

Art and Design

Do you have creative flair and like to use your imagination? Maybe you enjoy designing or making things using different materials? If you have good practical ability, or always have some sort of creative idea going through your head, then art and design is a great career area for you to think about.

Artists and designers are involved in designing and creating almost everything we buy, from book covers to high fashion and furniture. They create works of art in many different forms, from paintings and textiles to sculptures and photographs.

In 2023-24, there were 2.4 million jobs in the UK creative industries, accounting for 7% of all filled jobs in the UK.¹

What areas can I work in?

There is a wide range of careers in art and design!

You can work in areas such as furniture design, book illustration, animation, or household appliance design to fashion design and special effects for films and TV.

Art and design roles fall into the following areas: 3 dimensional design, fashion or textile design, fine art or graphic design, interior design or display and photography.

To see the routes to getting into each of these sectors, take a look at our [Career Pathway](#).

What kind of companies can I work for?

Possible employers include:

- museums, art galleries and cultural heritage organisations
- advertising, publishing and marketing agencies
- architectural, interior and graphic design agencies
- textile and knitwear manufacturers
- theatres, broadcasting and film media companies
- digital design and media companies
- teaching and educational institutions.

What's the job market like?

There is a huge amount of competition for full time work in the art and design world, with many people working on a self-employed or part time basis. Most companies in the creative industries employ 10 people or less.

Art and Design graduates often find it takes time, and relevant work experience, to build up a portfolio and develop the contacts for freelance or commissioned work. It's not always easy to make a living as a self-employed artist, and many artists take on other jobs with a steady income so they can survive when freelance work is in short supply.

According to the Scottish government, 90,000 people were employed in the creative industries in 2023, accounting for 3.4% of employment in Scotland and 5.4% of employment in the UK creative industries. Employment in this sector had increased by 2.3% over the latest year in Scotland. Employment was highest in Glasgow City (25,065) and City of Edinburgh (23,065) which comprised 27.9% and 25.6% of employment in this sector respectively. In 2022, turnover for this sector was £10.4 billion and approximate Gross Value Added (aGVA) was £5.7 billion. Between 2021 and 2022, turnover in the sector had increased by 13%. ²

The Scottish government has pledged to increase funding for culture and the arts so that it is at least £100 million more a year by 2028-29. ³

Graphic design and multimedia designers rank among the top employing careers. Between July 2023 and June 2024 there were 730 job postings, remaining above the pre-pandemic levels. The top locations for those jobs being advertised was in Glasgow City (320 job postings) and Edinburgh City (200 job postings). The median real-time advertised salary was £33,000 a year. ⁶

Facts and figures

- From the academic year 2021/22, 38.6% of art graduates in the UK found full time employment within 15 months of graduating. Of those, 16.9% worked as art, design and media professionals and 23.8% worked as retail, catering, waiting and bar staff. ⁵
- For the same year, 56.6% of design graduates in the UK found full time employment within 15 months of graduating. Of those, 33.4% worked as art, design and media professionals and 17.7% as retail, catering, waiting and bar staff. ⁵
- Salaries for creative arts graduates ranged from £21,929 to £30,952, with the highest earnings reported by females in the cinematic and photography professions. ⁵
- In Scotland, as of December 2024, there were 4,900 people working as artists, 11,400 as graphic and multimedia designers, and 3,500 in design occupations including interior designers, and clothing, fashion and accessories designers. ⁴

Want to find out more?

Why not take a look at the [Discover Creative Careers](#) website for information on getting into the arts? You will find information specifically about visual arts and crafts careers. You can also find detailed information about entry into the animation careers by visiting the [ScreenSkills](#) website.

Sources

¹ [Creative Industries: Growth, jobs and productivity, UK Parliament House of Lords Library \(30 January 2025\)](#)

² [Sector Briefing - Creative Industries, Office of the Chief Economic Adviser, The Scottish Government, \(17 June 2025\)](#)

³ [Programme for Government 2024-25 Serving Scotland, Scottish Government \(September 2024\)](#)

⁴ [Annual Population Survey - Occupation by sex, employment status and full/part time - UK, NOMIS \(December 2024\)](#)

⁵ [What do graduates do? Prospects \(part of Jisc\) and AGCAS \(2024/25\)](#)

⁶ [Sectoral Skills Assessment: Creative Industries, Skills Development Scotland, Skills Development Scotland \(October 2024\)](#)