# Kurt Geiger releases final 10 places on Business by Design academy after 120% rise in applications



The Kurt Geiger Kindness Foundation has announced a final release of 10 places for the third cohort of its Business by Design Academy, a free, seven‑month vocational programme run from the company’s London head office in Farringdon. Applications reopen on Thursday 14 August and close at 5pm on Monday 18 August 2025, with learning scheduled to begin on Tuesday 9 September. According to the company, the course is AQA Unit Award‑accredited and designed as a practical alternative to traditional higher education for London‑based young people contemplating creative careers.
(According to the original announcement and the academy’s programme pages.)

The academy says the curriculum combines weekly masterclasses and one‑to‑one mentorship with paid work experience across departments including design, buying, digital marketing and merchandising. Participants are reportedly given practical assessment and certification on completion, and the scheme covers expenses while offering hands‑on exposure to multiple business functions. Kurt Geiger has described Business by Design as a pathway into employment rather than a conventional degree route.
(Company materials and the original report.)

Kurt Geiger told reporters it expanded places for this intake after applications rose by around 120% year‑on‑year, increasing capacity by 50% compared with the previous year and effectively doubling the final intake. The Class of 2025 comprised 33 students; the company says four of those graduates have taken up full‑time roles at Kurt Geiger and three received grants to launch their own ventures, while a number of alumni have progressed into apprenticeships or paid summer placements with the business. Independent trade reporting also notes the group intends to launch a national online platform in early 2026 to make the same curriculum and mentorship accessible beyond London.
(Company statements and reporting by industry outlets.)

The expansion is being framed against persistent socio‑economic barriers to creative careers. The academy’s publicity highlights that only a small minority of creative‑sector workers come from working‑class backgrounds, a point echoed by research bodies that say the creative economy remains more socially exclusive than many other sectors and would need roughly 250,000 additional working‑class employees to match the wider economy’s socio‑economic mix. Campaigners and researchers also draw attention to the continued prevalence of unpaid or underpaid internships in arts, media and fashion — a practice the Sutton Trust and others say favours those who can rely on family support and reduces social mobility.
(Advocacy and policy research reports.)

At the same time, the creative industries are economically significant. Government and parliamentary analyses show the sector contributed roughly £124 billion in gross value added and supported about 2.4 million jobs in the most recent official period — figures frequently cited to underline why improving access and skills should be a public‑policy priority. Yet those same publications highlight regional concentration of activity and ongoing challenges on diversity and progression.
(Official statistics and parliamentary briefing.)

Cost remains central to the argument for alternatives to degree study. Official student‑loan statistics for 2024–25 put the average loan balance for borrowers entering repayment at about £53,010, a figure campaigners and businesses point to when urging more vocational routes that do not saddle young people with large debts. Kurt Geiger’s chief executive, Neil Clifford, told the Express that “the idea that you need a degree to succeed in fashion is outdated… That’s exactly what Business by Design is about – access, experience, and real‑world support.” The company frames the programme as one element of a wider push by firms to widen opportunity.
(Official student‑finance data and company commentary published in the original report.)

While the academy’s growth and the planned digital roll‑out have been welcomed by industry commentators as welcome practical steps, independent research bodies and education charities stress that employer‑led programmes must sit alongside stronger policy measures — from enforcement on paid internships to longer‑term social mobility plans — if the sector is to address systemic exclusion at scale. Those groups argue that collective action from government, industry and education will be required to ensure talent from all backgrounds can access sustainable careers across the creative economy.
(Policy centres and research organisations; sector charities and campaigners.)

Prospective applicants should note the short window for this final round: applications reopen on 14 August and close on 18 August 2025, with the cohort starting in September. For further details, the company’s Business by Design information pages provide application guidance and contact details.
(Company announcement and programme information.)

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## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/2092985/More-places-available-for-free-Kurt-Geiger-design-course), [[2]](https://www.kurtgeiger.com/business-by-design)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.kurtgeiger.com/business-by-design), [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/2092985/More-places-available-for-free-Kurt-Geiger-design-course)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/2092985/More-places-available-for-free-Kurt-Geiger-design-course), [[3]](https://fashionunited.uk/news/business/kurt-geiger-expanding-business-by-design-academy/2025040180849), [[2]](https://www.kurtgeiger.com/business-by-design)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/2092985/More-places-available-for-free-Kurt-Geiger-design-course), [[4]](https://pec.ac.uk/news_entries/the-uks-creative-industries-would-need-to-employ-250-000-more-working-class-people-to-be-as-socio-economically-diverse-as-the-rest-of-the-economy/), [[5]](https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/unpaid-and-underpaid-internships/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2025-0017/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/student-loans-in-england-2024-to-2025/student-loans-in-england-financial-year-2024-25), [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/2092985/More-places-available-for-free-Kurt-Geiger-design-course)
* Paragraph 7 – [[4]](https://pec.ac.uk/news_entries/the-uks-creative-industries-would-need-to-employ-250-000-more-working-class-people-to-be-as-socio-economically-diverse-as-the-rest-of-the-economy/), [[5]](https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/unpaid-and-underpaid-internships/), [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/2092985/More-places-available-for-free-Kurt-Geiger-design-course)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/2092985/More-places-available-for-free-Kurt-Geiger-design-course), [[2]](https://www.kurtgeiger.com/business-by-design)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/2092985/More-places-available-for-free-Kurt-Geiger-design-course> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.kurtgeiger.com/business-by-design> - Kurt Geiger’s official Business By Design webpage describes a free, seven-month vocational programme for young creatives based at the company’s London head office near Farringdon. The page explains that participants receive AQA Unit Award-accredited learning, weekly masterclasses, one-to-one mentorship and paid work experience across departments including design, buying, digital marketing and merchandising. It confirms the programme is classroom and hands-on, offers practical assessment and certificates on completion, and covers expenses. The page invites applications for the September cohort and provides contact details for queries, emphasising access for underrepresented backgrounds and the programme’s aim to open routes into the creative industries.
3. <https://fashionunited.uk/news/business/kurt-geiger-expanding-business-by-design-academy/2025040180849> - FashionUnited reports Kurt Geiger is expanding its Business By Design Academy, increasing places by fifty per cent and launching a national online platform to extend access beyond London. The article states the Class of 2025 featured thirty-three students and notes that around thirty per cent of previous cohorts moved into full-time roles at Kurt Geiger or further study. It describes the seven-month, fully funded programme as AQA Unit Award-accredited, based at Farringdon, combining weekly masterclasses, mentorship and several weeks of paid work experience across multiple business functions. The piece quotes Kurt Geiger leadership on widening access to creative careers nationwide.
4. <https://pec.ac.uk/news_entries/the-uks-creative-industries-would-need-to-employ-250-000-more-working-class-people-to-be-as-socio-economically-diverse-as-the-rest-of-the-economy/> - The Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre press release highlights persistent class imbalance across the UK creative economy, reporting that only a minority of roles are held by people from working-class backgrounds and that 250,000 additional working-class employees would be needed to match the socio-economic diversity of the wider economy. The release calls for a ten-year social mobility plan and practical measures from government and industry to tackle barriers to entry. It draws on Labour Force Survey and census data to show that creative occupations remain more socially exclusive than many other sectors and urges action to widen access.
5. <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/unpaid-and-underpaid-internships/> - The Sutton Trust’s research overview on unpaid and underpaid internships examines how unpaid placements remain a barrier to social mobility, particularly in popular sectors such as the arts, media and fashion. The page summarises survey findings showing a significant proportion of internships are unpaid or pay below the national minimum wage, with many young people relying on family support to participate. It outlines the financial cost of unpaid internships, recommends banning unpaid internships, calls for better enforcement of wage laws and public advertising of placements, and highlights the unfair advantage enjoyed by those from wealthier backgrounds.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/student-loans-in-england-2024-to-2025/student-loans-in-england-financial-year-2024-25> - The UK Government’s Student Loans in England statistical release presents provisional figures for financial year 2024–25, reporting that the average higher education loan balance for borrowers entering repayment in 2024–25 was approximately £53,010. The report explains how average loan balances are calculated, including tuition fee payments and interest accrued while studying, and notes a 9.8 per cent increase compared with earlier years. It provides tables and charts showing trends over time, regional breakdowns and cohort analysis, and cautions figures are provisional and subject to finalisation in the 2026 publication. The release is intended for policymakers and researchers tracking student finance.
7. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2025-0017/> - The House of Commons Library briefing summarises official economic estimates for the UK creative industries, reporting that the sector contributed around £124 billion in gross value added in 2023 and supported 2.4 million jobs between July 2023 and June 2024. The briefing breaks down sub‑sector contributions, noting IT, software and computer services as the largest component, and highlights the geographic concentration of creative activity, particularly in London. It cites DCMS data and discusses productivity, exports and regional disparities, offering tables and references for policymakers. The note contextualises the sector’s scale and underlines challenges relating to skills, diversity and regional inclusion.