

# Comm Design **Portfolio Review Guide**

BFA Specialization in Communication Design

Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
School of Art and Design



# PORTFOLIO PREVIEW EXPLAINED

## **What is a portfolio?**

The portfolio, also referred to as the “book,” is the collection of a designer’s best work. For young designers first striking out on their own, the portfolio is the primary method by which they secure jobs, attract clients, and market themselves. The portfolio is the record of their accomplishments and the critical demonstration of their education and creative abilities. Thus, the faculty place great emphasis on portfolio development.

## **What is the Assessment Portfolio Review?**

The Assessment Portfolio Review is the evaluation of student work that measures student design skills and progress. The primary purpose is to evaluate the work of each student to see if the student has basic design skills and a grasp of basic design concepts. The secondary purpose is to assess design courses in keeping with standards set by SIUC. The Communication Design specialization at SIUC is also accredited by NASAD (National Association of Schools of Art and Design). Assessment is integral and critical to the accreditation process required by organizations such as NASAD.

## **Who must be reviewed?**

Students who meet either of the following requirements are eligible for admission and must submit their portfolios to the Assessment Portfolio Review.

1. Any student who has completed the 200 level Communication Design courses or will have completed them at the end of the current semester.
2. Any transfer student applying to the Communication Design specialization.

## **Portfolio Review dates**

Spring:           **1<sup>st</sup> Friday in April**

Fall:               **1<sup>st</sup> Friday in November**

In the case of a conflict with the University Calendar, the review date will be posted.

## Portfolio Review Requirements & Criteria

Each student must present 10 to 15 pieces of their design work. Portfolios must be submitted for review to Design Barracks Room 121 between 8 am and 9 am on the day of review. Students will be reminded to pick up their portfolios **the following Monday**.

Any late entry results in automatic probation and a resubmission of the student's portfolio at the next portfolio review (see page 9).

Individual review sheets are handed back with evaluations and assessments by each member of the reviewing faculty, indicating the findings of the portfolio review.

### **Criteria:** What is being evaluated in the Review?

The following criteria are fundamental to the design profession and are the basis for the portfolio review. Work is evaluated on a scale of 1-5 according to each criterion by each professor. Scores are then averaged to arrive at the final score for each student.

### **Basic Skills**

#### 1. Drawing skills

Works should show how the student works with composition, tonal ranges, and perspective angles. They should show the student's use of a variety of media including, but not limited to, charcoal, pencil, marker, scratchboard, and color pencil. Work should show a variety of subject matter.

#### 2. Composition

Works should show a variety of design elements that produce challenging compositions that are both visually stimulating and focus on interaction and direction.

#### 3. Use of Color

Works should show a sensitivity to basic color principles, an understanding of the color wheel, hues, and values. Students should know the difference between RGB and CMYK color systems.

## **Design skills**

### **4. Use of type**

Works should show an understanding of type relationships. They should show sensitivity to size, type selection, spacing, integration of multiple fonts, integration of type with other visuals, font anatomy, and other typographical principles.

### **5. Layout skills**

Works should show a sense of spacing, size, and alignment of visual items within a composition. Students should utilize typography with imagery and graphics.

### **6. Craftsmanship**

Works should show a level of refinement appropriate to final designs. Works should show a basic understanding of presentation, including mounting, construction, cutting, and gluing.

### **7. Digital/computer skills**

Works should include examples of page assembly and creative use of vector and raster graphics. Students should show a basic understanding of scanning images and of raster graphics, such as those developed in Photoshop. They should also show an understanding of vector graphics, as developed in programs such as Flash, Illustrator or Freehand, and the assembly of various materials in InDesign. Students should also demonstrate a basic understanding of various digital and physical resolutions and have a basic understanding of font and file management.

## **Intellectual skills**

### **8. Design process**

Thumbnails and comps should show proof of the thought processes that were used by the student to develop the final results. Works should show the stages of development, sources and ideas which the student was exploring, and inspirations which led to the final results. Thumbnails and comps should also show a knowledge of the design process by demonstrating the various steps. Along with thumbnails and comps, students should also keep a sketch book that shows abstract and experimental design principles.

9. Use of design principles

Works should show an understanding of basic design elements such as repetition, size, movement, contrast, alignment, proximity, etc.

10. Creative ideas

Works should challenge and push the limits of the student's ability to design and compose effective elements of theory, text, and technology. Students should also show an understanding of history and culture.

11. Critical thinking and evaluation skills

Works selected should show the student's ability to be critical of their own work. Works should show an understanding of the critical thought process with the refinement of the pieces selected.

12. Practical and theoretical knowledge

Works should show use of visual form and the design process to produce both practical and theoretical solutions. This includes a basic understanding and use of a variety of art and design media and materials from concept to completion.

## How Should Work Be Presented?

**The 10-15 pieces of work should be presented as refined works of design. The student's name must be included in or on the portfolio. Any portfolio not submitted in one of the following formats will be unacceptable and the student will automatically be required to resubmit their portfolio at the next review (see page 9). Portfolios must be either:**

1. in a portfolio case with transparent sleeves that are uniform in size and finish.
2. in a portfolio box with work mounted on black or neutral grey matte boards.  
All boards must have the same outside dimensions and must be sized to neatly fit in the box.
3. in a presentation booklet.

The case, booklet, or box must have the exact number of pages for the amount of work being submitted - i.e. no empty spreads or boards. If the portfolio has empty pages that cannot be removed please make sure all of your work is in the front pages.

## What Should Be In Your Portfolio?

### **Students should include work that meets or exceeds the evaluation criteria.**

Whether you are an SIUC student or a transfer student, you may want to include work from these courses or their equivalent at another college:

AD122	Communication Drawing
AD222	Typography I
AD249	Design Process & Presentation
AD219	Introduction to Digital Art or computer/digital examples

Other design work may be included in the portfolio, such as multimedia, photography, product design, animation stills, film stills, furniture design and printmaking. Students are also encouraged to include any design work they have produced outside the classroom. This can include T-shirt designs, flyers, posters, and other work that could be considered freelance. Students who wish to include websites, interactive sites, animations, or movies are permitted to do so. Please use the following guidelines:

1. CD/DVD must be labeled.
2. Each project must be packaged in its own folder on the disc with all required elements. Reviewers will not look at work that is not organized this way.
3. There must be a page in the portfolio that describes the work on the enclosed cd/dvd.

**Remember, all print work must be submitted as printed work in the portfolio. Reviewers will only examine digital work if it is meant to be seen digitally.**

## PORTFOLIO REVIEW STRATEGIES

**The following sections deal with strategies you may use in preparing for the review. These strategies are only suggestions, and following them does not guarantee a successful review.**

### Suggestions for selecting portfolio work

Take everything that you have ever done during your time in college and lay it all out so that you can view it. Do not include anything you produced in high school. Look at everything and pull out the single strongest work. Set it aside. Look again and pull out the second strongest work. Set it aside. Look at everything for a third time and pull out the third strongest work. Set it aside. After selecting these three pieces, look at the remainder of the work. From these, try to select sets of work that will fulfill the requirements of the various areas of evaluation.

### Suggested order of work in the portfolio

Take the three strongest pieces that you have put aside and look at them. It is a good strategy to place your strongest piece as the first page of your portfolio. This piece is used to excite the viewer and draw them into the portfolio. Place the third strongest piece in the middle of your portfolio. This piece is used to renew or keep the interest of the viewer halfway through the book. Take the second strongest piece and place it as the last page in the portfolio. This piece is the last one that the viewer will see. It stays in their mind after looking at the book.

### Suggested development of work to go into the portfolio

Work that is considered weak or not design-related should be developed and improved. For example, photography can be used in a design layout and shown next to the original photo. Drawings that are of weak composition, yet show good tonal range, can be scanned and cropped for better composition. Weak designs can be reworked without the restraints of the original assignments. Good designs can be tweaked by following the comments in critiques.

### **PLEASE NOTE!**

**It is entirely possible to receive passing grades for assignments or for courses and yet not pass the Portfolio Review.**

The grades a student receives for assignments or for courses represent only one of several methods used to determine that student's potential to succeed in the Design program and in the profession. The Portfolio Review is a critical assessment tool that considers a combination of factors, including key subjective criteria such as originality, creativity, and drive. The Portfolio Assessment represents the consensus of all Design faculty members and is weighted accordingly.

## Additional Information About the Review

The following section includes requirements, suggestions, and comments to help you better prepare for the portfolio review. They include ways of presenting work, faculty expectations, and insights on past successes in portfolio reviews. Again, these strategies are only suggestions, and following them does not guarantee a favorable review.

### Do's and Don'ts

- Don't submit loose pieces of work. All work is to be submitted only in a portfolio, presentation box, or presentation book. Do not submit slides.
- Don't submit three-dimensional work. There are some exceptions, including experimental packets, newsletters, booklets, and other slim printed materials. For other 3-D works, see the Suggestions and Comments section for other recommendations.
- Don't include more than three charcoal drawings. This applies only to charcoal drawings; this does not mean students have to submit three charcoal drawings or even three drawings in general. Charcoal drawings should be protected by acetate sleeves or covered with a similar protective material.
- Work must be clean and without blemishes or flaws. White margins around printed work must be even all the way around the work or they should be trimmed off.
- There should not be any signs of warping from glue or tape, or any tape or glue showing. Edges of work should be cut straight and smoothly. Any pencil marks used for positioning should not be visible.
- Thumbnails and comps should be presented either neatly mounted with the work or in a separate folder slipped into the portfolio. Thumbnails are not included in the 10-15 count but as part of one of the designs.

## Suggestions for Portfolio specifications

1. Two-dimensional works larger than 24" × 36" should be photographed, scanned, and printed on high-quality paper.
2. Three-dimensional works should also be photographed, scanned, and printed.
3. In lieu of digital submission detailed on page 4, multimedia work can be printed out as still frames or screen captures.
4. Small mock-ups of publications may be slipped into pockets in portfolio cases. Small booklets showing thumbnail sketches may also be included.
5. Backgrounds on the pages on which works are presented should be treated consistently throughout the portfolio.
6. Labels are not required and are left to the student's discretion, but, if included, labels are to be considered part of the portfolio and will be judged. *A handwritten label is considered unprofessional.*
7. Design work is the most important part of the portfolio, not the labels. Labels should be small, if used, and clearly identify the work.
8. Remove all product labeling, price tags, and product information from matt board, presentation case, presentation book, and portfolio before submission.

## Preparation

- Talk to other designers, both here at SIUC and out in the world. Ask them about design, how to improve and refine design skills. Also, look at books and magazines. No one can design effectively in a vacuum.
- Don't sit back and wait for a project to be assigned in class. Explore design on your own, and your pieces will show your initiative and be different from the rest of the portfolios submitted.
- Challenge problems; don't just solve them. Push the limits of your skills and those of design. You will have the rest of your professional life to make traditional design. Be responsible for expanding the profession.
- Keep a sketch book and use it. You never know when you'll have a great idea, or when a doodle might become the next great design.

# REVIEW OUTCOMES

## **Unconditional recommendation to enter the specialization**

### **Probation**

#### What does probation mean?

Probation means the design work does not meet the criteria and standards required to succeed in the upper-division courses in our program. The student will be asked to do one or more of the following:

1. **Communication**

Students should discuss the appraisals of their work with the reviewing faculty.

2. **Resubmission of portfolio**

Faculty may require that a student prepare and submit a new and improved portfolio of work to the next portfolio review (the following semester).

3. **Retaking courses**

If the faculty require that a student resubmit their portfolio, the student may retake courses AD122, AD222, and/or AD249 to address their deficiencies and prepare for resubmission.

4. **Rethinking your major**

Faculty may strongly recommend that a student consider a major other than Communication Design. The student should discuss this option with faculty if it is presented.

Any student who does not agree with the findings of the review may challenge those findings by discussing them with any or all of the reviewing professors. If the student still does not agree with the results, they may discuss them with the Director of the School of Art and Design.

GOOD LUCK!

