



A Career in Craft

The Crafts Council has put together this careers pack to bust some of the myths about craft careers.

Craft generates **£3.4 billion for the UK economy** each year, with the contribution of the wider creative industries now growing at twice the rate of the UK economy. Craft roles are found in all industries and, research suggests, are unlikely to be replaced by automation.

A career in craft may seem like a far-fetched ambition but British craft has never been so sought after and craft skills are revolutionising industries from **aerospace** to **architecture**.

Jobs in the Sector

Craft Skills Across the Economy

How big are craft businesses?

Craft businesses vary in size—from independent makers selling their own work, to businesses like Benchmark, employing up to 70 people at their furniture workshops in Berkshire and Dorset.

- Across the UK, there are just over **11,500 businesses** involved in craft industries
- These businesses employ over **43,000 employees** across the UK
- Over 50% of craft businesses are **micro businesses**
- Businesses involved in craft industries contribute **£746m to the UK economy** in Gross Value Added (GVA), of which £81m (11%) is attributable to unregistered micro businesses.



What about people who use craft skills in other industries?

There are 10,000 people employed in craft occupations in 'other' creative industries*. These include design and making roles in film and TV, museums and galleries, architecture, and marketing.

There are 96,000 people employed in craft occupations in non-creative industries. These include jobs in manufacturing e.g. carpentry, joinery, printing and automotive industries.

This means there are nearly 150,000 people employed in the craft economy, generating nearly £3.4bn for the UK economy, accounting for 0.3% of UK GVA (Gross Value Added).

Craft Business

Ceramics

Silvia K Ceramics:

Located in the heart of Brighton on the south coast of the UK, Silvia K's ceramics studio produces tableware ranges that are sold in the UK, Europe, Canada and America.

Glass

The London Glassblowing Studio:

London Glassblowing is one of Europe's most prominent studio glass galleries, providing workspace for glass artists alongside a gallery to sell their work.

Metal

Cox London:

Sculptors and artisans Christopher and Nicola Cox founded Cox London in 2005.

They lead a team of specialist technicians in their London studio and workshops, creating furniture and lighting in bronze, silver, wrought iron, blown glass and stone.

Wood

Benchmark:

Furniture makers Benchmark work with a team of 70 craftspeople from their workshops in Berkshire and Dorset. They work with leading architects and designers on high profile commercial projects as well as their own furniture collection.

Textiles

Harris Tweed:

Harris Tweed has traditionally been woven by the islanders of the Outer Hebrides of Scotland.

Today the luxury fabric is still handwoven on the islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist and Barra, using yarn produced locally.

Craft in the Creative Industries

Craven Dunnill Jackfield: bespoke ceramic tiles for the interiors market.

The main factory is located on the original site that Craven Dunnill founded in 1872, at the Jackfield Tile Works in Ironbridge, Shropshire. The second factory is situated in Burslem, Stoke, right at the heart of the North Staffordshire 'Potteries'.

LSA International: Contemporary bar and tableware.

Founded in 1960s London, when Janusz Lubkowski and his wife Ewa were inspired to approach Terence Conran at Habitat with traditional brightly coloured enamelware from their native Poland.

Cod Steaks: multi-disciplinary design and construction company specialising in bespoke 3D solutions for film, TV, PR, exhibitions and retail.

From their workshop facilities in Bristol, Cod Steaks handle projects of every scale, from one-off props to full scale theme park and visitor attraction builds.

High House Production Park: building sets and scenery for the Royal Opera House.

Isabel Fletcher works for architecture practice Squire & Partners as their in-house textiles designer.

What is a microbusiness?

Microbusinesses are businesses that turn over less than £81000 a year, which is when you have to start paying VAT on what you make.

Beyond the Creative Industries

Whichford Pottery make flowerpots using hand-throwing and hand-pressed methods, exporting worldwide.

Glass artist Matt Durran has collaborated with researchers at the Royal Free Hospital to create glass moulds for tissue engineering.

BJS apply their experience as silversmiths and electroplaters to biotechnology, medical and counter-terrorism industries.

Bentley Motors' wood workshop use traditional woodwork skills to create luxury car interiors.

Professor Julian Ellis is a technical textiles specialist who uses machine embroidery to engineer automotive components and medical implants.

Running Your Own Business

Although there are opportunities in all kinds of businesses and industries that use craft skills, many makers will opt to run their own business. There are a number of different forms that a business can take but most small businesses start life as one of the following:



Sole Trader:

This is the simplest way of starting a business. You will need to advise the Inland Revenue that you are self-employed for tax and National Insurance contributions; they can provide you with guidance about how to do this. Control of the business will be entirely yours and you will be responsible for all management decisions, but you will also be liable for any debts that you incur.



Partnership:

If you are going to start your business with one or more other people you could form a partnership. In effect, this is the same as a sole trader but with all the partners sharing responsibility for managing the business.



Private Company:

You could set up a private limited company to run your business. You must appoint people to run the company (called 'directors') and register (or 'incorporate') it with Companies House.

The Crafts Council offers a programme of support for craft businesses, ranging from one-to-one advice sessions, online resources and one-off workshops to Hothouse, a six month development programme for emerging makers.

*(as defined by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport)

JOBS IN CRAFT

FASHION

- Pattern Cutter
- Stylist
- Illustrator
- Designer
- Milliner
- Tailor

TEXTILES

- Embroiderer
- Upholsterer
- Basket Maker

PAPER

- Book Binder
- Paper Engineer
- Wallpaper Designer
- Calligrapher
- Paper Maker
- Print Maker

WOOD

- Carpenter
- Automata Maker
- Clock Maker
- Set Designer
- Furniture Designer
- Model Maker
- Boat Builder

METAL

- Gong Maker
- Farrier
- Metalsmith
- Sculptor
- Blacksmith

CROSS DISCIPLINARY

- Prop Maker
- Interior Designer
- Sculptor
- Product Designer
- Photographer

STONE

- Engraver
- Stone Mason
- Stone Setter

JEWELLERY

- Art Jeweller
- Mount Maker
- Designer
- Fashion Jeweller
- Sample Maker
- Caster

GLASS & CERAMICS

- Glass Blower
- Ceramic Designer
- Mosaic Artist
- Glass Engraver
- Mould Maker
- Studio Potter

COMMUNICATIONS

- Journalist
- Publisher
- Editor
- Marketing

INNOVATION

- Materials Scientist
- Makerspace Technician
- Inventor
- Surgeon
- Scientist
- Engineer

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

- Exhibition Designer
- Conservator
- Curator

COMMERCIAL

- Gallerist
- Agent
- Merchandise
- Retailer

EDUCATION

- Teacher
- Lecturer
- Technician
- Researcher

ARTS MANAGEMENT

- Creative Director
- Arts Administrator
- Community Engagement Officer
- Project Manager
- Event Producer
- Fundraiser
- Educator

Artwork by Louise French // www.ohlouise.co.uk



Routes into Craft

We know from talking to lots of craft professionals that there isn't just one route into your career – some courses focus more on practical skills whilst others include more theory.

“Taking a creative subject such as Art and Design or Design and Technology at school will help you to be adventurous in investigating the potential of art, craft and design. These courses provide opportunities to explore a wide range of hands-on designing and making skills, introduce innovative materials and technologies and could offer a pathway to progress further onto creative Further and Higher Education courses and a career in the UK Creative Industries.

Studying Art and Design or Design and Technology can also encourage observation and experimentation for other subjects in school and facilitate better student mental health and wellbeing.”

Gareth Wadkin, Senior Lecturer for BA (Hons) Printed Textiles & Surface Pattern Design, Leeds Arts University

GCSE

Craft skills are taught through Art and Design and Design and Technology GCSE courses. Taking one of these options at GCSE will help you to develop the hands-on skills you will build on at A Level.

A Levels

An A Level in Art and Design or Design and Technology will help you to develop your creative and technical skills. Both are two-year courses assessed through a combination of coursework and exams.

BTEC

BTEC qualifications have a vocational focus and students work on assignments based on real-life scenarios throughout the course. They might also undertake work experience. BTEC is available at Levels 1, 2 and 3, with Level 3 being equivalent to A Level.

T-Levels

This is a new qualification – aimed to be an alternative to A Levels but with a focus on vocational skills. A Craft & Design 'pathway' is being developed as part of the Creative and Design 'route'.

Although we don't know when this will be ready, we know the plan is to combine work placements with core and specialist knowledge sharing.

Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is a paid entry-level job with a training element. Apprentices must work with an employer for at least a year, learning how to do a real job.

Apprenticeships currently have three core elements:

- A National Vocational Qualification
- A Knowledge Based Qualification
- Functional Skills, covering English, Maths and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Art and Design Foundation Diploma

The Art and Design Foundation Diploma is a one-year bridging course that helps students make the transition from secondary education (e.g. BTEC or A Levels) to specialist art and design education.

A Foundation Diploma allows students to explore a range of specialisms before choosing their specialised degree course. These might include drawing, painting, fashion, textiles, installation art, printmaking, graphic illustration, craft and 3D design or fine art.

University

Universities across the UK offer craft-related courses— you can browse the list of courses available on the UCAS website. Depending on your interests, you might want to consider:

- An Art and Design BA, which will enable you to explore a range of art and craft disciplines before specialising in a particular area
For example: Art and Design at University of Leeds
- A 3D Crafts BA, which will also cover a range of disciplines but with a focus on 3D making
For example: 3D Design Crafts at Plymouth College of Art
- A BA in a specialist craft discipline— if you have a passion for a particular material or discipline you might want to choose a specialist craft course.
For example: Artist Blacksmithing at Hereford College of Arts, Fashion Textiles: Embroidery at UAL or Artist, Designer, Maker: Glass and Ceramics at University of Sunderland

Top Tips

- Attending university open days will give you the opportunity to see studio spaces and facilities, as well as asking students about their study experience
- You can also get a good feel for courses by visiting end-of-year exhibitions of student work
- Most creative arts courses will ask to see a portfolio of your work when you apply.

Work Experience in Craft

Work experience and volunteering can be a great way to gain insight into a particular industry, and make new connections. If you're interested in working in a particular discipline you might look for work experience where you can work alongside a maker with skills in that area. You could also look for work experience in different parts of the craft sector by seeking opportunities in galleries, museums or education.

Top Tips!

- Start by exploring the craft organisations and businesses in your area. These might include small and larger craft businesses, makerspaces, studio spaces, universities, galleries and museums. You can use our Craft Map to help you.
- Larger organisations might advertise work experience opportunities on their websites but for smaller ones you might have to make a speculative application. Send a copy of your CV along with an email introducing yourself, explaining what kind of work experience you're looking for and what your key skills are.
- If an organisation or business offers you a work experience placement, set up an initial meeting so that you can discuss expectations, see where you would be working, and get to know each other. Take a parent/guardian or other adult with you to this initial meeting.
- Craft businesses can be very small (sometimes only one person!) so it can be challenging for them to offer work experience. You might have to contact several people before you find someone who is able to help.

"Alongside my studies I was always proactive in seeking opportunities to develop my skills, and I was able to take up Life Drawing Classes after school at a local community centre. When I was 15 I also found a local woodcarver based in Tamworth and spent the next 2 years visiting him once a week to learn sculptural woodcarving. The skills and knowledge he taught me enabled me to see a future career in the making industries."

Sophie Huckfield, Artist and Engineer

Finding a Work Placement with a Maker

Q: What's the best way to make a speculative application to a maker? What should you include in an application email?

- Don't start with 'hi there' and follow with a blanket email/letter with no relevance to the maker's practice. Make it personal and address it to a specific person.
- Demonstrate you've done some research into the maker. Tell them what pieces of theirs you like and why, and why you want to work alongside them.
- Briefly describe what you've studied or are studying, and demonstrate your enthusiasm for it.
- If you supply a CV, make it punchy and not wordy, and try to tailor it to the maker you're contacting.
- Similarly, avoid writing an email that appears as a wall of text. Break it down into paragraphs and be concise — your reader will thank you!

Q: How do you get the most from a work experience placement?

- Enthusiasm, curiosity and paying attention are really infectious and help show you're genuinely interested. I really love it when people make suggestions that contribute to the design and making process— you may have ideas that the maker hasn't thought of and would love to know.
- Suggest something you might like to make during your placement. It can be something you work on in your own time, or in quiet times during the placement.
- Be punctual, attentive and avoid looking at your phone all the time! If you prove yourself useful, you'll go down a storm.

Designer-maker Andy King is founder of King and Webbon, where he and his team create contemporary furniture using a carefully-selected palate of natural hardwoods alongside innovative materials for colour and texture.

Q: What should be agreed at the beginning of a placement?

- Consider what skills you'd like to learn and express this at the beginning. These might be specific techniques or processes, learning how particular machines or tools are used, or developing your design style.
- Communicate how long you envisage undertaking the placement for, and perhaps say if you like it after that, you might be keen to extend it.
- The maker is investing their time and experience in you. The more you learn, the more valuable you become, so if the placement goes well, there's a good chance the maker will want to keep you on if they have the capacity to do so.

Q: What are the benefits of offering work experience to a young maker— for you and for them?

- If a young person is keen to learn, seeing them develop and start to become more autonomous is very rewarding for the maker. The maker can start to undertake more work and increase their output, and will be so thankful you're there.
- The young person will get to see how design and making can work as a business, and have a great time learning in a friendly environment.

Top Tips from Craft Professionals

We asked craft professionals to share their top tips for a stellar career

Seek out an apprenticeship with a crafts person running a successful studio. An apprenticeship will give you the opportunity to experience all aspects of working in craft, the good and the bad, and to discover if it really is the career you want, without making too much of a financial commitment.

Matthew Warner, Ceramicist

Listen to your passions and your strengths. This will keep you motivated in your career. Be aware of the choices that are available to you to develop your craft, do your research and always evaluate what you do and what your next steps are. Learning within a craft career never stops, so always be aware of how you can continue your development. Be an individual, carve your own path and be prepared to be dedicated and self-motivated in your work

Laura Slater, Textile Designer

Working freelance has its own set of challenges and you have to be very organised with regards to invoicing, filing your tax return and budgeting your money to make sure it lasts between irregular payments.

Amber Butchart, Fashion Historian

Be proactive and enthusiastic. Knock on doors and make contact with people you would like to learn from. Seek as much work experience as you can in the area that you would like to explore.

Theresa Nguyen, Artist Silversmith

Find Out More:

Visit www.craftscouncil.org.uk for:

- Careers advice including job profiles and case studies
- Business development support
- Opportunities listings

On Twitter? Follow @CraftsYouth for:

- Craft related entry-level job vacancies
- Apprenticeships and training schemes
- Craft exhibitions and workshops
- Advice and guidance for young people

The account is run by our **Young Craft Citizens** group of 16-25 year olds who are passionate about craft and making.

Here's more great career websites sharing jobs and opportunities:

www.artshub.co.uk

Lists jobs and opportunities across the arts

discovercreative.careers

Profiles of creative career pathways across the sector

creativeaccess.org.uk

Opportunities for people from underrepresented backgrounds

www.artsjobs.org.uk

Arts Council England's jobs and opportunities page



www.craftscouncil.org.uk



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