



Higher Education

A Guide to Creative Applications



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General Guidance for Creative Applicants

What to do when:

- 1. Now:** Do your research on what creative courses are out there (the following pages contain some ideas of where to look) to gain all the information you need to make an informed decision.
 - Order a prospectus or look at the online version
 - Visit college websites for details of the specific courses they offer
 - Consider all options but ensure there are not any restrictions to whether you can apply e.g. the need to have studied a Foundation course first.
 - Undertake super-curricular activities. These are just as important for creative applicants as they will show where your interests lie outside of the curriculum and can enrich your personal statement and a portfolio (if required). Look out for the super-curricular creative flyer that gets sent to you every month by the HE department which is full of ideas but also be proactive and find activities for yourself.
- 2. Over the summer holidays:** Use this time wisely to continue your research on courses but also aim to undertake some meaningful super-curricular activities during this time e.g. summer schools/short courses/reading/creating/MOOCs etc.
- 3. Now until the end of September/October (dependent on your application date):** Visit as many colleges as you can (2 in term time) – use the Oct half term wisely, do plenty of research, there is no substitute for visiting a college in person.
 - Check the websites for Open Days and book a place. If you can't make these, email and ask for a private tour at a time that suits you.
 - Talk to students who are actually at the college for their opinions (DH Links can help here)
 - Talk to admissions/course tutors about the course and makes notes as you talk.
- 4. Now until your application deadline:** Talk to your Art/Textiles/Photography/DT/Music/Drama teacher so you are fully aware of what is expected of you in your portfolio/audition preparation.
- 5. End of September:** Internal deadline for Art degree applicants to **Ruskin**, Oxford University and Conservatoire applications through UCAS.
- 6. End of October:** Internal deadline for degree applications to Universities through UCAS.
- 7. Mid November:** Internal deadline for all other non-UCAS creative applications including Art Foundation and Drama Foundation courses.
- 8. December to March:** Interviews/Assessment Days/Digital Portfolios/Auditions etc. take place.

The key to a strong creative application is to plan ahead so you are prepared, and to be proactive in the application preparation process. Creative applications can be very competitive, and to make yourself stand out you need to show the institution(s) that you are worthy of a place on their course(s). A strong portfolio/audition is of course important and the creative teachers at Downe House are experts at supporting you with these, however, this alone is increasingly not enough. Explore your subject outside of the syllabus so that you can show the admissions tutors that you have genuine passion and drive to learn more about your subject area.

Things to explore and questions to ask on Open Days

- Is the teaching traditional or more modern? Do you see yourself fitting in?
- Familiarise yourself with the assessment methods on the course and find out, how much contact time with a tutor you get.
- Do you want to go to a 'dedicated' Art/Drama/Music etc. school or to a department in a university or college that teaches other subjects as well?
- Would you prefer to study your subject area in general or do you want to specialise e.g. General Art degree vs. Fashion degree
- What option units does the course offer? Are these areas you are interested in?
- What are the lecturers specialists in? Do their skills match your passions?
- What other facilities are on offer (other than basic studio space) e.g. darkrooms, tools, equipment?
- Check on access and number of computers available to you that have the software you will need.
- How well resourced is the library? Can you borrow DVD's and magazines?
- Who are the visiting tutors and is there a program of outside speakers/industry experts?
- What opportunities exist for work placements/mentors/internships? What is the employability rate for graduates going into the creative industries at graduate level?
- How much involvement do students have with shows & projects?
- Get a feel for the place – don't neglect the wider area: a local community of creatives is often a good sign. Are there opportunities for you to socialise/play sport join clubs etc?
- What Career's guidance is available?
- Ask to see previous students' work to see if it is the type of work you would like to produce.
- Talk to current students at open days if you can, they are the best way of finding out what the course is really like.

Don't be swayed by an Art school's reputation only as every creative applicant is unique.

League tables are unlikely to be helpful as they are too generalised for creative subjects e.g. Fine Art degrees and Foundation courses would all come under 'Art' but different institutions may be good for different types of courses.

You will know when a course is right for you by researching it and visiting the institution.

Art Applications

Art Foundation Courses

The Art and Design Foundation diploma is a one-year course (different to a two year Foundation degree). The curriculum is designed to help students prepare a developed portfolio and make informed decisions about the area in which they might wish to specialise in at degree or another higher level.

If you are thinking about a creative degree/further study/career, then we highly recommend you do a Foundation Diploma course. For some degree courses, it is an entry requirement to have completed a Foundation Diploma, but regardless, it makes you a much more competitive applicant to have one. However, not all degree courses require you to have completed one, so do check the individual institutions you are interested in as you may be able to go directly into degree study if that is your preference.

Below is a list of institutions that Downe House girls have attended over the years. There is no ranking as the institution you choose should be based on you as an artist and where you would feel comfortable exploring your art further.



Art and Design Foundation Diploma Courses (1 year)

Non-UCAS Applications (free if under 19yrs old):

Kingston University London - <http://www.kingston.ac.uk/undergraduate-course/art-design-foundation-diploma/>

Leeds College of Art and Design - <http://www.leeds-art.ac.uk/study/further-education-courses/foundation-diploma-in-art-design/>

Greater Brighton Metropolitan College - <https://www.gbmc.ac.uk/art-16-19>

Arts University Bournemouth - <https://aub.ac.uk/courses/preparation-for-he/foundation-diploma-in-art-design/>

Oxford Brookes - <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/art-and-design-foundation/>

Plymouth - <http://www.plymouthart.ac.uk/courses/foundation-diploma-in-art-and-design-post-a-level>

Manchester Met - <http://www.art.mmu.ac.uk/foundation/>

UAL (Camberwell) - <http://www.arts.ac.uk/camberwell/courses/foundation-diploma-art-design/>

UAL (Central St Martins) - <http://www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/foundation/foundation-diploma-in-art-and-design/> (Specialist or Diagnostic route)

UCA (Farnham) - <https://www.uca.ac.uk/study/courses/foundation-diploma-farnham/>

Loughborough - <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/aed/foundation/>

Private institutions (fee-paying):

Art Academy London - <http://artacademy.org.uk/foundation/> (Not accredited by an awarding body)

City & Guilds of London Art School - <http://www.cityandguildsartschool.ac.uk/foundation/> (UAL accredited)

Leith School of Art (Edinburgh) - <https://www.leithschoolofart.co.uk/course-info/3/foundation-course> (Not accredited by an awarding body)

Blake College - <http://www.blake.ac.uk/btec-art-foundation/> (BTEC accredited)

Kensington & Chelsea college - <http://www.kcc.ac.uk/course/19tfv001/> (UAL accredited)

Richmond Upon Thames college - <https://www.rutc.ac.uk/courses/art-and-design/155-level-3/729-access-to-he-diploma-art-and-design.html?he=1> (UAL accredited)

Art degree courses (3 or 4 years)

For the purpose of this guide, we are referring only to art-based courses which contain a practical element to the application process, however, much of the advice and information will apply to theory-based art courses too e.g. Art History.

Art degree courses tend to encompass both practical and theory-based elements but the weighting of each varies greatly. For example, the Fine Art degree at UAL (Central St Martins) is highly practical whereas the Fine Art degree at Edinburgh also includes an academic stream which focusses on the history of art and involves written exam-based assessment. Read the content of a course carefully to ensure the assessment methods and units covered will suit your learning style.

League tables become a little more useful for Art-based degrees and the below is the current Times 100 league table for Art and Design. However, it is never advisable to rely purely on league tables as so many other factors including your personal artistic style, will affect which course is right for you.

SUBJECT RANK	UNIVERSITY	TEACHING QUALITY	STUDENT EXPERIENCE	GRADUATE PROSPECTS	TOTAL SCORE
1=	Newcastle University	88.4%	88.3%	70.8%	100.0
1=	University of Oxford	n/a	n/a	70.0%	100.0
3	Lancaster University	77.1%	76.5%	81.4%	99.1
4	Loughborough University	79.8%	77.3%	76.0%	98.8
5	University of Essex	94.0%	90.4%	56.5%	97.8
6	University College London	86.8%	86.7%	55.9%	97.0
7	University of Glasgow	66.0%	69.4%	n/a	95.7
8	Ulster University	80.9%	73.7%	66.5%	94.8
9	Brunel University London	80.4%	79.6%	76.8%	94.4
10	University of Dundee	83.0%	80.2%	56.0%	94.2
11	University of Leeds	74.1%	69.1%	74.8%	94.0
12	Bangor University	96.8%	93.0%	75.0%	93.7
13	Nottingham Trent University	83.4%	80.5%	79.1%	93.2
14=	University of the West of England	91.0%	88.6%	60.3%	93.0
14=	Kingston University	87.2%	82.1%	60.7%	93.0

You may find some of these universities surprising to be in the top 15 in the country, but this helps to illustrate why it is important to search for the institutions that offer the best specialist course, not just those universities with a good overall reputation or that score highly in overall league tables.

Textiles Applications



Like Art, you can study Textiles at a foundation level or as a specialised degree/course. Within the field, there are various options which encompass completely practical courses in design, through to more theory-based courses with written exam elements which focus on things like fashion journalism or textile composition. Some students will find that studying a textiles-based Art Foundation diploma allows them to explore the wide range of options before deciding on which area they are most interested in. Many specialist courses will specify that a general art/textiles diploma is an entry requirement for access to their degree courses.

Please note that for any practical Textiles-based course you will need to produce a portfolio. The Textiles department at Downe House can support you with this and will be able to help you to ensure your portfolio has a good range of evidence and is focused towards any special areas of interest you may have.

Below is a selection of Textiles specific courses but the Art Foundation list from the previous pages is also useful as often you can choose to take a more textiles-centred route through a general Art Foundation course.

Central Saint Martins (UAL) - <http://www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/foundation/foundation-diploma-in-art-and-design/> (Choose the specialist mode)

Conde Nast College - <https://www.condenastcollege.ac.uk/how-to-apply/application-certificate-foundation-diploma/> The emphasis of this course is on fashion and the media

Instituto Marangoni - http://www.istitutomarangoni.com/landing_pages/en/schools/london/ They offer a foundation year programme in London and other locations overseas, but you have to contact them for more details. The degree is accredited by Manchester Met University.

If you are looking for a degree course, then you may want to explore the following universities:

Edinburgh University
Loughborough University
Arts University Bournemouth
Nottingham Trent
De Montfort
University of Arts, London (UAL)
University for the Creative Arts (UCA)
Manchester University
Leeds Arts
University of Brighton
Falmouth University

Drama Applications

What is a Drama Foundation course?

Drama Foundation courses are designed to give you an insight into what full-time study at a Drama School would be like. After completing a drama foundation course you may choose to go on to do a degree or other formal qualification or training at the same institution or another one, or you may decide to do something else entirely.

A Drama Foundation course tends to last a year, although some are two year courses, and they cover a range of different techniques to expose you to the various areas of drama you may want to explore in more depth. They vary between institutions so do your research to find the right one for you.

Where can I do a Drama Foundation course?

Miss Clark will provide you with a list of popular Drama schools although it is not exhaustive, and you should do your own research using the list as a starting point. Conservatoires require a different application through UCAS so let Miss Clark know if you are thinking about a conservatoire.

Why should I do a Drama Foundation course?

- If you are interested in Drama but don't want to do a three-year degree.
- If you like the idea of being in a very creative environment with like-minded people.
- If you want to follow a career in the performing arts industry, particularly if you want to be an actor.



How do I apply?

This varies between institutions but generally involves a written application document that you need to fill out (Miss Clark can help you with it). This often includes information about the grades you already have or are expected to get, personal contact information and often a personal statement or questions to answer to reveal what your experience and passion for drama is.

Some institutions ask you to apply through UCAS so in this case you will follow the UCAS preparation with the rest of the year group and submit your applications that way. There is a limit of 5 applications when using UCAS but no limit when applying independently to institutions who don't ask you to apply through UCAS. Conservatoires require a separate UCAS Conservatoire application.

When do I apply?

For UCAS applications you will need to submit by the internal school October deadline.

For other applications the date varies for different institutions but will be made clear on their website. If you are unsure talk to Miss Clark.

Who will support me?

The Drama Department – Will do all practical support with auditions, as well as being able to give lots of advice about Drama Schools and which ones would be a good fit for you.

Miss Clark – Supports the admin side of the process, making sure you stick to deadlines, submit the required application documents etc.

Other options

You can also apply directly to a university to study a Drama-related degree. These courses tend to have more of a written element combined with practical performance. Do your research, look at league tables for Drama and read the course content carefully so you are clear about the balance of the course and how it is assessed. It is often advisable to apply to some degree courses through UCAS at the same time as applying for Drama Foundation courses as the latter is very competitive and a UCAS application may provide more options and avoid an unintentional gap year. You can of course reapply to Drama Schools in your gap year if you are not successful the first time.

Music Applications

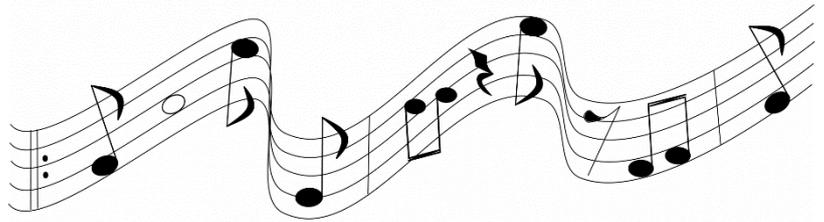
Music applications fall into two main categories:

- 1) Conservatoire applications – Specialist performing arts schools which offer a range of courses. The focus of the courses is on practical performance.
- 2) University applications – Many universities offer music-related undergraduate degree courses. The focus here tends to be more academic although there may be some performance-based assessment.

Conservatoire applications through UCAS Conservatoire - deadline 2 October at 6pm.

There are 8 conservatoires that you can apply to through the UCAS Conservatoire application system, each offering their own unique courses:

- Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
- Leeds College of Music
- Royal Academy of Music
- Royal College of Music
- Royal Northern College of Music
- Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
- Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance



Guildhall School of Music and Drama is another well-respected conservatoire but only takes applications directly, so you can't apply through UCAS.

Each institution is different and a visit to the ones you are interested in is strongly advised to see whether you would be the right fit. Think about your musical style, your career ambitions, the expertise of the teaching staff and the facilities on offer. Part of the application process is an audition(s) so you will need to ensure you have worked with your Music teachers to plan and prepare your pieces in accordance with what the conservatoire is asking for.

Music degree applications through UCAS - deadline 15 January at 6pm.

University Music applications happen through the normal UCAS system allowing you to choose up to five courses (these can be at one or more institutions). Look carefully at the course content of the courses you are interested in and be sure about the balance between academic music and performance to ensure the course will be the right fit for you.

Some good universities to consider for Music are:

Durham University	University of Manchester
University of Bristol	University of Oxford
University of York	London College of Music, University of West London
University of Nottingham	University of Leeds
University of Birmingham	University of Cambridge
Royal Holloway, University of London	University of Southampton
University of Edinburgh	King's College London, University of London
Cardiff University	

Overseas applications to specialist Music schools e.g. Julliard, are overseen by our Overseas Applications Coordinator (see page 15).

Design and Technology Applications

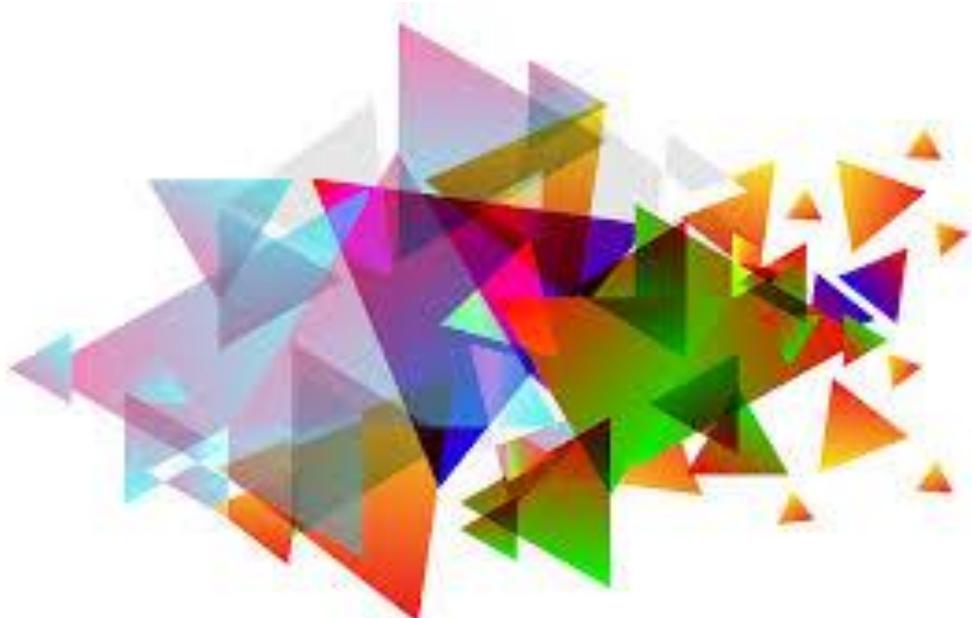
This is a growing area of interest for students as technology develops and more jobs are being created in the creative industries. Study and work options in this field can range from technology-based courses like Creative Computing or Digital Design to more practical courses like Furniture Design or Theatre Production Design. Whatever the course, there will likely be a need to produce a portfolio of evidence to support your application. This can easily be produced from compiling work you have done at GCSE and A level if you are taking a creative subject, especially DT, but would need to be produced independently (with support from DT teachers) if not.

The key to a successful design and technology-related application is to ensure you have done your research and explored the different options. Courses vary greatly in terms of content and a course that is called Product Design at one institution may be very different in content to another course elsewhere of the same name. If you are looking at the degree route it is worth noting that there are both BA and BSc degrees which differ in focus with the former being more creative and the latter more scientific. Visits to institutions to see the work spaces, meet the tutors and see the existing student work are invaluable. Also, be aware of the structure of the course as some incorporate a year in industry or an additional year of Masters level study which can affect the qualification you graduate with.

Another preparation route for a career in Design and Technology is through an apprenticeship or sponsored degree. This is a growing area as employers have appreciated that a traditional university education may not produce the most innovative graduates, and the high costs of university may put off potential design students too. There are some amazing options out there in this field which mean you end up in the same position as a graduate (with a degree plus practical experience) but you are not in the debt, and often ahead of the game in terms of your skills and knowledge from working in industry.

The UNIFROG website that we use at Downe House (www.unifrog.org) has a great Apprenticeships Tool which you can use to explore what is on out there. There are also some other websites listed below which you might find useful:

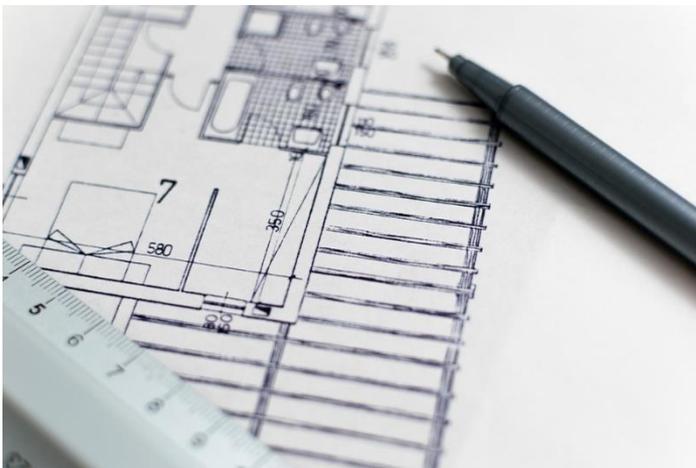
- The Government Apprenticeships Search Engine - <https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch>
- UCAS Alternative Routes to University - <https://www.ucas.com/apprenticeships-in-the-uk>
- Notgoingtouni.com search engine- <https://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/apprenticeships-223>



Architecture Applications

An architecture application should aim to showcase your abilities in engineering, problem solving, writing, drawing and a host of other skills. This means preparation is key and this is not generally a field you can decide on at the last minute. Our strong advice is that you should have taken Art at GCSE and A level to have enough material to create a good, broad portfolio, and it is a requirement at some universities.

In addition to a great portfolio, you should be able to provide lots of evidence of reading and research, as well as a genuine passion for Architecture which can be illustrated in innovative ways e.g. visits to specific buildings, an EPQ on an architecture-based topic, architecture-based Art projects etc. There are also some great companies who offer architecture-based trips both in the UK and abroad which can widen your understanding and appreciation for different styles of building design and the variations in approaches to design in different time periods and settings. Think about using your school holidays to really develop your interest either independently or with a university summer school.



Remember that training to be a fully qualified Architect involves training for more than just the three initial years of a degree. The initial undergraduate degree is three years, although many courses incorporate a year in industry which can be invaluable, and makes the course 4 years minimum. Make sure the degree you choose is certified by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Following the initial degree there is then usually a minimum of 3 further years of training and study before you can fully qualify as a member of RIBA.

Some good universities to consider for Architecture degrees, sourced from the Times Top 100, are:

Subject Rank	Overall Rank	University	Teaching Quality	Student Experience	Graduate Prospects	Total Score
1	13	University of Bath	78.3%	80.1%	96.6%	100.0
2	1	University of Cambridge	81.3%*	76.5%*	90.9%	99.5
3	25	University of Sheffield	90.3%	91.0%	96.4%	98.8
4	8	University College London	78.0%	75.4%	91.0%	97.1
5	44=	University of Strathclyde	83.8%	76.7%	93.5%	95.6
6	21	Newcastle University	74.8%	76.2%	89.9%	93.5
7	31	University of Liverpool	84.4%	81.4%	86.5%	93.1
8	38=	Queen's University, Belfast	81.6%	76.6%	91.1%	92.3
9	58	University of the West of England	96.5%	97.3%	86.0%	92.0

Film and Media Applications

The study of Film and/or Media Studies continues to be a popular choice and, as such, it leads to an overcrowded graduate market. However, don't let that put you off as this is an ever-growing industry with new and innovative jobs emerging as the media develops because of new technologies. Pick your course wisely and you will be well-qualified to enter the market in a strong position, potentially with some great work experience already behind you.

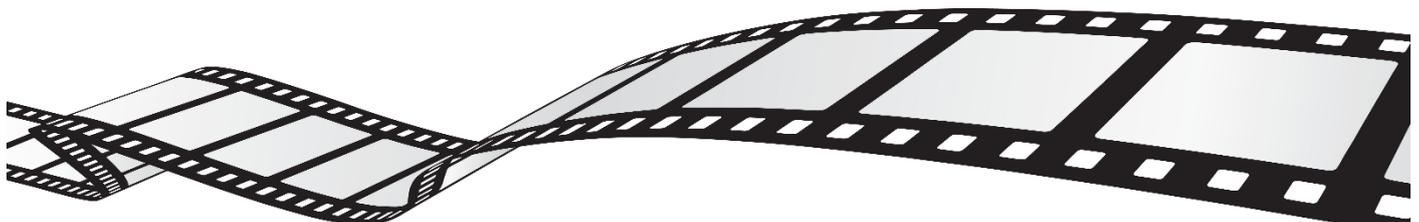
Rank	Institution	Guardian score/100	Satisfied with course	Satisfied with teaching	Satisfied with feedback
1	Queen Mary	100	94.7	96.8	79.7
2	Warwick	99.2	85.8	91.2	74.1
3	Exeter	98.6	87.9	93.4	95.4
4	Loughborough	98.1	93.3	88.6	77.0
5	Southampton	90.4	85.1	91	77.1
6	Leeds	90	81	88.7	78.7
7	Cardiff	89.3	94.9	90.7	79.8
8	Stirling	88.4	92.1	95.7	76.4
9	Lancaster	86.7	95	90.3	86.2
10	Kent	86.2	87	97.3	77.5

As you can see from the table above, the 'best' courses may lie outside of the traditional Russell Group universities. The Field of Media is an ever-changing one and so traditional academic universities are not always equipped with the facilities and equipment to deliver a top-level media course. We strongly recommend you visit any institutions you are interested in as the courses vary greatly.

Some factors that are important to consider (and ask about on a visit) are:

- Geographical location and proximity to related businesses in the industry (for work experience/internships etc.)
- Employment statistics. Not just do graduates get work but do they end up in the industry?
- What are the staff/lecturers like? Are they from industry themselves?
- What are the facilities like? Do you have access to the latest technology? Is the department innovative and forward-thinking?
- Do they offer work experience as part of the course? Where?
- Is the course new? Is it unique to the university? How will it make you a competitive graduate?

There is no doubt that in this field there can be an element of who you know leading to doors opening for you, however, do not despair if you know no one in the industry as there are other ways to get yourself noticed. This is generally an industry where you work your way up from the bottom and, so it pays dividends to show that you are willing to get your hands dirty doing boring jobs (cup of tea Mr Director?) in order to earn the next position up. You may have to sacrifice being paid initially too, runners on sets are often unpaid/poorly paid but the role is easily fitted in around school/university commitments so well worth looking into even if you ultimately want to land a job off-set, it is valuable to have an understanding of how the industry works in different areas.



Photography Applications

There are not a huge number of universities, especially in the Russell Group, that offer Photography courses, so this is another area where you will need to look to more modern institutions to find the best courses out there.

Edinburgh, Brighton, UCA, Falmouth, Leeds Arts, Oxford Brookes and Ravensbourne all have good Photography courses that are worth exploring. As with other subjects listed in this guide, it is really worth visiting institutions as they are all very different and the focus of their courses will differ too.

Another option for Photographers is to take a 1-year Art Foundation course (see page 5) as you can specialise in Photography as you move through the course and explore it in the wider context of Art. This may then allow you to decide whether to pursue a full degree or similar qualification in general photography or even a more specific field e.g. Fashion Photography



One of the key things that makes a Photography application successful is when the applicant can make their passion clear. Being able to evidence a passion for all aspects of Photography, not just taking pictures, is crucial. An interest in how equipment works, knowledge of how to edit and manipulate images, a broad interest in genres of Photography from wildlife to portraiture will all help an institution see that you would be someone who wants to learn, rather than having a fixed mindset about what you like. “But how do I show that passion?” I hear you cry, here are some suggestions:

- An online portfolio e.g. Instagram/Flickr which shows a wide range of styles/interests
- Visit Galleries/exhibitions of Photographers work
- Follow blogs/photographers accounts on twitter etc.
- Do free online courses e.g. a MOOC on Victorian Stereo Photography!
- Complete a summer school or masterclass which will generate additional material for your portfolio and may develop your skills and knowledge too.
- Enter photography competitions
- Watch TED Talks/Documentaries about Photography

Other Creative Applications

In addition to the types of courses previously mentioned, there is also a wide range of other courses/training that you can do which moves away from the more traditional degree and incorporates more practical/on-the-job experience e.g. internships and apprenticeships. This is an area which has seen a lot of investment and there has been a growth in the number of positions available at some top companies. Along a similar vein are sponsored degrees which incorporate a traditional taught degree with on-the-job experience and these are offered by firms who will pay for the degree in return for the students' loyalty for X many years after they finish the degree, staying on in a graduate role. These types of courses are either free or involve minimal costs so are becoming a very popular option for students as an alternative to traditional degrees and the huge debts that can be accrued whilst studying full-time. A flavour of the types of businesses offering these alternative courses is below and details of the opportunities they offer can be found on [the Government website](#) :



Overseas Creative Applications

As with any overseas applications, these are dealt with by Mrs Barnard, our Overseas Applications Coordinator. Mrs Barnard will follow a similar process to that of the UK-based applicants, meeting one-to-one to discuss exact requirements and plans. She will also outline any key deadlines which need to be adhered to and these may differ depending on where in the world you are applying to. Generally, institutions overseas will still want to see some practical evidence in your chosen field, so overseas applicants will meet with subject specific teachers to engage in preparatory work for portfolio/audition/interview etc. Any administration, including online application portals, for an overseas application will be overseen by Mrs Barnard.

As with UK-based applications, visits to institutions are encouraged, especially to places you have never visited before, but these would need to be carefully planned to try to avoid disruption to lessons wherever possible.

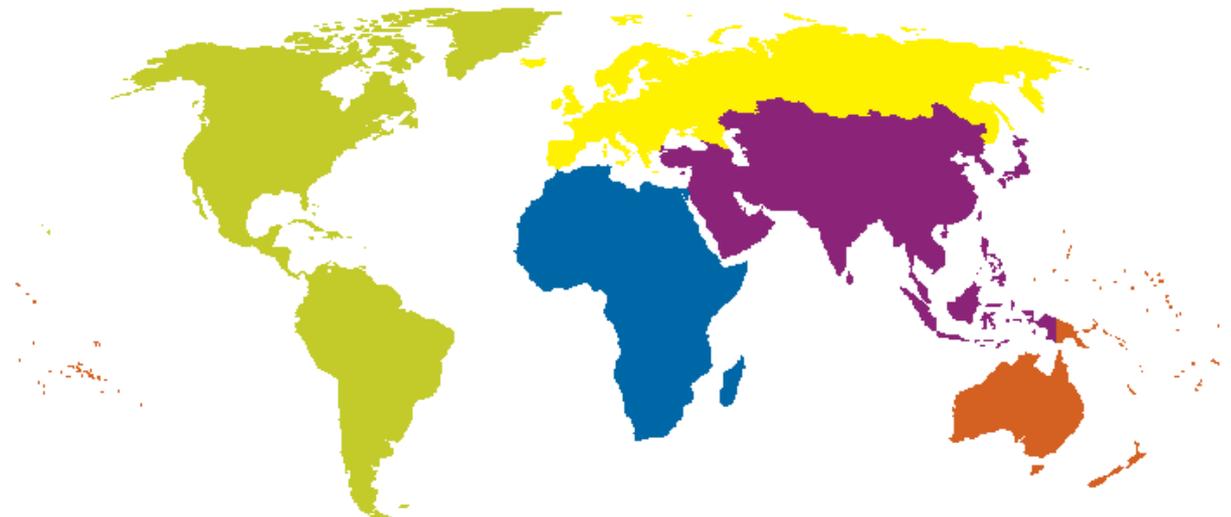
Over the years we have seen successful applications to many prestigious institutions including:



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
Tisch
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

THE
NEW
SCHOOL

PARSONS



Savannah College
of Art and Design

PARSONS
PARIS



SCHOOL OF
ART + DESIGN
logovaults



INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY