PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES
Masters of Architecture and Landscape Architecture Programs

STANDARD SIZE
Choose a standard book size for your portfolio. 8.5”x11” works but is seldom the most interesting format. Standard trade paperback formats of approximately 9.5”x7.5” work very well as we all are familiar with them from bookstores. Landscape orientation works particularly well in this format. “Legal fold” size works well also – this is the size of a legal sheet of paper folded in half – i.e. 8.5”x7”. Don’t pick a size too small however – paperback size for instance is just too small. Generally sizes between 6.5” to 8.5” in height and 7” to 11” in width work best. Never submit a size larger than 8.5”x11”

SIMPLE CLEAR LAYOUT
Don’t produce an overly complicated graphic format. It is always best to let the drawings and artwork “speak” for themselves. Too many graphic devices and “powerpoint style” elements distract from the main purpose of a portfolio which is to demonstrate your skill and sensibility in various media.

SIMPLE BINDING
A white metal spiral bind is an excellent choic when assembling a portfolio by hand. The “Perfect bound” paperback style binding of on-demand publishing are also good options when having the portfolio produced by an on-line printer. There are advantages however to the way in which a spiral binding allows a portfolio to sit open on a table during the review process.

ELEGANT COVER
Covers can be tricky. When in doubt, keep it very simple and elegant. Use a nice piece of heavy textured paper, preferably white, and just include your name, previous educational degree and the program to which you are applying in a small clear font justified to the lower and outer edge.

COMPOSE ACROSS PAGE SPREADS
Think of the two open pages of each page turn as a composition in itself. Don’t let images just mutely float in simple blocks on a single page. Find dynamic relationships between elements so they work together and produce a sense of depth in the layout. Allow the perspective depth of view drawing to merge into the space of other flat diagrams, images and drawings all the while preserving white space [see next item].

USE WHITE SPACE
Using the empty part of the page as an important part of page layout is critically important for a compelling composition. Allowing drawings or images varying degrees of “breathing” room can emphasize the relative importance of project elements.

SMALL TEXT
Keep text size very small and organize descriptions into blocks. Point size of text in portfolios is often 6pt or smaller. Text is present in portfolios mostly as a graphic element and is seldom read in-depth during the review process. Think of it as being there to answer questions about the work or to clarify and label elements. Architecture and Landscape Architecture are visual disciplines. If a reviewer must read the text to understand your work, that is a failure on your part.

SIMPLE CLEAN FONTS
It is always best to choose a simple and clean font. Arial generally works well as do most clean modern sans serif fonts. Don’t use flowery script fonts or fonts designed to resemble hand drafted lettering.

UNIFY COLOR PALETTE
Avoid the excessive and conflicting use of color images in renderings, diagrams and model photos. When related color images do not have a cohesive color palette, use grayscale or duotone images where possible and use color to highlight important components or elements in your projects.

VARY SCALE AND TYPE OF IMAGES AND DRAWINGS
Don’t put all the same kind of images or drawings on a page. Vary both the scale and type of work on each double page composition to keep the viewer’s interest.

EDIT OUT WEAK PROJECTS
Show us your best projects and artwork. You don’t have to show us every project you’ve ever done. Indicating development is important but it is more important to demonstrate your current level of ability. That being said, include enough work to show a range of projects and techniques so we can judge the nature of your design sensibility. Find a good balance between clarity and depth.

EDIT OUT WEAK AND REDUNDANT IMAGES
Edit out poor model shots or renderings and avoid redundancies when presenting work. Make sure drawings print well and are clean and crisp. Redraw old projects if necessary.