



**CREATIVE  
GRADUATES  
CREATIVE  
FUTURES**



## Crafting Futures

a study of the early careers of crafts graduates from  
UK higher education institutions

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## Crafting Futures

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*Crafting Futures* is a major study of the early careers of more than 600 graduates in crafts subjects. It forms part of the successful *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* longitudinal research conducted in 2009-2010.

[www.creativegraduates.com](http://www.creativegraduates.com)

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The authors have made use of data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), and acknowledge that HESA cannot accept responsibility for any inferences and conclusions that have been derived from these data.

## Crafts Council

The Crafts Council's goal is to make the UK the best place to make, see, collect and learn about contemporary craft.

We believe that craft plays a dynamic and vigorous role in the UK's social, economic and cultural life.

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to make, see, collect and learn about craft.

We believe that the strength of craft lies in its use of traditional and contemporary techniques, ideas and materials to make extraordinary new work.

We believe that the future of craft lies in nurturing talent; children and young people must be able to learn about craft at school and have access to excellent teaching throughout their education.

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University of the Arts London is Europe's largest university for art, design, fashion, communication and the performing arts. The University was the lead institution for the *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* study of the early careers of creative graduates from 26 UK higher education institutions. The study was also generously supported by CHEAD, the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design.



## Creative Graduates Creative Futures

*Crafting Futures* is based on data from a sub-set of graduates who specifically studied crafts subjects, and were drawn from the wider *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* study which involved graduates from 26 UK Higher Education Partner institutions:

Bath Spa University

University of Bolton

Arts University College at Bournemouth

University for the Creative Arts

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## Executive Summary

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### ***Crafting Futures* research into the early careers of crafts graduates**

*Crafting Futures* explores the early careers of more than 600 graduates in crafts subjects some six years on from graduation. This major study draws on the large body of data from *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* (CGCF) (Ball, Pollard and Stanley, 2010), a longitudinal study of the career patterns of more than 3,500 graduates from UK first degrees in art, design, crafts and media subjects undertaken between 2008 and 2010. It builds on and offers comparisons with an earlier study of crafts graduates' careers: *New Lives in the Making* (Press and Cusworth, 1998) more than a decade ago.

*Crafting Futures* explores the value of a crafts education to the economy through the experiences of crafts graduates as they move from higher education into work, and compares these experiences with those of graduates in the CGCF study. The timing of the research, during the economic downturn, offers unique insights into the impact of recession on their working lives and the strategies they employ to continue to work towards their goals.

### **The importance of the crafts sector**

The crafts sector is part of the wider creative industries, and contributes substantially to the UK economy – £3 billion gross value added (GVA) each year. Employment in contemporary crafts increased by 11 per cent between 1997 and 2006, and for the future further growth is anticipated in contemporary crafts markets. Crafts makers enter the sector from a range of educational backgrounds, many embarking on their careers from a first degree or postgraduate study in arts, crafts and design at UK universities.

Women represent the majority both in undergraduate crafts higher education and in the crafts employment sector, and this is reflected in the make up of the survey sample: 91 per cent of respondents were female.

These highly qualified makers, practitioners, researchers and innovators are grounded in an educational experience that involves learning by doing. They largely operate independently in an ever-changing landscape of micro-businesses and freelance work which characterise the crafts sector. Innovation, high quality, authenticity and aesthetic value are important characteristics of the contemporary crafts output.

Crafts practice combines personal enquiry with crafts knowledge, processes and skills – often tacit in nature – and these are core business assets. Thus crafts making within a theoretical and critical framework (intelligent making) contributes to new processes, products and ideas.

There are concerns about the sustainability of funding for HE crafts-based courses. Yet, higher education is important to the crafts economic sector – providing skilled and motivated entrants and a focus for continued professional development, as well as a focus for practice-based research and innovation – an under-developed career route for crafts graduates.

## Results and discussion

### Crafts graduates value their creative education

- The majority of crafts graduates were positive about their undergraduate experiences and opportunities to pursue personal interests and ideas. Looking back, they recognised the value of learning through project-based enquiry, essentially learning by doing – setting and solving problems, often stemming from personal interests, working directly with materials, gaining an understanding of processes, and learning from mistakes in a shared critical context – ‘intelligent making’.
- Crafts graduates valued opportunities to learn in a real industry environment through placements and from those working in the industry. Other professional opportunities such as Personal and Professional Development (PPD), taking part in shows and exhibitions, peer and self-evaluation were commonly experienced.
- Crafts graduates were committed to their practice, adaptable and optimistic for the future, and carried this forward into their careers. They felt they had developed important skills and attributes through their courses; in particular, creativity, innovation, making/design skills, visual skills, presenting work and ideas.
- Working to deadlines, self-discipline and juggling priorities were felt by graduates to be important professional requirements that were fostered through their studies. Key career survival skills such as: independence, persistence, self-motivation and a strong work ethic, were also felt to be important.
- Some survival skills were felt to be less well developed, in particular understanding client needs, networking, IT and entrepreneurial skills.

### Moving on and breaking in can be challenging

- Finding work after graduating was one of the main challenges facing crafts graduates and only half felt prepared for the world of work on leaving their courses.
- Work experience and contacts established at university were essential career facilitators; and crafts graduates continued to develop and nurture networks as their careers



progressed, and accessed help from their universities mainly in seeking jobs and opportunities.

- Word of mouth was a vital means of getting jobs. Crafts graduates created their own opportunities and these evolved into paid work at a later date – graduates recognised and exploited opportunities that came their way.
- Graduates stayed focused on creative careers and recognised the importance of a professional attitude and self-belief, and to persevere in their job search even if it meant taking on unpaid work or a lesser job to get started.

### **Crafts graduates have complex and diverse careers**

- Most crafts graduates were working in paid permanent employment, and half were engaged in multiple activities or 'portfolio working' at the time of the survey – typically combining several types of employment with self-employment, study or independent creative practice.
- Careers are diverse with two-thirds of crafts graduates in creative occupations and 14 per cent in non-creative roles. A quarter of crafts graduates were teaching in at least one of their work roles, often combined with a creative occupation.
- Teaching is a significant career for crafts graduates, and a positive career choice because it offers the opportunity to stay close to creative practice, and enables individuals to pass on their passion for craft as well as providing a secure and predictable income.
- Self-employment was an important form of working for crafts graduates relative to graduates in general. In their early careers, more than one in three crafts graduates had worked freelance, and at the time of the survey one in five were running a business and/or one in seven were working freelance. This was a serious expectation for the future with double this proportion saying that running a business was likely as their careers progressed.
- At the time of the survey, some four to six years into their careers, unemployment was low at three per cent, although one in three had experienced unemployment since graduating.

### **Crafts graduates are optimistic and strategic in navigating the labour market**

- An important question for the crafts sector is the extent to which it is possible to make a living from crafts practice. One in 12 crafts graduates (eight per cent) stated they were working as full-time makers or creative practitioners, the more common model being to combine practice with other work activities in portfolio careers.
- Crafts graduates have realistic and creative career goals, making purposeful moves, within the crafts sector and beyond, and juggling multiple activities and roles to develop their careers, achieve a stable income and continue making. They are optimistic and strategic in their pursuit of work in a competitive job market. Three-quarters are in or close to achieving their career goals.

- As their careers progressed, some crafts graduates sought job and financial security through employment. However, retaining autonomy and control over their work was also important, and for some self-employment was a way to achieve this.
- Family and friends were a strong source of support and their largely hidden contribution to the growth of the cultural and creative sector deserves wider recognition.

### **Collaboration is key to the success and fulfilment of crafts graduates**

- Career success is measured in terms of creative and personal fulfilment, recognition, life-work balance and progression to more stable careers and income levels.
- The crafts sector is focused predominantly in micro-enterprises and sole trader businesses and this is reflected in our findings. Over half of crafts graduates worked alone and a further one-third in organisations of 10 or fewer workers.
- In spite of the high levels of self-employment, crafts graduates valued working with others, and this may reflect a need to combat the isolation of the lone worker. Crafts graduates are naturally collaborative; they come together to find work, work on multi-disciplinary projects and pool resources. Collaboration crucially provides opportunities to discuss their work with others and seek critical feedback they need to progress.
- There may be a need for greater collaborative activity to be built into crafts courses, as working with students on other courses was less common during undergraduate study for crafts graduates than was found for creative graduates in other disciplines.

### **Crafts graduates are adaptable, resourceful and pragmatic**

- In the economic downturn, crafts graduates were realistic and adaptable in coping with job losses and fall in demand. They were proactive in exploring new markets, maintaining demand for services, and strategic in cutting costs and working for lower rates of pay or professional fees.
- In responding to challenges they were resourceful and pragmatic, keeping their options open and investing in their own development and practice.
- The personal attributes fostered through crafts education – independence, persistence, self-motivation and belief, professional attitude, a strong work ethic and dedication to creative practice – were often key in how graduates responded during the economic downturn.
- Crafts graduates with no parental experience of higher education (proxy for social class) were just as successful in their careers as those whose parents had been to university, indicating that they adopted similar career strategies, whatever their social background.

### **Crafts graduates are lifelong learners**

- Crafts graduates are lifelong learners and are prepared to invest in their own development, and at the time of the survey 38 per cent were engaged in further study or

some form of CPD (Continuing Professional Development), often combined with paid work. Making full use of and improving knowledge and skills are among the most important factors in career decision-making for crafts graduates.

- Almost three-quarters of crafts graduates had undertaken some form of informal or formal study since graduating; mainly to develop further skills and knowledge, enhance job opportunities or to develop their creative practice.
- Postgraduate study was an aspiration for many crafts graduates, and one-third had gone on to study at postgraduate level. Reflecting the importance of teaching as a career choice for crafts graduates, one in six crafts graduates had taken a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). However, for some, postgraduate study was seen as financially unrealistic.
- Short courses were the preferred model for CPD, keeping up to date with new digital technologies and industry software, learning new practice skills, business knowledge and promoting their work – aspects which were felt to be under-developed during undergraduate study. Courses also provided opportunities to network and collaborate with like-minded individuals.
- In the economic downturn, learning continued to be a priority and crafts graduates were prepared to make sacrifices to study alongside work commitments.

### **The working patterns of crafts graduates have remained stable**

- The characteristics of crafts graduates and their careers have remained consistent in the 10 years since *New Lives in the Making*. The crafts sector has grown and looks to continue to grow, but working patterns remain the same. Crafts graduates continue to carve out a space to continue with their practice.
- There have been some changes in the perceptions around crafts courses. The skills and knowledge learned through making are still well regarded by crafts graduates but graduates may now be better able to recognise and appreciate the development they have experienced particularly in creativity and innovation, making, design, technical and visual skills, and in presenting their work and ideas. However graduates continue to feel less well developed in the areas of IT, networking and other client-facing skills.
- There is still a demand to link courses to the real world but crafts graduates now appear to have had a better connection with industry during their studies. A significant group, more than two in five, had formal work placements linked to their courses; and more than four in five crafts graduates had taken part in shows and exhibitions, and had been taught by industry practitioners.
- Crafts-specific careers remain hard to define. This current study shows the diversity and complexity of crafts careers, that the full-time maker accounts for a very small proportion of crafts graduates, and that the sector is still small and fluid.
- Portfolio working, self-employment, unpaid work and part-time work continue to play a significant part in crafts graduates' early careers. However the study also shows that

crafts graduates are strategic about their career moves. They have realistic expectations, stay focused on their career goals and may choose to work in non-creative sectors to use their skills and knowledge in wider ways, and/or to achieve a stable income whilst continuing in creative practice. They are largely satisfied with their working situation and are in or close to achieving their career goals.

- Key career survival skills of persistence and ingenuity remain the same, although now they are perhaps coupled with adaptability and realism. Crafts graduates recognise the challenges in finding work but the study highlights the persistent nature of crafts graduates in their pursuit of creative practice, work satisfaction and focus on new learning and achieving a work-life balance.
- In contrast with *New Lives in the Making*, graduates appear to be at ease with using new technology, though they would have preferred more experience of IT on their courses. After graduation they are keen to update these skills on a regular basis.

### There are some differences between crafts disciplines

- Two distinct groups of crafts disciplines were examined in the study: Textiles (printed, constructed and textiles design); and Other Applied Arts and Crafts which included ceramics, metalwork, jewellery, glass and bookbinding, 3-D design and other applied arts (conservation, multi-media, plastics).
- Very few Textiles graduates were male, and those who studied Other Applied Arts and Crafts tended to be older and were more likely to be dyslexic than Textiles graduates.
- Textiles graduates were more likely to experience permanent employment than Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates who were in turn more likely to be freelance, self-employed, portfolio workers, or to have engaged in independent study and develop their creative practice.
- Textiles graduates were more likely to study at postgraduate level or take a PGCE, whereas Other Applied Arts and Crafts were more likely to undertake a short course.

### Crafts graduates are different to creative graduates as a whole

- There were also some differences in the nature of undergraduate experiences of crafts graduates. Crafts graduates have a distinctly different profile to creative graduates as a whole. They are considerably more likely to be female, from the UK and white; and so are less diverse in some respects than creative graduates overall.
- Crafts graduates valued making and technical skills in particular, and felt they were very important to their careers. This preference sets them apart from creative graduates as a whole. Crafts graduates appeared to have greater opportunities to learn through shows and exhibitions, field trips, competitions and business or enterprise activities than graduates in other creative disciplines.
- Focusing on career experiences, crafts graduates were more likely to be in permanent paid work than creative graduates as a whole, and slightly less likely to be working in the

creative sector or in creative roles, or in an area related to their degree. Although equally likely to run their own business as graduates of other disciplines, crafts graduates were relatively less likely to report freelance work. These patterns are likely to be driven by the stronger desire for a stable/regular source of income among crafts graduates and the higher proportions entering teaching.

- This greater propensity to enter teaching as a career is reflected in the proportions engaging in further study: crafts graduates were more likely to engage in formal study than creative graduates as a whole – particularly PGCE courses.

## Looking to the future - implications and conclusions

There is more complexity in the interaction between graduates, the crafts sector and wider 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 crafts 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.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) provide an environment that fosters ‘intelligent making’ and encourages important employability skills and key career survival skills. A distinctive characteristic of the crafts curriculum involves the interaction between creative ideas, materials and processes, personal direction and high-level intellectual skills within a theoretical and cultural context.

Looking forward, it is critical that all stakeholders recognise the importance of the following factors and issues and their role in supporting or inhibiting the success of crafts careers and growth in the crafts sector:

- The sector is largely made up of women, and they account for 91 per cent in the sample for the study. It is worth noting that more than half the respondents anticipated some form of caring or parental responsibilities over the next few years.
- Fifty-three per cent of graduates were the first generation in their families to go to university (proxy for socio-economic class). Yet, these graduates appeared to be just as successful and satisfied in their careers as those from more privileged backgrounds.
- Thirty-nine per cent of graduates had worked unpaid since graduating, and working on a voluntary basis, or in an unpaid internship post-graduation is becoming increasingly common for graduates across all subjects. The role of parents and families in supporting crafts individuals financially at the start of their careers is a largely hidden contribution to the growth of the cultural and creative sector.
- The relatively low levels of pay and acceptance of unpaid work as a way to maintain creative practice and establish oneself in the creative industries mean significant hardship in early careers.

- For this reason apprenticeships, paid internships, grants, loans and residencies – small amounts of funding would have a positive impact on graduates, their markets and their creative ventures in their early careers is something to be explored.
- Half the respondents felt unprepared for the world of work on graduation. There is work to be done to prepare graduates for the likelihood that they will be self-employed and for the reality of crafts and other creative careers, with appropriate support for progression into work and continuing professional development into their careers.
- The potential for crafts graduates to apply their creative skills in non-creative jobs or sectors is largely untapped, as the focus for their careers is on staying close to their practice. Further exploration of the nature of creativity, the transfer of crafts-making thinking and processes, and the experiences of crafts graduates in non-creative roles would be beneficial and open up new opportunities and aspirations.
- Networking and collaboration are important career facilitators for crafts graduates. There needs to be greater emphasis on these interactions and collaborative learning opportunities within undergraduate courses.
- The formalising of opportunities for collaborations and networking by stakeholders in HE and beyond, both pre and post-graduation, might include commissioning and funding multi-disciplinary projects and would stimulate work and new opportunities.
- Crafts higher education plays a significant role in the education and professional development of practitioners, and provision of a coherent approach to professional development – progression for skills development, research and innovation – is central to sustainability.
- There are concerns about resourcing and HE funding for crafts-based courses, in which students learn by doing, working hands-on with materials and developing highly skilled technical processes within a critical context in a studio and workshop environment. In times of constraints on HE funding, these courses may be under threat at all levels of education.
- In their early careers very few graduates aspire to research careers in higher education, and although this may become an aspiration as graduates mature, there is a need to build further capacity 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.
- Lack of funding for postgraduate study is a serious barrier to academic careers. For the future health of research, it will be important to establish and maintain the foundations of practice-based enquiry at undergraduate level and signal postgraduate research as a serious career route and longer-term aspiration.
- Crafts graduates are ambassadors for the crafts – they have a strong desire to pass on their passion for crafts and making to others either through the objects, ideas and responses communicated through crafts practice, or by inspiring and teaching others.

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## Key Findings

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- Three out of five crafts graduates had worked in the creative industries and in their field of expertise since graduating. At the time of the survey 9 out of 10 crafts graduates were in paid work, the majority in creative jobs and in or close to achieving their career goals.
- Portfolio careers are well established, with 50 per cent of crafts graduates in multiple jobs at the time of the survey, typically combining employment with self-employment, study or developing their creative practice.
- The remaining 50 per cent were in one main job or work activity at the time of the survey. The majority (72 per cent) of these graduates were in a permanent salaried job and the predominant mode of working was full-time (85 per cent).
- Unemployment was low at three per cent and seven per cent were working unpaid at the time of the survey. Unpaid work was a common strategy for job-seeking or learning new skills, particularly in the very early stages of a career, with 39 per cent undertaking some voluntary experience since graduating.
- Thirty-seven per cent of crafts graduates had worked freelance since graduating and at the time of the survey 15 per cent were still doing so. Twenty-six per cent had started a business during their early careers and 19 per cent currently had their own business.
- Seventy-four per cent of working crafts 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.
- Teaching represents a significant career choice for crafts graduates: 41 per cent of crafts graduates had experience of teaching in their early careers and 25 per cent were teaching at the time of the survey.
- Crafts practice – learning by doing – through project-based enquiry in a critical context is the dominant pedagogic model on undergraduate courses. ‘Intelligent making’ provides students and graduates with vital transferable and cognitive skills to equip them for multi-track careers and portfolio working. Crafts graduates particularly valued making and technical skills and this preference sets them apart from graduates from other creative courses in art, design and media.

- Crafts graduates had developed many of the skills required for their careers on their undergraduate courses, rating most highly creativity and innovation, visual skills and presenting their work and ideas. They felt they had less well-developed IT, networking and client-facing skills.
- Crafts graduates were lifelong learners with 74 per cent undertaking further study of some kind since graduating, often returning to higher education (HE) to study at a higher level. Higher proportions of crafts graduates entered formal study, teacher training and short courses than graduates in other creative subjects.
- Crafts 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, the pursuit of creative practice and achieving a stable or regular source of income.



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# 1 Introduction

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*Crafting Futures* is a major study of the early careers of graduates in crafts subjects from UK universities and colleges. Funded and commissioned by the Crafts Council in 2009, the study draws on the large body of data resulting from the *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* (CGCF) (Ball, Pollard and Stanley, 2010) longitudinal study of the career patterns of more than 3,500 graduates from UK courses in art, design, crafts and media subjects.

*Crafting Futures* draws on a sample of more than 600 respondents to CGCF, specifically from crafts disciplines, and explores the dataset to provide more detailed information about crafts graduates' post-graduation experiences and outcomes and specific evidence to inform priorities for the crafts sector. The quantitative data for this sub-sample of 600 crafts graduates is supplemented by findings from the qualitative element of CGCF: an email survey in autumn 2009 and depth interviews in spring 2010 which form the basis of the career stories.

This study is timely, as there is growing recognition of the role of crafts in the creative industries and of making in creative education. The sector has continued to grow, in spite of the economic downturn, and is considered to be well placed to maintain its position. A fluid contract economy predominates, resulting in an ever-changing landscape of micro-businesses and freelance workers who adapt and develop to meet client needs. Crafts workers and practitioners make a unique contribution to the creative sector, and many have benefited from an undergraduate education in crafts and design.

Innovation, high quality, authenticity and aesthetic value are important characteristics of the crafts output:

*'Combining employment satisfaction and vocational stability with artistic enquiry and business risk, craft practitioners provide an illustrative model of the new creative entrepreneurs of the 21st century.'*

McAuley and Fillis (2004)

In the case of crafts practice, research and development (R&D) combines crafts knowledge, processes and skills and these need to be recognised as core business assets. Research and development through crafts making within a theoretical and critical framework contributes to new processes, products and innovation that underpin many creative ventures and are core to business success.

Appropriate professional development and business support is required to increase sector capacity, taking account of crafts processes and the specific characteristics of crafts workers who typically sustain a living by combining income streams as portfolio workers, with the development of creative practice at the core of their career and life values.

*Crafting Futures* seeks to inform this agenda by exploring the diversity of work and employment undertaken by 644 crafts graduates and their career progression up to six years after qualifying from their first degrees. The study investigates:

- the diversity of careers entered
- models for crafts practice, portfolio careers and modes of working
- engagement with continuing professional development (CPD) and its impact on careers
- the perceived benefits of crafts higher education in the broader context of crafts graduates' contribution to the economy and to society as a whole.

## 1.1 Contribution of the crafts

The crafts sector contributes substantially to the UK economy – £3 billion gross value added (GVA) each year, which is greater than in visual arts, cultural heritage or literature, and there are estimated to be at least 88,250 practitioners working in the crafts sector across the UK. Crafts employment has increased by 11 per cent between 1997 and 2006, one of the highest growth rates of the creative industries. It is anticipated that there is potential for growth in the contemporary crafts markets (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2006).

Crafts activity is focused predominantly in micro-enterprises and sole trader business (75 per cent of businesses employ fewer than five people). One-fifth of those working in crafts work part-time, and more than one-third work freelance. Women predominate in the sector and are also associated with low pay levels. Diversity is a key issue, with 94 per cent of the sector workforce estimated to be from a white ethnic background<sup>1</sup> and largely female.

Crafts higher education plays a significant role in the education and professional development of practitioners entering the sector, and provision of a coherent approach to professional development – progression for skills development, research and innovation – is central to the Crafts Council mission. The *Crafting Futures* study provides evidence of the benefits of a crafts education for the individual – whatever sphere of work they enter – and some insights into their wider contribution to the economy and to society.

*'Innovation is at the heart of craft practice. A practitioner's capacity for innovation is as vital to his or her business as the intellectual property (objects, technical processes and creative vision) generated. It is the individual's ability to diversify and develop new work that secures their competitiveness in the marketplace ....'*

Creative and Cultural Skills (2009a)

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<sup>1</sup> Source of data: Creative and Cultural Skills (2009a); Creative and Cultural Skills (2009b); Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2006).

## 1.2 Sustainability of the crafts

The Crafts Council is concerned that both traditional and contemporary crafts are preserved and their contribution to both the economy and personal fulfilment recognised. Skills and skilled workers in this sector may be lost, if the foundations for and satisfactions of learning through making are not laid at the earliest stages of our children's education, thus inspiring and producing the next generation of crafts practitioners.

## 1.3 'Creative Graduates Creative Futures'

CGCF was undertaken between 2008 and 2010, and involved more than 26,000 first degree and foundation degree UK and international graduates from 26 higher education institutions up to six years after graduation<sup>1</sup>. The study is the result of a funding partnership of 26 UK higher education institutions and the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD). Based at and led by University of the Arts London, the project involves staff at the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) who undertook the research activity.

CGCF achieved 3,500 usable questionnaires from an on-line and postal census survey, giving a 14 per cent response rate. Respondents were approached again one year on from the first survey in the qualitative stage of the research. This involved a follow-up email questionnaire, resulting in more than 400 responses (a response rate of 23 per cent); and a series of case study interviews to gather career narratives and explore the transition experiences of graduates in more depth.

The findings of the census survey, published in January 2010, provide insights into both the value of a creative education and the career progression of those working in the creative and cultural sector of the economy. Creative graduates were broadly satisfied in their working lives, and placed a high value on their higher education experiences. At the same time they provided important critical feedback on aspects of their courses.

The study reveals resourceful and entrepreneurial behaviour in the face of the complexities and challenges presented in finding work and earning a living by creative endeavour. There were high levels of self-employment and engagement in work of a creative nature, with many sustaining a living in portfolio careers. For creative graduates, a set of distinctive characteristics has emerged. There is evidence of lifelong learning in which graduates combine self-development and career building through work, creating opportunities, further learning and study.

## 1.4 'New Lives in the Making'

*Crafting Futures* identifies key changes in the crafts sector over the past decade by drawing direct comparisons with an earlier study. In 1998, a study of 216 crafts graduates from UK

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<sup>1</sup> A list of participating institutions can be seen at the beginning of the report. The analysis presented in this report focuses only on graduates from crafts disciplines and therefore some of these institutions may not be represented.

higher education institutions (Press and Cusworth, 1998, *New Lives in the Making*) set out to assess the value of craft education in terms of the radical changes in work, economy and living anticipated leading into the 21st century. The study examined graduates' perceptions of the capabilities and skills that they developed on their courses, their preparation for work, their early career experiences and progression some years after graduation, and how they used their competencies in their working lives.

The findings showed that the skills and knowledge learned through 'making' were very highly regarded aspects of crafts courses, but graduates did not always recognise that a crafts education provides vital transferable and cognitive skills: creativity, communication, problem solving, working independently:

*'Intelligent making would appear to further many of the key requirements of the 'information age mind set' - flexibility through reflection-in-action, the exercise of judgment, creative problem solving, graphicacy and, of course, the 3Rs. For many individuals, craft education may well be the most appropriate vehicle for developing these.'*

Press and Cusworth (1998), p.6

However, in this report there were concerns that crafts courses were disconnected with the real world – with a lack of career guidance, work placements and business awareness. The study also identified a need for investment in bringing technology and IT skills into the crafts curriculum and exploring its relevance to making.

Students were often encouraged to hold unrealistic expectations about the careers they will be qualified to pursue. Crafts-specific careers were hard to define and entry required persistence and ingenuity in finding ways to continue with creative crafts practice. Other inhibiting factors were the impact of debt and high costs of making.

The project-based approach to learning in crafts, involving the management of time and multi-tasking, was found to equip people with the confidence and skills to develop multi-track portfolio working. Around half the respondents were involved in portfolio careers, in which they combined employment, self-employment and development activities. Self-employment featured strongly, mainly as a part-time activity, with 45 per cent having been involved in full-time self-employment since graduating, and at the time of the survey 39 per cent were self-employed; one-fifth were in full-time self-employment related to art and design.

Voluntary work was significant to career development, mostly related to developing craft skills. Part-time working was a key feature, with only 12 per cent of respondents working and sustaining a living as full-time makers. All of these findings indicated a fragmented and fluid work sector leading to concerns about sustainability. These concerns are still current today.

Yet, in *New Lives in the Making*, crafts graduates experienced high levels of career satisfaction, with 64 per cent of recent employment in art/design related work and this increased over time as their careers progressed. Graduates believed their education was relevant to modern society, *'appreciating and being able to produce the 'handmade' in an increasingly digital age.'*

Working patterns in the present study show remarkable similarities with the findings in *New Lives in the Making* and with the overarching CGCF study, and indicate the persistent nature of crafts graduates in their pursuit of creative practice, work satisfaction, focus on new learning and achieving a life-work balance.

*Crafting Futures* explores the extent to which crafts careers have changed over time, and provides an updated picture of working patterns in the crafts sector. It allows us to explore pluralistic models for making a living through crafts making and graduates' experiences in related careers and other work sectors. The findings help to build a differentiated picture for crafts education and crafts careers, and identify the continuing professional development needs of crafts practitioners in the context of their future aspirations.

## 1.5 Methodology

*Crafting Futures* involves:

- quantitative analysis of crafts graduates' responses to the CGCF survey of early career patterns (undertaken in 2008, see section 1.3 above)
- qualitative analysis of responses to a follow-up email survey gathering more detailed and personal accounts of working lives (undertaken in 2009)
- case study interviews to provide narratives of how graduates navigate their way through the challenges and complexities of work (undertaken in 2010).

### Quantitative analysis

The CGCF survey was sent to all eligible graduates and as such was a census survey. This took place between September and December 2008. The survey covered: experiences of HE and its perceived value to explore preparation for the labour market and impact on careers; activities since graduating to explore the range of activities undertaken and experience of creative work; current employment and wider work-related activities to explore the kinds of work graduates do; further study, education and training to understand the extent and nature of continuing professional development; and career goals and motivations to understand aspirations and drivers<sup>1</sup>.

A total sample of 644 graduates was drawn from all respondents to the CGCF survey in order to make up the sample population for *Crafting Futures* – this sub-sample represents 19 per cent of the overall eligible responses. Graduates in the *Crafting Futures* sample were selected on the basis of their subjects of study. The subjects selected are detailed in the Appendix, but in the main they were from the disciplines of: Applied Arts, Textiles Design and some were from 3-D Design (see Appendix A: Crafts graduates' degree titles). The profile of the crafts sample and its representativeness is outlined in Chapter 2.

Quantitative analysis of survey data for these 644 graduates was undertaken to explore issues for crafts graduates in their experience of HE and their subsequent careers and to explore issues of priority for the crafts sector. Findings from this analysis are presented in Chapters 3 to 6.

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the questionnaire used in the survey can be seen in Appendix D.

## Qualitative follow-up

An email follow-up survey was designed to provide additional qualitative information about HE experiences and career journeys and to explore themes emerging from the main survey. In September and October 2009 emails were sent to all graduates who were willing to be contacted again, this asked graduates to respond to a small number of questions in a narrative form. The questions covered: graduates' current work situation; the transition from HE into work (what they had been doing since graduation, how they found work and the choices they made); career facilitators and barriers; aspects of their HE experience that had been valuable to their careers and feedback on their courses; ways they might have collaborated or networked with others; and next steps and ideas for further development.

Eighty-one crafts graduates responded to the email follow-up survey and 26 of these were chosen for detailed qualitative analysis. Care was taken to ensure that this group included: both men and women, a range of ages, a range of degree outcomes, and a range of subjects of study including textiles, ceramics, 3-D design/furniture design, gold/silversmithing and jewellery and conservation. Also to ensure that there was representation of minority groups – five had dyslexia and two were from a black and minority ethnic background. Findings from this analysis are presented in Chapter 7: A Richer Picture of Career Experiences.

Depth telephone interviews with 16 crafts graduates drawn from the respondents to the main survey provided an holistic picture of the individual, their experiences, values and career stories. These included crafts makers and crafts practitioners working in other fields (related and unrelated). The discussions explored feedback on their educational experience, finding work after graduating, how their careers evolved, and how they feel about their experiences and their plans for the future. Findings from these narratives are also presented in Chapter 7 and a selection of these case studies have been edited and are included in Chapter 8: Career Stories.

## 1.6 Outcomes

This report provides a sector-specific profile of the findings for crafts and related subject groups (referred to collectively as 'crafts graduates') and, where relevant, compares findings with the total CGCF responding population (referred to collectively as 'creative graduates'). A set of core tables (Appendix B) provides a data set for further analysis and from which charts and tables are drawn in this report. Data throughout this report is presented for all crafts graduates and in most cases this is also broken down into two key disciplines within crafts: Textiles; and Other Applied Arts and Crafts. In some cases comparison is also made between all crafts graduates and all creative graduates taking part in the CGCF survey. Findings for the whole CGCF cohort are presented in square brackets.

The main CGCF reports for Stage 1 (the quantitative survey) and Stage 2 (the qualitative follow-up) provide extensive analysis and commentary on the research findings, and are an important core source of interpretation for the crafts-specific results.

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## 2 Survey Sample Profile

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### Summary

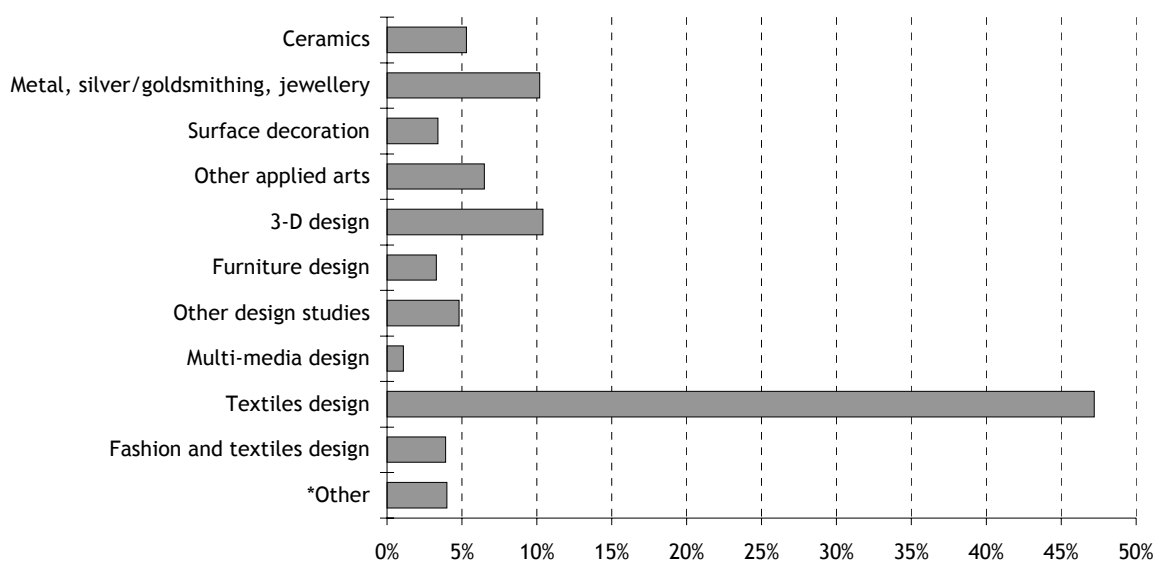
- A sample of 644 graduates from UK crafts first degree courses was drawn from the 3,500 respondents to the *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* census questionnaire survey, representing 19 per cent of the respondents to that study.
- The profile of the crafts sample corresponded to graduates in contemporary crafts disciplines. Almost half were from textiles courses, and the remainder were from applied arts, crafts and 3-D design materials based courses, including silver/goldsmithing, jewellery, ceramics, glass and plastics.
- Crafts courses are popular with women and 91 per cent of the sample was female - reflecting the profile of the student body and broadly reflecting the profile of the crafts employment sector.
- Crafts respondents were predominantly of UK domicile, with a good spread of age groups and representation across each of the cohorts: 2002, 2003 and 2004.
- More than half the crafts respondents were the first generation in their families to go to university (a proxy for socio-economic group), but only a small minority came from black and ethnic minority groups, and 12 per cent were dyslexic.
- Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates tended to have an older age profile and were more likely than Textiles graduates to be dyslexic at 15 per cent.

### 2.1 The sample

Six hundred and forty-four graduates were selected from eligible respondents to the main *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* survey in the autumn of 2008, representing 18.6 per cent of the final sample of 3,455 (see Appendix A for degree titles of the eligible crafts selected subgroup). Individuals were selected on the basis of their main and also secondary subject studied – if they had a crafts-related secondary subject, they were included (see Appendix Tables B1 and B2). Ninety-two per cent of graduates had studied crafts as a main subject and seven per cent as a secondary subject (See Appendix Tables B3 and B4).

## 2.2 Subject profile

Figure 2.1: Sample profile - discipline of primary subject of study



Note: \*Other includes all subjects less than 1% eg: Fine art; Other fine art; Media production and photography; Other creative arts/writing/journalism/literature; Glass and plastics; Bookbinding/paper; Other conservation; Graphic design, visual communication and typography; Multi-media design

Base: All craft graduates, N=644

Source: *Crafting Futures*, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B4

The contemporary crafts sector has large numbers of textiles practitioners, and in our survey, textiles design graduates formed a substantial group representing almost half the crafts respondents (304 or 47 per cent). This group included graduates in printed, constructed and textiles design as a main subject. Other subjects and disciplines making up the crafts graduates cohort are shown in Figure 2.1.

The dominance of textile-based courses needs to be borne in mind when interpreting the results, and for this reason, we have presented data separately for Textiles graduates in tables and selected charts for this sizeable group. It is therefore possible to compare the experiences of Textiles graduates with those in all Other Applied Arts and Crafts subjects. Combined data for all graduates taking part in the *Crafting Futures* study is also presented (labelled as all crafts graduates).

## 2.3 Background characteristics

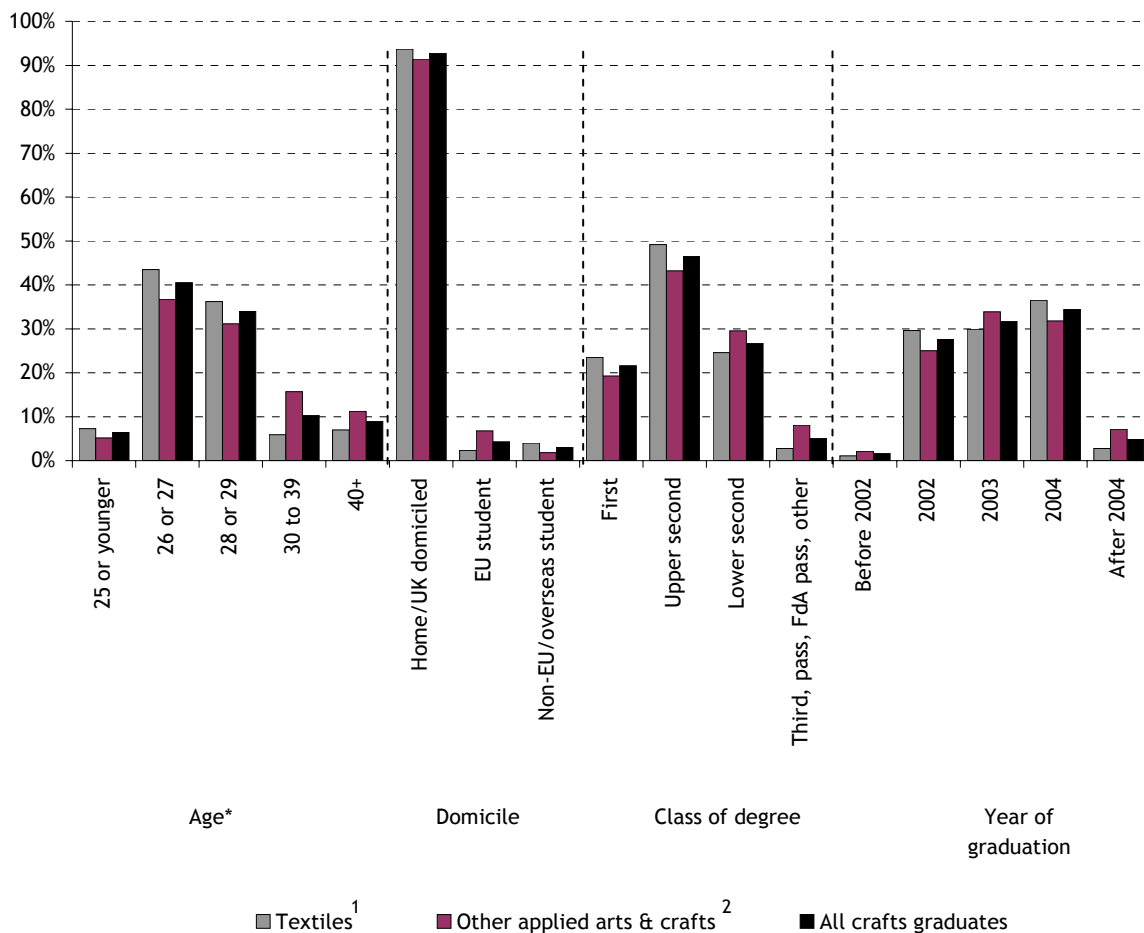
The sample of crafts graduates was made up of 91 per cent women and nine per cent men [73 per cent women and 27 per cent men]<sup>1</sup>. Ninety-three per cent [86 per cent] were UK

<sup>1</sup> Data from CGCF for creative graduates as a whole is provided [in square brackets] for comparison.



domiciled, four per cent from the wider [eight per cent] EU and three per cent [six per cent] were other international students. In terms of other characteristics, there was a good spread of graduates by age, seven per cent [11 per cent] came from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, and 47 per cent [46 per cent] were from backgrounds where parents had been to university (a proxy for social class). Three per cent [three per cent] were disabled (with a disability other than dyslexia) and a further 12 per cent [10 per cent] were dyslexic. There was a fairly even spread of graduates in terms of year of graduation, approximately one-third, in each of the cohorts: 2002, 2003 and 2004.

**Figure 2.2: Sample profile - age, domicile, degree class and year of graduation**



<sup>1</sup> including printed, constructed and textile design

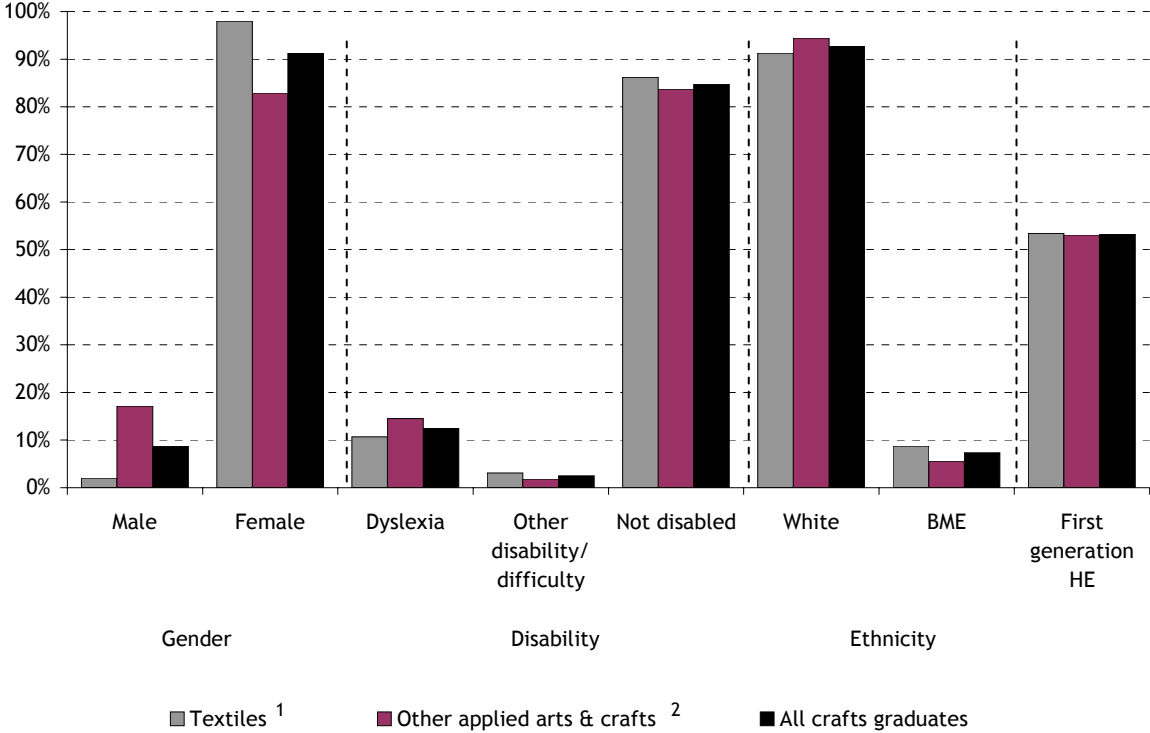
<sup>2</sup> all other applied arts, crafts, and craft-based 3-D design

\* age at last birthday, measured during September 2008

Base: All crafts graduates, N=644

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Tables B1 and B2*

**Figure 2.3: Sample profile - gender, disability, ethnicity and first generation HE**



<sup>1</sup> including printed, constructed and textile design  
<sup>2</sup> all other applied arts, crafts, and craft-based 3-D design

Base: All crafts graduates, N=644

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B1*

Crafts graduates have a distinctly different profile to creative graduates in the main study (CGCF). They are considerably more likely to be female, from the UK and white – they are therefore less diverse in some respects. It is also interesting to note differences between the two key groups within our sample of crafts graduates – Textiles graduates and graduates from Other Applied Arts and Crafts subjects. Those who studied Other Applied Arts and Crafts tend to be slightly older and more likely to be dyslexic than Textiles graduates or indeed creative graduates as a whole; and very few Textiles graduates were male (only two per cent).

### 2.4 Representativeness

To ensure the robustness of the data, we collected information from CGCF graduates about their backgrounds and study characteristics to understand their profile and distribution. This enabled us to compare with the key characteristics of graduates provided by our Partner Institutions, and to explore the impact of background and study characteristics on experiences and outcomes. We compared key characteristics of our 2003 group of CGCF respondents with those of the survey population (ie the whole group of graduates surveyed) using data supplied by the partner institutions; and with creative graduates as a whole using

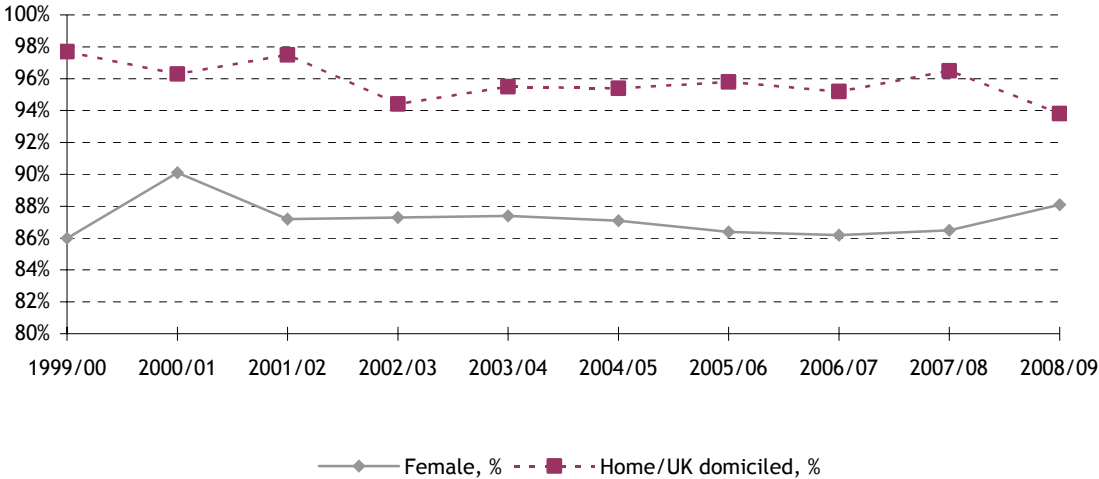
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. The profiles broadly corresponded indicating that our survey respondents were representative of creative graduates.

**Crafts graduates**

Using HESA student data for the JACS<sup>1</sup> defined subject groups of Applied Arts and Crafts and 3-D Design we can also get a broad idea of the representativeness of our *Crafting Futures* respondents, by gender and domicile<sup>2</sup>. HESA data for the years from 2002 to 2004 indicates the preponderance of female students in crafts subjects: 86 to 88 per cent of ‘crafts’ undergraduates were female; and the very high proportions of UK domiciled graduates: between 94 and 98 per cent were home students (see Figure 2.4 and Appendix Table B1a).

This indicates that the profile of *Crafting Futures* graduates is broadly in line with the profile of ‘crafts’ undergraduate participation in the UK.

**Figure 2.4: ‘Crafts’ undergraduates at UK HEIs - percentage UK and Female**



Base: Students in Higher Education Institutions, Table 2a (1999/2000 to 2008/09)

Source: *Crafting Futures*, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B1a

<sup>1</sup> Joint Academic Coding System

<sup>2</sup> HESA student data is not directly comparable, in that it shows undergraduate students in all years at all HEIs in the UK whereas our *Crafting Futures* sample is made up of graduates (ie finalists) from a sub-set of participating HEIs. It does however give a broad indication of the likely representativeness of our sample. Unfortunately, this comparison can only be made for the ‘Other Applied Arts and Crafts’ group because HESA data is not published at a detailed enough subject level to be able to compare the profile for Textiles students/graduates as they are normally subsumed within the ‘Design studies’ category in JACS codes.

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## 3 The Creative Curriculum and Work Experience

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### Summary

- The majority of crafts graduates were positive about their undergraduate experiences.
- They were most satisfied with skills developed in: creativity and innovation, making/technical/design skills, visual skills and presenting their work and ideas - all of which were considered to be very important career skills.
- Making and technical skills were more important to crafts graduates than for graduates in other creative disciplines, with 89 per cent feeling these were fairly or very well developed on their courses, compared with 76 per cent for all creative graduates.
- Other critical skills in the development of careers were self-confidence, self-management and flexibility/adaptability. Understanding client needs, networking, IT and entrepreneurial skills were the least well developed, yet were important to career development.
- The vast majority of crafts graduates had participated in shows or exhibitions, peer and self-evaluation, contextual/critical studies, field trips and study visits and teaching by practitioners on their courses.
- More than three out of four graduates had worked in a team and participated in Personal and Professional Development (PPD) on their courses. Very few experienced international exchanges or volunteering.
- Personal and Professional Development (PPD), team working, peer and self-evaluation and teaching by practitioners were considered to be particularly useful to career development.
- Two in five (43 per cent) crafts graduates had taken part in work placements during their courses, half doing so as part of their course. The majority had found these placements useful to their career development.
- Two out of three crafts graduates had worked during term-time and/or in vacations.
- After graduation, half of crafts graduates had accessed job information from higher education institutions, and one-third had taken up CPD and networking opportunities.
- Respondents were less inclined to access careers advice, studio facilities or business start-up support.
- Crafts graduates were equally divided as to how well their courses had prepared them for the world of work: 50 per cent felt well prepared, whereas 34 per cent felt not very well prepared and 16 per cent not at all well prepared for work.

### 3.1 Intelligent making

The CGCF study, like its predecessor *New Lives in the Making* (Press and Cusworth, 1998) asserted that many of the skills and attributes required for working in creative employment, such as 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. In their study, Press and Cusworth (1998) developed a model to illustrate the characteristics of a crafts education – involving the interaction between creative ideas, materials and processes, personal direction and high-level intellectual skills within a theoretical and cultural context.

*‘a model of intelligent making - that is reflective, integrative and interactive. It utilises a range of skills - technical/manipulative, theoretical, creative, judgmental and analytical ... intelligent making applies and creates different forms of knowledge, both tacit and prepositional.’*

Press and Cusworth (1998), p.6

Evidence for recognition and articulation of ‘intelligent making’ and its transfer is explored throughout this report, and particularly through the qualitative elements of the research (see Chapter 7):

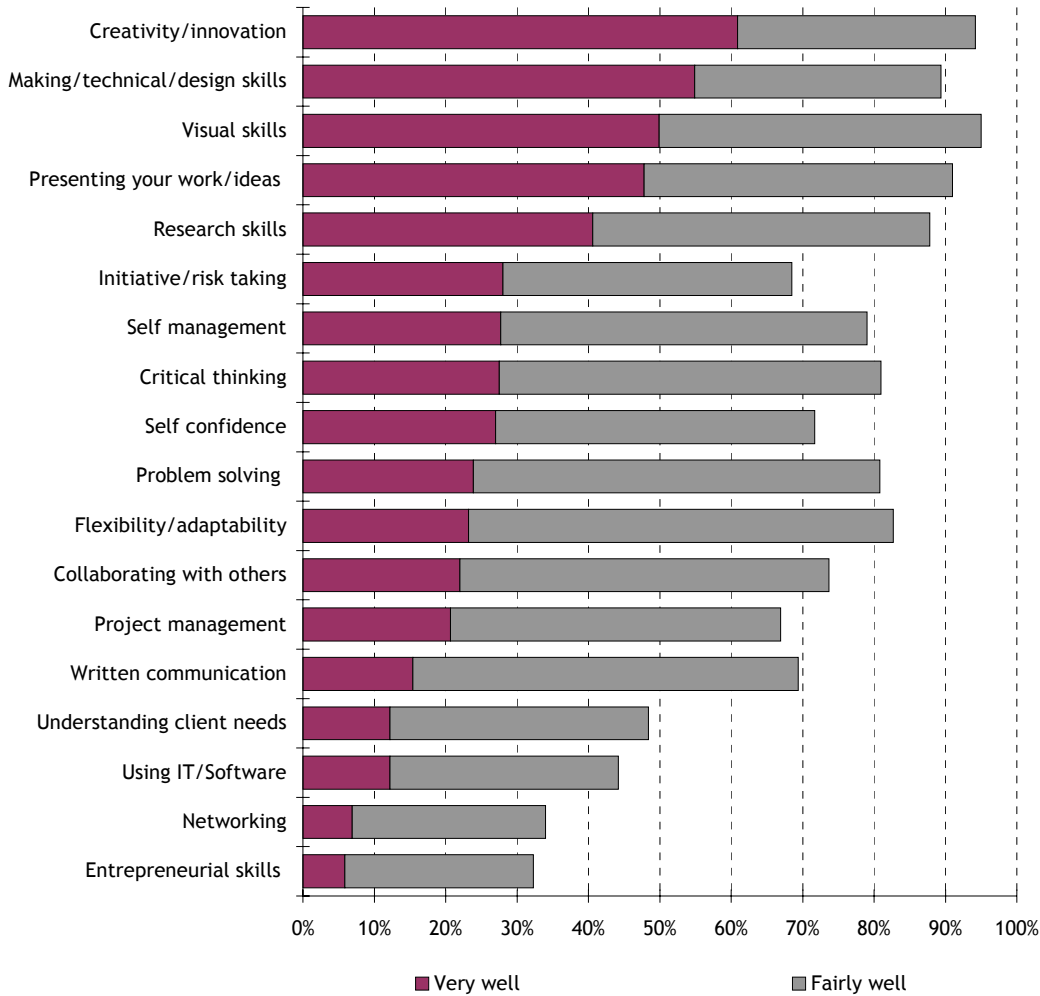
### 3.2 Skill development and satisfaction

*Crafting Futures* found high levels of satisfaction amongst crafts graduates in relation to the level of skill development and the value they placed on their courses.

Figure 3.1 illustrates that overall most crafts graduates were very or fairly well satisfied with the level of skills development they had achieved on their courses, particularly with: visual skills (95 per cent) [90 per cent], creativity and innovation (94 per cent) [92 per cent], skills in presentation of work and ideas (91 per cent) [89 per cent] and making and technical skills (89 per cent) [76 per cent] – all core to the crafts curriculum.

In particular, crafts graduates valued making and technical skills, and this preference appears to set them apart from creative graduates as a whole: 89 per cent of crafts graduates felt they had very or fairly well-developed making and technical skills compared to 76 per cent for all creative graduates.

**Figure 3.1: Extent of skills development on course**



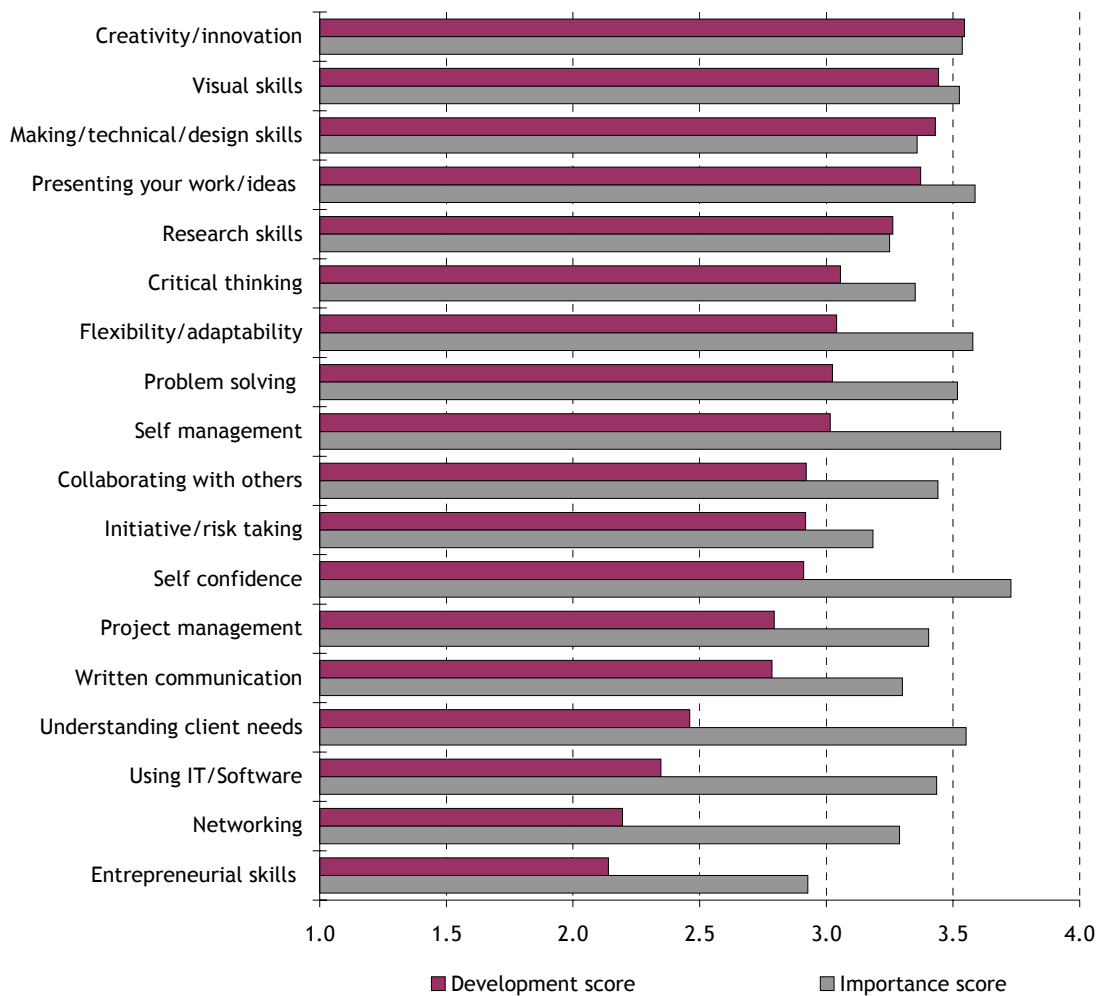
Base: Crafts graduates from undergraduate courses

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B5*

However, under half of crafts graduates felt satisfied with the development of skills in understanding client needs (48 per cent) [47 per cent], using IT/software (44 per cent) [47 per cent], networking (34 per cent) [38 per cent], or entrepreneurial skills (32 per cent [33 per cent]; see Figure 3.1).

Most skills listed were felt to be important to their careers with more than 80 per cent of graduates rating them as very or fairly important, with the exception of entrepreneurial skills, at 66 per cent [66 per cent]. CGCF discusses this anomaly, and observes that many of the other skills listed and valued by graduates are entrepreneurial in nature: for example, initiative, risk-taking, problem solving, flexibility/adaptability, and creativity/innovation.

**Figure 3.2: Skill development during undergraduate studies compared with importance to career development (ranked by development mean score)**



Base: Crafts graduates from undergraduate courses

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010*

There would appear to be a degree of under-development in some skill areas in relation to the importance of these skills to craft graduates' careers, particularly in the four less well-developed areas noted above. However, this is not a distinctive feature of a crafts education as a similar mismatch was found in these skills amongst all creative graduates.

These results together with respondents' comments suggest that crafts graduates valued their crafts education but would have liked a better appreciation of what creative employment would be like, improved understanding of client needs, training in IT/software and in business skills and the practicalities of working freelance.

### 3.3 Course activities and usefulness

Opportunities to apply creativity in different settings naturally occur within courses as students engage with a variety of project work, industry-linked initiatives, placements, collaborations, exhibitions and competitions. Critical engagement is facilitated by regular peer and self-evaluation, and teaching by practitioners.

Table 3.1 shows very high proportions of crafts graduates experiencing course activities with an external focus and that have the potential to encourage a professional mindset: shows/exhibitions – 97 per cent; peer/self-evaluation – 91 per cent; contextual/critical studies – 88 per cent; field trips/study visits – 88 per cent; teaching by practitioners – 87 per cent; teamwork – 78 per cent; personal and professional development – 75 per cent; and 68 per cent had experienced competitions. The majority reported that they had found these activities fairly or very useful in their careers (see Figure 3.3 and Appendix Table B6).

**Table 3.1: Proportion experiencing named course activities (per cent)**

	%
Shows and exhibitions	97.2
Peer/self-evaluation	90.6
Contextual and critical studies	88.4
Field trips and study visits	87.6
Teaching by practitioners	87.1
Teamwork	78.0
Personal and Professional Development (PPD)	75.0
Competitions	67.8
Careers education and guidance	51.2
External/live project work	46.9
Business/enterprise activities	42.1
Collaboration with students on other courses	31.6
Exchange/international experience	24.0
Volunteering	15.9

Note: % graduates experienced course activity: ■ 70%+ ■ 30-70% ■ <30%

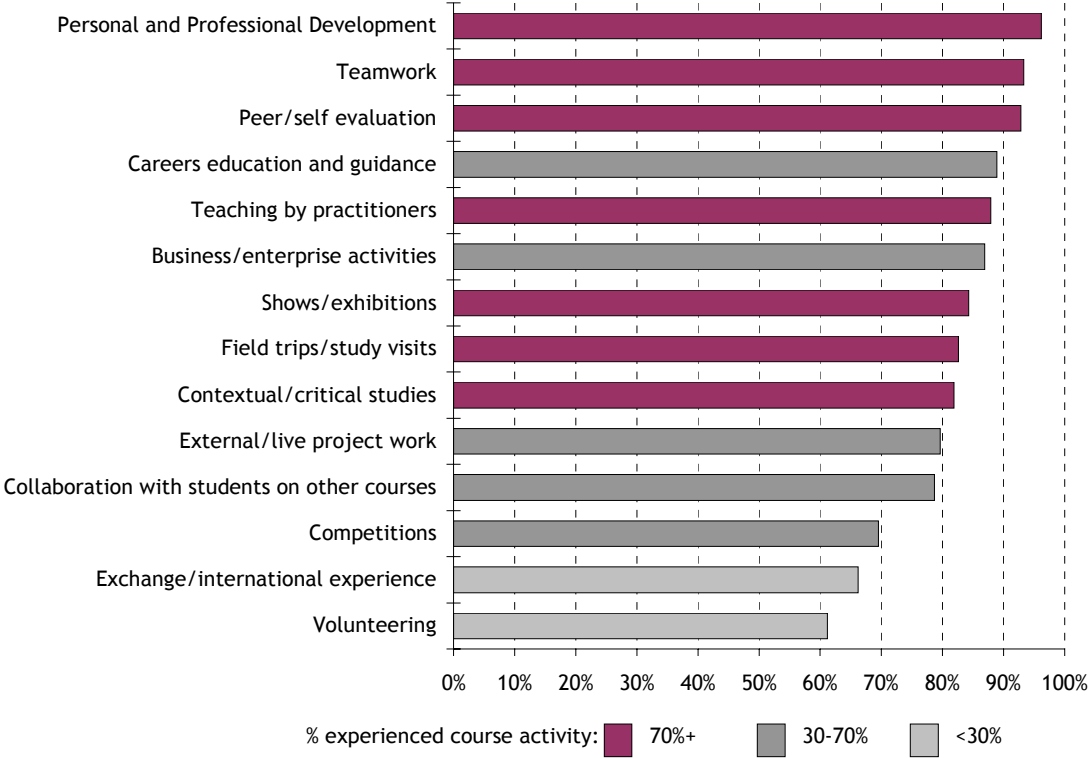
Base: Selected crafts graduates from undergraduate courses

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B6*

Half of the crafts graduates reported that their course had provided careers education and guidance. Under half had experienced external or live project work, business and enterprise activities or collaboration with students on other courses. Whilst relatively fewer crafts graduates reported having experienced these activities, the majority felt with hindsight these aspects were useful to their careers. As in CGCF, international exchanges and volunteering were more of an optional experience.



**Figure 3.3: Usefulness of course activities (proportion very or fairly useful) and proportion experiencing the named activities**



Base: Crafts graduates from undergraduate courses

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B6*

### 3.3.1 Comparisons with the experiences of all creative graduates

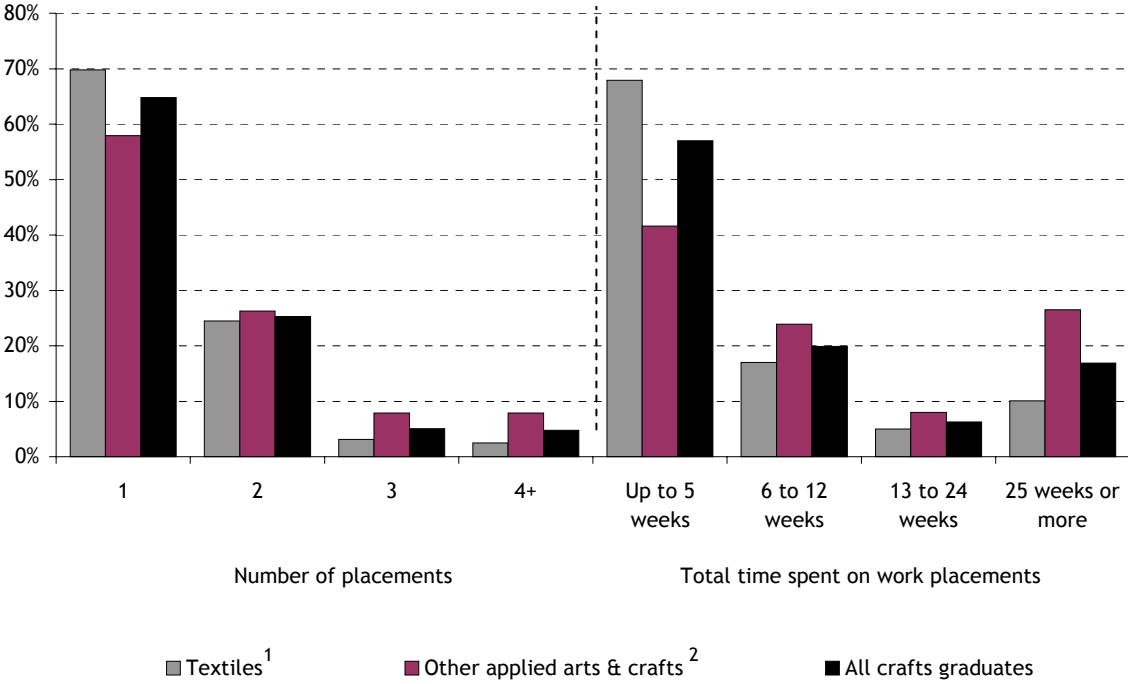
When we compare crafts graduates’ experience of course activities with the CGCF sample as a whole, crafts graduates were relatively more likely to have engaged in shows/exhibitions, field trips and competitions, and business/enterprise activity. They were less likely to have collaborated with graduates of other disciplines, worked as part of a team or engaged in external/live project work. These findings may illustrate some of the key characteristics that differentiate a crafts education, together with the higher development scores for making/technical skills noted earlier.

### 3.4 Work experience while at university

The term work placement refers to a specific organised period of time spent within the workplace or industrial setting, particularly periods that are required as part of a course. They afford the most effective experience of professional practice and a route into eventual employment. Yet for the crafts sector, there are comparatively few opportunities for placements as the sector is dominated by micro-enterprises, so different approaches may need to be taken within the curriculum to provide simulated professional activity through external and live projects, exhibitions and working alongside teacher-practitioners.

Graduates were asked to tell us about their work placements and other work experiences such as casual term-time work and vacation jobs during their time as undergraduates (see Appendix Tables B7 and B8); and the findings highlight the importance of work placements for students. In spite of the lack of paid placements and large employers in the industry, more than two-fifths (43 per cent) [42 per cent] of crafts graduates reported taking part in work placements while at university, half of these doing so as part of their course, and the other half demonstrating their proactive nature by organising their own placements. However, as in the CGCF study, these patterns need to be viewed in the context of career progression in a sector dominated by micro-businesses with limited capacity for employing students, and for the future, placement opportunities are unlikely to increase.

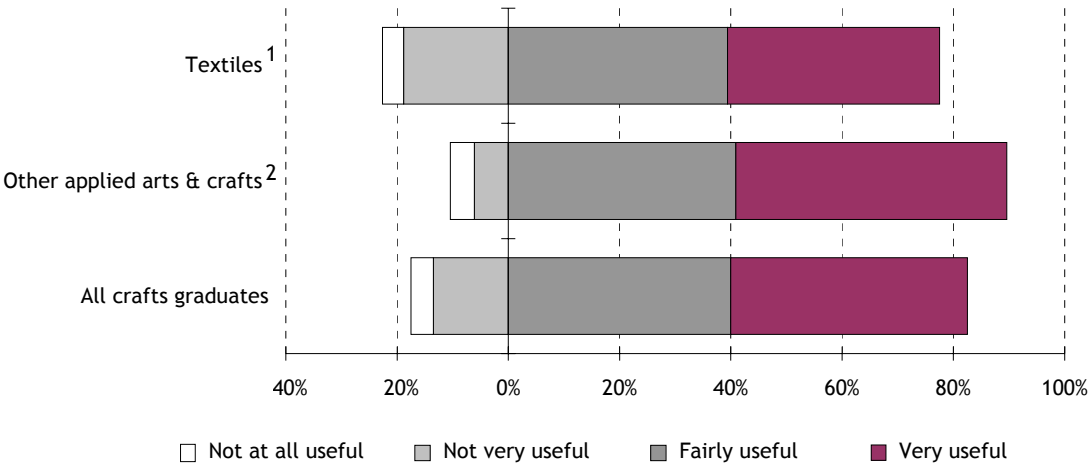
**Figure 3.4: Extent of placements**



<sup>1</sup> including printed, constructed and textile design  
<sup>2</sup> all other applied arts, crafts, and craft-based 3-D design  
 Base: All crafts graduates undertaking work placements during undergraduate study

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B7*

**Figure 3.5: Usefulness of work placements to career progression**



<sup>1</sup> including printed, constructed and textile design

<sup>2</sup> all other applied arts, crafts, and craft-based 3-D design

Base: All crafts graduates undertaking work placements during undergraduate study

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B7*

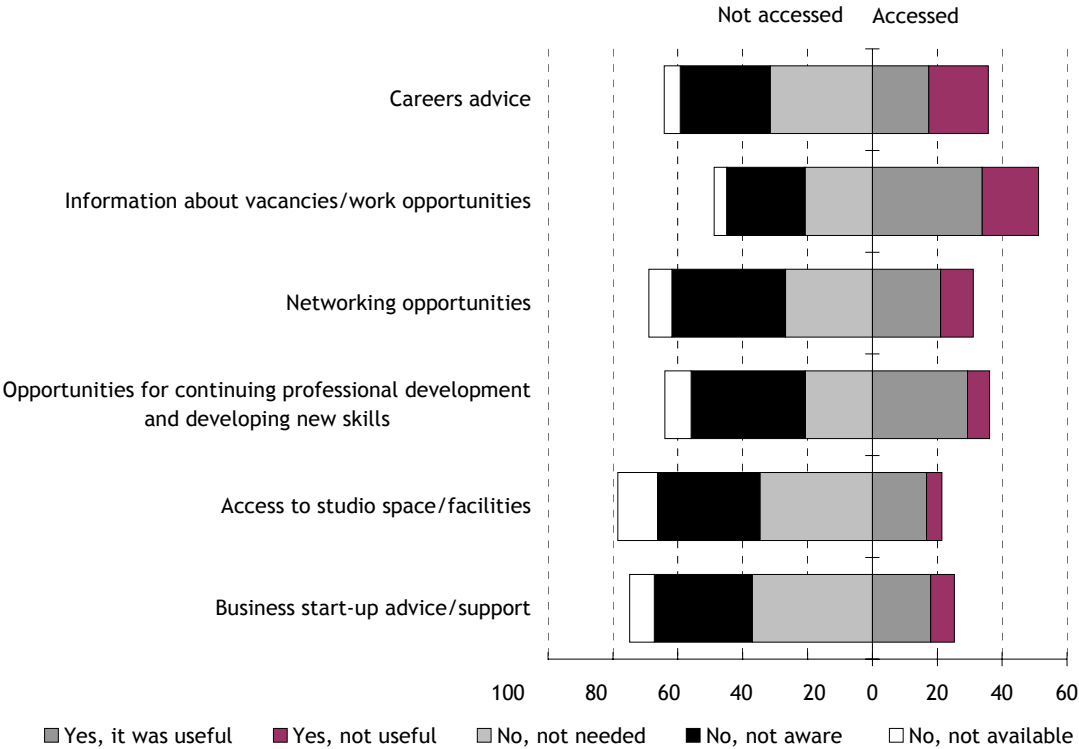
The majority (83 per cent) of those taking part in a work placement of some kind reported that this had been either very or fairly useful. Graduates in Other Applied Arts and Crafts disciplines were slightly more positive than the Textiles group in this respect (90 per cent compared with 78 per cent), perhaps because their placements tended to be longer in duration and were a structured part of their courses.

Term-time and vacation working were also common, with nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of crafts graduates reporting either a term-time or vacation job, or both (see Appendix Table B8). This latter type of work was much less likely to have been seen as useful (only 39 per cent felt it was very or fairly useful). Overall, crafts graduates’ experiences of working while at university (placements and/or wider work experiences) did not differ significantly from those in other creative disciplines (CGCF).

### 3.5 Continuing support after graduation

Crafts graduates had accessed support of different kinds from HE after graduation (see Appendix Table B9). They express continuing career development needs which highlights the importance of progression and the relationship between undergraduate learning, postgraduate study, on the job training and continuing professional development (CPD).

**Figure 3.6: Usefulness of support accessed after graduation**



Base: Crafts graduates from undergraduate courses

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B9*

After completing their courses, half (51 per cent) of crafts graduates reported having accessed information about vacancies, and around one-third reported accessing opportunities for CPD to build on their skill and knowledge base (36 per cent) and 31 per cent had taken advantage of networking opportunities. The majority of graduates accessing these forms of support had found them useful.

Over one-third (36 per cent) of crafts graduates reported accessing careers advice. However, only half of these said that it had been useful. One-fifth (21 per cent) of crafts graduates reported accessing studio space and facilities at their university since graduating and a quarter of graduates (25 per cent) had accessed business advice. Crafts graduates were more likely to have accessed these latter forms of support than creative graduates in general.

Where opportunities were not taken, it most often was because graduates were not aware that this kind of support was available.

### 3.6 How well prepared were graduates for the world of work?

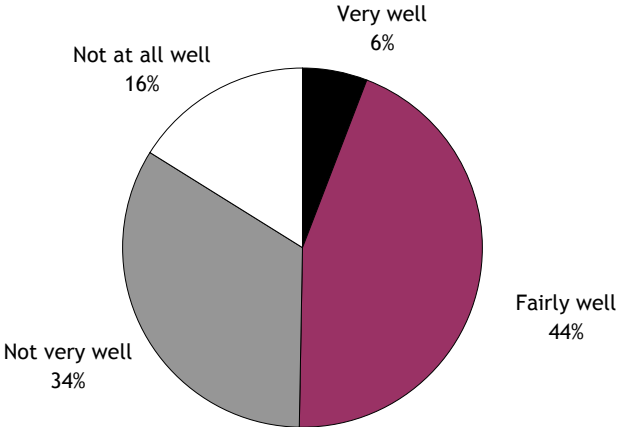
Crafts graduates were equally divided about how well their course had prepared them for the world of work. In spite of the high levels of skill development and high ratings for course activities reported earlier in this chapter, only half (50 per cent) of the crafts respondents felt that their course had prepared them very or fairly well for the world of work. More than

one-third (34 per cent) felt not very well prepared, and 16 per cent felt that their course had not prepared them at all well for work. Generally Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates were more positive about their preparation for work than were Textiles graduates.

Overall crafts graduates' feelings about their preparedness did not differ significantly from creative graduates as a whole.

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**Figure 3.7: Perceptions as to how well the course prepared graduates for the world of work**



Base: Crafts graduates from undergraduate courses, N=637

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B10*

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## 4 Career Patterns

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### Summary

#### All activities since graduating:

- Ninety-eight per cent of crafts graduates had undertaken some form of work; 76 per cent had experienced permanent employment and 45 per cent had worked on temporary contracts.
- Sixty-one per cent had worked in the creative industries, mostly paid work and related to their subject of study.
- One in four crafts graduates had started a business and more than one-third had worked freelance.
- Around two in five crafts graduates had been teaching in some capacity since graduation, mainly related to their degree subject.

#### All current work activities (at the time of the survey):

- In autumn 2008 (at the time of the survey) 9 out of 10 crafts graduates were in paid work, mostly permanent employment, and three-quarters of these were working in creative occupations; 14 per cent were in a non-creative occupation (not including teaching).
- Fifty per cent of crafts graduates were engaged in multiple work activities or 'portfolio' working, typically combining employment with self-employment, study or developing their creative practice. The remaining half described one main work activity, most commonly working full-time and/or working in a permanent role with a wage or salary.
- Teaching is a significant career, with 25 per cent of crafts graduates teaching in at least one of their work roles, often combined with a creative occupation.
- Crafts graduates were prepared to invest in their own development with 38 per cent undertaking further study or CPD of some kind, and 25 per cent were working in the studio, or on their creative practice.
- Fifty-six per cent of crafts graduates worked alone in at least one of their work activities; a further 37 per cent worked in micro-enterprises of 10 or fewer workers, and 23 per cent worked in organisations of 250 or more.
- Self-employment continues to be an important form of working with one in five running a business and/or 15 per cent working freelance.
- Unemployment was low at three per cent and seven per cent were working unpaid at the time of the survey.

**Main activity:**

- Graduates were asked to provide more detail about their main job or work activity. Three-fifths of crafts graduates were in creative occupations in their main job; 20 per cent were teaching and 20 per cent in non-creative occupations.
- In their main job, crafts graduates were less likely to be in a creative occupation and more likely to be teaching, when comparing findings with those for all creative graduates.
- The model of the lone craft worker, making a living from full-time crafts practice is rare, accounting for only one in 12 crafts graduates.

**Differences by subject and family background:**

- Textiles graduates were more likely to be in or have experienced permanent employment (particularly teaching posts) than Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates who were in turn more likely to be working or have worked freelance or self-employed, be portfolio workers, or to work alone (sole traders).
- Crafts graduates with no parental experience of higher education (proxy for socio-economic class) were just as successful in their careers as those whose parents had been to university, indicating that they adopted similar career strategies, whatever their social background.

**Earnings:**

- Crafts graduates are not high earners, with an average (median) income between £15,000 and £20,000, and 38 per cent earned £15,000 or less. Textiles graduates were more likely than Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates to earn over £20,000 and this may reflect their greater tendency to be in permanent employment.

**Satisfaction and relevance:**

- There were high levels of work satisfaction: three out of four crafts graduates being satisfied with their work situation and feeling able to be creative in their work.
- Two out of three were in their chosen career in work related to their degree subject and felt they had career opportunities open to them.
- A minority - one in four - felt underemployed in their work and this aligned with a similar proportion who felt they were not yet in their chosen career or felt their work was not related to their degree subject.

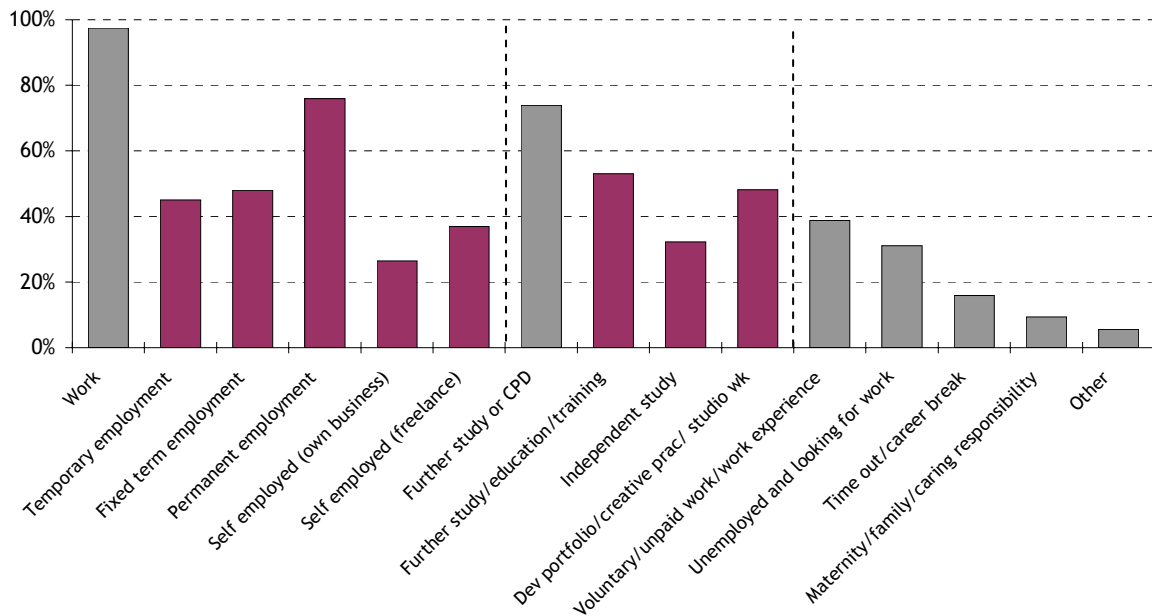
## 4.1 What do crafts graduates do in their early careers?

We asked crafts graduates to tell us about all the jobs, work activities and further learning they had undertaken since graduating and also what they were doing at the time of the survey. We offered multiple response questions to capture combinations of work and study, as we expected to see evidence of portfolio careers – in which graduates typically combine different income streams with development activity.

## 4.2 Activities since graduating

Looking across all crafts graduates' activities since graduating, 98 per cent had undertaken work of some kind.

**Figure 4.1: All activities since graduating**



Note: multiple response question, therefore sum % greater than 100%

Base: Crafts graduates (answering the question), N=640

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B11*

The pattern of working for crafts graduates was very similar to that for all creative graduates (see Appendix Table B11 and Figure 4.1): 76 per cent [74 per cent] had experienced permanent employment; 45 per cent [49 per cent] had undertaken temporary work; and 39 per cent [42 per cent] had worked unpaid.

The high incidence of self-employment is a key finding in both CGCF and *Crafting Futures*: 26 per cent [25 per cent] of crafts graduates had started a business; and 37 per cent [45 per cent] had worked freelance. Crafts graduates were less likely to have experienced freelance work than all creative graduates.

Patterns of further learning for crafts graduates were also similar to those of all creative graduates with 74 per cent [72 per cent] undertaking some form of further study (informal or formal), and 48 per cent [51 per cent] had continued to develop their creative practice.

Crafts graduates were less likely to work in the creative industries than creative graduates as a whole: 61 per cent [compared with 73 per cent] or in an area related to the discipline of their degree 65 per cent [73 per cent]. The difference is accounted for by the greater propensity for crafts graduates to enter teaching 41 per cent [33 per cent] and to teach in creative subjects 38 per cent [28 per cent] compared to creative graduates as a whole (see Appendix Table B12).



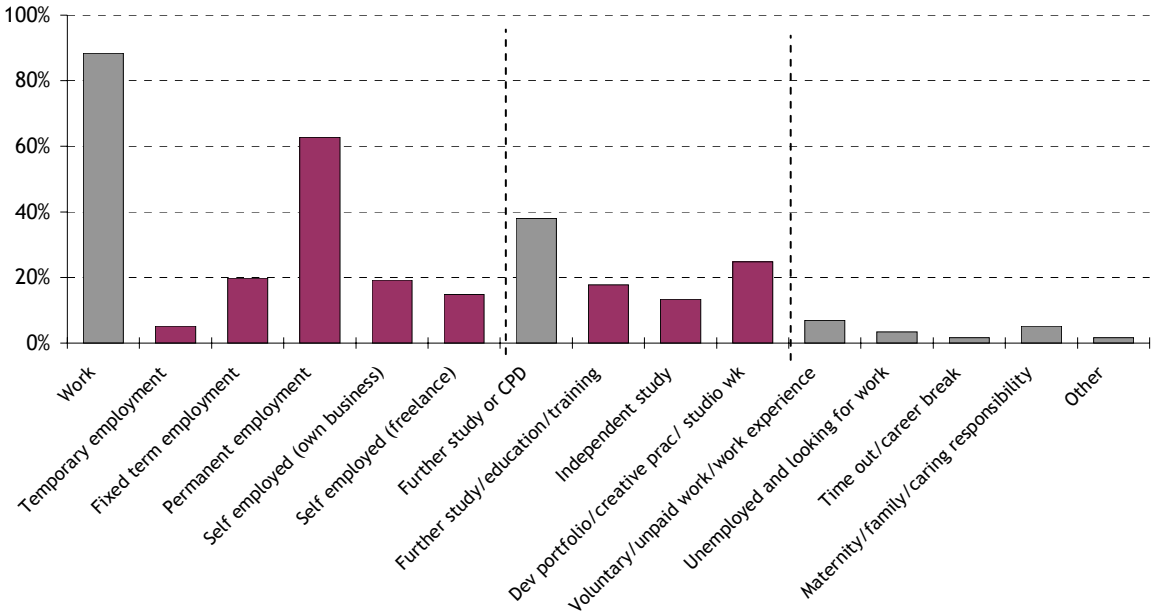
### 4.2.1 Subject differences

Among crafts graduates there was some variation in experiences since graduation. Textiles graduates were more likely to have had a period of permanent employment than Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates (80 per cent compared to 71 per cent), whereas Other Applied Arts and Crafts (including 3-D design) graduates were considerably more likely to have been self-employed with their own business (35 per cent compared to 19 per cent), and to have engaged in independent study (37 per cent compared to 29 per cent). They were also more likely to have spent time developing their portfolio/creative practice (54 per cent compared to 43 per cent) (see Appendix Table B11).

### 4.3 Current activities

At the time of the survey, looking across all the current activities reported by crafts graduates (see Appendix Table B13 and Figure 4.2), the patterns of work are largely repeated: with 88 per cent in paid work [89 per cent]; those running their own businesses at 19 per cent [18 per cent]; 15 per cent [23 per cent] working freelance; permanent employment at 63 per cent [58 per cent]; temporary work at five per cent [six per cent]; and seven per cent [nine per cent] working unpaid. Unemployment was low at three per cent [five per cent] of crafts graduates.

**Figure 4.2: Current activities**



Note: multiple response question, therefore sum % greater than 100%

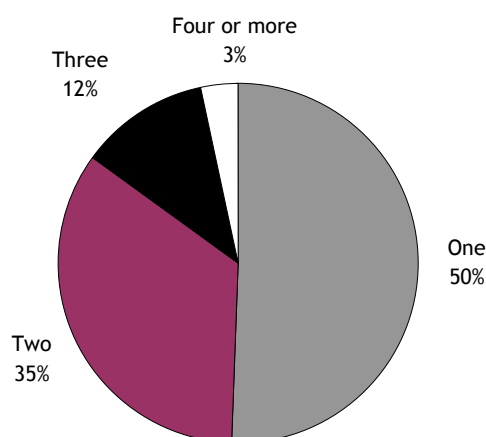
Base: Crafts graduates (answering the question), N=640

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B13*

### 4.3.1 Nature of work

Nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) of crafts graduates went on to describe their jobs or work-related activity at the time of the survey in greater detail (see Appendix Table B14). Half of these were 'portfolio' workers (Figure 4.3) with 50 per cent [48 per cent] reporting two or more work activities at the time of the survey (see Figure 4.3 and Appendix Table B14).

**Figure 4.3: Number of work-related activities - identifying portfolio work**



Base: Crafts graduates reporting work-related activities (and answering the question), N=467

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B14*

There was a very high level of crafts graduates combining part-time and full-time working<sup>1</sup>. Across all their work activities, 84 per cent [79 per cent] of crafts graduates were working part-time, and 78 per cent [83 per cent] full-time in at least one job (see Appendix Table B15). Part-time working appears to be more common for crafts graduates than for all creative graduates.

The majority of crafts graduates (56 per cent) [55 per cent] were working on their own/or as a sole trader in at least one of their current work activities; a further 37 per cent [40 per cent] had experience of working in small companies (employing 10 or fewer employees). Less than a quarter, 23 per cent [24 per cent] were working in large organisations with at least 250 employees. The size of company in which graduates worked does not differ significantly between crafts graduates and all creative graduates.

However, there were differences in the type of work undertaken. Looking across all their work activities (see Appendix Tables B16 and B17), crafts graduates were less likely to be in

<sup>1</sup> 'Full-time' was defined in the questionnaire as working 25 hours or more per week. 'Part-time' was defined as less than 25 hours per week.

creative occupations<sup>1</sup> 73 per cent [78 per cent], and less likely to be working in the creative industries<sup>2</sup> 71 per cent [77 per cent] than creative graduates as a whole. This again reflects patterns found when looking at all experiences since graduating.

Teaching is a significant career for crafts graduates with 25 per cent [18 per cent] teaching in at least one of their work roles and around half of these were combining teaching with other creative work. Only 14 per cent [13 per cent] were working outside of creative or teaching roles (see Figure 4.4).

Although graduates did not consistently specify what sort of teaching work they were engaged in, it is possible to explore whether or not those who reported teaching work had completed a PGCE, thereby giving some indication of the proportion that have qualified teacher status. Of the 111 crafts graduates that reported at least one teaching job, 54 per cent [44 per cent] had completed a PGCE, a higher proportion than found for creative graduates as a whole who were working in teaching.

### 4.3.2 Subject differences in the nature of work

There was some variation between the Textiles and Other Applied Arts and Crafts groups in current working patterns.

Textiles graduates were more likely to have a permanent paid job (70 per cent compared to 59 per cent) which may reflect a greater likelihood to be in a full-time teaching position.

Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates were more likely to: be self-employed or work freelance (55 per cent compared to 39 per cent), particularly to run their own business (27 per cent compared to 13 per cent); work on a temporary or fixed term contract (23 per cent compared to 13 per cent); be portfolio workers (55 per cent compared to 44 per cent); work as a sole trader (65 per cent compared to 48 per cent) or for a micro-enterprise (42 per cent compared to 37 per cent); and teaching combined with another creative occupation (15 per cent compared to 10 per cent).

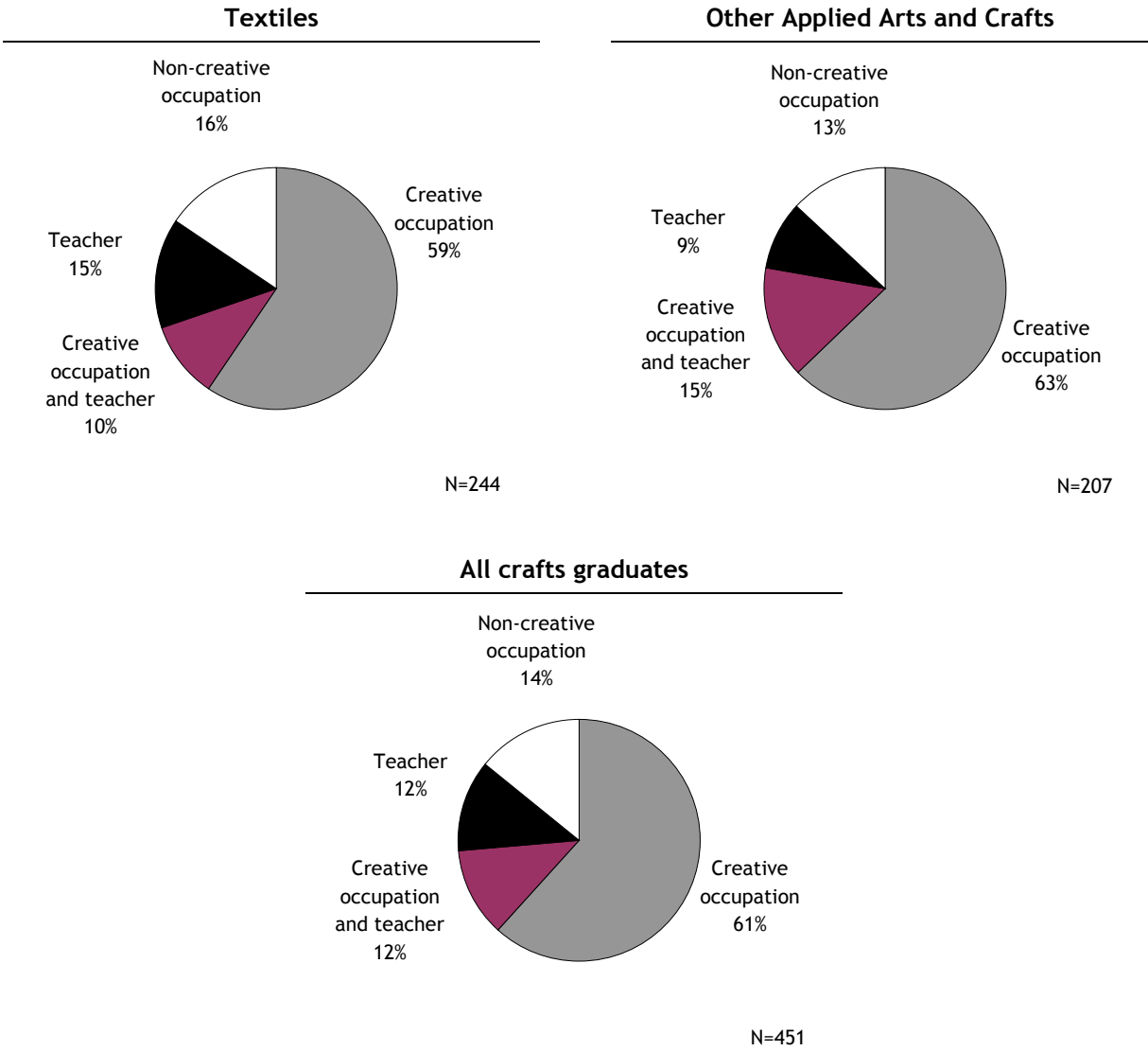
Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates were also more likely to be working part-time (93 per cent compared to 77 per cent). This fits well with the higher levels of portfolio working and self-employment (see Appendix Tables B14, B15 and B16).

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<sup>1</sup> Graduates' job titles reported at question C4 of the questionnaire were coded using the Standard Occupational Classification codes. The types of occupations classed as 'Creative', 'Teaching', and 'Non-creative' can be seen in Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> Graduates were asked in the survey questionnaire to indicate from a list which industry/sector(s) they worked in. Work was coded as being in the 'creative industries' if it was in any of the following: Advertising and publicity; Architecture; Art market and antiques (inc. fine arts practice); Computer/video games and software; Crafts; Cultural heritage; Design; Fashion, textiles and apparel; Film, video, and photography; Performing arts and music; Publishing and literary arts (inc. news); TV and radio.

**Figure 4.4: Occupation in any of up to three current jobs/activities**



Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B16*

## 4.4 Work patterns

### 4.4.1 Single job/activity

Graduates were asked to tell us about up to three jobs or work activities in their current work situation, to take account of portfolio working. Half of all crafts graduates in work reported only one job or work activity which tended to be full-time (85 per cent) and 72 per cent were in permanent employment.

Crafts graduates who had just the one job or activity worked for organisations of varying sizes, though nearly two-fifths (38 per cent) worked for micro-organisations or were sole traders. The notion of the craft worker, making a living from full-time crafts practice is rare, with around 17 per cent of those with only one job being self-employed or working freelance

– equivalent to one in 12 (or eight per cent) across all working crafts graduates. Seven per cent were employed on a temporary or fixed term basis, and only four per cent were in unpaid or voluntary work (see Appendix Table B18).

Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) were in a creative occupation and over half (55 per cent) were working in the creative industries. One in five (20 per cent) crafts graduates with only one job or activity worked as a teacher (see Appendix Table B19). Similar patterns of working were found for both graduates of Textiles and Other Applied Arts and Crafts subjects.

The majority therefore had steady full-time jobs in creative roles and in teaching. Examples of jobs (in creative roles and wider) include:

Art teacher	Exhibitions Administrator
Design Consultant	Surface Pattern Designer for home-wares
Product Developer (fashion)	Running a millinery business
Ceramic Artist	Dental Nurse
Garment Technologist	Menswear Designer
Visual Merchandiser	Jewellery Designer/Maker
Conservation Assistant	

#### 4.4.2 Two jobs/activities

Just over one-third (35 per cent) [30 per cent] of crafts graduates describing work reported having two jobs or work-related activities at the time of the survey (see Appendix Table B14). Among these graduates the most common pattern of working was to combine one main full-time job with a second part-time job (56 per cent did), followed by having two part-time activities (32 per cent). Doing two full-time jobs was rare (only five per cent) (see Appendix Table B20).

This group of crafts graduates described a range of work patterns, and the most common was to combine employment with some form of self-employment (44 per cent). Other common job combinations included self-employment and temporary work (18 per cent), permanent work and unpaid/voluntary work (13 per cent), and self-employment and unpaid/voluntary work (nine per cent). Where crafts graduates reported a permanent job this was most likely to be described as a main job, whereas self-employment, temporary or fixed term work, and unpaid/voluntary work were all more likely to be described as a second job rather than a first or main job (see Appendix Table B21). This reflects findings from the main CGCF study.

The majority (90 per cent) of those describing two jobs were doing at least some form of creative work or activity; two-fifths (40 per cent) worked in two creative roles; nearly a quarter (24 per cent) combined creative work with teaching. Just over a quarter (27 per cent) combined creative work with some other occupation. Overall, 26 per cent of this group of crafts graduates worked as teachers – the vast majority in combination with creative work

(although the teaching role tended to be recorded as their first or main job) (see Appendix Table B22).

The following examples of jobs reported by crafts graduates illustrate how they combine two jobs/work activities:

Conservator and Freelance Artist/Illustrator	Teacher and Freelance Artist
Textile Designer and Retail Assistant	Ceramics Technician and Ceramicist
Lecturer and Freelance Designer	Accessory Design and Home Furnishings Designer
Self-employed Jeweller and Shop Assistant	Volunteer Youth-worker and Information Officer
Library Assistant and Textile Designer/Maker	Bar Manager and Freelance Artist
Freelance Chef and Catering Assistant for catering company	Art Therapist/Counsellor and Jeweller/Artist

#### 4.4.3 Three or more jobs/activities

Fifteen per cent [18 per cent] of crafts graduates describing their work activities at the time of the survey reported three or more activities (see Appendix Table B14). These graduates described a wide range of activities and ways of working. As a relatively low number of graduates described three or more work activities, these findings should be treated as indicative only.

By far the most common patterns for working hours were three part-time jobs (46 per cent) or one full-time job and two part-time jobs (45 per cent) usually with the full-time job as the 'main' job (see Appendix Table B23).

Crafts graduates described a wide range of types of activity and working arrangements but no distinct patterns emerge, although it is clear that graduates are flexible workers and keen to combine different experiences to develop themselves, sometimes working unpaid. Across all job combinations: 83 per cent were doing at least some self-employed work, 56 per cent had at least one permanent job, 55 per cent reported doing some form of unpaid or voluntary work, and 44 per cent had some kind of temporary or fixed term work (see Appendix Table B24).

Across all jobs, the majority (89 per cent) reported doing at least some kind of creative work and 40 per cent reported teaching in at least one of their activities. Just over half (52 per cent) had at least one non-creative job (excluding teaching, see Appendix Table B25).

The following examples of jobs reported by crafts graduates illustrate how they combine three jobs:

Running own business in jewellery design & making, Tutoring art & crafts, and Community Education Worker	Self-employed Artist/Ceramicist, Invigilator for gallery, and Garden Nursery Assistant
Freelance Designer, Sales Assistant, and Textiles Intern	Gallery Assistant, freelance design work, and Placement (fashion)
Senior Designer (fashion & accessories), Freelancer (commission work), Volunteering	Designer Jeweller, Jewellery Shop Manager, and visiting Lecturer
Teacher, Product Specialist, and Merchandiser	Ceramics, Jewellery, and Aromatherapy
Part-time Teacher of art, Teacher of ceramics for adult education, and Ceramic Practitioner soil work	Bag and Accessories Designer, Teacher, and Exhibition work
Art & Design Lecturer, Museum Assistant, and Freelance Weaver	Business proprietor, Housing/Lettings Officer, and Ceramic Artist
	Pottery Workshop Assistant, Nursery Assistant, and Work Experience related to jewellery

#### 4.5 Main work activity only

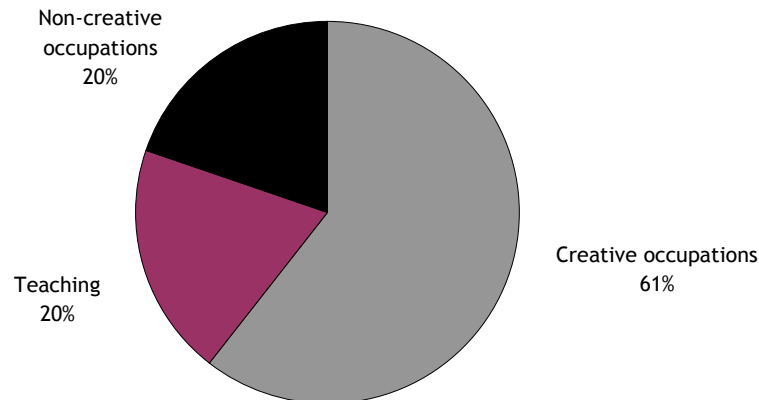
If we focus on what crafts graduates consider to be their main or primary work activity, the patterns of work (Appendix Tables B26, B27, B28, B30, and B31) show similarities with creative graduates as a whole (outlined in the CGCF study): 29 per cent [33 per cent] were self-employed or working freelance; 58 per cent [54 per cent] were in permanent waged employment; eight per cent [nine per cent] were on temporary contracts and five per cent [five per cent] were working unpaid in their main job. Crafts graduates were marginally less likely to be working full-time than found for all creative graduates at 71 per cent [75 per cent] in their main job. The rest, 29 per cent [25 per cent], worked part-time in their main job.

Education, design, crafts and fashion, textiles and apparel were among the most commonly cited industry sectors for crafts graduates to be working in and overall 57 per cent worked in the creative industries (see Appendix Tables B30 and B31). Industries worked in by graduates largely reflect the data for occupations, ie graduates tended to work in the creative sector if they were in creative occupations.

Crafts graduates were less likely to be employed in a creative occupation in their main job at 61 per cent [69 per cent] than found for all creative graduates. This difference is likely to be accounted for by higher proportions of crafts graduates going into teaching: 20 per cent [13 per cent].

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**Figure 4.5: Occupation in main job/activity**



Base: Crafts graduates reporting a job or work-related activity, N=432

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B27*

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Common occupations described by crafts graduates demonstrate that, like creative graduates as a whole, they crossed discipline boundaries. Occupations included: fine artists, makers, graphic designers and illustrators, fashion and textiles design, and teaching and research professionals.

#### **4.5.1 Subject differences**

When comparing main work activity within the group of crafts graduates, again we find that Textiles graduates were more likely than Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates to be in a permanent job (65 per cent compared to 51 per cent), were less likely to work freelance or on a self-employed basis (22 per cent compared to 37 per cent), and were less likely to be sole traders (21 per cent compared to 32 per cent).

Table 4.1 illustrates some of the differences in the main occupations of crafts graduates from the different disciplines of textiles, applied arts and crafts, and 3-D design.



**Table 4.1: Examples of main occupations described by crafts graduates (creative and other occupations) - by subject area of study**

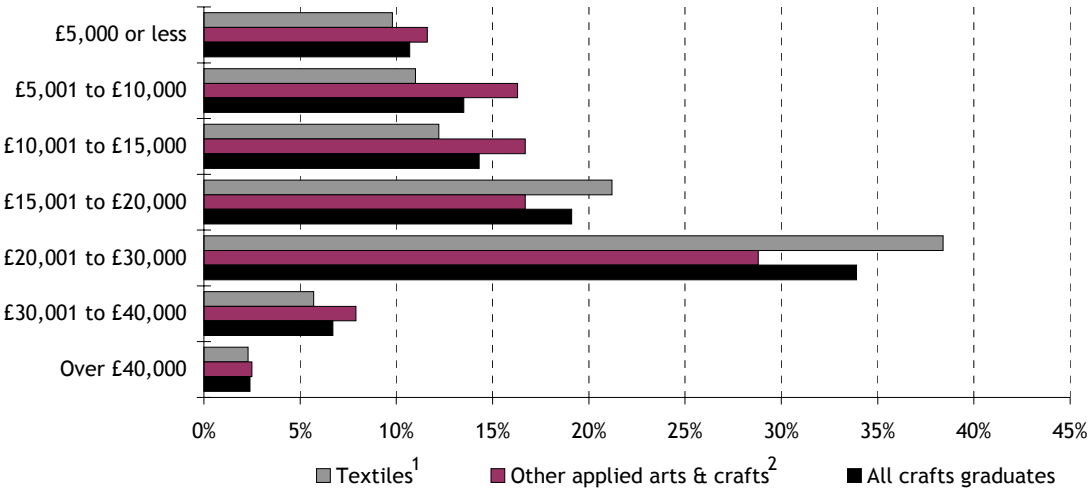
Subject area of study	Examples of creative occupations held	Examples of teaching and other occupations held
<b>3-D design and Furniture design</b>	Ceramic Artist; Exhibitions administrator; design engineer; Glass workshop assistant; Buyer; Pottery; kitchen planner; Exhibition Technician; Interior Design; packaging development; Designer/ Maker Glassblower; Designer for Retail Design Consultancy; Furniture Design; Contemporary Jeweller; Architectural Assistant/Urban Designer; Hotel Interior Designer; Senior designer; Making & Selling own work; Art Therapist/Counsellor; Printmaker; gallery attendant	Teacher; secondary art teacher; Education and outreach officer; Admin officer; primary education technical assistant; Dental Technician; Customer Service
<b>Applied Arts and Crafts</b>	Making handmade books to commission; Footwear designer; Creative Practitioner; Gallery Assistant; Cinema Tech (projectionist); Buyer; designer/maker; community artist; Public Art commissions; glass commission work; Events Co-ordinator; Own business jewellery design & making; Accessory Design; Artist Blacksmith running my own company; Jewellery Design/Product Management; Architectural draftsman/model maker; Curatorial; Conservator	Full-time teacher; Support worker; Part-time teacher of art; Building; Homelessness Officer - Local Authority; Occupational Therapy Pottery Specialist Technical Instructor; Delivery Driver; Senior Fraud Advisor; Adventure Travel consultant; Project Manager; Careers advisor
<b>Fashion and Textiles design</b>	Product Developer (fashion); Assistant Buyer; Garment Technologist; visual merchandiser; Fashion Designer; unpaid freelance design working from home; Director - own textile studio; Art Technician; Textile Design; Interior Designer; Product Developer; Homeware Buyer; Create one off pieces for me; Senior accessories designer; Surface Pattern Designer for homewares; Millinery Business; illustrator; Freelance artist; print designer; Fabric Tech Temp; Lingerie Designer	Teacher; sales assistant; Bar Manager; team coach/customer service; Wholesale manager; Art lecturer; Admin; Hair Stylist; Volunteer Youth worker; Account Manager; Accountant

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B29*

## 4.6 Earnings

Crafts graduates are not high earners, and these findings align with CGCF and other surveys of earning capacity in the crafts – a sector overwhelmingly comprised of female workers. The median average (median) income for working crafts graduates is between £15,000 and £20,000 (the same as for creative graduates as a whole) (see Appendix Table B32). However, crafts graduates (in work) were slightly more likely to be on lower incomes than creative graduates as a whole, with 38 per cent [33 per cent] earning £15,000 or less. Accordingly, they were more likely to indicate that they were ‘finding it difficult’ financially than were creative graduates as a whole: 27 per cent [22 per cent].

**Figure 4.6: Gross personal annual income**



<sup>1</sup> including printed, constructed and textile design

<sup>2</sup> all other applied arts, crafts, and craft-based 3-D design

Base: Crafts graduates reporting work-related activities, N=632

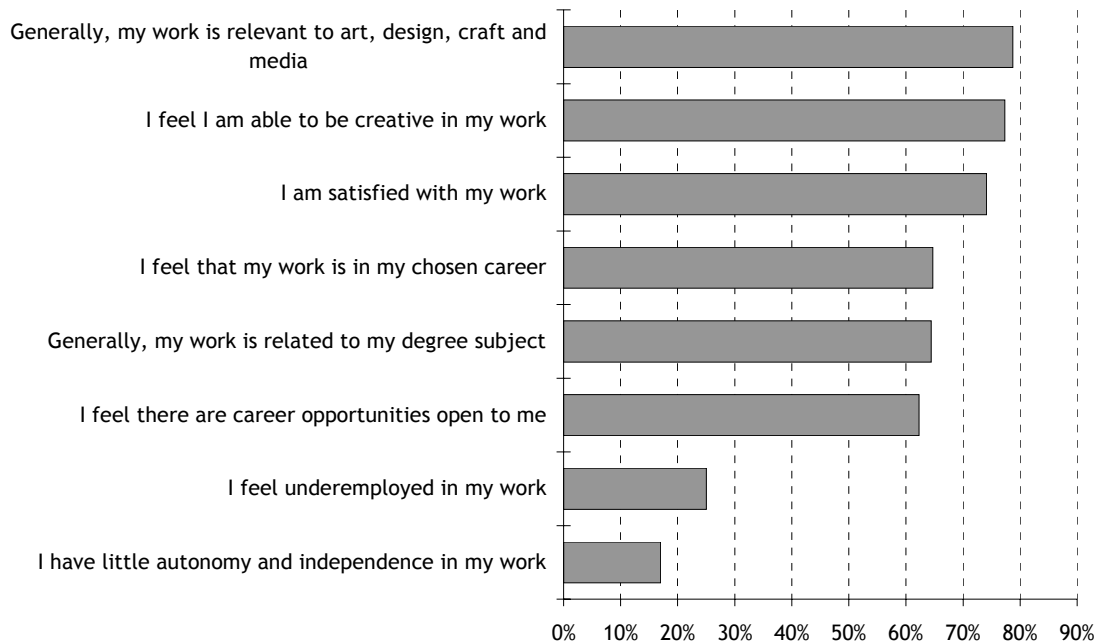
Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B32*

Looking at differences within the crafts graduate cohort, Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates were more likely to have an income of £15,000 or less than Textiles graduates (45 per cent compared to 33 per cent). However, they were not significantly more likely to report financial hardship.

### 4.7 Relevance and satisfaction

Generally crafts graduates were positive about their work situation. They agreed that their work was relevant to art and design (78 per cent) [79 per cent], and related to their subject of undergraduate study (64 per cent) [68 per cent]; and 65 per cent [68 per cent] said that their work was in their chosen career. Three out of four working crafts graduates appeared to be satisfied with their overall work situation, 74 per cent [77 per cent] and 77 per cent [77 per cent] felt they were able to be creative in their work. However, 25 per cent [24 per cent] felt they were underemployed in their work (see Appendix Table B33). Overall satisfaction of crafts graduates, with various aspects of their work situation, closely mirrors the feelings of creative graduates as a whole.

**Figure 4.7: Proportion of graduates agreeing with statements about their overall work situation**



Base: Crafts graduates reporting work-related activities

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B33*

There were no real differences in terms of overall work satisfaction between graduates who had studied Textiles based subjects and those who had studied Other Applied Arts and Crafts subjects.

Crafts graduates from more advantaged backgrounds – with parental experience of higher education – appeared to be no more successful in their careers than those from families with no experience of university education. This differed from the main CGCF study covering all creative graduates which showed that more advantaged graduates experienced a higher incidence of creative work, part-time and voluntary working.

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## 5 Further Study and Learning

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### Summary

- Crafts graduates are lifelong learners, with three out of four crafts graduates continuing with further study of some kind since graduating, mainly to develop further skills and knowledge, enhance job opportunities or develop their creative practice. They are more likely to engage in formal further learning than creative graduates as a whole.
- Three out of five had undertaken formal study, with 34 per cent studying at postgraduate level. Sixteen per cent had taken a PGCE and 14 per cent studied at Master's level, and, as found for creative graduates as a whole, the numbers studying at doctorate level at this stage of their career were negligible.
- Thirty-six per cent of crafts graduates had undertaken a short course, mainly related to art, craft or media, and 1 in 10 had studied business skills.
- Half of all crafts graduates had continued to develop their creative practice.

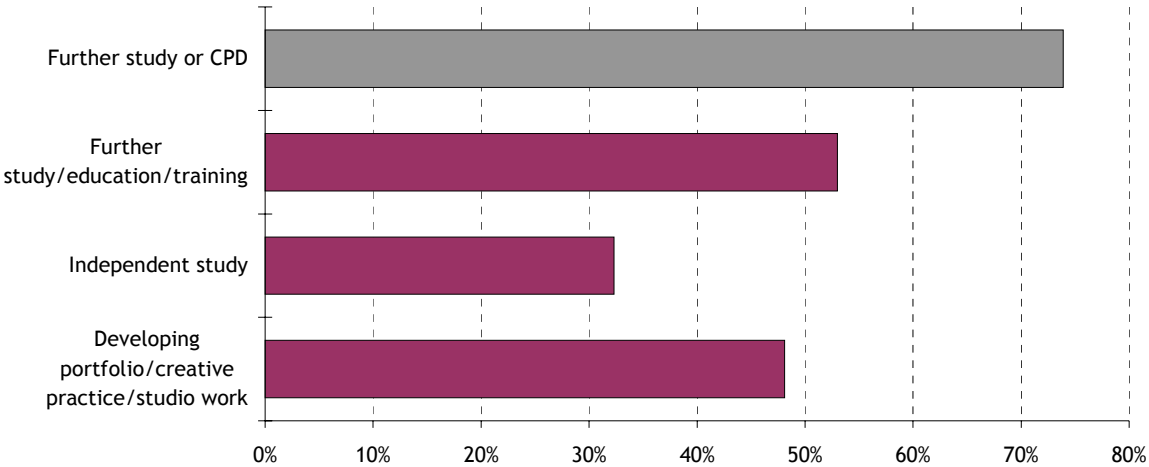
### At the time of the survey

- Eighteen per cent were in formal study, with 13 per cent studying independently and one-quarter working on their creative practice.
- Textiles graduates were more likely to study at postgraduate level or take a PGCE, whereas relatively larger proportions of Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates had undertaken a short course.

### 5.1 Engaging in further learning

One of the key findings of the CGCF study is that creative graduates are lifelong learners. They were keen to develop their skills and knowledge, enhance their job prospects and follow personal interests often related to their creative practice. The pattern is similar for our crafts graduates. Looking across all types of activities, three out of four crafts graduates (74 per cent) had continued with further learning of some kind since graduating. Almost half (48 per cent) had continued with studio work, either in or outside work, or developed their practice in some way since graduation (see Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1: Extent to which graduates engage in further study (since graduating)**



Base: Crafts graduates (who answered the question), N=640

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B11*

At the time of the survey, 38 per cent [39 per cent] of crafts graduates were undertaking further study or CPD of some kind, 18 per cent [15 per cent] were in formal study, 13 per cent [16 per cent] were studying independently and 25 per cent [27 per cent] were working on their creative practice or in the studio (see Appendix Table B13).

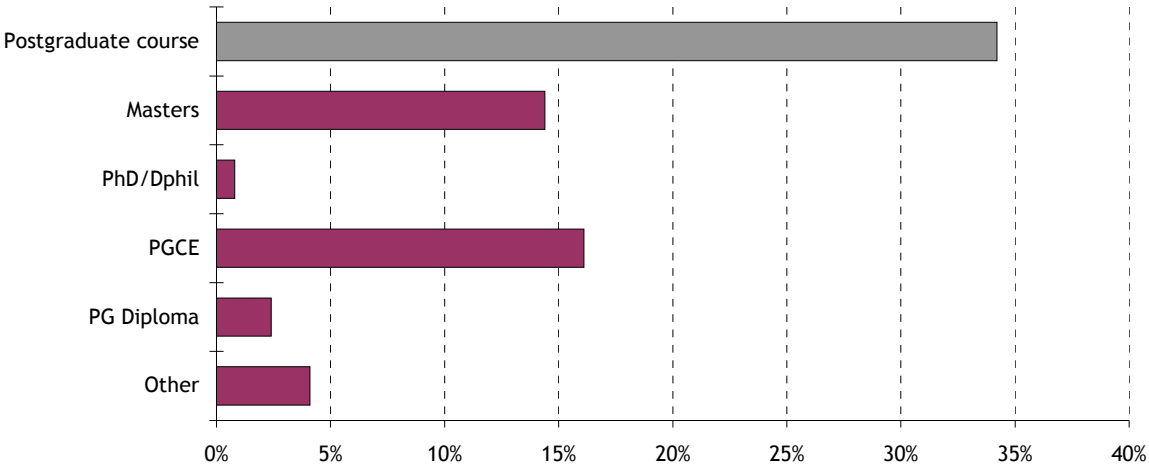
**5.1.1 The nature of formal learning**

Three-fifths of crafts graduates (61 per cent) then gave further details of the more formal further study, education and training that they had undertaken since graduating, enabling a more focused look at the nature of this learning.

The more detailed information shows that crafts graduates were more likely than creative graduates as a whole to undertake any further formal study since graduating 61 per cent [54 per cent], with 34 per cent [28 per cent] studying at postgraduate level (see Appendix Table B34).

PGCE was the most common form of postgraduate study (16 per cent) [10 per cent], followed by study at Master’s level (14 per cent) [13 per cent]. Crafts graduates were much more likely to have undertaken a PGCE than were creative graduates in general. One-third (36 per cent) [33 per cent] of crafts graduates had undertaken a short course, and 20 per cent [19 per cent] had studied in art, design craft or media. There was little take-up of short courses in business skills (11 per cent), very similar to the proportions given for all creative graduates [10 per cent].

**Figure 5.2: Postgraduate study - level of qualification**



Base: All crafts graduates, N=644

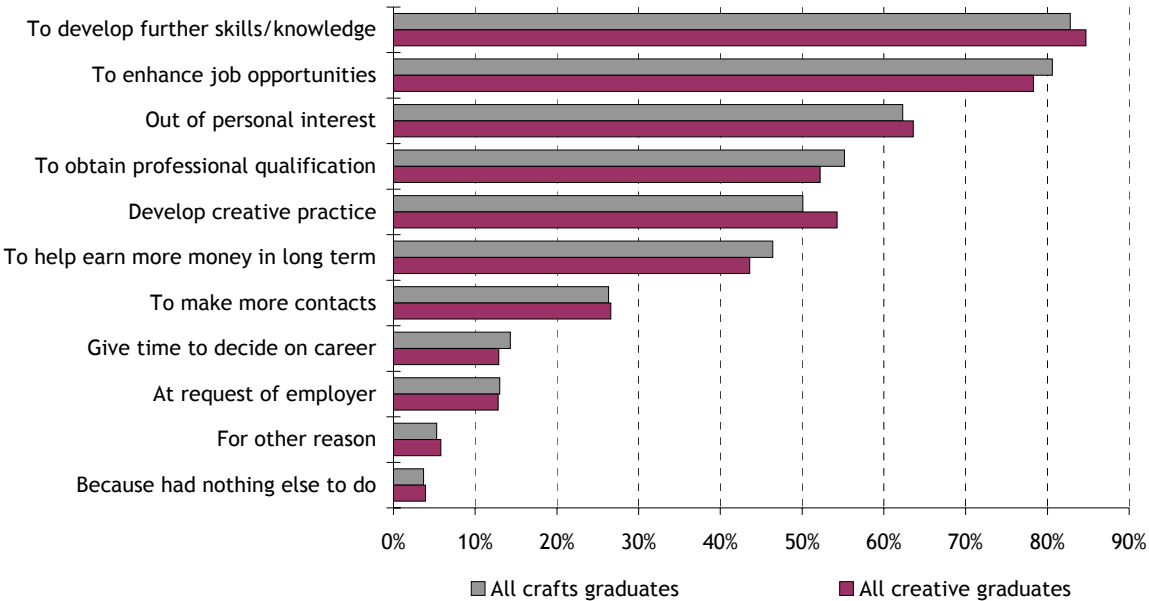
Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B34*

Less than one per cent had undertaken a doctorate and this was similar to the findings in the main CGCF survey for creative graduates as a whole. Clearly, careers in research were few and far between at this stage in graduates' careers.

### 5.2 Motivation for further study

Key reasons given by crafts graduates to engage in further study were to develop new skills and knowledge (83 per cent) [85 per cent], enhance access to job opportunities (81 per cent) [78 per cent], follow a personal interest (62 per cent) [64 per cent], to obtain a professional qualification (55 per cent) [52 per cent], and to develop creative practice (50 per cent) [54 per cent]. Very few did so to delay career entry or at the request of an employer, indicating that crafts graduates were making positive personal decisions for undertaking new learning, rather than addressing a deficit identified by an employer or because they had nothing else to do.

**Figure 5.3: Motivations to engage in further study (at any level)**



Note: multiple response question, therefore sum % greater than 100%

Base: Graduates who had engaged in further study

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B35*

### 5.3 Subject differences

There was little difference between Textiles and Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates in their propensity to engage in further formal study of some kind. However, Textiles graduates were more likely to have studied at postgraduate level (37 per cent, compared to 30 per cent) and to have completed a PGCE than were graduates of Other Applied Arts and Crafts (19 per cent compared to 12 per cent). Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates were more likely than Textiles graduates to have taken a short course (39 per cent compared to 33 per cent), and in an arts, crafts or business subject (see Appendix Table B34).

Motivation for study was similar for the two groups, although for graduates of Other Applied Arts and Crafts subjects the development of further skills and knowledge was more important (87 per cent compared to 79 per cent), while for Textiles graduates the most common reason was to enhance job opportunities (84 per cent compared to 77 per cent). Personal interest was a more common reason for further study among Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates than was found for Textiles graduates (67 per cent compared to 59 per cent, see Appendix Table B35) – perhaps reflecting their greater engagement in short courses.

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## 6 Career Aspirations and Motivations

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### Summary

- Crafts graduates overwhelmingly aspired to creative careers, their specific career goals aligning with their subject of study.
- In the four to six years since graduating, 29 per cent of crafts graduates had achieved their chosen career and 47 per cent were close to it.
- Twenty-three per cent felt they had some way to go to achieve their career goals, and this was similar to the proportion feeling under-employed in their work.
- Less than six per cent of crafts graduates felt they would be unlikely to achieve their goals in the next five years.
- Improving knowledge and skills, having a stable income and making full use of their knowledge were the most important factors in career decision-making.
- For the future, the majority of crafts graduates were settled in their careers with any changes likely to be progression to a higher level in the same work.
- CPD was a priority with four out of five anticipating some form of further study, development or skills training.
- Two out of five anticipated working freelance, and a similar proportion expected to be running a business; and 59 per cent thought their careers would be affected by responsibilities as parents and carers.
- The main barriers to career progression were similar to those for all creative graduates, and were mainly financial - preventing taking time out for further study or to gain experience.
- Barriers were often inter-related and coupled with a perceived lack of opportunities, connections or relevant skills and increasing competition for work.

### 6.1 Career aspirations

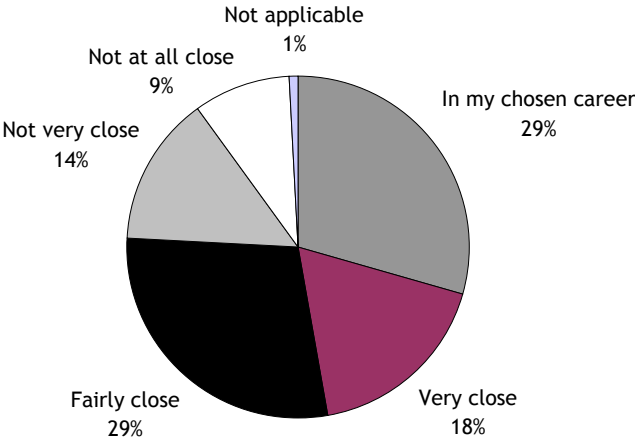
Graduates gave detailed comments about their career aspirations at the time of graduation and most had been clear about their career goals. Crafts graduates, like creative graduates as a whole, overwhelmingly aspire to creative careers; their specific career goals aligning with their subject of undergraduate study.



Initial career aspirations were predominantly in creative roles and Table 6.1 gives an idea of the careers mentioned<sup>1</sup>. The three most common career aspirations amongst all crafts graduates were: fashion/textiles designer (20 per cent); designer (inc. generic ‘designer’, graphic design and illustration – 13 per cent); and maker (eg glass, ceramics, jewellery and gold/silversmithing – 12 per cent). Teaching/research (11 per cent) was also a popular aspiration, as was expressing a general desire towards a creative role (11 per cent).

Generally, crafts graduates were settled on their career goals (having the same goals as when they graduated) and, at the time of the survey, many were in or close to achieving their goals. Crafts graduates were similar to all creative graduates in that half had not changed their career aspirations since graduating and 29 per cent [32 per cent] had achieved their career goals; and a further 46 per cent [47 per cent] were very or fairly close to doing so at the time of the survey (see Appendix Tables B36 and B39 and Figure 6.1).

**Figure 6.1: Proximity to career goals**



Base: Crafts graduates (answering the question), N=635

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B39*

<sup>1</sup> In many cases graduates gave detailed descriptions of the precise job that they aspired to, and in these cases it was possible to code their response accurately to one specific career role. However, some graduates gave less detailed answers, such as describing their career goal as ‘designer’ or ‘artist’. In these latter cases they were coded simply as ‘Design (generic)’ or ‘Artist (fine art)’ respectively. Therefore, there may be some slight overlap between aspiration categories.

**Table 6.1: Initial career aspirations when finished undergraduate degree course# - top 10 career goals**

Rank	All crafts graduates		Textiles <sup>1</sup>		Other Applied Arts & Crafts <sup>2</sup>	
	%	Initial goal	%	Initial goal	%	Initial goal
1	20.1	Fashion and textiles design	30.1	Fashion and textiles design	24.5	Glass, ceramics, furniture, musical instrument makers and gold/silversmiths: makers
2	12.7	Design (generic inc. designers, graphic artists and illustrators)	15.2	Design (generic inc. designers, graphic artists and illustrators)	10.8	Artists (fine art)
3	12.1	Glass, ceramics, furniture, musical instrument makers and gold/silversmiths: makers	11.7	Teaching/research	10.8	3-D design
4	10.7	Teaching/research	10.5	General creative career (subject not specified)	10.5	General creative career (subject not specified)
5	10.5	General creative career (subject not specified)	7.3	Artists (fine art)	9.7	Teaching/research
6	8.9	Artists (fine art)	5.5	Buyers, sales reps, marketing, advertising and PR assoc/asst and auctioneers	9.5	Design (generic inc. designers, graphic artists and illustrators)
7	7.1	3-D design	4.2	3-D design	6.2	Fashion and textiles design
8	3.3	Buyers, sales reps, marketing, advertising and PR assoc/asst and auctioneers	2.1	Glass, ceramics, furniture, musical instrument makers and gold/silversmiths: makers	2.6	Librarian, archivists, curators and museum assistants
9	1.6	Librarian, archivists, curators and museum assistants	1.3	Textiles and garments trades technicians	1.6	Media production and photography
10	1.2	Printing trades	1.3	Printing trades	1.0	Conference, exhibition, entertainment and cultural est managers

<sup>1</sup> including printed, constructed and textile design

<sup>2</sup> all other applied arts, crafts, and craft-based 3-D design

Note: # although the question was intended as a single response item some respondents indicated more than one career aspiration. Therefore this item has been treated as a multiple response question and the sum % may be greater than 100%; and the percentages quoted in the table represent the proportion of goals/jobs cited.

Source: *Crafting Futures, IES, 2010; Appendix Table B37*

A quarter (23 per cent) [20 per cent] felt they were not very or not at all close to their chosen career, and this is very similar to the proportion who felt they were underemployed in their work. Crafts graduates were optimistic for the future: 69 per cent [75 per cent] of those not yet in their chosen career thought they were likely to achieve their career goals within the next five years (see Appendix Table B40).

### 6.1.1 Subject differences

Amongst crafts graduates, there were fairly clear distinctions between the aspirations of Textiles graduates and those of Other Applied Arts and Crafts graduates, largely reflecting their discipline of study. Textiles graduates were relatively more likely to aspire to work in fashion and textiles design (31 per cent), although this industry sector was important for Other Applied Arts and Crafts subjects (see Appendix Table B37).

## 6.2 Factors in career decision-making

A range of factors appear to influence career decisions for crafts graduates: having a stable source of income (68 per cent felt this was very important in their career decisions) [60 per cent]; improving knowledge and skills (65 per cent) [65 per cent]; making full use of knowledge and skills (65 per cent) [65 per cent]; having time with family and friends (60 per cent) [58 per cent]; and pursuing creative practice (56 per cent) [58 per cent]. Crafts graduates are driven by a need for security, new learning and work/life balance (see Appendix Table B41).

The career motivators for crafts graduates are very similar to those found for creative graduates as a whole, and it is interesting to note the marginally higher influence achieving a stable income has on crafts graduates than for creative graduates. This may be reflected in the higher proportion entering teaching as a career.

There are some anomalies in the results to be interrogated further. For example, in spite of the high levels of self-employment, working for yourself was the least important factor, with half the respondents saying this was not at all or not very important. Textiles graduates were considerably less likely to be driven by a desire to work for themselves than graduates from Other Applied Arts and Crafts subjects.

## 6.3 Looking to the future

Although crafts graduates generally felt satisfied with their current work situation, looking to the future the majority thought they would be in the same career area as at present but they anticipated some progression to working at a higher level and some degree of further learning. Very few anticipated a change in career direction.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) was important for many. The most commonly anticipated changes were training and learning new skills (82 per cent expected this in the next five years) [82 per cent], and to be working in a higher level job in the same career (75 per cent) [79 per cent].

However, 71 per cent [69 per cent] expected no change in their working situation, and to be continuing to do the same thing in five years time (see Appendix Table B42).

Caring responsibilities were an important factor with 59 per cent [56 per cent] feeling it would be fairly or very likely that they would be parents or looking after dependents. Self-employment was an important aspiration with 45 per cent [54 per cent] anticipating working freelance and 42 per cent [44 per cent] running their own business.

## 6.4 Barriers to career progression

Almost one in four crafts graduates (23 per cent) [20 per cent] felt they were not yet in their chosen career and one-third of these thought it unlikely they would achieve their goals in the next five years, representing a very small proportion of all crafts graduates (less than six per cent). Where this was the case, respondents were asked to say why they thought that their career goals were unachievable in that time period. Reasons were mainly to do with financial constraints, lack of experience and limited opportunities. These findings mirror those for all creative graduates documented in the main CGCF study. It is worth noting that in many cases, this group of crafts graduates reported a combination of barriers.

Examples of career barriers given included: not having the finances to start up a business or to take up further study, concerns about the level of income achievable in a creative career, worries about loss of income when taking time out from a current job to gain the 'right sort' of work experience (often unpaid), perceived lack of opportunities in a chosen field or location, a competitive jobs market (heightened by the recession), perceived lack of relevant/valued skills and confidence, and personal commitments. These issues are illustrated by the following quotes:

*'University never told me how hard life would be in terms of careers and money. I can't afford to stop work and follow my dream so unless I have a lucky break or win the lottery it won't happen for a while. I spent too much money at uni and am still paying for it now. I have travelled and do have a studio but paid jobs in these areas are few and far between'*

3-D design/ceramics

*'I have gone into teaching to earn more money, have not been doing my own work for three years now - seems unlikely I will find time/money/job opportunity to get back into textile work'*

Textiles

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## 7 A Richer Picture of Career Experiences

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### Summary

- One year on from the census questionnaire survey, the career patterns of crafts graduates continue to be complex and diverse, with career moves rooted in a desire to continue with creative practice. Portfolio working dominates with graduates combining paid work with formal and informal study and unpaid activity.
- Graduates typically move between permanent employment, temporary and part-time work and self-employment, or combinations of these, as they seek to establish a stable income and achieve their career goals.
- Graduates stay focused on creative careers, and work in non-creative sectors was both a positive choice and a strategic career move to provide a regular income whilst continuing in creative practice. A key example here is the gravitation towards teaching as careers progressed.
- Movement within creative disciplines showed a willingness to learn and adapt to new opportunities, markets and projects.
- Graduates valued their creative education - learning through project-based enquiry in a critical context; applying learning through work experience on their courses and industry-linked projects; and appreciating and developing professional skills, such as working to deadlines, self-discipline and juggling priorities.
- 'Intelligent making' - the relationship between personal direction, creative, design and making skills, learning from mistakes, theoretical considerations supported by good research skills, criticism and contextual learning - was seen as fundamental to creative careers.
- Personal attributes such as independence, persistence, self-motivation and a strong work ethic were crucial and graduates recognised they had developed these on their courses and taken them into their working lives.
- Finding work was one of the main challenges facing graduates. Work experience and contacts established at university were essential, and graduates continued to develop and nurture networks as their careers progressed. The serendipitous nature of career paths created uncertainty and work was often found by word of mouth. Nevertheless, graduates were optimistic and strategic in their pursuit of work in a competitive job market.
- Important career facilitators were: a strong commitment to creative work; ability to be adaptable and strategic in career moves; developing new skills and knowledge; and seeking opportunities to learn about business and how the industry works.

- Family and friends were a strong source of support and the largely hidden contribution of parents, families and partners to the growth of the cultural and creative sector in this way deserves wider recognition. There was some success with grants, residencies and loans, and these forms of financial support can have a very positive impact on graduates, their markets and the development of their creative ventures in their early careers.
- Graduates were naturally collaborative and used their contacts to bring together teams and peers to work on specific projects. Collaboration was beneficial for combating isolation, and works well for pooling resources, sharing costs, professional support and providing a critical context for feedback and dialogue around creative practice.
- Career success appears to be measured in terms of personal and creative fulfilment, professional recognition, life-work balance and progression to more stable career and income levels.
- In the economic downturn, graduates appeared to be realistic and adaptable in coping with job losses and a fall-off in demand and freelance work. Strategies included deferring job change until prospects improved and working freelance until more permanent employment came along. Graduates were proactive in exploring new markets, maintaining demand for services, strategic in cutting costs, and working for lower rates of pay or professional fees.
- Graduates were resourceful and pragmatic in responding to the recession by keeping their options open and investing in their own development to enhance their career prospects, continuing with practice, learning new skills and knowledge. Graduates were prepared to make sacrifices to study, update skills or broaden experience, often working long hours to combine further study with work. Postgraduate study was an aspiration, but was seen as unrealistic financially.
- Short courses were the preferred model for CPD, and graduates were keen to enhance their creative practice and career prospects, update and learn new practice skills and processes, keep up with new digital technologies and industry software, and engage in training on running a business, e-marketing, website development, branding and promotion.
- There were many practical suggestions for how undergraduate courses could prepare students for the transition to work: relevant work experience, making the most of industry links and visiting lecturers, improving business awareness, more working to commercial briefs and encouraging graduates to research their careers before graduating.
- Beyond commitment, dedication to creative practice, a professional attitude and self-belief, graduates' advice to students was to manage debt whilst studying, build contacts, continue to discuss their work with others, listen to advice and to persevere in their job search - even if it meant taking a lesser job.

Some important questions emerged from the survey about graduates' experiences of the transition from higher education into work: what factors had influenced their career choices; what difficulties did they face; and what kinds of opportunities and working patterns developed from these early experiences?

An email follow-up survey and depth interviews gathered more detailed personal responses from crafts graduates about their working lives and explored these questions in some depth. The narratives captured allowed us to discover more about the complexities of crafts graduates' early career experiences – their transition from HE into work, the choices they made, and how they apply their creativity in different settings, both within and outside the creative industries.

The timing of the email survey and interviews was crucial (autumn 2009 – spring 2010), one year on from the census questionnaire survey, as it provided an opportunity to discover the impact the recession was having on career prospects (see section 1.5 Methodology).

### 7.1 Current work - one year on

Crafts graduates worked in a range of different roles at the time of the survey and occupations largely reflected the subjects studied at undergraduate level. There was evidence of graduates working across the boundaries of the creative field in which they had trained or to a different field entirely.

For example, one crafts graduate with a BA in furniture design was working as a photographer and another, who completed a 3-D design course in jewellery and metalwork, was starting to work with screen-printing whilst also running children’s workshops for the local council.

Although the majority of crafts graduates were in the same roles they had reported at the time of the initial survey, there was some evidence of job movement in the email follow-up survey. For some this was a natural progression: for example, moving into teaching following a PGCE; or promotion from a lower status job, for example to creative director at an established design company.

Teaching provided a secure career foundation as a main or secondary career combined with other creative work to provide supplementary income. As we saw from the initial survey, relatively few graduates reported jobs entirely outside of the creative sector.

Others reported having lost the job that they had been doing at the time of the initial survey either through the recession or lack of work in their field or area, while for some there was a shift in the balance of activities they had already been doing.

One respondent had been working in three roles: as a full-time research technician at a university while working part-time as a freelance print designer and part-time textiles designer on a voluntary basis. He had managed to turn the part-time print and textiles work into a full-time paid activity as a partner in a small design company, and going part-time in the research technician role.

Current jobs reported include creative and teaching roles, such as:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Designer/partner in a textile/print company and part-time research technician | Art technician at an FE college  |
| Textile designer  | Self-employed handbag and accessories designer                           |
| Freelance fine art conservation   | Self-employed accessories designer/maker                                 |
| Freelance visual artist   | Creative director of an established furniture and product design company |
| PhD student and lecturer  | Head designer for a fashion jewellery                                    |
| Greeting card and stationery designer   |  |

Fashion graphics designer for babies, boys and menswear	company supplying high street shops
Textiles teacher at a secondary school	Full-time self-employed jeweller and part-time evening class teacher
Jewellery maker and creative activities workshop facilitator	
Wider non-creative roles, often in lower management positions and/or in the public sector (local government, HE and social care), were:	
Community work specialising in youth work	Learning support at a university (whilst studying for a Masters)
Education outreach officer at a museum and freelance worker	Local authority homelessness officer
Facilities administrator at a university	Medical secretary and website administrator
Local council customer service department and a community arts project worker	Acting manager of a dental practice and working on a collaborative textile project
Trade union support worker (whilst learning new print techniques and setting up a local art group)	Enterprise officer at a university

## 7.2 Finding work

The first questionnaire survey showed that the majority of crafts graduates had specific career goals in mind at graduation, and even where their career goals had changed they tended to remain within the creative sector. However, finding creative work is very challenging, particularly permanent roles; graduates need to be persistent, pragmatic and resourceful and there was clear evidence of this.

### Using contacts and networks

Respondents to the email follow-up survey often found work and opportunities through the contacts and networks established during their studies (eg through people on their course or from work placements), or through formal and informal networks after graduation.

There was a sense of stability and progression, with a number of respondents working in the same job they had described at the time of the initial survey and some had been in the same job or with the same employer since graduation. One respondent found her first job as a studio assistant through her tutor, who had been approached by an employer and asked to recommend someone suitable. This job had worked out well for her over the years, helping her to develop and progress through the company:



*'My current employer wrote to my college tutor shortly before my graduation enquiring for suitable candidates for a studio assistant. I got the job in 2004, and have developed my role into Head Designer. I have chosen to stay at the same company, despite a successful interview at another company. This is due to the growth experienced at the company I work for, I enjoy being part of an expanding company, and it's been exciting to see where we go next.'*

Head designer for a fashion jewellery company

Another respondent, a self-employed jewellery maker and evening class teacher, described having a number of career opportunities stemming from a residency at the university where she studied:

*'I was lucky enough to spend two years after graduating as an artist in residence at [the university where I studied] where I could continue to create my work in a supportive environment as I started to approach galleries and have my work shown. As part of the residency I taught one day per week in the department and this is how I started teaching. I received a start-up grant from the Scottish Arts Council and set up my own studio to work from and continued working at the art college as an assistant in 1st year teaching and assisting in summer school. After this I began to teach evening classes and summer school courses at [a local art school] and also at [the university]. I have been involved with [a key arts organisation] and am now a council member, helping to organise the annual exhibition amongst other things. I have also been involved with a charity in Kenya teaching underprivileged girls jewellery-making skills. Throughout this time I have continued my own work and have been exhibiting nationally and internationally.'*

Jewellery maker and evening class teacher

One respondent, a freelance conservationist, reported having found out about all of his jobs through friends. Another, a ceramics graduate, a number of years after graduation, described hearing about an opportunity working as an assistant for an established architectural ceramicist from a former tutor:

*'While working in Wales I heard from my tutor at University (still keep in contact) about work available as an assistant for [an established architectural ceramicist in Scotland]. This was a good opportunity to network and develop skills along with a reasonable pay. Have since worked with [the same ceramicist] on another project again recently.'*

Ceramicist and part-time technician at a local art college

Other ways of finding out about creative work included word of mouth, through more informal networks established either through friends at university or since, and through trades bodies and specialist magazines and website.

*'I found my first job through Drapers Record magazine/website, since then I have worked closely with specialist agencies to find new positions within the design industry.'*

Babies, boys and menswear designer

*'I joined a local arts collective who organised selling events in the area and who were also very helpful'*

Ceramicist and part-time technician at a local art college

## Finding work through placements

Working on a placement whilst at university was an important way of gaining work experience, and from the employers' viewpoint a common recruitment method. A placement is a chance for graduates to show an employer what they were capable of which in some

cases led to being invited back to work on a more permanent basis. This was a way to kick-start working lives onto a trajectory that led to current careers:

*'I was invited back to work for my placement employer - [a design studio for a high street retailer]. I was then offered a job for [another established furniture design company] where I was for three and a half years as senior designer. Then I went freelance as I wanted to try and earn more money. Worked for an Australian property developer for five months designing a range of furniture, and an industrial design consultancy [with large corporate clients]. Started as Creative Director with [an established furniture and product design company] in August of 2009 - very exciting.'*

Creative director for an established furniture and product design company

Any kind of work experience or voluntary work, whether taken as part of the course or after graduation, could be a route into more permanent work and often provided a way of making useful contacts:

*'I gained invaluable experience and contacts by ringing a local contemporary crafts museum for work experience. I did three months part-time volunteer work in 2003 and have worked for them as a freelancer ever since. Word of mouth has been a huge tool in gaining workshops. Many jobs have been gained as the employer/company asked around for a good facilitator.'*

Jewellery maker and creative workshop facilitator

*'Started off on a work placement immediately after graduation which led to my first design job with [a design studio in London]. On leaving I returned to Scotland and began to explore digital printing. On taking up my current role at [a university], I have begun to experiment with digital textile technology which has led me to establish a design company with two former colleagues specialising in producing digital textile design and using traditional techniques with new digital technology.'*

Partner in a textile design company and part-time technician at a university

However, in what can often be a competitive market for jobs, difficulties in gaining work experience or the financial implications of working for limited pay were sometimes a barrier to gaining a foothold in a creative career.

*'The lack of design jobs in the south west (particularly in the textile trade) has been the most challenging factor. Too many design positions require years of work experience or else starting salaries which were unworkable.'*

Textiles graduate working as a medical secretary

### 7.3 Variations in career patterns

One year on from the first survey, graduates continued to engage in a range of working patterns, modes of working and types of careers. These ranged from full-time permanent jobs in the creative industries, to working self-employed as freelance designers or makers, and portfolio careers of one form or another. Making a living solely through creative work had its difficulties and one strategy was to combine more stable 'non-creative' jobs with less reliable and/or lucrative creative work. Some had put on hold their creative careers, either temporarily or permanently, opting for more permanent and stable jobs in another sector. Teaching provided a role that was largely creative, utilised creative knowledge or skills, and provided a secure and predictable income.

The following provides some examples of these modes of working, showing the variety of forms graduates' careers could take and highlighting some of the issues related to different ways of working.

### Permanent creative work

For many crafts graduates, a full-time permanent position at an established design company or other form of creative organisation would constitute the ideal form of employment, providing an outlet for creativity while potentially offering a stable income and an opportunity to progress in their careers. Respondents to the email survey reported having found permanent jobs in the creative arts sector as their careers progressed.

For example, a furniture design graduate had managed to secure a job as creative director of an established furniture design company through making the most of the contacts and opportunities acquired over the years (see example above – section 7.2). Similarly, a surface pattern design graduate reported working for a clothing company designing babies', boys' and menswear in a permanent role. In this case, the respondent had managed to find the post through specialist agencies having already worked in the sector for a number of years. However, this had not necessarily been an easy task and redundancy from one design position forced the need to find a temporary part-time job whilst continuing to work freelance and look for other opportunities.

*'I found my first job through Drapers Record magazine/website, since then I have worked closely with specialist agencies to find new positions within the fashion design industry .... I was made redundant this year, with few jobs available I had to work as a barmaid whilst freelancing and selling graphic work to international agencies. However I was lucky enough to find a new job within four months. It has taught me to be prepared for the worst as designers are often seen as a commodity and not a necessity. But also to keep your options open, the more varied you are the easier it is to find work.'*

Fashion graphics designer for baby, boys and menswear

So working in a permanent position does not necessarily protect oneself from volatility in the job market or from the effects of recession. A surface pattern and design graduate with four years' experience in the industry, working as a design manager for a small stationery and greeting card company was subsequently made redundant. The next step was to continue working freelance in the same industry until full-time work could be found:

*'I took a sandwich degree at university, which was key in finding the right job when I graduated, as I returned to the company I did a placement with and worked my way up from a designer to a manager over four years after graduating. I then emigrated to Canada where I found work in the greeting card industry, for a very small company. Unfortunately due to the economy and working for a small business I was made redundant. I love my new found lifestyle in Canada, I have taken up freelance design work until I can find full-time employment again in the future .... Finding freelance design work is proving a challenge for me and something I have never done before.'*

Freelance greeting card and stationery designer

Working in a permanent role for an established company gave a measure of stability allowing graduates to develop and progress within an organisation, as illustrated by the head designer for the fashion jewellery company (see section 7.2), who had moved up in the company. This respondent had stayed in the company, in spite of being offered a job elsewhere, because business was growing and it was exciting to be part of an expanding company.

## Self-employment and freelance work

There was a good spread of freelance working and self-employment across disciplines, including textiles and accessories design, print design, jewellery making and design, ceramics, and fine art conservation. Self-employment was generally seen as a natural progression as graduates developed more professional knowledge and potential clients. For others this is likely to have been borne out of necessity, because of the way in which work is organised in a particular area:

*'I worked for my father one day a week and for another conservator another day of the week for about a year, and then I stopped working for one of them and I started getting my own clients. I still work for one conservator. I get work from them and do it in my own studio. Not working for them directly, but as an independent conservator.'*

Conservation

In a sector characterised by a contract economy, opportunities for permanent paid employment are shrinking and freelance work may be the default position. Graduates are pursuing opportunities for work, rather than actual jobs or vacancies. This may pose significant challenges in maintaining a regular income. For example, the greeting card and stationery designer mentioned above had to switch to freelance work after losing a permanent position and reported having difficulty adjusting to the situation, while for others being self-employed was a conscious preference, allowing them to focus on their creative practice and to be their own boss.

Indeed, some crafts graduates reported returning to self-employed work after spending a period in a more stable 'non-creative' role because they felt it did not allow them enough time to do their creative work, and they also enjoyed having more control over their creativity:

*'I was running my own business and I've been building that up. I'd much rather be running my own business than working for someone else'*

Self-employed ceramicist

The fluid nature of careers is often dictated by demand in the market, and graduates were keen to establish a name for themselves, work flexibly and were willing to move to where the opportunities might be.

## Portfolio careers

The survey indicated that half of crafts graduates were portfolio workers, and there was often a combination of income streams and development activity. This pattern of working could manifest itself in a number of ways. For some this meant concurrent freelance projects, combining more substantial income earning projects with more informal projects (towards a longer-term creative goal):

*'Designer/partner [in a textiles design company]. Creating prints, embroideries and laser cut designs for sale to the fashion and interior markets. Part-time technician [in the digital art and design department at a university]. Responsible for the upkeep of the digital textile equipment.'*

Printed textiles design graduate

*'Freelance visual arts and INSET/CPD training & education projects ... infant primary and secondary level. Contracted to Creative Partnerships enquiry projects in Essex and Hertfordshire .... Developing a practice to generate independent work sales through manufacture and developed practice to work freelance with a more varied work base.'*

Ceramics graduate

*'I am currently looking for teaching/lecturing work. I am also making and selling my own textile work and running my own textile workshops for adults. I am about to begin teaching on an 'Aim Higher' course at a college, teaching adults and also first diploma textile students. I have also been appointed as an EdExcel Assessment Associate, and I will be a visiting moderator for GCE A level Textile design Unit 2 in the next year.'*

Textiles craft and embroidery graduate

One respondent listed five work activities at the time of the email survey. These included both paid and unpaid jobs and illustrate the variety of activities graduates accumulate and through which they create networks/contacts, find a way into the creative industries, continue their creative practice and build up income streams. This is also a good example of how creative graduates need to be pragmatic and resourceful to further their careers and creative practice, often pursuing a number of avenues at the same time to improve their chances of success:

*'1) I work one day a week at my local library. 2) I work as a casual information assistant at ... an arts and gallery centre. 3) I have a studio at ... a collective building housing artists and craftspeople. 4) I sell at craft fairs. 5) I am course bookings secretary with the [crafts association], this month I will change to become Treasurer ... I already had my one day a week library job and I continued with that as I enjoy it and I needed the money. In the summer that I graduated I worked unpaid as a technician setting up an exhibition at (name of) Uni. As I had free time I volunteered at my local Oxfam shop one morning a week doing online book valuing and eBay sales of designer clothes. I did this for a year as I enjoyed it and felt it was a good cause. For the three months of the [international arts biennial] worked in a gallery as a paid exhibition assistant. I did this for the money and to get experience and because the Biennial was an exciting thing to be involved in. I started to look for studio space in Nov 2008, visiting lots of ... studios. I decided on the [arts collective] and heard there was a long waiting list, I put my name down but got one immediately! It was in poor condition and it took me three months to get it to a workable condition. I was never happy in this studio, it was dark, cold and isolated and I found I didn't use it much. In June, when I was considering giving it up, a much nicer space came free and I am in that now and using it more.'*

*I worked with a business advisor and wrote a business plan and got a start-up grant earlier this year, I bought a kiln. I made a series of work to sell at craft fairs and in galleries. At about Easter I started looking for more paid work, applied for some positions but didn't find anything I wanted till August 2009. I am now a paid casual information assistant at the [arts gallery centre], I can pick my hours to fit in with my other work and any creative commitments. I found myself very tired after I graduated and unsure of what I wanted to do, the MA course didn't appeal. I have family commitments and they take up a lot of time and energy too. I decided to proceed as a designer maker while earning money in other ways at the same time. I am still doing this, the designer making has not been successful financially and I am in the middle of re-evaluating this, thinking about product ranges and considering maybe a more fine art path. I would say I am still not quite sure of what I want to do.'*

Design - textiles and metalwork graduate

Creative graduates' career paths – characterised by portfolio careers – appear to evolve and have a less linear trajectory than those in other disciplines or sectors, and the ways in which opportunities present themselves can be complex. As illustrated above, sometimes careers appear to be more happenstance and involve keeping 'a number of irons in the fire' whilst

employing various methods to access opportunities within the sector. Crafts graduates are no different in this respect.

## Teaching

Teaching as a career appears to have something of a gravitational pull into mid-career, and for some it was a key career goal. It offers income stability, particularly when combined with the pursuit of independent creative practice. This was seen by some as a fallback position if freelance or small business ventures were proving difficult to sustain:

*'I have worked hard to run my own business but it is really difficult to survive when you are not earning a wage each month and you are dependent on sales. I hope to get a part-time teaching post, so that I can also create the work I love and continue to work as an artist.'*

3-D design (jewellery) graduate, mother and children's workshop facilitator

*'It has been very hard this year for selling my handbags. I have decided not to stop but looking for a part-time job as a teacher.'*

Self-employed handbags and accessories designer

*'I ... continue to exhibit my own work in local galleries. I decided that I needed a steady income and have always wanted to move into teaching so I studied a PGCE in Post Compulsory Education and Training .... I am now looking for teaching/lecturing work within textiles at FE or HE level.'*

Textiles craft and embroidery graduate and qualified teacher

Clearly, finding a permanent teaching/lecturing role was not always easy. A couple of respondents reported that they were currently looking for teaching work and others relied on part-time teaching at evening classes or in the adult learning sector.

It was important to achieve the right balance. For some crafts graduates taking on a full-time teaching job may be a step too far, taking time away from creative work. This was the case for one respondent who had gone into teaching after experiencing low earnings as a self-employed jeweller. Having gone back to creative practice full-time, income was supplemented by teaching part-time at evening classes.

*'I went on to [an educational trust] workshop, to do a postgraduate residency for one year in silversmithing and jewellery design after graduating. After this I moved back to my parents and was self-employed for a year. I found I wasn't earning enough and didn't quite know where to go next so went to do a PGCE and teach for three years which I didn't particularly enjoy! Then went part-time in the third year of teaching and finally left in July 2008 after building my business back up .... Teaching helped me earn a wage but put a stop to my creative work but taking the plunge again and linking up with other local jewellers to meet every month really helped [in my career]'*

Full-time self-employed jeweller and part-time evening class teacher

## Career breaks

Taking time out of education and work, or to go travelling, for example, was a feature of career plans and for some this was an important opportunity to reflect on creative work and/or seek inspiration.

*'I graduated from [university] with a 2:1 in Textile Crafts, went on to study a Masters in Fashion and textiles ... which I passed. I then took some time to travel the world to develop my inspiration for my own textile work and collaborated with a fellow colleague in making our own textile works to sell at fairs, exhibitions etc.'*

Self-employed textiles maker and part-time teacher

For others, taking time out after graduating afforded an opportunity to go home to live and work and save enough money to get started in their own creative practice.

Other reasons for taking time out of a career were related to crafts graduates' personal lives, such as starting a family which for some meant only a temporary break in careers. However, for others, the cost of childcare and/or the associated costs of taking time away from work to care for a family was a challenge. The impact of family on life-work balance often meant further resourcefulness and adjustments in ways of working to continue in creative practice – still an overarching career driver:

*'I would love to be able to develop my new work more. With a young child I am finding it difficult to pay for childcare. I know my work would develop a lot quicker given some time.'*

3-D design/jewellery graduate, mother and children's workshop facilitator

## 7.4 CPD and further study

The email follow-up survey and interviews provided confirmation of a high level of investment in continuing personal development and the reasons for doing so: to enhance career chances (CPD is an effective career facilitator or a way to open up new career opportunities); continue creative practice and follow a creative interest; and develop skills and knowledge in their chosen subject area.

For example, a ceramics graduate had worked for some years as a technician at the university from which he graduated and then enrolled on an MA; his choice of both work and further study were to stay close to his practice and continue learning:

*'Since I graduated I worked as a technician at the art college I did my foundation at, I did this for four years. I then decided I was ready to do a Masters degree. I have done both of these things to learn as much as I can about my field.'*

Ceramics graduate

A textiles and surface design graduate suggested that having completed an MA, continuing on to a PhD and embarking on an academic career seemed a natural progression.

*'Applied for PhD and AHRC funding whilst studying MA and received the funding. For me, PhD was a natural progression from my MA.'*

PhD student and associate lecturer

Other examples involved a change of career focus:

*'I have moved from creative practice to writing practice in moving from an MA in Textiles to a theory-based PhD. The institution where I am studying offers the support, training and development I currently need.'*

PhD student and associate lecturer at a university

*'I took a PGCE course as I was not sure what to do, and discovered that I enjoyed teaching and five years later I'm still happy in my second school'*

Secondary school teacher

*'My undergraduate study led me to my postgraduate study which reinforced my interest and determination to pursue a career in museums/heritage. This has been of value, even if [my career] hasn't turned out as I hoped as yet.'*

Administrator in heritage sector

Graduates were prepared to make sacrifices and work hard to develop themselves and their practice and acquire new knowledge and skills. This was the main driver for postgraduate study:

*'I started my Masters last October in jewellery design. I decided to do it for a different challenge. Now my job's more challenging than it ever has been and I'm trying to do all my course work. It's quite difficult to find the time to do both and to switch on a different design edge. Work gives me one day off a week to go to college but I make up my hours for that day at home - so I'm still expected to work 45 hours a week, and then study part-time.'*

Goldsmithing, silversmithing and jewellery

For some, engaging in further study was seen as a beneficial experience even when it did not directly result in achieving career goals. For others, further study had a more direct influence on their careers, as a route into a job or developing the further skills, knowledge and confidence they need to be successful. This is particularly true in the case of teaching where a postgraduate qualification is a career entry requirement.

*'Studying for my Masters and passing, has allowed me to gain teaching experience within a HE institution and having this qualification of a Masters has given me the edge at an interview when applying for teaching/lecturing jobs. My PGCE challenged me throughout, however it has made me a much stronger, more confident individual.'*

Textiles craft and embroidery graduate and qualified teacher

However, some crafts graduates felt that further study had not helped them in their careers at all, while others had difficulty dealing with the competing demands of studying while working or gave financial or personal reasons. Further learning clearly requires a big personal investment and some sacrifices with graduates working long hours to combine paid work with part-time study.

This perhaps highlights the importance of finding the right course: will it provide what graduates want to learn and enhance their practice, and how will they use it afterwards? Equally, type of qualification, affordability, value for money, and manageability alongside work and other commitments are important considerations:

*'Did one year of an MA in design research whilst working two part-time jobs and freelance design. Stopped MA after a year as course programme seemed more geared towards artists than designers. Stopped freelance work as no guaranteed income for any work carried out through the company I worked with. Took decision to go full time in one of my part-time jobs to enable me to afford a house.'*

Medical secretary and website administrator

*'Last year after having my first child I went back to University to do a PGCE in Art and Design, unfortunately the workload was quite overwhelming and I had to stop after six months. Currently I am looking to do a few little art fairs in 2010.'*

3-D design/jewellery graduate, mother and children's workshop facilitator



Findings from the questionnaire survey showed that four out of five crafts graduates intended to engage in further study or development of some kind in the future, higher than found for all creative graduates. The email follow-up survey asked about graduates' CPD needs for the next year and these are discussed in section 7.7 below.

## 7.5 What did graduates value from their creative education?

Looking back after graduation, what do respondents value about their educational experiences and what have they taken with them from their creative education into their working lives? Crafts graduates' responses help to build a picture of how their course has influenced their life and careers and where there are felt to be gaps or deficiencies.

### Learning through making

Crafts graduates valued many aspects of their courses and the wider experience of being at university, including a strong work ethic instilled through the learning process. Undertaking a creative course for its own sake was an important motivating factor for choosing first degrees in a crafts subject:

*'Going to university and studying on the textile crafts course allowed me to be diverse in my textile techniques, and eventually specialise in what I enjoyed and was good at most.'*  
Textiles craft and embroidery graduate and qualified teacher

When crafts graduates were asked what they had taken with them from their course into their working lives, creative, design and making skills, opportunities to learn from mistakes, theoretical considerations supported by good research skills, criticism and contextual learning were seen as fundamental to creative careers. It is useful to refer to Press and Cusworth's (1998) reflexive model for 'intelligent making' which captured four elements: Creative ideas, Materials and processes, and Personal Direction in a Theoretical and cultural context, facilitated by Key skills of identification, invention, expression, judgment, construction and presentation.

Our crafts graduates considered that the models and structures for learning by doing through project-based enquiry were good preparation for working life, including: 'juggling projects', 'having to work independently', 'being well organised' and the 'pressure of working to deadlines'.

*'I found being able to work on projects particularly rewarding. We had set projects to begin with that we were able to work on which took you in totally different directions to perhaps what you'd come up with yourself. And then later on we had to determine our own projects, I suppose, own objectives and discover more about topics.'*

Jewellery

Understanding materials and their interaction was a specific aspect of crafts education that graduates valued:

*'I was using my skills and knowledge to design caravans. For example I've used materials science and ... my understanding in manufacture helped with the buying side of projects because I know about extrusions and different plastics and what's good for different things, so I won't be buying the wrong plastic.'*

Furniture and product design

Peers and tutors were seen as instrumental in the development of creative work – helping crafts graduates to be able to ‘deal with and act on criticism’, and ‘learning from and alongside others’.

*‘Listening to criticism from peers and fellow students taking it on board and learning from it. Working with deadlines and self-organisation’*

Fashion designer for baby, boys and menswear

Crafts graduates reported a range of different skills and attributes developed on their courses that had helped them in their careers to date.

*‘All the practical skills and background knowledge I acquired [have helped]. Confidence in my work and ability. Network contacts. My sketchbooks, things I made, research photographs. Friends.’*

Design textiles and metalwork graduate and portfolio worker

### **Business, enterprise and employability skills**

Over the past decade there has been considerable improvement in the provision of business skills, enterprise and professional development in undergraduate crafts courses. This was seen to be important for crafts graduates who were more likely than graduates of other creative disciplines to engage in business/enterprise activities, and participate in shows and exhibitions as analysis from the initial survey showed.

Crafts graduates were keen to understand the working world, from basic business skills and commercial awareness to finding work, managing projects, working to briefs and deadlines; and these were felt to be equally useful in a teaching career.

*‘There’s a lot that we did within the course. We worked with manufacturers, we worked with other designers, working together as a team, that sort of thing. It just gave you a head start in industry.’*

Furniture and product design

Time management, listening to and accepting criticism were also important and felt to be key employability skills.

*‘The ability to work to a design brief with deadlines. Only now the deadlines are much tighter! Having been student rep for three years at college helped my confidence to take on more senior roles with added responsibilities.’*

Fashion jewellery designer

*‘The ability to juggle lots of different projects at once [has helped me from my course]. My BA was a modular route.’*

PhD student and associate lecturer

*‘Successful time management and a strong work ethic. The workload from my degree was such that there was little time for a traditional student way of life and so I came out of my degree well prepared for the working world.’*

Textile design

A recurring theme among self-employed crafts graduates or those who had worked freelance at some stage in their careers, was the lack of knowledge at the point of graduation about how to convert their creativity into a stable form of income. Yet, crafts graduates did not rate the acquisition of business and entrepreneurial skills as important to career

development in the initial questionnaire survey, perhaps indicating that aspects of study directly related to creative practice had a higher priority:

*'The main thing I have taken with me, is the business training a few of my classmates and I attended in our own time from a 3rd party organisation. I feel many institutions lack to provide any useful business/working life prep.'*

Jewellery maker and evening class teacher

The ideas and artefacts or design outcomes developed during courses had in some instances been taken further and developed into business possibilities.

*'My handbags are made from the fabric designs that I developed for my graduation show - made from plastic carrier bags.'*

Self-employed handbag and accessories designer

There was evidence of the transferability of skills and learning processes:

*'I think that your deadlines when you're at university are sort of two to three months at a time, whereas in a working environment you might only have a day. But as far as being able to look at something and think about it in a design way, then it has really helped me because it is the same process, it's just different media.'*

Fashion designer for baby, boys and menswear

And transferability in the context of teaching others:

*'The key skills learned at undergraduate level have allowed me to keep producing my own work and have also allowed me to teach these skills to others. Working through projects and to briefs have also been key to developing my own lesson plans and proposals for courses.'*

Jewellery maker and evening class teacher

Graduates had clearly taken advantage of opportunities both within and outside their courses. For example, in learning about business and professional aspects or arranging their own work experience. The wider benefits of going to university were also cited and contributed confidence and maturity:

*'I learnt a lot about myself really, about my own limits and what I wanted out of life.'*

Part-time art teacher and Arts Award Advisor

## Work experience and placements

As mentioned earlier, work placements whilst at university were an invaluable experience providing crafts graduates with a foot on the career ladder and an advantage over those who had little work experience.

*'I would say the biggest thing which put me in a good career position was attending a university which offered a year's industrial placement. The experience in the industry put me in an excellent position for when I graduated, and gave me the edge over other graduates.'*

Freelance greetings card and stationery designer

*'Work placements. I think they are key to breaking into the fashion textiles industry'*

Designer/partner in a textiles design company

*'I think more work experience placements would be very helpful. I undertook a one month placement as part of my degree programme however this was optional and I think more or longer placements would allow students to form contacts within industry and so find it easier to find work once graduated.'*

Medical secretary and website administrator

## 7.6 Career success

What does success mean to crafts graduates? Staying close to creative practice, recognition, continuing with making, having autonomy, client satisfaction, being self-sufficient in a career, supporting ones family, making a difference to the way people see the world, or contributing to society were all cited. The thrill of successfully completing work to expectations and personal fulfilment in creativity came through in many case study interviews:

*'I think success is when I'm working with a client, and they ask you to design something very particular for them. You can sit there and talk it through with them, and design something bespoke for them and then it comes out exactly as you'd imagined it when it's been made. They love it, and they're thrilled with it, and you know that that piece is going to be a family heirloom almost. You're making something that's going to be permanent, and will stay on this planet for the next thousand, two thousand years.'*

Goldsmithing, silversmithing and jewellery

*'Successes? The Liverpool Biennial work after leaving university - it was really good to get that first bit of work - something arty based - even though it was only for a few months .... And it's about other people seeing your work really, it's about what I said about being creative and telling a story and wanting other people to connect with it as well so it makes a difference to them. Sometimes you can go to an art exhibition and look at something and it can really make you think about something differently or bring up something about you in your life so that you actually connect with a piece of work in some way.'*

Textiles design

Compromises tended to be financial to keep focused on creative working, but crafts graduates were proactive and a positive attitude prevailed. There was an optimism that things would improve:

*'Financially, it's a lot better than it has been. It's definitely going the right way, but I'm probably not even earning about 12 grand a year. So you end up in a situation of still living at home at 27 and no prospects really of being able to afford to move out. But yes, it's definitely going the right way and the teaching work I'm now doing is paying far better money for those kinds of skills. So, whereas I have been earning perhaps £5 or £6 an hour for (caring) agency work, I am getting like £18 or £20 which is obviously a great improvement.'*

Jewellery

## 7.7 Career facilitators

What had helped graduates in their early careers? Crafts graduates' responses provide both insights into the support structures they rely on to establish their careers and indicate needs and support for onward progression.

We examine the key themes arising from crafts graduates' responses to the email follow-up survey, focussing on opportunities, skills and attributes, and experiences that help to establish a creative career. Although each theme is explored separately, it is worth noting that in many cases it is a combination of these factors that contribute towards crafts graduates' progression.

## Motivation, confidence and commitment

Crafts graduates highlighted a range of personal attributes that they felt were key to maintaining a creative career.

For example, crafts graduates' motivation, tenacity and resilience were important for keeping going in pursuing a creative career, particularly for those who were self-employed or working freelance. Similarly, determination and commitment were seen as valuable attributes, particularly when attempting to get a creative career off the ground. Early successes were important and confidence was inextricably linked with an individual's belief in their work and engagement with clients and work colleagues.

*'I think my self-motivation has helped me in my life and work, allowing me to push myself and my work to create new opportunities for exhibitions and development. This is also essential for being self-employed as you need to motivate yourself.'*

Self-employed jeweller

*'My ambition and self-confidence to progress through all difficulties and odds'*

Textiles designer

*'Having been employed straight from college, and still working for the same employer, I have not really been too challenged or hindered. I'd say that my time in college was vital as this was how I gained my experience, and also where my current employer found me. Having the confidence to make my point of view matter, with good support from friends and family can also be considered as having helped me get to where I am today.'*

Head designer at a fashion jewellery design company

*'Determination! But also some very supportive members of staff at the institutions I have studied at. Good career advice (from academic staff not a specific career service). The opportunity to teach while studying PhD is great for me. Time management is challenging but crucial.'*

PhD student and associate lecturer

*'Commitment to the sector that I secured my qualifications for [museums/heritage] has helped me. You have to be extremely determined and persevere as the sector is notoriously lower paid than the commercial sector. I have been both challenged and hindered by the difficulty of breaking into the more "interesting" roles within the sector. It seems you have to accept being in lower admin jobs for quite some time and even then I don't know that this helps. I have yet to prove this myself .... My undergraduate study led me to my post-graduate study which reinforced my interest and determination to pursue a career in museums/heritage. This has been of value, even if it hasn't turned out as I hoped as yet.'*

Conservation graduate, working as an administrator

## Pragmatism and adaptability

There is considerable evidence of crafts graduates taking a pragmatic approach to their career progression. In some cases this meant taking jobs that did not utilise skills and creative abilities to the fullest, to get a foot in the door (see above). For others, this involved a process of learning about positioning themselves and their work in the market. For example, a couple of respondents reported changing their work to accommodate different markets or to reach a wider audience so as to be more financially viable.

*'I have started to develop a cheaper range of work to appeal to a wider market. My usual high-end work has been slower to sell but this is pitching up now with a new exhibition I am taking part in.'*

Self-employed jeweller

*'Straight after the graduation, I used to make something for up market so to speak, but it was slow going hence demotivating. After the career break (bringing up my family), my work has to fit in the child care, so I decided to make something smaller and easier. Because of the nature of the work I produce, I can also shift them a lot more quickly, too.'*

Self-employed bag and accessories designer

## Updating skills and CPD

As noted earlier, crafts graduates invest heavily in their own development and were keen to continue to learn. For many, CPD and keeping up to date in a potentially rapidly evolving industry was important, with the focus on developing creative practice. Short courses were a way of doing this without time away from paid work, whilst for others a postgraduate course was seen as essential for practice development, or finding employed work in an educational environment related to their field.

Respondents to the email follow-up survey were asked about their CPD needs over the next year:

*'I would like to do some short courses in silversmithing and jewellery to keep up to date with new processes and also develop my skills. I firmly believe in CPD.'*

Self-employed jeweller and evening class teacher

As well as discipline-related skills, crafts graduates were keen to acquire skills when they needed them – sometimes outside their chosen field. These were often linked to a specific need arising from current work, or to enhance creative practice and career prospects:

*'I am interested in learning more about photography and Photoshop to allow me to take better photographs of my own work to use for publicity and to approach galleries with. At the moment I use a professional photographer to do this but this is expensive and not always possible as work is sometimes only finished just before it needs to be sent away. I am also keen to learn CAD [computer-aided design] as I feel that this would help with designing and production of new work in line with the new technologies now available.'*

Self-employed jewellery designer

*'I have begun a Digital Photography course to help improve my Photoshop skills for when I do get a teaching job. I have also signed up for a pattern-cutting course to help me develop my fashion skills (again, for when I get a job). I will also be beginning my visiting moderator role in the next year which will not only assist with my own assessing and moderating when I get a job, but also helps consolidate my continuing professional development.'*

Textiles craft and embroidery graduate and qualified teacher

*'I would like to do another course in printing so that I can acquire more knowledge for both the creative side and for the subject knowledge to do some teaching.'*

3-D design/jewellery graduate, mother and children's workshop facilitator

## IT and industry standard software

IT and computer software skills, in particular, were seen to be important for career progression. Crafts graduates highlighted the need to strengthen skills in computer packages for their everyday work, and identified specific IT training they would find useful if they were given the chance. The pace of change in computer and digital technology requires the constant updating of skills, and CPD provision in this area is clearly a priority within the creative industries:

*'In a modern world, CAD / CAM [computer-aided manufacturing] is important to the design industry. I have been fortunate to find a job in design that uses more old-fashioned methods. However, to develop myself, I would find CAD training highly useful.'*  
Fashion jewellery designer

*'Learning more graphics software...Illustrator, Indesign. My degree only covered Photoshop, and I would personally like to have more knowledge of other programmes to put me in a better position at finding future employment.'*  
Freelance greeting card and stationery designer

*'CAD Skills, without these it would have been ten times harder to get a job.'*  
Fashion designer for baby, boys and menswear

*'Ideally I would like to receive more training in XHTML, however, as I have just started maternity leave this is not likely during the next 12 months.'*  
Medical secretary and website administrator

### **Business skills and working to commercial requirements**

Crafts graduates valued having access to business skills and career planning after graduation, from their university/lecturers, from colleagues or professionals:

*'I worked with a business advisor and wrote a business plan and got a start-up grant earlier this year, I bought a kiln. I made a series of work to sell at craft fairs and in galleries .... The business advisor at [the business advice consultancy] was really helpful in my doing the business plan and getting me thinking about things.'*  
Design textiles and metalwork graduate and portfolio worker

Other desired commercial skills relating to running a business included training on e-marketing, branding, and website development.

### **Job seeking and guidance**

Crafts graduates had accessed help on where to look for jobs and other opportunities, but their feedback suggests they would have liked this to be more focused towards their needs, including where to look for financial support or help to set themselves up in business:

*'With hindsight I feel a lack of information and guidance at university about how to be self-employed or where to go for apprenticeships. There was no real assistance about what to do after leaving past the first year or so. Doing a postgrad residency really helped with this but was not quite enough.'*

Self-employed jeweller and evening class teacher

### **Collaborating with others**

Collaboration with other creative practitioners was seen as beneficial to careers. There were different forms of collaboration: with associates and peers across disciplines to broaden the skills to complete a specific project; and working with fellow practitioners in the same field to share facilities and costs, pool networks, ideas and provide a professional support system.

*'I have done craft fairs all year with a friend from uni. This enables us to split the cost of the stall, the work of setting up and it is much more fun to do with someone else than on your own. We have met many contacts through this and it is good networking. My friend has had gallery requests and commissions from these events. I have just joined a textile group in [town] and we have had our first meeting in town. It is mainly people setting up as small*

*traders and should be really useful .... I met lots of people over the year at all sorts of events and visits who were friendly and helpful. Giving me contact numbers, advice etc.'*  
Design textiles and metalwork graduate and portfolio worker

*'I share my workshop with another jeweller and although we work on our own pieces it is good to have someone else about to bounce ideas off.'*  
Self-employed jeweller and evening class teacher

Collaboration across disciplines or areas of expertise was essential to create something that would not be possible by working alone or with people from within one's own field.

*'Collaborating always brings the best results. I worked as part of the team that produced the textiles for [well-known UK couture house] and on many fine art projects'*  
Designer/partner in a textiles design company

*'I have employed six artists over the years on both agency and collaborative projects (totalling around 50 days work), alternative skills being of great benefit to both business opportunities and personal practice. Being able to share practice with other artists has been highly influential in developing confidence and holistic values.'*  
Freelance visual artist

*'We work with many different high street shops and have also worked with fashion houses. This is really interesting for me as a designer as it has challenged my techniques and I have had to design to the specific styles demanded. In house, we are a relatively small company, and everyone works well as a team.'*  
Head designer for a fashion jewellery company

Collaboration was not only beneficial for those working in creative roles. A respondent entering teaching reported how valuable collaboration with others had been during teaching training and on into their career:

*'I spent my PGCE year collaborating with fellow trainee teachers during my studies and also collaborating with colleagues within both FE and HE institutions where I did my training. I co-wrote schemes of work, planned projects, lessons and ideas for external visits to galleries, etc., and I also helped arrange for speakers such as textile artists to visit the institutions and talk to the students about their work .... Working alongside others with different backgrounds and interests has been valuable as I am now beginning to work with others in my career with very different outlooks and approaches to life and work.'*  
Textiles craft and embroidery graduate and qualified teacher

## Professional networks and contacts

Contacts and networking were instrumental in establishing a creative career. These range from formal professional networks, to more informal support such as family and friends. Industry contacts gained through work experience at undergraduate level or after graduating were particularly useful, as well as university teachers and fellow students. For some, contacts were key to finding creative work and keeping up to date with developments in industry.

*'[I would advise new graduates that] If they are becoming self-employed straight after art college then it is good to keep contact with others in their field. Joining networks and associations also allows them to keep up to date with what is happening. I found it very useful having the extra two years of being in the supportive environment of college but finding a studio where other artists work can also keep you from going mad working on your own.'*

Self-employed jeweller and evening class teacher



Linking up with other practitioners in the local area was invaluable to some graduates and enabled them to establish a support base and share resources.

*'Teaching helped me earn a wage but put a stop to my creative work but taking the plunge again and linking up with other local jewellers to meet every month has really helped.'*

Self-employed jewellery maker and evening class teacher

## Friends, family, and wider support

Crafts graduates reported how their families had often been an invaluable source of support and encouragement. Families could also be relied on to provide a financial support while crafts graduates were starting their creative practice, or while times were hard. This raises questions about who is supporting graduates in their early careers, and the largely hidden contribution of parents, families and partners to the growth of the creative industries sector, as well as the resourcefulness of crafts graduates in starting up their own creative ventures:

*'What has helped? My lifelong love of the arts, hard work, creativity, support both financial and emotional from my husband, life experience. What has hindered/challenged? - Family ties, shyness.'*

Design textiles and metalwork graduate and portfolio worker

*'Friends and family offered emotional support and encouragement as well as a good sounding board for new ideas.'*

Jewellery maker and evening class teacher

*'I graduated ... in 2005 and moved back to Wales and worked full time on my parents' farm for a year. Used the money earned to purchase equipment for my pottery studio (along with local council grant) .... Running costs in Wales were cheap as I was not paying any rent for my studio and kiln (situated on parents' farm).'*

Part-time technician at local college and ceramicist

## Grants and loans

Crafts graduates accessed financial help and business advice from bodies such as Arts Councils, the Crafts Council, professional bodies and business start-up services. Financial assistance from these sources was used in a number of different ways ranging from paying for shows and events, to helping with setting up a studio or workshop or providing capital necessary to pay for materials and getting started in creative practice:

*'I received a start-up grant from the Scottish Arts Council and set up my own studio to work from and continued working at the art college as an assistant in 1st year and assisting in summer school.'*

Jeweller and evening class teacher

*'I have been good at networking and also good at applying for shows and grants. The Arts Council has been generous when I needed money towards paying for a show .... In 2003 I was awarded a grant and residency through the [regional] Arts Council, this took place at [an arts centre]. I began my own business in 2004 and exhibited nationally. I did a number of Craft Fairs including Chelsea crafts fair in 2005.'*

3-D design/jewellery graduate, mother and children's workshop facilitator

*'Business Link and the Princes Trust offered invaluable support and funds during my set-up .... The main challenge has been balancing cash flow as with both jewellery production and workshops, you usually have to make a large outlay of cash and time prior to being paid. It often takes 1-2 months from the outlay to recoup your expenses and be paid for your time.'*

Jewellery maker and evening class teacher

For many, their financial situation was particularly challenging in the context of considerable student debt. Residencies, small grants and loans can make all the difference at the start of creative ventures, and those who had received financial assistance reported that this had been instrumental in getting started. Others suggested further areas in which financial help could be put to good effect, for example in helping companies tap in to wider markets.

*'Funding to visit clients in Japan and US to become more global with our client base. Exhibition funding would be useful too.'*

Creative director for an established design company

## 7.8 Responding to challenges

Clearly, crafts graduates faced challenges in establishing their careers. This might involve juggling different roles or jobs at any one time, whilst others might have difficulty positioning themselves or accessing a market for their work. Working for limited pay did not help confidence or self-esteem, and there was often a lack of opportunities locally or generally within their chosen field. Some individuals faced competing personal priorities such as buying a house or starting a family while continuing to develop their creative practice. This brings to the fore concerns about how crafts graduates' careers progress mid-career when a more stable income is required as they take on family responsibilities.

Although many crafts graduates persevered, sometimes facing a degree of uncertainty in the level of income they could achieve through their creative work, others preferred to work outside the creative sector for a more stable income. For example, one crafts graduate found that finding freelance work had been challenging since losing a permanent position in a design company during the recession, and another textiles graduate decided to give up freelance design work to opt for the security of a part-time job as a medical secretary.

*'I stopped freelance work as [there was] no guaranteed income for any work carried out through the company I worked with. I took the decision to go full time in one of my part-time jobs to enable me to afford a house.'*

Medical secretary and website administrator

### Persistence

Crafts graduates were pragmatic in making decisions about how they were going to achieve their career goals. In some cases this involved taking on a less desirable role in their chosen sector to be in a better position to progress to the sort of job they would ideally want at a later date.

*'I have found it very difficult to get into the type of role that I would like to do, ie museum/heritage hands-on type of role and not just the more background administrative stuff. Even though I have a BA and an MA it doesn't seem to have made a difference in allowing me to progress quicker or into the areas I'd like to be in. Having said that I should be grateful to be in the heritage sector so I'm holding out for a permanent position and then move into something more interesting. At the end of the day life has to continue so you have to take the job offers that do come along even when they aren't what you thought you'd be doing. I hope that one day I will end up in a position that is fulfilling on all levels, not just one that pays a wage.'*

Conservation graduate, working as an administrator

## Changing direction

Some individuals made conscious decisions to work outside of the creative sector to either build on work experience gained since graduating in what were initially considered to be temporary jobs or, as noted above, to achieve a more stable income and provide time to be able to work on their creative practice.

*I got the first job that I could through a recruitment agent working in a Vodafone shop, within a fortnight I got a job in a call centre on a good salary and stayed there for 18 months until made redundant so again I had to find work quickly and got a job in another call centre for a bank, for more money and benefits. I then moved and because of my experience got a job in a bank branch as a cashier and customer service assistant. I left this role in 2007 and got my current job as the bank was very sales based and I was enjoying customer service.*

3-D design graduate working as a local council customer service officer

Some, however, did not feel able to convert their degree into a creative career or were forced to reconsider their career choices because of the recession or external circumstances. For example a ceramics graduate in his fifties who was working for the local authority as a homelessness officer reported that on completing his course, he did not feel that he had the confidence in his making skills to attempt to make a living from it and that instead he had reverted to relying on the experience he had acquired prior to his course to earn a living.

*'I have returned to using the skills I acquired before going to [university] as a mature student. Did not come away from my Ceramics degree with the confidence in my skills to attempt to make a living at it .... [I am] unlikely to progress with ceramics as a career ... Make sure you have other skills to fall back on. Be realistic and be prepared to do other less creative work.'*

Local authority homelessness officer

However, even where respondents' jobs were not in a creative or crafts-related role, their creative skills and tendencies sometimes opened up new possibilities. For example a textiles graduate who was working as a medical secretary and website administrator reported that the company she was working for was keen to develop her design skills further so she could put them to use in managing the website and had provided training for her to do so.

## Impact of the recession

The timing of the email follow-up survey, during the economic downturn, provided an opportunity to ask crafts graduates directly how they felt the recession had impacted on their careers or future plans. Some respondents reported little or no direct effect so far on their jobs, and in some cases it may even have had a positive impact in their line of work:

*'currently the impact is low but is now expected to hit just after the Olympics.'*

Freelance visual artist

*'Sales have dropped off a bit at the moment, but you just have to work around it, things will get better again.'*

Self-employed ceramicist and jewellery maker

*'I am lucky in that the business I work for has been able to adapt and is actually still in growth during this time although restructuring has still been made within some divisions. I do believe that these changes would have been carried out regardless of the recession. However the recession has made me less likely to look for another job until the climate is more stable.'*

Medical secretary and website administrator

*'The recession hasn't had much impact on fashion jewellery, if anything, it has made it boom slightly. This is due to the fact that old outfits can be updated with accessories, so people are still buying the more statement pieces. It does however, make the choice of changing jobs right now very risky.'*

Head designer for a fashion jewellery industry

There was evidence that respondents were quick to respond to challenges: coping with job losses; maintaining demand for services/products necessary to sustain creative practice; cutting costs and working for less; or making adjustments to ways of working to limit financial risk. Others were deferring job change until the market became more stable:

*'Currently, due to the recession, the place/company I was working with had to be closed so I had to move on and choose an alternative career. So now I am studying for an MBA in International Business.'*

Textiles designer

*'It has lost me my job, and finding freelance work could prove to be more challenging because of the recession. It could also benefit me in the sense that companies may be sourcing freelance workers rather than employing people on full-time salaries. I'm not sure at this point.'*

Freelance greetings card and stationery designer

*'I have chosen not to attend any sales/trade shows in the past two years that have a stand/table cost of over £100 unless I know from previous experience that they are very profitable. I have noticed that this year in particular the general public have been bringing a set amount of cash to art shows etc. and are leaving their cards/cheque books at home.'*

Jewellery maker and evening class teacher

*'I think I need to be very selective on what shows I apply for and also I am doing research by visiting fairs etc. to see if it is the right place for the art work.'*

3-D design (jewellery) graduate, mother and children's workshop facilitator

*'Sales have been very low, therefore my income is not sufficient to maintain my BMI [sic] [Body Mass Index]'*

Photographer, who studied furniture design

*'It [the recession] has encouraged me to begin trying to support myself rather than rely on being employed in these uncertain times'*

Designer/partner in a textiles design company

*'It made part-time job searching more difficult as there were less jobs around. My business plans are small scale and in their first steps so I wasn't looking for investors so little impact there.'*

Design textiles and metalwork graduate and portfolio worker

## Public sector working

Working as a teacher or elsewhere in the public sector did not necessarily shelter crafts graduates from the effects of recession. One recently qualified teacher was having difficulty finding a permanent post because of the recession, but this was compounded by the

specialist nature of their chosen field. Similarly, a conservation graduate who was working in an administrative role for English Heritage reported difficulty in finding a more permanent and ‘interesting’ job in the sector because of job stagnation.

*‘The recession has really impacted on me finding a permanent job. I finished my PGCE in June of this year (2009) and I came into the job market hoping to find a job for the new term in September. Unfortunately, many teachers and lecturers have stayed in their jobs and not many are being advertised for such a specialist subject as textiles.’*

Textiles craft and embroidery graduate and qualified teacher

*‘I am on a short-term contract at present. The public sector will be badly affected eg spending cuts so there are not as many vacancies to apply for in the sector.’*

Conservation graduate, working as an administrator

## Disability and dyslexia

It is worth noting that the qualitative findings for *Crafting Futures* (from the follow-up email survey and depth interviews) did not identify specific problems associated with disability in relation to career success; and, as these were very small in number, comments from graduates can only be illustrative.

Dyslexic crafts graduates surveyed and interviewed had coping strategies, and were just as likely to be working in creative occupations as others.

*‘I am dyslexic and I think this is the only slight hindrance I have faced in my life. I have developed ways for coping with this as I did not know until the end of my 3rd year at college. Once I was tested I received a grant to purchase computer equipment to help with my dissertation.’*

Self-employed jeweller

## 7.9 What would help current students prepare for the world of work?

The final question asked if there was anything else crafts graduates wanted to share that would help current students prepare for work. Beyond commitment, dedication to creative practice and self-belief, that were felt to be essential attributes; there were many practical suggestions for how courses could prepare students for the transition to work. These included: relevant work experience and placements, making the most of industry links and visiting lecturers, working to commercial briefs and encouraging and supporting individuals to research their careers before graduating. Crafts graduates felt it was important that courses focused on connecting with the ‘real world’:

*‘Helping them to find ways to look for work, websites, agencies, magazines. Other alternatives like freelancing and how to get work experience. If students could identify what they would like to do when they leave they can work towards a portfolio that is both professional and relevant to that sector.’*

Fashion graphics designer for babies, boys and menswear

*‘Ensure that students are taking part in ‘learning on the job’. Actually doing some work experience or shadowing someone who is working in their field I found to be very beneficial and builds confidence and prepares for when graduating and finding a job.’*

Textiles craft and embroidery graduate

*'I think more work experience placements would be very helpful. I undertook a one month placement as part of my degree programme however this was optional and I think more or longer placements would allow students to form contacts within industry and so find it easier to find work once graduated.'*

Medical secretary and website administrator

*'Teach them skills etc. but also teach them about the real world and not just through visiting lecturers. Encourage them to go to shows and scope them out so they are ready to apply when they leave. Have possible apprenticeships available. Equip students with life-long skills and the knowledge of their chosen specialism as well as subject knowledge so they do not sink when they leave and embark on real work!'*

Self-employed jeweller and evening class teacher

*'I feel the course like "sandwich course" is a good one to do, have some contacts with outside while you are studying. But then, I am sure there is always something I don't know.'*

Self-employed accessories designer/maker

There was a sense that crafts graduates would like to have acquired more comprehensive business skills while at university and this was important for both self-employed and those permanently employed:

*'More business training [would help current students prepare for work] - Perhaps a few sessions on how to do basic accounts - how to structure an invoice / write a business plan / client proposal / NDA [Non Disclosure Agreement]/ contract etc... I have learnt all this along the way and it may have helped to have a little knowledge beforehand. Also any info on sourcing and manufacturing abroad... transportation and import / export laws and taxes etc... the process of the product getting to a shop shelf from a factory floor would have been intriguing at the time.'*

Creative director for an established furniture and product design company

*'I feel that I would have appreciated more time spent on professional practice and meeting different makers/business people giving you advice on what areas you could work in once you have finished your degree. Our course leader did not help with this and was not supportive. Many of the students on my course did not leave with the confidence to continue using their skill and didn't know how to get a job/career in an area related to their discipline.'*

3-D design/jewellery graduate, mother and children's workshop facilitator

Crafts graduates' advice to students was to manage their debt carefully whilst studying, to be flexible but to persevere – even if it meant taking a lesser job, constantly discuss your work, listen to advice, and be friendly and professional.

*'Do it for the love, not for the money. Always be friendly and professional as word of mouth is your biggest selling point. Take advantage of all the support networks you have available to you. Network, network, network. And as my grandfather used to say "Shy Bairns Get Nowt"!'*

Jewellery maker and activities workshop facilitator

*'Don't get into too much debt as this plays a constant role in future life. Peers have left uni with huge credit card bills in addition to student loans and this has seriously impacted on their lives when it comes to making repayments.'*

PhD student and associate lecturer

*'90 per cent of students on my degree were f@\*king lazy! Art and design isn't a degree or a lifestyle, it's a compulsion, I had no choice but to do art. Just work your bollocks off and talk to as many people as possible about your work, the more people that know the better.'*

Ceramics graduate and Masters student

*'It is getting tough out there - they will need to be motivated'*

Self-employed ceramicist

*'Make sure you have other skills to fall back on. Be realistic and be prepared to do other less creative work'*

Local authority homelessness officer

*'From a design point of view, designing for the high street is very commercial, and not at all as involved as the design methods at college. You have to follow the brief, allowing boundaries to be pushed slightly, but not to the point where the customer wouldn't understand it. The pace is much quicker, leaving much smaller windows of time for development of ideas.'*

Head designer for fashion jewellery company

*'The main difficulty is affording to live while setting up as a creative. Try and plan for this, set aside cash if possible, live at home for a while, apply for grants etc. The MA gives you somewhere to work. Work part time. Collaborate with others to share costs and support each other. Don't give up.'*

Textiles and metalwork design graduate and portfolio worker

*'Be prepared that even though you have studied hard, achieved good grades, volunteered and undertaken work placements, it still might not be enough to get you where you want to be. You have to persevere and hope that in time you will get where you hoped even if you have to go a long way round, taking different jobs, to get there!'*

Conservation graduate, working as an administrator

*'Always go out with an open mind and don't expect it to be easy. Be ready to face challenges and a lot of negative responses'*

Self-employed textiles designer

*'Talk to practitioners and learn from their mistakes/listen to their advice'*

Ceramics graduate and mother

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## 8 Career Stories

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### Summary

Crafts graduates' career journeys are diverse and complex. Crafts graduates 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 creative practice. Their commitment and persistence is evident in the detailed career stories we gathered via depth interviews in the final stages of the research study. Through the following case studies this chapter charts their journeys and decision points from entering their undergraduate courses to the present day, in their own words.

### Jewellery designer (full-time) and study towards a Masters in Jewellery Design (part-time)

*'I started working full-time for a jewellery company as a jewellery designer and I have been there ever since'*

I chose my university because of their exhibition at the New Designers Exhibition. It just stood out as having exceptional work.

Because the university is quite small, it's more an art college, I felt very taken care of. There were just 30 or 40 students in your class so you had the attention of your teachers. We were expected to be at university five days a week, nine to five, which really helped because you learned, you could achieve more, and you felt like you had to be there. You didn't have other things to distract you.

The main thing I enjoyed was that the time that you were expected to spend on design and making was split 50/50.

The summer I graduated I started working full time for a jewellery company as a jewellery designer, and I've been there ever since – six years this summer. I use my skills that I learned at college every day. Doing design, you have to have knowledge of how something is going to be made. So because the course was weighted equally in design and making helped me in my job. One other useful aspect of the course was hand painting and in my current job we have to hand paint all our designs.



We didn't learn much about business skills during the course. It would have been useful. In a creative or craft-based course a lot of people end up self-employed and leaving university with the skills to do that would be really beneficial. In the second year of the degree, you could choose to do a work placement instead of one of the other modules, but nobody in my year took up that option – we were not really encouraged to do it and we weren't given any guidance or a list of approved companies that the college had links to.

A lot of the practitioners that we were encouraged to research at university were self-employed art jewellers and we weren't encouraged to look at the work of bigger companies. So it was almost like that was the given way that you're meant to go if you're a craft person, which is not necessarily the case of course.

I think that companies like the one I work for, and many others, wouldn't consider somebody as a trainee that didn't have a degree in that field.

I felt that the job was a proper career because I was working with a company that was well respected in the industry, and the people I was working with knew a lot about their job.

My job title has changed, but ultimately I still do the same job. The responsibilities are more, and more varied as well. For example, consultations with clients, and I would be expected to talk to outside manufacturers and suppliers about production.

I keep in touch with a few of the students from university, but they have not had an impact on my career. But in the future they might. Probably when the time comes for me to be self-employed I think I would call on them for their skills as well, because we've all gone a slightly different path after we graduated.

I started my Masters last October in jewellery design. I decided to do it for a different challenge. Now my job's more challenging than it ever has been, and I'm trying to do all my course work. It's quite difficult to find the time to do both and to switch on a different design edge. Work give me one day off a week to go to college. But I make up my hours for that day at home – so I'm still expected to work 45 hours a week, and then study part time.

I think I've progressed quite well in my career. I sometimes wish that I hadn't stayed at this company for so long on one hand, because working for a different company you get completely different experiences. But then I think, actually, I've really enjoyed my time working here, and I've learned so much already, and the grass is always greener.

I'd like to be self-employed because, as a crafts person and designer, I think there's always a desire to be able to make what you want to make, in your own way, and in your own style, rather than have to fit in with someone else's and to be more flexible with my working hours, to really achieve my own gratification at the end of the week, or the end of the year.

The only sacrifice I have had to make to pursue my goals is my time, because I have to do this particular job I have to commute to London, so early mornings, late evenings. So I've had to give up my social life more than anything. In the short term I'm happy to do that, but ultimately I would like to choose my own hours, and be able to have an evening or a day off if I need to.

I think I've been able to be creative in my work, definitely, though under the house style of the company that I work for. With regards to my own practice, I've only really got back to doing that since I started my MA. If I could do the job that I do now, part time, and then do my Masters and my own practice part-time, that would be ideal. But, I don't think my employer would like that.

After I finish my Masters I may do some short courses dedicated to making. I might take some more short technical courses perhaps about stone setting, or diamond mounting – although the question is, can I ever be as good as somebody who I might pay to do it for me. Also, I might look at doing some courses in gemmology, or diamond grading.

In terms of successes, I think particular success is when I'm working with a client, and they ask you to design something very particular for them. You can sit there and talk it through with them, and design something bespoke for them and then it comes out exactly as you'd imagined it when it's been made. They love it, and they're thrilled with it, and you know that that piece is going to be a family heirloom almost. You're making something that's going to be permanent, and will stay on this planet for the next thousand, two thousand years. I do want to be self-employed and I think measuring success when you're self-employed is quite difficult, because I think it's quite an organic process in where it goes. With any kind of craft or art-based trade, you have to make that decision whether you want to stick to making whatever you want, whenever you want, and not be bothered about making money. Or whether you go down a more commercial road, and you're driven by money and branding. So I think between those two avenues, I think life and opportunities dictate which way you go.

### **BA Goldsmithing, silversmithing and jewellery, female**

#### **Part-time teacher of art and trained Arts Award Adviser**

*'I thought about teaching and I think I wanted to do it because I could use my degree and get a good wage'*

My degree course was recommended to me by the tutor from my Foundation course. At university I learnt a lot about myself really, about my own limits and what I wanted out of life. Going such a long way to Scotland, I realised I liked where I came from so I came back here. The most rewarding part was the practical side, actually doing the ceramics. I wasn't particularly bothered about all the written stuff and whatnot. I wouldn't have been able to go on to do a PGCE if I hadn't had the degree as a background. Now I've got my own studio and doing my own thing every now and again, more as a hobby really than a serious kind of artist. I just decided that doing it as a living wasn't right for me. It's quite isolating and a lot of studio spaces are all dedicated to painting and more formal kinds of arts. So a lot of places don't have kilns and all the kinds of things that you need to do clay. So I ended up setting up my own thing. I've got a bit of a nice life doing my own thing and working in school.

We had a business studies part to the course. I think that was in the second or third year. It was all theory stuff. I learned the basics really of setting up a business and what differences there are between businesses – sole traders and companies and things like that. I found it quite useful. It would've been quite nice really if we'd have had to work somewhere or got a

bit of experience outside to put it into practice. It's a good way of getting contacts and deciding what you can do with the course that you did.

I think, especially if you go away to university, you have to deal with things that you wouldn't necessarily at home. My confidence has grown, yes definitely. In terms of work, it made me think that I enjoy the art side and the practical bits of what we were doing. I think I kind of decided then I probably wouldn't want to be a full-time artist, not give it up completely but find something that I knew I could get a decent wage from. I'm not a particularly massive risk-taker.

I thought about teaching and I think I wanted to do it because I could use my degree and get a good wage and I've already got a good idea of helping people and stuff so I think it'd fit quite well. After graduating, I came back to where I was originally from and then just got lots of different part-time jobs, doing anything really, because to go into teaching I needed my GCSE in Maths which I didn't have at the time. So I went back to college in the evening and just did any old job really – mainly in art shops and markets. I got invited to a couple of art shows through my end of year show. It was quite an experience actually. I think maybe if I'd stayed in Scotland and not come back here I might've been able to build on it a little bit more. It was just nice to put my work into a proper setting and actual, real people come in, see and actually sell some work as well.

I used to work in the pub, and bars at college. Of course I came back home to live with my parents – money-wise and stuff. To find work I just enquired when I went out shopping, looking in store windows and things. I think I found going into teaching a little easier because friends of mine have found it particularly difficult to get work in the areas of their degree. I think it goes back to that work experience. I think if you've got a bit of experience as well it sets you apart really, gives you a bit of contact with people, and gets you in the door.

My PGCE course was the point when I was properly on a career path. I think because I knew there were different avenues. I went for a secondary PGCE and being told that you can link in with primary, you could go into FE. Further education was probably the reason that I did it because I felt that's what I wanted to do because I did a bit of college teaching when I came home. You know the shows I was talking about? I went back to my old college to make some works and I got some work through them as well to teach. So it kind of all followed on from that, I suppose.

When I did the PGCE I qualified and then started looking for jobs in the local area. I went for three or four interviews and got a job. Because the PGCE is mainly work based, it's kind of like working and studying at the same time. So the teachers that you're working with are people at the school who've got jobs coming up and that's how I ended up getting the place that I've got today really.

I did used to do adult education classes on an evening as well but I don't do that anymore. I used to do that alongside and that was specifically ceramics based as well.

I've also been on Arts Award training. It's a nationwide thing that's happening in youth clubs and all sorts of art sectors. Because our school is a specialist art school, we're keen to

start that kind of qualification in our school. I kind of started that off in our school. I take some of the kids who do this Arts World programme as well. I was approached to do it and I thought it would be interesting to develop myself in different areas and it's always something you can use outside of the traditional school sector as well.

I think my career just naturally evolved. It wasn't something I wanted to do when I started the course and I naturally went throughout the course thinking, well, I don't think I'll do this day in and day out. I don't think it was a complete U-turn or anything like that.

I have been able to continue with my creative practice. It's quite important to be experimental in new things, I suppose, to experience other areas. Sometimes I go on courses just for my own pleasure, like glass courses and things like that that go on in our local area. It's always been interesting for me and it tends to work its way into what we're doing in class and stuff as well.

I worked unpaid in a couple of primary schools in summer holidays when I came home from uni when I was thinking I might want to do teaching. It made me realise I didn't want to be a primary school teacher. I thought I could use my artistic skills but, really, they're not into it in depth enough for the level that I wanted. So secondary and further education is better in terms of applying what you've learnt.

For the future, I've thought about sometimes doing an MA but, to be honest, there's no motivation really unless it gives me something within my career. People I know have done MAs and it doesn't seem to have progressed them any further. For the money that you pay, you'd have to be really interested to do that as well as your job or it would help you getting further on in your career than where you are.

My main successes? I think getting to be a teacher. Not a lot of people made it. I was quite surprised. I thought everybody doing the course would end up doing it but quite a lot of people dropped out and found it very difficult.

I just found out recently I'm pregnant so things are a bit on hold. Career wise I'm just happy being a bog standard teacher. Some people want to move on and be heads of department but it's not something I'm really interested in at the minute but possibly could be.

**Ceramic design degree, female**

### **Local Authority Homelessness Officer**

*'I just didn't see myself making a living out of it. So I had to fall back on what I knew before college'*

As a mature student, I had had an interest in ceramics for a while and I felt it was time to try to do something new. I chose my degree course at uni because I could commute from where I was living, whereas other locations were going to be a bit of a problem, another factor was the names of the tutors involved in the course, which was quite attractive. Also, they offered me the option to do the BA in two years.

It was quite a challenging two years. I learnt a number of skills while I was there, but not sufficient to make me feel as though I was a craftsman at the end of it. I came away feeling that some of the teaching was poor. I had done a degree before and you expect tutorials, seminars and lectures and maybe I misunderstood what was going to happen at art college, but that sort of stuff was pretty thin on the ground. So I came away feeling a little bit cheated in as much as the strength of the course was not what I was expecting. Combined with the job hunt afterwards, I came away from it fairly disillusioned. I haven't done anything in ceramics, to speak of, in the eight years since I left.

During the course we were pretty much just left to get on with it and there were occasions where I actually paid to go to other locations to watch certain potters in action, and to actually pick up stuff from them, because we got precious little of that at college. Some tutors were fine, but the supervision was poor. One tutor might show us a bit of throwing and you would be left to get on with it. It lacked input from the main people and lectures were fairly limited.

In one sense my learning experience was probably that a career in ceramics was not going to happen. Not only did I not see myself having the skills, but even people reasonably skilled struggle in that area and I just didn't see myself making a living out of it. So I had to fall back on what I knew before college and the experience that I'd had for 20 years in social housing, and make money that way.

During the course there was a business module. It suggested that you made more money out of making tea and running a tea shop, than you did out of making ceramics. I think most colleges are required to do that sort of thing now in order to prepare people for the business world. It wasn't without its usefulness in terms of the whole business planning process, but it's not had any lasting benefit for me.

I've not been in contact with many of my fellow students, but as far as I'm aware, they're all struggling. They're not running their own business; they're doing part-time teaching, a bit of this, a bit of that, a bit of the other.

One of the other things that made me feel that I wasn't skilled enough was at the end of the course. I found a potter in Cambridgeshire who was looking for someone to help over the summer, and I spent two days with him discussing what it involved. I came away pretty disheartened, depressed, disillusioned, because I just didn't seem to be up to the skill levels that were required. There were things I could do but not sufficiently to be effective in that environment. It was a reality check for me. I had long been interested in the arts and it was my opportunity to try and put that into practice. Perhaps there is something in me that lacks the focus in order to go down this route, which has resulted in me going back to what I know and what I can make a bit of money out of. I slipped back into the field that I'd been familiar with. I've had fairly consistent employment since I left college, but not in the field I was studying.

I went for a job as an artist in residence at a school, which I didn't get, and I did look around for business units where I might set up, but I would say it was probably half hearted and either people didn't get back to me or it just didn't seem viable. I ran out of steam fairly quickly on it and thought 'well, I'm earning money, I haven't got room to work at home and

I don't know whether a business unit is affordable'. I looked into getting one studio, but when you start looking at the figures and you think 'I don't know that I can make this pay' you start thinking 'well, I think I'm going to leave this'.

I don't think my degree was helpful in finding work. It was a reasonably enjoyable two years, it was interesting, it was a challenge, but it didn't actually get me anywhere. But then, my first degree was in English history and English literature, and that didn't help me get a job either. Thinking back on the first degree, it was an opportunity to pursue something I was interested in and to get away from a job I hated, and I don't think I entered into it with a view of where it was going to lead. The same could be said of ceramics. That's probably the way of my life, really. I've never really been a career person. Things have just happened. I have rather drifted in terms of careers and I think there are possibly quite a lot of people like that. It was studying as an end in itself, rather than a career move.

I might do some ceramics in future but I don't think it would be in the way of a business venture. I might eventually get a small set-up at home if I had the resources. I think there's still a creative element in me and if something comes along I'd have a go at it, but I still don't feel that I'm a craftsman – I'm a hobbyist. I do a bit of drawing. Someone asked me for some cartoons for an article and I did a bit of work on that, but I've come away from it feeling disappointed because I don't feel that my skills are up to it.

I'm always looking out for new learning experiences. I am 58, I'm looking for my pension, but I always feel that I'm open to trying to learn new skills, but there's nothing on the horizon that I see at the moment.

I think there are things I've achieved. Whatever I've done I've worked my way up, as in the local government field. I've done those two degrees – that is an achievement. There are other things in my personal life but it all tends to be a bit more ad hoc. But I think there are successes. I did display stuff at the Victoria and Albert museum; that was quite good. Okay, it was a student show but, nevertheless, it was there. I have a pilot's licence, I learnt to fly when I was 45 and I've always been open to new learning experiences. There are lots of things I've done in my life, just not necessarily a coherent plan. There are successes but I can also get fairly depressed when I'll think, 'well, that was a load of rubbish' or 'some of the stuff you made at ceramics was pretty awful'. I'm one of my worst critics. I could name one or two successes in my life but there's also been an awful lot of rubbish.

My plan for the future, I suppose, is to keep in work for as long as I can. I would like to have some creativity in my life, whether it's ceramics or woodturning. Woodturning is something that I have an interest in as well. Continuing to get this house I moved into two years ago knocked into shape will be a full-time job in itself, I think. But, otherwise, it's just trying to maintain income, really.

**BA in ceramics, male**

## Commercial Manager at a manufacturing company

*'I have changed direction from my original career plans, possibly because I am a better commercial manager than I was a designer'*

I chose my course because it offered the combination of product and furniture design. Plus it was vocational-based looking at the design industry which was important because I wanted to find a related job at the end of my degree.

My time at uni changed my outlook on life because it brought me together with a lot of different people. We worked a lot with manufacturers, with other designers, working as a team, that sort of thing. It gave you a head start in industry. But most rewarding was making things and having your design finished.

Since finishing I've been working for my employer for several years. During that time the design skills and materials knowledge that I gained while at college have been invaluable, and my understanding of manufacturing has really helped. It was very good that the tutors have worked in industry before they'd worked as teachers.

In my sandwich year I did a work placement for a furniture company. I was treated like a student, not as a serious designer, which was disappointing. I wanted to really get my teeth into things and the placement didn't get promoted by my direct boss. The production director was very good though and he helped and developed me. He got me involved with the factory layout for a company, so I actually had a project of my own. Also, I did get a sense of what a factory is like, what the real world is like, and I learnt something about materials.

At university I became more focused on what I wanted to be in a few years' time. I grew up a bit and had a more serious view on life because of the hours that we were expected to put in on our degree. So, it's given me a good work ethic.

When I finished university, I wanted to use my degree designing products that were in use every day by everyday people. But I didn't really have any specific ideas about jobs. I kept looking for jobs and I was very lucky, because I got my job after three months in my home town. And I'm still working there now. I found out about my job from the local paper while living back home with my parents.

I think my degree helped getting a job. The help that we got at university with our CVs and introduction letters was very good – without work experience you need something that jumps off the page and that's what my CV did.

When I first started at [the company] I was doing interiors. Then, I applied for another job within the company which was problem solving but I didn't get that job. I was quite disappointed but the managing director suggested that I try a commercial manager job placement within the company. I tried it and that's what I've been doing since. I still have a hand in design – that is important to me as I would hate to just do the commercial side.

For the [design project] I managed two members of staff, an engineer and a designer. Also I had some team leaders who worked on the production line. The main benefit of working as a team is the shared experience, and shared knowledge. It is invaluable because everybody's got different experiences in life of what worked and people have knowledge of different areas, so you can pool all your resources and often ideas come from other things. There are

challenges. If you've got one idea and somebody else has another idea, it's working out which is the best way to go. Trial and error, I suppose, is the way it is but some people are really dogmatic and really forceful that their way is the best way and you have to really look at it from all angles.

I keep in contact with some friends from my course but, to be honest, they haven't really enhanced my career progression at all. They've been very good friends throughout but nobody's said to me 'oh, this job's come up' or 'that job's come up' or anything like that.

For me I don't think going self-employed is an option because my husband's got his own business and the security for me would be that at least one of us will be working for somebody else.

In terms of career progress, I was really pleased with it until about a year ago. I think it's the fact that I finished a project about a year ago, the launch of the new [product], then suddenly there wasn't a project to do as well as the commercial side of things. It's the creative side that I miss and I'm happiest when I can be creative. It's quite a freeing process, being creative. There's no set boundary of what's right and what's wrong.

I have changed direction from my original career plans, possibly because I'm a better commercial manager than I was a designer. It doesn't sit that comfortably with me because it wasn't ever anything that I wanted to do but I've come to the conclusion that I can do it well and so therefore I'll be doing it or something similar to it. In a way that is rewarding in itself.

In future I might think about doing some further learning, probably some more computer skills on the computer design side.

I feel my success was getting the job here and developing the new [product] and I've progressed in my confidence and my understanding of how business runs. I suppose I am disappointed that I haven't got further and my salary is not higher.

Ideally I would like to go self-employed but I don't think I can at the moment but I'd like to do something on the creative side. I'm working at the moment with a friend who has got a pub, doing new signage, promotional leaflets and stationery and that sort of thing. I'm doing that off my own bat but I'm not being paid for it. It's fun, thinking up new ideas.

My dyslexia affected me on my course because I had a lot of extra help dealing with dyslexia when I was younger, in junior and secondary school, and when I went to university there wasn't that level of help. Because I knew how to cope, I wasn't eligible for funding at university. It's nice to know that I did it on my own and I didn't have any extra hours with work and I didn't have any limitations. I did it completely on an even playing field with everybody else on the course. In my job it hasn't really hindered me much at all because I feel that, again, I've learnt to cope with it. I almost overcompensate for it, so I take more time over spelling, I make lists and things, I've got little cards. My short-term memory and my reading skills are affected as well as my writing. If there's something I need to do I make a list and work out where I need to go next. It's automatic, just general motor skills, I suppose, that I didn't have before. So it hasn't really affected my job.

**BA Furniture and product design**



## Art and Design secondary school teacher

*'Teaching was always something I wanted to do but didn't get a lot of support whilst I was at school'*

I chose my degree because I wanted to get into teaching, and for the PGCE you need a degree in art. My uni offered me the opportunity to do it in two years because of my previous experience as a jeweller – I had done an apprenticeship with a jeweller and had worked for about six years and it was the silversmithing and jewellery department that I was applying to get into. So I did the third and fourth year and missed out the first two years, which was great.

I loved the course and the environment of like-minded people. I've always been mad about art, and I loved the challenge. The working environment previous to that was very repetitive, just producing what the market wants and then at art school there's no limits. I loved the feeling of that.

What I liked about the course was having access to all types of art. I was specialising in metalwork, but I did all types of art, so it was great having access to other classes' resources, which were brilliant.

Before the course, although I classed myself as a designer, it was very much self-taught. And going through art school you learnt the design process in detail. So now I'm much more confident in that area. In fact I really grew in confidence. The course gave me the opportunity to try lots of different things, so it's broadened my skill base and knowledge. We had to do art history, which I need a lot in my current job, so it enabled me skill-wise to do the job I'm doing.

We did some business skills seminars and lectures, but because I'd already worked for a jeweller and been self-employed, contracting, I knew most of it already. The seminars were basic, but if you were interested to go self-employed it was enough information to get you started.

I did work experience working with children whilst at uni: art classes with local primaries and a homework club. It came through word of mouth, because one of our tutors knew I wanted to get into teaching. Although it was very difficult to try and fit it in with the course it was definitely worth doing, experience-wise building up your CV. It helped when I applied to do the PGCE.

After that, I was very, very lucky. The PGCE was a two year course. The first year at university then in the second, your probationary year, you're placed in a secondary school where you're almost a full-time teacher. At the end of that year a job came up within the school, so I went for interview and got the job. I worked there for three years, and then a position became available in another school much closer to home. I applied, got the job and that's where I am now. This is my third year.

My degree was vital to get on to the career path that I wanted. I couldn't have done it any other way. It was the only route.

I love what I'm doing, I can't imagine myself doing anything else; it's what I definitely love doing. Career-wise, promotion-wise, within teaching there's lots I can do, so it's a versatile

career. You're not stuck in a rut. When I was doing the jewellery it was just picking up designing and manufacturing and that was it.

Teaching was something I always wanted to do but didn't get a lot of support whilst I was at school. The negative response from people put me off a bit. So, I left it in the background and was really at a loss what to do. So I fell into silversmithing, really. And it was great initially, but I did it for six years, and the long hours you work, the environment you work in, it's fine if you're younger. I think it was age, maybe, that changed my mind. Three months coming up to Christmas, it's almost seven days a week at the workbench. It's just chaos. Also, it was very business-like. It was all about money and producing things at minimum cost and selling at maximum profit, and that wasn't me. I didn't enjoy the business side of it. Also I wanted to have a family. There was no way it would have worked out, having a family and trying to keep the hours as a full-time job.

Do I still feel able to continue with my creative practice? No. That's been a bit of a surprise. The job at school is so full on it drains you, because when you come home you're that knackered you're not really feeling creative. But now that I've been doing it nearly six years I feel I'm getting into the swing of things, and I've been making enquiries at the school and they're quite happy for me to set up my jeweller's bench in a classroom. I've introduced jewellery in the curriculum recently which has been really successful.

How important is being able to be creative to me? Absolutely paramount. I think as far as the job is concerned if I'm not enthusiastic about it then it obviously doesn't follow through with my students. So I need to keep on top of my creative skills and knowledge, because I'm passing that on to them. I feel I'm getting more creative now that I've got the teaching side sorted. Initially, I did it very safe just until my confidence grew and my skills grew in my teaching. I'm actually getting trained up in animation and there are other areas with creative ways that I'm going to be introducing to the curriculum.

My successes? I feel incredibly lucky, because I made up my mind to change career and go down a different career route. If I'm honest, at the time, everybody, my partner, my friends, everybody again said 'no, don't do it'. But I just went ahead and it's worked. I'm incredibly lucky, and the course at art school I thoroughly enjoyed. I had great tutors, so it was very, very successful. I made great contacts through the course – people I've kept in touch with that have broadened my horizons skill-wise, and then from that I got to go on to a PGCE course which was highly competitive to get into and I managed to get into that, which I was thrilled to bits about. Then I graduated from that and then got into a job, so it's been brilliant. And also I love the job and the school that I'm at, so the gamble has paid off.

My future plans? At work – I'm wanting to be head of department. That's what I'm working towards now. So I've done leadership courses through the local council, and currently I'm on one just now which has been done through the school with the intention of hopefully getting a job when one becomes available. I would prefer to do it in my current school, but, if not, I would move. The only downside to being a head of department would be I would cut down the hours I teach. It's a difficult one, because I do really enjoy being in the classroom, and your timetable is cut down significantly. But I can do it for a few years and if I really don't like it that much I've always got my teaching job to go back to. So I think I'm ready for it now.

**BDes Design (Jewellery and silversmithing), female**

## Freelance Conservation of fine art

*'Things have progressed quite well, and are just picking up now. I'm getting quite busy'*

I wanted to do conservation and the college was the only local one that does it. My father went there as well. I had moved back to England and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, and I thought I'll do the course and think about what I wanted to do during those three years.

I guess you can't do conservation unless you have this degree. You can't work in an institution – people might not take you seriously.

I also found out that I was dyslexic while I was at uni, almost a year into it my degree. They give special help with essays and things, an electronic dictionary, a recorder for lectures, and a computer. Those things are quite useful.

I enjoyed doing certain subjects. I don't know whether they were useful but I enjoyed doing them. I did metalwork and art curation. I learnt to write better – that was useful. They probably could have condensed that course into two years.

I do conservation now. It's a much different level and the things you learn in the course are not necessarily the correct way for the real world – but it's a good starting point. The Head of Conservation was a photography conservator, teaching conservation as if it was document conservation, instead of fine art conservation.

We didn't really do any business skills training as it isn't so relevant. Most conservators end up working for institutions and museums rather than people who work privately or perhaps go out and get work.

I did do a two week work placement at a museum in London and they took me in for a week at a university – that was quite interesting. I suppose if I'd worked more in an institution it would have been more useful. Maybe as freelance private work and where you have a much more hands-on kind of work where you bring it in, you look at it, you decide what's wrong with it, and then fix it. The work experience covers the same thing every day, not adding much input into the final outcome of their objectives, just one little scrap pad of many, just one little cog in the wheel. I guess I learnt to work with other people.

When I left university I wanted to get a job in a museum. I had a work experience job for a couple of months in [City] at an institution and then I worked at another museum about a year later. Both paid work, one through a contact of my father.

I applied for maybe 15 other jobs which I didn't get. I had two interviews. I was a mature student so I might have been too old, and maybe my grade wasn't good enough. I'm not sure.

My degree has been helpful in getting work. I probably wouldn't have been able to do these jobs without it. A BA is minimum for doing a job at an institution, but I do work freelance now and I don't know if my customers care if I have a BA. Nobody has ever asked me if I have any qualifications – it goes by word of mouth and the level of the work.

The first proper job was in [City] a week or two after leaving college. I was working on conservation and getting paid. I did conservation for three or four colleges, and there were

about four other conservators working there. They had the responsibilities for the upkeep and the care of the books and art of quite a few of the colleges.

Since then I've been doing freelance work for my father one day a week and for another conservator another day of the week for about a year. Then I started getting my own clients.

I mostly worked part-time, usually two days a week. I liked that because you learn more while being paid, and I was just about earning enough to get by. I have done other jobs as well, for instance photography, which pays much better than conservation. These were just jobs that were offered to me, so I thought I'd do them. Often those kinds of jobs, conservation or photography, are flexible so you can fit them both in.

For conservation jobs, I find institutional jobs on the Distribution List – a weekly list of conservation jobs and questions and answers about queries and events and things related to conservation. But I haven't got many jobs this way. Many of the jobs I have got through contacts. I got one at a museum through somebody I knew at uni who was there working. Jobs seem to come through other conservators more than through your own endeavours, or from going to framing shops or art galleries.

Overall, fellow students have been quite important in my career. I've had quite a few jobs referred to me by book conservators that don't do flat art, or oil paintings, or other paint-based jobs.

I haven't done much training or learning since leaving university. I've been to a few meetings and lectures, but I haven't done an MA and I haven't been accredited yet. I keep thinking about doing it but it's a lot of work, like doing another whole BA again, and being dyslexic, writing is difficult. It could be useful if I was going to get a job in a museum, but I know other people in my class who got jobs at museums and they're not accredited. Maybe the dyslexia is holding me back, or maybe it's something else.

Things have progressed quite well, and are just picking up now. I'm getting quite busy. I use my father's studio and I'm looking into getting a studio. That will be quite a big leap. To rent a studio with water and windows is going to cost you quite a lot per month, for all the equipment that you need. I could probably afford it now and with my own studio I'd be able to work more days. I could pay the rent unless it suddenly slows down, but you don't really know if it's going to slow down until it does.

I'd call myself self-employed, rather than freelance. One of the downsides to being self-employed is that the income is not steady. But one of the benefits is that you don't have to do the same thing day in and day out, and you can work when you want to. From a financial point of view you just get by and some months are better than others. Taxes are tricky. I usually do my own taxes. Some clients are so slow paying that you just have to figure that you'll get paid when you get paid.

I don't feel that I am really able to be creative in my job, it's not really a creative job. You're repairing other people's work. There's usually one way or two ways of doing it and you just get on with it.

In the future, I'd like my own studio and maybe be able to hire other people. It would be nice to be able to make more money, do less day-to-day boring work, and get bigger jobs.

Dyslexia hasn't really affected my working life. At uni they teach you ways to deal with it and that helped me with writing a bit. I still don't like doing the writing, but I can figure how to write commission reports and invoices. I suppose maybe if I was writing and filling in job applications it would be more of an issue.

**BA Conservation, male**

### **Fashion graphics designer for baby, boys and menswear**

*'I think my success has been having the confidence to go for jobs that I might not even be able to get and just think, oh sod it, and just do it'*

I chose my university because it was one of two that I looked at offering a course where you can do a bit of everything, because when I left college I didn't know what I wanted to do. Also, after looking around the university I decided that it had a nice atmosphere, and it wasn't far from the beach.

I learnt a lot from going to uni. It just makes you ready for that work environment where you do have to push yourself because whereas you're not being paid to be at uni, when you do get a job you know that certain things are expected of you and you have to be professional about it.

I found just being able to do whatever I wanted, within reason, and being able to push yourself within the boundaries of what the university had to offer the most rewarding thing. But what I found most helpful was that the uni pushed us to use the computers and other facilities like the digital printer.

The skills that I learnt within textiles, digital printing, screen-printing, dyeing, all of that is now relevant to my job and having that knowledge is really helpful. I did Basic Computer Studies as well, Photoshop, all of which I've used in my job. When I started my first job, I had to teach the senior designer how to use Photoshop properly so the IT side of it was really important. And where I work we don't hand draw stuff anymore so it has been really beneficial to me.

We did some business skills learning, but it was very much focused on becoming a craftsperson and having your own studio, etc. I don't think there was enough information as to how you would go about actually promoting yourself, setting up a studio, getting your work into shops and things like that. I think for something like Surface Pattern they really need to explore all of the avenues for the students and show you more of a rounded view of what you could actually do. There wasn't much help related to work experience, or even applying for jobs, presenting your portfolio and things like that.

When I first left uni, I didn't want to do anything that was to do with design for about six months because there's so much pressure that when you come away from it you just want to have a pub job and get some money. I worked in the local pub for about six months, and I was still applying for bits and pieces, but I wasn't really given any information on where to

look for work. Eventually I ended up getting a magazine called Drapers Record and I just started applying for everything, but it took me a year before I actually got a job.

In the end I got a job as a design assistant. They were actually looking for a designer, and they wanted two to three years' experience with a graphics background. What I do now is T-shirt graphics and it was that kind of work. Because I had no experience and they could pay me £10,000 instead of £25,000 they saw me as a cheaper alternative and I got the job. I felt I was very lucky. It was a combination of things that got me the job, and I know the boss now and I think he was quite pleased to take on someone a bit cheaper.

It was hard taking the job on that kind of money because from where I was living I had to travel a long way. I think after tax I got £720 a month, but my travel was £550 even with a student rail card, so it was really hard to start off with. But you have to have the attitude that, although you're not making any money you're investing in your future. So I didn't have any money, but they were quite good and they did give me a pay rise pretty quick because they realised how much my train fare was costing. It was tough, but I stayed there for four and a half years so it couldn't have been that bad in the end.

It was a really small company, but three weeks after I started the girl who worked as senior designer left, so I went from being an assistant to being the only designer that they had. I was pushed very quickly to do more in the company and then when we got more designers I just started taking on my own customers and my own accounts. There were a few times that I thought I would leave, but then they'd throw something new at me and it was always worth my while to stay.

Was my degree a good preparation for work? I think it is and it isn't. I think that your deadlines when you're at university are sort of two to three months at a time, whereas in a working environment you might only have a day. But as far as being able to look at something and think about it in a design way, then it has really helped me because it is the same process, it's just different media.

After finishing my first job, I worked for a larger company a short commute away that had a similar set up and was also a High Street supplier. I worked there for about 18 months, and although it was a good company to work for I found the role a bit stagnant. In the end I was made redundant last February. I'm now working for another supplier in [town] and I've been there for about eight months now.

I worked from home for six months or so before I found this job at the height of the credit crunch. During that time there was nothing at all to apply for. To start off with, I just got any old job. I worked in a pub and a garden centre to get some cash in. But then I went to see a company in London that sell peoples' designs. You produce as many graphics or artworks as you can and send them to the company, then they go to trade shows in America and Europe and sell your designs. If they sell it for £300 you get around £190 and they have the rest. I went in to see them in their offices and because they didn't have any boys' wear designers they said they'd really like to work with me. It's just a great way of building a commercial portfolio and also making a bit of money on the side. I also did freelance for various companies as well in between that so it wasn't too bad, I was able to keep going within design. Much of the freelance work I got through word of mouth.

I know where I want to be in the next four or five years, because at the moment every job I've taken is near London and I'm having to travel from the East Midlands. And I'm lucky that I've got quite a few companies around here that I can go for, but they're not necessarily companies I want to work for for a long time. So I'm thinking in five years stay with one company for like 10 or 15 years and then move on to the next one. But as for looking for a job, I always contact the agencies that I work with to let them know that I'm looking.

Since leaving uni I haven't done any further learning, but I've been thinking about doing something to do with web design. It's more from an idea of setting up my own website. I've moved back home to live with Mum and Dad so I don't have to pay rent. Although, my partner and I are planning to build a house, starting this year, so I'm hoping I won't be at home for too much longer.

I'm very happy with where I am right now in my career, but I do think that because I stayed in my first job for four years, that has hindered me slightly because you don't tend to get pay rises within your job. You get a pay rise when you leave. So it's like you're on £10,000 on one job and then you tell the new job that you were on £15,000 and you want £17,000, so you jump in that way. And I think if I'd have stayed there for maybe 18 months and then moved on, I think I would financially be better off now. So it seems a roundabout, if you move too quickly, it can put you back in the experience, but if you don't move quick enough then it puts you back from the finance side of things; it's finding the balance.

In doing any freelance work you have to work out a daily rate. If you go in too high, then someone else comes along who will do it a bit cheaper. I think I charge £150 a day, but I know most people are £200 to £300 a day. You have to expect to be a bit lower and get more days. What I try to do is anything that I get freelance goes into a cash ISA so I don't spend it and pay tax.

I think my success has been having the confidence to go for jobs that I might not even be able to get and just think, oh, sod it, and just do it. And also to be very confident in an interview, and when dealing with customers because you're very often expected to present work to people. I don't know where that's come from really. I don't think it's a massive thing from the university because we didn't do a lot of presenting. I'm happy with where I am and I've got a great job now, a brilliant company, and they let me work from home two days a week, which is fantastic. The only thing I would say is sometimes I feel like, because I travel so much, that I don't really have much of a life.

Financially, when I was made redundant I managed to pay off a lot of debt which I had still from uni. In the future my ideal is to get to a point where I can go down to four days a week, and work locally. And there's one company in particular I'd like to work for. I like their clothes, I like their design and they're just down the road from where I live. And work less hours; even if it means not earning more, I'd rather just say, rather than giving me a pay rise I'll work four days instead of five. That's the end goal really, for me.

**BA Surface pattern design, female**

## **Portfolio worker - library assistant, information assistant in a gallery, studio work in an arts collective and selling work at craft fairs, volunteering at a craft association**

*'I haven't got any concrete long-term plans at the moment. It's about seeing what happens'*

1) I work one day a week at my local library. 2) I work as a casual information assistant at the [name], an arts and gallery centre. 3) I have a studio at the [name], a collective building housing artists and craftspeople. 4) I sell at craft fairs. 5) I am course bookings secretary with the [craft association], this month I will change to become Treasurer.

I chose my course because I wanted to work with textiles and to physically produce work, so I wanted a practically based course. I was a mature student with a family and it was the only university offering that course locally. I found learning new things exciting and challenging. I learnt completely new skills like metalworking. It gave me confidence in producing my own work. I found it rewarding to develop projects from start to finish. I really enjoyed being alongside other creative people and seeing what they were producing and discussing ideas. It was challenging because I worked (and still work) part time one day a week at a local library. To work, have a family and study was very intense.

In terms of applying my skills I now do some gallery work at a local arts centre, work as a freelancer, and I produce and sell my own work. I've also done freelance textile workshops. My broader knowledge of art and design comes in handy for the gallery work.

We did a theoretical business module where we learnt marketing and the basics. I think the course could have had stronger links with businesses and linking students in with the real world. The uni wanted us to get work placements ourselves and a few people got very successful ones but it depended on who you knew. The course opened up possibilities, like the idea that I might set up as a designer/maker and that I might run workshops.

When I left uni I didn't have a clear picture of where I wanted to go or how to do it, and being restricted to my hometown was a difficulty. We went to London to display at New Designers. That year was the [international arts biennial] and I got a gallery assistant job which was good because it felt like I was getting back in the arts world. I found out about that job on a [local cultural and arts website].

My degree has been helpful in getting work. Like some part-time casual work I do and the freelance textile workshops. I started looking for studios in the November after graduating and it took a while but I found one. It wasn't very nice, but I stayed with it and then another studio came up in the same building, which was really good. I had to submit a CV and images to their committee to see if they approved me or not.

From spring onwards I made a range of work that I could sell at craft fairs and small galleries but it wasn't very successful for me. I didn't sell a lot at them. It wasn't the quality, it was just I hadn't got the market and the selling right. I'm not prepared to compromise my artistic integrity – I've been lucky that I can do that because I've got a husband who supports me financially.

I got a business start-up grant after linking in with an organisation that gave free business advice on how to set up a business plan. I kept in touch with some fellow students; a girl that



I did craft fairs with, and I co-led textile workshops with an ex-student. So, it has been important.

Do I think I'll do any more courses in future? It's not attracted me really. I would only do future training if I wanted a specific practical skill. I feel my career has progressed, particularly because of the textile workshops. If I hadn't have got those then I think I'd have tried to go in a different direction. I'm quite pleased with the way things have gone.

I have been able to continue with my creative practice, but only because I've got financial support from my husband. I think my creative practice will always be a part of my life really, but in what direction that would be or what form it would take I'm not sure. Being creative is something about being open to the world and everything around you and then translating that into something concrete that other people can see and interact with. It's something to do with just being alive really. I quite like combining different jobs at the same time. Working like this is both something I want to do and something I have had to do.

My successes? The [arts biennial] work after leaving university – it was really good to get that first bit of work – something arty based – even though it was only for a few months. Doing the business plan made me think about things and get things straight about what I wanted to do and what was possible. The workshop job was a big success, we'll get a good reference from it. And having a studio is a big plus as well.

I haven't got any concrete long-term plans at the moment. It's about seeing what happens, like the [arts biennial work] happened and then the business plan and setting all that up happened and then I tried the craft fairs and that didn't work for me but it was still good doing them. And I met lots of people through them as well, networking. Getting the textile workshops was a real plus and I don't quite know where I'll go now because I've got to wait until I've stopped doing those before I can really put myself out again for anything or see what's there. I think the next thing I want to do is do some of my own work again and perhaps that might take more of a fine art, textile angle. I'll perhaps look into exhibitions and galleries but other than that it's a bit vague at the moment where I would go. There are some exhibition spaces I'd like to get in at some point but they're ones where you're judged to decide who goes in.

I'm also a member of the local [crafts association], they have competitions that I would like to get a piece of work in at some point, that would be an achievement. And it would be an achievement to get some stuff in my studio space which is part of an artist's collective, so we try and exhibit during the [arts biennial].

It's about other people seeing your work really, it's about what I said about being creative and telling a story and wanting other people to connect with it as well so it makes a difference to them. Sometimes you can go to an art exhibition and look at something and it can really make you think about something differently or bring up something about you in your life or something like that so that you actually connect with a piece of work in some way. You stop and you interact with it and connect with it which is a positive thing to happen.

**BDes Design (textiles), female**

**Portfolio worker - Jewellery evening class tutor (part-time), run pottery workshops (part-time), agency work in children's nursery (occasional) and make own jewellery**

*'I learned that crafts business might not be easy but it was worth sticking with'*

I chose my university because not only did they do a 'jewellery' degree course, but it was in more alternative materials. One of the best things about my degree course was the sandwich year in the third year. We spent the whole year doing work placements. That year was the most beneficial because you worked with different people, different companies and experienced the real world.

Through my university experience I learnt that craft business might not be easy, but it was worth sticking with. I enjoyed working with different materials on the course, but discovered I enjoyed metal most. I found project work particularly rewarding. We had set projects to begin with which took you in totally different directions than what you'd come up with yourself. Later we had to determine our own projects – that was a great thing to be able to do. The placement year was absolutely invaluable – we learnt business and technical skills.

On graduating we were more or less shown the door. It would be beneficial to do some basic business skills right from the beginning of the course, advice on how to set up your own business is something that jewellery students are likely to want, and advice on how to price your work and how to market yourself. During my sandwich year I worked at three different places: a costume jewellery business in London making jewellery for the rich and famous and for the catwalks, a silversmith where I learnt most of my metal working skills, and a jeweller who makes jewellery out of resin which taught me completely different skills. The placements were paid little, basically travel costs.

Since leaving uni, it's been complicated and difficult to be honest. I'm realising that in the craft industry you don't tend to get one permanent job, but several part-time bits of work and combining that with making your own work as well, which is what I'm doing at the moment. I wanted to carry on making my own work, but didn't feel that I was in a position particularly financially to set up my own business straightaway. I wanted to try and work for other people, other creative people to perhaps build up some skills and some money first. For the first few months I was doing gardening work. Then in the autumn I secured the first exhibition as a recent graduate. I don't think I sold anything but six months later I was offered another exhibition in [local town] as a result of the first exhibition.

Then I started sending off CVs looking for employment. I sent a hundred job letters out with my CV. Most people would reply, but a lot had gone out of business. I only got one positive response but I just carried on sending the letters. The year that I graduated, I went onto Job Seekers Allowance. The Job Centre back home laughed in my face when I said what I was trained in and were not helpful at all. So, the first year or so was particularly difficult, and I ended up just carrying on with agency work.

I did cash in hand and travel expenses work for a while because I had hoped it would lead on to more reliable work, more paid work. I was only able to do it for the short term. Then a jeweller I worked for in [local county] told me about a job with a ceramic artist who needed an assistant. I got the job and I've been doing it ever since. So the most useful thing for me since graduating has been the contacts that I've made myself and the contacts that they have.

I generally work with the ceramic artist two or three days a week. For the last three years I have been going into schools and doing clay workshops. Although it's not what I'm trained in, it's creative work I enjoy and I can use my creative skills really well. In September last year I got another career break, a position teaching adult jewellery evening classes. I also make my own jewellery and try and sell that when I have time. I still combine this with a bit of agency work at a kids' nursery which helps with a bit more money.

It can become very complicated juggling perhaps three organisations and trying to promote and make my own work. At times people say why don't you get yourself an office job? But I'm the kind of person who doesn't want to give up on the kind of training that I had, so the creative side of things is something I'm always going to be interested in, and that's what I enjoy. So, it might not be the easiest option by any means, but I try and keep it up nevertheless.

I have continued with my own jewellery work. If I could get to a point where my work will bring in regular income for me, then I would prefer to work on that more even if it's alongside some of the other things that I'm doing. Definitely the creative side of things is something I'm very keen on.

I'm planning to take teaching training from September for two years. I'll be able to combine it with some of my day jobs. And some of it is based around what I'm teaching at the moment. Ultimately, it will be a diploma in teaching in the lifelong learning sector to enable me to officially teach mature and adult students in further education terms.

It's been very hard work, and I have had times that it has been a real struggle, especially from a financial point of view. But it seems to be going in the right direction, my career is definitely on an upward trend. And in the last year I've secured the evening class teaching position, which is a fantastic boost to my career and my skills. I've also had some of my university work included in a book, through the resin jeweller from my placement year. That's fantastic exposure for me and my work. And in the last couple of weeks I was contacted by [national magazine] having seen my website they wanted some of my work in the magazine – I'm really hoping that that will be a fantastic boost.

Financially, it's a lot better these days than it has been before, but I'm still not even earning 12 grand a year. So you end up living at home at 27, and no prospect of being able to afford to move out. But yes, it's definitely going the right way, and also the teaching work that I'm now doing is paying far better money for those kinds of skills.

I really need to push myself in my own work, because it has taken a back seat sometimes, inevitably because when you're doing two or three jobs, it's very difficult to find any energy to make your own work as well. So, I would like to try and make more of my own work, but I'm definitely hoping that the [national magazine] exposure will develop my work. But also I'm trying to exhibit my work more over the county, and perhaps further afield as well. You have to get your work out there and people have to see it to want it and to buy it. So, I will try and do that through my website and exhibiting in the galleries and shops locally, whilst also doing more evening class teaching work as well to progress the teaching side of my career in the future.

**BA Jewellery, female**

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