

Preparing a Fashion Portfolio

Bachelor of Design - Fashion Technology and Design (Level 7)
Ara Institute of Canterbury.

"Your portfolio is your chance to express your creativity, passion, and potential as an aspiring fashion designer or technologist. It's important to understand that not all applicants will have a fully developed or well-rounded skill set, and that's perfectly fine. Many of the technical and design skills required in the industry will be taught during the course. Your portfolio is less about showcasing perfection and more about communicating your unique interests, ideas, and enthusiasm for the field of fashion." - Nathan Ingram, Fashion Team Leader.

Here's how to create a portfolio that reflects your individuality and readiness to grow:

1. Understand the Programme Requirements

Carefully review Ara guidelines for portfolio submissions.
Note the expected format (physical or digital), dimensions.
Keep in mind that your portfolio is a way to demonstrate your passion and potential, not necessarily mastery of every technical skill.

2. Use the Portfolio to Communicate Your Interests

The portfolio is a platform to show where your curiosity and creativity lie within fashion. Whether you're drawn to garment design, styling, photography, graphic design, or textile art, let your work reflect the areas you're passionate about.

3. Structure the Portfolio

Organise your portfolio in a way that tells a story about your creative journey and interests:

a. Introduction

Write a short personal statement (100–200 words) explaining your passion for fashion and your goals in the industry.

b. Concept Development

Showcase 2–3 mood boards or inspiration boards that reflect themes you are interested in exploring in fashion.
Include textures, colours, and imagery to demonstrate your ability to think conceptually.

c. Creative Work Across Related Fields (Optional)

If you don't have extensive garment-making experience, showcase other creative skills, such as:
Styling: Photographs of styled outfits or ensembles.
Photography: Fashion-themed photoshoots or creative imagery.
Graphic Design: Prints, promotional materials, or textile designs.
Visual Arts: Drawings, paintings, or digital art inspired by fashion or related to your personal style.
Crafts: Knitting, weaving, felting, ceramics etc.

d. Fashion Sketches & Illustrations (Optional)

Include sketches of garments or ideas if applicable. These don't need to be perfect; they can show your ability to communicate ideas visually.



Andy Sales - Year 1 Ara Fashion Student

e. Experimental & Conceptual Work (Optional)

Demonstrate innovation through:

Upcycled or sustainable design experiments.

Exploration of unconventional materials.

Avant-garde or artistic approaches to fashion.

f. Technical Work (Optional)

If you have experience in garment construction, pattern-making, or textile manipulation, include photographs of your work.

Briefly describe the process, materials, and skills demonstrated.

g. Final Pieces

End with 2–3 fully realised projects that best showcase your creativity and interests. These could be styled outfits, accessories, or finished garments.

4. Emphasise Exploration Over Perfection

Admissions teams understand that you are at the beginning of your fashion journey. Highlight your curiosity, willingness to experiment, and enthusiasm to learn.

Use captions or annotations to explain your thought process, inspiration, and what excites you about each piece.

5. Presentation Tips

Quality Over Quantity: 12–20 pages PDF format. Include only your best and most relevant work.

Layout: Keep the design clean and organised. Ensure clear labelling and enough white space for visual clarity.

Photography: Use high-quality, well-lit images to present physical work.

6. Tailor the Portfolio to Your Interests

Reflect on what excites you most about fashion—whether it's sustainability, garment design, technology, or visual storytelling—and let your portfolio emphasise those areas.

Show a connection between your personal interests and the programme's focus.

7. Seek Feedback

Share your portfolio with mentors, teachers, or peers in creative fields to get constructive feedback.

8. Submit Confidently

Follow the submission guidelines precisely, whether physical or digital.

If submitting a physical portfolio, include a digital backup.

Final Thoughts

Your portfolio is an opportunity to show your interests, creative thinking, and potential—not to prove you've already mastered every skill. Many technical abilities, like sewing and pattern-making, will be taught during the course. Focus on showcasing your passion, originality, and enthusiasm for fashion in whatever way feels authentic to you.

<https://www.ara.ac.nz/study-interest-areas/art-and-design/fashion/>

