ual: london college of fashion

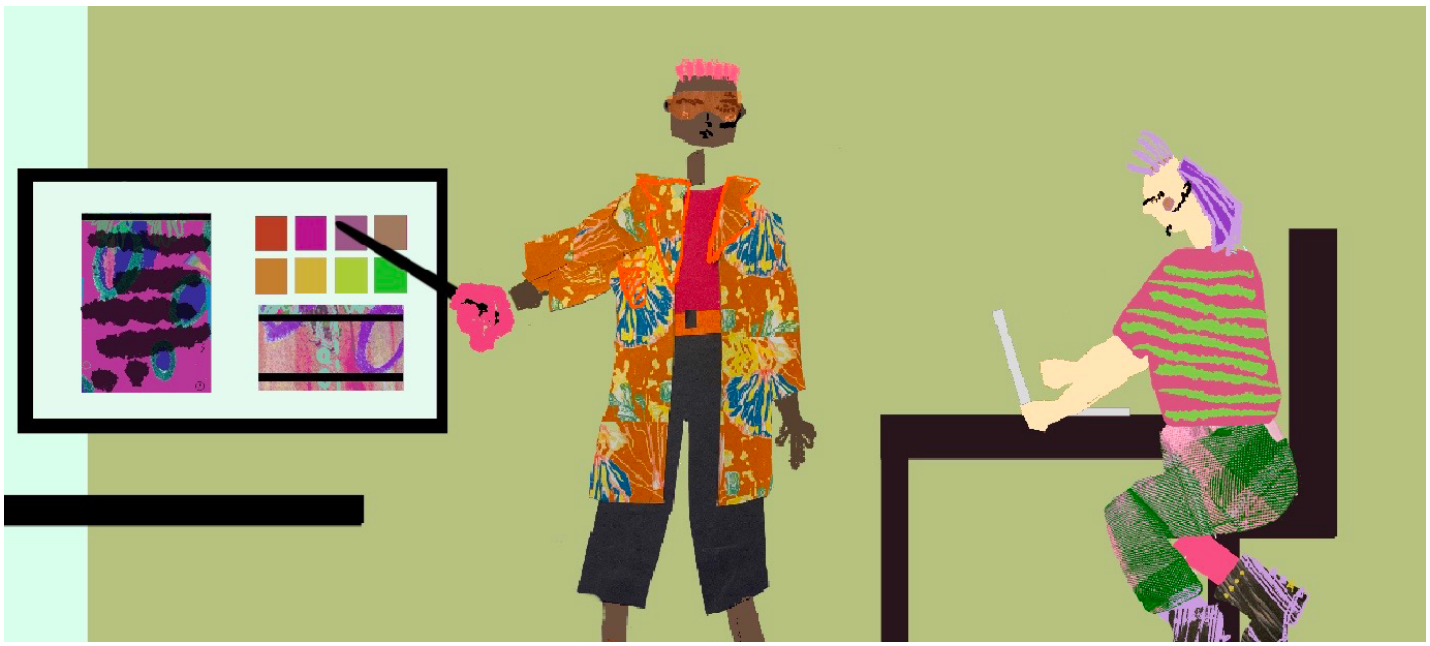


Illustration by Priscilla Fung



How to prepare your portfolio for career opportunities

What is the purpose of a portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection of your work, which shows how your skills and ideas have developed over a period of time. It demonstrates your creativity, personality, abilities and commitment. A portfolio can be used to secure creative job opportunities and helps viewers to evaluate your skills and potential. You will likely need both a physical and digital portfolio depending on your course and desired career path.

Types of portfolios

Physical portfolios

Depending on your creative practice, this can be presented in various ways. A physical portfolio is a great way of taking your work along to in-person interviews and meetings.

Examples of physical portfolios include:
- A3 professional portfolio
- Printed book
- Sketchbook
- Folder of inserts
- Magazine
- Lookbook

Online portfolios

Online portfolios are collections of work that can be viewed online. This showcases your work on a wider scale, strengthening your visual presence. It also demonstrates your commercial awareness. This can be created on a portfolio platform such as ‘UAL Portfolio’, or you can use your own website domain. Social media platforms such as Instagram or Pinterest, can also be used to showcase work. Having an online portfolio means you can link to it in job applications and emails.

Social Media

Many creatives use social media as an extension of their portfolio to showcase their brand, style and personality. If you choose to do this, it is important to maintain a professional platform which can have a positive impact on your job search or promotion of a business. Remember to:

- Plan your content effectively in advance. It can be helpful to look at competitor’s pages to help you to plan.



Tolu Ashiru, Jewellery Headpieces, MA Fashion Futures. © Ben Turner

- Use high quality images, representative of your brand. Edit and save them appropriately for web, to make sure they upload correctly.
- Link to your professional online portfolio or other professional profiles.
- Keep it up to date.

Digital portfolios

This is normally created in Adobe or design software and saved into a PDF document or collection of JPEG files, to showcase a selection of your work. Digital portfolios are a great way to showcase your historical work, and work you may be currently developing, directly to employers. This type of portfolio ensures your work is outside of the public domain. If you have undertaken contracts with well-known brands or companies, this may be a contractual requirement.

Guidelines

Visual portfolios

For career paths in design, development, production, photography, marketing and creative direction, you will need a portfolio that mostly consists of the visual elements of your projects. This can be both physical and digital.

Structure considerations

Page limit:
The viewer will likely have limited time to go through your whole portfolio so it is best to include 25 pages maximum. Separate to your portfolio, you can create a website or social media account that shows all of your work if you feel you cannot showcase all of your projects in your portfolio.

Landscape or portrait:
Visual portfolios commonly follow a landscape format as the industry standard for presentations and decks is landscape.

Title pages:
Your portfolio should include a title page with your name, degree, email and links to important pages, eg. Website, Instagram or LinkedIn profile.



Courtney Burnan working in the studio, BA Fashion Imaging and Illustration. © Alys Tomlinson.

The general flow of content:
Consider how the portfolio builds from start to finish. You should try to include: concept development, initial ideas and sketches, sampling and testing, technical design, refining into final products and artwork, photographs of achieved result and any press or marketing campaigns.

The use of text:
Text and notes can be included on each page of your portfolio to add value and purpose. You do not want to overwhelm a visual portfolio with long paragraphs of text as the viewer will rarely read everything included.

Using your best work:
Think about whether the portfolio showcases your skills to your best ability. Try not to be influenced too strongly by other's layouts and aesthetics and focus on whether the portfolio encompasses you as a creative. Your best work is not always your most recent, include the work you are most proud of and want to continue building in the future.

Written portfolios

For career paths in writing, management, psychology, analytics and consulting, you may need a portfolio that mostly consists of the written elements of your projects. This can be both physical and digital.

Structure considerations

Page limit:
The viewer will likely have limited time to go through your whole portfolio so it is best to include 20 pages maximum. Separate to your portfolio, you can create a website or blog that showcases more of your work.

Landscape or portrait:
For written work which has few visual elements, it is best to format this in portrait for ease of use when saving as a pdf.

Title page:
Your portfolio should include a title page with your name, degree, email and links to important pages, eg. Website, Instagram or LinkedIn profile. You may also want to include a contents page to separate projects clearly.

The general flow:
Consider how the portfolio builds from start to finish.

The use of visuals:
If possible, incorporate images and diagrams into your portfolio for a space break from text.



Portfolio of Jeffrey Thomson, London College of Fashion, International Preparation for Fashion. © Alys Tomlinson.

Using your best work:
Think about whether the portfolio showcases your skills to your best ability. Does each project add value or can they be condensed? Your best work is not always your most recent, include the work you are most proud of and want to continue building in the future.

Building your portfolio

- Editing your work is key, ask yourself, do all your projects say the same thing? Be selective with what work you include, don't include everything.
- Tailor the content for your audience, who are you applying to? Who is your potential client? What would they like to see?
- Demonstrate your skills, competencies and knowledge of processes.
- Organise your work so that it makes sense logically, chronologically, by theme or medium.
- Label your work and credit your references and collaborators.

Tailoring your portfolio

You can stand out in job applications and interviews by tailoring your portfolio to the specific brand you are applying to or meeting. This can include creating a couple of pages or a short project based on how you would go about working for the brand, for example:

- A selection of designs based on the brand's signature aesthetic
- A mock-up of a campaign for the brand
- A written case-study based on your research of the brand

Going this extra mile is time consuming but is worthwhile if you are strongly aiming to secure a role at this brand.

Preparing to present your portfolio

In a job application

If you are sending your portfolio in job applications, you need to consider what a person with no previous knowledge of you and your work will be viewing. You can test this by giving your portfolio to a friend or classmate and see what they take away from viewing it.

- Ask them whether it makes overall sense or lack context?
- Are any elements repeated or feel unnecessary?
- Can they now describe your skills and interests from the portfolio?

In an interview

If you are presenting your portfolio in person during an interview, you need to practice what points you want to get across. Time yourself talking through the full portfolio to a friend or classmate, you should try to keep the presentation to 10 minutes maximum. If you are presenting a digital portfolio, make sure you have what you need to present (for example, a file saved on memory stick or bringing in your laptop).

You may be asked to bring a physical work to demonstrate your technical abilities such as a garment or hand-made product. Make sure you prepare this piece before your interview so that you can showcase it in the best possible way, such as steaming the garment or presenting the product in a box designed by you.

Top tips for your portfolio

- Constantly re-evaluate your work.
- Make sure you have good quality images and keep it neat. Your portfolio is a communication tool, it should be easy to read and well presented.
- Practice presenting your portfolio. Be familiar with the sequence of projects and know what to say for each one.
- Look at the portfolios of companies or professionals you admire for inspiration.
- Make your portfolio exciting, distinctive and full of passion!

Useful Links

You can view other creative's portfolios and gain inspiration from the following links:

- UAL Portfolio
- Coroflot
- Pinterest

Examples of digital portfolio hosting platforms:

- Behance
- Issuu
- JournoPortfolio
- WordPress
- Krop
- Squarespace
- Wix
- Portfoliobox



The Children of an Oscuro Pasado, by Lucy Holzhauer-Conti, London College of Fashion, Costume Design for Performance. © Emmi Hyppa.