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Awards are in fashion at Northumbria

Staff and graduates from two of the fashion programmes at Northumbria University are celebrating a trio of awards as part of a vital partnership between education and industry.

Final year undergraduates studying [Fashion Communication](#) and [Fashion Design and Marketing](#) at Northumbria School of Design were last year set the task of developing a marketing campaign or product design project based on a collaboration between streetwear brand [size?](#) and international footwear label [Vans](#).

At a special ceremony held in London earlier this month, Northumbria picked

up three accolades as part of an [awards scheme by size?](#), aimed at recognising the work which went into developing the campaigns and designs, and the efforts of universities across the country involved in the [?syllabus programme](#), devised by *size?*.

The [?syllabus](#) Partner University of the Year Award was presented to Northumbria and was collected on the night by Assistant Professors Christopher Hodge and Gayle Cantrell. Two Northumbria Fashion Communication graduates were also named winners. Imogen Hands won the Sustainability Award for her project 'Revamp' and Olivia Mackinnon was named the [?syllabus](#) scheme's first ever Student of the Year.

Northumbria's work with *size?* has already resulted in at least two graduates joining the team in permanent roles. Another Northumbria graduate has also been employed by *Vans* as a direct result of the collaboration.

Cameron Poole, who graduated from the Fashion Communication course in 2019 and has worked at *size?* ever since, explained: "We started the [?syllabus](#) programme to give something back to a key community, the student population, as well as our main consumer base of 18 to 24-year-olds.

"From the off, Northumbria University took the [size?syllabus](#) and ran with it. As a result, the quality of final submissions was incredibly high, a fitting tribute to the attention that both students and staff paid to the programme. This relationship continues to go from strength to strength and long may it continue."

Students were asked by *size?* to consider key brand pillars including community, music and sport, as well as looking at how they might launch their concept to market, while incorporating the action sports and street culture aspects that *Vans* is known for.

Gayle, who is Programme Leader for the BA (Hons) Fashion Communication at Northumbria, said: "The advantages of projects like this are manifold. It gives students confidence, because their contributions are being heard by real people in industry, and they're seeing those ideas realised, sometimes beyond the project. And the feedback they receive from the [?syllabus](#) team is really valuable to their ongoing development as designers and communicators, while from a personal perspective, it's always quite exciting to see where the students are going to take it.

“Not only that, but because this is real-world experience, it generates real passion, and a number of students go on to start jobs in the field straight after graduation, often because they’ve impressed judges so much with their work.”

Cameron added: “With Olivia’s work, judges were moved by her mature approach and all-round consideration to the brief, combined with the seemingly effortless blend of *size?* and *Vans*’ iconography.

“Similarly, Imogen took a view of the synergies that exist between *size?* and *Vans*, and so many details were listed, from upcycling, graffiti art, skate performances and live acts, so it was extremely ambitious but also very realistic.”

Olivia graduated in the summer and the 22-year-old is now working full-time at PR and brand agency, [VARG Talent](#), after completing an internship at the firm while still a student. She said: “I really enjoyed the project. It didn’t seem like work as it was so creative and lots of fun. More than that though, I think the course really prepared me well for my role and it’s a great fit with my experience so far.

“I’m really keen to try different things as I progress, and the course was great for that as there was lots to consider, such as photography, branding and project management, so as well as those creative elements, I got experience in organisational and planning skills that I use in my current role at VARG.”

Imogen, who now works in London for the brand [A-COLD-WALL*](#), added: “Looking at the *size?* and *Vans* brand pillars, I was drawn to their continued reference to accessibility and inclusivity. Coming from a less privileged background, inclusivity and a lack of it are concepts that feel very familiar to me and the people I grew up with, so it’s definitely something I feel strongly about acknowledging in my creative work.

“I’m proud that a project which was developed so personally was recognised and feel its authenticity was key. I had a great experience at Northumbria, and when I reflect I can truly see how the course allowed me to work to my creative interests. I think I found a creative voice and grew as person over the three years I was there, and I’m grateful for the guidance the tutors provided.”

For 2023, *size?syllabus* is partnering with footwear manufacturer [New Balance](#), while welcoming more universities on board with the ambition of growing the programme internationally.

Northumbria University was named [University of the Year 2022](#) in the prestigious Times Higher Education (THE) Awards. The School of Design offers programmes across a number of disciplines covering industrial, fashion, communication and innovation design. Discover more online at northumbria.ac.uk/design.

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

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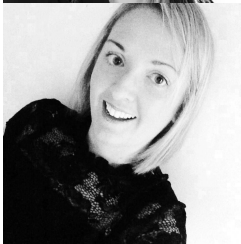


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