ual: university of the arts london

So, what is a portfolio?

We like to think of a portfolio as a window into your own unique world through which we can see your skills, personality and potential. It's a collection of your work demonstrating how your creativity has developed over a period of time. It shows your ability to work with different materials, themes and techniques, as well as how you research, develop and plan your ideas. A portfolio should be professional, yet human – we want to see you amongst the pages.

Please note: While these tips will help you with your undergraduate application, remember to also check the specific page for your chosen course to ensure you've considered the specific criteria as it varies from course to course.

Find out more at **arts.ac.uk/courses**

Personality is important

You're applying to a specific undergraduate course, so we want to see your passion and enthusiasm for that area. It's not always about how advanced your skill set is but what your potential is. As creatives we put a lot of ourselves into our work, so ensure that comes across in your portfolio.

Balance process and perfection

Don't be embarrassed by imperfect drawings or unfinished plans, it's all part of your process and is how we understand your ability to ideate. We always like to see research, development and final outcome. However do be mindful of presentation. If you've got samples, ensure they're mounted on same-sized clean card and always use high-res imagery. It's your work, so give it the best possible chance of making a good impression. Feel free to include labels and indicators so we know what materials and creative methods were involved.

Be decisive

While we love to see a variety of work within your portfolio we do want to see your ability to edit. It's all about establishing a balance, don't submit everything you've ever done but don't cut it down to nothing at all. If you have lots of drawings, show us a few of your favourites. If you're including film, edit it down and include stills to be efficient.

Think about format

With format, opt for what best suits the creative area you're working in. Consider practicality too – is a heavy folder going to hinder you in transit? Tailor the format of your portfolio to suit the situation. With content, keep it uncluttered and relevant. Have a reason for every single thing you include. Your portfolio should be clear and confident; if you can't explain why something is in there – take it out.

Show us what you love

Don't assume what we want to see. It's better to include what you want us to see. You can submit unfinished pieces, independent or group work – but do remember to indicate this so we know the origins of the project and the role you played in it. You may really excel at a certain technique but show variety, aim to keep the work on topic without it becoming repetitive. Show us your range, keep our attention.

Consider your audience

Instead of chronological order we advise a strong narrative. Compare it to a piece of music or a good book: an impactful beginning, interesting middle and a strong ending. Some courses involve interviews or submitting a purely digital application so it's imperative to consider your audience. Ensure work has room to breathe, is all the same orientation and can speak for itself.