



University
of Dundee

A guide to...

Creative Applications



Foreword

ACES is a nationally funded initiative based across the four art schools in Scotland. Our job is to encourage, educate and empower senior-phase pupils to consider careers and higher education in art, design and architecture.

Our broad programme of events and 1-1 support helps pupils to explore their options, create a competitive application and develop a strong portfolio of work.

ACES advice is always impartial, and we support pupils wherever they want to go.

How can ACES help me with my application?

ACES is here to guide and support you through the whole process of thinking about and applying to creative courses. Whether it's finding out where to apply, what to include in your application, how to write a creative personal statement or start your digital portfolio - we've got you covered.

Use this guide to get started in the process but remember ACES is here if you need additional help.

- Come to our on campus events such as portfolio prep course
- Check out our online events & resources
- Chat to our ACES Student Ambassadors
- Book a 1-2-1 support meeting (online, in school or at University of Dundee)

All our events are listed on our website: www.dundee.ac.uk/aces
They are always free, and we provide all materials!

You can get in touch via email: aces@dundee.ac.uk

Content

This guide will cover:

- Introduction to creative applications
- Researching your options
- Creative courses at FE college
- Submitting your application
- Starting your portfolio
- Building your portfolio
- Documenting your work
- How to include SQA work
- Physical vs digital portfolios
- Annotating your work
- Next steps
- Your application

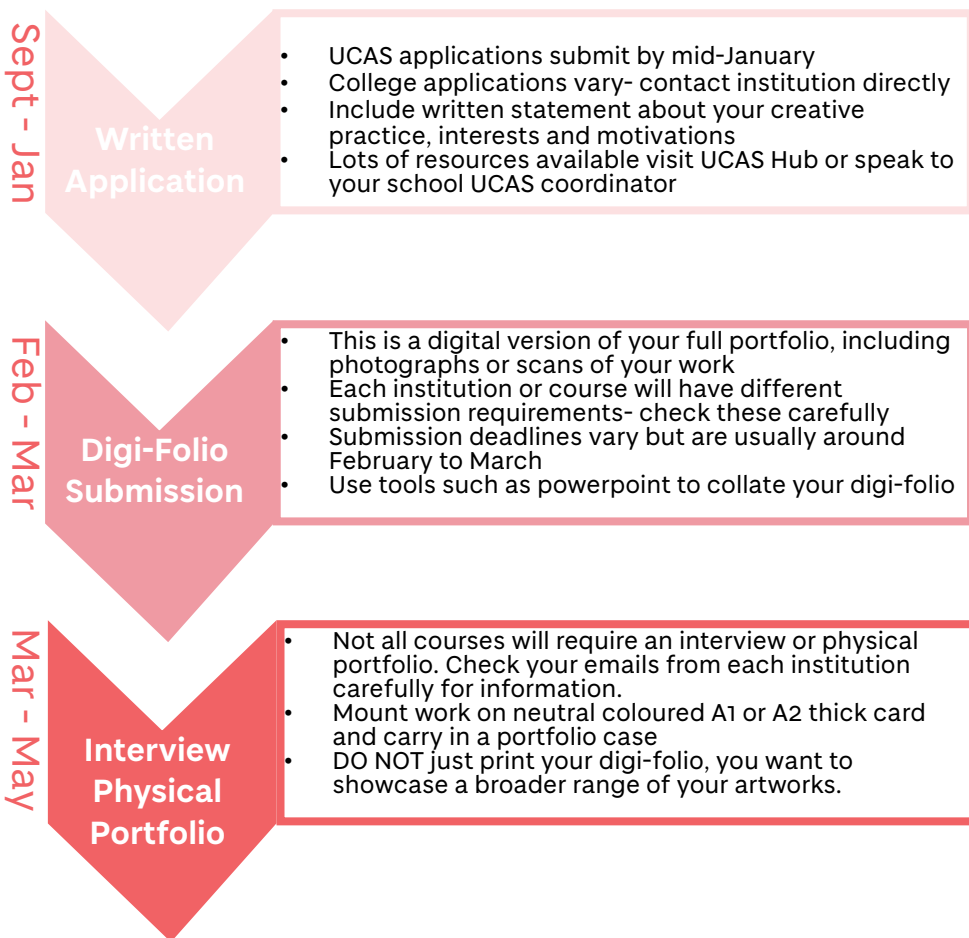
This guide offers general advice and guidance on each stage of a creative higher education application.

Every effort has been made to ensure the information is up-to-date and accurate at the time of publication. However, as requirements and formats can change; **it is vital that you carry out your own research and always verify information with the individual college or university.**

Creative Applications

Frustratingly, different universities and courses have varying requirements and deadlines for their applications. It is essential to do your research and prepare early.

While not every course is the same, the process are similar and tend to follow the below process:



It is best to start preparing early, don't wait until you are in S6! Take an active approach to your applications; double check details, visit institutions' websites for the most up-to-date info & get in touch with ACES if you have questions or concerns.

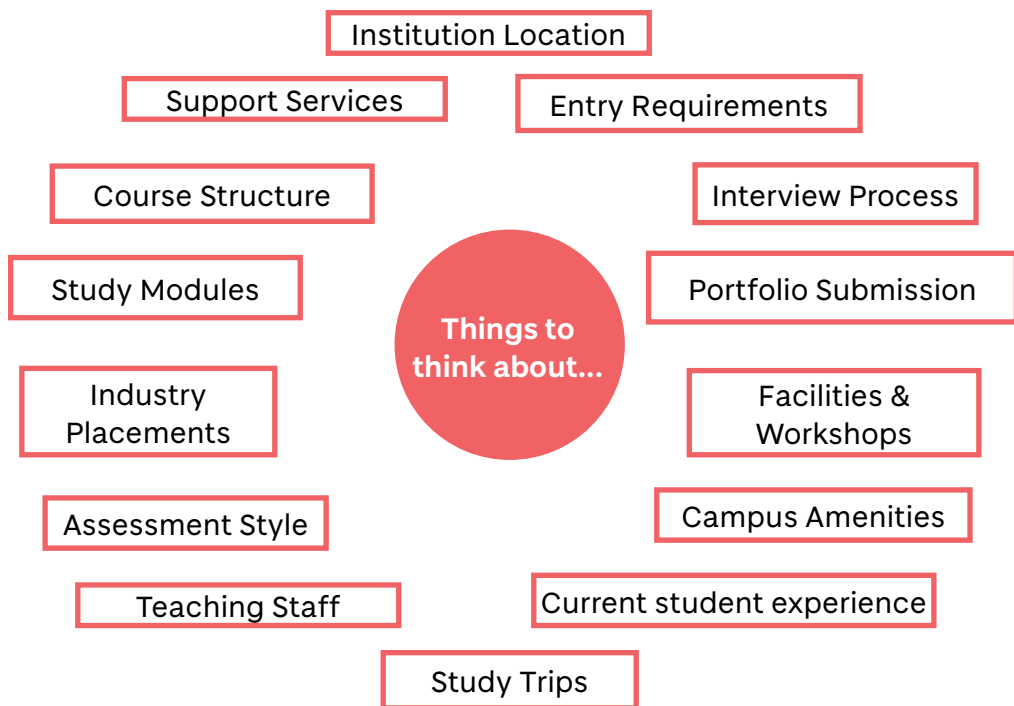
Research & Options

There are lots of different creative course types and options, so research is the first step to completing your application.

Although courses at different universities might share the same name they can be very different in their structure, teaching style and content. Course names can be confusing - it isn't always clear what the course content will be from the name alone. Course descriptors can be found on universities websites and will give you more detailed information.

In addition to researching online and reading prospectuses, it's essential to visit the universities and colleges you are considering to get a feel for what they are like in person, find out more information and ask questions.

All universities and colleges will advertise their open days on their websites and usually you are asked to book a place online.



Further Education (FE) College

If you don't feel you are ready to begin a university degree straight from school, you might want to consider studying at college.

College courses vary but can allow you to develop your portfolio, boost your academic grades and allow you the time to develop your creative interests before starting a degree.

College course options

Portfolio Preparation

- Varies short course / 1 year
- SCQF Level 6
- Entry requirements: 2 National 5's, portfolio & interview

Develop your creative practice and produce work for your portfolio admission to year 1 of university. Note this course should be seen as an addition to Higher qualifications completed in school rather than an alternative.

HNC / HND

- 1 year or 2 years
- SCQF Level 7 / 8
- Entry requirements: 1-2 Highers, portfolio & interview

Equivalent to year 1 of university. You might consider this course instead of S6 at school. Although advertised as a two year course, you can apply to uni after year 1 and may be able to articulate to year 2 of a degree programme.

Other Courses

- Diplomas are 1 year development courses to prepare you for going on to either HNC or university. These are less common in Scotland so be sure to check the SCQF Level carefully.
- National Certificates are equivalent to Nat 4/5 in school so if you have achieved a Higher look at other courses.
- Colleges also offer evening or introduction courses, these are usually practical and do not have an assessment or qualification. These courses also charge fees so watch out!

College Applications

You can apply to both college and university at the same time. Even if you are confident in your application to university, it is always a good idea to have a plan B- just in case things don't go to plan or if you change your mind!

University applications are submitted via UCAS website. Your school will be able to guide you through registering & submitting application and you may be able to access support from LIFT OFF.

You can check the level of a course by looking for the SCQF rating.

- Level 5 - National 5
- Level 6 - Higher Level
- Level 7 - Year 1 Uni / HNC
- Level 8 - Year 2 Uni / HND



Starting your Portfolio

The challenge of creating a portfolio is that each one is unique to the applicant and there is no one correct formula for success. However, institutions publish detailed guidance for each course on their website. This can give you an idea about what type of work they are looking for and guide you when selecting pieces to include in your submission.

It is important to show that you are engaged with being creative outside the classroom- so work from extra curricular activities, like ACES workshops, or works that you develop in your own time can also be included in your portfolio. Some activities that can help develop work for your portfolio are:

- Portfolio preparation course
- University taster events
- Life drawing classes
- Gallery or museum activities
- Drawing in public places
- Summer school

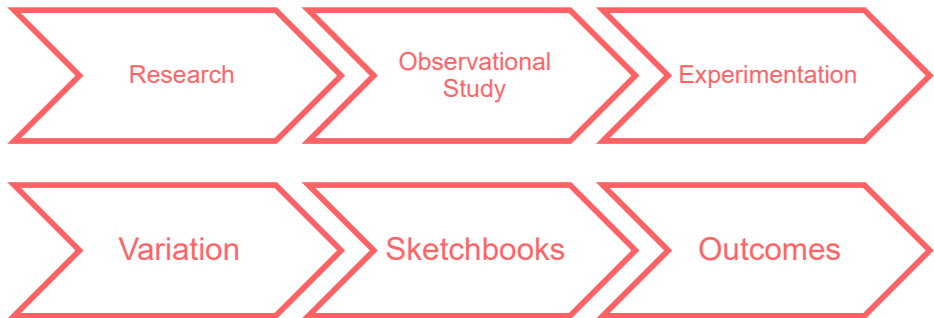
You can also include works from any creative subject in school or college that showcases your best work. Consider content from your Higher or Advanced Higher courses such as:

- Art & Design
- Graphic Communication
- Photography
- Design & Manufacture
- Nation Progression Awards
- Foundation Apprenticeships

Remember to keep your portfolio relevant to the course you are applying to! For example if you are applying to courses such as Architecture or Interior Design, you should include examples of 3D work that show engagement with the environment & spaces.



A few ideas of what to include:



Showing development in your portfolio

A key element to any work you include in your portfolio is showing how your ideas and work have developed. Universities need to see that you can work an idea through from start to finish, and they want to see the journey you have taken to do this.

Development can take many approaches; consider including drawn or painted studies; experimentation with colour, surface, scale and form; or even document your thought process at each stage of your artwork.

Top tip: A small sketchbook that fits in your bag is useful tool. Fill it with drawings, artist research, exhibition info & found objects. This can be included in your portfolio to showcase your interests and personality.



Building your portfolio

Making a Plan

Making a start on the digital portfolio process might seem a bit overwhelming. Our best tip is to make a visual plan to help you visualise what work you have or if there are any gaps.

Get all of your work together (you can do this project by project) and gauge how many slides each project will need to show development. As a guide, each Nat 5 or Higher should probably have one slide. Advanced Higher should take up multiple slides.

To help you there is a template for your plan at the back of this booklet.

Example Portfolio Plan for 12 slide portfolio:

Higher Art	Higher Design	ACES Life Drawing	ACES Life Drawing
Adv H Art	Adv H Art	Adv H Art	ACES Explore Day
ACES Portfolio Prep	ACES Portfolio Prep	ACES Portfolio Prep	ACES Portfolio Prep
ACES Printmaking	H Photography	Spare - for new work	Spare - for new work

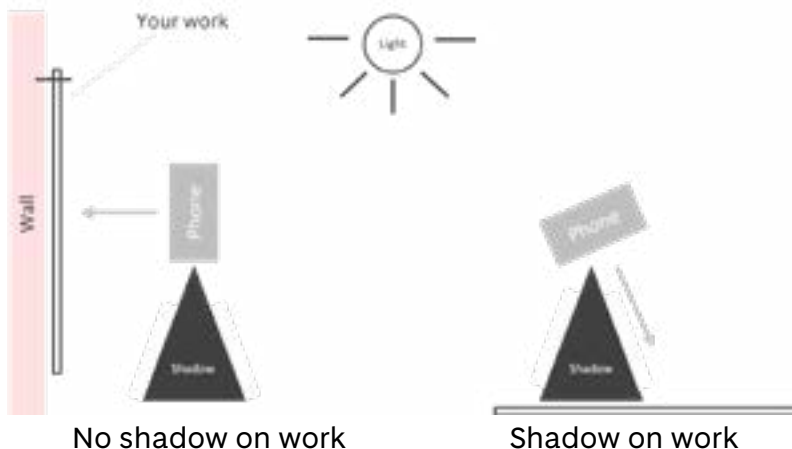
Documenting your Work

Photographing your work

- For larger pieces of work, or if you do not have a scanner, you will need to photograph it.
- You will need a clean space with good lighting – natural light is best if you don't have professional studio lights.
- Place your work against a blank background. For 3D work you can create a curved background using large sheets of paper. Alternatively you can tack your work to a clean, white wall.
- Some work will photograph better outside or on location

Camera

- Your mobile phone camera should be good enough.
- Remember to hold the camera square to the work – not on an angle – otherwise your work won't be square in the photo
- Think about lighting – are you casting a shadow?!
- For flat work, take your photographs as close to your work as possible. For 3D work, make sure you have good space around your work.
- You might also want to photograph your work from different angles.
- Make sure that flash is turned off, and if possible, adjust the white balance of your camera to match the light you are using.

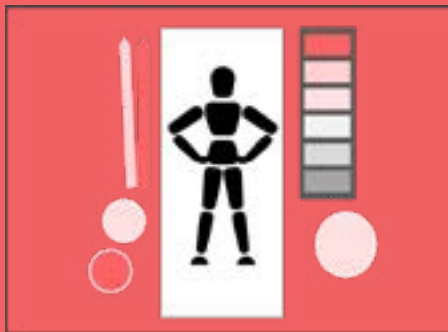


Scanning your work

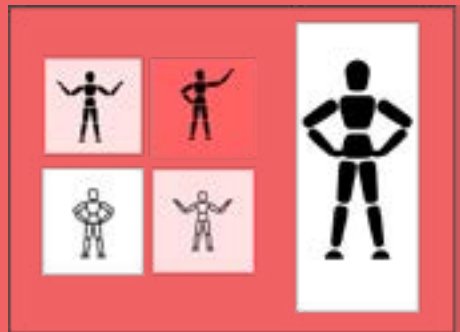
- For smaller work and for sketchbooks, it is probably easier to use a scanner or you can download free scanner apps to a mobile phone, such as Adobe Scan.
- For bulky sketchbooks you might need to press down as you scan to avoid a grey shadow on the spine of book.

Editing your work

- Use editing tools sparingly, you want to give a true representation of the work. For example; don't change colours, add layers, or filters to your artwork, this would be a misrepresentation of the work itself.
- Crop any borders or backgrounds to show your work clearly and without distraction.
- There are lots of free image editing software available to help you refine your images. Software such as Paint.net, Canva, phone image editor or even Microsoft Powerpoint will have basic editing capabilities.
- Keep your portfolio focused on your own artwork and free from loose stationary or busy backgrounds. This takes up valuable space and distracts from your work.
- Consider the layouts below. The left is cluttered and unclear, whereas the right uses the space well showing 4 more artworks.



Work surrounded by art materials and unrelated objects. No evidence of development and work unclear!



Good development and final piece of work. Everything is clear with room to breathe!

SQA Work

The sheets that your SQA work is organised on are often crowded and not appropriate for your portfolio. Additionally, the written statement on your SQA sheet takes up a lot of space and is not relevant to your university application.

Consider taking photographs of each piece of work on the sheet individually and upload them into the portfolio as separate image files to better present your work.

Physical Vs Digital Portfolios

It has become less common for institutions to ask for a physical portfolio, instead opting for a digital portfolio (sometimes called a digi-folio) submission. This is simply a digital version of your full portfolio, where you document your work and collate as digital slides. A digi-folio allows you to tailor the content you include, to meet the specific requirements of each course you have applied.

However, be prepared incase you are asked to attend an interview with a physical portfolio. Present your work on A1 or A2 pieces of paper in a portfolio case. DO NOT print out your digi-folio, they want to see your original artworks.

Remount your SQA work, removing any borders, coloured backgrounds, double mounts or overlapping work. Let your work breathe by spreading it across multiple sheets of your portfolio.



SQA Higher Design:
Final CD Cover. (120x120mm)

Digi-folio Slides

ACES recommend using Microsoft Powerpoint to assemble your digi-folio as it's easy to use, can be saved in a variety of formats and you should be able to access it via your school glow account.

Getting Started

- Open Powerpoint and create 15-20 blank slides – standard width, not widescreen.
- To import your work click 'Insert' then select picture. Then start to arrange your photographs on your slides.
- It's a good idea to have a rough plan of what each slide will show as you go along – but powerpoint makes it so easy to move things around. Be flexible!
- Presentation is important, so take care in how you arrange your work. Pay attention to the details; align the edges of your images, make good use of the space and include multiple images per slide but take care not to overcrowd.
- Check each institutions' guidance on how to include digital or moving image work, you may have to upload this separately or include a html link on your slide.
- For 'final' pieces consider using a whole slide to allow the work to stand out.

Example Layouts



Annotation and Text

Adding brief notes or annotations to each slide allows you to add some context to help assessors to understand your work. Include information such as media, size, references & short comment.

- You don't need to write an essay- keep notes relevant & direct
- Use a clean font and keep it quite small (size 12 maximum)
- Consider using a grey font colour as it's clear but not too bold or distracting from your artwork.
- Place your text at a bottom corner and keep this the same on each slide to keep it neat.

Example Annotation

“ACES Portfolio Prep Club

Mixed media drawing experiments: charcoal, graphite, ink, wax
Using a variety of media I created my own drawing tools to experiment with mark making. I really like the texture of the graphite and ink together.”

Different universities will have different text requirements and sometimes ask you for an additional statement. Make sure you check the requirements carefully!



ACES Portfolio Prep Club
Mixed media drawing experiments: charcoal, graphite, ink, wax
Using a variety of media I created my own drawing tools to experiment with mark making. I really like the texture of the graphite and ink together.”

Next Steps

Once you are happy with your digital portfolio you will need to export it to the correct file format and upload it to each institutions' system. Read instructions carefully and bear in mind the file size restrictions, you may have to compress your images.

Compressing images

- Click on any image
- Go to picture format tab and click on compress picture button shown below
- Untick the 'apply only to this picture' box and ensure the delete cropped areas of picture is ticked
- Try selecting the highest target output possible e.g. print This may impact file size and you might have to repeat this step
- Click ok and save



Saving your portfolio as PDF

- File > Export > Create PDF > Choose location > Publish

Saving your portfolio as JPEG

This is slightly more complicated

- File > Save As > Choose location
- Select JPEG in the 'save type' drop down menu > Edit File name e.g Joe Bloggs- UCAS ID- Portfolio
- Click OK
- A box will pop up 'Which slides do you want to export?' > Click 'All Slides'
- Find the folder and JPEGs- check each one is under the MB limit by selecting it, at the bottom of your folder it will tell you the size of your file

Your Applications

The next section of this guide is dedicated to your application.

Task:

- Research the college and university courses that interest you
- Once you have your top five choices note them down in the boxes below
- Take note of the portfolio specifications, requirements & dates required for each of your UCAS choices as this will be different at each institution
- Use the portfolio planner template to start mapping what work you are going to include in your portfolio

University:

Course:

Portfolio Submission Y / N

Date:

Time:

Requirements:

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University:

Course:

Portfolio Submission Y / N

Date:

Time:

Requirements:

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Your Applications

University:

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Portfolio Submission Y / N

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Need help with your application? Get in touch!

Pupils registered with ACES Tayside can access additional support including online application master-classes, portfolio preparation class & 1-2-1 application support. Visit our website or email aces@dundee.ac.uk.

“ACES not only give detailed explanations of the [application] process, but assist in every conceivable way...”

**Contact us
aces@dundee.ac.uk
dundee.ac.uk/aces
[@cestayside](https://www.instagram.com/cestayside)**