

Furniture Designer

Furniture designers produce designs for furniture such as tables, chairs, bookcases and cabinets. Working to the needs of clients or manufacturers, they may design individual handcrafted pieces or design for mass production.

The Work

You could be:

- planning the design and selecting suitable materials including wood, metal, plastic or textiles
- researching market trends and new techniques, as well as period styles such as Mackintosh
- producing designs and technical drawings using computer-aided design (CAD) packages (such as AutoCAD and TurboCAD), sketches or models
- discussing designs with individual clients and manufacturers
- using tools to make a prototype model
- testing how well the model stands up to wear and tear and then solving any problems
- incorporating mechanical parts of some items into the design, such as levers in adjustable office chairs
- taking into account issues such as cost, market trends, demand, materials and manufacturing methods and techniques and safety
- liaising with individual craftsmen, or with various departments of the company: marketing, production, supply and sales, regarding the process of construction or manufacture
- attending seminars and workshops on areas of furniture design and manufacturing.

Pay

Pay rates vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salaries for qualified furniture designers in the UK tend to be around £23,000 a year. With experience this can increase to around £30,000 and senior designers may earn up to £45,000 a year or more. Some furniture designers work freelance. They charge a fee which varies depending on the job.

Conditions

- You might work for a large manufacturing company, a small family business or a design company doing work for several manufacturing firms.
- You would be based in a design studio or a workshop.
- You might work on your own or in a team while designing.
- You may have to travel to visit factories, meet clients or attend trade shows.
- The hours can be long at times, including some evenings and weekends, to meet deadlines.
- In workshops, conditions might be dusty when wood is being shaped.

Getting In

- You usually need a degree (SCQF Level 9) in 3D design or product design with an option in furniture design. For entry to most courses you need 4 Highers including English and Art and Design or Design and Manufacture.
- You might be able to get a job with an HNC (SCQF Level 7) or HND (SCQF Level 8) in furniture design. For entry you normally need 1-2 Highers or a relevant NC or NQ (SCQF Levels 4-5)
- You could start by taking an NC or NQ. Entry requirements vary from no formal entry requirements to 4 subjects at National 4 including English, Art and Design and a technological subject. You might then progress to a more advanced course.
- You need a very good portfolio of designs to get into college or university.
- If you are very talented and have an extremely good portfolio, you might get into college or university without the necessary Highers.
- Some entrants have previous experience in a trade such as carpentry.

For art school courses you need to apply through UCAS.

Entry can be very competitive. Most jobs are in large factories, designing furniture for the mass market, but there is also work with design consultancies, working with for example, interior designers and architects. There are also opportunities in retail and sometimes with smaller bespoke design companies. Some designers are self-employed and take a considerable time to establish themselves.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- artistic, creative and imaginative
- practical, accurate and good with your hands
- flexible and adaptable as you may have to alter designs to suit the budget or the client
- able to accept criticism of your work
- self-motivated
- able to work under pressure to meet deadlines
- willing to keep up to date with new trends and materials.

You need to have:

- a good eye for 3D design, colour and detail
- good communication skills
- good IT skills and an understanding of CAD
- confidence, to explain and sell designs to clients
- teamworking skills
- business and marketing skills if self-employed.

Training

- You would develop your skills and gain experience on the job.

- You will be expected to learn CAD skills and other relevant software or technology.
- You may be able to attend further courses and conferences on relevant topics. The [Design Business Association \(DBA\)](#) runs courses for designers.
- You will need to keep up to date with design trend developments, technology and materials and equipment.

Getting On

- Joining a professional body such as the Chartered Society of Designers can be useful.
- In a large manufacturing or design firm, you could become a senior furniture designer.
- In time, you might move into a supervisory or management job.
- With experience you might work on a freelance basis, designing for other manufacturers or designing and making your own furniture.
- You might specialise in designing particular types of furniture.
- You will need to develop your portfolio and skills throughout your career.
- You might move into other fields, such as teaching or lecturing.

More Information

- Freelance furniture designers can find it difficult to build a good reputation and get enough work.
- You must be persistent in taking your portfolio and samples of work to exhibitions and to potential clients. You also need to network and maintain a good contact base.

For more information on creative careers see [Discover Creative Careers Finder](#)

Contacts

Chartered Society of Designers (CSD)

Tel: 020 7101 0685

Email: membership@csd.org.uk

Website: www.csd.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/charteredocietyofdesigners

Creative Scotland

Email: enquiries@creativescotland.com

Website: www.creativescotland.com

Website (2): opportunities.creativescotland.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland

Design Council

Tel: 0207 4205200

Website: www.designcouncil.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/DesignCouncil

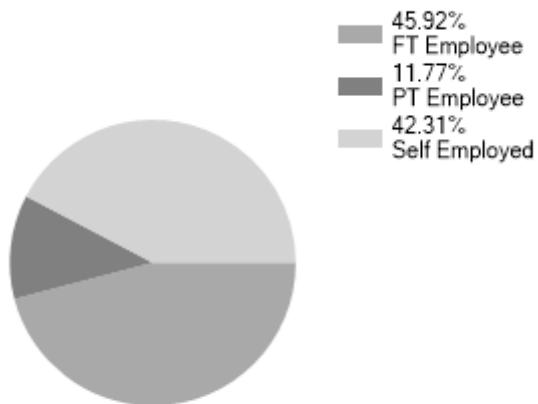
Discover Creative Careers Finder

Website: discovercreative.careers/#

X: [@CreativeCareer5](#)

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

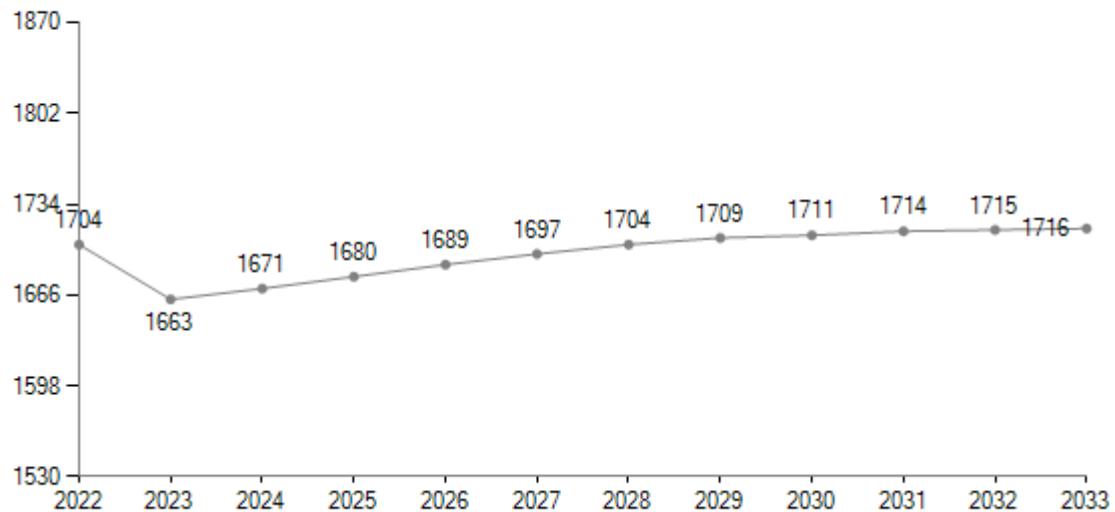


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)