



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FASHION, APPAREL, ART & DESIGN PORTFOLIOS IN FSAD

In addition to these FAQs, we strongly encourage you to visit the [Fiber Science and Apparel Design](#) website for more information about the program and its opportunities.

*Q: What is the average number of pieces submitted in a portfolio?*

A: There are no expectations around the quantity; it can be as few as five or six, but not more than 20 items. All applicants should select and submit her/his best pieces, the ones which they are most proud of showing.

*Q: The guidelines indicate that applicants may submit a supplemental CD of their design work. Is it possible to submit only a CD and not a paper-based portfolio?*

A: No, all applicants MUST submit a paper-based portfolio. The standard portfolio format cannot be substituted with a CD.

*Q: Is a portfolio necessary to be competitive in the undergraduate admission process for FSAD?*

A: Yes. The best students are proud of their accomplishments in art, design, and fashion, and are highly motivated to show off their work to department faculty members.

*Q: For several years I have worked in summer stock theatres (or, as an intern for a local fashion designer) and would like to ask the designer to write a letter of recommendation for my Cornell application. May I use a letter from a professional designer in place of one of my high school teachers in my formal application to Cornell?*

A: No. It is very important to select two of your high school teachers who know you well, and are able to write a comprehensive letter about your academics, special talents, and personal characteristics. A recommendation letter from a designer about your good work in the theatre (or on an internship) can be inserted as a page in your portfolio.

*Q: To date, I have a good art and photography background from high school, but have not yet experimented with fashion sketching and sewing projects. Will this hurt my chances at getting accepted into the FSAD program?*

A: No. FSAD faculty in apparel design and admissions officers understand that a majority of U.S. high schools rarely teach sewing and fashion sketching in the curriculum. Fashion graphics and sewing are taught in the first two semesters at Cornell and are required of all fashion design students. Not having these items in your admission portfolio will not hurt your chances at being accepted in FSAD. Be sure to show other types of art and design work in your portfolio that you are most proud.

*Q: I do not have a sewing background. Would it be a good idea for me to enroll in a sewing course in a local fabric store, or ask a family member or friend to work with me independently on some basic sewing projects before I begin my college courses, if I am accepted in the apparel design program?*

A: Absolutely! The summer before you matriculate at Cornell is an excellent time to do some independent work in sewing to establish a basic understanding of fabric and machine handling. All background work will enhance the quality of projects in your fashion design studios. Apparel design work in FSAD begins with original sketch ideas, patterns are then developed, and all garments are constructed by students in fashion fabric.

*Q: The portfolio guidelines suggest that students show a range of work in "Primary" and "Secondary" categories. I have experimented with nearly all of the items listed in these categories. Is it better to show one item from each category, or show a select group of items from fewer categories?*

A: Each student should decide what visual work will best highlight their creativity and skill level in art, design and fashion as they consider their portfolio pieces.

*Q: I have no background in painting and water colors, but am able to sketch very creative fashion illustrations. Must my portfolio sketch work be colored to indicate fabrics used, or can sketches be shown in black and white?*

A: Black and white sketches work well for fashion illustrations. You might, however, want to include fabric swatches with some of your sketch work to give reviewers an idea of how you envision the finished garment(s). Design faculty are very interested in students' thoughts about the design process, fabric selections, and color choices.

*Q: Why are Cornell's portfolio requirements less restrictive and very different from those at other professional/technical schools of design?*

A: Cornell's fashion design and apparel management programs are much more comprehensive, requiring that applicants have a very strong academic background, in addition to intense and tested interest in fashion, design, and art. Graduates of FSAD programs are educated more broadly than students in design and technical schools, and therefore expectations for admissions portfolios are broad and flexible. We assume that students apply to Cornell from diverse backgrounds and will not have identical art and design experiences. Cornell seeks applicants who are the best "fit" with each major, and each applicant expresses her/his "fit" through portfolios and essays.

*Q: I have sewn several prom dresses from printed Vogue patterns. What is the best way to photograph this work for my portfolio?*

A: Use a digital camera or print film and photograph a full front view, full back, and side views of the designs on a model or mannequin. Then take several close-up shots of the detail work and construction work that you wish to highlight. Include fabric swatches of the designs with your photos. Always note the source of the design, i.e. commercial pattern, several commercial patterns used together, original designs that were created by draping or by self-made patterns.

*Q: I applied for the Early Decision Program (EDP) in Apparel Design, but was deferred to the spring application pool. Since last fall I have been adding new visuals to my portfolio. May I send these items to be included with my application packet for spring review?*

A: Yes. You may send updates about your design activities, new awards, academic and personal achievements, and portfolio pieces. These will be added your admissions folder. Additional letters of recommendation, however, are not helpful at this point.

*Q: My professional goal is to design high technology sportswear with innovative fabrics. Will a degree from the FSAD department help me prepare a profession portfolio targeted towards the sportswear industry?*

A: Yes. An integral part of the FSAD programs is that all students are required to take classes in textiles and fiber science to augment their design and apparel management backgrounds. There are FSAD faculty members who specialize in teaching functional clothing design and fiber science who will work closely with students interested in these areas.

*Q: I am a transfer applicant who just recently discovered that I love the fashion field and that I have a burning desire to work in the fashion industry. My portfolio seems very small compared to my avid interest in the field. How can I enhance my chances of being accepted to the FSAD programs?*

A: Send your best art and design work in a small portfolio. This work may be done in a class or independently. Detail why your field of interest has changed, and how you think a Cornell education will help you achieve your new professional goals in the apparel and textile industries in your application essay. Plan a trip to campus, attend classes, and visit with Admissions Staff, FSAD faculty and students (call well in advance of your visit to schedule appointments) to become well informed about the academic and professional goals of the program you are considering. Transferring from another institution requires a great deal of research and preparation by students. Additional semesters at Cornell will be required to earn a degree, if admitted.

*Q: I have lots of fashion savvy and my dream is to become a profession fashion stylist. Among my friends, I am proudly known as **the best** fashion consultant. Classmates rely on me to coordinate their outfits for school, parties, and proms. How can I show my talent for fashion coordination in my portfolio?*

A: Create storyboards or collages around fashion themes and colors to demonstrate how you coordinate trendy apparel and accessories. Include these collages in your portfolio. Take photos of your friends in the outfits you have coordinated for them and briefly explain your selection decisions. Include these in your portfolio as well.

Note:

Please contact these fashion design faculty members if you have other specific questions about preparing your portfolio, Professor Anita Racine ([arr5@cornell.edu](mailto:arr5@cornell.edu)) or 607-255-1931 or Professor Van Dyk Lewis ([vd14@cornell.edu](mailto:vd14@cornell.edu)) 607-255-1930