UVA School of Architecture — Portfolio Guidelines
Graduate Programs

Overview

Your portfolio should be a personal narrative, describing your work and interests by demonstrating the way you think creatively and critically through design. The portfolio:

- serves in helping the Admissions Review Committee to assess your potential within a studiobased curriculum
- allows you to share how you work through and think through creative problems
- demonstrates the tools and media you use (drawings, diagrams, sketches, models, prototypes, writing, renderings)
- includes a selection of academic and professional work; or creative work developed on your own
- should represent an arc of your thinking, from idea to final project.

What to include
[Path 3 Applicants]

Path 3 applicants applying to the Master of Architecture and Master of Landscape Architecture programs are not expected to demonstrate advanced design skills or techniques.
Develop your portfolio featuring a range of work completed for courses or other creative activities such as drawing, painting, graphic design, set design, sculpture, computer graphics, animation, furniture design, industrial design, fiber or textile arts, or other media pertaining to art, design, materiality and craft. You may also choose to supplement visual medias with less visually-based processes such as poetry or scholarly research, particularly if related to the constructed environment and/or design culture. We are interested in how you synthesize ideas through drawing and other media – it is less important to be photorealistic. Works included can be abstract, gestural and/or exploratory.

[Path 2, Path 2 Advanced and Path 2.5 Applicants]

For those who are applying to an advanced placement or post-professional Path, applicants are expected to present a high-quality portfolio of work demonstrating the ability to pursue advanced design. Projects should demonstrate your skills in making both digitally and by hand through a developed range of works at multiple scales. The work should present a rigorous and thoughtful research-based approach. We encourage you to include the design process – the iterative steps of design development that display your thought process, and not just the "final" products.

Annotations + Attribution of Credit

Applicants are expected to abide by the **University of Virginia's Honor System**, which prohibits **academic fraud and plagiarism**. To avoid plagiarism, be sure to include supporting text for each project or piece in your portfolio as follows:

- Title/Name of the work
- Year and/or semester that the work was completed (as applicable)
- Brief project description that includes the work's context and/or purpose
- Indicate your role and contributions to the conceptualization and development of any group, team, or collaborative projects.
- Include the course number and instructor name for any work produced in an academic setting.

[Examples]

- 10-minute sketch for Drawing 2000, Professor Smith
- Photographic Essay titled "Cinematic Space" completed during personal travel to Hong Kong
- Site Plan for Landscape Architecture Studio 300, "Novel Ecologies" taught by Professor Brown
- Exterior rendering of museum proposal, completed as intern at ABC Design in Seattle
  (part of 5-person design team, individual author of digital rendering completed for competition)

Organization + Format

Consider that the design of the portfolio is in itself your design statement. Let it express your personal aesthetics in a clear, concise and thoughtful layout that is legible. Quality of included work is valued over the quantity of work.

[Organization]

Work is often arranged in chronological order, but projects can also be organized around thematic links such as material explorations, environmental concerns, site/geographic conditions, scales of investigation or research inquiries. Work may also be organized according to context (i.e., "Academic," "Independent" or "Professional").

[Mandatory Formatting]

The portfolio must be:
- No larger than 15MB
- Designed and formatted for on-screen viewing; Portfolio will not be printed for review
- PDF format
- Formatted to horizontal (or landscape format) for better viewing on a computer monitor or digital screen

[Recommended Extents]

A typical portfolio includes:
- Approximately 20 pages or 10 spreads
- 5-8 projects

[Additional Recommendations]

Advice from faculty reviewers:

- Do not attempt to include the totality of your work or too many pieces in your portfolio. We value your aesthetic judgment, and sometimes less is more.
- In addition to limiting the number of projects, avoid attempting to present everything you did on a single project. Instead, be selective in presenting the strongest aspects of your project that showcase concept, development, and refinement.
- Simplify the graphic design to promote clarity, consistency, and focus on your art/architectural work rather than portfolio graphics.
- Be mindful of demonstrating creativity as a form of critical thinking and not simply something that appears 'artistic.'
- Avoid photographs of landscapes and/or travel as examples of your creative work. You may include photography but consider the subject matter as a design statement and show us how you employ the media creatively and experimentally.
- Do not overpack pages with images and text that are too small to read. Control the visual hierarchy on the page for readability. Limit layouts that reduce the readers need to have to scroll excessively across a page.
- Balance 2D graphics with photographs and imagery of models, prototypes or 3-dimensional works (both finished and study/process models) where possible.
- Be succinct and straightforward in your text descriptions.