Illustrator

Illustrators produce drawings, paintings or diagrams by hand or digitally, for a wide range of products to communicate information, facts or emotions, depending on the needs of their clients. These can include book jackets, computer games and animation, educational materials, brochures, magazines, comics, posters, greeting cards, adverts and packaging. They may specialise in one type of illustration, such as fashion, games design, scientific or technical, or children's books.

The Work

You could be:

- reading the text to be illustrated
- meeting editors, authors or designers to discuss the job requirements (or brief) and negotiating fees
- searching the internet or books for suitable reference material and information
- deciding what style, theme and colours would be most appropriate for the target readers
- creating artwork by hand using a range of techniques, such as ink, gouache, watercolour or pastel, or using an airbrush to apply paint to the surface
- creating digital artwork using computer software packages such as Photoshop and Illustrator, or CAD packages for more technical or digital work, such as computer games
- making any changes required by the client
- preparing final artwork for the printer, after receiving client approval
- if self-employed, carrying out business admin and promoting your work.

Pay

Pay rates vary, depending on:

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

Most illustrators work freelance. They charge a fee, which varies depending on the work. The better known they are, the more they can charge. The Association of Illustrators gives guidelines for calculating fees on its website.

The a-n (The Artists Information Company) website has an interactive artist's toolkit which helps artists calculate how to price their work (you need to be a member to access this). Suggested sample rates of pay from the London Freelance Fees Guide:

- Book jacket (UK): £600.00
- 3/4 page (UK): £150.00
- 1/2 page (UK): £130.00
- 1/4 page (UK): £75.00
- 1/8 page (UK) £40.00

- Magazine, commissioned per image: £150.00 to £180.00.

If you sell your work through an agent, you need to pay the agent a fee. This could be as much as a third of the selling price. In an employed job, an illustrator could earn a starting salary of around £21,000 a year. With experience this can rise to £30,000 a year, or more if very well established.

Conditions

- You would work in a studio or at home.
- You might travel to visit clients or to promote your work.
- Hours can be irregular and flexible, sometimes including weekends and evenings when you have to meet deadlines. Average working hours are 30-40 a week.
- Most illustrators work freelance or are self-employed and may need to take a second job to supplement their income.

Getting In

- You usually need a degree (SCQF Level 9) in art and design, preferably with an option in illustration.
- An HNC (SCQF Level 7) or HND (SCQF Level 8) in an art and design subject may get you work as an illustrator or lead on to a degree.
- The universities of Dundee and Edinburgh offer degrees in Illustration.
- City of Glasgow College and Glasgow Clyde College offer an HND in Illustration.
- For entry to an HND you need 1-2 Highers, for a degree, 4-5 Highers, usually including English and Art and Design.
- You might start with an NC or NQ (SCQF Levels 4-6) (formal entry requirements not always needed) in an art and design subject and progress to a more advanced course.
- You need a very good portfolio of artwork to get into college or university.
- You might be able to get work without having qualifications, provided you have a very good portfolio.

For art school courses you need to apply through UCAS.

Entry to this work is very competitive. You may be able to get work from publishers, advertising agencies, broadcasting agencies or the fashion industry. You would take your work, or send copies, to agencies to try to find work. You will need to be persistent, as first time illustrators have a low rate of acceptance.

Some illustrators find work through an agent or submit their work to ‘stock houses’, but both of these would take a commission.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- artistic, creative and imaginative, with a good eye for design, detail and colour
- excellent at drawing and painting
- good at networking to promote your work to clients
- able to work alone and manage your time

- a good presenter to explain your ideas
- persistent, to keep submitting your work despite criticism and rejection
- adaptable, as you may have to alter your work to suit clients
- able to work calmly under pressure to meet deadlines
- knowledgeable about computer graphics and specialist software.

Training

- Training is through experience, on the job.
- The Association of Illustrators runs training events and seminars for members.
- To keep up to date, you could take short, part time, courses in new software packages.

Getting On

- If you work for a company, you may become an art director or design manager.
- You are more likely to work freelance, project to project, selling work directly to clients or through an agent. This is not easy and you might need to take another job to add to your income.

Contacts

Creative Scotland
Email: enquiries@creativescotland.com
Website: www.creativescotland.com
Website (2): opportunities.creativescotland.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland

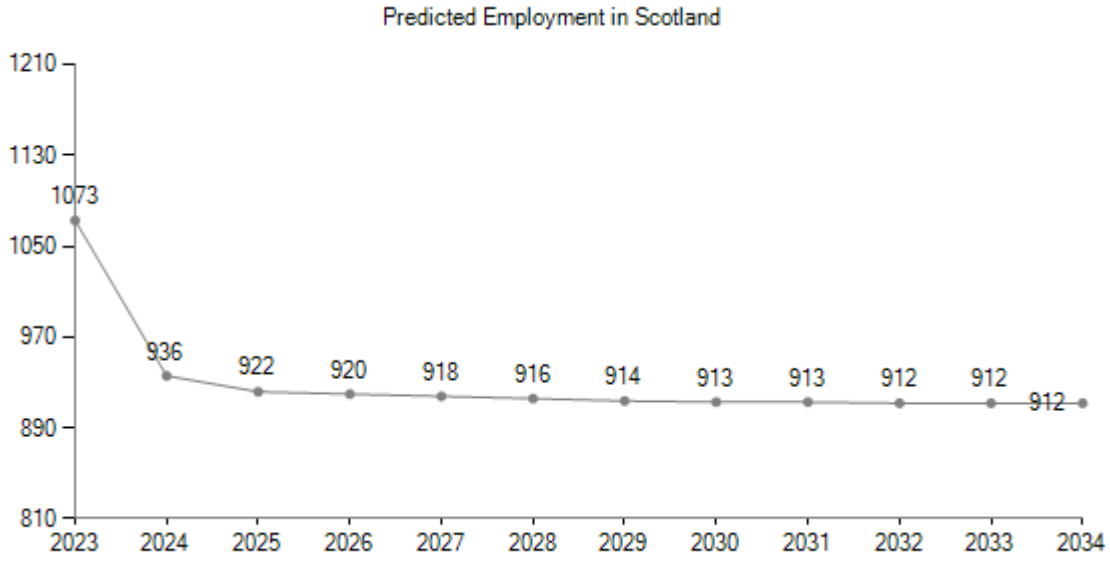
Discover Creative Careers Finder
Website: discovercreative.careers/#
X: @CreativeCareer5

Statistics

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by LMI for All



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