



ID Course Evaluation Checklist

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Instructional design courses range from free to five figures. Most sales pages look the same. This checklist gives you a way to tell them apart before you spend anything.

How to use this checklist

1. Pick the courses you are seriously considering. Three is plenty.
2. Run each one through the 12-point checklist below. Print this page once per course if you are evaluating more than one.
3. Fill in the comparison table with what you find.
4. Email the provider the six questions in the callout. A serious program answers all of them in writing.
5. Check your notes against the red flags before you pay.

The 12-point checklist

Check a box only when you can point to specific evidence on the course page or in the provider's written answers. "Probably" does not count.

Skills coverage

- ☐ The curriculum covers AI skills you will actually use on the job: AI-assisted design, prompting, and building or evaluating AI-powered learning experiences
- ☐ It teaches at least one industry-standard authoring tool hands-on, not just in theory
- ☐ It grounds you in learning science and the instructional design process, not tool tips alone

Portfolio output

- ☐ You finish with at least one complete, portfolio-ready project you could show a hiring manager tomorrow
- ☐ The flagship project reflects real workplace work, such as a scenario-based experience built in a real tool, not a class exercise
- ☐ You get help presenting the work: a portfolio site, or clear guidance on hosting and framing your projects

Feedback and support

- ☐ A qualified human reviews your actual work and gives specific feedback, not just auto-graded quizzes
- ☐ Live sessions or office hours exist where you can ask questions in real time
- ☐ Career support goes beyond course content: resume, LinkedIn, or interview help is included or available

Cost and credential

- ☐ The total cost to finish is stated up front, with no hidden upsells required to reach the advertised outcome
- ☐ The credential carries weight: it comes from an accredited or licensed institution, or a name hiring managers in this field recognize
- ☐ The refund or withdrawal policy is in writing and you have read it before paying

Score your shortlist

Fill in one row per course. Use the last column to record how many of the 12 checklist items each course met.

Course name	Cost (\$)	Length (weeks)	AI coverage (None/Some/Deep)	Portfolio deliverable you finish with	Items met (0-12)

If two courses score close, weight portfolio output and feedback depth over everything else. Those two categories are what hiring managers actually see and what most cheap courses skip.

Questions to ask before you pay

Email these to the provider word for word.

1. What specific AI skills does the curriculum cover, and when was that content last updated?
2. Can you share two or three examples of student portfolio projects completed in the past year?
3. Who reviews my work, what are their credentials, and how many rounds of feedback do I get per project?
4. How much live access do I get to instructors each week, and in what format?
5. What is the total cost to complete the program, including any required tools, software licenses, or add-ons?
6. What is your refund or withdrawal policy, and can I get it in writing?

Red flags

Any one of these should make you pause. Two or more means walk away.

- No AI coverage anywhere in the syllabus, or an "AI module coming soon" promise with no date
- No project deliverable: you finish with a certificate but nothing to show a hiring manager
- No feedback loop: all grading is automated, quiz-based, or peer-only
- Sample student projects look dated, such as click-next slide decks with no scenarios or interactivity
- The curriculum page shows no last-updated date, or references tools the industry has moved past
- Pricing is hidden behind a sales call
- Testimonials praise the experience but never mention work produced or jobs landed

Disclosure

I run [Peck Academy](#), a licensed career school for people transitioning into instructional design. Hold it to this same checklist. If any program of mine fails a line item for you, do not buy it.

Have any questions? Email me at devlin@devlinpeck.com