





Initial vocational education and training (VET) in fashion design

Information brochure

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Imprint

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INITIAL OVERVIEW

Both the textiles and fashion markets are changing at an increasingly rapid pace as a result of economic drivers such as individualisation, digitalisation, sustainability and regionalisation. These changes also present challenges for initial vocational education and training (VET) programmes in fashion design. Against the backdrop of these developments, the question arises as to what career prospects graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design have and what potential their skills unlock within the textile and fashion markets. Studies by the Chair of Education Systems at ETH Zurich paint a comprehensive picture in this regard. They demonstrate that initial VET programmes in fashion design impart the necessary skills for graduates to develop further in a dynamic employment system.



The in-depth studies for this project can be found on the website of the Swiss Education Lab (department of the Chair of Education Systems) at ETH Zurich (see: <https://sel.ethz.ch/forschungsprojekte.html> (in German) under 'Grundbildung Bekleidungsgestaltung').

Every year, around 300 young people graduate from initial VET programmes in fashion design in Switzerland. The majority of these young people finish a dual VET programme to become a fashion designer with a federal VET diploma, whilst only a small number graduate as a garment sewer with a federal certificate of vocational education and training (hereafter referred to as federal VET certificate).

The occupational profiles for these two initial VET programmes in fashion design have adjusted to changing demands in the worlds of work and the education system over the years. During this adjustment, the significant divergence that used to exist within the field of fashion design disappeared. Today's occupational profile developed out of a convergence of what were formerly multiple different professions.

The Association for Vocational and Professional Education and Training in Fashion Design (Interessengemeinschaft Berufsbildung Bekleidungsgestalter/in, IBBG) is the responsible body for the VET ordinances for the 'Fashion Designer with Federal Diploma of Vocational Education and Training' (hereafter referred to as 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma') and 'Garment Sewer with Federal Certificate of Vocational Education and Training' (hereafter referred to as 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate') programmes. They commissioned the Chair of Education Systems at ETH Zurich to undertake a study that investigates whether the career profile of the initial VET programmes in fashion design still correspond to the labour market's expectations.

This brochure summarises this study's findings. The brochure describes the career development of graduates of these VET programmes and demonstrates the potential of skills acquired from the initial VET programmes within the textile and fashion markets. Furthermore, potential gaps in these skills are identified and market-based indicators for further development of the skills imparted in the initial VET programme are named. The study fundamentally addresses four topic areas, which were investigated by drawing on a wide variety of data and information sources:

- > **Emergence and career profile:** how can the initial VET programmes 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' and 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate' be categorised within the broader framework of the Swiss education system and labour market?

- > **Educational pathways:** which education pathways can be observed among graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design?
- > **Labour market situation:** how has the labour market situation developed for graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design?
- > **Skills:** what potential and what gaps are there in the skills acquired by graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design?

The majority of the following findings focus on the programme 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' for two reasons: not only are there very few young people who graduate as a garment sewer with a federal VET certificate each year – i.e. that the data and information available about this qualification are rather sparse – but also many of these young people proceed to acquire a federal VET diploma immediately after acquiring their Federal VET Certificate. The findings about the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' presented below thus also encompass many young people who acquired a 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate' first. Detailed information about the Federal VET Certificate can be found in the studies by the Chair of Education Systems at ETH Zurich.

CONTENTS AND TARGET GROUPS OF THIS BROCHURE

The purpose of this information brochure is to convey the potential and opportunities of the initial VET programmes in fashion design to a wide range of actors. In particular, the brochure is aimed at career information centres who provide information and advice services. The actors involved in initial VET programmes in fashion design – namely vocational education offices, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, and organisations within the employment system (associations) as affiliated partners within vocational education – are also among the target groups. It is also intended to reach educational institutions, which either play an active role in initial VET programmes in fashion design or provide additional education and training for graduates of these VET programmes. Moreover, the brochure offers people interested in pursuing an initial VET programme in fashion design an overview of career prospects in fashion design.



EMERGENCE AND CAREER PROFILE

How did the initial VET programmes in fashion design come about?

The 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' and 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate' programmes emerged over the course of several decades from the convergence of several professions within the fashion design sector. Today's 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' and 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate' programmes have existed since 2014.

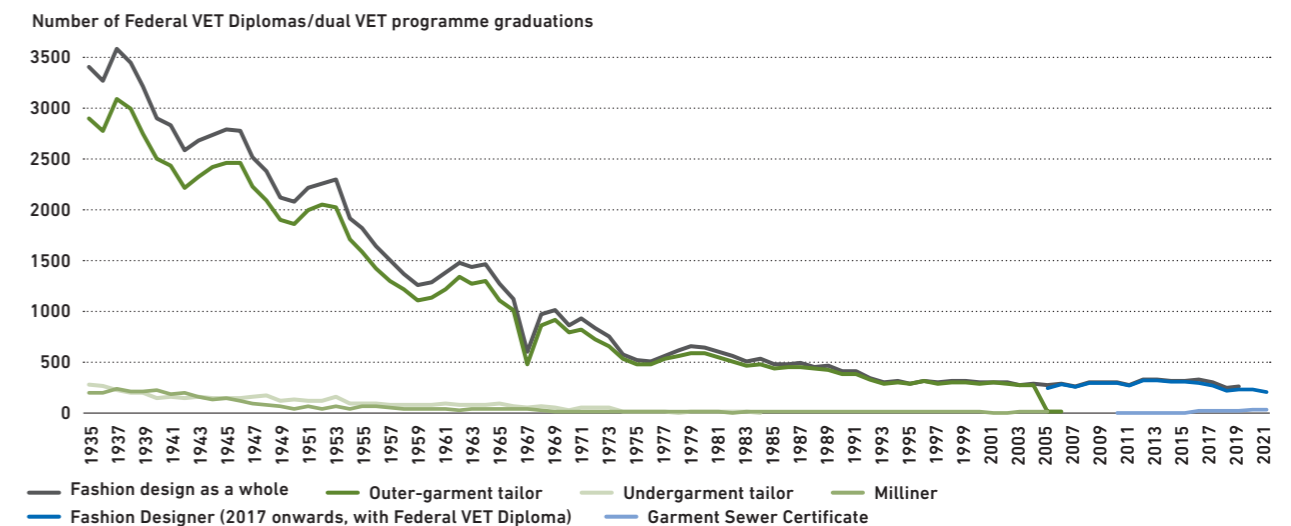
Figure 1 illustrates the progression of various initial VET programmes in fashion design based on the number of dual VET programme certificates issued from 1935 to 2021. This chart therefore not only shows the progression of graduations in the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' and 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate' programmes, but also graduation numbers from their main predecessor professions, namely milliners, outer-garment tailors and undergarment tailors. As such, the black line shows the total of all graduations within the field of fashion design.

In 1935, over 3,000 dual VET students completed dual VET programmes in one of the professions under study (as they were in 1935). The vast majority obtained certificates as outer-garment tailors. Most of these dual VET students went on to become dress-makers, with only a small number of graduates becoming gentlemen's tailors. At this time, undergarment tailors and milliners accounted for around 200 to 300 graduates.

Between 1940 and 1980, the number of certificates issued in all the professions listed decreased significantly. This decrease coincided with an increase in the relative significance of the profession of outer-garment tailoring, to the extent that the other professions had almost ceased to play a role by the end of the 1980s.

From 1990 onwards, the number of certificates issued stabilised to around 300 graduations per year and remained stable into the 2000s. As of 2002, the various occupations were all classified as 'fashion designer', while in 2014 the programme 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' was created. The first dual VET students taking part in the 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate' programme also enrolled in 2014 and, since then, about 30 have graduated each year.

Figure 1: progression of the number of graduates in fashion design from 1935 to 2021



Interpretation aid: the chart shows the progression of the number of final dual VET programme examinations (1939–1986) and the number of Federal VET Diplomas/ Certificates (1935–1938, 1987–2021) issued from 1935 to 2021 for the career paths of the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' and 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate'. Authors' own illustration based on SERI's career development database (see <https://www.sbfli.admin.ch/sbfli/de/home/bildung/berufliche-grundbildung/datenbank-berufsentwicklung-auf-sekundarstufe-ii.html>) and the FSO's graduation figures (see [https://www.pxweb.bfs.admin.ch/pxweb/en/px-x-1502020100_301/px-x-1502020100_301.px/](https://www.pxweb.bfs.admin.ch/pxweb/en/px-x-1502020100_301/px-x-1502020100_301/px-x-1502020100_301.px/)).

What does the occupational profile of the initial VET programmes in fashion design look like nowadays?

The programme 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' imparts the skills and knowledge necessary to practise the profession over the course of a three-year dual VET programme. Part of this dual VET programme is undertaken at a vocational school and part at a company or training studio. There are also regular intercompany courses, which consolidate and expand the dual VET students' knowledge. Furthermore, fashion designers may go on to acquire a federal vocational baccalaureate (FVB), either concurrently with the initial VET programme (known as an 'FVB1') or after completing it.

The IBBG notes in its explanation of the profession's career profile that prospective fashion designers should be creative. This involves an appreciation of colour and shape, abstract visualisation, imagination and manual dexterity. Using modern technology and CAD systems, and the ability to present and market services and products are also important. Currently, however, social, linguistic and management skills are also crucial for fashion designers.

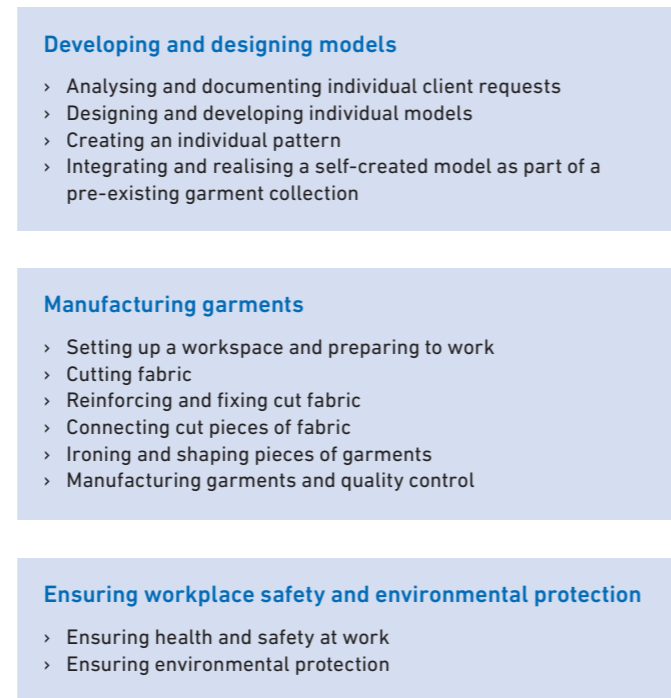
The 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme encompasses five specialisations, from which one is chosen before starting the dual VET programme:

- > women's clothing
- > men's clothing
- > headwear
- > fur clothing
- > workwear and protective clothing

Figure 2 clarifies which skills are imparted to the fashion designers during the initial VET programme. It distinguishes between three categories of 'action competencies', i.e. skills that are activated by performing an action: 1) developing and designing models, 2) manufacturing garments and 3) ensuring workplace safety and environmental protection. Each field encompasses several specific vocational action competencies, listed in Figure 2.

Furthermore, there is also the option of pursuing a Federal VET Certificate as a garment sewer within the fashion design sector. The 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate' programme takes two years and takes place at both a VET school and either a training company or studio. Skills in sewing pieces of garments, ensuring health and safety in the workplace, and protecting the environment are imparted. Following the federal VET certificate, there is the possibility to acquire a federal VET diploma in fashion design in a shortened period of time – an opportunity many dual VET students take advantage of.

Figure 2: skills the dual VET students acquire by the time they graduate as fashion designers with a federal VET diploma



Source: syllabus for the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme.

Who are the young people who complete initial VET programmes in fashion design?

Figure 3 shows selected characteristics of young people enrolled in a VET programme in fashion design. These characteristics were determined in the course of a survey among former dual VET students (hereinafter referred to as 'graduates') from an initial VET programme in fashion design.

It becomes apparent that 95% of these graduates are women, indicating that very few men enrol in initial VET programmes in fashion design. The overwhelming proportion of the graduates were also Swiss nationals, while only 8% were foreign nationals. The graduates who partook in the survey reported that young people on initial VET programmes in fashion design tended to graduate between the ages of 20 and 21. 58% of graduates live in German-speaking Switzerland, 29% in French-speaking Switzerland and 13% in Ticino.

Graduates survey

In spring 2020, the Chair of Education Systems at ETH Zurich conducted a survey of graduates of the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' and 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate' programmes as well as their predecessor programmes. 803 graduates from all of Switzerland's language regions were asked about their characteristics, skills, educational backgrounds and current employment situations.

"Aspiring fashion designers should have creative competencies, be able to work with modern technologies and CAD systems and should be able to present and market services and products".

Figure 3: Personal characteristics of an average graduate



Source: graduates' survey

LABB data

The basis of this analysis is a new data source from the Federal Statistical Office (FSO: see <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/erhebungen/labbb.assetdetail.22304689.html>).

These data – called longitudinal analyses in the field of education (Längsschnittdaten im Bildungsbereich, LABB) – allow personal data from various registers to be linked using the Old-Age and Survivors' Insurance (OASI) numbers. The data analysed for this study encompass all the people recorded in the LABB data set who graduated from an initial VET programme in fashion design between 2011 and 2018 or 2019, respectively. This study involves an investigation of the educational backgrounds and labour market situation of these people during the first seven or eight years respectively after graduating from the initial VET programme. In addition, these findings are compared to those of graduates from selected related initial VET programmes. The related initial VET programmes are:

- > Textile Care Professional with Federal VET Diploma
- > Industrial Upholsterer with Federal VET Diploma
- > Home Textile Designer with Federal VET Diploma
- > Poly-designer 3D with Federal VET Diploma
- > Interior Designer with Federal VET Diploma
- > Leather and Textile Worker with Federal VET Diploma
- > Textile Technician with Federal VET Diploma
- > Orthopaedic Shoemaker with Federal VET Diploma
- > Shoemaker with Federal VET Diploma
- > Textile Care Professional with Federal VET Diploma

What forms of education and professional development do graduates pursue after completing their initial VET programme in fashion design?

The numerous possibilities at the secondary and tertiary levels – and the permeability between the various options within the Swiss education system – open up a wide range of career paths to graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design. Using the LABB data, it can be precisely established which of these options are chosen most frequently by the graduates.

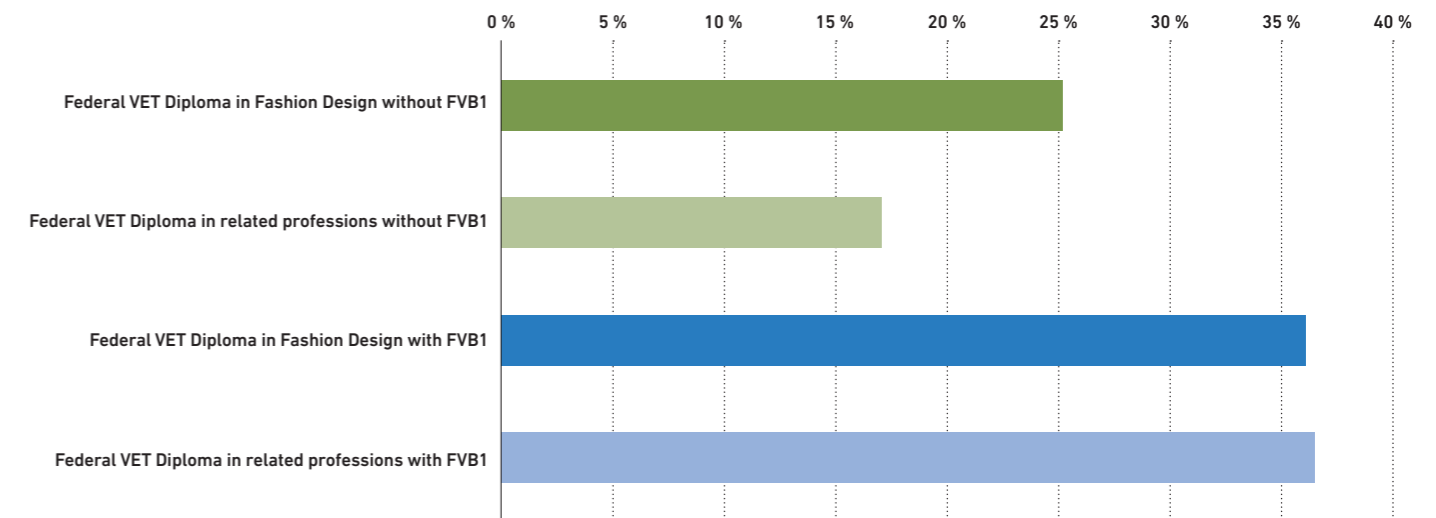
“The Initial VET programme provides a good basis for the further development of one's own educational biography”.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of graduates who go on to do additional education or training within seven years of graduating from their initial VET programme. It distinguishes between fashion designers with federal VET diplomas, who graduated either with or without a federal vocational baccalaureate ('with FVB1' or 'without FVB1').

In addition, Figure 4 compares these graduates to graduates of related initial VET programmes. Related initial VET programmes are those whose syllabi overlap with fashion design in terms of the skills imparted. These related programmes include initial VET programmes in the clothing trade, textile industry, leather manufacturing and processing, and textile cleaning and maintenance. The related initial VET programmes that were analysed are listed in the text box.

The chart shows that 36 % of 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme graduates who obtained a federal vocational baccalaureate (FVB1) pursued additional education or training within the seven years following graduation. Among graduates without the FVB1, this proportion is somewhat lower (25 %). Differences become especially apparent when comparing the educational pathways of graduates of the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' without FVB1 with graduates of the related initial VET programmes without FVB1. This comparison makes clear

Figure 4: Proportion of graduates enrolled in additional education or training



Source: Chart based on evaluations of the FSO's LABB data for 2011–2018.

Interpretation aid: the chart shows the proportion of graduates who pursue an additional education or training within seven years of graduating from their initial VET programme. It distinguishes between graduates who pursued a federal vocational baccalaureate concurrently with the initial VET programme ('with FVB1') and those who did not ('without FVB1'). The chart also distinguishes between graduates of the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme and the related initial VET programmes.

that fashion designers go on to pursue additional education and training significantly more frequently than graduates of the related initial VET programmes. The proportions are practically identical among graduates with a FVB1 in the two groups.

The most frequently chosen additional education and training can be subdivided into the following categories:

- > upper-secondary level programmes (including academic baccalaureate, university aptitude test (UAT), federal vocational baccalaureate and specialised baccalaureate)
- > professional education and training programmes (federal examinations, i.e. Federal Professional Examination and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education, and study programmes at colleges of higher education)
- > study programmes at institutions of higher education (universities of applied sciences, universities of teacher education and traditional academic universities)

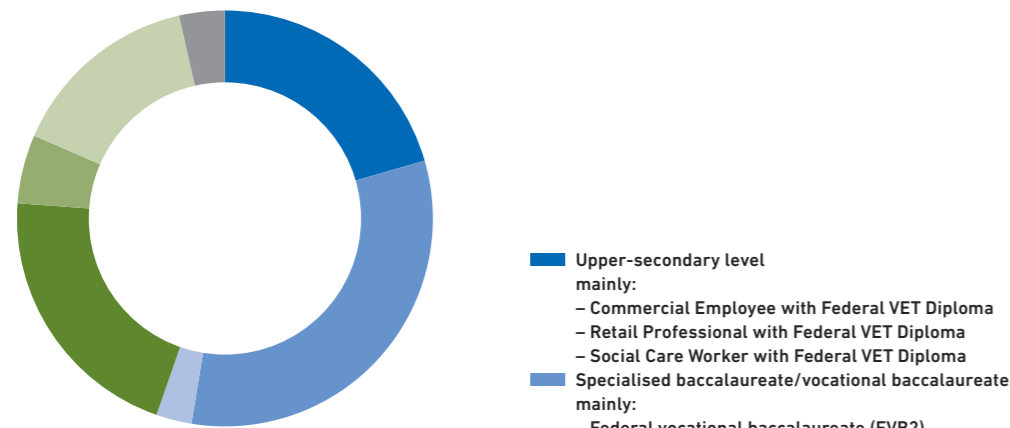
Figure 5 on page 10 breaks down which of these categories of additional education and training graduates of the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme pursue within seven years of graduating. It becomes apparent that the graduates with a federal VET diploma without FVB1 most frequently opt for

a federal vocational baccalaureate or specialised baccalaureate (32 %). Furthermore, 21 % obtain an additional upper-secondary level qualification without a baccalaureate, for example as part of an additional initial VET programme. A large portion of graduates without FVB1 progress directly into tertiary education. 26 % pursue professional education and training, of which colleges of higher education account for a larger portion than Federal Professional Examinations and Advanced Federal Diplomas of Higher Education. Just under a fifth of graduates without FVB1 go on to attend a university of applied sciences, university of teacher education or traditional academic university, while completing a baccalaureate or UAT beforehand.

The situation for those who pursued a federal VET diploma in fashion design with FVB1 looks somewhat different. At 13 %, this group obtains fewer qualifications at the upper-secondary level or lower. These qualifications are frequently the academic baccalaureate or UAT, which grant candidates access to traditional academic universities. The majority of graduates with FVB1 who complete an additional education or training progress directly to the tertiary level, either in the form of professional education and training (24 %) or higher education (46 %), i.e. they attend a university of applied sciences, university of teacher education or traditional academic university.

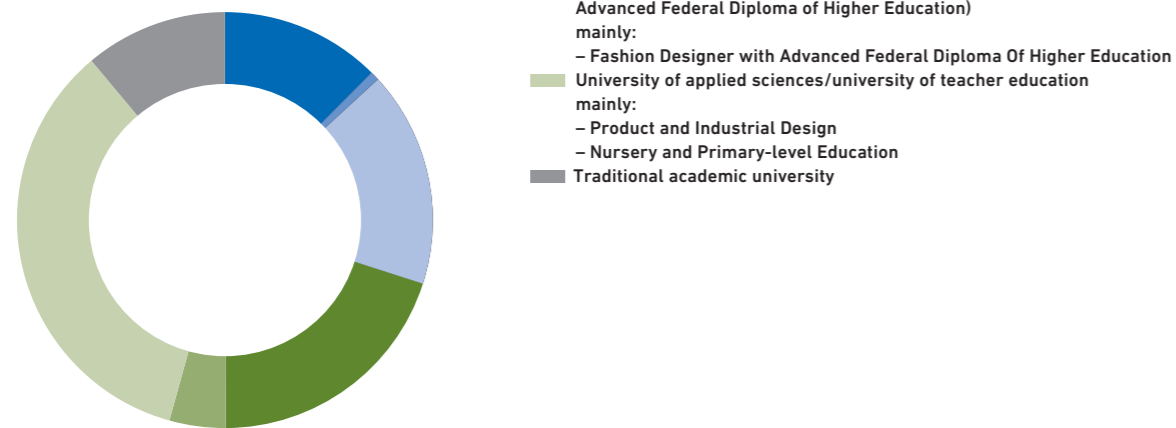
Figure 5: Prevalence of various educational pathways taken by graduates

Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma (without FVB1)



- Upper-secondary level
mainly:
 - Commercial Employee with Federal VET Diploma
 - Retail Professional with Federal VET Diploma
 - Social Care Worker with Federal VET Diploma
- Specialised baccalaureate/vocational baccalaureate
mainly:
 - Federal vocational baccalaureate (FVB2)
 - Academic baccalaureate/university aptitude test
- College of higher education
mainly:
 - Textile Business Management at a College of Higher Education
 - Advanced Federal Diploma in Textiles Technology and Management
- Traditional academic university

Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma (with FVB1)



- Upper-secondary level
mainly:
 - Commercial Employee with Federal VET Diploma
 - Retail Professional with Federal VET Diploma
 - Social Care Worker with Federal VET Diploma
- Specialised baccalaureate/vocational baccalaureate
mainly:
 - Federal vocational baccalaureate (FVB2)
 - Academic baccalaureate/university aptitude test
- College of higher education
mainly:
 - Textile Business Management at a College of Higher Education
 - Advanced Federal Diploma in Textiles Technology and Management
- Traditional academic university
- University of applied sciences/university of teacher education
mainly:
 - Product and Industrial Design
 - Nursery and Primary-level Education

Source: Chart based on evaluations of the FSO's LABB data for 2011–2018. N=1680 (all Diplomas without FVB1) and N=287 (all Diplomas with FVB1).
Interpretation aid: The chart shows the proportion of graduates of 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programmes who chose to pursue additional education and training in a given category among those graduates who went on to pursue additional education and training. It distinguishes between graduates who pursued a federal vocational baccalaureate concurrently with the initial VET programme ('with FVB1') and those who did not ('without FVB1'). In addition, the legend shows the courses most frequently chosen in each category.

Interviews with experts

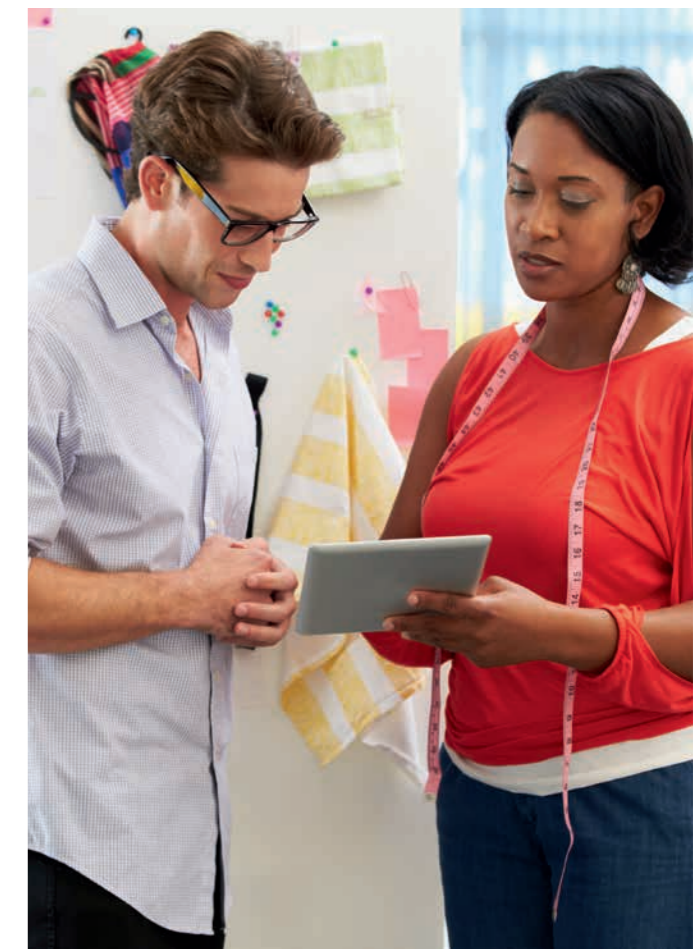
Between September 2020 and March 2021, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 experts from the field of fashion design. For these interviews, people connected to the initial VET programmes in fashion design were chosen, covering a total of three language regions and five groups of institutions: 1) Upper-secondary vocational schools and training studios, 2) (commercial) training companies, 3) providers of tertiary education and training courses, 4) supporting organisations of the IBBG and 5) supporting organisations of initial VET programmes related to fashion design. During the interviews, the experts provided information about their perceptions of initial VET programmes in fashion design, the educational and career paths of graduates and the relevance of skills imparted in the VET programmes.

Aside from the federal vocational baccalaureate and the UAT, the most important education and training courses at the upper-secondary level are the initial VET programmes 'Commercial Employee with Federal VET Diploma', 'Retail Professional with Federal VET Diploma' and 'Certified Social Care Worker with Federal VET Diploma'. At colleges of higher education, 'Textile Business Management' or 'Textiles Technology and Management at a College of Higher Education' are the most frequently chosen programmes by graduates. The most popular qualification among the Federal examinations is the 'Fashion Designer with Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education'. At institutions of higher education, study programmes in 'Product and Industrial Design' at universities of applied sciences and 'Nursery and Primary-level Education' at universities of teacher education are the most prevalent.

In Figure 5, non-formal continuing education and training courses – which also play a meaningful role for graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design – are not considered. The most frequently chosen continuing education course is 'Costume Design'.

Interviews with experts from the field of fashion design conducted during the course of the study provide indications as to why a large portion of graduates from this initial VET programme go on to pursue additional education and training.

The interviews with the experts confirm the considerable significance of subsequent education and training for graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design. Some experts emphasise the importance of motivating graduates to pursue a federal vocational baccalaureate to open more opportunities for them. For graduates with a Federal VET Certificate, on the other hand, acquiring a federal VET diploma (in fashion design or a related field) would open more doors. The experts report that the importance of subsequent education and training leads to a large proportion of graduates starting another education programme directly after finishing their initial VET programme. It therefore becomes apparent that the experts view the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme as a solid foundation for further educational development.



WHAT IS THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION OF GRADUATES?

In the LABB data, the employment situation of graduates of initial VET programmes is divided into four categories:

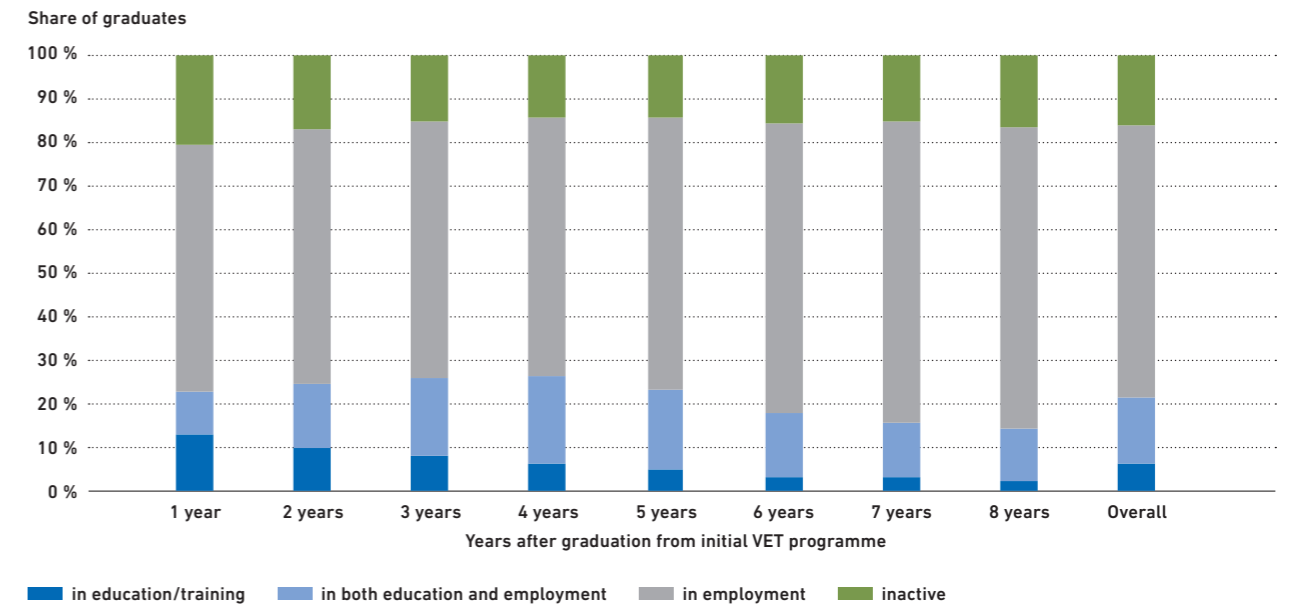
- 1) in education but not in employment
- 2) in employment but not in education
- 3) in both education and employment
- 4) inactive

Figure 6 breaks down the proportion of graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design by employment status during the first eight years after graduation. The vast majority for this entire time period are either in employment or in education. Over half of the graduates are in employment, with or without concurrent education, at all times. In addition, 23% of graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design go on to additional education within a year of graduating and 10% of are in education concurrently with employment. This proportion rises consistently over the first four years following graduation.

The chart further demonstrates that, on average, within the first eight years of completing an initial VET programme in fashion design, 16% of graduates are inactive – in other words, not in education, employment or training.



Figure 6: Proportion of graduates by employment status over the first eight years after graduation



Source: Chart based on evaluations of the FSO's LABB data for 2011–2018.

Interpretation aid: the chart shows the proportion of graduates who – over one to eight years after graduation from an initial VET programme, i.e. on average over this period – are inactive (green), in education or training (dark blue), in both education and employment (light blue) or in employment only (grey).

A comparison of various groups of graduates demonstrates that there is barely any difference in the proportion of inactive graduates who graduated with or without an FVB1. Graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design are on average less active than their peers who have graduated from related initial VET programmes (e.g. Shoemaker with Federal VET Diploma, Leather and Textile Worker with Federal VET Diploma, Textile Care Professional with Federal VET Diploma, Textile Technician with Federal VET Diploma).

Further conclusions about the nature of graduates' employment can be drawn from the graduates' survey. The findings show that one third of graduates work in micro-enterprises with fewer than ten employees. Around 40% work in small or medium-sized enterprises and one quarter work in large enterprises. Half of graduates work full-time, i.e. with a 90% workload or greater. In addition, 30% of graduates have a management role, while 15% are self-employed. The graduates have an average annual income of around 60,000 CHF. Comparing these results with those of the female population in Switzerland shows that the graduates perform better or similarly well with respect to the indicators investigated.

What professions do the graduates practise?

The profession practised by graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design is therefore important, as a large proportion of graduates go on to pursue more education or training, indicating a significant probability of a career change. In this case, it is particularly relevant how the graduates are able to apply the skills acquired during their initial VET programme in their day-to-day working lives.

“The professions practised by the graduates are diverse and the promotion opportunities are numerous”.

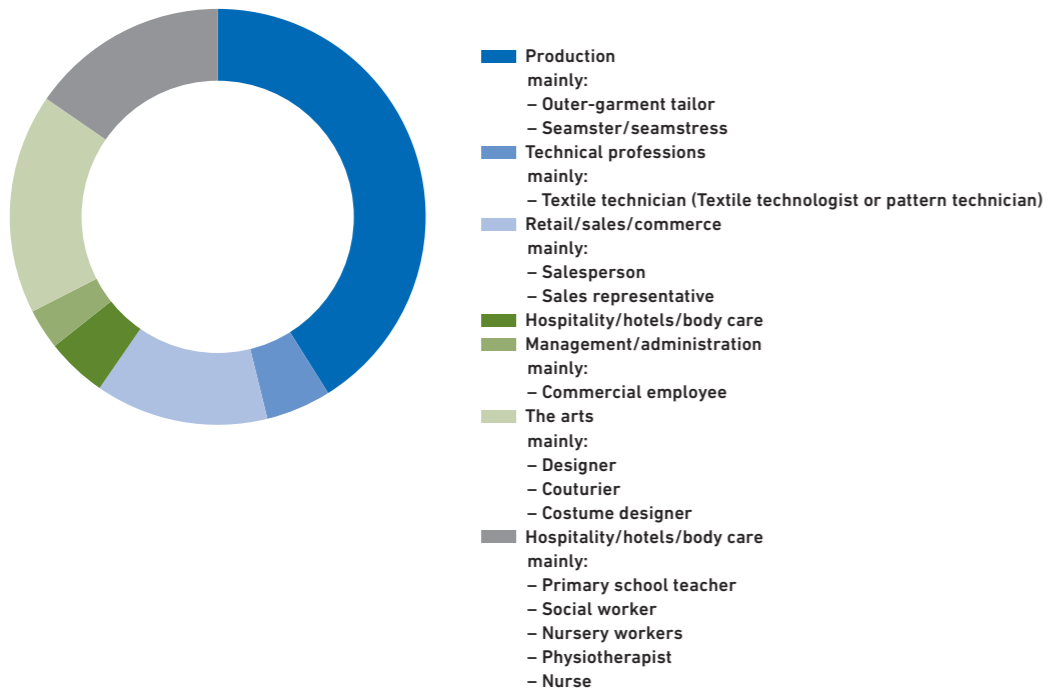
The graduates' survey and interviews with experts provide an insight into these careers. For example, Figure 7 on the following page shows the typical professions graduates pursue within seven distinct sectors. The most common professions are listed in the legend.

After finishing their initial VET programmes, 40 % of fashion designers remain in production-related sectors, including tailors, seamsters and seamstresses. This is a diverse sector, however, as reflected by its major employers, i.e. fashion studios, industry, film and theatre. 17 % of graduates work in the arts, including designers, couturiers and costume designers. These professions provide numerous opportunities for career advancement. The technical professions, including textile technologists and pattern technicians, also present an important career advancement opportunity and are pursued by 5 % of graduates.

There are also graduates who change to more distant-related sectors. Among these, 'Healthcare, teaching, culture and science' is particularly important at 15 %, including primary school teachers and social workers. Somewhat closer to the original sector are the 13 % of graduates employed in 'Retail/sales/commerce'.

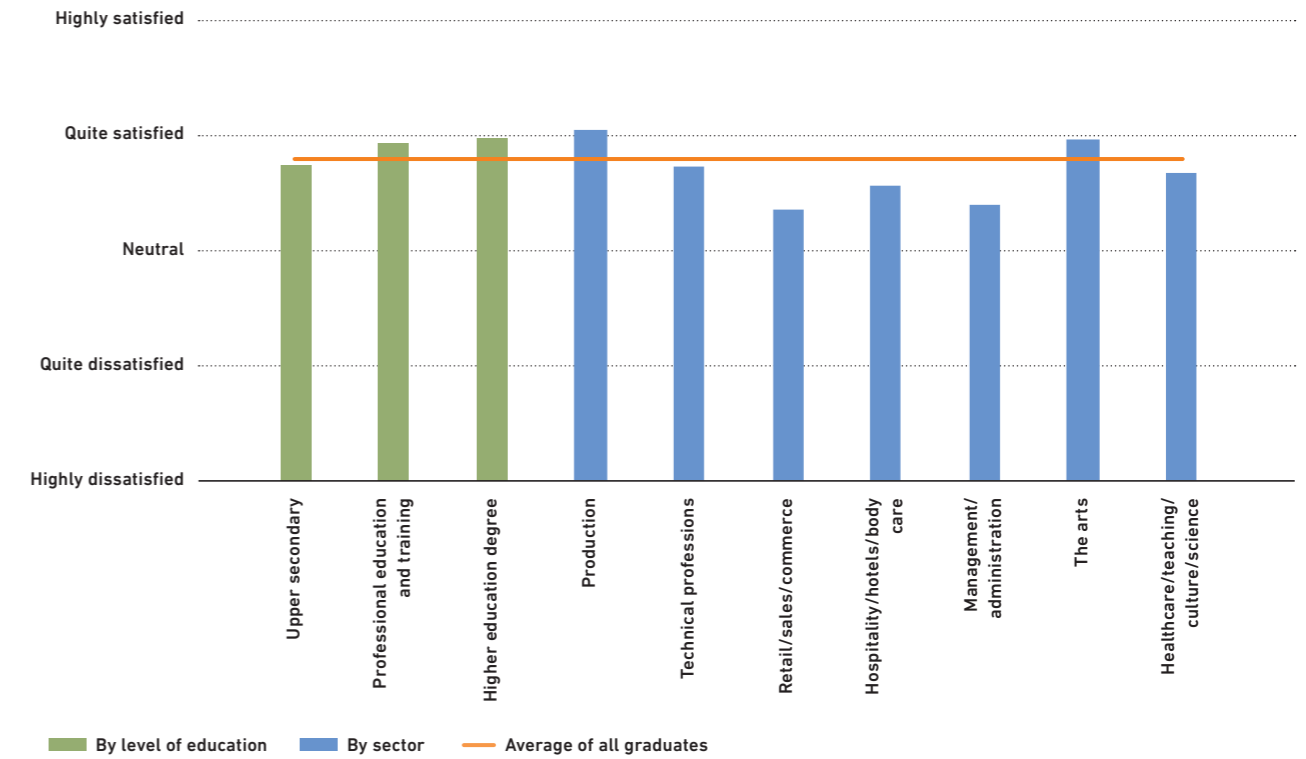
These results demonstrate the diversity of professions practised by graduates and the extent of opportunities for career advancement or change. They also confirm the great significance of additional education and training for the career development of graduates.

Figure 7: Prevalence of the different sectors among graduates



Source: Chart based on the evaluation of the graduates' survey. N=572.
 Interpretation aid: the chart shows the proportion of graduates of the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme employed in a given sector, broken down by sector, of all graduates. In addition, the legend shows the professions most frequently chosen in each sector.

Figure 8: Satisfaction with the initial VET programme in fashion design



Source: Chart based on evaluation on the graduates' survey. N=761.
 Interpretation aid: the chart shows the extent to which graduates report that the initial VET programme provided a solid foundation for their current employment and career opportunities, broken down separately according to the highest level of education attained by graduates and their current sector.

How satisfied are graduates with their initial VET programmes?

Albeit relevant, objective information about the employment and educational situations of graduates is not the only information of interest. Graduates' satisfaction with the initial VET programme, which forms the foundation for their current employment and career opportunities is also highly relevant. Figure 8, for example, shows the satisfaction of graduates with the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme on a five-point scale, with 1 being 'highly dissatisfied' and 5 being 'highly satisfied'. With an average score of 3.8 (orange line on the chart), the graduates are broadly satisfied with their initial VET programmes.

Besides the average, Figure 8 also shows satisfaction according to the highest level of education attained by the graduates (green columns) and their current sector (blue columns). Satisfaction rises in line with the level of education: satisfaction is highest among graduates who went on to graduate from an institution of

higher education. Nonetheless, the values are comparable across all levels of qualification.

Larger discrepancies in satisfaction become apparent when distinguishing between sector. The highest satisfaction is expressed by graduates active in the 'Production' or 'Arts' sectors – two sectors in which graduates are frequently employed. Lower levels of satisfaction are apparent among graduates who, after

“The graduates are generally satisfied with the initial VET programme”.

graduation from an initial VET programme, change to a sector not directly related to fashion design. These sectors include sectors 'Retail/sales/commerce' and 'Hospitality/hotels/body care'. Satisfaction ranges from moderately high to high across all groups. The skills acquired in the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme thus provide a solid foundation even after a career change.

How can actors within the employment system be included constructively?

One peculiarity of the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme is that the majority of practical training takes place in training studios. Training studios are non-commercial garment-making studios where dual VET students process orders for customers. In contrast, in the majority of other initial VET programmes, practical training takes place mainly at training companies. Thus, the question arises whether it is as constructive to train at a training studio as at a training company.

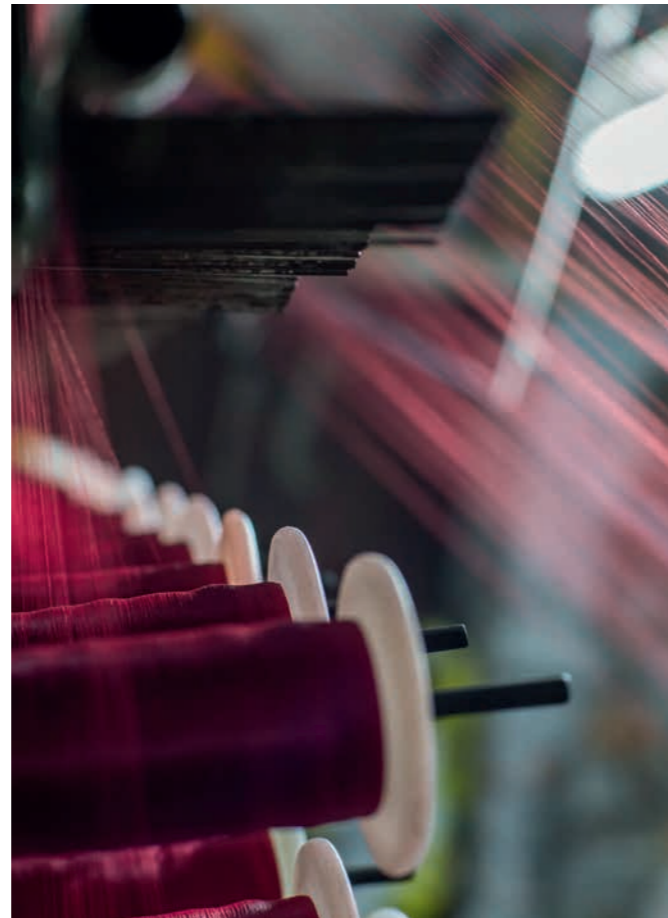
Nevertheless, during the initial VET programme, there are various opportunities to include actors from the employment system. Training studios, for example, work for customers. The graduates' survey can serve as a basis to investigate the extent to which including actors from the employment system affects the action competencies and employment situation of graduates. Including organisations of this kind helps the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme to meet the demands of the labour market and help graduates in transitioning successfully into the world of work.

We hereby list three avenues through which work experience can be acquired pertaining to the programme 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma':

- 1) an internship
- 2) orders carried out for real customers
- 3) commercial orientation of the training company

With these types of work experience, school-based initial VET programmes or programmes that mainly take place in a training studio might also be able to include actors from the employment system effectively.

Our studies show that processing orders for real customers is highly important. Experiencing orders of this kind improves the employment status of graduates in the medium term. It improves their chances of finding a job, teaches action competencies and increases graduates' satisfaction. Processing orders for real customers is therefore an important part of the learning process. These orders occur more frequently in commercial training companies, although not exclusively. The analyses are more of an indication that it is not the commercial orientation of training companies



or training studios that is essential to graduates' success in the labour market or to their satisfaction. Rather, the decisive factor is the proportion of real customer orders processed during the initial VET programme. Internships cannot compensate for a lack of these orders.

“The processing of orders for real customers is of great importance”.

The experts confirm the high degree of relevance of practical training in the workplace during the initial VET programme and the great importance of including actors from the employment system. Nonetheless, they suggest a variety of different strategies to include these organisations. They agree with the graduates that the commercial orientation is not the most important factor. Rather, interacting with real customers and carrying out orders, as is also common practice in training studios, are more important factors. The graduates and experts therefore both agree that carrying out real customer orders is the essence of practical training.

WHICH SKILLS ARE IN DEMAND IN FASHION DESIGN NOW AND WHICH WILL BE IN DEMAND IN THE FUTURE?

The skills to be imparted in the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme are clearly defined in the syllabus. The potential of the skills acquired by graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design and any potential gaps in their skills are of interest in this regard. The graduates' survey sheds light on the satisfaction of graduates with their initial VET programmes, and the relevance of the skills contained in the syllabi to their employment. In addition, the interviews with experts help to gauge the relevance of the skills contained in syllabi to graduates' employment and to identify any gaps, also for future developments.

The experts agree that the current 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme represents a solid foundation for future employment and is highly versatile in its various specialisations. As mentioned in the introduction, this initial VET programme has specialisations in women's clothing, men's clothing, headwear, fur clothing and workwear and protective clothing. The combination of this broad occupational field with the specialisations allow for an in-depth insight into the various aspects of the field on the one hand and the chance to focus on a single specialisation on the other hand.

The experts also agree that the distinct set of skills involved in garment manufacturing are of fundamental importance, as these will not only prepare graduates for future employment, but also for potential additional education and training. The graduates' survey confirms that the range of skills related to garment-manufacturing is highly relevant to future employment.

Among the specific action competencies, analysing and documenting customer requests was the most relevant. This action competency requires high levels of personal and social skills, demonstrating that transferable skills, of which personal and social skills are examples, are even more relevant to graduates employment than other skill sets. The graduates cite team work capacity as the most relevant skill, followed by trustworthiness. The graduates rank transferable skills of this kind as relevant to highly relevant, regardless of the highest education they have attained or the profession they practise. Figure 9 shows the relevance of all action competencies (blue bars) and transferable skills for graduates (green bars).

Despite being a generally good match for the demands of the labour market, there are – according to both the graduates and the experts – certain developments for which the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme could still provide better preparation:

Digitalisation

The experts expect that digitalisation will change the sector significantly. While they do not expect that fashion designers will have to learn fundamentally new skills, digitalisation will require dual VET students to be taught to use digital technologies from an early stage in their careers. Nevertheless, a solid understanding of the craft on which the initial VET programme focusses will remain a basic requirement to master these technologies.

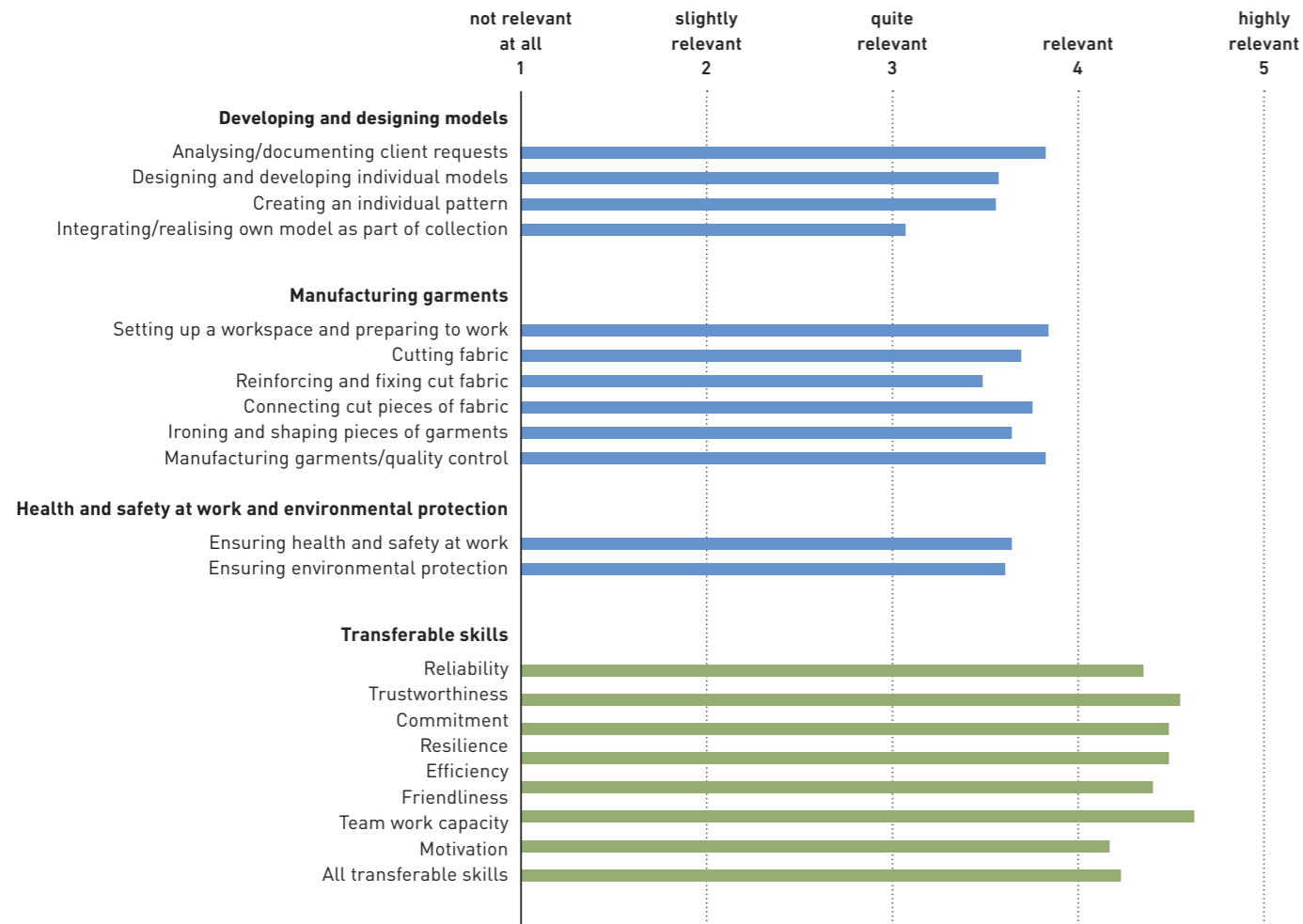
To find out what changes need to be made, the graduates were asked about situations and technologies related to digitalisation that should be given greater consideration in the initial VET programme. Many graduates, especially those who went on to attain higher education or those employed in a technical profession, recognise the need to expand their digital skills. The most important technology, which the graduates report is being given too little consideration, is computer-aided design (CAD). In addition, some graduates also mentioned fundamental skills, such as general usage of computers or the Excel software.

Sustainability and local production

The experts also named sustainability, the reuse and refurbishment of old garments and local clothing production as important drivers of change in the sector. Among the skills relevant to this trend, the syllabus already covers the aspect of environmental protection. However, the experts argue that fashion designers should be given a deeper insight into the topic of sustainable garment manufacturing.

The experts perceive increasing awareness of sustainable garment manufacturing on the part of consumers, i.e. locally produced clothes made out of environmentally friendly fabrics. This trend presents a significant opportunity for fashion designers. Some experts note that younger customers' preferences have moved on from fast fashion – i.e. short-lived,

Figure 9: Relevance of action competencies and transferable skills for graduates



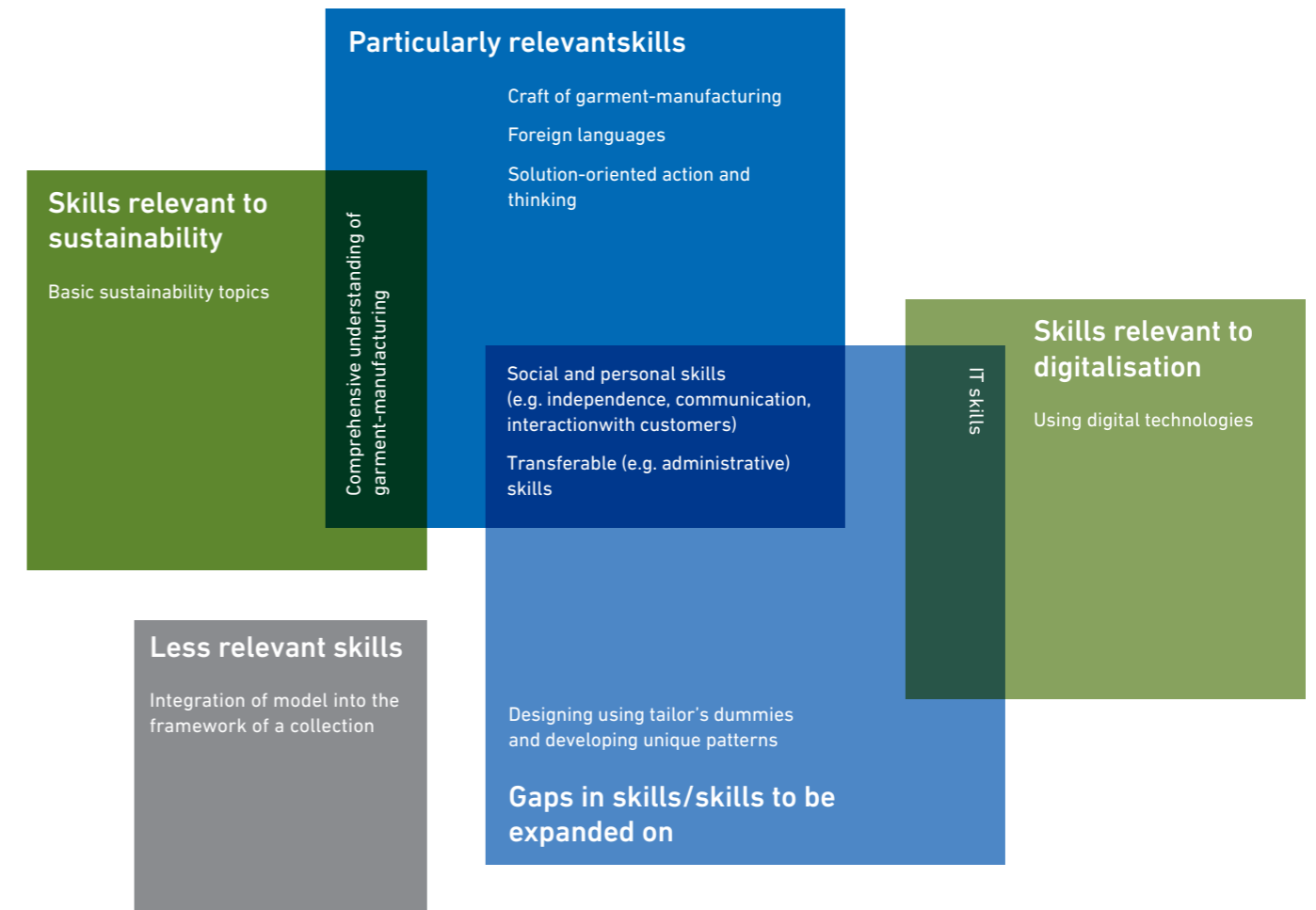
Source: Chart based on evaluation on the graduates' survey, N=639.

Interpretation aid: The chart shows the average level of relevance of action competencies from the syllabus for the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET Diploma' programme and transferable skills for current graduates' employment on a scale of 1 (completely not relevant at all) to 5 (highly relevant).

mass-produced clothing – towards individual, time-less items that are made of recycled materials. They believe this shift in preferences stems from greater awareness of environmentally friendly and fair production processes. The craft involved in fashion design could serve to meet rising demands in this regard.

Figure 10 summarises the findings from the expert interviews about skills, drawing on the skills from the syllabus (see Figure 2 in the chapter 'What does the occupational profile of the initial VET programmes in fashion design look like nowadays?') as the basis for the discussion in the process.

Figure 10: Relevance of skills and gaps in skills



Source: Chart based on evaluation on the interviews with experts.

Interpretation aid: the diagram shows how the experts who were interviewed evaluated the significance and transmission of various skills in the initial VET programme, also with respect to future developments.

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE INITIAL VET PROGRAMMES IN FASHION DESIGN

Analysing graduates' individual backgrounds in education and their employment situations shows that the 'Fashion Designer with Federal VET' programme provides a solid foundation both for starting a career and for career advancement and change down the line, as well as opportunities for additional education and training. After graduation, graduates of initial VET programmes in fashion design appear well-prepared for education and training. They most frequently go on to pursue additional education and training in their own sector, but also general courses such as academic and federal vocational baccalaureates. Even after completing these additional courses, graduates frequently remain in the same profession or at least in professions for which the initial VET programmes in fashion design are relevant. Comparing the graduates' employment situation with that of the female population in Switzerland shows that the graduates perform better or similarly well with respect to the indicators investigated. The opportunity to obtain the federal VET diploma faster leads many graduates of the 'Garment Sewer with Federal VET Certificate' programme to pursue the diploma afterwards. Obtaining a federal VET diploma also prepares these dual VET students to start or change their careers.

The experts and graduates confirm that the skills acquired by fashion designers during the initial VET programme are relevant to later employment. Both groups think that transferable skills are most relevant, followed by action competencies related to the craft of garment manufacturing. Accordingly, imparting transferable skills will remain as important or become even more important in the future.

Developments such as digitalisation and sustainability will have a powerful impact on the sector in the future and the required skills will therefore gain greater significance. Aspiring fashion designers will be well-equipped for these changes as long as they also have a solid understanding of their craft alongside skills in using digital technologies. The increasing role of local production and the growing importance of sustainability provide fashion designers with opportunities, which those with an in-depth knowledge of clothes manufacturing will be better able to take advantage of.

Since the 1990s, around 300 qualifications from initial VET programmes in fashion design have been awarded each year. This stability is an additional indicator that these training programmes are fit for purpose. The graduates' survey made clear that it is not the commercial orientation of the training organisation that is most important for dual VET students to be well-prepared for the labour market. It is more important that dual VET students process real customer orders, which also frequently occur in training studios.

"The initial VET programme is a good basis for starting a career, for later career advancement and for opportunities for additional education and training."

Therefore, it should be ensured in the future that dual VET students can process as many orders as possible for real customers. This will guarantee that dual VET students enrolled in initial VET programmes in fashion design acquire the practical skills necessary for rising to the diverse challenges of the labour market.



