

Role

On larger productions these related jobs may be separated, but usually the two roles are combined. The Hair and Make-Up Departments would work initially with the show's Designer to design and create the application and care of the hair/wigs and make-up used during a production.

Some show designers actually start their careers learning backstage technical skills including Wigs, Hair and Make-Up and progress.

Most Wigs, Hair and Make-Up Designers are freelance and work on a project-by-project basis. A trainee can earn no less than the national minimum wage or union minimum.

More experienced Designers may earn between £21,000 and £50,000 per year.

Responsibilities include

Working with the show's Director to understand their vision and with the Costume Designer to create the overall looks for the characters

Breaking down the script to work out hair and make-up requirements for each scene

Ensuring that actors' hair and make-up fits within the overall production design, with particular attention to historical detail on period dramas

Attending fittings, photoshoots and dress rehearsals

Supervising adjustments and repairs to wigs, maintaining them during long runs, making sure wigs are collected at the end of each performance and prepared for the following one

Key Skills

A flair for creativity

Specific hair/wig skills including wig dressing

Specific make-up skills, including period and ageing

Specialist areas, including wig making, body painting, prosthetics, making contact lenses and teeth

A thorough understanding of historical and cultural styles

Good communication and diplomacy skills

Knowledge of relevant Health and Safety guidelines, including good working practices and hygiene

Training

To become a hair and/or make-up artist it's important to do a good foundation course – completing an NVQ in hairdressing is also advisable.

It's also vital to gain practical on-the-job experience, starting with work placements at local theatres. Many Heads of Wigs started off as Wig Assistants, gaining invaluable experience in hair, wigs, make-up and special effects by working closely with senior colleagues.

Often, academic qualifications are not as important as creative and practical skills. It's possible to become a Wigs, Hair and Make-Up Designer without a degree. You can often complete traineeships and freelance work within the industry to gain experience. Qualifications or courses in hairdressing, wigs, make-up and design may be useful.

Courses include but are not limited to the following

BA (Hons) Fashion: Hair & Make-Up for Fashion – London College of Fashion

BA (Hon) Make-Up and Hair Design – Southampton Solent University

BA (Hons) Specialist Hair and Media Make-Up – University College Birmingham

BTEC Extended Diploma in Make-Up Design and Hairstyling – West Thames College

UK Wig School

Useful Information

<https://careers.broadway/careers-jobs/hair-wig-designer/>

<https://www.screenskills.com/job-profiles/browse/film-and-tv-drama/craft/hair-and-make-up-designer-film-and-tv-drama/>

<https://www.liveabout.com/art-of-hair-and-makeup-designer-2638621>

<https://hairmakeupbranch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/theatre-department-roles.pdf>

https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/Salaries/wig-and-makeup-designer-salary-SRCH_KO0,23.html