Ceramic Designer

Ceramic designers create a wide range of decorative or functional items such as tableware, tiles and sculptures by shaping and firing clay. They create designs either as a 'one-off' made in a workshop for a client, or for mass production.

The Work

You could be:

- sketching designs by hand, or using 3D computer aided design software, either for your own work, a client, or for a design brief if employed by a company
- working with a wide range of materials such as stoneware, earthenware, terracotta, bone china or porcelain
- hand making pots and vases either by shaping on a potter's wheel, or by hand building, involving rolling coils of clay and smoothing them together
- using moulds or hand operated machinery to create multiple items such as bowls, plates, bottles or decorative pieces
- making and decorating tiles used for floors, walls or fireplaces
- hand building decorative sculptures using slabs or small lumps of clay to build up over a frame or ‘armature’ for support
- decorating your work either by directly painting glaze to the surface or applying photo transfers, and then stacking in a kiln (oven) for firing
- if working in manufacturing, overseeing the production of work on a factory floor
- keeping up to date with design trends and promoting or selling your work online, at craft fairs, galleries or through a shop.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual salaries may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job
- the type of craft work you are doing.

Starting salaries for ceramic designers in the UK can be in the range of £22,000 to £30,000 a year. Experienced designers could earn between £35,000 and £45,000 a year. Many ceramic designers are self-employed or work freelance. They charge a fee, which varies depending on the item designed or made, and on their reputation. The better known they are, the more they can charge.

Conditions

- You would work in a studio, factory or from your own home.
- Working conditions may be noisy, dusty and hot in a workshop environment.

- The work is usually messy, where you can work with liquid plaster, liquid clay (called 'slip'), and powder pigment glazes.
- You sometimes need to use protective gear such as gloves, goggles and an apron.
- You may sometimes work with hazardous substances when mixing coloured glazes, so you need to wear a face mask.
- You might have to work long hours, including evenings and weekends, to meet deadlines.
- You might travel to meet clients, or attend exhibitions, in order to promote and sell your work.

Getting In

- There are no formal entry requirements but most people have a qualification in art and design, specialising in ceramic art or 3D craft design.
- You could take an NC or NQ (SCQF Levels 4-6), HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) or a degree (SCQF Level 9-10) course.
- You do not always need qualifications to get into an NC or NQ, although some courses may require up to 4-5 subjects at National 4 or 5. For an HNC or HND you usually need 1-2 Highers or an NC or NQ, and for a degree, 3-4 Highers including English and Art and Design.
- You normally need a portfolio of art work for entry to college or university.
- If you are very talented and have an extremely good portfolio, you might get into an HNC, HND or degree course with less than the normal minimum academic requirements.
- Gray's School of Art at Robert Gordon University offers a BA Hons degree course in Product, Ceramics and Jewellery. Entry requirements are 3 Highers at BBC including English or another English based subject and Art and Design or another art based or media based subject.

For art school courses you need to apply through UCAS.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- artistic and naturally creative
- practical when using tools and materials
- able to use specialist computer software
- accurate and attentive to detail
- knowledgeable about materials and working processes
- able to work under pressure to meet deadlines
- aware of health and safety working procedures
- able to accept criticism of your work
- business aware, if self-employed.

Training

- You would continue to develop your skills and experience through on the job training if employed, or by attending further workshops or courses.

Getting On

- You could set up your own company, making and selling your own designs, or employing others to produce your designs if you are quite successful.
- Getting work is competitive so promoting yourself and building up a network of contacts is important to establish yourself if you are working freelance.
- You could design for manufacturers on a freelance basis.
- There are fewer opportunities for promotion if you work in a small craft workshop.
- You may also do other jobs such as teaching or running a craft shop, to supplement your income.

Contacts

Crafts Council
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Email: hello@craftscouncil.org.uk
Website: www.craftscouncil.org.uk
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Creative Scotland
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Website (2): opportunities.creativescotland.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland

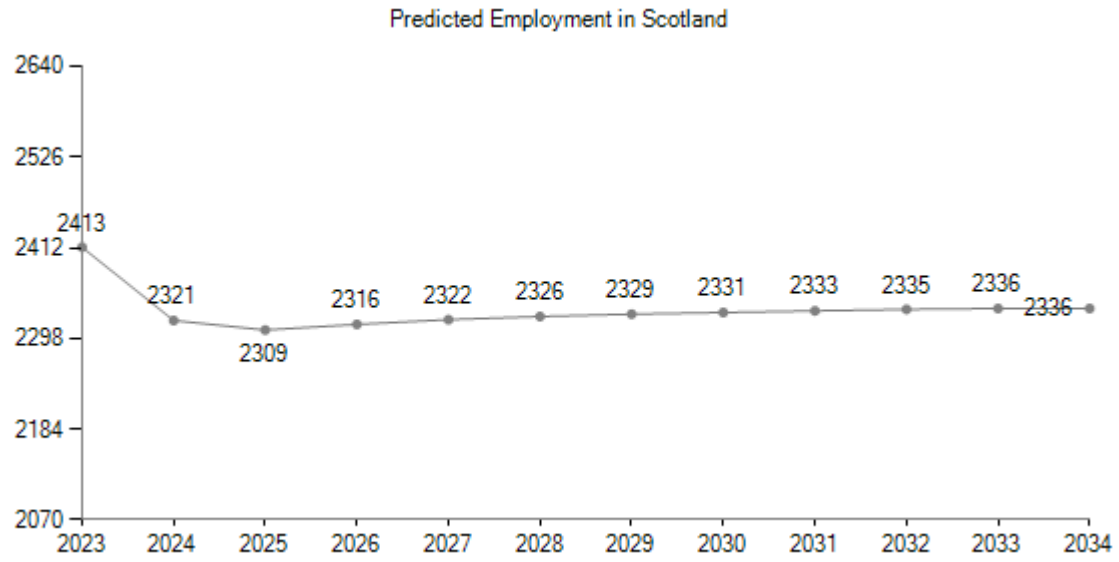
Discover Creative Careers Finder
Website: discovercreative.careers/#

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.



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