Digital Portfolio

Postgraduate Taught Degrees
School of Design

MDes Communication Design
MDes Graphic Design
MDes Illustration
MDes Photography
MDes Fashion and Textiles
MDes Interior Design
MSc Product Design Engineering

Image: Holly Smith

Contents

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What is a digital portfolio?

The digital portfolio is a very important part of your application to study at the Glasgow School of Art. It is a collection of images of your design work laid out clearly to demonstrate your ideas, skills, interests and suitability for the programme you are applying to.

Uploading a digital portfolio is mandatory for all postgraduate taught degrees in the School of Design *except MSc Product Design Engineering*. Applicants to this programme have the option to upload if you have relevant project work from previous experience.

Your digital portfolio should show recently completed and/or work-in-progress including research, development work, evidence of exploration, as well as resolved pieces.

Admissions staff assess your application form, digital portfolio, and personal statement together. If successful at this initial assessment, you will be invited to attend an interview.

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Initial assessment

1. Initial assessment of complete application which includes; Application Form, Personal Statement and Digital Portfolio.
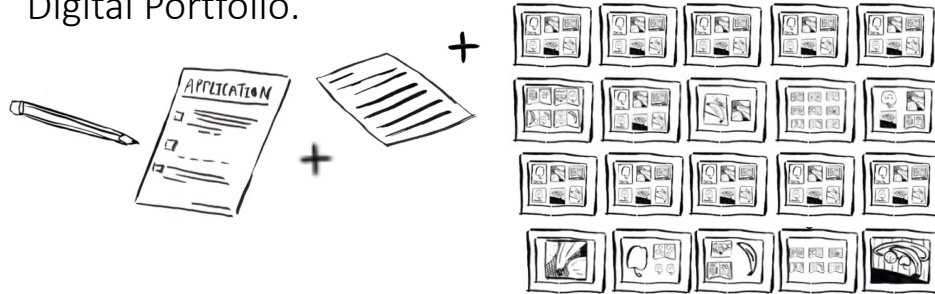
Scoring System

1 – Unsatisfactory evidence of required ability
2 – Very limited evidence of required ability
3 – Limited evidence of required ability
4 – Satisfactory evidence of required ability
5 – Good evidence of required ability
6 – Very good evidence of required ability
7 – Excellent evidence of required ability

2. Admissions staff review your application scoring it out of 7 for each assessment criteria.

5. If your total score is below the threshold, GSA Registry will let you know your application has been unsuccessful.

Upon request, your assessment criteria scores can be provided as feedback.

Interview invitation

3. Each programme sets its own threshold, this is the score that your application needs to reach in order to be invited to interview.

4. Your score is totalled up and if it equals or exceeds the threshold you will be emailed an invitation to attend an interview.

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Interview assessment

1. An interview takes place online with a tutor from your chosen programme. You will be asked set questions and your digital portfolio will be discussed.

Scoring System

1 – Unsatisfactory evidence of required ability
2 – Very limited evidence of required ability
3 – Limited evidence of required ability
4 – Satisfactory evidence of required ability
5 – Good evidence of required ability
6 – Very good evidence of required ability
7 – Excellent evidence of required ability

2. The tutor reviews your performance scoring it out of 7 for each assessment criteria.

3. Each programme sets its own threshold, this is the score that your application needs to reach in order to be offered a place on the programme.

Congratulations!

4. Your score is totalled up and if it equals or exceeds the threshold GSA Registry will issue either an unconditional or conditional offer.

5. If your total score is below the threshold, GSA Registry will let you know your application has been unsuccessful.

Upon request, your assessment criteria scores can be provided as feedback.

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Assessment criteria

Your complete application will be numerically scored against specific assessment criteria. It is important to know what this assessment criteria is, and you should try to respond to this criteria when creating your digital portfolio, writing your personal statement, and preparing for interview.

The assessment criteria is listed to the righthand side and explained in more detail on subsequent pages.

1. Applicants' ability to demonstrate practical skills. *Except MSc Product Design Engineering

2. Applicants' ability to apply analytical and conceptual skills.

3. Applicants' ability to communicate about work and put it in context.

4. Applicants' ability to demonstrate an interest in design and specialist area applied for.

✳ The first criteria for MSc in Product Design Engineering programme is explained on page 7.

* Criteria 1

Applicants' ability to demonstrate practical skills

We would like to see your practical skills. You can demonstrate these in a variety of ways in your digital portfolio, including hand drawing, collage, 3D work, computer work, photography, prototyping, print making etc. Practical skills can be shown through finished pieces and development work. It's important to show all the practical skills that are relevant and transferable to your chosen programme. You can also talk about these at interview and write about the most relevant skills in your personal statement.

*This criteria applies to all programmes except the MSc in Product Design Engineering programme. Further detail on *

* Criteria 2

Applicants' ability to apply analytical and conceptual skills

We want to know about your working process, from project inception to resolution. We are interested in the ideas behind your work and your thought process. Clearly present your research methods and routes, showing how these translate into developed ideas. What was the initial starting point, how was this idea explored and experimented with, and what decisions determined the finished work?

Within the digital portfolio this process should be organised and presented with a clear succession and conclusion. You should be able to speak confidently about your working process during the interview.

* Criteria 3

Applicants' ability to demonstrate an interest in design and specialist area applied for

We want to know about your interest in your chosen design specialism; who or what inspires and motivates you. This might include artists, designers, architects, mentors, exhibitions or online events attended, documentaries, books, journals, archives, podcasts etc. You can discuss this in your personal statement and during the interview. Including reference imagery in the digital portfolio can also show this but don't include too much, the portfolio imagery should focus on your response to the references.

You should demonstrate that you have researched your chosen programme and be able to discuss why you have chosen to apply to this programme. You can do this within the personal statement and during discussion at interview.

* Criteria 4

Applicants' ability to communicate about work and put it in context

We are keen not only to understand your sources of inspiration but also what determined the direction and focus of your projects. The creative process is a journey, what did you learn and what areas did you find to be most successful or challenging.

Demonstate that you understand where to position your work within your design specialism by showing this visually in the digital portfolio or by explaining this in the personal statement or at interview. For work-in-progress you could describe what you hope to achieve, what sources you will be looking at, and how you hope to explore these.

Product Design Engineering

The first criteria for Product Design Engineering is;

1. Applicants' ability to demonstrate engineering and technical awareness.

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* Criteria 1

Applicants' ability to demonstrate engineering and technical awareness

We look to see your knowledge of a range of Mathematics, Physics and Engineering subjects within your application. Due to the Engineering and Technical nature of the programme, knowledge of the following subject areas will be of great value to you:

Engineering Maths
Statics
Dynamics
Power Electronics
Thermodynamics
Mechanics of Solids/Structures

If you have any examples of work and or a portfolio, we are interested in seeing how you have demonstrated your application of these subject areas. For example, technical analysis and engineering considerations that have been applied in the development of a product/concept. It's important to show the practical and prototyping skills that are relevant and transferable to your chosen programme. You can also talk about these at interview.

Files and images

- Digital Portfolio should be uploaded as **a single PDF file** to the GSA Digital Portfolio portal.*

- PDF file should contain a **maximum of 20 pages.** Digital portfolios that are longer may not be viewed fully.

- Each page of your digital portfolio can contain multiple images. Include as much work as possible in order to give admissions staff a good indication of your current skills, knowledge, interests, and readiness for postgraduate degree level study.

- Avoid cramming too many, small images onto one page as staff may not be able to read the imagery properly.

- Do not include a page solely for your name or for a Curriculum Vitae (CV), as this unnecessarily uses the 20-page limit. Focus on showing project work instead.

Single PDF file with 20 pages
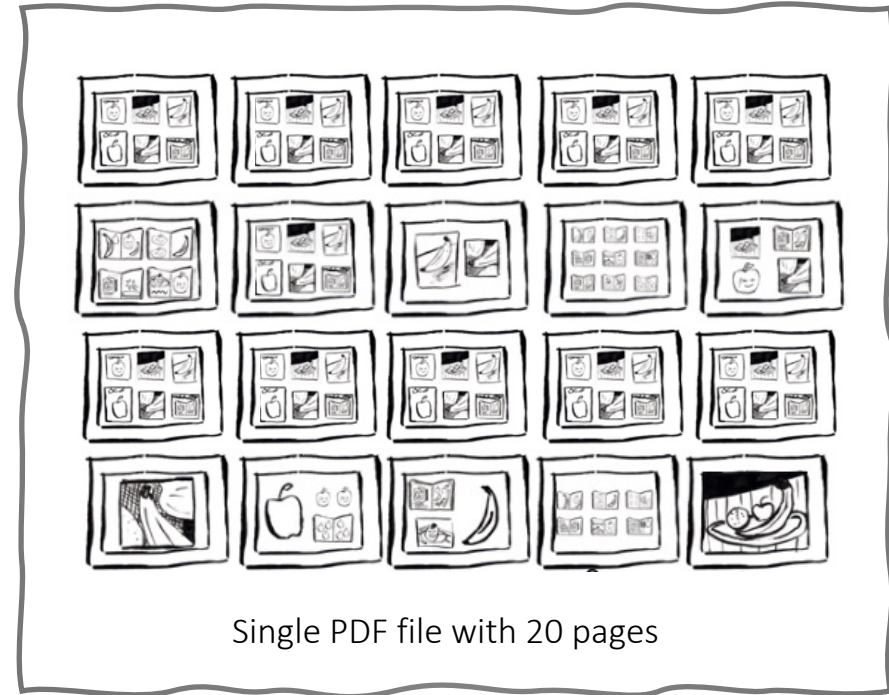
✳ Digital portfolios submitted via URL weblinks to online cloud services will not be accepted.

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Moving image, sound and professional websites

Moving image, sound clips or a professional website can be included in your application, however they must supplement a digital portfolio.

The media should be no more than five minutes long, otherwise they may not be fully viewed.

You can include moving image, sound clips, or professional websites in two ways:

1. Hyperlink included in your PDF digital portfolio to an online video or sound sharing platform, or professional website. Access to websites should not be password protected or have an expiration date.
2. Input a URL link into the designated field on the GSA Digital Portfolio portal.
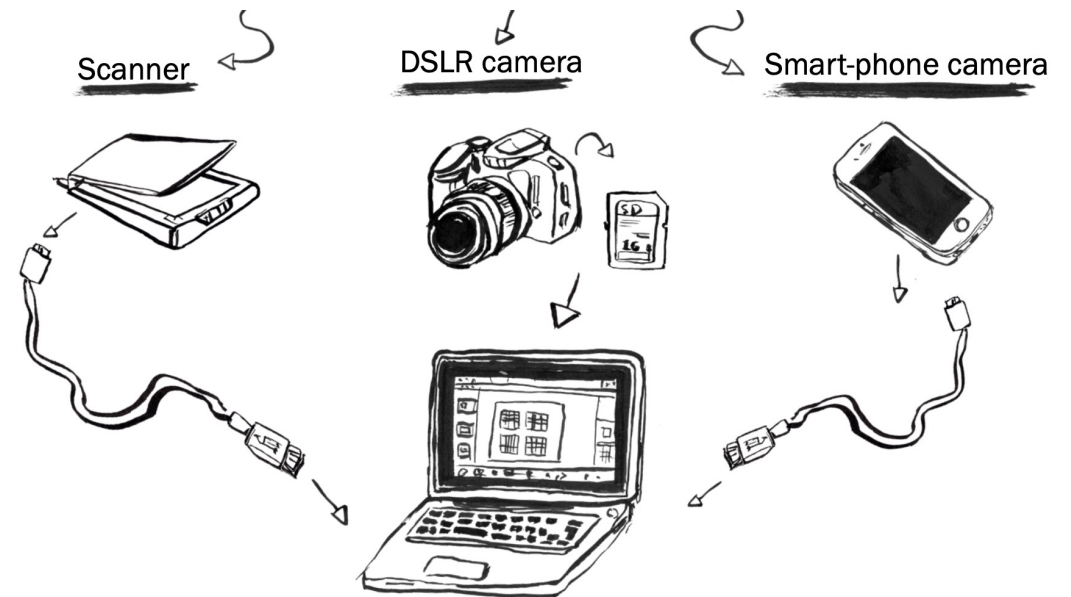
Documenting your work

Documenting your work is one of the most important parts of creating a digital portfolio. You have invested time and effort in making your work and it deserves to be shown properly.
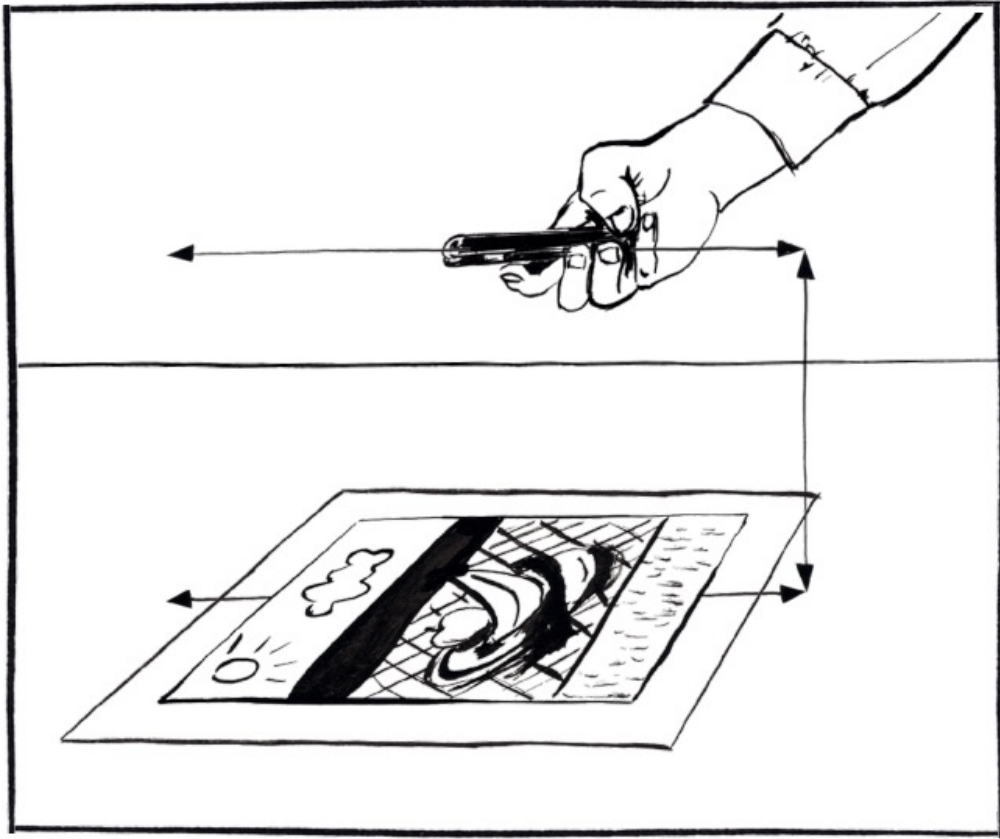
Make sure to photograph or scan work that you have made. This might include projects you've done at university, during work experience or employment, as well as any self initiated work.

Your digital portfolio isn't just for finished work. Include all work that shows your creative process. It is good practice to photograph work throughout the process of making and at the end when you feel it is finished. It can be helpful for admissions staff to see how you made a particular piece of work, especially if you were exploring iterations of an idea or a way of making work that is relevant to the programme.

Regardless of the methods(s) you choose to use, make sure the images are clear, in focus and do the work justice.

Scanner   DSLR camera   Smart-phone camera

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Photography

Documentation photographs tend to fall into two major categories; work-in-progress documentation to show processes and development of ideas and techniques. Second is the presentation of finished works.

These two types require different approaches and thought: showing work as you're making it on a well used desk or in a workshop isn't unreasonable; but displaying finished pieces in a similar context might suggest a lack of regard for your own work.

Good documentation photographs are typically:
• Contextually appropriate
• Softly, and evenly lit
• Free from background distractions
• Correctly focused, exposed and colour balanced

For a detailed guide on photographing your work, including how to document using a Smartphone, visit:
http://www.gsa.ac.uk/portfoliophoto

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Select and curate

Admissions staff will look at your 20-page digital portfolio for a maximum of 10 minutes. It is important to curate and pace the pages in a way you wish to present your work and you as a designer.

The running order of the imagery 'tells the story' of how a project develops. This helps the admissions staff to see the way that you work and understand your creative process.

Each page of your digital portfolio can contain multiple images. You should include as much work as possible in order to provide a good indication of your current skills, knowledge, and readiness for postgraduate study.

Include approximately 3-5 projects.

Uncertainty/Experimentation   Clarity/focus

Research   Development   Resolution
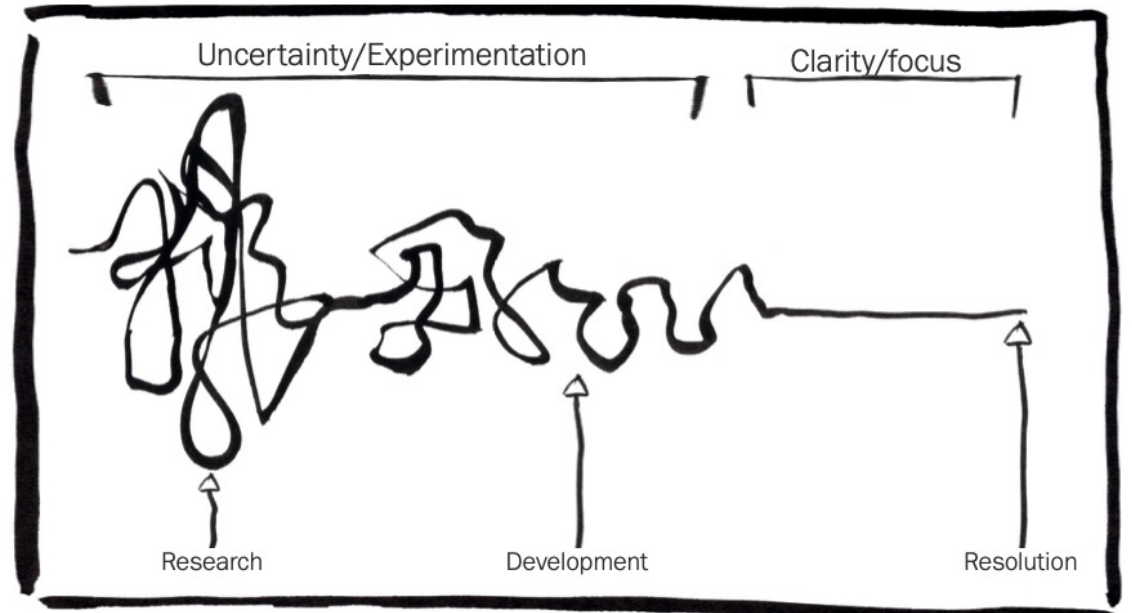
The Creative Process

Positioning imagery
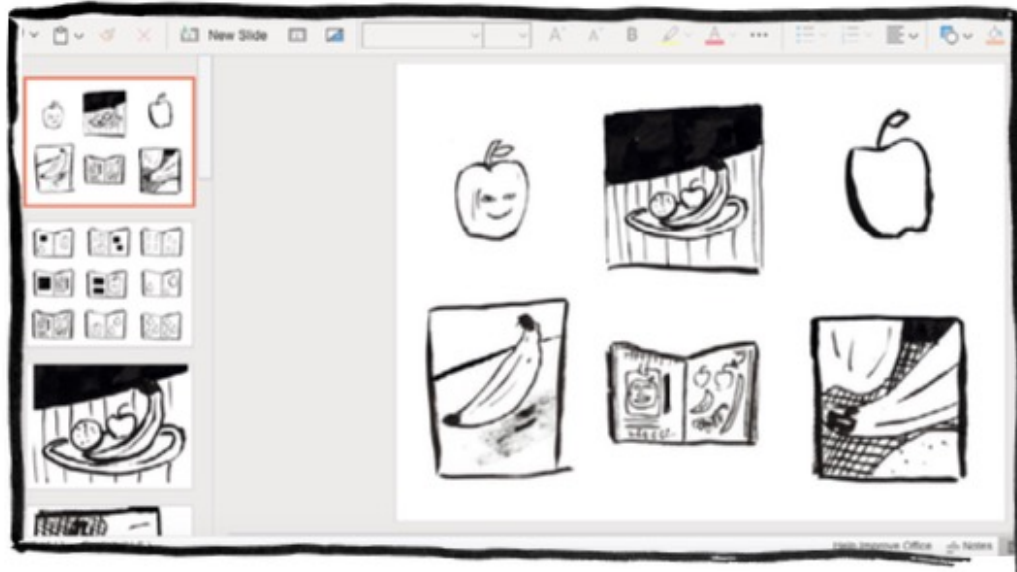
In most cases you want to keep the layout of your work simple, with white space around the images, so that they are not overlapping. You want your work to be visible and clear to see.

Having a lot of images together on a page can show multiple ideas being explored at once, but make sure they are included at an appropriate scale so that the image contents can be read.

It is a good idea to have a few pages that contain less images. For example, if you have a final piece for a project or details that need to be seen, then you could dedicate a page to just one or two of these images.

Including text

Text should be kept to a minimum. A simple title for a completed piece of work or a description relating to a group of images is sufficient. Larger sections of text may not be read.

When including images which are not your own (for example, research sources) a text reference should be positioned alongside the image stating who it belongs to.

If collaborative work is included in the digital portfolio (for example, an industry project for clients or a university group project) ensure your role within the project work is made explicit.

Remember that we are most interested in *you*; your individual knowledge, skills, experiences and interests. As a result, we discourage the use of external companies to prepare portfolios as the outcome can often be generic.

✳   ✳   ✳

Remember the Digital Portfolio should:
• be a single PDF file with a maximum of 20 pages.
• be a collection of images of your design work laid out clearly to demonstrate your ideas, skills, interests and suitability for the programme you are applying to.
• show recently completed and/or work-in-progress including research, development work, evidence of exploration, as well as more resolved pieces.
• 'tell the story' of how a project develops.
• respond to the assessment criteria.

✳   ✳   ✳

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Deadline dates

Complete applications will be processed in four rounds: *Early; Standard 1; Standard 2* and *Late*. Key dates for each round are included below.

We guarantee to review all complete applications received by the Standard 1 deadline date of **27 January 2023.** After this date, programmes can become full and close to applications in advance of the Standard 2 and Late rounds. Early application is therefore encouraged to avoid disappointment.

Round	Deadline to apply	Interviews taking place	Decision on application by
Early	11 November 2022	28 November – 2 December 2022	20 January 2023
Standard 1	27 January 2023	20 February – 3 March 2023	10 March 2023
Standard 2	10 March 2023	3 April – 21 April 2023	28 April 2023
Late	9 June 2023	3 July – 14 July 2023	21 July 2023

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Uploading your digital portfolio

We would encourage you to upload your completed application form, personal statement and digital portfolio as soon as you have it available rather than waiting until the deadline. This will give you time to receive assistance if you need it and reduce any frustration over internet upload speeds during particularly busy times.

Important times
Applicants must submit a completed application form and personal statement by **12:00 noon (GMT)** on the deadline to apply date.

You will then be emailed log-in details and instructions on how to submit your digital portfolio to the GSA Digital Portfolio portal.

Applicants should then submit their digital portfolio by **4:00pm (GMT)** on the deadline to apply date.

Submissions made after these times will automatically move to the next round, unless the programme has been closed to applications.

Further information

Programme websites

MDes Communication Design, Graphics, Illustration, Photography
MDes Fashion and Textiles
MDes Interior Design
MSc Product Design Engineering

GSA website

Programme listings
Programme specifications

Open Day

You can meet GSA online and on campus for advice and introductions at Open Days and during more informal events taking place throughout the year. Find out more and register an interest.

Need help or have a question?

If you need further information about applying to postgraduate level study, email admissions@gsa.ac.uk If you have a question about an existing application, email registry@gsa.ac.uk

Useful weblinks

How to apply to Postgraduate programmes at GSA

GSA Degree Show to view work of our graduates

Fees, Funding and Finance information

Accommodation information

Individual country guides

Guides for parents of international students

English for Creative Disciplines

Glasgow and Scotland

Covid-19 information

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