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Welcome to Issue #1 of the ARTS THREAD: Guide to getting there...

The ARTS THREAD guide to getting there does exactly what it says—practical advice to get you exactly where you want to be.

Our undergraduate guides are carefully timed through the academic year to help you deal with immediate issues, but also contain career features that are for longer-term consideration, from how to stage a degree show to the best advice on work experience.

We ask a wide range of industry experts for advice in compiling these features, as well as consulting lecturers from the top schools of art & design—to make sure our advice is the best available.

We also ask former graduates for their opinions and help too, so, after you've graduated, look out for our email requests for specific articles you might like to be involved in.

We also publish a similar guide for pre-university students. If you are an undergraduate student and would like to be involved in providing advice for the pre-university guide or be one of our case studies, please email us at:

practicalguide@artsthread.com

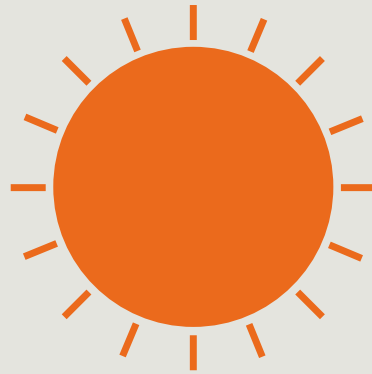
Thanks to:

Joyce Thorton: Editorial

Sharon Williams: Editorial

Matt Bucknall: Art Direction/Design

FIRST



TEXT: SHARON WILLIAMS, LECTURER IN FASHION, WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART

If you are just about to embark on your first year as a design student chances are you are working on your first summer project right now. This practical guide looks at what to do and what is expected.

Summer projects give you the opportunity to explore how it feels to take the first steps into your new life as a design student without having set a foot through the door. What you create will help your new tutors to get to know you, your methods of designing and ability to work independently. It also encourages you to set aside dedicated time to explore and learn about your subject of choice.

WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?

It can be a bit daunting to embark upon a first project without tutor support or guidance. You may be wondering - have I done too little or too much, is it interesting enough, have I covered everything required? You won't be the only one thinking this. All your new peers are in the same position.

It is natural to think 'what are they looking for?' when you begin your project. However, the emphasis should be on 'what

do I want to know?' In fact, most summer projects (unless the brief states otherwise) are not formally assessed, allowing you to focus on exploring your view of the brief without having to worrying too much about making a mistake.

When you first start your course your tutor may review your summer project and give you helpful feedback. They will be looking to guide you on how you approach your work, how you document information and how you translate what you have learnt into a new outcome.

GETTING STARTED

It is quite likely that you have been sent a brief which outlines the requirements of the project you have been set. Your brief should act as a guide for your project

Treat your brief like an exam question and break it down into a checklist. Identify any constraints that have been set or problems that need to be solved.

RESEARCH

Before starting any design project you need to do some initial investigation to gain

SUMMER PROJECT

inspiration and knowledge and to develop new ideas. This is the research stage. The research you gather here will explain the context of your work and is known as 'contextual research'.

Whilst gathering your research it is good to get a balance of primary and secondary information. Primary research includes own sketches, drawings, photographs, small-scale samples or models. Secondary research is information which has already been gathered and collated by others, for example in magazines, books or on the Internet.

Other great sources for research include: exhibitions and galleries, architecture, natural forms, films, music, festivals, travel, second-hand shops and people-watching.

DESIGN

Your brief may ask you to develop your ideas into a particular outcome or design. It is recommended that you invest time into this stage of the project. An experimental and exploratory approach to the design process can make the difference between an outcome based on imitation and one that demonstrates innovation.

Make sure your design ideas link closely with your research, the two should not be seen as separate entities. From your research bring colour, detail, line, texture and shape

through to the design development stage. Here you are showing your thought process, how you analyse and interpret information and how you can develop it in an informed way. Some written analysis helps to explain your thought process also.

PRESENTATION

Good presentation can lead to a clear, coherent and engaging project. Presentation is about communication. The communication of ideas, detail and identity.

Pay attention to the presentation of all aspects of your project, from initial research through to final outcome. Consider proportion, layout, use of text, font and clarity of image.

Finally, refer to the checklist you created from your brief. Have you communicated all the points you wished to cover?

A trip to the library and the help of a good librarian can arm you with a far broader wealth of research than scouting around the Internet. The Internet is great for unchallenging contemporary references, designers and images, however, it can lack a depth of well-researched opinion, so don't rely on it as your only source of information.



TEXT: JOYCE THORNTON

The importance of work experience in gaining a foothold in the hugely competitive world of design cannot be over-emphasised. Although usually unpaid, work experience builds confidence, increases knowledge and skills, and offers an invaluable insight into the world of work. It is the best way to discover what sort of work you would find enjoyable and satisfying, and just as important, to discover what you don't enjoy.

Francesca Muston, Senior Editor for WGSN's 'Whats in Store' fashion retail directory told us, "Internships are often wrongly viewed as exploitation and cheap labour. In fact they're an invaluable opportunity for students and graduates to network, try out different career paths and most importantly, to really demonstrate to potential employers what you have to offer."

Today, many universities specialising in design integrate work experience into their course curriculum. However, if this is not

the case, how do you go about getting a work placement?

SECURING THE PLACEMENT

Find out all you can about your target work destination and its staff.

Enquire if they regularly take interns and work out the best person to write to about this. Never assume that the best place to start is the personnel department (HR), as general letters addressed here normally just generate a polite reply reading 'thanks for your interest and that they will "keep your details on file"'.
 Find out the actual department head's name and work out why and when they might need some help—and, crucially, how you and your skills may be of use to the company. Armed with this information,

write a concise and enthusiastic covering letter and attach a CV which

you have checked and perhaps amended to **ensure that it is entirely relevant** to that company.

You must ensure that the name of the person you are writing to (usually a manager) is correctly spelt and also that you have their correct job title—ie Head of Design, Design Manager, Senior Editor, etc... This sort of attention to detail is very important, and getting it wrong may mean that your letter hits the wrong note before it's even read.

Francesca agrees, she says, "When I screen CVs I immediately look for a professional covering letter which conveys a sense of genuine enthusiasm for the company and the position. I dismiss those which seem vague or don't have a professional tone. Spelling and grammar are also hugely important. A CV which is riddled with typos and grammatical errors gives the impression that the student is sloppy and careless in their work. Double-check everything before you send it."

Finding a link with your preferred company definitely helps—do you know anyone, (a friend of a friend perhaps) who

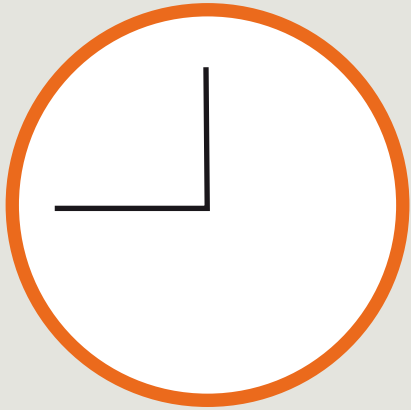


works there? Recommendations can go a long way when competition for placements is fierce. Most people use email these days—in which case your this email should replace the covering letter, but it is also worth sending a "hard copy" (printed version) of both the letter and your CV through the normal post.

Once you have done this, it's worth following the correspondence up with a polite phone call the following week to check that they have received it. Once you know that your letter and CV have been received then **DO NOT** call again—just wait for the company to get back to you in their own time. Calling again will be counter-productive and may well turn the impression you have made from being labelled 'keen' to that of 'pest'!

YOU HAVE THE PLACEMENT. WHAT NOW?

Prior to day one: it is a good idea to write or email a short note to say thanks for the work placement opportunity—and at the same time, this is your chance to clarify anything that you are unsure about. This may be simple things like clarifying

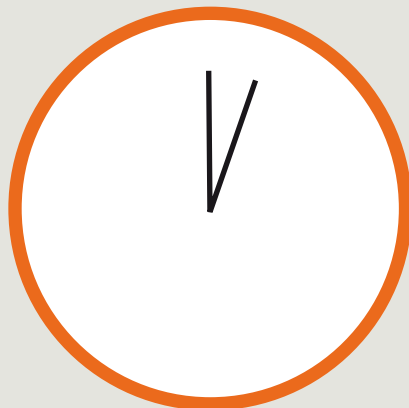


re-cap, and will add to the impression of organisation and efficiency that you should be striving to achieve.

In many jobs you will become a hands-on member of the team. Whatever happens—**be punctual, willing, cheerful and use your initiative.** Don't sit there waiting for the next job to come along once you have completed something, let the team or your line manager know and ask for something else to do. The experience is usually a great way to pick up new skills, experiences, ideas and broaden understanding.

WHAT MAKES A FANTASTIC INTERN?

Francesca says, “My most important factor for recruiting is attitude. It doesn't matter how creative or intelligent a student is, if they don't have the right attitude and work ethic they're no use to me. I expect students to be punctual, reliable, enthusiastic and able to use their initiative. Those who repeatedly call in sick or are late all the time are unlikely to be given a good reference or invited back. Nor are those who spend the day on Facebook or gazing

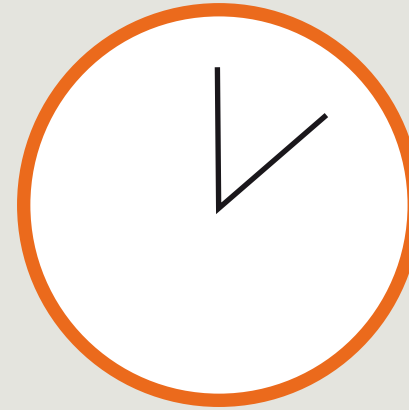


the **exact location of where you will be based and the hours you will be expected to work.** Hopefully, you will have already clarified the sort of tasks they will be expecting you to undertake, but if not, make sure that this is clear before you arrive!

You may also want to know what the 'dress code' is. Most design and media offices are very relaxed about what people wear to work—but if it is a “customer facing” position—they may wish you to dress more smartly, so it won't do any harm to ask before you turn up.

Day one: arrive early! Give yourself plenty of time to get to your destination—and then add on another 15 minutes just to make sure. It's never a bad thing to get there too early and you can spend the time waiting in a reception area, soaking up the atmosphere and composing yourself. Being late—especially on day one is just not acceptable.

Come prepared: always bring a pen and notepad, as you will invariably have to write instructions down (passwords to computer systems etc). Your own notes will ensure you don't have to bother people later for a



almost two years of unpaid placements in everything from graphic design, to catwalk styling and even a photography placement in New York. In February 2003 I began a two-week work placement with the graphics team at WGSN. Roll-on six years and I'm now a Senior Retail Editor; a position I largely attribute to the experience and contacts I gained as an intern. My placement, which lasted nearly six months, was an opportunity to work across all the departments of WGSN and really develop my writing, photography and trend analysis skills under the watchful eyes of the industry elite.

“I won't pretend that two years of work experience is an ideal situation; I funded much of it with dreary office temping positions. Once I had my foot in the door of a company I made the most of the free samples and press invites!”

Francesca is in no doubt about the huge benefits of work experience placements, she says, “An employer is far more likely to recruit based on personal experience and a proven track record than they are to take a chance on a faceless CV”.

absently into space waiting for instruction. Positive students who are bubbly and keen are a joy to work with. Those who ask lots of questions and offer to go the extra mile to help out are the ones we're likely to dedicate more time to helping out with further work placements, university projects and references. They're also the ones most likely to be rewarded with party invites and press gifts! The more an intern puts into the placement the more they will inevitably get out.”

One of the most valuable aspects of work experience is undoubtedly learning how to work with a team of people, as invariably at university you are usually working on your own individual projects. Take the opportunity to talk to people who are already doing a job you may aspire to—find out what they think about the work they are doing and apply any tips they may give you.

Francesca's own personal experience of interning was longer than most and money was very tight. Eventually, her determination paid off. She explains, “I began my fashion career with a mammoth stint of work experience—including my industrial placement year, I completed





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Start Early

Good organisation is everything. Start planning as soon as possible. The final year is very short and everyone has so much work to do, so every day counts. Before you know it, the degree show will be upon you!



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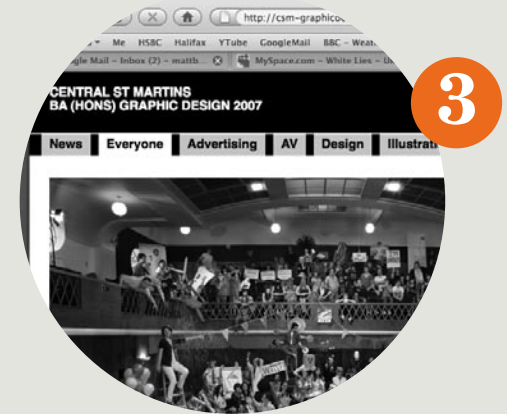
Fundraising

To find sponsorship for drinks etc, you should start in September. If you want companies to give you money, talk to them as early as possible, as they often allocate their money for sponsorship a year in advance.



Create a website

Create a site a few months before the show, allowing people to upload their portfolio images and post messages on a blog. You can use this to communicate with each other and chart your progress. Tie the site design in with the catalogue design to help reinforce the identity of the degree show.



3



HOW TO STAGE A DEGREE SHOW

Matt Bucknall, one of the organising team behind the Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design Graphic Design degree show of 2007 shares with ARTS THREAD his top 6 tips on staging a degree show.



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Business cards

Save money by getting together with some friends to share a printing plate. You will need to agree on the same paper stock and printing method. Remember to include a small image of your key piece—it helps visitors to remember your work.



Exhibition space

Find out in advance what you can/cannot do with the space and budget for any extra work required e.g. screens or lighting. Aim to give everyone the same amount of space and organise it in the way it appears in the catalogue—keeping all works from one discipline together.



5



4

Create a catalogue

Aim for a format that allows the work to speak for itself and give every student the maximum amount of display space. Collect the text through the site, using a log-in system that allows people to type in or copy and paste their text including contact details. It's important to stress that it's each person's responsibility to ensure their images/text are correct.



INTERVIEWS —MAKING THE RIGHT IMPRESSION

TEXT: JOYCE THORNTON

There are lots of websites and video clips now freely available, offering excellent information about how to handle an interview and nail that all important job. ARTS THREAD lists some useful links and offers a few interview tips of our own.

PRE-INTERVIEW RESEARCH

Once you have landed an interview, you need to do some really thorough research into the company and the position itself. Find out as much as you can. If it is a big organisation, request information such as a company profile from the marketing department or a press pack. Obviously, have a good look at the website, noting any key messages and important policies that they have.

Prepare to be asked questions relating to the company/brand's current products, their position in the marketplace, their competitors, their history/heritage and very importantly, be prepared to be asked how you would contribute to their success. This

research is hugely important and will give you the confidence to answer lots of varied questions that may be posed. Neglect this essential element at your peril!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

Most interviews for a position in the design industry won't be scarily starchy affairs and will appear fairly relaxed. But don't be fooled—how you come across to a prospective employer on the day is all-important and nowhere is this more relevant than if your job is in the image-obsessed design industry. In any interview however, image and body language are said to count for a whopping 70% of an employer's impression of a candidate—made in the first five minutes of an interview.

Don't forget really important but simple things such as eye contact, smiling and a confident handshake. Always aim to arrive early: you should allow plenty of time to get to the interview, allowing for all eventualities of weather, public transport failures etc.

TEAMWORK

Most jobs in the design industry are almost always about being able to work within a team and employers will be looking keenly for someone who can fit well into their existing set-up. This can take some adjusting to—as the focus of students at university or college is invariably on working as an individual. Of course employers are interested in your individual qualities—but be prepared to talk about your excellent communication skills and cite examples of how you have previously worked well in a team.

SHOWING YOUR DESIGN PORTFOLIO

This can take up a large chunk of the interview, but aside from showing your talent, you must be prepared to talk enthusiastically about your work. Consider what you are going to say, and practice showing your portfolio to a friend or family member prior to the actual interview. Remember that there will be other candidates who also have good portfolios—so make sure that you stand apart from the crowd through your memorable presence at the interview. Be very careful however, not to drone on with a long story relating to every page or project, otherwise you will be memorable for all the wrong reasons! Keep it snappy and relevant and remember interviewers have limited time to spare.

LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THE INTERVIEWER'S QUESTIONS

When showing your portfolio, listen to the questions and wait for them to finish before answering. However, if they don't ask anything—talk them through what you enjoyed and felt you learned from

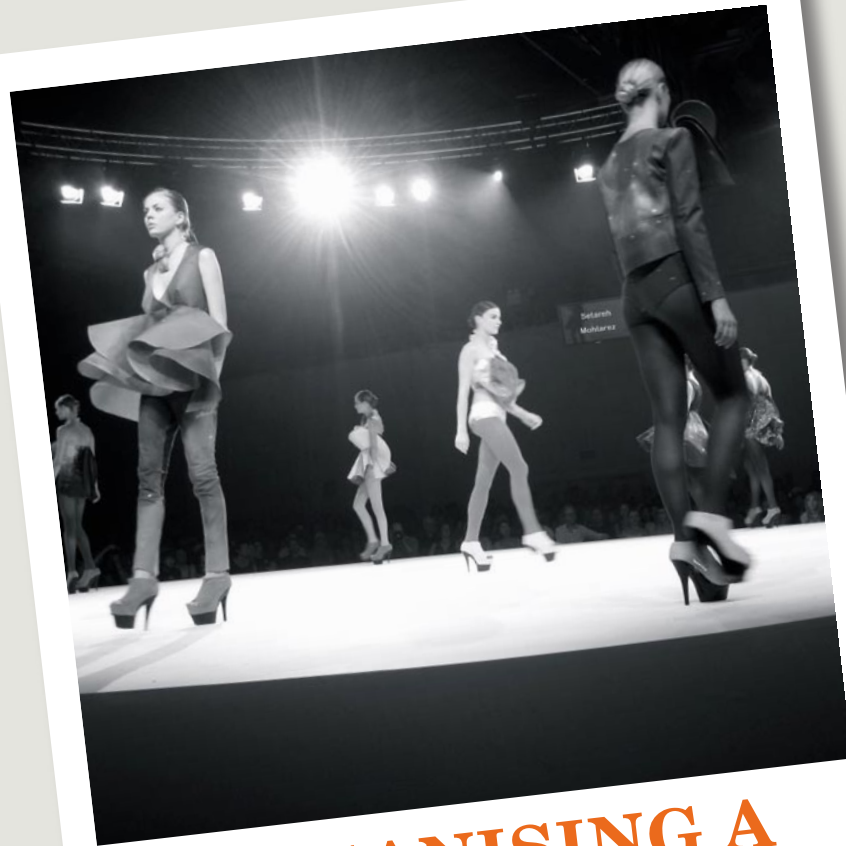
particular projects. On no account just stay silent as the pages are turned! It's worth remembering that research has shown that the way you say something, including the tone of your voice, is generally reckoned to be even more important than what you actually say. Try to portray a lively personality without going over the top: aim to come across as open, honest and confident.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

There will definitely be time allocated for this, usually at the end of the interview, so make sure you have something ready. Prepare some relevant and intelligent questions, but these do not have to be too involved or complicated - you could start just with asking about the team you may be working with, and what the day to day duties will be. Obviously you will want to know when a decision will be made about the position, and how a successful candidate will be notified.

Remember, research and preparation are the keys to success. Good luck!

For further information:
bbc.co.uk/interview-techniques
guardiancareers
University of Westminster
Graduate Recruitment Bureau
Target Jobs



ORGANISING A CATWALK SHOW

TEXT: JOYCE THORNTON

If you have the budget, getting in the professionals to create your catwalk show is the best way to guarantee success. Respected industry professionals such as Lesley Goring, the duo Martyn Roberts and John Walford of Vauxhall Fashion Scout and Lee Lapthorne at On:Off, have all been in show production for many years and have a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field. If you have the means to hand your show project over to a professional you can sit back and relax. However, if money is too tight for this to be a viable option read on.

ARTS THREAD offers 12 essential tips to navigate your way through this complex, challenging but exciting process.

1. PLANNING IS ALL! You need to start well in advance of the event and **draw up a timescale or 'critical path'**. Start at the preferred date of the event and work backwards. You will need a couple of people to form a team and share the workload, but it's crucial to **appoint a project manager** to oversee the whole thing and delegate tasks. Put in key deadlines on the calendar and ensure you (and others in the team) stick to them.

2. BUDGET Cash may be tight, but you can get a lot out of limited funds with lots of imagination and a clear plan. Draw up a clear budget: make an **estimate of how much you think everything is going to cost**. You will need some 'costing estimates' from outside agencies such as printers, model agencies etc—so enough time needs to be allocated for this. They will often ask what your budget is before they start—in order to give you options—but everything comes back to cost. **Thorough research and good negotiation skills will be crucial** here. Once you have your estimated costs—you may realise you need

to do some fundraising! Consider getting a local company you know to support your show and maybe help out with funding—or contributing practical help instead? For example, you may be able to get local shoe stores to sponsor the footwear for the show.

3. THE VENUE You need to secure a space to put on your show. **Apart from the cost, consider the following things carefully before you decide.**

Availability—is it free for the date you require? Many popular venues are booked up many months in advance.

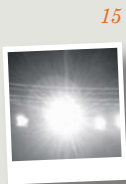
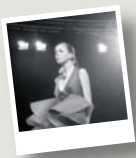
Legality—what are the restrictions on holding a performance there—do you need a licence? Music and refreshments need to be a consideration—you will need to check out the legalities of using certain music in a public performance and what you can serve/sell to your guests at the event.

Capacity—how many people will the venue hold? Health and Safety regulations will specify this and there are other things in terms of holding a public performance that you must adhere to. The capacity is key to the atmosphere of the event; for example, if the venue is too big and there aren't enough people to fill it, then the atmosphere will feel empty and a bit sad.

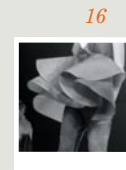
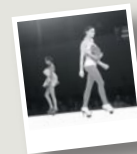
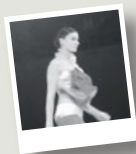
Staging, lighting etc—what is available at the venue? If this is limited—**what will you need to provide** in terms of both equipment and manpower?

Accessibility—is it easy to find by public transport, accessible to people with disabilities etc.

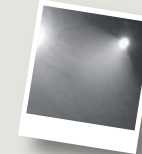
4. THEME/IDENTITY Consider creating a theme or 'identity' for your event. This is a good idea to ensure that all the elements of the show 'hang together' in a professional, satisfying way. Arrange a meeting to discuss ideas—it's good to get as much input as



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possible on this before deciding. Once this has been decided then it's a great idea to get a graphic designer to devise some graphics that fit your theme. (This could be great work experience for a student—or you could enlist an amateur artist). This 'identity' can then be used on all promotional material such as the invitation, the programme and running order etc.

5. INVITATIONS Something that often gets left too late! Allocate one person to co-ordinate this. Create an exciting invitation that will stand out and capture attention. Draw up a guest list and invite local press and local business people to your show. **Ensure the invitations are sent out in plenty of time** so that people can put the date in their diaries. Get volunteers on board to help with posting/delivering etc.

6. PROGRAMME AND RUNNING ORDER If you are really well organised you might be able to create these as part of one publication, but it is more usual to have these as separate documents. These can be as simple or as glossy as you like depending on how much time, money and effort you spend on them.

The **show programme** should contain information about the show, thanks to sponsors, contact information for the school/college. Contact information for individual student designers can also be included, and this is a good idea, as shows are generally at the end of a course of study when students are moving on to somewhere else.

The programme can also contain

advertising from local businesses (which may ensure that it pays for itself). **Running orders** are a sheet that explains the order in which the actual outfits appear on the stage at the show. These are crucial to the audience making sense of (and journalists making notes on) the show, but due to last minute changes or fine-tuning (usually at rehearsals), these are often kept separate from the programme.

7. MODELS Use a local professional agency if at all possible; you can usually choose the look of the models through auditions/castings to create the look for the show that you want. The agency may well have experience of organising actual catwalk shows—so consider commissioning them to organise this as an option if you have the funds. If not then you will have to work out a running order and ensure that you have enough models to enable one set of people to change outfits backstage while others come on to take their place in the performance.

Educational fashion charity FAD have staged many successful catwalk shows, and Reyes Lora, Director of Educational Projects, has this advice, "Treat models well, make sure they have refreshments and food if necessary. Happy models make a big difference to the show! Try and give the a little bit of privacy if possible, separating the changing area from hair and make-up, they do appreciate it. And when garment fitting on the models she says, "Once you decide who is wearing what, it's useful to take a Polaroid photo and stick it on the wall, so the person

dressing that model has a checklist to refer to."

If you want to use student models—it will be cheaper, but you will have to consider building in extra time and resources for more rehearsals etc to ensure that that student models can pull off a professional looking show.

8. HAIR AND MAKE-UP It's essential to get someone to take charge of this, create a look for the models and decide on make-up and hair etc well in advance of the event. Enquire if a local hairdressing salon will lend their services for free promotion and advertising in your programme.

9. MUSIC You will need a soundtrack to accompany the show. Playing any music at a public event involves obtaining a licence and often royalty payments—so do some research. You may have to use your imagination and get creative here—so if your college/school has a music dept, enlisting their help may be an option.

10. LIGHTING/STAGING/GRAPHICS Consult the experts wherever possible, as this is an area where you really need expertise to create a professional result. Again, someone allocated to stage manage the actual show, co-ordinate models, dressers and create a smooth event is essential. Consider getting someone to create a slide show of projected graphics to fill in any gaps and to flash up information—names of the participants/sponsors etc. Again, this will need planning and preparation and you will need to

rehearse how this works with the main part of the show.

11. BACKSTAGE All important to producing a show you can be proud of. You will need 'dressers' backstage to assist the models and the quick changes that they will be making during the course of the show. **These people should be organised and reliable.** They will need a **backstage running order**—a detailed list on which you have decided exactly what garment goes with what accessories etc for all of the individual models. Usually one dresser is allocated to one or two models and any problems are ironed out at the rehearsals/run-through.

12. POSTERS AND PROMOTION Now that you have put in so much effort and hard work into creating your show—**ensure you build in time to promote and tell people about it!** Enticing and lively posters and flyers distributed to key locations, a notice in the local press etc are all good ways of letting the right people know about your event.

At the show itself, you might consider a 'goodie bag' for front row guests. This could contain some small promotional gifts from sponsors, a complimentary drink and some further information about the school/college courses or other events. Be as imaginative as possible—small treats for guests all contribute to the overall experience of the event.

Finally, Reyes advises not to forget a welcoming and helpful 'front of house' team. Good luck with your show!