NEW! Portfolio/Case Study Book Return Policy:

Q: Will I receive my portfolio or case study book back after the application process is completed?

A: Due to the increased volume of portfolios (or case study book) it is no longer our policy to return portfolios to applicants after they are reviewed and the application process is completed. If you would like yours back it will be available for pick up around the beginning of April and no later than May 4th, 2012. If you live in the U.S. you may also have your portfolio or case study book returned by via FedEx. If you choose this option, make sure the packaging used to ship it to us is reusable and follow the instructions below to arrange pre-paid pickup through Fed Ex Ground service. **Portfolio return options are not available outside the United States.**

FedEx Ground Service Instructions – Please follow the instructions below

1.) You will be notified when your portfolio is ready to be mailed. (around the first part of April)

2.) Set up an account with FedEx by calling 800-503-1428 or online at www.fedex.com. It takes 24 hours for the account to become active for FedEx Ground service, the only service which allows for the type of pick up required to obtain your portfolio.

3.) Once 24 hours has past and your account is created, call FedEx Customer Service at 800-463-3339 to request a **Fed Ex Ground call tag**. When the automated system begins speaking state “**representative**” so that it sends you to a FedEx representative to speak with. It will then ask if you are calling to ship a package. State “**yes**”. At this point you should be able to speak with a representative to request a **FedEx Ground call tag** to arrange for FedEx to pick up the package at the following address at least one week from the date you call. **Do not arrange for pick up on a Friday as no one will be in the office to meet the driver on that day.** At the end of the process a tracking number will be assigned to your call tag.

Kristen Taylor
Stanford University
416 Escondido Mall Rd, Rm 151
Stanford, CA 94306-4021
4.) Add the call tag tracking number to your portfolio return form and fax it to the attention of Kristen Taylor at 650-723-3521 or e-mail an scanned *.pdf copy to kristenk@stanford.edu at least one week in advance of the pick up date.

Q: I’ve heard about Stanford’s Design Program, sometimes called the Product Design Program and I’m interested in learning more about the program?
A: Thank you for your interest in the Design Program at Stanford. The first thing to do if you want information on applying to our program is to spend some time on our web site at http://www-design.stanford.edu/PD/. The program has no printed materials but instead uses the website to relay information about the program to prospective students. Also, please read over the Mechanical Engineering Design Division site at http://design.stanford.edu/index.html and the main Stanford Graduate School site at http://www-me.stanford.edu/academic_programs/grad/index.html. These will answer most of your questions about graduate student life at Stanford and how apply on-line. And please read through the rest of this FAQ before you email us.

The best way to find out if our program is right for you is to visit the campus for an information session specifically designed for prospective students. These sessions are offered in the fall quarter and offer the opportunity to meet professors in the program and visit with the current graduate students in their design space known as the "Loft." Information regarding the dates of these sessions and how to RSVP are available on the website in July prior to each fall quarter. We strongly recommend that students interested in applying plan to attend one of these sessions prior to applying to the program.

Q: Can you please send me a brochure or other information about Stanford’s Design Program?
A: We do not send out printed information on our program. However, we have recently updated our website and you can find out everything you might want to know about the Design Program specifics by doing your research there. Stanford also has an extensive array of informational websites that are worth looking through for background.

Q: How much does it cost to attend the Design Program?
A: The cost of attending any program at Stanford is determined annually by the University. You can find more information about tuition, housing, and other costs for undergraduate and graduate study at the following websites:

The University Registrars Office: http://www.stanford.edu/dept/registrar/
Graduate Admissions: http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/gradadmissions

Q: Is financial aid (fellowships /teaching assistantships) available for students pursuing MS in product design?
A: The Master’s program is two years long. There are a limited number of fellowships offered to incoming MS students based on academic excellence. Refer to the ME website for more information. The Design Program also has a large number of classroom assistantships and all design graduate students serve as teaching assistants in their second
year to help pay for part of their education. The CA’ships cover tuition for a number of units as well as a stipend. Other details about financial aid for graduate students is available at http://www.stanford.edu/dept/finaid/grad/

Q: When can I apply to the program?
A: It's important to note that we require students to have at least one year of life experience after receiving their undergraduate degree before applying to the program. The average time out of college before applying is about 4 years.

Q: Do you have a GPA and/or GRE requirement for admissions?
A: Stanford is a selective university and expects that all graduate students will be able to demonstrate academic excellence prior to admission; however, we do not have a specific GPA requirement for admission. The admissions committee considers your overall academic preparedness (previous degree(s), undergraduate GPA, GRE scores, etc.), portfolio, recommendations, statement of purpose, and life experiences after receiving your bachelors degree as part of the admissions process.

Q: Do you have a TOEFL Score requirement for admissions?
A: Our program requirements for TOEFL scores match that of the university. These requirements can be found at the following link:

http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/gradadmissions/applying/exams-international

Q: How much design experience do I need before applying?
A: We're looking for a balance of design potential and design experience in incoming students. The application process uses the statement of purpose, portfolio, academic preparation, recommendations, and life experience prior to applying to develop a sense of this.

Q: How important is the Statement of Purpose?
A: It is as important as your portfolio. Everyone on the admissions committee reads it and a strong, clear Statement is a must for admission.

Q: Why do I have to submit a portfolio? What should it contain?
A: The Design Program is not a skills teaching program. We are a masters-level program that teaches design thinking, creativity methodology, a human centered-ethnographic approach to design, strategic innovation, and design leadership. Therefore, students who enter the program should have already mastered design skills such as quick idea sketching, product rendering, prototype building, and quick visualization techniques like storyboarding and video production. The portfolio is intended to help us assess the development of these skills and your underlying visual and artistic abilities.

A physical portfolio is required. We do not require a digital copy. Other than its physicality there are no specific guidelines on the kind of portfolio you submit or how many pieces should be in the portfolio. Think of the portfolio as your vehicle to demonstrate who you are and how you think. Given this, each portfolio is expected to be
unique. However, please do not provide too large of a portfolio with repetitive examples of the same media, process, or end product. We are looking for breadth as well as depth and will judge the quality of your presentation and its appropriateness by your editing and selection.

Your portfolio should be about your design process, your design thinking, the types of design and subjects you're interested in. It should demonstrate your ability to visualize things. It should show us how you develop new and innovative solutions. These solutions can be in almost any area but we are particularly interested in new products, services, environments, information, and smart spaces. It should have an example or two of completely finished pieces of artwork/craftwork (2D or 3D) that you are passionate about. It should express your independent thinking on the subjects that you think are important.

NEW!

Q: Are there alternatives if I do not have a Portfolio?
A: MS applicants may submit a “case study book” in lieu of a portfolio. A portfolio is typically a collection of your best pieces of art, design, and engineering, and it is a tried and true way to demonstrate your creativity. However, given the change in focus of our curriculum toward more design thinking, strategic innovation, and design leadership, a portfolio may not be the best way to present your unique set of skills. We are adding the new case study format to the admissions process because we want to make sure that design thinkers and developing leaders have the best opportunity to show us why they should be considered for our program. A traditional portfolio might not capture important information about their candidacy. For instance, we think that case studies are a particularly useful way to demonstrate a holistic portrayal of the way you approach thinking and problem solving. Case studies are a great way to explain your creative process and can include all the “messy prototypes” and “important failures” that just don’t fit in the portfolio format. Case studies are also one good way to show us non-design projects that emphasize your leadership skills and your strategic thinking.

A case study is typically a one or two page description of a project. It should include some description of the original problem and lots of visual information about the process that resolves it. We are not looking for a lot of writing. As designers, we prefer case studies that are more like narratives or storyboards, not like research papers, but some writing may be necessary to frame the story for the reviewers.

A case study book will contain a series of these case studies and may also include an overview or explanation of how each individual case is related to a larger theme. Of course, you are going to ask “how many cases?” and we are going to answer “it’s hard to say.” In general, six to eight examples, each illustrating different aspects of your work should be plenty. However, you may have completed one or two very large and comprehensive projects that demonstrate a variety of your skills and you may want to focus on these. In this example, two (or even one) case studies might be sufficient. These are likely to be multi-page, multi-topic studies, so their organization and clarity become even more important.
There is no preference given in the admission process to either a portfolio or a case study book. Either is equally acceptable. Choose the format that you think will be the best way to represent your skills and your potential. We welcome both.

Inevitably someone will ask, “Can I do a hybrid of the portfolio and a case study book?” The answer is yes.

Q: I’m not yet a designer and do not have a body of work to make up a portfolio or case study book per se. Are their classes I should take to build up my portfolio before I apply to the Design Program?
A: Any courses that help you develop your visualization skills are beneficial. You might look for classes that fall into the following rough categories:

1. Sketching/drawing/animation/filmmaking – As we design, we primarily use sketching and storytelling as a way to communicate our ideas to ourselves, to other designers, and to people we're designing for. Any class that helps you get confident in your ability to get your ideas down on paper is great. Look for classes that cover things like quick sketching, storyboarding, flash animation, filmmaking, etc.

2. Other visual arts courses - Painting, sculpture, furniture making, design, are examples of courses that would help demonstrate your mastery of two and three-dimensional ideation. Follow your own interests here. We are looking to assess your skills in areas of your own interest. We assume that you will create a body of work for your portfolio that you are passionate about.

3. Classes in leadership or entrepreneurship – These might include courses covering business plan writing, strategic thinking or classes that involve you in team-based project work where you can hone your leadership skills and come away with evidence of success.

Q: I do not have any formal art or design training but I do have experience in designing products. Can I apply for the program?
A: Your experience designing products could be considered an appropriate background. An appropriate undergraduate degree is generally required for application. However, we value experience in design and that is why we require applicants to submit a portfolio of their prior work. It is important to note that we require students to have at least one year of life experience (work, travel, etc.) after their Bachelors degree before applying. The average applicant has four years of experience before applying.

Q: Does Stanford have a PhD option in Design, Design Thinking, or Product Design? I would like to apply for this if possible.
A: There is no PhD in the Design Program at this time. There are, however, a number of design-related PhDs at Stanford, including many areas of PhD study in the Design Division of the Mechanical Engineering Department. Information on these programs can be found at http://soe.stanford.edu/home/index.html.
Q: I do not have an undergraduate engineering degree and I want to apply to the program. Is this possible and, if so, what engineering courses do I need to take prior to admission?
A: No, it is not possible to apply to the Design Program without a BS in an engineering or science related field.

Q: I want to do other graduate study. Is there a Design minor available?
No.

Q: Do you accept exchange students?
A: Stanford does not have any exchange programs for visiting students. The Design Program does not have an exchange program with any other Universities.