



# Fashion design

The United Kingdom (UK) has long been recognised as a leading fashion centre and one of the most exciting creative environments in the world. Whether your interest is knitwear, footwear, millinery, fabrics or any other aspect of fashion, you will be able to find a course to suite your needs in the UK.

## Checklist: Why study Fashion design in the United Kingdom?

- a UK arts, crafts or design qualification will be respected internationally
- students have the opportunity to be taught by world famous figures, at the forefront of the creative world
- many institutions have links with professional individuals, agencies and organisations, and you may be able to work on commercial projects during your study
- the qualifications at UK institutions represent the largest range of visual and creative arts courses in Europe – whatever your specific interest, the UK can offer a course to suit you
- European resources are easily accessible
- the opportunity to improve your fluency in English will improve your job prospects in English-speaking countries
- UK qualifications not only encourage you to produce work of the highest quality, but offer you a shop window in which to display your talents.

## 1 What can I study?

You can take practically any aspect of fashion design, including the following :

- embroidery
- textiles
- lace-making
- machine knitting
- footwear manufacture
- leather technology
- womenswear
- menswear
- sportswear
- knitwear
- clothing textiles
- fashion promotion
- clothing engineering and management

- clothing marketing and distribution
- marketing technology.

You can choose a career-based craft qualification (such as a City & Guilds or National Vocational Qualification/Scottish Vocational Qualification) or a degree. Your degree could be in a single subject, or a combination with another subject. The table below summarises the qualifications offered, and the general differences between them.

Type of study	What qualification would you gain?	Length	Features
<b>Work based study</b>	NVQ/SVQ or City and Guilds	One or two years	Generally only available part-time. The usual pattern would be for students to start in a job and then study for the qualification related to that job. For this reason these qualifications are not usually an option for international students.
<b>Further education (vocational)</b>	GNVQ/SVQ in Art and Design Vocational A-level in Art and Design BTEC/Edexcel First Diploma in Fashion BTEC/Edexcel National Diploma in Fashion Higher National Certificate	One to two years	Usually taken at an art and design college or college of further education, these courses will teach a range of skills and enable you to study your preferred subjects in more detail. The courses are designed for entry into employment. At the higher level, they also qualify students for entry into higher education.
<b>Further education (academic)</b>	Art and design foundation course Access Certificate/Diploma A-levels and Scottish Highers	One to two years	These courses are designed as preparation for higher education. The foundation course is the preferred method of entry. It can be taken at a college of further education or specialist college.
<b>Higher education</b>	BTEC/Edexcel Higher National Diploma (HND) Degree (BA) Foundation Degrees in relevant subjects including : fashion design for industry fashion design technology fashion design and practice (See <a href="http://www.ucas.com">www.ucas.com</a> for more information)	HNDs usually take two years; degrees three or four years Foundation Degrees usually take two years	These are very specific courses. It is important to research the content carefully for the aspect you want to study (eg footwear, millinery, embroidery, textiles).
<b>Postgraduate</b>	Postgraduate Diploma MA MPhil PhD	Up to three years	Taught courses and research degrees are available.



## What can I study alongside fashion?

There is a vast range of course combinations available. There are nearly 300 fashion courses on offer at HND and degree levels, covering everything from fashion with accountancy to fashion with a foreign language.

## When would I specialise in the branch of fashion I want to study?

Usually after your foundation course or foundation year. Some four year degrees (including all Scottish degrees) incorporate a foundation year, so if you do not want to change institutions after your foundation year, you should research the course content carefully beforehand to make sure it covers the subjects that you want to specialise in.

## Could I gain some practical experience during the course?

Some courses do offer this and some offer experience abroad.

## Can I study fashion by distance learning?

Although the choice is very limited, there are a few courses available. Look for them on [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org).

## Are there short courses available?

Yes. Short courses are listed on [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org) and [www.hotcourses.com](http://www.hotcourses.com)

## What can I study at postgraduate level?

At postgraduate level you can specialise in a particular aspect of fashion design, for example, menswear, womenswear, knitwear or textiles. There are courses in fashion marketing, fashion technology and fashion theory. Research degrees are also available.

### Checklist: Choosing the right course

- think carefully whether you want to do a general art and/or design course or to specialise at an early stage.
- if possible, read one of the reference books on art and design courses (see 'Where can I find more information?'). These may be available at your local British Council office.
- search for courses on [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org).
- obtain the prospectuses for the courses you are interested in and read the course requirements carefully – do you have to do a foundation year, or send a particular type of portfolio?
- first, check your personal qualities against the following list to see if a career in this competitive and creative field suits you:
  - I am passionate about clothes and fashion
  - I am highly creative and ambitious
  - I am skilled at visual expression (drawing, painting, model-making, etc)
  - I am interested in how clothes/hats/shoes are made
  - I am determined and can see projects through to their completion
  - I can work to deadlines
  - I am a good team worker, but I can work alone
  - I can organise and analyse material and make a reasoned critical judgement
  - I am curious about and interested in society and what is around me
- if you know the area of fashion you want to go into, and the country in which you want to work, check whether it demands particular qualifications and at what level
- thorough research is needed, as no two courses are the same – even if they have the same title
- make sure the course you choose has the content balance that you want.

## 2 Entrance

Courses have different entrance requirements and prestigious art and design colleges are highly competitive. Because institutions are looking for creativity and talent some colleges may waive traditional academic requirements although most courses include theoretical aspects that require academic ability. Applicants should carefully check entrance requirements for each course.

### *The portfolio*

For HND and degree courses, you would usually be asked to present a portfolio of the best of the artwork you have done in school or at home, and would probably have to attend an interview. You may have to present your portfolio at other stages in your higher education and when you come to apply for jobs, so you should keep it up to date. A good portfolio will always improve your chances of acceptance on to courses of which there is a lot of competition – especially foundation courses at popular institutions.

Below is a general guide of the qualifications you will need for different levels of study.

Type of qualification	What you will need
<b>National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)</b>	No formal entry requirements
<b>General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs)</b>	No formal entry requirements
<b>Vocational A-level Scottish National Qualifications</b>	BTEC/Edexcel First Diploma or GNVQ Intermediate or four/five GCSEs/Scottish CEs at grade C or above or recognised equivalent
<b>BTEC/Edexcel First Diploma in Fashion</b>	No formal entry requirements
<b>BTEC/Edexcel National Diploma in Fashion</b>	Successful completion of BTEC First Diploma or GNVQ Intermediate or four/five GCSEs/Scottish CEs at grade C or above or recognised equivalent
<b>City and Guilds parts 1 (operative), 2 (craft level) and 3 (advanced craft level)</b>	No specific entry requirements
<b>Foundation courses BTEC/Edexcel Foundation Diploma (In Scotland, foundation studies are included in full-time career-based and degree courses)</b>	Minimum age seventeen; five GCSEs/Scottish CEs at grade C or above; some colleges ask for at least one A-level/Scottish Higher or equivalent
<b>Degree courses</b>	A BTEC/Edexcel Foundation Diploma; a BTEC/Edexcel National Certificate or Diploma, a vocational A-level in Art and Design; an Access to Higher Education certificate awarded by an approved agency; a recognised equivalent qualification.  At least two A-levels or Scottish Highers or recognised equivalent
<b>Mature students entry into higher education</b>	Usually via access courses
<b>Postgraduate study – diplomas and higher degrees (MA, MPhil, PhD)</b>	Usually a first degree, although some courses will accept career-based or professional qualifications



### 3 How can I register as a professional?

There is no formal registration for most creative careers in fashion or design. Career progression is achieved on merit, and would be expressed through your portfolio of work.

However, there are some sector specific organisations that offer membership and/or professional qualifications. These include :

- Chartered Society of Designers (CSD) (See [www.csd.org.uk](http://www.csd.org.uk))
- Textile Institute (See [www.texti.org](http://www.texti.org))
- Society of Designer Craftsmen (See [www.societyofdesignercraftsmen.org.uk](http://www.societyofdesignercraftsmen.org.uk))

#### Would a United Kingdom qualification be recognised in other countries?

The country in which you want to work could have a different structure for training in fashion and its associated fields. You should check with potential employers to confirm that they recognise the qualification you are intending to pursue.

### 4 Next steps

#### Checklist: Your next steps

- 1 Try to define the branch of fashion you want to go into – this could be design, marketing, knitwear, footwear, manufacture, etc.
- 2 Enquire in your own country about the most respected form of study for that career or profession. Do you need a degree to get in? If not, would a more practical qualification suit you better?
- 3 If you are unsure which job you want to do, look for a general course such as the GNVQ/GSVQ in Art and Design; or the BTEC/Edexcel First Diploma in Fashion; or the BTEC/Edexcel National Diploma in Fashion.
- 4 Applications for HNDs and first degrees should be made through UCAS (contact details below). Other applications should be made direct to the institution/course provider. (For more information, refer to *Applications* in this series.)

## 5. Where can I find more information?

### British Council Education information

Website [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org)

For further information, you can find details of your nearest office at [www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm) which includes links to all our country web pages and a worldwide address book giving contact details for all offices.

### EducationUK Scotland

Website [www.educationukscotland.org](http://www.educationukscotland.org)

### Wales International Consortium

Website [www.walesinternationalconsortium.com](http://www.walesinternationalconsortium.com)

### Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

PO Box 28  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ  
Telephone +44 (0) 870 1122211  
Fax +44 (0) 1242 544961  
Email [enquiries@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ucas.ac.uk)

Website [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

### Chartered Society of Designers

5 Bermondsey Exchange  
179-181 Bermondsey Street  
London EC2A 3UW  
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7357 8088  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7407 9878  
Email [csd@csd.org.uk](mailto:csd@csd.org.uk)  
Website [www.csd.org.uk](http://www.csd.org.uk)

### Society of Designer Craftsmen

24 Rivington Street  
London EC2A 3DU  
Telephone/Fax +44 (0) 20 7739 3663  
Email [info@societyofdesignercraftsmen.org.uk](mailto:info@societyofdesignercraftsmen.org.uk)  
Website [www.societyofdesignercraftsmen.org.uk](http://www.societyofdesignercraftsmen.org.uk)

### City and Guilds

1 Giltspur Street  
London EC1A 9DD  
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7294 2800  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7294 2400  
Email [enquiry@city-and-guilds.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@city-and-guilds.co.uk)  
Website [www.city-and-guilds.co.uk](http://www.city-and-guilds.co.uk)

**Creative Future** (career portal website by Design Council, Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Arts Council for England)

Website [www.yourcreativefuture.org](http://www.yourcreativefuture.org)

### Textile Institute

1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
St James's Building  
Oxford Street  
Manchester M1 6FQ  
Telephone +44 (0) 161 237 1188  
Fax +44 (0) 161 236 1991  
Email [tiing@textileinst.org.uk](mailto:tiing@textileinst.org.uk)  
Website [www.texti.org](http://www.texti.org)

### Skillfast-UK (Sector Skills Council for Apparel, Footwear and Textile Industry)

Richmond House  
Lawnswood Business Park  
Leeds LS16 6RD  
Telephone +44 (0) 11 3239 9600  
Fax +44 (0) 11 3239 9601  
Email [enquiries@skillfast-uk.org](mailto:enquiries@skillfast-uk.org)  
Website [www.skillfast-uk.org](http://www.skillfast-uk.org)

### Other useful resources

*Complete guide to art and design courses 2005* (UCAS/Trotman, 2004, ISBN 0 8566 0958 7) – information on the different types of art and design courses available, with course listing and brief description of course contents.

*British Qualifications 34<sup>th</sup> ed.* (Kogan Page, 2004, ISBN 0 7494 4138 0) – lists every recognised qualification on offer in the UK, by schools, colleges, universities, business schools, learned societies, trade and professional bodies and associations.

*Occupations 2004* (DfES 2003, ISBN 0 86110864 7) - Connexions compilation, an in-depth guide of over 600 career choices of all types from unskilled to professional work, also list prospects and qualification for each occupation.

**NB.** Please note these books may not be available at your local British Council office.

*While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness.*

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