

# Options with art and design

## Your skills

Over the course of your degree you develop a good mix of subject specific and technical skills as well as transferable core skills. Consider these alongside your other activities, such as paid work, volunteering, family responsibilities, sport, membership of societies, leadership roles, etc. Think about how these can be used as evidence of your skills and personal attributes. Then you can start to market and sell who you *really* are, identify what you may be lacking and consider how to improve your profile.

Many employers of graduates seek to recruit people who are lateral thinkers and creative problem-solvers. These qualities are natural to artists and designers and therefore make you an attractive asset, particularly to the expanding UK creative industries sector. This sector relies on people who can think differently, formulate questions and solve problems.

Increasingly, artists and designers are finding work in areas unrelated to the art and design world. Creative skills are valued and actively sought across a wide range of employment sectors, as employers are looking to recruit employees who are adaptable and can generate fresh ideas.

An art and design course will equip you with a combination of practical skills mixed with theory. Specific skills differ according to the art and design discipline, but the following transferable skills are common to all subject areas: imagination and creativity; critical awareness of self and external factors; interpersonal and social skills; resourcefulness; creative problem-solving, divergent thinking; decision making; oral and written communication skills; visual presentation; information and research skills; self-motivation and management; organisation and planning; and IT skills, particularly using creative software.

Work experience, exhibitions, shows, commissions and competitions can also be used as evidence of the above skills as well as drive, determination and initiative.

## Job options

Bear in mind that it's not just your degree discipline that determines your options. Look at [your degree... what next?](#) for informed advice on career planning and graduate employment, or take a look at [what jobs would suit me?](#) a helpful starting point for self-analysis.

You can choose between jobs that are degree-related or those that appeal because they use other interests or elements of your degree.

### Jobs directly related to your degree

- [Advertising art director](#) - works on the visual side of advertising, producing original ideas in response to a brief from the client and being involved in all stages of the project, from initial concept to finished product.
- [Fashion clothing designer](#) - works on clothing design. Some designers may focus completely on a specialist area, such as sportswear, childrenswear or accessories.
- [Graphic designer](#) - produces visual solutions to communicate messages for their clients. Most work is two-dimensional for products such as book covers, magazines, posters, corporate communications and websites. Some designers work on three-dimensional designs.
- [Illustrator](#) - uses creativity and the technical skills of painting and drawing to communicate ideas, sensations, facts, feelings and emotions. Illustrators work to

commercial briefs to inform, persuade or entertain a client's intended audience.

- [Printmaker](#) - designs and make prints. Techniques such as woodcuts or silk-screens are used to create images which are transposed onto surfaces, generally using a printing press.
- [Textile designer](#) - works in knit, weave and print to create two-dimensional designs that can be produced in a design repeat for the production of commercial or artistic fabrics or textile products.

### Jobs where your degree would be useful

- [Arts administrator](#) - supports artistic activity, including the presentation, exhibition or preservation of cultural forms in the performing, visual and heritage arts. Functions range from marketing and booking, to finance and insurance matters.
- [Art therapist](#) - works with people who suffer mental/physical illness, emotional and learning difficulties, stress and trauma, enabling clients to cope and even change through the use of art.
- [Community arts worker](#) - works with communities to improve their quality of life using a variety of art forms to explore relevant issues. Community arts workers generally work in areas where there are social, cultural or environmental issues.
- [Museum/art gallery curator](#) - acquires, cares for, develops, displays and interprets a collection of artefacts or works of art in order to inform, educate and entertain the public. The role also includes PR, fundraising, handling enquiries, education and access activities.
- [Multimedia specialist](#) - combines design and technical knowledge to create information and communication technology (ICT) based products, such as CD ROMs, DVDs, websites. Typical outputs include entertainment products; education and training materials; marketing materials; catalogue databases; and public information resources.
- [Secondary school teacher](#) - teaches art or design, craft, or technology as part of the national curriculum to pupils aged 11-18.

### Other options

In longitudinal studies of art and design graduates, nearly half had been self-employed at some point. Many also spend at least part of their early careers as portfolio workers - carrying out two or more quite different roles in order to earn a living.

Although some of the jobs listed here might not be first jobs for many graduates, they are among the many realistic possibilities with your degree, provided you can demonstrate you have the attributes employers are looking for. It's also worth noting that many graduate vacancies don't specify particular degree disciplines, so don't restrict your thinking to the jobs listed here.

[Explore types of jobs](#) to find out more about the above options and related jobs.

## Career areas

Every year statistics are collected to show what HE students do immediately after graduation. These can be a useful guide but, in reality, with the data being collected within just six months of graduation, many graduates are travelling, waiting to start a course, paying off debts, getting work experience or still deciding what they want to do. For further information about some of the areas of employment commonly entered by graduates of any degree discipline, check out [what do graduates do?](#) and [your degree...what next?](#)

The career path of art and design graduates is often complex during the early years. It is common for graduates to be working in more than one job simultaneously, freelancing alongside salaried work and continuing to study.

Many graduates initially work outside the art and design sector, but encouragingly only 20% remain outside the sector in the long term. Graduates need time to develop a 'creative' career as success often depends on getting a foot in the door, building a portfolio, gaining experience and contacts from placements and voluntary work, and raising the finance and knowledge to set up a business.

Self-employment is a popular choice for art and design graduates.

An art and design degree is useful for all areas of the rapidly growing creative industries, and across all employment sectors as employers increasingly seek out art and design graduates.

## Where are the jobs?

Artists and designers often work in smaller companies. There are opportunities in the rapidly growing creative industries and also in creative roles in the media, marketing, PR, arts administration or education. Artists and designers are actively recruited for their creative approach to problem solving. See the following sectors for more information:

- [Advertising and PR](#) - advertising promotes and publicises products, services or concepts in order to sell or influence attitudes. PR aims to promote the reputation of an individual or organisation;
- [Broadcast, film and interactive media](#) - encompasses TV, radio, film, private production companies, web and internet services, multimedia and computer games;
- [Creative and cultural arts](#) - the sector skills council for the creative and cultural sector lists the following in its remit: advertising, crafts, cultural heritage, design, music, performing, literary and visual arts.

Career management is an ongoing process; one that you'll no doubt develop throughout your working life. [Explore job sectors](#) for further information on all the above employment areas.

## Further study

For art and design as a whole, the proportion of students progressing to full-time further study is lower than for graduates generally. However, some courses are exceptions. A much higher proportion of fine art graduates continue in full-time education, as do those from film and fine-art-based photography courses. Gaining qualified teacher status (QTS) through the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), or the Scottish Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), is the most popular option amongst those who opt for full-time study.

Almost all art and design graduates find they need to study further within a short time of completing their degree. This is usually to develop specific vocational and technical skills which can be learnt within employment, practice or part-time study.

These trends show only what previous graduates in your subject did immediately upon graduating. Over the course of their career - the first few years in particular - many others will opt for some form of further study, either part time or full time. If further study interests you, start by thinking [about postgrad study](#). [Find courses and research](#) to identify your options; you can also [apply for courses online](#).

Look at [funding my further study](#) for more details relating to finance and the application process.

## What next?

Don't forget there are alternatives to entering employment or postgraduate study, such as taking time out, volunteering or travelling. Longer term, you may want to consider starting your own business. For something different, check out [self-employment](#) and [flexible working](#) or explore [working and studying abroad](#).

This should have started you thinking about your future. Whether you are in the early stages of career planning, or you have definite ideas about what you want to do, you will find further information to help you in the following sections:

- Analyse your skills, interests and motivations to find out [what jobs would suit me?](#)
- [Explore types of jobs](#) to find out about entry requirements, salaries and working conditions.
- [Explore job sectors](#) for hints on breaking into various industries.
- [Find graduate employers](#) and see what they have to offer.
- Look at the advice on [applications, CVs and interviews](#).
- Get [work experience](#) through vacation work or a work placement.
- [Find courses and research](#) and investigate postgraduate study opportunities.
- If you have already graduated, get online [interactive advice](#).
- Visit [your university careers service](#) for a wealth of advice and resources to help with your career planning.

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