

Fashion Designer

Introduction

As a Fashion Designer you will create designs for clothes and accessories. You'll aim to fit with, or predict, fashion trends and to appeal to potential buyers. You could decide what people will be wearing on the High Street next year!

Also known as

- Clothes Designer
- Designer, Fashion



Work Activities

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Haute couture is the most exclusive area of design. As a Haute Couture Designer you will produce garments for individual clients and produce seasonal collections that influence the rest of the fashion industry. You might even have your own fashion house!

As a Designer of ready-to-wear ranges, you will create quality garments that you sell in selected 'upmarket' shops. You can either follow the haute couture trend, or you can work upon creating your own unique style - a style that people will instantly recognise as being your own.

When your clothes go into production, you'll give advice and sort out any problems with cutting or stitching. You will take care of the products quality control - making sure the final product meets your design standards.

You may also visit trade fairs to find out about new fabrics and designs or to source new suppliers. You will need to stay on top of what is happening in the world of fashion - who is displaying what, where, and what are the latest styles?

The work may involve travelling locally, nationally and sometimes overseas.

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 Fashion Designer, you will need:

- good communication, presentation and negotiation skills
- creative and artistic skills
- flexibility to adapt designs to suit clients' needs
- good organisation and planning skills
- an understanding of different fabrics and clothes making
- an interest in fashion and new fashion trends
- to work to deadlines and budgets
- knowledge of design-related software

Self-employed or freelance Fashion Designers will need business and marketing skills.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £24,000 - £25,000
- With experience: £26,500 - £31,000
- Senior Fashion Designers earn £33,000 - £35,500

Hours of work

You will usually work a basic 39-hour week, Monday to Friday. Working hours for self-employed designers may be irregular, depending on the project you are working on. Late finishes and weekend work may be required from time to time, especially as deadlines approach.

Where could I work?

The largest employers of Fashion Designers are the large wholesale manufacturers. Other opportunities occur with large retailers. However, many fashion design firms are small businesses employing just a few designers.

Self-employment

Opportunities occur for Fashion Designers to work as self-employed, freelance Designers in consultancy and fixed-term contract work. You can obtain this work through specialist recruitment agencies.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in design industry magazines/journals such as *Drapers*, 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 fashion design jobs are advertised. Making speculative job applications can also be effective.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

A common route into this career is via a Foundation course in art and design followed by a degree, HNC, HND or foundation degree in a subject such as fashion design.

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

Any kind of pre-entry experience is useful, since this is a very popular choice of career. Many new Fashion Designers also gain experience abroad.

A lot of new Fashion Designers start out in junior positions, such as an Assistant Fashion Design role, working with more experienced designers, gaining skills and experience along the way. This is something you should seriously consider.

An Intermediate or Advanced Level Apprenticeship can be a great place to start. You may be able to study for an NVQ as part of your apprenticeship.

Training

If you would like some more training, then the British Academy of Fashion Design offer a certificate course in fashion design. This is a level 2 accredited BTEC qualification. This certificate is an introduction course for people who would like to get some experience in the industry. Some of the units you will be studying include:

- analysing Fashion Designers work and choosing one that inspires you
- the research and design process
- trend forecasting
- the different aspects of fabrics
- understanding different body shapes

- how to create a mood board

You will be assessed by completing five practical assessments.

Other courses could be available in your area.

Progression

Many Designers become self-employed. With experience, some move into senior roles within an organisation.

Work Experience

Previous skills gained as an assistant in a design studio or workshop, or in a design consultancy would be really useful for this career. Experience in related fields, such as advertising or marketing, is also helpful to become a Fashion Designer.

Qualifications

The usual entry requirements for a relevant HNCs, HNDs and Foundation courses are:

- 1/2 A levels where you'll need an A level in art or in an art-based subject
- GCSEs at grade C/4 or above in 4/5 subjects where some courses ask that you have a pass in English
- a pass in design and technology will be useful

Alternatives to A levels include:

- a City and Guilds or BTEC level 3 qualification
- the International Baccalaureate Diploma

Useful vocational subjects include:

- BTEC level 3 - art & design
- BTEC level 3 - fashion and clothing
- BTEC level 3 - textile design and manufacture
- BTEC level 2 - textiles
- City & Guilds level 3 - craft
- City & Guilds level 3 - design and craft

Also a BTEC level 1 award in pattern cutting could help you to stand out from the crowd and to create your own designs.

Many other qualifications are also accepted so check college/university websites for more details.

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

To enter any course in art and design, you'll need a portfolio of your work.

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 as an assistant in a design studio or workshop, or in a design consultancy are valued. Experience in related fields, such as advertising or marketing, is also useful. Commercial awareness and an understanding of the fashion industry is an advantage.

To enter the work or relevant courses, you need to have a portfolio of work showing 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 Art Foundation course, which leads to a degree or HND course. Higher National Certificate (HNC) courses are also available part-time, often in the evenings and/or in the daytime.

Universities and colleges of higher education (HE) 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 universities and HE colleges.

Distance learning

Relevant courses at various levels in fashion design subjects are offered by a large number of educational 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
- **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/

- **London College of Fashion**
Address: 20 John Princes' Street, London W1G 0BJ
Tel: 020 7514 7400
Email: enquiries@fashion.arts.ac.uk
Website: www.fashion.arts.ac.uk
- **Drapers: The Fashion Business**
Publisher: EMAP
Address: Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7EJ
Tel: 020 3033 2600
Website: www.drapersonline.com
- **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 028 4844
Website: ams.careerswales.com/
- **Hiive**
Hiive is the online professional network for creative people.
Website: app.hiive.co.uk/
- **The British Academy of Fashion Design**
Tel: 020 3773 7862
Email: info@fashiondesignacademy.co.uk
Website: www.fashiondesignacademy.co.uk

Related Careers

- Medical Illustrator
- Design Assistant
- 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