

FSU Department of Interior Architecture + Design Freelance Work Policy

Design students, interns, and even entry level working designers are sometimes asked to produce freelance work, “on the side.”

The definition of “free lance” for this discussion is work you do outside of a school setting, outside an internship environment, or even as an entry level employment that you conduct on your own, with no supervision by a professional. This can be work done for free or for payment. Often the client asking for such work is a friend, relative or close family member, who values your expertise but does not want to pay a professional for that work or feels the job is “too small.” Often they may feel they are offering you a great opportunity to practice the skills you are learning and gain some valuable experience.

The issue of concern is that interior design is a profession, which is regulated by the state of Florida so that the design work completed does not negatively impact the health, safety and welfare of the public. Until you have completed your education, required on-the-job experience, and then pass the NCIDQ, you cannot seal drawings legally or practice interior design in a commercial environment. In some states, including Florida, interior designers must hold a license to practice commercial interior design, and holding a degree in interior design, having the required minimum hour experience, and passing the NCIDQ is required for that license. Many states, including Florida, crack down heavily on unlicensed work and you do not want to expose yourself to possible legal repercussions.

So, what are you to do if asked to do this sort of work? If you are selecting colors, furniture and fabrics in a residential setting, then use your own judgment. But if you are being asked to provide any kind of sketches or plans, produce written specifications, work on a project in a commercial (non-residential project) setting, work with other professionals who are not supervising you, or produce presentation materials that will be used for a business or client, you should not take on this type of work.

If you are asked to explain why you cannot take on this type of job, simply explain that interior design is different from “decorating” and is regulated in the majority of states around the country. You would be putting yourself in legal jeopardy if you take on such projects. If you are ever unsure how to handle a freelance project request, please consult with a faculty member or a professional designer to get their opinion. It is best to wait until you are ready and qualified to handle such projects.