

Analyzing the curriculum distinctives of fashion design at Shih-Hsin university

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Abstract: The fashion and apparel design program at Shih - Hsin University in Taiwan was established relatively early and has distinctive features in its course settings and has accumulated a great deal of experience. Through an in - depth study of its course settings, this article analyzes its training objectives and course structure settings, examines the characteristics of its course system construction, and discusses the implications for fashion and apparel design education in mainland Chinese universities.

Keywords: Shih - Hsin University, fashion and apparel design, course settings, characteristics, research

1. Introduction

Shih Chien University is a private university in Taiwan. Its predecessor was the Shih Chien Junior College of Home Economics, founded by Mr. Hsieh Tung - Min in March 1958. It was upgraded to a university in August 1997. The university has two campuses, one in Zhongshan District, Taipei City, and the other in Neimen District, Kaohsiung City. It comprises six academic units: College of Home Economics, College of Design, College of Management, College of Commerce and Information, College of Culture and Creativity, and the General Education Center. The College of Design at Shih Chien University has been recognized by the U.S. Business Week as one of the world's top 60 preferred design schools.

The university's educational philosophy emphasizes fundamentals and practicality, with both teaching and research oriented towards practical applications. Its mission is to cultivate individuals who are diligent, honest, optimistic, and progressive, with a rich sense of life, a passion for service and dedication, and the characteristics of creativity, practical ability, and a global perspective.

2. Program training objectives

The Department of Fashion and Apparel Design at Shih Chien University, established in 1961, aims to cultivate students' cultural literacy and expertise in fashion design. It emphasizes developing individuality and design skills through competitions and exhibitions. To meet industry demands and enhance employability, the department offers preparatory courses in design, business planning, production management, and textile design, producing well-rounded professionals for Taiwan's fashion industry.

3. Curriculum structure

The fashion design program equips students with comprehensive theoretical knowledge in fashion and apparel design, aligning with artistic aesthetics and societal needs. Students are trained to utilize current fashion information from home and abroad, achieving high - level design and strong craftsmanship.

3.1. General education courses

Table 1 Four-Year Course Credit Distribution Summary for Fashion Design Major

Category	Freshman Year			Sophomore Year		
	Course	Up	Low	Course	Up	Low
General	Chinese (1)	2		Fashion Design (3)	2	

Education Courses	Chinese (2)		2	Fashion Design (4)		2
	College English (1)	2		Accessory Design	2	
	College English (2)		2	Hair Design (1)	2	
	National Defense Policy	0		Hair Design (2)		2
	National Defense Policy		0	Apparel Display Design (1)	2	
	Physical Education (1)	0		Apparel Consumer Behavior	2	
	Physical Education (2)		0	Apparel Procurement		2
	Historical Thinking and World Civilization	2		Ready-to-Wear Trade Practices		2
	Moral and Legal Education		2	Bag Design (1)	2	
	Service Learning (1)	0		Bag Design (2)		2
Category	Junior Year			Senior Year		
	Course	Up	Low	Course	Up	Low
General Education Courses	College English (4)	2		English Proficiency Graduation Requirement	0	
	Life Arts	1				

The general education courses consist of 28 credit hours, with 15 credit - bearing courses and 9 non - credit - bearing ones. Before graduation, Shih Chien University students must meet the Chinese - language proficiency, physical - fitness, and English - language graduation requirements. The 4 - credit Chinese courses contribute to the Chinese - language proficiency. Although the 2 physical - education and English - language courses are required, they don't count toward graduation credits. The Liberal Arts Select courses are all credit - bearing, totaling 10 credits. These courses are grouped into five categories: Humanistic Thinking, Aesthetic Cultivation, Civil Society, Global Perspectives, and Natural Sciences. Starting from the first semester of freshman year, students must take at least one course in each category by graduation, satisfying their personalized course selection and broadening their academic foundations. The general education foundation courses include 8 credit - bearing and 4 non - credit - bearing courses. The credit - bearing ones include College English, Historical Thinking and World Civilization, Moral and Legal Education, Family Science, and Life Arts, totaling 14 credits. College English follows a sequential enrollment system. Non - credit - bearing courses are National Defense Policy and Service Learning, with 2 courses each.

3.2. Core courses

Table 2 Four-Year Credit Distribution of Required Courses for Fashion Design Major

Category	Freshman Year			Sophomore Year		
	Course	Up	Low	Course	Up	Low
Required Courses	Creativity Principles	2		Special Topics on Cultural and Creative Industry		2
	Art History (1)	2		History of Western Costumes	2	
	Art History (2)		2	History of Chinese Clothing		2
	Textile Materials (1)	2		Fashion Marketing (1)	2	
	Textile Materials (2)		2	Fashion Marketing (2)		2
	Garment Construction (1)	3		Fashion Design (1)	2	

	Garment Construction (2)		3	Fashion Design (2)		2
	Color Science (1)		2	Computer-Aided Fashion Illustration (1)	2	
	Basic Design (1)		2			
	Introduction to Fashion Industry	2				
	Sketching	2				
	Fashion Drawing (1)		2			
Category	Junior Year			Senior Year		
	Course	Up	Low	Course	Up	Low
Required Courses	Clothing Business Management (1)	2		Monographic Study (1)	2	
	Clothing Business Management (2)		2	Monographic Study (2)		2
	Apparel Aesthetics	2		Merchandise Planning (1)	2	
	Textile Quality Evaluation		2	Merchandise Planning (2)		2

The required courses for the Fashion and Apparel Design program at Shih Chien University total 58 credits. In setting the foundational design courses, the emphasis is on cultivating aesthetic sensibility and enhancing self-expression.

In the first year, all major - related courses are required, accounting for 26 credits. These courses lay a solid foundation for various design directions.

To meet the diverse talent needs of the fashion industry and cater to individual student interests, in the second and third years, the program is divided into three modules: apparel design, apparel business, and textile - application design. Students complete 16 credits in the second year and 8 credits in the third year, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to enter the fashion industry.

The fourth year features an 8 - credit course in fashion design application. Beyond design creation, students integrate research on fashion trends and market demands, combining theory with practice and gaining an understanding of the fashion industry's operations and market structure.

3.3. Elective courses

Table 3 Credit Distribution of Restricted Electives for Fashion Design Major (Sophomore & Junior Years)

Category		Second Grade			Third Grade		
		Course	Up	Low	Course	Up	Low
Restricted Elective	Fashion Design	Garment Construction (3)	3		Fashion Design (3)	2	
		Garment Construction (4)		3	Fashion Design (4)		2
					Accessory Design	2	
					Hair Design (1)	2	
					Hair Design (2)		2
	Clothing Business Management	Commercial English (1)	2		Apparel Display Design (1)	2	
		Commercial English (2)		2	Apparel Consumer Behavior	2	
		Statistics (1)	2		Apparel Procurement		2
		Economics (1)		2	Ready-to-Wear Trade Practices		2

Textile Design	Fabric Print Design	2		Bag Design (1)	2	
	Fabric Structure & Analysis (1)	2		Bag Design (2)		2
	Fabric Structure & Analysis (2)		2	Footwear Design (1)	2	
	Hat Design		2	Knitwear Design (1)		2

The elective courses for the Fashion and Apparel Design program at Shih Chien University total 42 credits. Students are required to choose 16 credits within their selected module and direction, and the remaining 26 credits can be chosen based on their personal interests. These elective courses are mainly scheduled during the second and third years of the university.

The course arrangement aims to strengthen the foundational theoretical teaching of fashion design on one hand, and on the other hand, focuses on cultivating students' innovative design abilities, enhancing their aesthetic awareness and practical skills. It also expands the scope of professional adaptability and achieves interdisciplinary integration to meet the diverse social demands for fashion - related talents.

4. Program features

4.1. Liberal arts education focus

Shih Chien University emphasizes holistic development through liberal arts education, enabling natural growth and exploring students' potential. It cultivates diverse skills beyond utilitarianism. Courses like cultural and creative industry research help develop students' potential and practical abilities.

4.2. Interdisciplinary integration

The university's Liberal Arts Select Courses deepen students' understanding of humanities and social sciences, enhancing their grasp of basic sciences. By breaking down disciplinary barriers and encouraging interdisciplinary interaction, the university improves students' overall competence and fosters innovation.

4.3. Practical skills emphasis

With the philosophy of "Practice and Excellence," over 30% of the course credits are practical. In fashion design, practice validates theoretical knowledge, and the learning process is highly hands - on. The university has established industry partnerships to provide long - term internship opportunities [1].

4.4. Personalized development

The curriculum encourages students' autonomy and creativity. In fashion design teaching, students are motivated to explore their creative thinking based on their individuality and strengths. They can choose different module courses to promote personalized development. The three module courses in fashion and apparel design allow students to freely select learning content and develop innovative thinking. Under Taiwan's creative industry development initiative, the university effectively implements innovative design education methods [2].

4.5. Industry - Aligned curriculum

The university aligns its curriculum with the industry based on faculty strengths and educational positioning. It focuses on communication with the industry, collaborates with it, and integrates industry needs with theoretical applications. This equips students with the ability to adapt to industry development. The university also offers practical courses to enhance students' ability to apply theory in practice.

4.6. Implementation of Labour education

Shih Chien University has introduced labour education courses and drafted the "Labour Education Implementation Plan for Shih Chien University." The aim is to instil in students the excellent school ethos that "hard work is joyful" and to help them establish correct values. Students are encouraged to respect others' work in maintaining both on - campus and off - campus environments and to form good environmental education partnerships, thereby promoting environmental activities. Through performance - based evaluation and scholarships, the labour education courses enhance students' sense of collective

honour and develop a love of work and environmental protection among the students of Shih Chien University.

5. Implications for mainland fashion curriculum reform

5.1. Increase in practical teaching hours

Fashion and apparel design is a practice - oriented discipline. Practical teaching is essential for developing students' practical abilities and innovative spirit. When designing the curriculum, it is important to allocate sufficient hours for practical teaching, link theory with practice, and cultivate students' practical, hands - on and innovative abilities. Practical courses should be reasonably increased, and the content, methods and assessment forms of practical teaching should be reformed.

5.2. Linking courses to industry

Higher education institutions should develop talent - training plans that are guided by market demand and supported by industry needs, in order to produce highly - qualified, application - oriented individuals with solid theoretical foundations and strong practical abilities. The curriculum for fashion and apparel design should be closely related to the fashion industry, enabling students to apply what they have learned and meet societal demands after graduation. This will also promote teaching quality through industrial collaboration.[3]

5.3. Increase in elective course offerings

Elective courses, which are designed to expand students' knowledge, meet their interests, and develop their talents, are an essential part of personalized education. Mainland Chinese universities should take a leaf out of the book of Shih Chien University and increase the number of elective courses offered. This will provide students with a learning platform, help improve the curriculum system, and foster students' interest in learning.[4]

5.4. Emphasis on creative design education

Creative design, which emphasizes the humanistic connotations of innovation, is an authentic form of innovation. During the teaching process, instructors at Shih Chien University introduce the elements of traditional costumes from the 14 local ethnic groups in Taiwan, which are rich in regional characteristics. By studying the creative connotations underlying these traditional ethnic costumes and analysing the sources of inspiration, they demonstrate from multiple perspectives that creativity is a living form of innovation. Mainland Chinese universities should incorporate local ethnic costume elements into their design courses. This will not only provide students with a source of inspiration but also effectively promote the inheritance of regional ethnic costume culture and the development of the creative industry.[5]

5.5. Enhancing teachers' practical competence

Fashion and apparel design is a discipline that requires strong hands - on skills. In addition to having high academic qualifications and degrees, the faculty should also possess practical operational skills. On the one hand, teachers should be encouraged to undertake further studies and internships in the industry to enhance their practical abilities and understanding of industry demands through the integration of theory and practice. On the other hand, engineers with rich industry experience can be invited to teach in universities to help students solve practical problems encountered in the industry.

6. Conclusion

In the course of running its fashion and apparel design program, Shih Chien University has accumulated a great deal of valuable experience, with distinctive features in its curriculum, which are worth learning from by fashion and apparel design programs in mainland Chinese universities. These lessons include increasing practical teaching hours to enable students to apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems, linking courses to the industry to ensure the knowledge acquired is applicable and expandable, adding elective courses to broaden students' professional knowledge, emphasizing creative design education to

carry on national and folk design elements, and improving teachers' hands - on ability to enhance the effectiveness of practical teaching.

7. References

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