Creative and user-focused digital careers

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Digital careers are not just about technical roles like programming - there are many roles that require creative skills or the ability to understand people. This leaflet explores some of the creative and user-focused areas of digital work. Whilst there are no set entry requirements for these career areas, many digital professionals hold higher education qualifications.

There are a number of different roles and opportunities for people who would like to work in the digital sector and use their creative or people skills. This leaflet introduces some examples of the career opportunities available, more information is available in the other leaflets in this system - see the Related Leaflets section.

Education options

Most people working in digital careers have higher education qualifications. Although there are specialised courses available (see below), depending on the role, subjects such as graphic design, computing, marketing, animation, psychology or business may also provide routes into work.

There are relevant specialist **degree** and **postgraduate** courses suitable for a range of jobs featured in this leaflet. Course titles include digital media, creative media, digital design, creative computing, user experience and user interface design, and service design.

For entry to a degree course you normally need A levels, or equivalent qualifications. Relevant experience is useful. For creative courses and job roles, universities/employers often want to see a portfolio of your work. You could include examples of what you have produced through relevant courses or work placements, or just in your free time.

You should research higher education courses carefully, as they vary in their approach and content. It's also a good idea to find out the career destinations of past students. **Sandwich courses**, which include a year or equivalent on placement, can give you valuable work experience.

If you do not wish to go on to higher education, it may be possible to enter employment with a lower-level computing, business, media or design qualification. For example, you could consider taking a course leading to a **BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First** or **BTEC Level 3 National** qualification in creative digital media production or business, or an **OCR Level 2 or Level 3 Cambridge Technical** qualification in digital media or business. The **T levels** in digital production, design and development, and digital support services are available in certain schools and colleges in England, and may be relevant for certain roles. Other relevant courses are mentioned in *Digital careers - an introduction to the work and training* and in other leaflets listed under the Related Leaflets section.

Apprenticeships can offer structured training in the workplace. Find out more about the Apprenticeship opportunities in creative and user-focused digital careers in the sections below.

Creative digital careers

Many digital jobs sit at the crossover between technical and creative careers (also known as CreaTech) and require design skills, innovation and artistic flair.

Areas of work

Digital designers create visual and interactive digital content for websites, apps, social media posts, games and other digital platforms. This broad-ranging role may combine elements of web design, graphic design and even animations.

Web and **app designers** work with developers to create and construct websites and applications. They focus more on the look, layout and design of digital products, but still need technical knowledge (see the leaflet *Web and app design* for more information).

UI (user interface) designers/analysts concentrate on the visual experiences of users of digital products, such as websites, apps and software. They aim to produce an interface that is appealing and works smoothly for users, whilst maintaining the look and feel required by the digital product (e.g. in line with its branding).

Digital content creation requires a range of creative skills. **Digital copywriters** produce text-based content for a wide variety of online and digital sources. **Web content editors/managers** (also known as **digital editors** and **content designers**) are responsible for the creation and production of online content (usually for a particular organisation), which may include images, videos, copywriting and social media content. Content specifically produced for marketing purposes may be overseen by **digital marketers**.

Visual effects artists and **virtual/augmented reality designers** use their creative and technical skills to blur the boundaries between the digital and physical worlds in our games, films, TV shows and other media.

Games designers work to create and develop computer games on a wide range of platforms, as part of a multidisciplinary team. As well as developers, games designers may work with other creative digital professionals, such as **artists**, **scriptwriters**, **sound effects designers** and **animators**. See the leaflet *Games design and development* for more information.

What it takes

In addition to creative and design skills, depending on the job you are aiming at you also need to:

- be able to work as part of a team of professionals (such as developers and graphic designers)
- communicate effectively
- be capable of solving problems creatively
- be able to work to deadlines, perhaps involving long working hours
- be flexible and adaptable
- work effectively in a fast-changing area of technology.

Apprenticeships

In England, the following Apprenticeships may provide training in these specific areas of work:

- Level 3 Apprenticeships for content creators and digital marketers
- Level 4 Apprenticeships for junior animators and junior VFX artists
- Level 6 Degree Apprenticeships for creative digital design professionals.

In Wales, there are Apprenticeships at levels 3 and 4 in:

- creative and digital media
- digital content design
- social media and digital marketing.

User-focused digital careers

Certain tech jobs focus on the users of digital services, be it games, apps, social media, websites, learning resources or software products. These jobs require a good understanding of people, specifically those people who will be using your digital service/product.

Areas of work

User researchers must understand how to develop digital products to suit user needs, by carrying out and analysing research. They may be involved in researching responses to ideas for new digital tools or services through to testing existing products with their targeted users.

UX (user experience) designers/analysts are concerned with designing digital products that are easy to use and navigate, engaging, attractive and suited to the target audience. UX specialists are experts in human-tech interaction and UX roles may call for expertise in design, technology and psychology. **Service designers** apply UX principles to a whole software package or digital service, making sure the experience of the users remains of central importance in what can be a complex design and development process.

Digital accessibility specialists/consultants provide information and advice that help organisations to meet accessibility standards with their digital content, products and services, so that they are available to a wide variety of users.

Digital learning designers create and maintain digital/virtual learning environments for a range of educational and training purposes. They must be aware of the needs of their users and work closely with training/educational staff to ensure that the digital tools support successful learning.

Social media/digital community managers are responsible for managing communication with an organisation's users, through social media and digital community building tools. Their role also includes promoting engagement with the organisation in order to increase its audience.

Client management roles, such as **digital account managers** and **client relationship managers (CRMs)**, are focused on building and maintaining good working relationships with clients. This area of work may involve approaching key contacts in different businesses and organisations in order to gain new clients, maintaining a network of previous clients, and supporting and liaising with current clients.

What it takes

In addition to people skills, depending on the job you are aiming at you also need to:

- have excellent communication skills
- be able to undertake research and apply your findings in practice
- have a good understanding of business
- be able to work to deadlines and targets
- get along well with colleagues from different teams
- be prepared to stay up to date in a changeable sector.

Apprenticeships

In England, the following apprenticeships may provide training in these specific areas of work:

- Level 4 Apprenticeships for digital accessibility specialists and digital community managers
- Level 5 Apprenticeships for digital learning designers
- Level 6 Degree Apprenticeships for digital UX professionals.

In Wales, there are Apprenticeships at level 3 in digital learning design and at levels 2, 3 and 4 for user-centred design.

Pay and prospects

There are no set career paths or pay scales for creative or user-focused digital specialists. Salaries vary widely depending on the employer, exact job role etc. The more skills and experience you have to offer, the larger the salary you can usually command.

Once you are in employment, there are various qualifications that you can gain through part-time study or through assessment in the workplace. Many digital specialists are self-employed and work on a contract or consultancy basis. There are also opportunities to move into other areas of work such as management, training, or business.

Further Information

Discover Creative Careers - to explore creative careers and to find out about online events etc, see: https://discovercreative.careers

BIMA (British Interactive Media Association):
www.bima.co.uk

Search for degree courses on:
www.ucas.com

To find out more about Apprenticeships, view:
www.apprenticeships.gov.uk
www.careerswales.gov.wales

Other useful organisations and websites are given in other leaflets in this system (see the Related Leaflets section); in particular, view *Digital careers - an introduction to the work and training*.

Related Leaflets

1.02 Working with people
1.16 Making a career online
D 01 Digital careers - an introduction to the work and training
D 02 Tech and digital support
D 03 Web and app design
D 05 Data analysis and management
D 06 Software design and development
D 07 Games design and development
D 09 Tech and digital management
D 10 Working in esports
D 12 AI and machine learning
E 01 Art and design - an introduction
E 03 Careers with design and technology
E 09 Graphic design
GE 06 Sound recording
O 11 Digital marketing
PA 01 Animation
PA 05 Special and visual effects work
PB 02 Writing for a living (includes digital copywriters and web content management)
PC 01 Photography
V 11 Psychology: an overview of the work and training