

Glass Designer or Maker

Glass designers create a wide range of decorative or functional items such as tableware, mirrors, lampshades, window panels or ornaments. They produce either 'one-off' bespoke items in a workshop for clients, or design items for mass manufacture.

The Work

You would usually work in one area: studio crafts (decorative and functional glassware), architectural glass (industry) or stained glass.

You could be:

- sketching design ideas and deciding on technique and materials for a new project, keeping the budget in mind
- melting scrap glass pieces (cullet) together with sand and soda ash at high temperatures to create new glass material
- working with a wide range of materials and equipment such as moulds, lathes, furnaces, drills, saws, cutting wheels, stencils, blowing irons and polishing machines
- blowing molten glass into a bubble using a blowing iron and turning it and shaping it with rods or tubes, to make different shapes and forms (glass blowing)
- bending or shaping pieces of glass over moulds or shapes by heating them in an oven (slumping or kiln forming)
- soldering pieces of painted, enamelled or patterned glass together with lead to create stained glass window panels or mirrors
- decorating your work using techniques such as sand blasting, engraving, stencilling or acid etching
- restoring or repairing older glassworks or stained glass window panels
- keeping up to date with techniques and trends and promoting or selling your work online, at craft fairs, galleries or through a shop.

Pay

Many glass 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. Earnings can start at around £20,000 a year.

Glass designers working for companies can earn between £25,000 and £30,000 a year. Experienced designers may earn more.

Conditions

- You might work from your home, a studio or workshop in a factory.
- Working conditions may be noisy and hot in a workshop environment.
- Your hours will vary if you are self-employed as a craft worker.
- You might work as part of a small team if you work in industry.

- If you work for a manufacturer you may have to work shifts.
- You might have to work long hours, including evenings and weekends, to meet deadlines.
- You need to use protective gear such as gloves, goggles, safety boots and overalls.
- You might travel to meet clients, or attend fairs and 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, sometimes specialising in glass art or 3D craft design.
- You could take an NC, NQ (SCQF Levels 4-6), HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) or a degree (SCQF Level 9).
- 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 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 artwork 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 degree in Product, Ceramics and Jewellery with the option to study glass design. Entry requirements are 3 Highers at BCC including English and Art and Design, or another creative design or media subject.

For art school courses you need to apply through UCAS.

You could look for work with glass manufacturers or architectural glazing organisations. Self-employed stained glass designers can get work on renovation or new projects from public authorities, national heritage organisations or private clients. Studio craft workers tend to be self-employed and network to get work as well as advertise their work in galleries, shops and on websites.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- artistic and naturally creative
- practical when using tools and materials
- accurate and attentive to detail
- aware of health and safety working procedures
- able to accept criticism of your work.

You need to have:

- excellent hand to eye co-ordination
- the ability to think in three dimensions
- knowledge about materials and working processes
- business skills, if self-employed
- good time management skills
- a flexible attitude, if clients change their minds about a design or budget.

Training

- You would continue to develop your skills and experience through on the job training if employed, or by attending further workshops or courses.
- The University of Edinburgh offers a postgraduate course, the MA in Craft, which gives the opportunity to specialise in glass design.

Getting On

- You could design for manufacturers on a freelance basis.
- 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 may also do other jobs such as teaching or running a craft shop, to supplement your income.
- You could specialise in the conservation of stained glass panels or glassware.
- You could branch into the industrial side of glass manufacture, perhaps as a scientific glass blower, working for a university, or a glassware, pharmaceutical or chemical company.

Contacts

Crafts Council

Tel: 020 7806 2500
Email: hello@craftscouncil.org.uk
Website: www.craftscouncil.org.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CraftsCouncilUK

Creative Scotland

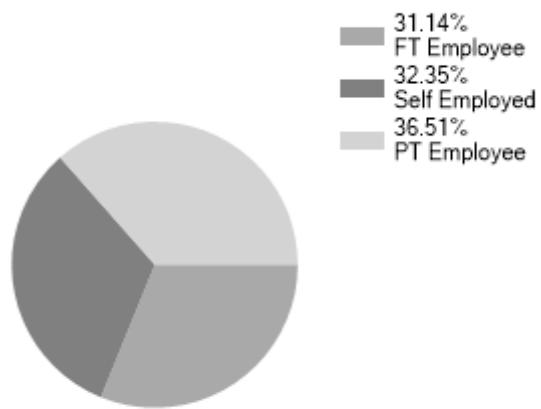
Email: enquiries@creativescotland.com
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Website (2): opportunities.creativescotland.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland

Discover Creative Careers Finder

Website: discovercreative.careers/#
X: @CreativeCareer5

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

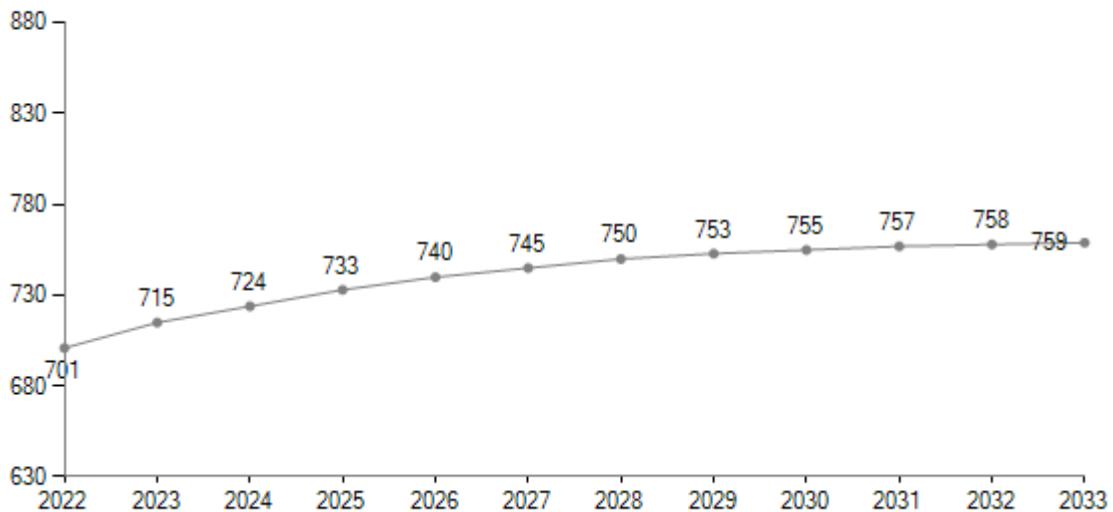


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)