

2026 Photography Applicant Guide

How to Apply:

To apply to the photography program, applicants must submit a portfolio of representative work including **1 portrait and up to 6 other images**.

Portfolio Guidelines:

Images may be taken on any type of camera, including smartphones or tablets.

Images may be conventional and/or digital photographs, but all photos must be submitted digitally in JPG format.

Images must have been taken AFTER March 1 of the prior year, and former OSAI students may not submit work produced at OSAI.

If you are submitting darkroom work, it's essential that your scans accurately represent the quality of your work to ensure your darkroom prints are competitive with digitally produced images:

- Scan the print itself, not a negative or a photograph of the print.
- Avoid taking a photo of the print with your phone; this will not meet quality standards.
- If your print has deep shadows or subtle tones, check the histogram or preview to ensure they are not lost in the scan.
- Scan your print at the highest optical resolution your scanner allows (not "interpolated" or "enhanced" resolution). After scanning, scale the final image to 1200 pixels on the longest side and save it as a high-quality JPG.
- If you do not have access to a high-quality scanner at home or school, it is strongly recommended to use a professional scanner at a copy/print shop such as FedEx Office, Staples, Office Depot, or a local photo lab. These services usually offer affordable high-resolution scanning and can dramatically improve the clarity and accuracy of your submission.

Portrait Guidelines:

While "portrait" may be defined in different ways, for the purposes of this audition, your portrait photograph must include the face of the person being photographed, and the subject you are photographing must know they are being photographed. The purpose of portrait photography is to give insight into the person's character or story.



Portfolio Tips:

Show variety. Include images that represent a range of subjects, interests, and photographic approaches.

Curate with purpose. Select images that say something about who you are as an artist and what interests you visually.

Limit special effects or heavy editing. Overuse of filters, digital effects, or image manipulation can distract from your technical and artistic strengths.

Avoid clichés. Images of family pets, young children, or other common “snapshot” subjects typically don’t showcase the level of artistic intention evaluators are looking for.

Show intentional technique. Evaluators look for applicants who use photographic fundamentals thoughtfully. Strong portfolios demonstrate purposeful composition, lighting, and contrast and reflect a clear artistic point of view.

Refer to our series of instructional videos for more guidance:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZ9xl1T9h_0UP5SaBppYH3XSbU4vXvVhG

Photo Upload Tips:

Label your portfolio images with numbers 1 through 6. Label your portrait photograph as *Portrait*.

Ensure your name or other identifying information does NOT appear anywhere in your portfolio images or their metadata.

Once you are ready to submit your portfolio, save your files in JPG format, and scale your work to 1200 pixels in the longest dimension. (This is the equivalent of 300 dpi when the longest dimension is 4 inches.)

Some phones—especially iPhones—save photos in formats that our application platform can’t read, which can cause your file to upload backwards, upside down, or not at all. If your file won’t upload, it is almost always because of the file type.

JPG files are best.

If you took your audition photos on an iPhone, your phone may save it as HEIC file, and these often won’t upload correctly on our application platform. We recommend first converting it to JPG file, then uploading. See tips for converting your file/s below.

- Option 1: Use a converter website
 - Search for “HEIC to JPG.”
 - Upload → convert → download → then upload to your application.
- Option 2: Use a computer
 - On Mac: open photo → File → Export → choose JPG
 - On PC: open photo → Save as → choose JPG

Evaluation Criteria:

Composition – 30%

Does the applicant understand how to place objects within the frame and work with geometry and light to achieve a compelling image, including consideration of color, line, shape, scale, texture, and value?

Creativity and originality – 30%

What is the applicant doing beyond technique? Is there a unique vision, personal style, or original idea expressed through the work? Is there something unusual or especially insightful in the approach to subject matter?

Technique – 20%

How well did the applicant use photographic methods to achieve technically competent images? (i.e., Is the image well composed? Does it have a recognizable subject and background? Did they manipulate depth of field?)

Potential – 20%

Does the applicant display insight or ideas that could be strengthened with training at OSAI? Does the applicant seem to show an artistic ability that may or may not yet be developed?

Read general information about our evaluation process here:

<https://oaiquartz.org/application-selection-process>