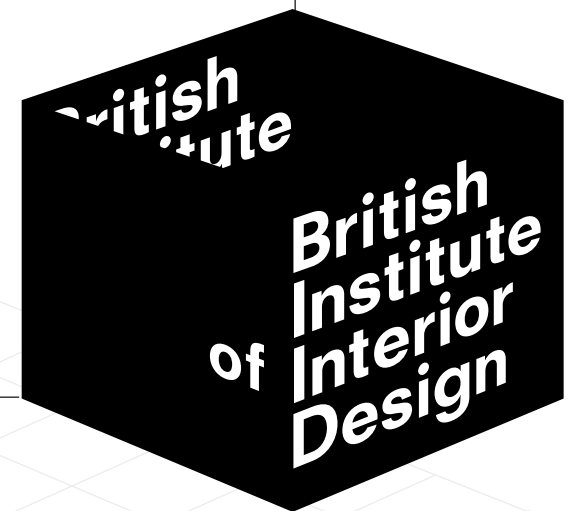
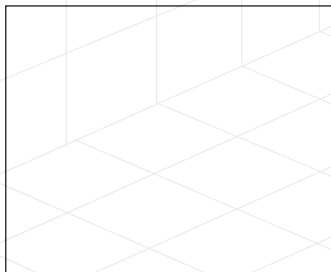


Interior Design Career Guide





Introduction

Interior design is a varied and rewarding career path. Creativity, curiosity and enthusiasm are just as important as being methodical, organised and technically skilled. As an interior designer you could work in a large international company, work in a small firm, freelance for a variety of designers or set up your own small practice. You could be involved in the design of offices, restaurants, hotels, schools, spas, shops, exhibition spaces, private homes, show apartments, yachts, gyms – every internal space of a building has been designed by someone. You will never stop learning about new materials, products and techniques. Interpersonal skills are also hugely important including the ability to communicate to clients, colleagues and tradespeople, both visually and verbally. Negotiation and problem solving skills are also essential

01

What is an interior designer?

The International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers (IFI) (the international federating body for interior designers) defines an interior designer as someone who:

- Identifies, researches, and creatively solves problems pertaining to the function and quality of the interior environment
- Performs services relating to interior spaces including programming, design analysis, space planning, aesthetics, and inspection of work on site, using specialised knowledge of interior construction, building systems and components, building regulations, equipment, materials, and furnishings.
- Prepares drawings and documents relating to the design of interior space to enhance the quality of life and protect the health, safety, welfare, and environment of the public.





What is the difference between an Interior Architect, Interior Decorator and Interior Designer?

02

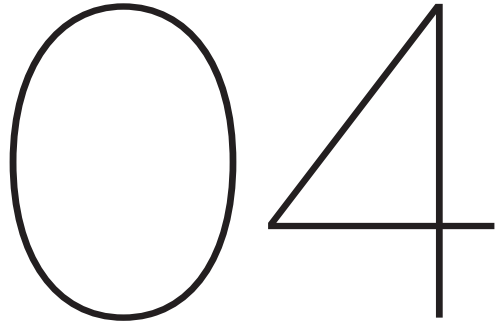
Whilst the vast majority of countries in the world recognise the different professions of architecture and interior design, in a few countries there is a third job role – that of 'interior architect'. This usually refers to someone whose job role incorporates some elements of both interior design and architecture. In the UK however, the job title 'architect' is a legally protected term, which means that only trained architects registered with the Architects Registration Board (ARB) (the UK's statutory regulator of architects) are able to refer to themselves as 'architect' or 'interior architect'. This means that while you may graduate with an 'interior architecture' degree taught at a UK university, unless you have had the education, training and experience needed to become an architect and are registered with the Architects Registration Board it is illegal for you to practice as an 'interior architect'.

Interior Decorator is a more fuzzy term. Some people understand it as someone who specialises in the decorative elements of a design project and does not get involved in more complex structural work that involves planning permission, building regulations and complex technical design. However, other people describes themselves as Interior Decorators, whilst still undertaking projects that involve all of these things. There is no standardised definition, but in the UK, the majority of people who are responsible for the design and decoration of interior spaces call themselves interior designers.

03

What do interior designers get paid?

The salaries for interior designers can vary widely depending on the size of the design practice, where the practice is located, the seniority and responsibility of the role, the specialist skills required, your level of experience and other factors. The best source for current data on industry salaries is recruitment firms that specialise in interior design recruitment – if you search online you will often be able to find their most recently published salary survey.



Responsibilities of a professional interior designer

The day-to-day life of an interior designer varies hugely depending on your job. If you run your own small business, you will often take on every element of a project, from initial client brief to final handover. You also need to manage the financial, marketing, HR and business management elements of running your own practice. However, if you work for a large multidisciplinary practice you may specialise in one particular area such as Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E) or Computer Aided Design (CAD). Here is a non-exhaustive list of the typical tasks undertaken by a professional interior designer within an interiors project:

1. Taking a design brief from a client
2. Producing a list of all work that needs to be done (usually referred to as a Scope of Works) and a list of all the services that you will offer as an interior designer (usually referred to as a Schedule of Services)
3. Calculating fees for the project, then agreeing a contract with the client (the contract usually includes the Scope of Works and Schedule of Services)
4. Understanding both your own responsibilities, and your clients, in terms of current legislation, including building regulations, CDM, health and safety, listed buildings, fire safety and any other relevant legislation
5. Conducting research for your project
6. Appraising the project site (this will usually include a measured survey alongside accompanying notes and photographs)
7. Developing a design concept, with accompanying visual aids, and being able to explain the rationale behind the concept to your client
8. Producing technical drawings, 3D visuals and presentation boards, proposing materials and finishes samples



9. Assisting with the tendering process – the process whereby contractors put themselves forward to be considered to take on the project and responding to contractor queries about the design
10. Speaking to different contractors and suppliers, sourcing advice about their products and services and requesting relevant quotations for the project
11. Creating a list of all tasks that need to be done by contractors (this is usually called a Schedule) and then updating this with any changes (this is usually called a Schedule of Variations)
12. Creating clear instructions for contractors, including documentation, drawings and excel schedules, so they understand what work needs to be done (these are usually referred to as Specification Documents or Tender Pack)
13. Submitting any required approvals for planning permission, Landlord approvals, building consent or any other statutory approvals required, liaising with Consultants and Client Project Managers where relevant
14. Communicating with other project professionals such as project manager, architects, surveyors, contractors, specialists and health and safety consultants, ensuring all discussions and decisions made are clearly documented (usually this is done in the form of Meeting Minutes)
15. Researching potential products to be used on the project – these are usually referred to by the umbrella term 'FF&E' (furniture, fixtures and equipment) and ensuring they are fit for purpose, satisfying compliance regulations
16. Checking for any defects in the delivery of the project and following up with the relevant contractors or suppliers to ensure they are fixed (this process is usually referred to as 'snagging')
17. Commissioning a photographer to photograph the final completed project
18. Producing an operations and maintenance manual for the client, to ensure they are able to take care of the project after it has been delivered

How do I train to become an interior designer?

05

Some people know from a young age that interior design is the career for them and will embark on their journey from their chosen GCSE subjects, A-levels or equivalent and finally their Interior design degree course. Other people may switch to interior design following an earlier career in a different field. There is no right or wrong way and all experience is valuable as you will bring a wealth of transferable skills to your new design career.

We recommend that you conduct thorough research on any interior design course before you begin. The BIID recommends that any professional level interior design course should encompass the following::

- The fundamentals of interior design as a discipline:
this could include history, philosophy, ergonomics, anthropology and different theories of design
- Design research and how to undertake it
- Products, furniture and materials and how to specify them
- Costing and estimating your project
- Architecture, building technology, structures and services as they relate to interior design
- Design communication via hand drawing, computer aided design (CAD), found images (photography, drawings, samples) and model making
- Professional Practice: verbal and written communication, time management, client management, project management, working with other project professionals and relevant legislation

We recommend that you ensure that any course undertake results in a government recognized qualification. This is because these courses are inspected by external examiners on an ongoing basis. This ensures that qualifications offered by different providers all meet the same standard. In the UK, all government accredited qualifications are set at levels 1 to 9 (a Bachelor of Arts degree is a Level 6 qualification). This enables prospective students to understand how much work they will have to put in, and what type of standards are required. For more information, please see the Register of Regulated Qualifications.

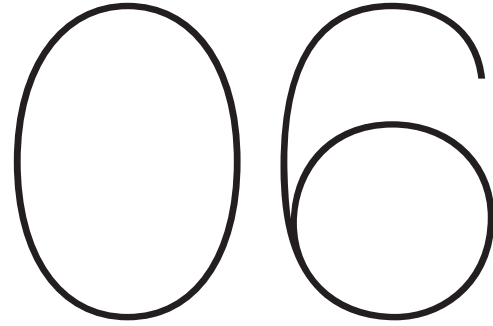
In addition to checking that any course you are considering is accredited, we recommend asking the following questions:

- What study support will you receive?
- Who are the course tutors/lecturers and what are their qualifications?
- Where have previous graduates gone on to work?
- How vocational is the training and what technical skills will you learn?
- What support is offered in terms of organising work placements, internships or employment assistance?



In a previous life I was a commissioned officer in the British Army. It became apparent to me that a life in the armed Forces with two young children was not going to be compatible with any kind of family stability so I made the decision that I would leave and find something that I really wanted to do. I was lucky enough to shadow a very experienced interior designer for two years prior to leaving the armed forces, which gave me a huge understanding of the industry and the confidence to know the direction I wanted to go in. Finding the BILD and joining as a Provisional Associate had a significant impact on how I wanted to evolve as a designer and that handrail taking me from Provisional to Full Registered Interior Designer, as well as doing the job has allowed me to grow my business and my skills in equal measure. As a Registered Interior Designer, the CPDs have been invaluable to my continuing learning and discovering new suppliers and new interior trends. The best bits about being an interior designer has been meeting and working with clients and being able to deliver the homes of their dreams. But equally, being able to work every day with subject matter experts, trades and designers who have all honed their skills to undertake beautiful renovation and design projects is a genuine joy. The challenges are always the bits you don't see, the administration, the inevitable headaches that occur with any projects and growing a small business, but the good bits by far outweigh the bad.

Verity Coleman, Founder, Rascals and Roses



**I have my qualification
and I am now ready to
join the work force.**

What's next?

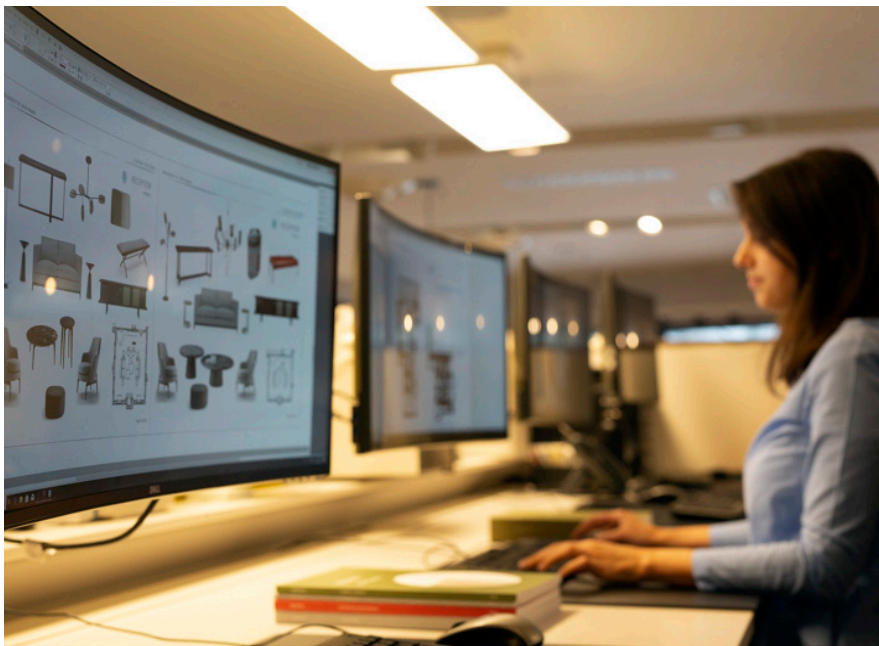
Once you have gained your qualification, we advise the best next step is to look for a job in an interior design practice so you can gain real world experience. Even if your long term ambition is to set up your own business, it is always advisable to work for an established practice first as the experience you gain there will be invaluable. The industry is very competitive – currently only around 38% of interior design graduates are working in the interior design profession 18 months after graduation

(SOURCE: HESA). You may need to start with a short term work experience placement or internship role first, before you are able to gain a permanent job role (although all internships should still be paid at least the national minimum wage).

There is a huge variety in the type of work that interior designers do. Practices might focus on residential design or commercial interior design, or a mix of both. Design studios might specialise in designing homes, show apartments, restaurants, hotels, shops, offices, education centres, retirement homes, hospitals, clinics, spas, exhibitions, civic buildings, yachts, airplanes or other spaces. Some interior design graduates also end up specialising in a particular element of interior design – such as lighting or kitchen design.

When you are looking for work as an interior designer, ensure your CV and portfolio (and website if you have one) are well laid out and free of spelling and grammar mistakes. If you are sending a speculative email to a design practice (rather than applying for a specific job) ensure your email is short, to the point and addressed to the right person in the practice.

If you are successful in being shortlisted for the interview stage for a job role, make sure you are fully prepared:

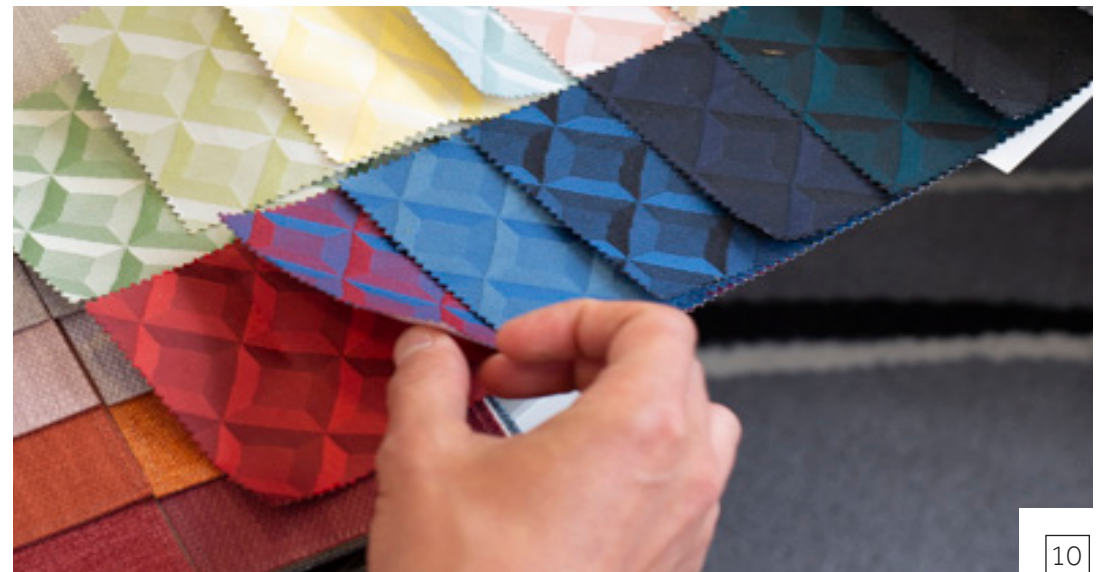


- Before your interview ensure you research the practice and their projects thoroughly (using their company website, LinkedIn and other online sources). Interviewers will often ask what you know about the practice, and this will ensure you are able to answer this question.
- Read the job description thoroughly and try to think of appropriate examples from your professional or educational experience that demonstrate how you meet the job requirements.
- Turn up on time and ensure you are wearing appropriate clothing.
- Listen to the questions you will be asked carefully – don't rush to answer, ensure you take your time to give a considered response.
- Interviewers will often ask at the end of an interview whether you have any questions for them. Ensure that you prepare some questions for them in advance. You could ask questions about opportunities for career progression, company culture or show interest in what is coming next for the company etc.

At GCSE level I studied art and design and information systems, which piqued my creative interest and led to work experience at an architects' practice. This in turn encouraged me to study art and design at GNVQ level. One of my GNVQ projects was to design a film set which I – and my tutor recommended I pursue an HND in interior architecture. I then went on to study interior architecture at BA level at Cardiff Metropolitan University. After I graduated I was able to secure a week's work experience at a practice in London via an alumni of the university. This work experience turned into a junior role and I stayed at the company for two years. I am forever grateful for this opportunity. Since then I have worked at several practices on a wide variety of types of projects and most recently a residential focus. The best part of being an interior designer is getting to know clients well and understanding their needs – happy clients equal happy designers. The biggest challenge I found initially was being organised but once you understand the process and how what you are doing fits into the process that it all falls into place."



Matt Freeman, Founder, Studio Freeman






You have now secured an interior design job,

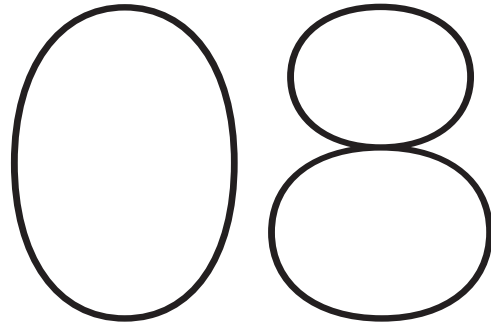
What's next?

As a designer, your learning never ends, even after you have graduated and secured your first job. Don't feel self-conscious about asking too many questions – that is the best way to learn and improve. Ask for regular reviews of your work and agree deadlines for delivery of your tasks. It is also important to be as open as possible to feedback – both negative and positive – as that is what will enable you to improve and make you a stronger interior designer. Be as helpful as possible with other team members, to make yourself indispensable. As far as possible, try to work on different elements of a design project, and learn about different aspects of the design practice, to ensure you are as well rounded a designer as possible. Think about using your performance reviews as a way to build a long-term career plan, in addition to receiving feedback on performance. If possible, try and find a mentor either from your practice, or your network, to help develop your skills and understanding.

Remember to stay curious, seek inspiration and find new skills. This could be in the form of reading books, magazines and journals, visiting museums and galleries, watching films and documentaries – and any other sources of inspiration you might find. In addition, it is important to continually improve and update your technical and professional skills – which could be as simple as doing some online tutorials to improve your CAD or sketching skills, or becoming more knowledgeable about a topic like sustainability in interior design. .



This process is common to almost all professionals and is known as Continuing Professional Development (CPD). This learning is usually undertaken in the form of lectures, seminars and workshops, both in person and online

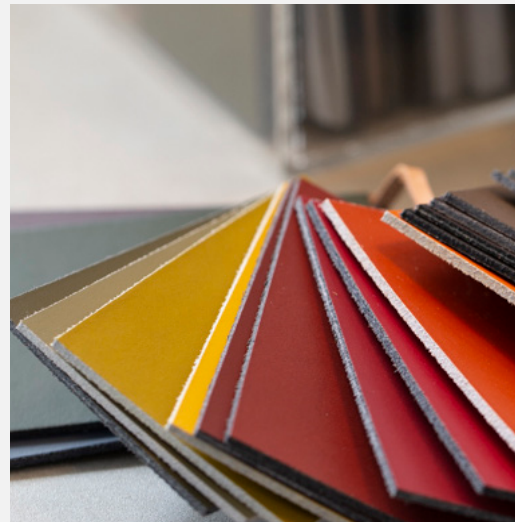
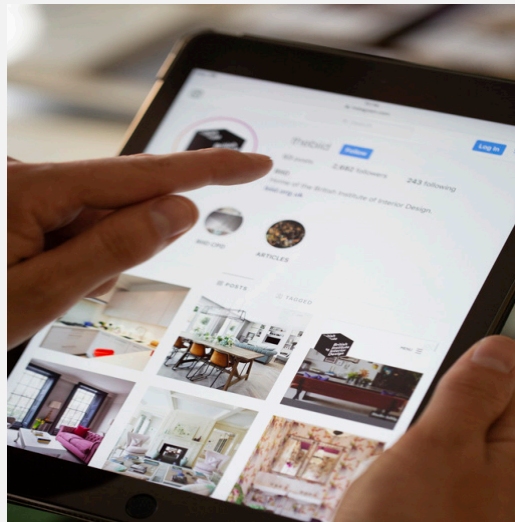


Developing your long-term career

Your interior design career may take you in many different directions – you could work for different practices, set up your own business or even work abroad. The BIID is here to support you at every stage of your career:

About the BIID

The British Institute of Interior Design (BIID) is the UK's only professional institute for interior designers. We are a not-for-profit organisation, owned and governed by our members. Our mission is to advance professionalism, integrity, and excellence in interior design and our values are being approachable and supportive, inclusive and collaborative, ethical and environmentally responsible. We support designers at every stage of their career – from students to early career designers to experienced practitioners. Our members work across the commercial and residential sectors and run the spectrum from sole practitioners to large practices. In addition to setting rigorous standards of professionalism, exemplified by our Registered Interior Designer membership status, we support designers through continuing professional development programmes, advice,

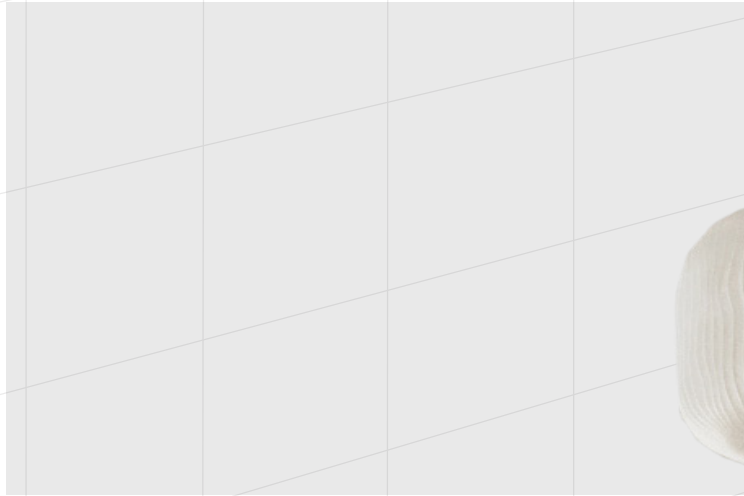


support, networking opportunities and more. For the wider public, we champion the value of interior design and designers, and for those wishing to find an interior designer or to confirm the credibility of a potential interior designer we offer a directory of our Registered Interior Designers.

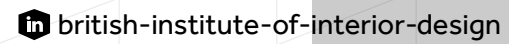
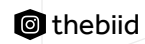
BIID student membership is free for those students studying towards a qualification in interior design. We offer a range of benefits and opportunities for our student membership including portfolio feedback, advice panels, competitions such as the Student Design Challenge and Student Drawing Competition and opportunities to contribute to the BIID website.

For more
information on
the Institute
please visit
www.BIID.org.uk





biid.org.uk



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