

Design Assistant

Introduction

As a Design Assistant you will be helping designers with their specialist design work. Your typical duties could include researching a new design project, making rough sketches and preparing materials for production.

Also known as

- Design Studio Assistant

Work Activities

As a Design Assistant you will help Designers as they work on three-dimensional design projects. Three-dimensional design is the design of solid objects, with particular focus on how they look.

The designs you work on could be used for either for mass production, or for production by designer-craftworkers, which would be on a much smaller, individual scale.

You'll work in areas such as:

- industrial or product design
- interior design
- theatre design
- jewellery design
- furniture design
- ceramic design

Whilst the exact nature of the work varies from one design area to another, the processes are similar. You'll be given instructions for the project:

- what needs to be designed?
- what role will it play?
- who is it aimed at?

You then work on creative ideas, producing rough sketches using suitable colours, shapes and materials. You may also be expected to present ideas to senior Designers or clients.

You will then prepare and check detailed working drawings, models or prototypes in preparation for production. Computer-aided design (CAD) is normally used as part of this process.

As a Design Assistant you will work with Designers and other team members on projects. You may also help with arranging client meetings, preparing marketing materials and finding new business.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Design Assistant, you need:

- creative and artistic skills
- the ability to change ideas into a three-dimensional design



- to work well on your own and with others
- knowledge of design-related software
- to be able to take instructions from Designers
- good communication skills
- good research skills
- to work to deadlines

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £24,000 - £25,500
- With experience: £27,500 - £31,000
- Senior Design Assistants earn £33,500 - £36,000

Hours of work

You will usually work 39 hours a week, Monday to Friday. However, late finishes and weekend work may be required, especially as deadlines approach.

Where could I work?

Employers include large manufacturing companies, design studios and consultancies, exhibition companies and furniture manufacturers. Television and theatre companies may also employ Design Assistants to work on special effects.

Opportunities for Design Assistants occur in towns, cities and rural areas throughout the UK.

Some areas of design are concentrated in certain areas of the country. For example, many large ceramics manufacturers are based in North Staffordshire and the jewellery and silver industry is largely based in London, Sheffield and Birmingham.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised on all the major job boards, on Find a Job, and at Jobcentre Plus.

It's a good idea to build up a network of relevant contacts, as not all design jobs are advertised. Making speculative job applications can also be effective.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

Some people enter this career after completing a relevant course such as a HND or a degree.

There are many different design courses. Some are broad-ranging and others focus on a specialised area, such as furniture design or interior design.

There are a number of routes into these courses:

- foundation course in art and design where these courses cover a wide variety of design topics and help students to decide which area of design they want to specialise in
- A levels in a relevant subject
- a BTEC level 3 qualification

Foundation degrees in design and design-related subjects are also available at a number of universities and colleges

of Higher Education. These may enable you to progress onto an accredited degree course.

A great way to get into this career is through an internship. Take a look at our information article 'Internships', for more details.

An Intermediate Level Apprenticeship is also a great place to start. Take a look at our general information article 'Apprenticeships - How do I apply?' for more details on applying for apprenticeship positions.

Work Experience

Skills gained in using computer-aided design (CAD) software are an advantage.

To enter the work or relevant courses, you need to have a portfolio of work demonstrating your creative ability.

Training

Once in employment, it may be possible to work towards qualifications in design.

Progression

Some Design Assistants progress to becoming professional Designers.

Qualifications

The usual route into design training is to complete a foundation course in art and design, such as the BTEC foundation diploma in art and design.

For this course, you'll need:

- 1/2 A levels
- GCSEs at grade C/4 or above in 3/4 subjects

A BTEC level 3 qualification in art and design could help you to stand out from the crowd.

Equivalent qualifications are also accepted for entry to Foundation courses as well as for entry to degree and HND courses. However, entry requirements vary - check prospectuses for details.

To enter any course in art and design, you'll need a wide-ranging portfolio that shows your potential.

Employers may ask for some GCSEs at grade C/4 or above to enter this type of work straight from school, or to enter work-based training schemes.

To get onto an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need at least 2 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, possibly including English and maths.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A level.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

Skills/experience

Skills gained in using computer-aided design (CAD) software are an advantage.

To enter the work or relevant courses, you need to have a portfolio of work demonstrating your creative ability.

Courses

If you don't have the qualifications needed to enter your chosen degree or HND course, a college or university Access course (eg, Access to Art and Design) could be the way in. No formal qualifications are usually required, but you should check individual course details.

They can lead to relevant degree/HND courses.

It's also possible to do a part-time Foundation course in Art and Design, which leads to a degree or HND course.

Colleges will usually consider applications from candidates who don't meet their usual entry requirements, especially those with experience in arts, crafts or design. You should check the admissions policy of individual colleges.

It may also be possible to enter this field of work via a Design Intermediate Level Apprenticeship.

Distance learning

Relevant courses in art and design subjects, at various levels, are offered by a large number of centres, by distance learning.

Further Information

Contacts

- **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**
National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
Tel: 0800 015 0400
Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk
Website: www.apprenticeships.org.uk
- **Skills Development Scotland - Modern Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 9178000
Email: info@skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk
Website: www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships
- **ScreenSkills**
Skills for the creative industries
Email: info@creativeskillset.org
Website: www.creativeskillset.org
- **Creative Choices**
Publisher: Creative & Cultural Skills
Email: info@creative-choices.co.uk
Website: www.creative-choices.co.uk
- **Creative & Cultural Skills**
Skills for craft, cultural heritage, design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts
Email: london@ccskills.org.uk
Website: ccskills.org.uk
- **Chartered Society of Designers (CSD)**
Email: info@csd.org.uk
Website: www.csd.org.uk
- **Getting into Art & Design Courses**
Author: James Burnett Publisher: Trotman
Website: trotman.co.uk/our-books/getting-into-art-and-design-courses/
- **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 028 4844
Website: ams.careerswales.com/
- **National Theatre Wales (Welsh Enquiries)**
Tel: 029 2035 3070

Email: info@nationaltheatrewales.org

Website: nationaltheatrewales.org

- **Hiive**
Hiive is the online professional network for creative people.
Website: app.hiive.co.uk/

Related Careers

- Medical Illustrator
- Fashion Designer
- Graphic Designer
- Artworker
- Metal Engraver
- Visual Merchandiser
- Commercial Illustrator
- Signmaker
- Ceramics Designer
- Footwear Designer
- Furniture Designer
- Product Designer
- Vehicle Designer
- Interior Designer
- Jewellery Designer
- Packaging Designer
- Textile Designer
- Costume Designer
- Theatre Designer
- Musical Instrument Technician
- Picture Researcher
- Technical/Scientific Illustrator
- Model Maker
- Picture Framer
- Designer
- Illustrator
- Artist
- CGI Artist
- VFX Artist
- Nostalgist