



Design Quality Management Standard

Draft Rev. 6

Drafting Committee:	
Ulrich Schraudolph (Chairman)	Design Director, XentiQ
Freddy Soon	Chairman Singapore Quality Class
Daphne Flynn	Director, Philips Design Singapore
Pernilla Johansson	Design Director, Electrolux Asia Pacific
Kia Tong Tan	Chief Technology Officer, OSIM
Nigel Smith	Managing Director DIA Brand Consultants
Alex Mucha	Partner Equus Design
Jonathan Bonsey	Managing Director, Bonsey Design
Allein Dupuis	Research Team Leader, EADS
Charlene ANG Hwee Ling	Vice President, Corporate Learning and Consulting PSB Academy
Jennyfer Lacroix	Program Leader Product Design, Lasalle College of the Arts
Thierry Do	Lecturer Singapore Polytechnic

I.INTRODUCTION

The Singapore Design Class Standard defines criteria and for design organizations to enable them to consistently provide high quality design services to their clients. Organizations which will meet the Standard have the expertise, best practices, methods, business processes and the financial stability to ascertain that the services provided are of high standing for a global market and address effectively the needs of its clients. Such needs typically cover not only the creative quality of the work provided, but many other critical issues such as collaborative aspects, communication and project management and implementation.

The Standard is property of Designer Association Singapore (DAS). DAS Executive Committee appoints a Standard Committee consisting of stakeholder which has the authority to draft, validate and amend the Standard. Amendments to the Standard should be executed in a way which respects the needs of design organizations which have adopted the Standard already, e.g. consulting the industry in advance and giving sufficient prior notice of changes.

The design organizations who have adopted the Standard can apply for certification. Upon successful audits they will be awarded the Singapore Design Class quality label.

II.Core Values

- II.1. Visionary leadership
- II.2. Client-centric excellence
- II.3. Innovation focus
- II.4. Organizational and personal learning
- II.5. Valuing people and partners
- II.6. Agility
- II.7. Knowledge-driven system
- II.8. Corporate social responsibility
- II.9. Results orientation
- II.10. Systems perspective.

III. QUALITY CRITERIA

III.1. Creative Process & Innovation

III.1.1 Quality of creative work & creativity

For a design organization, the creative quality of its work is obviously the major concern. The creative solutions presented and recommended should be innovative, imaginative and of high aesthetic quality, but at the same time they need to be effective solutions for the business problems of the client and address the brief for the project. The new solutions created have to cater to a whole spectrum of needs. A specific idea with a high degree of novelty might boost the image of the portfolio of a design organization, but not always the return of the client.

Therefore, in evaluation of the creative standing of the design organization special emphasis should be given to client projects. The effectiveness of the resulting design, including answering the brief, its aesthetic qualities and functionality and the outcomes for the business or organization, should be measured equally. Speculative work can be part of the work evaluated, but should be given minor weight.

The evaluation of the creative quality should be based on a peer review for which a panel will be established. Indicators can be awards in reputed design competitions and a project portfolio.

III.1.2. Staff Qualification

The design organization should have key staff with the relevant academic qualification in a design specialization of a recognized local or international University or Polytechnic in the field, and/or sufficient professional practice in the field for which the organization provides services. While overall there might be a mix of backgrounds in a design organization, and such a cross-disciplinary situation typically enhances the performance of a design organization, it should have a solid foundation in design expertise, both academically and in professional practice.

Evidence for this criterion should be certificates and CVs of key creative staff.

III.2. Continuous Improvement

III.2.1. Continuous Improvement in processes and methods

In order to thrive as a company and adapt to the ever changing and increasingly more competitive industry environment, the design organizations needs to adopt Continuous Improvement as an integral element of its processes. Continuous improvement concerns business processes as well as work methodology and tools in its specific domain.

Indicators can be structured approaches in work improvement, evidence of developmental activities and improvements in infrastructure.

III.2.1. Staff Training and Development

For a business to stay competitive as a strong partner for its clients, staff training and development is an essential aspect. The design organization should show commitment and a

structured process for the development of its staff as well as to staff induction of new hires. Such training can be internal and external; it may consist of courses, workshops and on the job training. Visits to trade fairs, congresses, seminar, speeches and presentations are often also part of it.

It can also take the form of special developmental design projects, which can be speculative, experimental, pro bono, or targeted at exhibitions and publications.

Special and often very effective developmental schemes can be exchange programs with other subsidiaries or network partner organizations. Engaging in internship programs are also to be considered in this aspect.

This process should be anchored in an effective and documented staff appraisal and training needs evaluation process.

Evidence for Staff Training is: training and development records, training and development programs.

III.3. Project Management

III.3.1. Project Objectives

Clear project objectives ensure that all resources deployed are aligned and success can be measured. Such objectives and success factors established between client and design organization should be defined in the design brief, as detailed or open-ended as is suitable in

the specific context, to enable project teams to manage expectations and plan for project success.

Evidence can be documents pertaining to project briefs, project proposals, design service agreements or client correspondence.

III.3.2. Resource Planning

Resources for design projects (manpower with specific expertise, management, tools and methods, financial, material, external services) should be planned and equipped with suitable tools in order to ensure their availability and to mitigate risks affecting the project success. Project teams on both sides should be defined at the onset and changes in the course of the project should be tracked.

Evidence can be project documentation pertaining to resource planning, such as tables, spreadsheets, project proposals etc.

III.3.3. Scheduling

Project Schedules maintained, updated and communicated throughout the project are an important element to ensure timely execution of individual tasks and provide visibility during the project progress. They allow suitable corrective action to be taken if delays or additional iterations occur, or project parameters modified.

Evidenced by documented change management including project schedules with revisions and client correspondence in regards to scheduling

III.3.3. Project Control

Suitable control activities like design reviews, review minutes, acceptance tests, design verifications and reports, or roles like project-reviewer, enable a project team to take corrective action early when required, in order to ensure the ultimate project success. Measures to mitigate risk during the project progress should be in place.

Evidence is records of control activities; reports or project planning documents as well as workflow or process descriptions.

III.4. Client Relations

III.4.1 Client relations process (leads, communication...)

The organization should have a well-defined process in communicating with its clients, ongoing and potential. This process will cover the processing of leads or Request for Quotations (RFQ), client relations within project management (design review and acceptance, meetings, minutes, file and document exchanges), client feedback (process, and implementation of resulting actions), as well as managing the relations with clients outside of projects (account management, networking).

Evidence is sales and project records, including typical Client communications.

III.4.2. Proposal

The organization should submit to its clients, proposals, service contracts or quotations, which define clearly and understandably, project deliverables, budgets, timelines, mutual

responsibilities and general conditions. The proposal should be established such that the client can understand effectively from his perspective and knowledge what is offered. It should also address exit scenarios, if any. The proposals should not be in conflict with ethical practices in the industry or ethical business aspects in general.

Evidence is sample proposals, service contract or quotation.

III.4.3. Responsibility to the client

The design organization should consider the interest of the client in its actions and strive for a fair collaboration. It should not work at the same time on projects that are in direct competition with an existing client unless with the consent of the clients involved. It should ensure confidentiality of critical information concerning the client and the project transmitted during the collaboration.

Indicators are legal documents, proposals, employment contracts (confidentiality), archiving processes and track-record in this regard.

III.4.4. Presentation & Communication

The design organization should use effective means of communication to establish a presence among its client target group as well as in the industry network and future staff and collaborators. Typical communication approaches are web presence, public relations, corporate identity or branding, networking activities. The organization should have a clear positioning such that the design disciplines it offers, its expertise and specialties can be clearly understood.

Evidence is samples of communication tools.

III.5. Business Management

III.5.1. Business Processes

The design organization should have well defined and documented business processes and work-flow, and should be able to show evidence of its consistent implementation. These processes should cover the design work itself, but also client relations, finance, purchasing, human resources and all other relevant business aspects. The processes and their documentation should be 'live', continuously evolving with the evolution of the organization, the technology and the market. These processes should be defined such that they ensure quality for the client and ensure the stability and accountability of the company.

The origination should show evidence of application and ideally documentation of consistent business processes

III.5.2. Organizational aspects

The design organization should have well defined functions and responsibilities of staff; coherent staff titles and roles (e.g. project manager, project reviewer, business development officer, design director...).

Typical indicators are documentation such as an org chart and job descriptions, defining roles and responsibilities in the company/project process.

III.5.3. Risk management

Design projects often evolve in a high-risk environment: The impact, for example of a branding program, can represent high stakes in the future of a client corporation. The investment going into a new product development will typically dwarf the resources going into the initial design project. On the consultancies side, sometimes the open ended and not entirely quantifiable character of design projects makes it very difficult to plan reliably for resources. Overall, design projects address typically critical elements at the core of a corporation and therefore liabilities are high.

The design organization should show evidence of risk management, in which it evaluates and addresses project risk on its clients and its own side, as well as its own internal risks (financial, liabilities, health and safety).

Evidenced by documents of risk management activities and processes both project focused and internal to the design organization as a company as well as standard contract clauses.

III.5.4 Contracts

Mutual responsibilities between clients or suppliers and the design organization in a legal context should be well defined in relevant documents such as contracts, quotations, purchase-orders, or others. This applies also to staff, freelancers, interns, temp-staff, suppliers and partner organizations.

Evidence will be legal documents and communications with partners.

III.5.5 Intellectual Property (IP) issues

IP ownership resulting from projects should be clearly addressed in contracts and proposals. The contracts should specify in detail how the IP created will be handled; e.g. when and under what conditions is IP transferred? What is part of the IP transferred and what not? To whom belongs the IP created in the project but not adopted by the client? Does the organization

retain the rights to images, sketches, photographs created within a project? Can it use such elements for its own promotion (portfolio, brochures, website..). If there are applications of the concepts other than the ones commissioned by the clients, such as different digital support formats, to whom will the IP of such other adaptations belong?

Indicators will be contracts with clients, Standard terms and relevant legal communication with clients.

III.5.6. Financial standing

The design organization should be in a position to ensure its stability in respect to its client engagements. Financial stability can be assumed if the company is generally profitable, has a robust cash flow, capital and reserves and/or credit line. The financial standing should be seen in relation to project values and material costs, as well as duration of projects. The diversity of its clients is a contributing factor for the financial stability of the company.

Indicators are past accounts of the company. Fully audited accounts are recommended. For new companies or an important reorganization, a business plan can serve as indicator in addition or as substitute.

III.6. Ethical Standing

III.6.1. Ethical Business Practices

The design organization should comply with ethical business practices, in particular in respect to the creative field. It should not engage in unfair competition (such as free pitching or in general free creative work) and adopt policies that balance its own as well as its client's interests. Its policies should be driven by a fair approach to its business, and towards fostering better ethical standards in the industry as a whole.

Indicators are legal documents specifying sound ethical conditions, adaptation of specific policies of an industry association such as DAS, declarations of ethical concerns.

III.6.2. Plagiarism

Designers will not engage in plagiarism and will take reasonable care to ensure their work does not infringe the IP of other parties.

Indicators are the track record of the organization in this respect.

III.6.3. Global Concerns / Corporate Citizenship

Ethical aspects also cover initiatives and activities concerning interest beyond the client/ consultancy or global concerns, such as universal design or pro bono work. As a company, there might be policies directed at special needs individuals or minorities that are evidence of the high ethical and moral standards of the company. It may be involved in donations to charities or NGOs, sponsorships or other activities in a 'corporate citizen' context.

Indicators are declarations of ethical concerns, examples of Pro Bono work, evidence of high standards in employment and its track record of activities as a 'corporate citizen'.

III.6.4. Design for Sustainability

A higher ethical responsibility of a design organization can manifest itself in integrating aspects of sustainability, environmental concern or 'green' design in its commercial work. Such an approach might involve creating suitable tools and approaches to tackle this objective.

Evidence is project records, Awards, or project methodologies and tools.

IV. CERTIFICATION

Both DAS member and non-member design organisations are invited to adopt the Standard. For proof of compliance, they are encouraged to apply for certification, expressed by the Singapore Design Class quality mark. Auditing parties for the evaluation of compliance should use suitable guidelines, checklists and assessment tools.

The certification process will require an application to DAS. An assessment executed by DAS assigned panels and external partners will take place, which covers both a paper and on-site audit. The audit will be performed such that confidentiality needs of the design organisations are met.

Upon a successful audit, DAS will certify the applicant and award it the Singapore Design Class quality mark. The audit cost will be borne by the applicant, and DAS may levy a subscription fee for the quality mark. To retain the quality mark, periodic reviews and re-audits will be required.