

Becoming a Certified RGD

Guidelines for Practitioners/Managers

Welcome!

This package will be your guide for navigating each step on the journey to becoming a Certified RGD with quick tips and FAQs to help along the way.

The Process is made up of **5 phases** with details included in this guide:

- 1 Eligibility & Application: [Page 2](#)
- 2 The Case Studies: [Pages 3](#)
- 3 The Online Test: [Page 4](#)
- 4 The Portfolio Presentation: [Pages 5-6](#)
- 5 Results & Next Steps: [Page 7](#)

Once you've completed the Process, you can use the RGD designation to signify your proven understanding of business best practices, accessible design principles, research methods and ethics.

The designation lets clients, colleagues and industry peers know that you have effectively demonstrated your ability to apply strategic design principles to marketing and communication challenges, and have been acknowledged by a national organization with more than 4,000 Members spanning communication design disciplines from editorial to motion, brand to environmental, UX to information, educators, managers and more. So, what are you waiting for?

Other Resources:

- [Still on the Fence? 10 Reasons to Get Your RGD Certification](#)
- [Summary of RGD Membership Categories & Benefits](#)
- [What it Means to Be an RGD](#)
- [FAQs](#)



Phase 1: Eligibility & Application

- 1 Review the eligibility requirements
- 2 Download the PDF Application
- 3 Complete the Application

(including your Case Studies details outlined in Phase 2)

Are you eligible?

Do you have at least **7 years of education and/or relevant work experience**? Then you are eligible! This can include up to 4 years of post-secondary education in graphic design or a related field.

Do you have over 15 years of experience (this can include up to 7 years of education)?

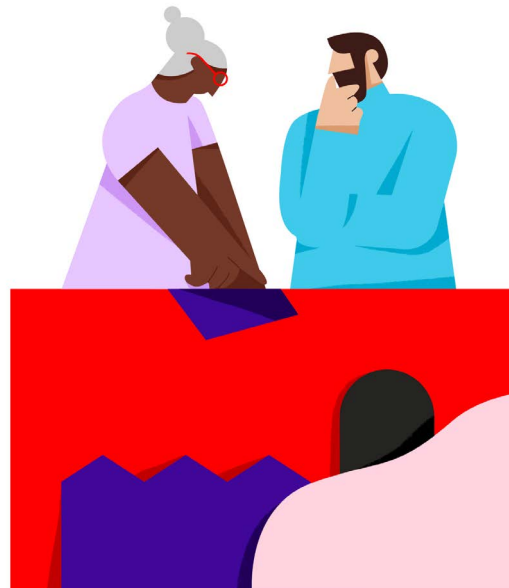
Good news! You are exempt from some sections of the Test! **Seniority exemptions** are noted in the relevant sections of this guide.

Accessibility

Contact certification@rgd.ca if you are concerned about visual and hearing impairments, physical and mobility limitations, medical and mental health disorders and/or learning disabilities, so that we may work with you to equalize your RGD Certification Experience. Once self-identification of any issues occurs, we will work with you to develop an accommodation plan. Confidentiality is maintained within the parameters of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Legislation.

Application forms

Fill out the relevant form with your personal information, record of education, professional experience and 6 Case studies (see **Phase 2**).



Phase 2: The Case Studies

- 1 Consider your work as compared to the criteria below
- 2 Identify 6 projects that will be presented in your Portfolio Presentation (Phase 4)
- 3 Draft your Case Studies and submit them as part of your Application (Phase 1)
- 4 Receive confirmation of eligibility from the RGD
- 5 Pay admin fee

All 6 of your projects must meet the following criteria

- Must have been completed in a professional capacity
(student work/work completed for an academic credit cannot be submitted)
- Must demonstrate your highest level of professional work

Other requirements

- 1 project must have been produced in the last 24 months*
*normally 12 months but extended due to COVID-19
- 2 other projects must have been produced within the last 5 years
- Up to 2 projects can be pro bono, BUT must follow the same design process as paid work
- Up to 1 project can be self-published
(example: your business' visual identity, portfolio website or self-published book)

Fee

Eligible applicants pay an admin fee ranging from \$75-\$150 CDN plus applicable taxes.

Are you a **Provisional RGD** or **Affiliate Member** of RGD? Then your application is FREE! The fee is covered through your Membership!

For each project, you will be asked to provide:

Context – Description of client needs/project brief, including goals and objectives.

Method – Description of your design/design management process including research, analysis or other info gathering that contributed to the design solution.

Design Process – Brief overview of process from initial concept exploration and presentation to acceptance by the client.

Solution – Description of your design solution/deliverables and how they achieved project goals and objectives.

Results – Quantitative/qualitative evidence of the effectiveness of your solution.

Supporting Materials – URL or PDF upload (final pieces are preferred).

Tips for choosing your Case Study projects

For Design Practitioners – Choose projects that demonstrate your ability to develop and implement solutions to complex problems encountered in all phases of the design process.

For Design Managers – Choose projects that demonstrate your ability to develop and implement effective design management strategies.

Application Review

Once the RGD receives your application, it will be reviewed by our Eligibility Review Committee and you will be notified of their decision within about a week.

Once your eligibility is confirmed, the RGD will contact you to schedule a date and time for the next steps in the Process: the **Online Test (Phase 3)** and the **Portfolio Presentation (Phase 4)**. The entire Process can be completed within 2 weeks, or can be spread out over a maximum of 6 months from the date your application is received.

Phase 3: The Online Test

- 1 Acquire and review the suggested texts
- 2 Consider taking a Sample Test
- 3 Take the test

After your application has been submitted, the RGD will work with you to schedule your Online Test.

Format

- All questions are multiple choice
- You will have **95 minutes** to complete the test (**all 5 sections**)
- If you are eligible for the seniority exemption, you will have 40 minutes to complete the Ethics and Accessibility sections

Requirements

You can take the test from any location at any time as long as you have a webcam-enabled computer

Books and notes including the pre-approved digital package containing the RGD Handbook, Code of Ethics and Accessibility Handbook may be used during the test; no other electronic devices are permitted.

Tip! The RGD lends review texts to eligible candidates in Canada for up to 2 months. Contact certification@rgd.ca to make arrangements to borrow any or all of the texts listed above.

Seniority Exemption

Candidates with 15 years of combined education / relevant work experience are only required to complete the Ethics and Accessibility sections of the Online Test.

The Online Test is comprised of 5 sections:

1 Business

Demonstrate your understanding of professional client work and fundamental principles of operating a business in Canada. **(12 questions)**

Relevant Resources: *The Business of Graphic Design: The RGD Professional Handbook*

2 Accessibility

Demonstrate your understanding of the principles of accessibility as applied to printed messages, websites and physical environments. **(12 questions)**

Relevant Resources: *A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design*

3 Ethics

Demonstrate your understanding of professional and ethical standards when working for clients, as employees and in service to the general public. **(15 questions)**

Relevant Resources: *By-law #3: Code of Ethics*

4 Design Principles

Demonstrate your understanding of design principles, from a logo to a brochure to a complex website. **(12 questions)**

Relevant Resources: *Graphic Design: The New Basics by Ellen Lupton and Jennifer Cole Phillips* and *Design Elements: A Graphic Style Manual by Timothy Tamara**

*Chapter 3 only

5 Design Research

Demonstrate your understanding of the tools available to help determine client needs and markets and develop effective design solutions. **(12 questions)**

Relevant Resource: *A Designer's Research Manual*

Phase 4: The Portfolio Presentation

- 1 Schedule your Portfolio Presentation
- 2 Do a tech test with the RGD
- 3 Present your work to 3 Evaluators

When the RGD contacts you to schedule your Online Test (Phase 3), you will be asked to confirm a date and time for your Virtual Portfolio Presentation.

How it works

- You will be given **30 minutes** to present the **6 projects** that you submitted for the Case Study portion of your application (Phase 2) before a panel of three RGD Evaluators ([see complete list of Portfolio Evaluators here](#)).
- You will have a virtual meeting with the RGD prior to your Presentation to test meeting software compatibility, review the process and clarify any questions you might have.

Evaluators will judge your Presentation based on:

Project Context

- **Clarity** – Do you understand the purpose of the project?
- **Knowledgeability** – Have you demonstrated a depth of knowledge about your clients, target audiences and challenges?
- **Proficiency** – Have you presented observations and details in an appropriate and professional manner?

Method/Process

- **Appropriateness** – Do your strategies connect with project challenges and with the client's target audiences?
- **Originality** – Are your design approaches tailored to address your client's specific needs?
- **Proficiency** – Does your concept development demonstrate professional design skill or expertise?

Design Solution

- **Compatibility** – Does the work display design elements that connect appropriately to the intended audience?
- **Originality** – Are the visual solutions linked to the project challenges?
- **Proficiency** – Have you competently demonstrated appropriate design principles?

Results

- **Quantitative/Qualitative Evidence** – Have you shared audience data or client testimonials that indicate positive project outcomes?
- **Relevance** – Do your project results connect with the client goals?
- **Proficiency** – Have you competently communicated the effectiveness of your design solution?

Phase 5: Results and Next Steps

- 1 Pass Accessibility & Ethics sections of test
- 2 Pass Portfolio Presentation
- 3 Pass other sections of Online Test, as required based on your Portfolio Presentation score
- 4 Receive results
- 5 Join the RGD as a Certified Member
- 6 Use the RGD designation after your name across your self-promotional materials

Passing Marks

Ethics sections

Correctly answer 11 of 15 questions.

Other sections

Correctly answer 9 of 12 questions.

Portfolio Presentation scores determine how many other sections you must pass:

27-36 Points

Must pass Ethics + Accessibility

24-26 Points

Must pass Ethics + Accessibility + 1 other section

19-23 Points

Must pass Ethics + Accessibility + 2 other sections

12-18 Points

Must pass all 5 sections

0-11 Points

Overall Fail

Notification of Results

Once you have completed your Application, Case Studies, Online Test and Portfolio Presentation, you will receive an email with detailed results on your evaluation. Results will be **emailed less than 2 weeks** after the Online Test and Portfolio Presentation are both complete.

After you Pass

Congratulations! You're just a few steps away from becoming a Certified RGD. To complete the Process:

- Submit an RGD Member application form
- Pay your Annual Membership dues

Note: Passing the Certification Process makes you eligible to become a Certified RGD, but you will not be officially Certified until after your Membership Application has been accepted.

Re-takes

If you do not pass required sections of the test, you may rewrite each of them up to 3 times. If you fail a section 3 times, you must wait 6 months before you can try again.

If you do not pass the Portfolio Presentation, you will receive:

- Feedback on areas for improvement
- Invitation to join the RGD as an Affiliate Member
- Opportunity to reapply in 2 years' time

You can also appeal the results of your Portfolio Presentation in which case you have the opportunity to present the same 6 projects to **3 new evaluators who have no knowledge of past results.**



Using the RGD Designation

Once you are officially a Certified RGD, we encourage you to use the RGD designation after your name wherever it appears in a professional context, including on your personal or organizational website, on your LinkedIn profile and in your C.V.

The RGD will provide you with the following assets to represent your certification:

- Official RGD Certificate
- RGD Membership Card/Annual Sticker for each year of Membership
- Digital logo for download, to be included in printed and digital promotions

If you have any questions about the content of this Guide, please email certification@rgd.ca



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