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 2024-25, 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, 78,000 people were employed in the creative industries in 2024, accounting for 3% of employment in Scotland and 4.6% of employment in the creative industries in Great Britain. Employment in this sector decreased by 13.3% over the latest year in Scotland. [2]

In March 2025, there were 13,120 registered enterprises operating in the Creative Industries sector, 7.5% of all registered business in Scotland. [2]

Employment in the creative industries sector in Scotland in 2025 was most prominent in the following local authorities: City of Edinburgh 6.9%; Glasgow City 6%; East Dunbartonshire 5.8%; and Dundee City 5.7%. [3]

Between July 2024 and June 2025 there were 310 job postings for graphic and multimedia designers in Scotland, a 19.6% decrease compared to the period between July 2023 and June 2024. However in the creative industries as a whole, the mid-term (2025-2028) forecast is that the number of people in employment will grow by 3% (3,300 people). [3]

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. [4]

Facts and figures

- From the academic year 2022/23, 34.3% of art graduates in the UK found full time employment within 15 months of graduating. Of those, 17% worked as art, design and media professionals and 27.3% worked as retail, catering, waiting and bar staff. [5]
- For the same year, 52.4% of design graduates in the UK found full time employment within 15 months of graduating. Of those, 31.6% worked as art, design and media professionals and 20.5% as retail, catering, waiting and bar staff. [5]
- Salaries for creative arts graduates ranged from £23,655 to £29,081 a year - the highest earnings were reported by females in the performing arts sector. [5]
- In Scotland, between January and December 2025, there were: 6,400 people working as artists (1,500 increase from 2024); 10,300 as graphic and multimedia designers (1,100 decrease from 2024); and 6,400 in design occupations including interior designers and clothing, fashion and accessories designers (2,900 increase from 2024). [6]

Want to find out more?

Why not take a look at the Discover Creative Careers website for information on getting into the arts? There are links to information about a wide range of creative careers. You can also find detailed information about entry into the animation careers by visiting the ScreenSkills website.

Sources

[1] Facts and Figures: There are an estimated 2.4m creative industries jobs in the UK, Creative Industries Council (11 November 2025)

[2] Sector Briefing - Creative Industries, Office of the Chief Economic Adviser, The Scottish Government, (24 March 2026)

[3] Sectoral Skills Assessment: Creative Industries, Skills Development Scotland (October 2025)

[4] Programme for Government 2024-25 Serving Scotland, The Scottish Government (September 2024)

[5] What do graduates do? Prospects (part of Jisc) and AGCAS (2025/26)

[6] Annual Population Survey - Occupation by sex, employment status and full/part time - Scotland, Nomis (December 2025)