



TERRENCE DAVIS, CID, IIDA, WELL AP
Interior Designer at Corgan

NCIDQ Certified interior designer based out of midtown NYC specializing in workplace interiors with 5+ years' experience.

Q: Brief intro/What type of work do you do/ where do you work

A: My name is Terrence Davis and I am a certified interior design in NYS specializing in workplace interiors. I have over five years' experience in the industry and have spent much of my career at Corgan, as part of the interiors team in New York. I've had the pleasure of working on various project types, varying from 500,000 SF multi-floor office spaces to high-end retail and even some hospitality-driven designs.

Q: When did you decide to take the NCIDQ Exam? How did you decide what order to take them in?

A: I knew while in school that my goal would be to take on the NCIDQ Exam as soon as I was fully eligible. I felt the earlier I could take on the exams post-graduation, the better. I feared I would risk losing critical study skills and routines had I waited too long. Also, as you spend more time in the industry, you may find less time to prepare for the exam, as your day-to-day responsibilities intensify.

I decided to take both multiple-choice sections first and then save the Practicum for the following exam season. I recommend this to anyone not planning to take all 3 exams at once because I believe the way one studies for the IDFX and IDPX differs greatly from what is required by the Practicum section.

Q: Did you fail any exams/retake any? How did you stay motivated through that process?

A: I took adequate time to prepare for all three exams and was fortunate to pass each on the first attempt. My firm's compensation incentive (offered only if you pass) was a major factor in keeping me on task when it came to studying during late nights and weekends.

Q: How long did you study for the exams? What did you use to study?

A: Being I took on the exams separately; I took approx. eight weeks to prepare for the IDFX/IPDX and another eight weeks to prepare for the PRAC. I joined a local study group offered by the IIDA, which not only offered extremely helpful material but also kept me on track with weekly meetings and assignments. I owe a great part of my passing the exams to this group — which is still offered to all designers at little to no cost. I highly recommend seeking out similar programs, as well as joining Facebook groups online geared toward the exam.

With the use of the official Ballast book and PPI2Pass flashcards I purchased on Amazon, I spent roughly 8–12 hours per week dedicated to completing material for the study group, skimming through the book and taking practice exams.

Q: Has the practice of interior design lived up to your expectations that you had as a student? Any surprises or disappointments?

A: Luckily, in addition to my alma mater being CIDA accredited, many of the professors are active members of the industry and took no hesitation to give us the good, the bad and the ugly when it came to the real world of design and what to expect. I'd say that it was surprising to me to discover what a tight knit industry we are, even in a city as big as NY. I'd recommend not burning any bridges and always presenting your best self in and outside the workplace. "Fake it 'till you make it" when you have to and keep positive during intense project deadlines.

Q: What advice would you give to current students that you wished you had received?

A: Choose your battles! Understand that coming into the industry at entry level often does not grant you lead design roles. Take all criticism with a grain of salt and be patient in perfecting your skill set while discovering who you are as a designer.

Q: Why did you become NCIDQ Certified/why was it important to you?

A: Being NCIDQ Certified distinguishes us as designers. Many can say they've graduated with a BFA, maybe even from a CIDA accredited school, but very few (in NYS for instance) can say they are certified with their state. The NCIDQ Exam proves you maintain a certain level of knowledge on current standards and are equipped to create spaces for public use. This can only serve to help you in whatever career path you peruse within the design realm.

Q: How has having an NCIDQ Certificate benefited you and your career?

A: Being NCIDQ Certified allowed me access to promotions and design titles at my firm that would otherwise have been inaccessible to me.

Q: Have you/are you interested in pursuing any other credentials/certifications or licensure/registration/certification in a jurisdiction? If so, please provide those details.

A: Shortly after completing all sections of the NCIDQ, I took on the WELL exam and am now an accredited professional. I take pride in this, as it is something I truly believe will benefit our industry and the clients we serve. I also plan to take the Fitwel exam as often it is more tangible certification for the type of projects we work on.

Q: What could the industry do to overcome obstacles from diverse individuals being represented and having equal opportunity?

A: This would likely be best addressed at an early stage of one's career. Having exposure to the design world and potential opportunities within it can inspire young people and help them gear the decisions they make to put themselves ahead. Reach-out programs and having

networking groups within the industry geared toward diversity and equal opportunity could serve this need. I hope to see more design initiatives exclusively offered to these groups.

Q: Anything else you'd like to share?

A: A few study tips:

1. Be realistic with your schedule when planning how you will prepare for the NCIDQ Exam. Treat this like a project and tell family, friends and especially your team at work that you're pursuing it. This will keep you accountable!
2. Complete endless practice exams and allow yourself additional time to go over questions you got wrong.
3. "Fine Dining and Breathing" — perhaps the best piece of advice I can give. Consider the NCIDQ Exam as your most sensible client and answer every question with the most efficient solution. Often avoid ostentatious answers and remove anything from your thought process that involves a specific municipality or local code.