

AUT

A FUTURE IN
FASHION





WHAT IS A CAREER IN FASHION ABOUT?

Design is influenced and informed by the time we live in. People make a statement about their identity, their tastes and their status through their fashion choices.

Fashion designers create the look of the time, responding and reacting to political, economic, social and environmental themes. Fashion symbolises or delineates the styles and issues occurring within a particular timeframe.

Careers in fashion can follow two pathways. The design pathway involves the creation of garments and ranges – researching ideas, creating concepts, preparing design and developing fashion products.

The commercial pathway involves the business of design – the strategising, buying, forecasting, retail and organisational aspects of fashion. Graduates working in larger companies may find themselves dealing with off-shore production, which can often lead to overseas travel. When employed by smaller independent fashion companies, graduates are situated in a workroom environment and involved in patternmaking and a certain amount of design input.

Fashion graduates need to be willing to start at the bottom – there are not many opportunities to walk into fashion design roles in top companies without industry experience. It will take a new fashion designer over two or three years to achieve label awareness – and up to five years to develop an established following.

Emerging fashion designers require the skills of both pathways while developing their label and business.

Do you have a strong sense of style and a commitment to pursue a career in fashion? Are you a creative problem solver? Do you have an eye for texture, shape and detail? Do you love clothes and demonstrating your personality through your dress style? Then a career in fashion may be a great option for you.

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

Eco-awareness – Currently the majority of New Zealand fashion designers manufacture offshore because of high costs. Designers need to carefully research the sustainability of their offshore supply chain and manufacturing choices. Are their suppliers disposing of or recycling their waste responsibly? How are their workers treated? Where are they sourcing their materials?

There are a few successful commercial designers that have garments manufactured from start to finish in New Zealand, such as Kate Sylvester, Anne Mardell, Miranda Brown and Verge. This gives them an increasingly strong point of difference.

Globalisation of fashion – The continued globalisation of the fashion marketplace offers consumers a wide range of choices at all price points. Australian brands were the first to physically enter the New Zealand market, with global players, such as Prada, Topshop and H&M arriving more recently. For local fashion brands to survive, they need to be distinctive, unique and innovative.

Visibility in the market – The increase in digital marketing through multi channels offer huge opportunities to create brand awareness. Fashion brands need a strong brand story and guidelines, clear target audiences and strong forward marketing strategies to stay relevant and competitive. Local fashion businesses with strong brands and compelling strategies, include Zambesi, Karen Walker, Lonely

Hearts, Stolen Girlfriends Club, Kate Sylvester, I Love Ugly and Deadly Ponies.

Cheap as chips – The larger global fast fashion brands are very price competitive which puts pressure on existing retailers, particularly in the middle price point in retail. In addition the fast fashion brands have very short stock timelines, with product newness a key feature.

Community of practice – New graduates often establish fashion collectives and combined retail showroom exhibitions to develop a community of support, connection and collaboration in a creative environment. These exhibitions offer a more diverse range of choice for any consumers looking for a point of difference from the existing fashion retail market, and gives the designer opportunities to build relationships with the consumers by direct retailing. Collectives also help fashion design graduates stay connected and supported while working to get exposure for their labels.

Growth opportunities in retail – Currently in New Zealand the business side of fashion offers more career opportunities because of the growth in global fashion retailers opening New Zealand stores, eg Topshop and David Jones. Larger fashion retailers employ fashion graduates for buyer and merchandiser assistant roles, seeking to utilise their fashion sensibilities, eye for detail and creativity.



WORK SETTINGS

Fashion design graduates can follow either a design or a commercial pathway in the fashion sector. Graduates entering the design arm of industry will often work part time or full-time in roles such as workroom assistants, pattern makers, design assistants or production assistants, while establishing their own labels through collective showroom retail options.

The commercial arm includes roles such as buyer administrator, merchandiser assistant or production co-ordinator. They could be working for fashion design companies, large fashion retailers, fabric wholesalers or suppliers of fabrics or accessories.

A number also work part-time in fashion retail whilst developing their own fashion label.

Typical work settings include –

Design workrooms for independent fashion labels, such as Kate Sylvester, Huffer, Lonely Hearts, Zambesi, Ingrid Starnes, Ruby.

Large corporate fashion retailers, such as Barkers, Glassons, Hallensteins, Max, Farmers.

Fashion marketing and public relations companies, such as Showroom 22, FashionNZ, Ciel PR, Impact PR.

Fabric wholesalers, such as Wall Fabrics, Frost Textiles Ltd, Charles Parsons, Fabric Merchants, John Rainger.

Start-up labels, such as Jason Lingard, Sherie Muijs, Ingrid Starnes, Glenn Yungnickel, Joseph Yen of Tür.

CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES

Fashion designer – Involves creating a garment/range from start to end, sketching the initial designs, developing patterns and creating prototypes. Includes sourcing appropriate fabrics and accessories, tweaking and preparing each range. If a sole label, also involves doing accounts, managing finances, paying taxes etc.

Fashion buyer – Observes trends by attending fashion fairs and trade fairs and visiting wholesale showrooms. Either sources and bulk-buys garments at wholesale stores or buys one-off from fashion fairs to be reproduced cheaply, depending on the company. Works closely with designers

Workroom assistant – Includes pattern drafting and sizing of garments, spec sheets and production. Can involve cutting of sample garments for manufacture, hand sewing and finishing.

Production co-ordinator – Co-ordinates stages involved with turning textiles into wearable products. Includes overseeing cutting and sewing, pressing, selecting garment components, eg buttons, zips, lace. Manages quality control and deadlines, back orders, etc.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Graduates have the ability to create a design concept and turn it into a fashion product using the following skills.

- Able to turn creative ideas into practical fashion outcomes
- Skills in design, pattern cutting, fitting and garment construction
- Flexible and innovative thinking
- Practical and creative problem solving skills
- Understand the importance of deadlines
- Understand importance of being a team player



PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Creative problem solver, who has initiative
- Determined, resourceful
- Practical and able to apply theory to practice
- Flexible and creative thinkers
- Has a personal sense of style

SALARY GUIDE

Graduate salaries for entry level across all of fashion sector (design assistant, workroom assistant, production assistant) range from \$31,720 (min wage) to \$38,000. Salaries should start increasing after three to six months.

With 3 to 5 years' experience:	Salary (per year)
Fashion designer	\$50,000 - \$80,000
Pattern maker	\$50,000 - \$65,000
Garment technician	\$50,000 - \$70,000
Merchandise manager	\$65,000 - \$70,000
Commercial fashion buyer	\$90,000 - \$120,000
Senior production manager	\$70,000 - \$150,000, depending on size, experience, travel duties, team size.

Sources: Fashion Personnel, Careers NZ, payscale.com

The salary guide is indicative of the NZ job market at the time of publication (late 2016) and should only be used as a guideline.

THE AUT APPROACH

Fashion students are taught realistic design processes, learning within industry standard design and production studios. All lecturers have recently been or are currently working in the industry.

Final year students present their collections to media and industry in a showroom environment or a runway show. A selected number of final year students also participate in the AUT Rookie Fashion Show, which is well acclaimed and attended by industry and media. These shows may launch a graduate's label or open doors to employment with top national and international designers.

FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Fashion can be studied to postgraduate level within the Master of Design. Research areas include advanced development of practice for emerging fashion labels, sustainability, upcycling, integrity of rainwear, design theory and humanistic economics.



INGRID STARNES

Fashion designer (own label)

Bachelor of Design in Fashion Design

"I couldn't have wished for a better job. I am living my dream and – even when it gets tough – part of what makes it so great is getting through those hard times.

I worked part time at Global Fabrics after I finished at AUT, while also creating a few of my own pieces to stock in Rip Shit and Bust. Then a very exciting opportunity came up at Kate Sylvester for a junior sample room assistant/junior design role. It was an invaluable experience.

I started my own fashion label seven years ago. My first collection was a concise 12 piece range and we shot the look book in our garage. I worked with a pattern maker who I still work with today, and cut and sewed everything myself. When moving into production I basically did everything myself to keep our overheads down. My partner looks after all the business side, sales and PR – it has very much been the two of us since day one.

We have just opened our 3rd store in the city. It has definitely been a challenging seven years with its ups and downs.... the big thing is that you are supported by your suppliers and others in the industry and you have to work really closely with them.

Retail allows you to learn directly about your customer and what they love, which helps me refine the mix of pieces I design while doing what I love and keeping the business really sustainable.

There's a lot of variation in our week, depending on where we are in a season. We are currently finishing grading our high summer range and wrapping up the last of the SS16 (spring/summer 2016) production. In the coming weeks we will do final fittings for the AW17 (autumn/winter 2017) range before moving into grading and production. There is also a constant flow of made-to-measure and a lot of liaising with stores with new stock and imagery.

I tell new graduates to gain as much experience as possible, work for people they admire, talk and question others in business. You can never have too much information and the people in the wider industry are great to work with – they have seen it all before and can help you a lot."

USEFUL WEBSITES

Fashion Personnel (fashion industry recruiter)
www.fashionpersonnel.co.nz

The Big Idea - information, jobs, grants and networking opportunities for creative industries
www.thebigidea.nz

Viva Magazine (NZME) online
www.viva.co.nz/fashion

Refinery29 (fashion and style website - US)
www.refinery29.com


FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about Fashion or the Bachelor of Design please visit:
www.aut.ac.nz/fashion-studies

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: www.aut.ac.nz/enquire

futurestudents@aut.ac.nz

 @AUTFutureStudents


CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information:

0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

www.aut.ac.nz/enquire

studenthub@aut.ac.nz

 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS

For other Future Career Sheets visit:


www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets


For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through <https://elab.aut.ac.nz/>


CITY CAMPUS


55 Wellesley Street East, Auckland Central

CONNECT WITH US NOW

 @autuni

 @AUTuni

 AUTUniversity

 @autuni

The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, August 2019.

Cover image by Christian Tjandrawinata

