

Interior design

Interior design and the skills that complement it – such as soft furnishing, interior decoration, lighting, interior landscaping and floristry - are professional occupations in the United Kingdom (UK). With a wide choice of colleges and locations, and a range of study levels from short summer courses to postgraduate degrees and diplomas, you will find a course to suit your ability and enhance your skills.

Checklist: Why study Interior design in the United Kingdom?

- interior design is well established as a discipline and has had its own professional body in the UK for nearly forty years (the British Interior Design Association)
- you can study at all levels and at all types of institution
- overseas students have been coming to the UK to study for many years and you will feel at home in a cosmopolitan environment
- the opportunity to improve your fluency in English will improve your job prospects in English-speaking countries.

1 What can I study?

There are different levels of study in interior design. You can choose anything from a university-based Master's degree to a short course during the summer, which you might do for interest while you improve your spoken English. Associated skills such as floristry and curtain-making can be studied from the second level of National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (NVQs/SVQs) or as a Higher National Certificate or Diploma.

The table below summarises the courses available and where you might study them (refer to *Choosing a career-based training course* in this series for an explanation of NVQ/SVQ and City & Guilds qualifications).



Subject	Levels at which you can study	Where would I study?
Floristry (flowers) Upholstery	NVQ/SVQ levels 2 and 3; BTEC/Edexcel National and Higher Certificate and Diploma	State-run colleges of further education or private colleges
Curtain- making Soft furnishings Upholstery	City & Guilds	State-run colleges of further education or private colleges
Lighting	This is not usually taught as a subject on its own (it is usually part of interior design courses); there are intensive short courses, but they tend to be technical and concentrate on shop and office lighting.	
Interior Design (vocational courses)	Wide range of courses available from City and Guilds, NVQs to Higher National Certificate and Diploma.	State-run colleges of higher or further education or private colleges
Interior Design (foundation/access courses)	These are designed to prepare you for entry to a degree course in art or design. Some foundation courses are specifically in interior design. Some are intended for international students and include English language tuition.	State-run colleges of higher or further education or private colleges
Interior design (undergraduate)	<p>You can study interior design on its own or in combination with another subject. You could opt for a two year Higher National Diploma (HND) or a three year Bachelor of Arts (BA) or – less commonly – Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree.</p> <p>Degree titles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Furnishing and interior decoration Interior design Design for interiors and exteriors Interior and landscape design Spatial design International textiles and surface patterns Three-dimensional design Interior architecture Interior design and technology. <p>There are also relevant Foundation Degree courses including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interior design Spatial design: interiors Interior architecture Interior design for retail environments. <p>(See www.ucas.com for Foundation Degree courses and information).</p>	
Interior design (postgraduate)	Master of Arts (MA) degrees and postgraduate diplomas in interior design.	Universities, art colleges, colleges of higher education



Distance learning	There are a wide range of subjects that can be studied in this way. Most can be done at your own pace, and offer certificates or diplomas (not usually degrees).	
Short courses and summer schools	These are widely available in interior design and associated skills. The British Interior Design Association (BIDA) has a list of course providers and brief details on its website www.bida.org although they do not accredit or recommend courses. (see 'Where can I find more information?'). Alternatively, search on www.educationuk.org and www.floodlight.co.uk (for London courses only).	State-funded and private colleges
Placement or internship opportunities	Several members of the British Interior Design Association (BIDA) offer unpaid placements – their contact details are on the BIDA website www.bida.org (see 'Where can I find more information?'). Several degree courses are 'sandwich' courses (this is when practical work experience is offered as part of the course and taken as a block – normally for one year – in between academic studies), which would enable you to spend a year working in the UK.	

Checklist: Choosing the right course

- your choice will depend entirely on the level at which you want to study – www.educationuk.org will show you virtually every course (including short courses, distance learning, undergraduate courses and postgraduate courses)
- for undergraduate courses, you can also check the website of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), www.ucas.com
- make sure you can fulfil the requirements – most higher academic courses ask for a portfolio of work, and some insist on candidates having done a foundation course in art and design.

2 Entrance

You can take NVQs/SVQs and City & Guilds without previous qualifications. For higher qualifications – Higher National Diplomas and first degrees – you would be expected to be educated to A-level/Scottish Higher standard, and to have taken art or art and design at that level. Some courses insist on a foundation course in art and design. This would usually be accepted as a valid entrance qualification on its own, as would an access course specialising in art and design.

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.

How to apply

For most courses you apply direct to the institution, but for Higher National Diploma (HND) and first degree (BA) courses you must apply through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). UCAS offers two different methods of applying for art and design courses, as detailed in the table below. Some colleges will not accept both methods and this is something you should ascertain from the course prospectus before you apply.



Interior design HND and degree courses: methods of applying		
Step 1: Contact your chosen institutions before completing the UCAS form to establish the arrangements for sending them your portfolio and whether an interview is necessary. Also find out if they will accept both methods of application, or only one. Then follow one of the routes below.		
	Route A (simultaneous) – where all (or at least three) of your chosen institutions see your application at the same time.	Route B (sequential) – where you are able to prioritise the order in which your applications are considered so that your first-choice institutions sees your application first.
Step 2	Enter up to six choices, listed in the order in which they appear in the UCAS handbook. You can reserve up to three institutions for application through Route B if you would like to do so.	Indicate on a separate form (supplied with the UCAS application form) the order in which you would like to be interviewed, or to have your portfolio considered. A maximum of three choices is allowed.
Closing date	15 January (earlier application advisable) of the year before the course starts.	24 March in the year that the course starts.
Step 3	You can reserve up to three institutions for application through Route B if you would like to do so.	
Step 4	Copies of your application are sent simultaneously to all six institutions.	Copies of your application are sent to the three institutions in the order you requested.
Late applications	Up to 30 June, applications will be sent on to institutions to consider – whether they do so is up to them. Applications after 30 June are entered in Clearing (refer to <i>Applications</i> in this series for an explanation of Clearing).	Applications received between 24 March and 11 June will be referred to institutions in the next available round. Applications received after 11 June will be entered in Clearing (refer to <i>Applications</i> in this series for an explanation of Clearing).

Would I have to have a good grasp of the English language?

Probably. Many institutions will expect you to have sat the IELTS exam (International English Language Testing System) and for undergraduate studies to achieve a band of 5.5 to 6.5. (For postgraduate courses it might range between band 6 and band 7). You need to check this requirement with the specific institutions.

3 How can I register as a professional?

You do not need to register as a professional to work as an interior designer in the UK, but many people do. The principal professional body is the British Interior Design Association (BIDA). Members are expected to have accredited and recognised professional qualifications and a minimum period of experience.

Would a United Kingdom qualification be recognised in other countries?

Although UK qualifications are recognised in many parts of the world, it is very important that you check in the countries in which you want to work that the qualification you intend to pursue will be useful and acceptable.



4 Next steps

Checklist: Your next steps

- 1 Do not rush through the searching process – there are many interior design courses in the UK and you need to find the right one for you.
- 2 Make sure your portfolio is up to date and carries your most impressive work. You may wish to ask a teacher to help you choose what work to include.
- 3 Look carefully through the prospectuses of the institutions you intend to apply to – some will not accept the traditional two methods of application, and this could delay your start date.
- 4 Consider your lifestyle. Would you be happier living in a city, town or more rural part of the country?
- 5 If you choose a private college, it could be important for your career that the course is accredited by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education (BAC) (see 'Where can I find more information?'). For information on BAC accreditation see *Quality issues* in this series.

5 Where can I find more information?

British Council Education information

Website www.educationuk.org

For further information, you can find details of your nearest office at 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

Wales International Consortium

Website 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
Website www.ucas.com

British Interior Design Association (BIDA)

3/18 Chelsea Harbour Design Centre
Chelsea Harbour
Lots Road
London SW10 0XE
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7349 0800
Fax +44 (0) 20 7349 0500
Email enquiries@bida.org
Website www.bida.org

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

Website www.yourcreativefuture.org

Scottish Qualifications Authority

24 Douglas Street
Glasgow G2 7NQ
Telephone +44 (0) 84 5729 1000
Fax +44 (0) 14 1242 2244
Email customer@sqa.org.uk
Website www.sqa.org.uk

British Interior Textiles Association (BITA)

5 Portland Place
London W1B 1PW
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7636 7788
Fax +44 (0) 20 7636 7515
Email enquiries@interiortextiles.co.uk
Website www.interiortextiles.co.uk

Institute of Professional Designers (IPD)

117 Piccotts End Road
Piccotts End Farm
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire HP1 3AU
Telephone +44 (0) 1442 245513
Fax +44 (0) 1442 245513
Website www.professional-designers.net
<http://www.aecportico.co.uk/Directory/IPD.shtm>



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
Website www.city-and-guilds.co.uk

**British Accreditation Council for
Independent Further and Higher Education (BAC)**
42 Manchester Street
London W1U 7LW
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7224 5474
Fax +44 (0) 20 7224 5475
Email info@the-bac.org
Website www.thecapability.uk.com/bac

**The Furniture, Furnishings and Interiors
National Training Organisation (FFINTO)**

67 Wollaton Road
Beeston
Nottingham NG9 2NG
Telephone +44 (0) 11 5922 1200
Fax +44 (0) 11 5922 3833
Email info@ffinto.org
Website www.ffinto.org

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

Richmond House
Lawnswood Business Park
Redevers Close
Leeds LS16 6RD
Telephone +44 (0) 11 3239 9600
Fax +44 (0) 11 3239 9601
Email enquiries@skillfast-uk.org
Website www.skillfast-uk.org

Other useful resources

Complete Guide to Art and Design Courses 2005 (UCAS/Trotman, 2004, ISBN 0 85 660676 6) – includes information on the types of art and design courses available, with course listings and brief descriptions of course contents.

British Qualifications 34th 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 8611 0864 7) 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

Creative futures: guide to courses and careers in art, craft and design (Burnside, A, National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD), 1999, ISBN 0 90 4684 28 8) – course listings, information on qualifications in various fields of art, craft and design, case studies and student profiles and information about working.

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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