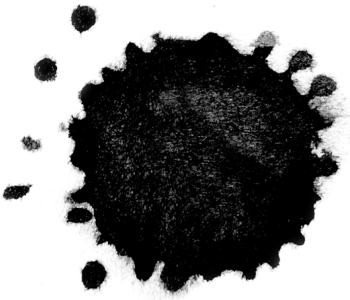


University of the
Arts London * *
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creative careers

working for yourself

Creative Careers is part of Student Services
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working for yourself

Making a living as an artist, designer or craftsperson

Around 13% of University of the Arts graduates will be in some form of self-employment within six months of leaving College. They are ten times as likely as all graduates nationally to be self-employed 6 months after graduation. They are running their own businesses, working freelance or practising as professional artists and designers.

What does working for yourself mean to you?

Self-employment?

Working as a freelancer?

Selling products/objects or a service?

Making a living (or a partial living) either alone or within a group or co-operative?

Basically, as soon as you take your work out of the studio and into the public domain, you are involved in some kind of business activity.

Is the lifestyle right for me?

The route to successful self-employment is unlikely to be easy and a great deal depends on motivation. You need to be committed to your business and determined to make it succeed. You will also need to be self-reliant and have plenty of self-belief. Finally, you need to be willing and able to work hard. Studies of those who are successfully self-employed show that they usually have to put considerable effort into establishing themselves and may have to put in long hours in the early stages.

Here are some things you will need to think about:

Have you built up any contacts in your industry, if not how will you go about this?

Do you have a clear idea of what you want to do?

Have you researched the market?

Have you looked closely at likely costs?

What legal aspects do I need to think about?

Do you have a detailed business plan for the first 12 months?

Taxation

“ Get yourself a good accountant” *Freelance photographer*

As soon as you start working for yourself you need to contact your local Inland Revenue Office, the Contributions Agency and HM Customs and Excise

If you are working for yourself you are responsible for paying your own UK taxes. You will have to pay Income Tax on any profits that you make. For information on tax call the Inland Revenue help line for the newly self-employed on 08459 15 45 15.

You are also liable for National Insurance contributions, for advice call 08459 15 46 55.

Suppliers of goods and services must register for VAT if their supplies to customers exceed or are likely to exceed a set limit in a 12 month period. You should seek advice whether registering will benefit you. For advice on VAT call the HM Customs and Excise Advice Service on 0845 010 9000.

Business plan

If you are planning to set up as a practitioner you will certainly have to develop a business plan, especially in order to access funds. All business plans are different as they reflect the interests of the applicant and the nature of the proposed business. The research that you undertake in order to be able to make a business plan will help you to decide whether it is a viable option and whether you are interested in running a business at all. Here are some of the basics:

A definition of the business - what is it and what or whom does it serve?

The objectives of the business

A people plan - describe your background, experience and skills

A marketing plan - what is your product and who are your customers?

Profit and loss budget & cash flow forecast

Copyright

Copyright is an important consideration when working for yourself. When you create a piece of original work (be it a sculpture, a photograph, a textile design, a written piece etc) you own the piece itself and automatically the right to copy the piece. You can sell the piece without selling the copyright. You can choose to sell the copyright in total or in part and any copyright agreement must be in writing.

Premises

Do you have somewhere where you can set up your business? Do you need to lease premises, or will you work from home. You will need to factor in these costs into your business plan. If finances are tight, you could consider sharing premises with a partner.

Promotional tools

“A website can really help, its like an online portfolio” *Freelance jewellery maker*

Your publicity and promotion needs to be clearly targeted to the chosen market. This may seem obvious, but don't send slides of product designs to a magazine that only covers fine art photography! (People make these kinds of mistakes all the time, at best it's a waste of time, at worst, it can really back fire if you develop a bad reputation.)

“ You have to invest in marketing yourself – build a name/ reputation” *Freelance photographer*

When you design your promotional tools, remember that quality is all-important if you want to create a professional and credible impression. Spend as much as you can on good quality printing and image reproduction. Your written language should be exemplary. Presentation is 80% of the message. You should also aim for consistency.

What are your promotional tools?

They could include:

Portfolio

Website

A personal image or logo or group image if a group promotion

Slides, photographs and illustrations

Press release

Business cards, headed paper, headed invoices etc.

Management / Administration

A lot of your time will be taken up with administration for your business. One of the most important aspects is record keeping. You will need to keep full and accurate records of all your business transactions. The tax authorities may want to check these. To back up your records you must also keep documents such as receipts, bills, bank statements and cheque stubs. You should separate your business transactions from your personal finances. Put money aside to meet your tax liability. You should assess if it is worth your while employing an accountant.

Contracts

“Check going rates on relevant websites so you don't sell yourself short” *Freelance photographer*

A simple contract would state:

The names of the parties who have made the agreement.

The content and details of the work; (e.g. designs required, quantity required).

The fee (see below).

When the work will be delivered and in how many stages payment will be made.

Who owns copyright/reproduction rights – (you maintain ownership unless you assign copyright to you client).

A cancellation clause

On occasions misunderstanding can occur if the number, method and timing of payments are not agreed. It is advisable, therefore, for this to be verbally agreed or written into the contract. It is recommended that the payments for designed/commissioned work be made in three parts. When the work is agreed, when it is half completed and on completion and delivery of work.

The fee may be calculated per design/piece of work or on an hourly rate. It is important to establish this in advance.

A final thought

Working for yourself can be extremely rewarding both personally and financially, for instance:

- Being your own boss
- Variety of work
- Potential higher earnings

However, there are some disadvantages to consider also:

- Social isolation
- Irregular workflow of peaks and troughs
- Lack of employment benefits (sick pay, holiday pay)

It may be advisable to start your freelance work in your spare time or work part time until you have established some contacts and built up a reputation. It is also important to continue with your own personal development. Keep up to date with training opportunities in your local area.

And remember – don't be afraid to turn down work and be bold!

Further Information

The following are some examples of organisations and resources that may help you. Further information can be found at the Careers Information Centre at Davies Street, where there is a wealth of material contained in our box files, books, directories and journals.

www.arts.ac.uk/student/careers

Visit our website to locate further information on resources to help you Working for Yourself. For access to our recommended websites click on Resources - you will now see links to Self-Employment (general links) and Useful Websites (subject specific links). You will find valuable information on organisations such as:

- ArtQuest
- Enterprise Centre for The Creative Arts
- The Crafts Council

- The Arts Council England
- The Design Council
- Learning & Skills Council

Department of Trade and Industry – www.dti.gov.uk

The DTI has a comprehensive section on “Help for Small Businesses and New Businesses” and includes information on Business Links, company legislation and funding opportunities.

HM Revenue & Customs – www.hmrc.gov.uk/

To find out all you need to know about self employment and tax issues, click on the Individuals and Employees section.

The Design Trust - www.thedesigntrust.co.uk

The Design Trust produces the “Business Start-Up Guide” which is an invaluable resource of information, advice and contacts for anyone thinking of starting a design-led business. It can be downloaded for free from their website, or purchased for £5.00.

Written and researched by Annie Payne, Jo Febry and Leila Almodiny

University of the Arts London
– a creative constellation

Camberwell College of Arts
Central Saint Martins College
of Art and Design
Chelsea College of Art and Design
London College of Communication
London College of Fashion
Wimbledon College of Art

www.arts.ac.uk



The main purpose of our written material is to provide specialist careers information, that is not readily available elsewhere, for our students and recent graduates.

All eligible students and graduates are welcome to use Creative Careers. We provide a range of services from information, advice and guidance through to practical group workshops. To find out how we work with students and leavers at your college or how to contact us visit www.arts.ac.uk/student/careers.

We aim to be disability friendly so do let us know of any particular requirements you may have. All our handouts and workshop materials are available in alternative formats on request. Please contact us to discuss your needs and how we can help. To make comments about this handout or suggestions for new ones we could produce, please email us at careers@arts.ac.uk