

# Best Foot Forward: Tips for Strong Scholarship Applications

In choosing to apply for the Fred Ross Scholarship, you are expressing an interest in pursuing a career in the arts. A professional-looking application will greatly assist you to convince the members of the jury that you are ready for this next step. These suggestions are designed to help you present your work professionally as possible.

## Image quality

Images must be IN FOCUS and WELL LIT to show your work off properly to the jury.

Images that are out of focus are very hard to evaluate, with qualities of the work that may be very important to you (such as fine detail or texture) going unappreciated when they can't be seen clearly.



If you do not have access to special lighting, natural light is often best. A slightly overcast day can be a good time to photograph. Too much direct sunlight can wash out colours, and a dark day may lead to images that are too dark to see properly. The morning is often a good time to photograph work.

Editing your images in programs like Photoshop can be a good idea. With flat work – such as a painting or a drawing – try to crop the background of the image as close as possible to the edge of the painting or drawing. This will make your work look far more professional.

With sculptures or textiles, try to photograph them against either a neutral/ plain background or – if you choose to present them in a particular setting – make sure that the setting complements the piece. You may even choose to include a line about why you have chosen that setting in which to photograph your work as supplementary information included with your list of works. The most important thing to remember is that everything the jury sees should support the work they are evaluating.

Three-dimensional pieces such as textiles or sculptures should show more than one view. Consider using one of your allotted images to include a 'detail' image – a close-up of a small area. This is particularly important for work that has fine

detail, such as embroidery. It may be worth showing a smaller number of pieces if you can better represent those works you choose to include.

## Curate your work!

Consider carefully what you will include in your submission. Your portfolio should focus on your best works, and those that show your own ideas rather than including multiple class projects where you followed someone else's instructions. This does not mean that the pieces you include cannot have been made in

an art class – but the jury wants to see some of your own ideas for artworks (and the results!).

Show the jury work that demonstrates both your technical skills and your ideas – both of these will be important in pursuing a career in the arts.

Some variety in media and subject matter is good, but it is important to show what you are enthusiastic about through the work you choose. For example, if you

want to study graphic design, then it will make sense that the majority of your images will relate to graphic design. However, you may also choose to include some evidence of successful experimentation in other media, such as a couple of paintings or photographs. Some variety in your portfolio can demonstrate to the jury that you are willing to 'step outside of your comfort zone' and try new things. Some evidence of focus or concentration is, however, also important, as this is how your personality will come across most clearly.

## Roll credits...

If you include or reference the work of others, it is important to give them credit. Examples include music used in videos, or drawings of other people's art works. Submissions that do not credit other artists' work will not be discounted, but this is a good habit to establish early in your career, and will make you look more professional.

## List of works

List of works typically include the title, medium (for example 'digital photograph' or 'acrylic on canvas', dimensions, and the year the work was finished. In the event that you have used multiple (for example four or more...) materials to make a piece, you can simply state 'mixed

media'. Three-dimensional objects with irregular dimensions may consider using maximum length, height, and width.

Always make sure that your list of works is in the same order as the images appear on the CD you have provided. Each image file should have a number that corresponds with a number on the list of works.

## Artist statement

Discussing what you have made and why you have made it is always difficult, but it is a very important skill to develop if you want to pursue a career in the arts. Here are some questions to help you start writing an artist statement:

- Why do you make art?
- What kinds of things do you think about when you are making art?
- Is there a message you would like your work to communicate to people?
- What other artists / musicians / films / books / friends / ideas / etc. have influenced your work?
- How would you like to see your art develop? (For example: are there ideas that you would like to tackle that you haven't yet worked with? Do you want to begin working in another medium, possibly in addition to the materials you already work with?)

Finally, imagine you were hidden in the room when the jury is looking at your submission. What would you like to overhear them say about your work that would make you feel as though they really understood your work and ideas?

Try to aim for an artist statement that is at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a page long. An artist statement does not need to be a work of literature, but it helps the jury understand a bit more about you and the ideas that go into your art. The better the jury understands you and your work, the better the chance your application has of being successful.

## GOOD LUCK! BONNE CHANCE!

