

Footwear Designer

Introduction

Footwear designers create new footwear designs or change existing ones. They need to keep up to date with fashion trends and the needs of buyers. Knowledge of the anatomy of the foot is important.

Also known as

- Designer, Footwear
- Shoe Designer

Work Activities

As a Footwear Designer, you will design new shoe styles or change existing ones, usually for retail chains. You'll follow changes in colour and dress fashion to ensure that you offer up-to-date styles to the client.

Footwear Designers usually specialise in one area of the footwear market, such as:

- high street fashion
- sportswear
- ladies
- mens
- high end footwear

You will carry out market research, so that you stay on top of these latest fashion trends - what do people want to wear?

Then you can begin the design process - possibly by creating a mood board, which is a collage of images, text and materials. This will visually illustrate the design you have in mind, so that you can display it to other people, e.g. Senior Designers, in order to get their opinion.

You might also use specialist digital software packages, such as CAD, to help with the design process.

Once a design is complete, you will hand it over to the Product Development department. You will need to work alongside Product Development to make sure the work is progressing as you have designed and intended.

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 Footwear Designer, you will need:

- creative and artistic skills
- to pay attention to detail and make precise measurements
- people skills
- knowledge of foot anatomy
- an understanding of the materials, machines and processes used in production
- to keep up to date with fashions and footwear trends
- to work to deadlines and budgets
- knowledge of design-related software



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

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £23,500 - £25,000
- With experience: £26,500 - £31,000
- Senior Footwear Designers earn £33,000 - £35,500

Hours of work

Employed Footwear Designers usually work 39 hours a week, Monday to Friday. Working hours for self-employed Designers may be irregular, depending on the project they are working on. Late finishes and weekend work may be required from time to time, especially as deadlines approach.

Where could I work?

Employers include footwear manufacturers, fashion houses, retailers, agents and design studios.

Opportunities for Footwear Designers occur with employers in towns and cities throughout the UK.

Self-employment

Opportunities occur for Footwear Designers to work as self-employed, freelance Footwear 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 local/national newspapers, on recruitment and employers' websites, and on Find a Job (www.gov.uk/jobsearch).

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

An Intermediate or Advanced Level Apprenticeship is a great place to start. Take a look at our article 'Apprenticeships - How Do I Apply?' for more details.

Most Footwear Designers enter the industry after a degree or foundation degree in a subject such as footwear design. Some fashion design degree courses feature options in footwear design.

De Montfort University offers a degree in footwear design and a foundation degree in footwear.

University of the Arts London offers a degree in cordwainers footwear and an introductory course in footwear design - aimed at beginners.

The University of Northampton offers a degree in footwear and accessories - available by full-time or part-time study.

Some people get on to degree courses from a foundation course.

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

Training

Most of your training will be on-the-job.

Progression

Many Footwear 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.

Qualifications

For entry to a degree course in any subject, the usual minimum requirement is:

- 2/3 A levels in relevant subjects such as engineering or maths
- GCSEs at grade C/4 or above in your A level subjects
- a further 2/3 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, including English and maths

Other qualifications are often acceptable as alternatives to A levels, for example:

- BTEC level 3 qualifications
- the International Baccalaureate Diploma

To get onto an Advanced or Higher Level Apprenticeship, you will usually need at least five GCSEs at A*- C or 9 - 4, including English and maths, and possibly two A Levels.

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. Commercial awareness and an understanding of the footwear industry are 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.

De Montfort University offers a Footwear foundation degree (FdA), and a BA Hons in Footwear Design, both via part-time study.

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.

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
- **University of the Arts London (UAL)**
Address: 272 High Holborn, London WC1V 7EY
Tel: 020 7514 6000
Email: admissions@arts.ac.uk
Website: www.arts.ac.uk
- **University of Northampton**
Address: Avenue Campus, St George's Avenue, Northampton NN2 6JD
Tel: 0800 3582232

Email: study@northampton.ac.uk
Website: www.northampton.ac.uk

- **De Montfort University**
Address: The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BH
Tel: 0116 2551551
Email: enquiry@dmu.ac.uk
Website: www.dmu.ac.uk
- **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/

Related Careers

- Medical Illustrator
- Design Assistant
- Fashion Designer
- Graphic Designer
- Artworker
- Metal Engraver
- Visual Merchandiser
- Commercial Illustrator
- Signmaker
- Ceramics 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