

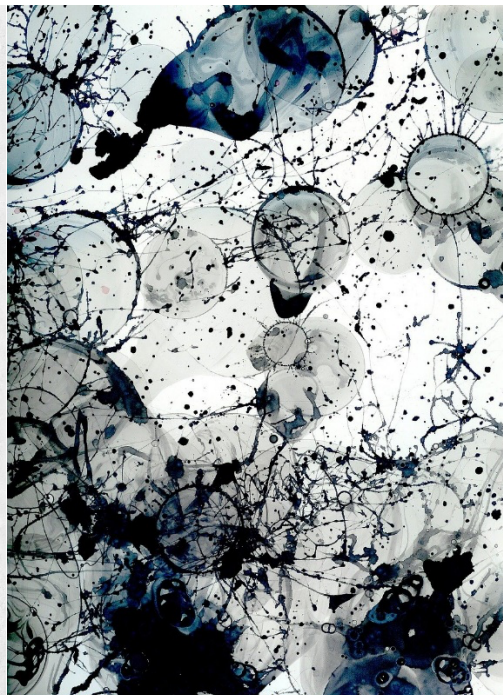
# IFP Introduction to Art and Design Practice Making an Application



This guide will help you in those aspects to consider when creating an undergraduate application portfolio for art and design courses.

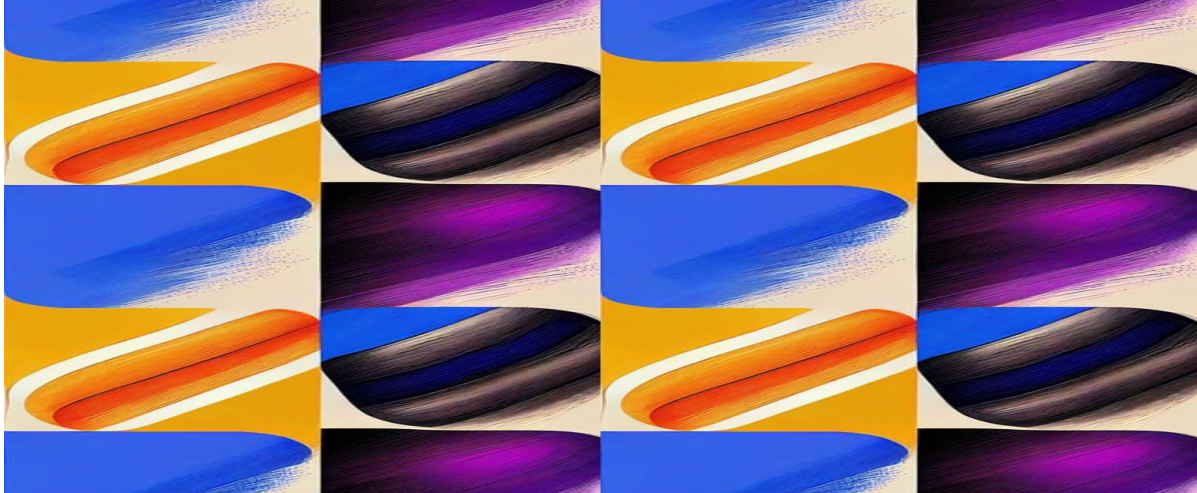
## What is a portfolio?

A collection of your creative work showing your skills, research and development of your project ideas, your completed work and some of your writing about the projects.



## Why is it important?

Preparing your portfolio is a useful way to show what you have learned, show off your skills and demonstrate your creativity. It is useful for you as a student to be able to edit the portfolio so that it shows off the best of your abilities and shows how you work through ideas, overcome challenges and go about exploring visual ideas. It is also useful for assessors to see your progress and if you would be suitable to start a degree course.



## What Assessors of your portfolio are looking for:

### 1. Visual Research and Enquiry

How well you communicate your ideas, and that you are fully engaged in your work. That you are curious about the visual world and you work through your ideas in an intelligent way.



### 2. Idea Development

Your ability to explore and develop ideas and your level of skill in the use of materials and techniques.



### 3. Selection and Resolution

How well you judge which ideas have the most possibilities and how you complete your projects successfully.



### 4. Contextual Awareness

Your knowledge of the subject you have applied for and how your work relates to it.



## What makes up a portfolio?

You should include sketches, drawings, images of your work being developed at different stages (these can also be photographs, audio and video) and completed projects that show how you approach an idea, then develop it into completed work. You should show your experiments and any research that led up to the finished work. These can be drawings (studies), 3-D models (photographed from different angles), photos and videos. You can also include brief written notes on each project.



## A range of approaches to drawing

Assessors looking at your portfolio will want to see a range of drawing methods in different materials, for example, pen, ink, wash, these can be quick sketches and/or longer studies through observing your surroundings, indoors and outdoors is a good way to begin a drawing project. Digital methods (using creative software programmes on your computer or laptop such as Adobe Photoshop) can be shown next to more traditional drawing methods to show how you use different ways of working with the same idea.



## Sketchbook Images

Include photographs of selected pages of your sketchbooks in your portfolio.



For guidance on the use of sketchbooks, see: [Pebble+ Public \(pebblepad.co.uk\)](http://pebblepad.co.uk)

### Your use of different materials and techniques

Include how you use different art and design materials in your portfolio. Your sketches and experimental work should show off your creativity with different materials. A study of the different kinds of art and design materials should be included, along with the methods that are needed to use them correctly.



### A sequence of images that reveal your visual discoveries

In Art and Design, learning comes from making. It is important to show this in your portfolio by including your experiments with different materials and the methods for applying them. This also includes different approaches to the subject. For example, showing the same subject in daylight and at night. Assessors will want to see how you have gone from one stage to the next, so show these sequences in your portfolio.

Each stage is a different 'thought' about the material, technique or idea.

Evidence of how you have developed a visual language through research, experimentation and reflection

***You can use the sentences below to help you to put your portfolio together:***

### What are your interests and influences?

Can you think of an artist or designer whose work you like that has been a major influence on your work? Do you take inspiration from their techniques? The subject of their work? What is it about their work that has inspired you?

Your influences might not be one person, but also an artistic movement, historical period or subject.

### Where have you come from?

Use your development images and influence images to show your existing training, your education and how you develop a project. This could be sketchbook work, observational drawing, or examples of where you've experimented with different media or techniques.

### Where you are now and where do you want to go?

In your finished work show what you are good at. If you are a great painter put into your portfolio your most successful paintings. If you are a fashion designer you could put in fashion illustration and photos of your garments. Use this space to show off your technical skills in your finished projects.

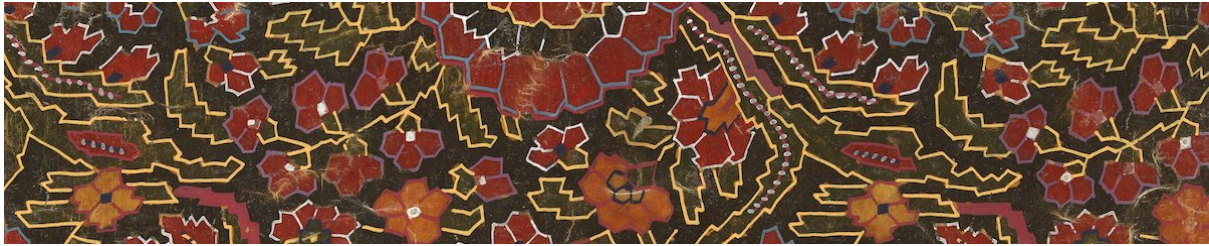
### How do you work as a creative?

Use a development section to show how you work through a visual idea. Show the final outcome next to it. Through the portfolio you should show every stage of your creative process, from first ideas to research, through experiments and development into your final pieces.



## Resolved work

Include finished pieces that are the results of your experimental work. These form a conclusion of your projects and contain reflective writing that reviews your work.



## Reflective writing

Include short written reviews (around 100 words) on the challenges that you faced during the project. This is called 'reflective writing'. Make sure this is in your own words and be as honest as you can about how you felt about the experience of making the work, or feel about the project now it's finished. Include how you got over any difficulties during the project. For example, having to change the colour scheme as the first version was too dark. You can also include short suggestions about how you might continue developing the project if you had more time. A good way to write about your influences, for example, from key artists, designers and creative people, is to look at two artworks or design works and 'compare and contrast' them to write a comparative piece. What makes them similar, and what are the differences between them? Remember, your personal response (what you like about a piece) is always very important.

## Writing about your influences

Connect these to your own creative practice, for example, if you are a Design student, you should write about a designer that you like or a design movement that you are influenced by. If you are applying to an Art course, consider writing about an artist of an art movement that inspires you. Try to focus on a particular area, for example, specific techniques, ideas and creative approaches, and information about the period. Again, keep these quite short (about 100 words).

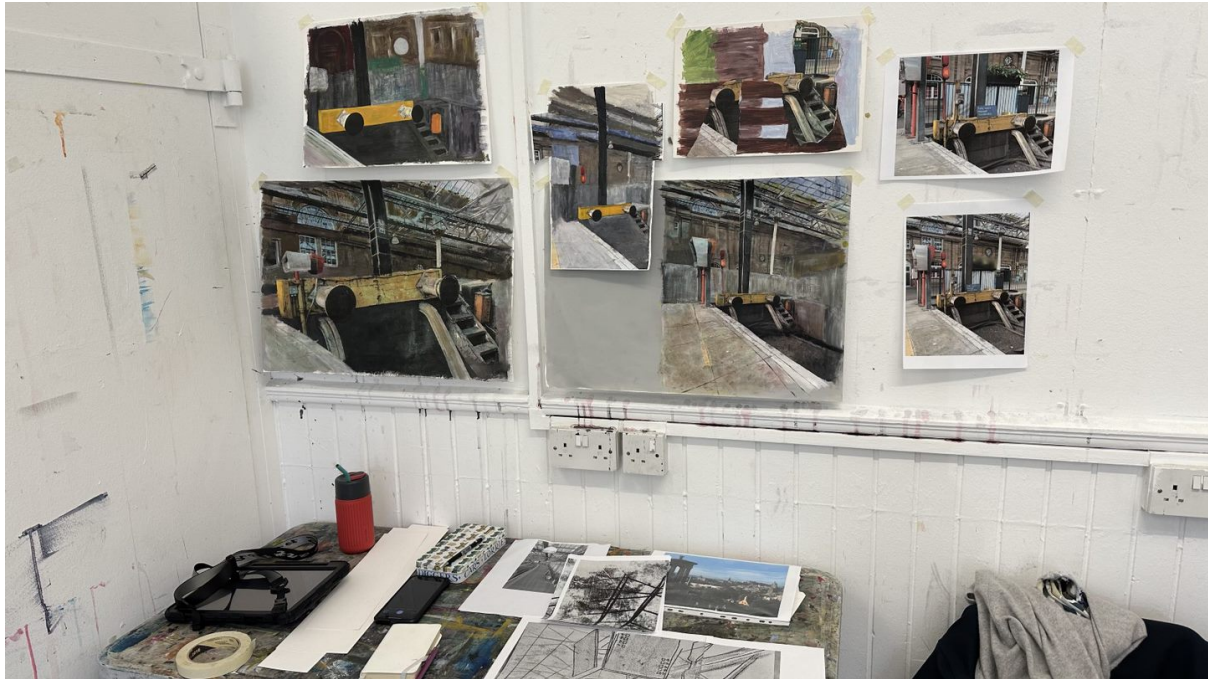
## Labelling your work

You can include written notes that direct the viewer of your portfolio through your projects. Keep these short. Your visual language (images) should stand out in your portfolio and any writing should be there only to guide the viewer through your work. It doesn't need to explain your work in detail.



## Documenting your work

Take photos of your creative experiments to record your progress. You should think about sequences of images that show your project's development.

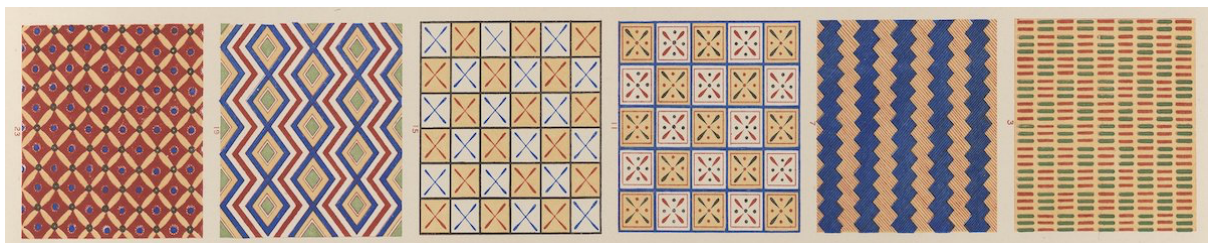


## Photography

Use a digital camera (this can be your smart phone) to take pictures of your work that can then be inserted into your digital portfolio. You may also use video to record your progress.

## Lighting

When photographing your work try to use natural daylight (near a north facing window is best, or a place that's **not in full sunlight**). Turn the lights off in the room so only daylight is lighting your work. Cover a worktop or table with clean white paper or a white tablecloth. Then lay your work on the table to photograph it from above. If your work is too big, place the work **on the floor** and photograph it from a standing position from above, again with the white paper underneath. **Do not stand on a table**. When photographing, make sure you get the whole image or page into the frame-of-view and don't crop the image, we want to see the full work.



## Selecting your work

The following advice may be applied to all creative practices (e.g. Fine Art, Fashion, Design)

The advice is adapted from that given by Edinburgh College of Art:



## Editing

**Assessors want to see work with based on ideas, not just a random selection of images – be selective in your choice of work.**

**Ideas are more important than technical ability.**

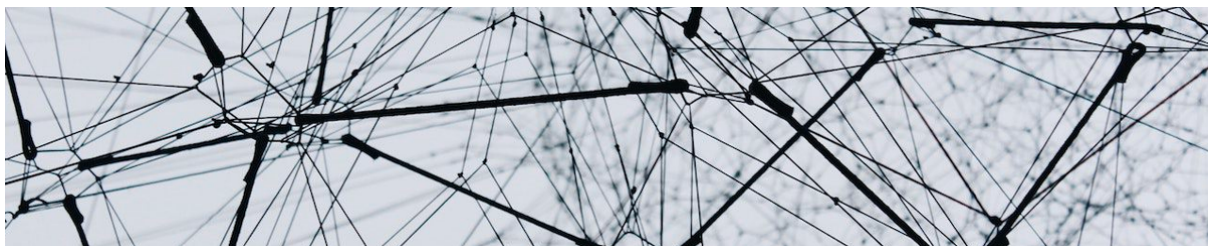
## Sequences

**Assessors are interested in how you research and develop ideas in a visual way.** How you present your portfolio is important and you should think about how you want the viewer to 'journey' through your projects, for example starting with your first ideas, through early experiments and towards the completed work at the end of the creative process.

## Narratives

**Assessors are looking for work which shows original thinking as well as a narrative about your personality and the way you see things. Look out into the world, slow down and notice your surroundings honestly. Ask questions about the visual world.**

**A strong portfolio submission will show evidence of independent work beyond school/college projects.**



## Appendix

### Further information

For specific information for **Art and Design Applications**, you can refer to the Edinburgh College of Art video: <https://vimeo.com/756407912>

For **Design Portfolios** you can find more information here: [Pebble+ Public \(pebblepad.co.uk\)](http://pebblepad.co.uk)

There are more of these **Art and Design** resources on the **Centre for Open Learning Arts Hub**:

[Pebble+ Public \(pebblepad.co.uk\)](http://pebblepad.co.uk)

### Glossary of commonly used Art and Design terms

#### *Group Critique*

A 'group critique' refers to a structured evaluation and discussion session, organised by the teaching staff, where a group of students come together to provide feedback and analysis on each other's art or design work. During a group critique, participants may share their thoughts, observations, and constructive criticism, discussing elements such as technique, approaches, ideas and concept. The aim is to foster a collaborative learning environment, encourage diverse perspectives, and help the student refine their work by gaining insights and suggestions from their peers.

### *Personal Language / Visual Vocabulary*

These terms refer to the unique and distinctive visual elements, symbols, motifs, or themes that the student incorporates into their art or design work. It encompasses the individual artist's visual language, developed through their personal experiences, emotions, and artistic exploration. This vocabulary can include recurring colour palettes, mark-making techniques, subject matter preferences, or any other visual elements that become characteristic of their artistic style. The personal visual vocabulary allows artists to express their ideas, emotions, and perspectives in a distinct and recognizable manner, creating a cohesive body of work that reflects their artistic identity.

### *The Workshop*

A 'workshop' typically refers to a focused and interactive learning session whereby students engage in hands-on activities, demonstrations, and discussions to enhance their skills and knowledge in a specific area of art or design. Workshops are often led by the teaching colleague who provides guidance, instruction, and feedback to the participants.

During a workshop, participants have the opportunity to explore new techniques, experiment with different materials, and learn from the expertise of the teaching colleague and their peers. They are designed to be immersive and at times, collaborative, allowing participants to learn and grow in a supportive environment while actively engaging with the subject matter. Workshops can vary in duration, from a few hours to several days, depending on the depth and complexity of the topic being covered.

### *Studio Practice*

The phrase 'studio practice' refers to the regular and dedicated artistic and designerly activities, processes, and routines that the artist or designer engages' in, within their studio setting. It encompasses the full range of activities an artist undertakes to create, experiment, explore, and develop their art or design work.

Studio practice involves various aspects, including generating ideas, researching, sketching, experimenting with different materials and techniques, creating art or design work, and reflecting on the artistic process. It is a time for artist or designer to delve into their creative process, allowing them to refine their technical skills, explore new concepts, and deepen their understanding of their chosen medium.

The studio serves as a dedicated space where artists can concentrate on their work, free from distractions, and fully immerse themselves in their creative practice. It is a place for experimentation, problem-solving, and self-expression. Studio practice is crucial for the student as it provides them with the time and environment to develop their artistic voice, refine their style, and consistently create and evolve their body of work.

### *Visual Research*

The term 'visual research' refers to the process of gathering visual references, studying and analysing visual materials, and conducting investigations to inform and inspire artistic practice. It involves actively exploring and examining various visual sources, such as photographs, artworks, historical images, nature, objects, or any visual stimuli relevant to the artist's interests or creative goals.

Visual research serves multiple purposes in the art and design process. It can be used to gather information and inspiration, to study different art and design techniques, to explore diverse styles

and aesthetics, or to deepen understanding of specific subject matters. Through visual research, artists and designers can expand their visual vocabulary to develop new ideas and ways of working.

The process of visual research often involves collecting reference materials, organizing and categorizing visual resources, creating mood boards or visual journals, and critically analysing and reflecting on the gathered information. Visual research serves as a foundation for creative exploration, helping artists and designers broaden their perspectives, developing their concepts, and make informed decisions in their creative practice.

### *A Demonstration*

A 'demonstration' refers to a live presentation or performance conducted by the teaching colleague to illustrate and teach specific art and design techniques, processes, or approaches. During a demonstration, the demonstrator showcases their skills and expertise by creating artwork in real-time, explaining and showcasing each step of the process.

Demonstrations are typically interactive and an educational experience where participants can observe and learn from the instructor's techniques, materials, and creative decision-making. They can cover various aspects of art and design, such as drawing, painting, sculpting, 3D modelling and crafting, printmaking, or any other medium or technique. Demonstrations may focus on fundamental skills like colour mixing or the use of collage, or delve into more advanced techniques and specialized topics.

The purpose of a demonstration is to provide visual learners with a hands-on learning experience. Participants can witness the creative thought process, gain insights into their artistic choices, and acquire practical knowledge that they can apply to their own artwork. Demonstrations often include opportunities for participants to ask questions, seek clarification, and engage in discussions. They are valuable tools for sharing knowledge, inspiring creativity, and fostering a deeper understanding of artistic techniques and processes.

