

Marines set sail for jungle trip

### Your Stories

You are in: [Somerset](#) > [People](#) > [Your Stories](#) > Somerset's top designers



Victoria and Hilary won a European comp

### Somerset's top designers

Somerset College has been producing award-winning students of late, beating some of the most prestigious universities in the country to the top spot. But what is it about the college which makes it so successful?

For all aspiring designers, Somerset College seems to be the place to be.

Competing with heavyweights such as Central St Martins (which is where the likes of Stella McCartney and Alexander MacQueen trained), Somerset College's students are more than holding their own in industry competitions.

Of the 10 finalists at the Clothes Show Live Young Designer of the Year competition, four hailed from Somerset. Students Victoria Griffiths and Hilary Wells won gold in a European competition where they had just 12 hours to design and create a dress from scratch.

The students' work has attracted famous fans: at London Fashion Week, theirs was the only show attended by the Prime Minister's wife Sarah Brown, and editorial heavyweights including Vogue and Marie Claire also praised the work.

Previous students are now working for New Look, Ikea, Harvey Nichols and also have their own successful design companies.

"Students have done exceptionally well. They've risen to the challenges, coursework and exhibitions, so they have really worked hard," said the head of textiles and fashion, Imelda Hughes.

### Futuristic design

One student who is on top is Richard Maynes, a fashion student who has been named as a finalist in the prestigious 2009 FAD Competition, set to take place at Vauxhall Fashion Scout in London on 24 February.



The awards are judged by Vogue

Richard, who is a second year student at the college, is one of 14 finalists all vying for the coveted prize of £2k and an industry placement after judges liked his futuristic design.

"It's always a shock that someone else appreciates and understands your work," said Richard who was said he was thrilled - and also surprised - to have made it so far.

His final design will be showcased in a unique catwalk show during London Fashion Week with the jury, which includes Dolly Jones (Editor, Vogue.com) and Martyn Roberts (Director of Vauxhall Fashion Scout), announcing the winners on the evening

Fashion Awareness Direct (FAD) is a registered charity (charity number 1112095).

London office: 10a Wellesley Terrace, N1 7NA

Tel/Fax: +44 (0)20 7490 3946

[www.fad.org.uk](http://www.fad.org.uk)

So what is it about the college which is making it produce such successful students?

Richard, who is from Stourbridge near Birmingham, decided to make the move to Somerset because his lecturers recommended the course, purely because of its reputation.

"We're given a lot of freedom and we are allowed to explore it on our own. We're not restricted; we can find our own individual style," he said.

Head of textiles and fashion, Imelda Hughes, said one of the reasons the students at the college are doing so well is that when they start the degree, they are offered the chance in the first year to try many different courses which enables them to find out what they not only enjoy, but what they are good at.

"We have a diagnostic service - students can try textiles, interior textiles, furnishings - right through to fashion, whereas elsewhere they would have to decide straight away what they want to study," said Imelda.

"We're the right place to find their individual style so they design what's suitable to them."

The second year looks at the professional industry and provides students with business advice while the third year works towards the degree element.

Students are taught by a mixture of tutors who are academically trained and those with a background in the industry, which provides a good balance, according to Imelda.

"We're very much a community based college which is an advantage as we have such a strong teaching team."

They also have projects set for them by small design companies and have a permanent commission to provide the artwork for Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton.

As the students bring home the prizes, Imelda says the main thing they need to do is shout about their success.

"We're not very well known in Somerset for doing degree courses - people just don't realise that they have this great course on their doorstep."

And you can see some of their designs by clicking on the links to the right of this page.



The brief for Richard was the future



Sarah Brown attended the show

last updated: 16/02/2009 at 15:53  
created: 16/02/2009