Objective: *Students will demonstrate professional communication skills through in-person and virtual interviews, digital networking, and industry interaction.*

- 43) Participate in mock interviews with industry professionals in person or through virtual meeting platforms.
- 44) Present portfolios confidently and professionally.
- 45) Respond to questions using industry-appropriate language in both in-person and digital professional interactions.
- 46) Reflect on interview performance and improvement opportunities.

12. Industry Feedback, Reflection and Career Readiness

Objective: *Students will evaluate career readiness by incorporating feedback from professionals, revising digital career materials, and reflecting on goals.*

- 47) Participate in portfolio reviews with industry professionals.
- 48) Analyze professional feedback constructively.

- 49) Revise digital portfolios and career materials accordingly.
- 50) Reflect on personal strengths, growth, and next career steps.

13. Leadership

Objective: *Students will demonstrate leadership skills by collaborating with others, managing responsibilities, and applying professional behaviors in digital creative workflows and workplace settings.*

- 51) Demonstrate leadership behaviors such as initiative, accountability, and collaboration in digital creative projects.
- 52) Apply communication and problem-solving skills to support team goals and project success in shared digital and workplace environments.
- 53) Evaluate how leadership contributes to workplace readiness and professional growth.

14. Work-Based Learning

Objective: *Students will apply workplace readiness and professional skills through authentic work-based learning experiences connected to creative industries, including digitally based collaboration and project management when appropriate.*

- 54) Participate in work-based learning experiences such as job shadows, client-based projects, internships, industry mentorship activities, or virtual professional engagement.
- 55) Demonstrate professional behaviors including punctuality, digital communication, collaboration, and accountability in workplace settings.
- 56) Apply technical and employability skills to complete tasks and solve problems in authentic creative industry contexts.
- 57) Reflect on work-based learning experiences to evaluate performance, identify growth areas, and connect classroom learning to career goals.

15. Final Assessment Project

Objective: *Students will synthesize course learning by completing a final assessment project that demonstrates entrepreneurial thinking, professional communication, and readiness for digitally based creative industry pathways.*

- 58) Develop and present a culminating project that integrates digital business planning, branding, portfolio development, and professional communication skills.
- 59) Apply course concepts to solve a real-world or simulated creative business challenge using digital tools and professional workflows.
- 60) Evaluate project outcomes using established criteria, feedback, and self-assessment.
- 61) Defend design, business, and communication decisions through a professional presentation or portfolio review.

16. Career and Technical Student Organizations

Objective: *Using the CTSO Resource Document, chapter activities will provide some of the best opportunities CTSO members will have to learn by doing. A successful program of work creates a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom. CTSO members learn*

how to accept responsibility, work as a team, manage a budget, and handle success and failure. Per the CTE Admin Handbook, CTSOs are embedded into curriculum.

Professional Development

Prepare each member for entry into the workforce and provide a foundation for success in a career. Becoming a professional does not stop with acquiring a skill, but involves an increased awareness of the meaning of good citizenship and the importance of labor and management in the world of work.

Community Service

Promote and improve goodwill and understanding among all segments of the community through services donated by CTSO chapters, and to instill in its members a lifetime commitment to community service.

Business & Industry Connections

Increase awareness of quality job practices and attitudes, and increase the opportunities for employer engagement and eventual employment.

Financial Leadership

Plan and participate in activities to allow all members to carry out the chapter's projects. Educate members on their own personal finance for current and future success.

Public Relations

Make the general public aware of the good work that students in career and technical education are doing to better themselves and their community, state, nation, and world.

Social Activities

To increase cooperation in the school and community through activities that allow CTSO members to get to know each other in something other than a business or classroom setting.

Academic Standards Alignment

Colorado CTE courses are required to integrate academic and essential skills into course content. The following academic standards have been identified as aligned to this course and should be integrated throughout instruction.

[CO CTE Academic Standards Resources](#) (Rubrics, integration strategies, etc)

[CDE Colorado Academic Standards Online](#) (Online standards lookup tool)

Note: Mathematics and Science standards will be added in the future. Visit the [Colorado Academic Standards](#) page for the most current version.

Reading, Writing and Communicating Crosswalk

Course: Business for Creatives

Colorado Academic Standards – Reading, Writing and Communicating

Standard	Prepared Graduate Competency	Description	Course Evidence / Alignment
Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening	Prepared Graduate 1 – Collaboration	Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully; pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others; and contribute ideas to further the group's attainment of an objective.	Students collaborate in teams to develop creative business ideas, listen to feedback, and contribute ideas toward shared business and entrepreneurial goals.
Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening	Prepared Graduate 2 – Oral Presentations	Deliver effective oral presentations for varied audiences and varied purposes.	Students present business ideas, pitches, marketing concepts, and project proposals to peers and instructors.
Standard 2: Reading for All Purposes	Prepared Graduate 4 – Informational Texts	Read a wide range of informational texts to build knowledge and to better understand the human experience.	Students read and analyze informational texts such as business plans, contracts, financial documents, marketing materials, and industry resources.

Standard 2: Reading for All Purposes	Prepared Graduate 5 – Language in Context	Understand how language functions in different contexts, command a variety of word-learning strategies to assist comprehension, and make effective choices for meaning or style when writing and speaking.	Students use appropriate business, marketing, and industry-specific vocabulary when communicating in professional and creative contexts.
Standard 3: Writing and Composition	Prepared Graduate 6 – Argumentative Writing	Craft arguments using techniques specific to the genre.	Students craft arguments and persuasive texts to justify business decisions, pricing strategies, branding choices, and entrepreneurial plans.
Standard 3: Writing and Composition	Prepared Graduate 7 – Informational Writing	Craft informational/explanatory texts using techniques specific to the genre.	Students write business plans, proposals, marketing copy, reflections, and explanatory documents related to creative industries.
Standard 3: Writing and Composition	Prepared Graduate 9 – Writing Process	Demonstrate mastery of their own writing process with clear, coherent, and error-free polished products.	Students revise, edit, and refine written professional documents to produce clear, coherent, and polished business communications.
Standard 4: Research Inquiry and Design	Prepared Graduate 10 – Research & Ethics	Gather information from a variety of sources.	Students research markets, creative industries, and legal requirements.

Free Resource Links

1. Career Exploration and Postsecondary Opportunities

- Creative Careers Guide (career exploration, design roles, education pathways)
<https://www.creativecareersguide.com/>
- ONET Online (career profiles, skills, wages, job outlook)
<https://www.onetonline.org/>
- College Board BigFuture (postsecondary planning, majors, careers)
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>
- My Next Move (career search, interest profiling, job pathways)
<https://www.mynextmove.org/>

2. Creative Industry Overview and Career Pathways

- AIGA Eye on Design (design trends, industry insights, careers)
<https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/>
- Creative Bloq (creative industry trends, design inspiration)
<https://www.creativebloq.com/>
- Behance Job Listings (creative jobs, portfolio examples)
<https://www.behance.net/joblist>
- Dribbble Hiring (creative careers, freelance and agency roles)
<https://dribbble.com/jobs>

3. Business Structures, Legal Basics and Licensing

- SBA Business Guide (business structures, startup basics)
<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide>
- IRS Small Business Tax Guide (tax basics, registration)
<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed>
- Nolo Legal Encyclopedia (business law, LLCs, licensing)
<https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia>
- Colorado Business Resource Center (state licensing, registration)
<https://oedit.colorado.gov/colorado-business-resource-book>

4. Business Plans and Creative Strategy

- Bplans (business plan templates, strategy, examples)
<https://www.bplans.com/>
- SCORE Business Templates (planning tools, strategy guidance)
<https://www.score.org/resource/business-plan-template-startup-business>
- Canva Business Plan Templates (visual planning tools)
<https://www.canva.com/business-plans/templates/>
- HubSpot Business Plan Guide (startup strategy, planning)
<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/business-plan-template>

5. Personal Branding and Business Identity

- Canva Brand Kit (branding tools, identity design)
<https://www.canva.com/brand/>
- Adobe Creative Cloud Tutorials (branding, design identity)
<https://creativecloud.adobe.com/learn>
- Looka Brand Resources (logo and brand identity basics)
<https://looka.com/blog/>
- 99designs Branding Guide (visual identity, branding strategy)
<https://99designs.com/blog/branding/>

6. Resumes, Cover Letters and Professional Documents

- Resume Genius (resume and cover letter templates)
<https://resumegenius.com/>
- Canva Resume Builder (creative resume design) <https://www.canva.com/resumes/>
- Purdue OWL Resume Guide (writing, formatting, examples)
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/resumes_and_vitas/index.html
- Indeed Career Guide (resume tips, cover letters)
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice>

7. Portfolio Development and Digital Presentation

- Adobe Portfolio (portfolio creation tools)
<https://portfolio.adobe.com/>
- Behance (portfolio hosting, creative showcase)
<https://www.behance.net/>
- Wix Portfolio Builder (website portfolios, customization)
<https://www.wix.com/portfolio/website>
- Carbonmade Portfolio Platform (portfolio design, hosting)
<https://carbonmade.com/>

8. Marketing, Self-Promotion and Online Presence

- HubSpot Marketing Resources (digital marketing, branding)
<https://www.hubspot.com/resources>
- Hootsuite Blog (social media marketing, engagement)
<https://blog.hootsuite.com/>
- Later Social Media Resources (content planning, promotion)
<https://later.com/blog/>
- Mailchimp Marketing Library (email marketing, promotion strategies)
<https://mailchimp.com/resources/>

9. Copyright, Intellectual Property and Creative Ethics

- U.S. Copyright Office (copyright law, registration)
<https://www.copyright.gov/>
- Creative Commons (licenses, free use resources)
<https://creativecommons.org/>

- Stanford Copyright & Fair Use (legal guidelines, education)
<https://fairuse.stanford.edu/>
- Pixabay License Guide (free image use, attribution rules)
<https://pixabay.com/service/license/>

10. Freelancing, Pricing and Client Management

- Freelancers Union (freelance business, contracts, pricing)
<https://www.freelancersunion.org/resources/>
- AND CO Freelance Resources (invoicing, contracts, client tools)
<https://www.and.co/resources>
- Bonsai Freelance Toolkit (contracts, proposals, pricing guides)
<https://www.hellobonsai.com/resources>
- Upwork Resources (freelance business skills, client management)
<https://www.upwork.com/resources>

11. Interviewing, Networking and Professional Interaction

- LinkedIn Learning Career Resources (networking, interviews)
<https://www.linkedin.com/learning/>
- The Muse Career Advice (interview prep, networking skills)
<https://www.themuse.com/advice>
- Big Interview (interview practice and strategies)
<https://biginterview.com/>
- Indeed Interview Guide (common questions, preparation)
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing>

12. Industry Feedback, Reflection and Career Readiness

- Behance Reviews (portfolio feedback, professional critique, industry standards)
<https://www.behance.net/>
- Dribbble Community (peer critique, design feedback, professional growth)
<https://dribbble.com/>
- LinkedIn Career Advice (career readiness, reflection, professional development)
<https://www.linkedin.com/advice/>
- The Muse Career Growth Resources (self-reflection, career planning, feedback integration)
<https://www.themuse.com/advice>

13. Leadership

- ACTE Employability Skills Framework (leadership, teamwork, professionalism)
<https://www.acteonline.org/professional-development/high-quality-cte-toolkit/employability-skills-framework/>
- MindTools Leadership Resources (leadership skills, communication, decision-making)
https://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TED.htm
- SkillsYouNeed Leadership Skills (leadership, collaboration, workplace readiness)
<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/lead/>

- Indeed Career Guide Leadership Skills (professional behavior, teamwork, initiative)
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/leadership-skills>

14. Work-Based Learning

- CareerOneStop – Work-Based Learning (internships, apprenticeships, career exploration)
<https://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/learn/work-based-learning.aspx>
- Colorado Work-Based Learning (state guidance, employer connections)
<https://cdle.colorado.gov/work-based-learning>
- ACTE Work-Based Learning Resources (career readiness, employability skills)
<https://www.acteonline.org/professional-development/work-based-learning/>
- Xello Career Readiness (career planning, reflection tools, WBL support)
<https://xello.world/en/>

15. Final Assessment Project

- PBS LearningMedia – Media Production Projects (project ideas, assessment, rubrics)
<https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/>
- SCORE Business Templates (final business plans, project development)
<https://www.score.org/resource/business-plan-template-startup-business>
- Canva Pitch Deck Templates (presentation design, final project delivery)
<https://www.canva.com/presentations/templates/pitch-decks/>
- Rubistar (project rubrics, assessment tools)
<https://www.rcampus.com/rubistar/>