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PORTFOLIO & POSITION STATEMENT PREPARATION GUIDELINES

MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN TRANS-DISCIPLINARY DESIGN

FOR PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS | 2026 INTAKE

SUBMISSION DEADLINE | JULY 20TH

01 / PURPOSE

WHY THIS GUIDE

This document offers guidance for applicants preparing a portfolio or position statement for admission to the Master of Fine Arts in Trans-Disciplinary Design at American University of Sharjah. It reflects the program's priorities and examines evidence of research, processes, critical inquiry, experimentation and interdisciplinary thinking.

02 / AUDIENCE

WHO THIS PROGRAM IS FOR

For applicants from design, art, architecture, media and the humanities as well as education, technology, social sciences, curatorial practice, community work and adjacent fields. The program welcomes diverse backgrounds. A strong application shows creative potential, intellectual curiosity, clarity of purpose, and the ability to work across ideas, methods and disciplines.

A successful portfolio may include visual, spatial, written, digital, time-based, participatory or hybrid work. The committee welcomes multiple modes of practice and presentation from applicants from a wide range of backgrounds, including but not limited to:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| → Animation | → Digital media | → Illustration | → Publishing |
| → Architecture | → Education | → Interaction design | → Sound and music |
| → Art | → Fashion | → Interior design | → Spatial design |
| → Creative technology | → Film | → Media studies | → Storytelling |
| → Cultural studies | → Fine arts | → Performance | → User experience design |
| → Curation | → Game design | → Photography | → Visual communication |
| → Design | → Graphic design | → Product design | → Writing |

and other related creative or interdisciplinary fields.

03 / TWO PATHWAYS

PORTFOLIO OR POSITION STATEMENT

PATHWAY A / PORTFOLIO

For applicants with a visual or design-based practice.

Submit a portfolio of original work together with a **Statement of Practice (750–1,000 words)**.

PATHWAY B / POSITION STATEMENT

For applicants from non-traditional or adjacent fields.

Submit a **Position Statement (1,000–1,200 words)** with representative samples such as essays, research projects, films, exhibition documentation, community initiatives or proposals via the link in the application form.

In both pathways, the central question remains the same: What do your materials reveal about how you think, what you care about, and how your work may grow in this program?

↓ PATHWAY A / PORTFOLIO

04 / CRITERIA

WHAT A STRONG PORTFOLIO SHOWS

- A clear point of view and a sense of what matters to you
- Evidence of research, inquiry and critical thinking
- A visible process of making, testing, reflecting and developing ideas
- Awareness of social, cultural, environmental, technological or ethical context
- The ability to connect ideas across fields
- Potential to grow within a research-driven, trans-disciplinary graduate program

05 / RECOMMENDED STRUCTURE

UP TO TEN STRONG PROJECTS, WELL EDITED

Applicants are encouraged to focus on up to ten strong projects or bodies of work. A concise, well-edited portfolio is usually more effective than a large collection of disconnected pieces. Each project should help the review committee understand how you think, how you work and how your practice may develop in the MFA.

FOR EACH PROJECT, INCLUDE:

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|----|--|
| 01 | Project title | 04 | Brief context or project description |
| 02 | Date | 05 | Your role, especially in collaborative work |
| 03 | Medium or format | 06 | If possible, show a research process for one of the projects |

06 / SUBMISSION FORMAT

A) PORTFOLIOS

Applicants may submit:

- a single PDF portfolio
- a personal portfolio website
- a clearly organized digital folder link

The submission should include selected projects, brief descriptions and, where relevant, evidence of process and final outcomes.

Document physical work, drawings, models, installations, material experiments and handmade artifacts through photographs or scans.

Time-based or interactive work must be available for online viewing, supported by stills, screenshots, storyboards or other visual documentation with short text.

→ Applicants will be contacted with further instructions for sharing a link to their portfolio as part of the application process.

B) POSITION STATEMENT

Applicants may submit a Position Statement (1,000–1,200 words) together with representative supporting materials.

The Position Statement should be saved as a PDF and uploaded to Google Drive. Supporting documentation should be placed in a separate clearly organized folder within the same Google Drive link.

Supporting materials may include essays, research projects, films, exhibition documentation, community initiatives, proposals, writing samples, visual documentation, or other relevant evidence of practice and inquiry.

→ Applicants should upload their Position Statement PDF and supporting materials to Google Drive and share the link through the application process.

07 / PRACTICE NOTES

PROCESS, COLLABORATION, AI

Graduate portfolios become stronger when they show process for one or more projects. If possible, include sketches, drafts, diagrams, notes, iterations, prototypes, screenshots, fieldwork, interviews, maps, material studies or installation views when they help explain the development of the project. You don't have to show it for every project, but reviewers are looking for evidence of inquiry and development, not just resolved outcomes.

If AI tools were part of your process, provide a short and transparent description of how they were used, whether for concept generation, image making, writing, prototyping, coding, translation or analysis. Clarity around authorship and process helps the committee understand your decisions and your contribution.

Collaborative projects are welcome. Please identify your role clearly. State what you contributed and how you shaped the work. A short statement such as:

My role focused on user research, visual systems, prototyping and presentation design.

is very helpful.

What to avoid

- Too many unrelated projects
- Only polished final images, with no process or context
- Crowded pages with small, unreadable visuals
- A portfolio that feels generic rather than tailored to this MFA
- Collaborative projects without a clear explanation of your role
- Beautiful work that offers very little insight into your thinking
- A written statement that does not connect to the work shown

08 / BEFORE YOU SUBMIT

A practical checklist for Portfolio

- Does the portfolio open with your strongest work?
- Does it include up to ten substantial projects rather than a large number of fragments?
- Does each project have enough context to be understood?
- Does it show both process and outcomes?
- Does it reflect your own role clearly?
- Does it feel intentionally prepared for this MFA?
- Does it demonstrate capacity for research, experimentation and trans-disciplinary growth?

A practical checklist for Position Statement

- Does the statement explain your background, interests and current direction clearly?
- Does it show what questions, themes or challenges matter to you?
- Does it explain why you want to join this MFA specifically?
- Does it connect your representative samples to your ideas and future goals?
- Does it demonstrate intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and trans-disciplinary potential?
- Does it feel clear, focused and intentionally prepared for this program?

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