Fashion and Technology

The apparel industry has evolved well beyond the simple purpose of providing clothing to protect, identify and adorn the body. The focus has shifted towards a more intentional purpose that reaches deeper than the mere elements of style, but extends to solve problems and address needs related to function and performance. It also includes the integration of technology to improve upon design, marketing and production processes through the conscious awareness of the global impact on the economy, environment and society.

The rapid advancement in technology and globalization will continue to shape the landscape of this industry, creating an emerging need for designers who are flexible and collaborative cultivators of innovation. They are adaptable in responding to the complex needs of the technological and information savvy, time-starved customer, while still remaining mindful of social and ethical influences of business practices. The role of a designer within this industry has evolved to one who possesses the skills that go beyond just creating beautiful sketches and great clothing.

To succeed within this field, it is necessary to gain significant and relevant education and training in the areas of design, production and marketing for the apparel industry. A typical fashion career requires analyzing market trends and forecasting, the ability to design for a specific target market and in-depth knowledge of fabric, pattern drafting, fit and garment construction. Other skill requirements include the preparation of technical specification packages, presentations, communications, costing, trade and logistics and collaboration with in-house production teams, suppliers and contractors.

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STUDENT PROFILE

Most people who apply to the program have a passionate, lifelong interest in fashion with an aptitude for creative design, technical construction and an appreciation for fabric, prints, colours and trend forecasting. They are recent high school graduates, transfer students from other institutions, mature individuals returning to the profession or making a career change, or industry personnel seeking an upgrade in skills.

KPU boasts student exchange agreements with fashion schools in London, England; Helsinki, Finland; Taipei, Taiwan; Melbourne, Australia; Berlin, Germany and is developing further exchange opportunities to broaden global experiences.

Applicants with previous experience in the fashion industry may gain credits through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). Graduates from a two-year fashion program who wish to pursue a degree will be assessed on an individual basis for potential advanced entry.

Industry personnel who wish to take a specific course or courses on a part-time basis to complement their job skills may do so based on seat availability and with permission from the Program Coordinator. Some course prerequisites may be waived based on work experience. Contact the Program Coordinator for further information.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

With over 300 apparel companies in the Lower Mainland, the well-established B.C. fashion industry offers many career choices. Graduates work in the design, marketing and production departments for vibrant lower mainland companies such as Arc'teryx, Aritzia, International Fashions, ivivva, Karma, Kensie, Kit and Ace, lululemon, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Mustang Survival, Oak and Fort, Peekaboo Beans, Plenty and Sugoi Performance Apparel. Similar opportunities are available worldwide with graduates currently at Nike, Abercrombie & Fitch, Nordstrom, and Volcom in the U.S. and Chloe in Paris, France.

Depending upon capabilities and interests, students work for large companies as members of design, production or marketing teams, for smaller design houses, working in all aspects of the business, engage in entrepreneurial (examples include Allison Wonderland, TrunkShow, Flaming Angels, Osei-Duro and Jolie Couture) or freelance endeavors. In all instances, graduates need to be well versed in all three aspects of the business (design, production and marketing) to fully contribute as a team player. Emerging designers prosper best if they have a solid background and experience in production and marketing.

Fashion students interested in a career as a high school teacher of clothing and textiles may be eligible for entry to UBC's Bachelor of Education program in Home Economics upon completion of KPU's fashion degree, including a combination 18 credits of English, Sociology, Psychology and Family Studies courses. Family Studies courses may be taken at UBC as either a visiting student at UBC while completing KPU's fashion program (using these courses as electives towards the completion of the fashion degree) or as a UBC student following graduation from KPU's fashion program.