

GCSE LEVEL

FACT FILE

Moving Image Arts

Subject content link:

**Industry Practices and Contexts:
Professional Roles**

FACT FILE

moving
image
arts

Animation



Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

Explain the roles and responsibilities of the following film professionals:

- director;
- screen writer;
- producer;
- production designer;
- camera operator;
- director of photography/cinematographer;
- sound designer; and
- editor.



Course Content

Director:

The Director is in charge of the look, tone and feel of a film and must work with their cast and crew to achieve their creative and technical goals. During pre-production a Director must:

- select cast members;
- communicate with department heads such as Cinematographers and Production Designers to ensure they are all working towards the same creative goals as the director; and
- devise shot-lists and create a shooting script.

During Principal Photography a Director must:

- direct the actors so that their performances are consistent and appropriate for the type of story being told (a Director of a comedy may have to direct the actors to give more exaggerated performances, for example);
- work with department heads to ensure that everyone works together to create the right look and tone for the film; and
- adhere to the agreed production schedule so that the film does not go over its budget and is completed within the time frame agreed with the Producer.

During Post-production a director must:

- work with the Editor on the completed cut of the project, and
- liaise with the Director of Photography (DP) over the finished look of the cinematography. In most cases the DP and the director will communicate over the final colour grading of the film.

Screenwriter:

The Screenwriter is in charge of writing the screenplay for the film. Working alone, or perhaps with another writer, the Screenwriter will write the script for the film. The script will outline the story of the film and include all the action, scene changes, characters and dialogue.

Sometimes a Screenwriter will write an original speculative screenplay or Spec Script, that is they will come up with an original idea for a film and write an original script in the hope of selling it to a studio or producer. So, for example, the classic Western film, *Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid* (1968), began as a spec script written by William Goldman in the hope of selling it.

Sometimes, however, a Screenwriter might be commissioned by a producer or studio to write a screenplay based on an existing idea. So, for example, Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho* (1960) came about when Hitchcock purchased the movie rights to a pre-existing novel and then hired the established Screenwriter Joseph Stefano to adapt it for the screen.

Screenwriters may be replaced during the production or pre-production of a film. Frequently a finished screenplay will be the result of multiple drafts by multiple writers. When writers work together as a team on a draft their name will appear in the credits at the end of a film using the '&' symbol. When they work separately on successive drafts the word 'and' is used instead.

So, for example, the film *Ant-Man* (2015) went through two teams of writers before reaching the screen. Its final script credits read, "Screenplay by Edgar Wright & Joe Cornish and Adam McKay & Paul Rudd." So, by reading those credits, we can tell that Wright & Cornish wrote the original draft or drafts of the script before the assignment was handed to another partnership.

Sometimes a Screenwriter will be brought in to 'polish' a script. A Screenwriter undertaking such work is usually referred to as a 'Script-doctor'. The rewriting work they perform is usually referred to as a 'script polish' and will usually go uncredited. So, for example, director George Lucas, though still credited as solo-writer on Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith, actually hired acclaimed playwright Sir Tom Stoppard to help improve the film's dialogue.

Producer:

The Producer creates the conditions for making movies. They initiate, supervise and control the entire production of a film. A Producer must:

- set a budget for the film;
- raise the funds needed to make the project and maintain good working relationships throughout the making of the film with its main financiers;
- manage the budget and overall schedule to ensure the film is delivered on time and within the agreed budget;
- hire key personnel; and
- arrange the sales and distribution of the finished project.

The Producer is involved throughout all phases of the filmmaking process from early script development through to the final completion of a project. They have overall responsibility for the legal, financial and organisational aspects of the film.

Production Designer:

Working under the supervision of the Director, the Production Designer devises, develops and oversees the overall design of the production. Anything which will appear in front of the camera is their responsibility. The Production Designer plays a huge role in the overall look of a film.

During the production of a film a Production Designer must:

- act as a supervisor to the Hair, Make-up and Wardrobe departments;
- consult with the Camera, Art and Special Effects Departments over individual elements and the overall look of the film;
- coordinate the work of the Costume Designer and other visual technicians (such as effects artists) to align with the creative goals of the DP and the Director.

Other duties may include:

- early development of attitude and mood boards for characters, locations, scenes, etc.; and
- supervising the creation of title sequences and credits.

Camera Operator:

Camera Operators are responsible for operating camera equipment and following the Director of Photography and Director's instructions regarding framing, blocking and composition. During filming Camera Operators are responsible for all aspects of camera operation. Having a Camera Operator in place frees the DP to concentrate on the film's lighting and overall visual style.

Camera Operators are usually the first on set to use the camera's eyepiece or video assist monitor. They must constantly assess and evaluate how all the elements such as lighting, set design and performance will look on-screen. If there is a problem with a take, mise-en-scene element or a proposed set-up it is often the Camera Operator who will spot it first.

The work of a Camera Operator usually begins during the later stages of pre-production. Before the film begins to shoot they will be expected to attend technical reces with other Heads of Department. This may involve traveling to locations in advance of the shoot, or helping the DP get test footage of certain more complicated elements. If any technical issues become apparent during pre-production the Camera Operator and DP will have a chance to think up and try out any solutions.

Aside from working with the DP they must also work closely with the Grip, a camera technician in charge of camera movements and camera mounts. The Operator is also responsible for supervising junior members of the camera crew such as the First Assistant Camera (1st AC), Second Assistant Camera (2nd AC) and the Focus Puller, the member of the camera crew responsible for adjusting focus. During the shoot itself, after the Director and DP have rehearsed and blocked the shots they want, the Camera Operator and DP will determine the camera's position and will decide what lenses and supporting equipment to use. Camera Operators must always make sure that cameras and supporting equipment are prepared for the required set-ups and they must be able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Cinematographer / Director of Photography (DP):

The Cinematographer, also known as the Director of Photography or DP for short, this crew member is the camera and lighting supervisor. The DP is in charge of the visual look and design of the entire movie. This involves working with the Director during Pre-production and deciding how the script should be filmed and photographed. This process may involve some test shooting to establish whether certain lens types, lighting styles or film formats will create the intended mood or effect.

During production the DP will supervise all aspects of the cinematography.

A DP can wield a huge influence over the look and feel of a film and some go on to become directors in their own right.

The DP's duties usually also extend into post-production as well where they will work to ensure that the finished film's colour, brightness and contrast levels are adjusted to help enhance the look of the film. This process is known as grading.

Sound Designer:

A Sound Designer works on the finished cut of a film, adding and inventing new audio textures. It's a role which used to go uncredited. Most films prior to the 1970's were only recorded in mono and didn't need complicated sound mixes.

Advances in audio technology such as the rise of high fidelity stereo recording suddenly gave film-makers more channels of audio to play with and a need to make more use of film's expanded audio possibilities.

Ben Burrt, the sound designer on the original Star Wars films, helped create a sense of that universe by cleverly repurposing and combining real-world sounds he had recorded. So, for example, the iconic light sabre sound was created by combining the sounds of a film projector with the sound of electrical feedback recorded from the back of an old television set.

Editor:

The Editor works closely with the Director crafting the raw footage into a coherent whole. It is their job to make sure that the film's story flows coherently from beginning to end and they must watch all of the footage which has been shot in order to identify the best takes to use and so on and must log all of this footage before they can begin to cut and shape the film.

Their duties also include:

- importing film footage;
- creating a back-up of recorded footage; and
- exporting footage.

Additional responsibilities may also include credits, post production effects and compositing. Editors may also work in a supervisory role during the subsequent music and track laying and sound mix.

Often the Editor works closely with the Director during pre-production, to decide how the editing process can best help to tell the story. So, for example, an editor might insist that a director film certain scenes from multiple angles to ensure that a certain editing style can be achieved.

Editors must also be aware of the technical standards of the footage they receive. If an important shot or scene has an unnoticed technical flaw the Editor may need to alert the director so that this footage can be re-shot.

Because scenes are usually shot and edited out of sequence, Editors may work on scenes from the end of the film before cutting those at the beginning or in the middle. Because of this they must have a clear understanding of the script and story and a well-developed grasp of pacing.

Editors select the best takes and edit them together to create scenes but this isn't just a matter of selecting the most effective takes and splicing them together. In some cases, an improvised line or an unplanned aspect of a performance might become the new focal point of a scene and this can be suggested first by the Editor.

During post production, the Editor and the Director work closely together, refining the initial assembly edit into a final picture locked cut. A picture locked cut is a version of the film where all the editing decisions have been made and are now in a locked position. The right to final cut is not automatically granted to most Directors and it is the Producer who will usually have the right to approve any film's final form.

moving
image
arts

