teaching assistant + museum volunteer + event co-ordinator learning resource assistant costume maker magazine artworker + self-employed jewellery business creative manager/team leader creative enterprise specialist cinematographer + camera operator designer/deputy manager lecturer + artist + author interior designer magazine editor artist + tutor + administrator gallery owner + working artist: commissions and exhibitions supply teacher (secondary art) photographer animator teacher of art and design part-time personal assistant in 2 jobs own business jewellery design and making + tutoring arts and crafts + community education worker literary work + literary work + visual work wholesale manager programme executive/promo producer + producer teacher chairman + stylist painter + sessional tutor ba level senior support worker museums education officer + commission work art technician + artist interior designer fine artist design consultant designer + web designer art lecturer product developer (fashion) business start up retail designer video editor retail designer in 3 jobs conservator + freelance artist/illustrator art tutor + print designer in 2 other jobs youth volunteering advisor + teaching evening class + volunteering housing assistant production manager designer marketing manager designer costume designer sculptor + set designer/builder + military reserve arts admin + arts council projects + preparing for group show textile design + retail assistant assistant buyer art group chairman designer charity coordinator + freelance textile design account manager freelance textiles interior designer + floral designer studio photographer self-employed + volunteer teacher of textiles digital art teacher + adult education art teacher pr agency account director graphic designer human resources building maintenance exhibitions coordinator senior graphic designer teaching + head of art and design stock controller school technician + visual artist retail assistant + designer/artist freelance designer + sales assistant + textile intern civil servant photography in 2 jobs artist + gallery and retail assistant + museum volunteer product developer + florist teacher freelance prop maker + theatre company director interior design + kitchen design designer theatre design + interior design salaried work + arts practice + freelance curator gallery associate director learning support assistant studio recording sales agent children’s book illustrator and author + maths and english tutor for children + studio work ceramic artist account manager civil servant Homewares buyer library development worker teaching freelance print textile designer + teaching myself it skills + jewellery designer teaching teaching printmaking personal practice + scenic art freelance outworker + studio/exhibition work company stage manager senior designer (fashion and accessories) + freelance/commissions + volunteering copywriting industry development /training coordinator senior designer administrator + project manager + volunteering art education/workshop cruise ship administrator/excursion assistant freelance copywriting artist nanny + pr + radio teacher sales manager designer teacher/tutor director of marketing and design company + marketing and business manager in renewables commission work + teaching + exhibition work create one-off pieces for me fashion designer director + web/graphic designer interior designer + illustrator creative manager supply teacher lecturer + freelance designer assistant buyer children’s book illustrator and author senior designer potential exhibition preparation portraiture assistant photographer (2 jobs) + artist/photographer entrepreneurship coordinator + jewellery designer picture researcher picture framer + photographer + gallery exhibition artist animator website designer/art director self-employed + exhibition preparation architectural assistant full-time teacher + self-employed artist branding/sponsorship picture editor freelance film production manager community arts projects supported learning assistant/adult education design teacher own business photographer tv editor artworker + freelance designer broadcasting channel coordinator graphics teacher + stationery designer fashion editor + stylist senior designer interior designer (employed) + freelance teacher of visual arts occasional freelance + designer job + voluntary work for magazine glass workshop assistant + glassmaker/designer police constable software design + reading and writing auction house art support project management jeweller + jobbing jeweller photography teacher secondary school hypnototherapist design manager + freelance director administrator (fashion suppliers) 3d modeller freelance cameraman and photographer + camera assistant senior designer theatre designer + illustrator photograph + lecturer + fine artist graphic designer creative director garment construct + styling artwork commission working for agencies + teaching + making clothes/fine art artist + retail + freelance model maker costume designer/maker costume assistant graphic designer designer/director + teacher textiles teacher + actor buyer, new york + founder of ‘stylizers’ prop/costume maker interpretation manager + ma studies + occasional costume designer senior producer senior accessories designer bank clerk gallery manager + administrator graphics/repro + photographer studio practice + environmental initiative in 2 jobs freelance animation compositor/director + animation compositor + painter/printer/animator/illustrator make up artist design accessories promoter/centre manager + graphic artist + chair of trustees matte painter + concept artist clapper loader + film maker designer maker + gallery assistant womenswear receptionist + designer/assistant + designer photographer + artist temp +pr events volunteer + pr coordinator designer proposals writer fashion designer support worker/arts facilitator + shop assistant + studio manager + freelance illustrator project manager/art psychotherapist + artist designer (interior) + illustrator insurance administrator school teacher web designer + commission painter photographer + box office agent + community arts senior designer illustrator + teaching assistant, art and design curatorial work

creative graduates creative futures
www.creativegraduates.com
Key findings

Creative Graduates Creative Futures is a major longitudinal study undertaken between 2008 and 2010 of the early career patterns of more than 3,500 graduates in practice-based art, design, crafts and media subjects, qualifying in 2002, 2003 and 2004 from 26 UK higher education institutions.

- 3 out of 4 graduates had worked in the creative industries and in their field of expertise since graduating. At the time of the survey, 4 out of 5 graduates were in paid work, the majority in creative jobs and achieving their career goals.
- Portfolio careers are well established, with 48 per cent of graduates in multiple jobs at the time of the survey, typically combining employment with self-employment, study or developing their creative practice.
- 45 per cent of graduates had worked freelance since graduating, and at the time of the survey 23 per cent were self-employed and 18 per cent were running a business.
- 77 per cent of working graduates were positive about their current work, enjoying the ability to be creative, having autonomy and potential for future opportunities, with 79 per cent in work they felt related significantly to art, craft, design or media.
- 33 per cent of graduates had experience of teaching in their early careers and 18 per cent were teaching at the time of the survey. Unpaid work is a common strategy for job-seeking or learning new skills, with 42 per cent undertaking voluntary experience since graduating.
- Creative graduates had developed skills required for their careers on their undergraduate courses, rating most highly creativity and innovation, visual skills and presentation, but they had less well-developed IT, networking and client-facing skills.
- After graduation, 72 per cent had undertaken further study or informal learning of some kind, with more than one-quarter of graduates returning to HE to study at a higher level.
- Graduates aspire to creative careers and achieving a good life/work balance, their career goals aligning with their subject disciplines and their career plans most influenced by a strong desire for new learning and the pursuit of creative practice above high earnings.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the most significant features of the last decade is the growth of the creative and cultural industries, as traditional industries have declined and micro-businesses have come to a new prominence in a sector characterised by a contract economy. Creative industries are unlike virtually any other sector, being heavily reliant on highly qualified graduate and postgraduate workers which are provided by HEIs in ever increasing numbers.

Creative graduates in art, design, craft and media subjects are well-equipped to deal with the challenges of creative working, which they keep firmly in their sights as they navigate their way through the complexities of work, underpinned by their desire to continue with their creative practice. As a result, they experience considerable personal and work satisfaction. Creative graduates are at the forefront in initiating changes in the creative sector, and their tolerance of uncertainty and ability to adapt and to continue to learn fits them for contemporary life and work.

The models for working life presented in this study represent a new way of maintaining life/work balance, highly relevant to a rapidly changing society.
Creative careers 1999 - 2009

Creative Graduates Creative Futures is a major longitudinal study of the early career patterns of graduates in art, design, crafts and media subjects qualifying in 2002, 2003 and 2004 from 26 UK higher education institutions. The research, undertaken between 2008 and 2010, involved first degree and foundation degree UK and international graduates up to six years after graduation.

The main survey element of the study in autumn 2008 achieved 3,500 respondents (14 per cent response rate) making it the largest detailed study of its kind, and broadly representative of the eligible courses across participating institutions and the creative HE sector in terms of the profile of responding graduates. A second stage of qualitative research in September 2009 examined graduates’ career paths in more depth and their experiences of work in the recession; findings will be published in spring 2010.

Creative Graduates Creative Futures contributes to the longest continuous study of occupational choices and working patterns, offering comparable data to the pioneering Destinations and Reflections (1999) which followed more than 1,800 graduates from art and design disciplines into their early careers and was one of the first studies to provide evidence of synergy between higher education and growth in the creative industries. Findings demonstrated graduates’ generic capability for wider roles, their adaptability, and a multi-tracking approach to working often combining work with personal development.

These patterns continue in the present study, together with engagement with portfolio working and high levels of self-employment. Larger proportions of graduates now work in the creative industries and in work related to their subject than ten years ago. Other key indicators for change are increases in part-time working, business start-up, self-employment and fixed-term or temporary work, together with a slight fall in full-time employment and a drift away from working in medium-sized enterprises to micro-businesses. These patterns are consistent with recent growth in the creative and cultural sector.

Ten years on, employment growth in the creative and cultural industries and the size of the sector mean that graduates continue to contribute very substantially to the creative economy, and, in doing so, they demonstrate approaches to establishing a career that workers in other sectors may benefit from adopting in a rapidly changing economic environment. Indeed, resourceful and adaptable creative graduates are the trail-blazers for other disciplines in engaging with contract and freelance working.
Characteristics of creative graduates and their careers

The present survey tells us what is distinctive about graduates, their educational experiences and their working lives. The vast majority of graduates engage in work and employment that is creative and closely related to their field of expertise or course of study. They place a high value on their higher education experiences, although they would have liked a stronger connection with the professional world on their courses. They stay focused on their career goals and envisage progressing in the same kind of work for the future.

The study reveals resourceful behaviour in the face of the complexities and challenges of finding work and earning a living, with high levels of self-employment and engagement in work of a creative nature, and many sustaining a living by multiple income streams through portfolio careers. Creative graduates are working predominantly as sole traders or in micro businesses that change rapidly and frequently, and the creative industries are highly dependent on these small-scale enterprises.

The majority of graduates work in creative occupations

- Looking across all of graduates’ experiences since graduating, three out of four graduates had worked in the creative industries and a similar proportion had had a paid permanent job.
- Graduates were asked to describe up to three jobs or work activities they were undertaking at the time of the survey, to take account of portfolio working. More than three-quarters (78 per cent) of working graduates were in creative occupations in their main job. Half the respondents worked in organisations of ten or fewer workers.
- Under 1 in 20 graduates were unemployed or looking for work at the time of the survey.
- The most common employment sector was the design industry (28 per cent of graduates), education at 23 per cent (including teaching at 18 per cent), followed by fine art and fashion/textile design (both at 14 per cent), and work in media production and photography (13 per cent), largely reflecting the expected vocational choices of the sample population.

A minority of graduates work in non-creative occupations

- At the time of the survey, fewer than one in five graduates (18 per cent) in their main job were in work they considered was not creative. Non-creative occupations were very diverse and spread over a wide range of economic sectors, mainly in retailing (4 per cent) and in not-for-profit sectors (3 per cent), with other sectors such as public service, health and social work accounting for fewer than two per cent of respondents in each.
Portfolio working is a major established working pattern

- The portfolio career represents a model for work that appears to be typical in the creative industries sector, and may be adopted partly by personal preferences and partly by the way in which work in the industry is organised.

- 52 per cent of working graduates were engaged in one main work activity at the time of the survey, tending to work full-time. Many of these had also continued with their creative practice, worked unpaid or freelance since graduating.

- 48 per cent of graduates in work were engaged in multiple activities or portfolio working at the time of the survey, typically combining paid employment with self-employment, working voluntarily, or developing their creative practice; 30 per cent combined two work activities; 13 per cent had three; and five per cent of graduates combined four different types of work activity. Work was often combined with formal learning.

- This pattern does not change significantly over time, even when graduates are four, five or six years into their careers, and is also confirmed by the high levels of satisfaction with careers to date, the majority of graduates being settled on their career goals.

- We speculate that this pattern of working and learning is established during student life: in which full-time study is combined with relevant work experience, paid and unpaid, and income from part-time term-time and vacation work supports students through their studies.

Working on a self-employed basis is a key feature of portfolio working

- Just under one-half of all graduates had worked on a freelance basis (45 per cent) and around one-quarter had started a business during their early careers. At the time of the survey, 23 per cent of respondents were self-employed or undertaking freelance work and 18 per cent were running a business, and this was seen as a serious ambition for the future with 40 per cent of all graduates expressing an interest in running a business as their careers progressed.

- The majority of graduates in self-employed work were in creative occupations and in the creative industries (86 per cent for both). Sole trader status is a major feature of creative graduate activity, with 68 per cent of self-employed workers working alone, and the remainder either working collaboratively or creating work for others.

- Where graduates reported self-employed activities as their main job, three-quarters were working full-time, but when self-employment was recorded as their secondary/tertiary activity it was part-time.

‘Old models for work, purposes of education, skills agendas and graduate employment are limiting and prevent dealing with a new reality, in which creative practice provides the context for academic study, work experience, employability, professional development, innovation, enterprise and productive careers.’
Part-time working is a key feature of creative careers

- At the time of the survey, 75 per cent of graduates were working full-time in their main work activity and 25 per cent part-time. The significance of part-time working is most apparent when looking across graduates’ combinations of work activities: 79 per cent of graduates in work at the time of the survey were working part-time in at least one of their jobs or work-related activities.

Unpaid and voluntary work contributes to career progression

- Post-graduation ‘internships’ and working unpaid are an established feature of the creative industries landscape, as a common strategy for finding work or gaining experience, with 42 per cent of respondents undertaking unpaid or voluntary work or work experience since graduating. At the time of the survey, one-quarter (23 per cent) were still in these types of roles, although often as a secondary activity combined with permanent work and/or self-employment. On the whole, these tended to be creative roles and part-time.

Teaching is an important career destination

- One third (33 per cent) of respondents had experience of teaching (generally in the arts). One in ten graduates had studied for a postgraduate teaching qualification (PGCE). At the time of the survey one in five graduates worked as a teacher (18 per cent) at any level, from schools to higher education, with half of these combining teaching with other work or self-employment. When graduates changed from their initial career goal, it was most frequently towards teaching.

Graduates rely on combined income streams and are not highly paid

- The widespread feature of unpaid work and internships in the creative industries may depress the earning power of graduates and opens a debate about the true worth of graduates. Around half (48 per cent) of graduates reporting their working situation were earning over £20,000 (gross) at the time of the survey across all their jobs and working activities, and this includes 14 per cent of graduates who earned at least £30,000.

- There are concerns about low pay, with one-third (33 per cent) of respondents earning £15,000 or under, which is less than the average starting salary for a new graduate across disciplines. Pay tends to be lower in creative roles.

- Those in portfolio careers were financially disadvantaged compared with graduates with only one job: 48 per cent of those with at least three jobs or work-related activities earned less than £15,000, compared with 22 per cent of those with one job.

Graduates gravitate towards London

- Over half (53 per cent) of all respondents (whether working or not) were living in the South of England at the time of the survey: a quarter (26 per cent) in London, 17 per cent in the wider South East, and 10 per cent in the South West of England. The Midlands or East Anglia accounted for 12 per cent, 14 per cent in the North of England, 9 per cent in Scotland or Wales, and a further 12 per cent were living overseas.
A greater proportion of creative graduates now live in London than did so prior to commencing their undergraduate studies (26 per cent compared to 14 per cent). Graduates living in London and those living overseas were the most likely to be working in a creative occupation across any of their jobs/activities (85 per cent and 83 per cent respectively).

**Graduates are satisfied in their working lives**

- Graduates experienced high levels of career satisfaction: three-quarters of working graduates (77 per cent) were satisfied with their work situation and four out of five (79 per cent) felt that their work related significantly to art, craft, design and media. Highest levels of overall satisfaction were found for graduates with higher earnings and among those whose work was congruent with their discipline or domain and who also felt that they could be creative in their work.

**Graduates aspire to creative careers and to achieve a good life/work balance**

- Graduates overwhelmingly aspired to creative careers, their specific career goals aligning with their subject discipline, and their career plans were most influenced by a strong desire for new learning. A high value was placed on opportunities to make full use of knowledge and skills, earn a stable income, pursue or maintain creative practice and have time with family and friends.

- Although four out of five graduates (79 per cent) were in or close to their chosen career, many anticipated at least some change over the next phase of their career, most commonly further training or learning and some degree of upward progression. Very few anticipated a complete change of direction.

- Graduates may be trading off higher earnings in their career choices to achieve more satisfaction in terms of life/work balance, personal development and independence.

**Barriers to career progression are mostly financial**

- 20 per cent of graduates felt they had some way to go to reach their chosen career and 14 per cent felt they were unlikely to do so. A key barrier to career progression was lack of finance to enable individuals to undertake learning to benefit their practice and develop new knowledge, either through postgraduate study, moving to relatively risky but rewarding jobs, or by undertaking low or unpaid roles to gain experience.

- Other career inhibitors were perceived lack of opportunities, relevant skills or experience, coupled with competition and the difficulties encountered in gaining entry to new areas of work.
Further study

Graduates were keen to develop their skills and knowledge, enhance their job prospects and follow personal interests often related to their creative practice.

Creative graduates are lifelong learners

- Almost three-quarters of respondents (72 per cent) had undertaken some form of further study, education or training, independent study/more informal learning since graduating. Four in ten (39 per cent) were undertaking formal further study of some kind at the time of the survey, often supported with paid work.

- One third (33 per cent) of all graduates had undertaken a short course, with over half of these in creative arts subjects, and just under one-third in business skills.

- More than half of graduates had continued to develop their creative practice in some way since graduation, often alongside other work activities.

Creative graduates place a high value on postgraduate study

- More than one quarter of graduates returned to HE to study at a higher level, with 13 per cent of graduates having studied at Master’s level, and one in ten following a PGCE. Master’s level study was not seen as a route to an academic career, with fewer than one per cent of study at doctorate level, indicating that academic research may not be identified by graduates as a serious career path and this is supported by the very small numbers identified as teaching in HE.

- Key motives for postgraduate study were to enhance job opportunities, develop further knowledge and/or gain a professional qualification.

‘Many of the skills and attributes required for creative employment, such as creativity, problem-solving, independence, innovation, enterprise and collaborative working are embedded within the creative learning process, together with more tacit skills such as resourcefulness and handling ambiguity.’
The value of a creative education

Active learning through project-based enquiry is central to the creative curriculum in higher education. Students not only learn to solve set problems in a creative way, but they also develop the ability to identify and to redefine problems, and to raise and address appropriate issues. Many of the skills and attributes required for creative employment, such as creativity, problem-solving, independence, innovation, enterprise and collaborative working are embedded within the creative learning process, together with more tacit skills such as resourcefulness and handling ambiguity.

Creative graduates value their creative education

- More than four out of five graduates had participated in shows/exhibitions, peer and self-evaluation, teamwork, contextual studies and teaching by practitioners on their undergraduate courses. They rated most course activities as fairly or very useful, with Personal and Professional Development (PPD), teamwork and teaching by practitioners as the most useful in relation to their careers.

- Creative graduates felt that their creative education had developed the skills required for their careers, rating most highly creativity and innovation, visual skills and presentation skills, but had less well-developed IT, networking and client-facing skills.

- Self-confidence and self-management were considered to be the most important to careers, yet they were felt to be less well-developed than core creative skills. Entrepreneurial skills were the least well developed and also perceived to be the least important for career development, which is interesting given the high incidence of self-employment.

- Just over half the graduates (52 per cent) felt their course had prepared them very or fairly well for the world of work. Respondents would have liked a better appreciation of what creative employment would be like, improved understanding of client needs, training in IT/software, business skills and the practicalities of working freelance.

Graduates are pro-active in gaining work experience

- Placements were seen as important for gaining insights into working practices and contacts in the industry and were experienced by 42 per cent of respondents. Just over half of these were doing so as a formal part of their course (57 per cent), and formal on-course placements appear to be associated with gaining creative work. In an industry dominated by micro-businesses with limited capacity for taking on students, these opportunities are unlikely to increase.
Around one in five respondents (18 per cent) had organised their own placements. They tended to find these more useful than those arranged by courses. Informal work experience during vacations and term-time was widespread (64 per cent) but was perceived as less useful to career development.

Graduates access support from HE after graduation

Graduates express continuing career development needs, and this highlights the importance of progression and the relationship between undergraduate learning, postgraduate study, on-the-job training and continuing professional development (CPD).

Almost half of graduates had accessed job information and around one-third had taken up opportunities for professional development, networking and careers advice since graduating from higher education institutions. Where these opportunities were not taken, it was most often because graduates were not aware of provision.

‘A distinctive characteristic of the creative curriculum is that opportunities for transfer of the creative process occur naturally, as students experience different contexts in which to apply their learning through live projects, exhibitions, commissions and learning alongside teacher-practitioners.’
Implications for creative careers

There is more complexity in the inter-action between graduates, creative industries and higher education than in the simple equation of supply and demand. Old models for work, purposes of education, skills agendas and graduate employment are limiting and prevent dealing with a new reality, in which creative practice provides the context for academic study, work experience, employability, professional development, innovation, enterprise and productive careers. In this new reality, work satisfaction is focused on measures such as personal fulfilment and opportunities for creativity and new learning.

HEIs provide an environment that fosters creative practice and encourages important employability skills. A distinctive characteristic of the creative curriculum is that opportunities for transfer of the creative process occur naturally, as students experience different contexts in which to apply their learning through live projects, exhibitions, commissions and learning alongside teacher-practitioners. Further capacity building is required in research communities to nurture academic careers, meet aspirations for new knowledge and innovation in the HE sector, and to bring in the next generation of teacher-practitioners. For the future, it will be important to establish and maintain the foundations for practice-led research at undergraduate level.

In the academic domain, creative practice provides the context for personal and professional development and our findings indicate that students continue to adopt this model after graduation in their portfolio careers – they continue to combine practice, further study and informal learning, and engage simultaneously in paid and unpaid work. It follows, therefore, that it is essential for graduates to put their creative practice at the centre of any discussion that reviews their progression and needs, pre and post-graduation, so they can articulate their strengths confidently and position themselves in relation to future goals.

Limits on industry capacity to provide work placements mean that curriculum innovation needs to build on extending creative practice through collaborative learning. There is a need to explore differentiated models for employer engagement in a sector in which small businesses and freelance professionals work in fluid, collaborative and non-hierarchical models of practice.

Gaining entry into creative work requires graduates to be resourceful and willing to work unpaid to gain necessary experience. The nature and form of voluntary work or unpaid ‘internships’ for all graduates post-graduation has become controversial in the context of minimum wage legislation and the extent to which graduates are giving free labour. At the same time, valuable experience and industry-related skills can be learned by working in this way. Creative graduates have strategies for coping with unstable employment conditions, and this is significant as we see graduates in all subjects coming into a more uncertain employment market.
The predominance of a project-based work structure in the creative industries sector will continue to draw on a pool of creative, skilled and adaptable workers. These will be individuals who combine or collaborate to respond to client needs, make new work or engage in creative endeavour. At the same time, these workers will be expected to be willing to acquire new learning to respond to specific niche needs of contracts and clients and continue to work flexibly. It is clear there is work to be done to prepare graduates for the likelihood they will be self-employed and for the requirements for creative careers, with appropriate support for progression into work and continuing professional development into their careers.

The resourcefulness of creative graduates and their determinants for successful and satisfying lives provide new career models that have a wider significance for society as a whole.

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*Creative Graduates Creative Futures* is a major longitudinal study undertaken between 2008 and 2010 of the career patterns of graduates in art, design, crafts and media subjects qualifying in 2002, 2003 and 2004 from UK higher education institutions. The research was commissioned and funded by a partnership of 26 UK higher education institutions and the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD). The project is led by University of the Arts London, and the research has been undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES).

Partner institutions: Bath Spa University, University of Bolton, Arts University College at Bournemouth, University for the Creative Arts, Coventry University, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Dundee University, Edinburgh College of Art, Glasgow School of Art, University of Gloucestershire, Glyndwr University, University of Hertfordshire, University of Huddersfield, Leeds College of Art and Design, Liverpool John Moores University, University of the Arts London: Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion, Wimbledon College of Art, Loughborough University School of Art and Design, Manchester Metropolitan University, Middlesex University, University of Northampton, Norwich University College of the Arts, Nottingham Trent University, Plymouth College of Art, University of Portsmouth, Swansea Metropolitan University, University of the West of England, York St John University.
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