Getting Work in the Creative Industries
Introduction to Getting Work in the Creative Industries

This is the third in our series of careers guides focussing on the creative industries - www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides.

The previous guides, Careers Information for Creatives and Designing a Creative CV, will have provided you with information about the types of jobs that are available together with top tips for designing a professional creative CV.

This handout now outlines the main routes you might follow to obtain employment in the creative industries.

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Graduate Vacancy Listings

The Careers & Employability Service and School of Art (MSoA) regularly receive details of internships, freelance commissions and jobs suitable for current students or recent graduates direct from creative employers and arts organisations. Details are posted to the relevant Facebook and LinkedIn groups in the School of Art and My Career Hub at www.mmu.ac.uk/mycareerhub

Occasionally, internships, residencies and project work for students and recent graduates are advertised on the websites of the larger design practices, professional associations and ‘trade’ journals. You will find links to their sites in the employers and careers development sections of the Graduate Prospects occupational profiles at www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles.

The most relevant sectors on Prospects for the creative industries are:

- Creative Arts and Design
- Media and Internet
- Marketing, Advertising and PR

Specialist Recruitment Sites for Creatives

- Arts Thread www.artsthread.com  Originally focussed upon new graduates entering textiles and fashion, Arts Thread has expanded to cover all aspects of design. Arts Thread also works in conjunction with New Designers www.newdesigners.com
- Arts Jobs www.artsjobs.org.uk  Arts Council England’s free mailing list service
- Axis Web www.axisweb.org

For digitally based roles, two North West specialist recruitment agencies carry occasional vacancies appropriate for new graduates together with detailed information about making applications:

- Bubble Jobs www.bubble-jobs.co.uk/career_portal/
- Orchard www.orchard.co.uk/careerkickstart.aspx

Jobs Boards and Online Galleries

Beyond these, there is a multiplicity of jobs boards and specialist recruitment consultancies in the creative industries sector together with online galleries hosting creative work for sale. (See the final section of this guide for examples).

It can be helpful to browse these as they can give you an insight into the types of work typically on offer and the job requirements, whilst the online galleries can stimulate ideas about how you might present your own work. A number provide helpful guidelines on how best to create an online portfolio too.
However, the roles advertised on the jobs boards are usually for experienced artists, designers, media professionals and performers whilst the online galleries are invariably dominated by creatives who already have established reputations. (Most online galleries will also charge substantial fees for hosting your profile and online portfolio of work.)

As a result, whether a current student or fresh graduate, you will almost certainly need to consider other strategies for getting your first offer of work or a commission.

Getting Short Paid Freelance Commissions

The number of sites that now advertise short-term commissions, especially in design, have grown dramatically in recent years. They provide an online global market place that is often referred to as ‘The Gig Economy’.

These are worth exploring as experienced designers will not normally pitch where the commissions are very short term. Apart from getting your name in front of potential employers, such commissions can be useful for testing out whether freelance work is for you as well as helping you earn some cash whilst you are studying or working on your professional portfolio after graduation.

Most of these sites also provide guidance on pricing your work and making your pitch.

- Check out 10 of the ‘market leaders’ for creatives at www.creativeboom.com/resources/10-essential-websites-to-help-you-find-more-freelance-work
- Gradlancer www.gradlancer.co.uk Links students to short term paid employer commissions in range of sectors including creative arts, media content writing and digital
- Talent Cupboard www.talentcupboard.com Links students and recent graduates to short commissions in digital
- Student Gems www.studentgems.com
- Enternships www.enternships.com

Speculative Applications using Professional Association Directories and Journals

Small organisations dominate the creative industries. As a result, they tend not to advertise, preferring to follow up appealing speculative approaches or positive discussions at a networking event.

Professional bodies, trade associations and journals in the creative sector provide listings of networking or exhibiting opportunities together with online directories of potentially relevant consultancies/practices. These organisations may be willing to provide work experience or consider speculative approaches for freelance assignments or paid employment if they receive a well-presented and interesting approach.
Examples of online directories and journals relevant to the creative industries include:

- A-N – Artists Newsletter - [www.a-n.co.uk](http://www.a-n.co.uk)
- Hidden Art - [hiddenart.co.uk/2014/07/18/a-z-designers/](http://hiddenart.co.uk/2014/07/18/a-z-designers/)
- The Design Directory - [www.designdirectory.co.uk](http://www.designdirectory.co.uk)
- The Marketing and Creative Handbook - [www.mch.co.uk](http://www.mch.co.uk)
- The Artists and Writers Yearbook - [www.writersandartists.co.uk](http://www.writersandartists.co.uk)
- The Drum - [http://www.thedrum.com/network](http://www.thedrum.com/network)
- Knowledge Online - [www.theknowledgeonline.com](http://www.theknowledgeonline.com) (for Film, TV and Video)
- Manchester Digital - [www.manchesterdigital.com/directory-listing](http://www.manchesterdigital.com/directory-listing)
- Royal Institute of British Architects - [https://www.architecture.com](http://https://www.architecture.com)

**Please note:** some online journals charge a subscription for accessing vacancies and/or their members directory so it is worth checking whether they are available to browse free in the MMU Library (see link immediately below).

The Library also hosts a number of online company databases, such as FAME, that can be very useful when undertaking a speculative job search. [http://libguides.mmu.ac.uk/](http://libguides.mmu.ac.uk/) (enter FAME in the search box)

**Networking is Key**

As you are approaching people ‘cold’, making speculative applications can take up immense amounts of time and effort with no guarantee of success.

You are far more likely to get results if the person/organisation you are approaching has had some form of contact with you already. This might be an introduction via a mutual contact or a conversation at an event or exhibition i.e. **NETWORKING**. Indeed, many of the MSOA staff will tell you that they owe their first offer of employment or freelance commission to a conversation about their work with an artist, designer etc., not an application to an advertised job or a speculative approach!

As a result, it is vital to take advantage of any potential relevant networking opportunities open to you. For example:

- Attending a private view in the School of Art or exhibitions at local galleries and museums
- Taking part in exhibitions and competitions
- Attending master classes, guest lectures and talks
- Joining student groups coordinated regionally by professional associations
- Participating in local networking groups
- Registering with online networking groups

This can enable you to:

- Meet like-minded people
- Make contacts with people who can be inspirational in the development of your practice. Some may offer to be a mentor to you
- Get advice on what you can do to get your work noticed. For example, participating in key competitions, exhibitions or community arts groups
- Find out who the key players in your area of practice are so that you can tailor any approach you wish to make to obtain work experience, a job, freelance assignment or commission.
- Even learn about forthcoming vacancies and freelance commissions before they are advertised.

For more advice, attend the Careers and Employability workshop ‘Networking: build your personal brand’. Details at www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/events

**Online Social Networks**

LinkedIn and Twitter are now heavily used by professionals in the creative industries so it is worth creating an account so you can connect or follow the relevant people:

**LinkedIn** [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

The professional version of Facebook, LinkedIn enables you to connect with a range of arts, design and media groups. It offers a means of posting visual content on your personal profile too – see mashable.com/2013/05/01/linkedin-visual-profile/

To make optimum use of LinkedIn:
- Follow the advice at university.linkedin.com
- Attend one of our regular LinkedIn workshops to perfect your profile

**Twitter** [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

Twitter has been widely adopted by people working in the media and in design. Learn more about using Twitter (and other social media) in your job search at: [https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/getting-a-job/job-hunting-and-social-media](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/getting-a-job/job-hunting-and-social-media)

This (American) article also gives some context: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/16/twitter-job-search_n_7571260.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/16/twitter-job-search_n_7571260.html)

Two Twitter accounts worth following are @artsjobs and @artsopps

For general advice on using social media for job-hunting, see our guide [http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/media/mmuacuk/content/documents/careers/guides/Using-Social-Media-for-Job-Hunting.pdf](http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/media/mmuacuk/content/documents/careers/guides/Using-Social-Media-for-Job-Hunting.pdf)

**The Manchester School of Art Facebook Group**

These continually feature a wide range of jobs, commissions, internships, competitions, exhibitions, master classes, events and opportunities for creative collaboration. Creative Manchester in particular concentrates on opportunities in the Manchester area.

*Creative Manchester Students* [www.facebook.com/groups/149502408413575/permalink/1007200462643761/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/149502408413575/permalink/1007200462643761/)
Networking & Mentoring Opportunities in The Manchester School of Art

Many departments offer structured networking opportunities by arranging private shows, guest lectures, careers panels, visits to exhibitions, employer briefs etc. Make sure you take part in as many of these as possible and go along with some interesting questions in mind. It is advisable to have a business card to offer if the conversation is particularly positive. Don’t forget to ask if you can link with the person via LinkedIn too.

The Careers & Employability Service arrange networking cafes together with other events that will enable you to make even more useful contacts. See www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/events

Tutors and technicians possess a lot of knowledge about their sector and have a wealth of contacts so it is worth asking them for suggestions of key people to approach too. Many of their contacts will be previous graduates of Manchester Met/MSoA.

As awareness of the Schools of Art, Media, Design and Architecture LinkedIn groups begin to grow, we anticipate that former MSoA graduates will request to join too. It is likely that many will be willing to connect with you and offer advice about your search for work.

Some courses support mentoring schemes to link you with professionals working in your area of practice – the School of Art’s LinkedIn groups should encourage their development further. You could also consider joining the University’s Mentor Me programme if you cannot source a mentor through your course. See https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/careers/students/how-we-can-help-you/mentor-me/

Creative Networking Groups in Manchester

Many networking groups now exist enabling creatives to either meet on a regular basis or share news and ideas online. Many are free to join and offer useful social events at little cost.

A good number in Manchester are coordinated through Meetup, whilst the Creative Manchester Facebook group often receives posts about new networks being set up or established groups inviting students to their events. (Alternatively, use Google to search for any other groups that meet in the City – or consider setting up a group of your own.)

Meet Up – www.meetup.com
This online social networking portal facilitates group meetings around the UK, enabling people to find and join groups unified by a common interest such as the creative arts.

Manchester-based groups include:

- Life Drawing Manchester - www.meetup.com/Life-Drawing-Manchester
- Manchester Photography - www.meetup.com/Manchester-PHOTOGRAPHY
- Drink’n Doodle - www.meetup.com/DrinknDoodle/
- Manchester Sketchbookers - www.meetup.com/The-Sketchbookers
- Manchester Arts, Music and Culture Lovers - www.meetup.com/Manchester-Arts-Music-Culture-Lovers
- Creative Industries Networking Group - www.meetup.com/C-I-N-G/
- Northern Digitals - www.meetup.com/blabtalks/
For more, go to www.meetup.com/cities/gb/18/manchester and search under:

- Arts & Culture
- Games
- Movies and Film
- Music
- Photography
- Tech
- Writing

Other social networking groups who meet in and around Manchester include:

- **Draw North West** (on Twitter) - @DrawNorthwest
- North West Craft Network - http://nwcraftnetwork.blogspot.co.uk/
- Manchester Urban Sketchers - www.flickr.com/groups/manchesterurbansketchinggroup/pool or http://urbansketchers-manchester.blogspot.co.uk
- Art with a Heart - www.artwithaheart.org.uk
- Kosmonaut - http://kosmonaut.co/event/art-social
- Art Battle - www.facebook.com/ArtBattleManchester
- Arts for Recovery in the Community (ARC) - http://arc-centre.org/volunteer-with-us
- All Stitched Up in Chorlton - www.stitchedup.coop
- Manchester Fashion Network - www.manchesterfashion.com
- Manchester Jewellers Network - manchesterjewellersnetwork.org
- Northern Soho - northernsoho.co.uk
- Manchester Digital - www.manchesterdigital.com
- Future Artists - www.futureartists.co.uk (For independent filmmakers)
- Redeye - www.redeye.org.uk (NW photographers)
- Geek Up - www.geekup.org (Web designers and developers)

Networks offering more formal events and masterclasses in Manchester and Lancashire include:

- **Castlefield Gallery** - www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk (Includes studio listings and artists resources)
- **Creative Industries Trafford (CIT)** - creativeindustriestrafford.org/
- MadLab - https://madlab.org.uk/events
- Manchester Digital - www.manchesterdigital.com
- Manchester Publicity Association - www.mpa.org.uk
- Professional Copywriters Network - www.procopywriters.co.uk/
- Publishing North West - www.publishingnorthwest.co.uk (Writers and independent presses)
- **Creative Lancashire** - www.creativelancashire.org
- Creative England - www.creativeengland.co.uk
- Northern Edge - theyeatculture.org/northern-edge

**Networking through Volunteering**

Another useful way of getting to meet people who can introduce you to others at the same time as getting your name and work more widely known.
Volunteering MMU [www.theunionmmu.org/your-opportunities/volunteering](http://www.theunionmmu.org/your-opportunities/volunteering)

Based in MMU Student Union, opportunities include volunteering with arts and creative groups.

Manchester Community Central (MACC) [www.macc.org.uk](http://www.macc.org.uk)

Manchester’s development agency for the voluntary and community sector organisations, many of which are in the arts and cultural sector. Visit their Manchester Volunteer Centre at [www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/volunteer-centre-manchester](http://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/volunteer-centre-manchester)

Community Arts Manchester [can.uk.com](http://can.uk.com)

For comprehensive listings of voluntary organisations elsewhere in the UK, see:

- Voluntary Arts Network [www.voluntaryarts.org](http://www.voluntaryarts.org)
- Do-It - Volunteering Made Easy [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)
- Volunteering England [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

**Portfolio Working**

It is not easy to establish yourself in full-time practice or employment straight after graduation. As a result, many students undertake other work roles alongside portfolio preparation and painting, designing, making etc. This is usually referred to as Portfolio Working - see:

- [https://ccskills.org.uk/careers/develop-your-career/article/building-a-portfolio-career](https://ccskills.org.uk/careers/develop-your-career/article/building-a-portfolio-career)
- [http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/careers-advice/1545/is-portfolio-working-for-you](http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/careers-advice/1545/is-portfolio-working-for-you)
- [http://portfoliocareers.net/](http://portfoliocareers.net/)
- [http://www.portfolioworkers.uk/](http://www.portfolioworkers.uk/)

**Freelancing in the Creative Industries**

Many creatives also establish their careers through freelancing. See our guide ‘**Freelancing, Exhibiting and Community Arts**’ in the Creative Industries section for links to sites that will help you sell your work. [www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides)

**Commercial Online Portfolio Galleries and Creative Jobs Boards**

As stated at the outset, these concentrate upon artists and designers who are already well-established in practice but they can still be extremely helpful to browse for an insight into typical job requirements and how you might lay out your CV and portfolio.

**Note:** - *The following sites are offered as examples only:*
- Arts Admin - www.artsadmin.co.uk (For performing artists)
- Arts Hub - www.artshub.co.uk/uk
- Arts Professional - www.artsprofessional.co.uk (For arts administration and curatorship)
- Behance - www.behance.net
- Coroflot - www.coroflot.com
- Creative Recruitment - www.creativerecruitment.co.uk
- Creative Review - www.creativereview.co.uk
- Design & Design - www.designanddesign.com
- Design Week - www.creativereview.co.uk
- Marketing, Advertising and Design - www.mad.co.uk
- Media Volt - www.mediavolt.co.uk (For performers and TV/film production)
- Talent Circle - www.castingcallpro.com/uk/services/links/884/talent-circle (For all aspects of film)
- The Dots - https://the-dots.com/jobs/featured
- The I Spot - www.theispot.com
- Voodoo Chilli - www.voodoochilli.net

**Careers & Employability Support**

The Careers & Employability Service offers range of support to Manchester Met students and graduates:

- **Find Opportunities**: We advertise hundreds of part time, graduate and internship roles through My Career Hub.
- **Jobs Hub drop-in**: Available Monday-Friday 1pm-4pm, our Careers & Employability Assistants are available to offer jobseeking and application advice.
- **Career Consultant Appointments**: Meet with a Careers Consultant to discuss options with your English degree.

For more information visit [www.mmu.ac.uk/careers](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/careers)