



Men and Women of Letters

Certified Lighting Designers discuss what makes the industry's newest credential different from the rest

Designations are meant to prove value, but requirements for obtaining different lighting related credentials vary widely, and the result is an “alphabet soup” of qualifications. The Lighting Certification (LC), as one example, is certainly considered a badge of honor, but what—besides bragging rights—is passing a test really worth?

LD+A examined this question through the lens of designers who have earned the industry's newest credential: Certified Lighting Designer (CLD). According to the CLD Commission, which was developed by the IALD in 2015, the certification is “an evidence-based assessment that tests your professional competence over seven domains of practice,” such as ingenuity, synthesis, science, stewardship and human experience. To be considered, eligible candidates must submit written responses to a set of questions and project descriptions, as well as physical materials that support those statements and demonstrate competency. The rigorous process ends with a double-blind review, which might explain why just 20 designers have received the CLD since its inception.

Here, eight discuss their pursuit of the credential and, in turn, the value of test-based qualifications as compared to experience or expertise.

Samantha Schwirck



DENISE FONG STANTEC

The LC credential confirms a basic level of knowledge about lighting but does not convey any information about experience as a lighting designer. It is a multiple-choice test and there are many people within the lighting industry who have this credential. LEED is focused on sustainability. I think it is important for lighting designers to have this credential but it does not speak to a person's experience as a lighting designer.

The CLD reviews the evidence that a person has the experience to be the lead lighting designer on the project team. No other credential does that. In terms of its perception in the industry, I think that will grow over time as more designers achieve it. The hope is that purchasers of lighting design services start to require it in their RFPs and RFQs.

Fong's Other Credentials: IALD, LC, LEED AP



JENNI GILLARD

JENNI GILLARD ARCHITECTURAL
LIGHTING DESIGNERS

CLD is another critical step defining, assuring and codifying the lighting design profession globally for community and business benefit. As the core of lighting is safety and function, failures here have serious consequences for humanity. Beyond that, artificial light also impacts our ecology, health, night sky, lifestyle and landfills. With the uptake of LED, lighting also becomes an extension of the Internet of Things and inherits the many risks and social implications embedded in the world of technological innovation.

CLD is an important response by industry to self-regulate and steer its own destiny. If we fail to maintain high standards or adapt to innovation, then governments should act and regulate in the public interest. In the absence of a regulated environment, CLD provides another way of reassuring clients that they are engaging a professional of the highest standard.

Gillard's Other Credentials: IALD



MARK HERSHMAN

HENDERSON ENGINEERS

Resisting the need to take the LC test for as long as I could, I was finally forced to take it due to U.S. General Services Administration requirements . . . and I was not disappointed. It was as pointless as I imagined—a "test" that

was incapable of gauging one's competency and validity as a lighting designer. Much to my delight, the IALD was floating a new certification process based on collective work, whether finished or conceptual. I pursued the CLD because it searched for a true indicator of ability and talent.

Unfortunately, given its infancy, the CLD recognition, even within the lighting community, has not reached the significance of LC status. With only a handful of names on the CLD Global website, most clients are unaware of the recognition, and thus CLD plays no role in awarding of contracts. Perhaps that will change in the following years.

Hershman's Other Credentials: IALD, LC