

POSTGRADUATE COURSE ACCREDITATION

SCREENWRITING

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION AND ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

This document is designed to provide general guidance to postgraduate screenwriting courses on how to apply for Skillset accreditation and outlines in full the accreditation criteria that courses need to demonstrate they meet in order to achieve accreditation. The guidelines and the criteria include background information on Skillset and the accreditation process, details on how to apply and information on how your application will be assessed, as well as an explanation of the accreditation criteria and how to demonstrate that your course meets them. The pilot screenwriting accreditation scheme was limited to courses covering feature film screenwriting but the scope of accreditation has now been widened to include scriptwriting for other media sectors including games, television, radio and interactive media.

Please use these guidelines in conjunction with the [Screenwriting Postgraduate Course Accreditation Application Form](#)

GETTING ADVICE

For information and advice on accreditation, please contact The Development Team at Skillset:

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BACKGROUND

SKILLSET

Skillset exists to influence, lead and develop skills, training and education policy for the UK Creative Industries. This includes encouraging the delivery of informed training and vocational education provision so that the UK's Creative Industries maintain and enhance their creativity, productivity and competitiveness. In the context of this document, Skillset raises skill levels to ensure the future success of the industries it represents.

Skillset is the only UK-wide organisation involved in promoting and developing quality standards and training for our highly diverse and creative sectors. Skillset is backed by industry, trade associations, unions, and learning and training providers and is awarded Sector Skills Council status by Government.

AIM AND PURPOSE OF ACCREDITATION

Skillset accreditation approves and endorses courses within higher education that represent best practice in the provision of graduates with appropriate skills, knowledge and abilities to work in the industry they are studying. The aim of Skillset accreditation is to:

- **Signpost** prospective students to the courses that will provide them with industry relevant skills and good links with companies and potential employers.
- **Assure** employers that students graduating from accredited courses have the levels of knowledge and skills they are seeking from new employees and can perform to the standard they expect.
- **Enable** employers to prioritise recruitment activities on courses that have been identified as having an industry-facing ethos.

The purpose of accreditation is to facilitate strong and organised links between course providers, the industry and Skillset to ensure that the industry gets graduates with the talent it needs. The Skillset accreditation process:

- **Informs** higher education institutions (HEIs) and other providers of the skills needs of industry by defining what employers expect new entrants to know, what skills they expect them to possess and the standards of performance that they expect them to be able to reach in new entrant roles.
- **Enables** students to develop the appropriate knowledge and skills that the industry requires, providing them with an understanding of the industry and its working practices, thus improving their employability and contribution to industry.

The Skillset accreditation approach is to set down benchmarks to ensure that courses provide the best opportunity for the professional development of students in their chosen career. The benchmarks, wherever possible, do not seek to stipulate particular forms of pedagogy or methods of delivery. Skillset does not dictate how courses impart the skills, as long as the outcomes of learning meet the criteria.

BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION

The main benefit of accreditation is the quality mark of the Skillset Tick which symbolises industry recognition and raises the profile of the course. Skillset will help promote your courses with its integrated **Pick the Tick** marketing campaign and list your courses in a special section of the Skillset website: www.skillset.org/pickthetick

In addition, through the accreditation process, courses receive industry input and evaluation of their curriculum.

Where funding is available, Skillset offers accredited courses access to industry speakers, organises industry mentors, provides graduate showcases, organises networking events and provides student bursaries. We also lobby government for increased funding for accredited courses.

OVERVIEW OF THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

ACCREDITATION PROCESS

COURSE LEADER DOWNLOADS APPLICATION GUIDANCE, THEN SUBMITS APPLICATION FORM AND ACCOMPANYING MATERIALS

0 WEEKS

(estimated 50 hours work)

STAGE ONE: DESK BASED CRITERIA CHECK

Industry evaluators review all documentation, screen based evidence and student work in detail, benchmarking the information against the accreditation criteria then produce a stage one report which indicates whether the application is strong enough to proceed to a stage two accreditation visit. Declined applicants are offered feedback and advice on course development and are encouraged to reapply after standards have been raised.

6-14 WEEKS

STAGE TWO: THE VISIT

An industry evaluator chairs a team of up to three additional industry representatives who visit the course department for a day. The agenda includes viewing examples of student work, interviews with staff and students, tours of facilities and meetings with senior management.

18-22 WEEKS

INDUSTRY ACCREDITATION PANEL

The industry evaluator presents the findings of the visit to an industry accreditation panel who will make a final accreditation decision.

24-30 WEEKS

AFTER SUCCESSFUL BID

THREE TO FIVE YEAR CYCLE

Exact length of cycle determined by ongoing review and to align with the HEI's own monitoring activities e.g. quinquennial review.

COURSE ACCREDITED

The accreditation report will set the monitoring agenda for the following three to five years. Monitoring will be dependent on whether there are any recommendations or conditions, progress against areas for development or any major course changes during the three year licence.

ANNUAL MONITORING IN YEARS ONE AND TWO

Courses are monitored through desk based monitoring or through visits with an industry evaluator. Courses report any major staffing, resource or curriculum changes on an annual basis. More specific and detailed monitoring may also take place.

REACCREDITATION END OF YEAR THREE TO FIVE

Courses submit a stage one reaccreditation application which is assessed by the Industry Evaluator. The industry evaluators then revisit the course and a recommendation is made to the relevant industry accreditation panel on whether the course should be reaccredited.

PROCESS REPEATED

ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES

GENERAL INFORMATION ON POSTGRADUATE SCREENWRITING ACCREDITATION

COURSES ELIGIBLE FOR ACCREDITATION

- Full or part-time postgraduate courses that meet a high proportion of the accreditation criteria.
- Courses that are already in operation and that have produced one cohort of graduates, a proportion of which will have gained employment as screenwriters.

WHICH TYPES OF COURSES ARE INELIGIBLE FOR ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is not intended for those courses that only offer screenwriting as a minor element of a wider creative writing course. Courses offering screenwriting as a pathway in a broader general postgraduate degree are not eligible. The focus of the course should be on providing students with the creative and practical writing skills with a view to working in the media industry. Undergraduate courses are ineligible.

COURSE FOCUS AND RANGE

The initial screenwriting accreditation pilot scheme was open to undergraduate as well as postgraduate courses that concentrated on writing for feature film. After consultation with the industry, revised screenwriting accreditation is now limited to postgraduate courses only (full and part time) but the scheme has been widened to include postgraduate courses that concentrate on scriptwriting for television, radio, games and interactive, as well as film.

HOW LONG DOES ACCREDITATION LAST FOR?

Accreditation will normally last for a period of three to five years and Skillset will endeavour to align the accreditation cycle with your HEI's own monitoring activities. Variations in the length of cycle may occur if a significant change is made in the course content or structure, or if the industry evaluator team regard it as appropriate to accredit the course for a shorter period of time. This may be due to a forecasted change or revalidation being planned which requires a re-accreditation to take place, or because of concerns about some aspect of the course. In such cases accreditation may be provisional and subject to further evidence that criteria are still being met.

ACCREDITATION CHARGE

Although the accreditation process is subsidised there will be a charge introduced for institutions who apply for Skillset accreditation. Please contact the Development Team with regards to planned introduction of accreditation charges: developmenttick@skillset.org

WHEN CAN INSTITUTIONS APPLY FOR COURSE ACCREDITATION?

The call for applications is open with no fixed deadline. Applications will be assessed as and when they are made.

ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES

ACCREDITATION APPROACH AND CRITERIA

Skillset's accreditation process is industry-led with Skillset facilitating the process. At the heart of the process are the accreditation criteria which are listed in full in this document.

For postgraduate accreditation in screenwriting there are two groups of criteria. Firstly, the [general criteria](#) relating to how the course provides professional preparation and a significant involvement of industry in course design, curriculum, and delivery. The second group is the [subject specific criteria](#) which provide an industry specified list of skills, knowledge and capabilities students should possess upon graduation.

Accreditation does not aim to dictate to HEIs how to run their courses. The focus of the accreditation criteria is on the outcomes of the course and only specifies delivery requirements where absolutely necessary (e.g. group work and collaboration).

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The outline of this process is in the diagram on page five.

BEFORE SUBMISSION

We recommend that you contact Skillset for informal advice and guidance prior to submission of your application form and supporting documentation. The Development team is also available for ongoing advice on putting the application submission together: developmenttick@skillset.org. We emphasise conversation and dialogue as key components of the accreditation process.

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

There are two parts to the application; the [application form](#) and accompanying [supporting materials](#) such as CVs, course handbooks, external examiner's reports, etc. (please see the full suggested list that follows). The application form should primarily act as a reference to your supporting materials.

STAGE ONE ASSESSMENT: OUR DESK BASED CRITERIA CHECK

The first stage of the accreditation process is desk-based, analysing paper and screen materials. Industry evaluators use the information provided in the application form and supporting materials to benchmark the course against the accreditation criteria and produce a stage one report.

Along with detailed feedback against the criteria the report makes a recommendation on whether to progress to stage two or not.

If a good proportion of the criteria are met, the application will progress to the second stage of the process, a visit to the department. Courses are provided with a summary of the stage one report which will highlight the areas in the criteria to be explored during the visit.

If a good proportion of the criteria are clearly not met, the application is halted and detailed stage one feedback report provided to the course.

ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES

STAGE TWO ASSESSMENT: THE PANEL VISIT

The purpose of the accreditation visit is to follow up on any of the subject specific criteria highlighted in the stage one report and to explore all of the general criteria around industry engagement.

Visits typically last a day and Skillset will liaise with the course team to choose a suitable date and time. The date will take into account various factors such as the availability of course teams and industry evaluators, curriculum clashes, availability of specific visiting tutors and a period when a good representation of students and graduates are available.

A typical visit agenda will include:

- Initial meeting with course management
- Tour of facilities and resources
- Private panel sessions to view student work
- Meeting with a randomly selected cross section of students and graduates
- Meeting with course staff (not including the course leader or senior management)
- Final meeting with course management

In addition, classroom observations or meetings with specific individuals may be scheduled as needed.

ACCREDITATION DECISION

At the end of the visit industry evaluators may provide informal feedback and an indication of the accreditation recommendation.

Following the visit, industry evaluators complete a stage two report which provides detailed feedback against the criteria as well as a formal accreditation recommendation. The purpose of the report is also to highlight any particularly innovative areas of the course as best practice.

If industry evaluators judge that a good majority of the accreditation criteria have been met, the report will recommend accreditation. This accreditation can be conditional and subject to formal recommendations or subject to satisfactory monitoring against any areas for development.

If industry evaluators judge that critical areas of the accreditation criteria have not been met the report will not recommend accreditation but will provide feedback on areas that need to be addressed in order to better align with the criteria in future.

All accreditation recommendations are presented to an impartial Industry Accreditation Panel who will make the final accreditation decision.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A COURSE IS TURNED DOWN FOR ACCREDITATION?

If an application for accreditation is unsuccessful at any stage in the process, Skillset will provide detailed feedback on the criteria that were not met and advise on how to meet them in the future. It is then strongly recommended that the applicant speaks to Skillset about working towards a successful new attempt.

When assessing a reapplication, our industry evaluators will need to see evidence that any changes that have been implemented are having an impact on the students' learning experience, the work they produce and the jobs they move into after graduation. Reapplication is therefore likely to be at least one calendar year after the initial application.

The aim of accreditation is to initiate a dialogue between higher education and industry. We only make successful accreditation public, accreditation applications are confidential.

ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES

SUMMARY OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS

LEAD INDUSTRY EVALUATORS

Lead evaluators are always industry practitioners and are contracted by Skillset to play a leadership role in the assessment, evidence collection and feedback process. Their duties cover assessing applications, leading course visits and making accreditation recommendations.

SKILLSET REPRESENTATIVES

The role of Skillset representatives is to ensure that all accreditation procedures and criteria are adhered to, that evidence leading to decisions is gathered in a robust and measurable way and that the assessment visits are valid, fair and consistent. They provide advice, guidance and support to the industry evaluators and to the applicant.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

Industry representatives are also practitioners and are brought in to provide an objective professional perspective on the accreditation application. Unlike lead industry evaluators they are not formally trained in the accreditation process and do not need an in depth knowledge of Skillset practices. Their role is to provide a professional view on whether or not the course equips the students with the skills, knowledge and experience needed for them to confidently enter the screenwriting industry.

SKILLSET ACCREDITATION PANELS

Skillset accreditation panels are made up entirely of members of industry. The screenwriters panel includes all industry evaluators along with members of the Skillset Film Skills Council and independent professionals to ensure fairness and transparency. Their main role is to receive feedback and recommendations in order to make informed final decisions. In addition, they will address any arising issues, provide input and advice on accreditation guidelines, contribute to development plans for courses and ensure that criteria are regularly updated in line with industry need. Typically they will meet or liaise via e-mail three to four times a year.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS - MORE ABOUT THE INFORMATION WE NEED

For the stage one criteria check, courses are asked to submit the application form along with supporting materials in order to demonstrate how their course and the students work meets both the [general](#) and the [subject specific](#) accreditation criteria.

The purpose of the application form is not to provide a lengthy narrative on how various modules meet each criteria point. Space has been provided for narrative where needed but as far as possible the form should simply contain references to where in the supporting materials evidence for meeting the criteria can be found.

Outlined below is a suggested list of supporting documentation to evidence the criteria but applicants are free to submit any additional information necessary to represent the course adequately.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

SUGGESTED SUPPORTING MATERIAL	CRITERIA CHECK
<p>Student work</p> <p>Industry evaluators need to see a range of the work students complete whilst on the course. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples of outlines, treatments, shorts format scripts or shadow episodes of TV series, game concepts and market documents and interactive formats and content, including tutors' written feedback. • A range of outputs from major final term projects produced during the course e.g. a distinction, a pass and a borderline fail for a major project. 	<p>Subject specific and general criteria</p>
<p>Graduate employment information</p> <p>HESA data can be provided but preferably as supplementary information. Industry evaluators need an idea of the proportion of graduates entering relevant employment as well as names of the companies and roles they are filling where possible. The most useful evidence includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of all graduates from the past three years along with details of their employment history where known. For data protection purposes courses may want to simply list anonymous student numbers. • List of student productions, credits, and awards e.g. BAFTAs, Royal Television Society awards, film festival awards, etc. • List of students taken on by agents or professional freelance services. 	<p>Subject specific and general criteria</p>
<p>Information on industry input into curriculum design and content, and additional information on input and feedback from industry partners. This information might be pre-existing however this is a crucial area of the application and the following detail should be provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of all guest/visiting lecturers over the past two years including which modules they regularly deliver. • A list of all industry visitors, when/how often they visit and in what capacity e.g. master class, mentor, live brief, project feedback, pitching sessions, industry talk, etc. • Details on any industry input into curriculum development including membership, attendance and scheduling of any advisory boards. • Up-to-date staff CVs for all core staff including details of recent professional development. • Staff professional development policies and procedures. • List of work placements undertaken throughout the course. • Professional screenwriting work carried out by staff. 	<p>General criteria</p>

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

<p>Details of course content and structure including intended outcomes per module. This information is likely to be contained in pre-existing documentation e.g:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course handbook • Student handbook • Module descriptors • Course diagrams • Programme specifications 	<p>Subject specific criteria</p>
<p>General course information to enable industry evaluators to know how students are selected, who teaches on the course and to how many students. Again this is likely to be pre-existing and may be contained in documents listed above and below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of all core staff and visiting staff and their allocation of taught hours. • Details of staff to student ratios. • Student selection procedures. • Equal opportunities and access arrangements. 	<p>General criteria</p>
<p>Any pre-existing documentation on course monitoring and development procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant validation and course monitoring reports. • External examiners' reports from the past two years. • Student feedback. • Tutors' written feedback to students. 	<p>Subject specific and general criteria</p>
<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory of relevant equipment, ratio of equipment to student, details of student access time as well as technical support. • Details of the learning materials and technical resources available to the course e.g. equipment/studio/library or shared facilities. 	<p>Subject specific and general criteria</p>

GENERAL ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

These general criteria are designed to enable courses to demonstrate how they have a specific focus towards professional preparation and significant involvement of industry in course design, curriculum, and delivery.

1. DEMONSTRATE CLOSE LINKS WITH INDUSTRY.

- Curriculum design should have regular input from the industry. This should include a mixture of industry advisory boards, external examiners with appropriate professional backgrounds, documented email dialogues with industry professionals, regular refreshing of seminar and course lecture content and live briefs for project work.
- Appropriate visiting and guest lecturers should be regularly scheduled and provide talks, seminars, workshops, visits.
- Work placements and/or internships.
- Staff should have recent, i.e. within the last five years, relevant professional experience and professional development procedures should be in place to enable them to regularly refresh their professional practice.

2. ENSURE PRE-COURSE INFORMATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES IDENTIFY STUDENTS FROM AS WIDE A RANGE OF BACKGROUNDS AS POSSIBLE.

- Where possible all applicants should be interviewed/and or provide demonstrations of their eligibility for the course.
- Pre-course information should clearly state what student expectations should be of the course, its outcomes and their likely progression into employment.
- Evidence of providing outreach work and proactive recruitment practices to encourage wider access and diversity.

3. PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRESSION OF STUDENTS INTO THE FILM, TELEVISION, GAMES OR INTERACTIVE INDUSTRIES.

- Courses should provide information on the career destinations of the majority of their graduates over at least a one year period. It is expected that a good proportion of graduates will have gained employment in the relevant media sector and/or have transferred the skills to relevant alternative careers.

4. ENCOURAGE PEER GROUP LEARNING AND TEAMWORK.

- Courses need to show they are communicating to students the benefit of teamwork and peer review as desirable qualities that will accelerate their entry and progression in the world of work.
- Where teamwork is optional, or there are no group productions or team-based writing projects, courses need to demonstrate methods of promoting the benefits of teamwork and testing student ability.
- Courses should be able to point to explicit guidance and documentation that encourages students to peer review - not for academic convenience but rather as a representation of professional practice.

5. DEMONSTRATE QUALITY TEACHING PRACTICE.

- Evidence of how qualitative and imaginative tuition, advice and feedback mechanisms are in place to inform student's developing practice.
- Documentation of a programme of face-to-face crits, both group and individual.
- How written feedback is delivered to students.
- Details of staff/student ratios.
- How online and distance learning elements are managed.
- How tutors continually update knowledge and skills and what staff development opportunities and training there might be.

SCREENWRITING - SUBJECT SPECIFIC CRITERIA

As well as demonstrating how they meet the general criteria, courses are asked to meet specific criteria relating to screenwriting. These criteria are industry specified skills and knowledge that students should possess when they graduate. Different courses will teach variants of the list below with different emphases. Courses should demonstrate significant strengths in all of these:

1. CREATIVE PROCESS

An understanding of the creative process and the ability to generate and articulate a range of original story ideas and processes and the ability to work as part of a creative team.

2. SCREENWRITING SKILLS

An ability to construct stories and scripts in a variety of formats, genres and styles with an understanding of the rewriting process and with a regard for the potential audience.

3. PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

An understanding of the production process, the media marketplace and the importance of career planning, marketing and business planning.

These subject specific criteria are each divided into three sections:

LEARNING OUTCOMES

What students are expected to be able to do as a result of the course. These might be evidenced as artefacts such as scripts, treatments, character descriptions, series bibles or storyboards.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

What the course contains in order to deliver these outcomes, in terms of activities or procedures.

RESOURCE AND TEACHING REQUIREMENTS

What needs to be in place in order to attain the appropriate level of student learning outcomes?

1. THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The aim is to support the steady maturing and application of a student's own distinctive voice. Through a process of theoretical, analytical and practical work, students should grow to understand the sources and stimuli which give rise to their own writing. They should acquire the ability to command and exhibit their voice in screenwriting formats appropriate to their studies through the deployment of images, language and sound.

Employers have emphasised the need to equip emerging screenwriters with the technical skills and understanding of the industry. However they have also suggested that courses should nurture the ability to generate a wide range of original new material, formats and characters.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

PRODUCT

Student portfolios should demonstrate that they can command and exhibit their voice in screenwriting formats appropriate to their studies in their deployment of images, language and sound through synopses, treatments, step outlines, script drafts and rewrites from at least three distinct projects.

PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

Writing in the student portfolios should demonstrate they can:

- Generate a range of original script ideas.
- Develop a range of ideas or concepts and select from them for different audiences and formats.
- Engage intellectually and emotionally with script subjects.
- Identify the potential audience, and make an intellectually and emotionally coherent case, for a particular script or story proposal.
- Apply their knowledge and understanding of the surrounding culture and society in their development of the script.
- Demonstrate their authorial voice through the development of plot, character, dialogue, visual and aural storytelling.

The course should be able to point to areas within the syllabus where:

- Students are encouraged to devote time and thought to the development of fresh, creative ideas and ways of generating stories and adapting existing stories.
- There is continuous monitoring of student development by tutors, recorded in written form.

There should also be personal guidance and assessment procedures in place to determine that students can:

- Identify the cultural characteristics of a particular society and explore their significance in generating creative ideas and influencing the subsequent shape of a script.
- Reflect on their attitudes, beliefs and values, identifying how these are shaped by their social and cultural context; how these shape their perceptions of culture, individuals and society and how these may be harnessed to generate creative ideas.
- Employ a structured and coherent approach to analyse and critically appraise scripts, films, television and radio programmes, games and interactive media for potential meanings and personal, intellectual and emotional impact.
- Analyse texts to identify and critically appraise techniques for bringing about an audience's intellectual and/or emotional engagement and explore the particular demands of the process of adaptation.

1. THE CREATIVE PROCESS

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Development of the creative process should include:

- Strategies for generating and developing creative ideas, overcoming creative and personal blocks. Where do their ideas come from? What is inhibiting them?
- A knowledge and understanding of their surrounding culture and society. What are they writing about?
- Processes of intellectual engagement. How do they think about the script subject? How do they think about the surrounding culture, etc?
- Emotional literacy. What is their emotional engagement with the subject? How do they wish audiences to respond? How can that response be elicited?
- Their own individual priorities, agendas, capacities and limitations in respect of the above. Why are they writing this script? For whom? What do they wish to say? How best can they do this?
- Personal goals, motivation, ethics, morality and political views, and their effect on attitudes and behaviour.
- Personal (intellectual and emotional) strengths and weaknesses. These explorations may be conducted in a variety of ways (through research, reading or discussion) but it is expected that the primary tool will be the individual's own creative writing, for which there should be substantial opportunity throughout the period of study.

Development of the student's own creative writing must include:

- Detailed, ongoing constructive feedback from course tutors supported by written confirmation. Feedback should include one-to-one tutorials and workshops.
- Opportunities to rewrite and submit revisions of each stage of their projects in light of the above.
- Opportunities to conduct analyses and acquire an understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses during the creative process through reflective essays or journals.
- An introduction to standard reference works on story and scriptwriting techniques including adaptation (in general and for their specific area of specialisation – film, games, TV or radio). Relevant online resources should also be signposted.
- It is desirable (but not essential given limited resources) for the students to have the opportunity to explore at least one of their projects with actors and directors and, where appropriate, games developers. Where institutions provide production courses it is expected that screenwriting students' work will be used as the basis of some productions.

1. THE CREATIVE PROCESS

RESOURCE AND TEACHING REQUIREMENTS

- Access to a film and TV archive (and where appropriate, to games and radio recordings) and to viewing or listening facilities. Script and DVD library.
- Copies of books, screenplays, games and periodicals should be retained for reference and loan in the college library, or in the department.
- Where project development is concerned, the average ratio of staff to students should be no greater than ten students to each tutor (ideally, no greater than seven students to each tutor).

It is desirable that 50% of core* tutors must be industry professionals who have had work optioned, commissioned or produced within five years, although exceptions may be made in the case of tutors who have exceptional previous professional experience in the field.

There should be a lead tutor responsible for scriptwriting and encouraging students to find their own authorial voice.

Courses should use part time and sessional staff with experience in the media industry to supplement teaching of writing exercises for performance and expression, treatments and storyboarding. Where appropriate, tutors with experience of commercial television, games, film or radio production should also be used.

*Core tutors are those who are actively involved in the development of projects over the duration of the course.

2. SCRIPTWRITING SKILLS

This area of study aims to equip students with the necessary knowledge, understanding and craft skills to be able to exercise their creative voice in screen, games, radio or interactive drama. The scriptwriting skills are the means by which the creative process is manifested.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The treatments, character profiles, story outlines, short scripts, scripts and screenplays, concept and format documents and other products in student portfolios should demonstrate that they can respond to a story or project brief.

PRODUCT

Student portfolios should contain at least three pieces of original work, with at least one being in a long format form (either a feature length film, or a game, television drama or radio drama). The other pieces of work could include an extended treatment, a short film screenplay, a chapter of a video game, a radio play or a shadow TV episode.

PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

Writing in student portfolios should demonstrate they can:

- Construct scripts for different media and audiences and/or in different formats, genres and styles including adaptation (and in the case of interactive media, respecting appropriate technical limitations).
- Develop a script from original concept to first draft and then through revisions to a second draft.
- Describe the process of development of a script, identifying the critical decision-makers and decision criteria at each stage.
- Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of script construction by analysing scripts written for film/TV/other performance media to identify the general characteristics of effective script construction for the medium. Their analyses should include comparisons of scripts written for different audiences in different formats, genres and styles and a study of the discipline required for adaptation.

2. SCRIPTWRITING SKILLS

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All courses must include the teaching, practice and understanding of:

- Theme and premise
- Arena/world of story/dramatic universe
- Distinctions between film and TV writing (and where appropriate, multimedia and games and radio) and the particular demands of adaptation
- Formats, genres and styles
- Dramatic structure, characterisation and character action
- Developing dramatic conflict
- Dialogue, description and writing styles
- Visualisation

SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

All courses must cover:

- Achieving a viable story idea: scale and scope for the format
- Synopsis and treatment

- Step outline
- First draft
- Critique and rewrites
- Final script
- Pitch or selling document

SCRIPT DISCUSSION

Each student must also have the opportunity to develop their skills in giving and receiving feedback by participating in group discussions during which they will read and respond creatively to each other's work. Please provide information about the frequency of group discussions and the nature of the feedback as well as the size of the groups.

In an ideal situation, students would be able to have their scripts produced as short films, TV programmes or games, but it is acknowledged that limitations of time and resources will not allow every course to offer opportunities for full production.

RESOURCE AND TEACHING REQUIREMENTS

- Access to ICT, printing and photocopying facilities
- Appropriate individual and group teaching space
- Projection facilities
- Access to scriptwriting software, such as Final Draft

- Course leaders/directors must have experience in film/television/games/radio and must demonstrate ongoing involvement in the industry, for example, screenwriters, producers, directors, development executives or script editors
- Courses must draw upon the expertise of other professionals as guest lecturers e.g. writers, readers, script editors, directors, producers, actors, agents

3. PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

Professional studies should aim to provide students with background knowledge of the screen, television, radio or games sectors, related issues of law and economics, and the personal skills essential to their capacity to function as professional scriptwriters.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

PRODUCT

Student portfolios should contain a CV, synopses, treatments, step outlines, script drafts and rewrites from more than one project and at least one feature-length screenplay, radio play, TV feature or game script as well as project development schedules. Student CVs should identify clearly their personal, educational and industrial experiences and outcomes, and their strengths and abilities in screenwriting for their specialist area (film, television, games, interactive or radio).

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Students should be able to present themselves and their original script ideas both verbally and in writing. Presentation must be articulate, clear, coherent, concise and informed, and must be supported, where appropriate, by relevant documentation. Students must demonstrate effective personal communication skills, such as asking and answering appropriate questions, within the context of such presentations.

OTHER OUTCOMES

There should also be personal guidance and assessment procedures in place to determine that students can demonstrate:

- Knowledge and understanding of the production process by describing the production process in film/TV/radio/interactive/games from initial pitch to distribution/broadcast; and by explaining the roles and functions of key personnel at each stage of the development and production process.
- Knowledge of the film/TV/radio/interactive/games market, such as characteristics and trends in international and UK industry (sources of funding, production and distribution for different market segments, etc.) and audience characteristics and trends (market structures, segmentation, etc).

- Knowledge and understanding of the commissioning and contracting process in film/TV/radio/interactive/games, the role of agents and appropriate professional bodies and the main features and implications of writers contracts..
- Knowledge and understanding of the law and regulation as they affect the operation of the film/TV/radio/interactive/games industries such as the implications for screenwriters of the statutory and case law relating to intellectual property rights, defamation, libel and obscenity; whether or not specific examples of material are likely to breach statutory and case law; whether or not specific examples of material are likely to breach statutory and voluntary regulation of film, television and other electronic media.
- Self-employment skills by gathering and analysing sources of information about the market for scriptwriting in their particular field; by being able to manage their own workload to agreed schedules; and by identifying the legal, financial, taxation and practical implications of self-employment.

There should also be personal guidance and assessment procedures in place to determine that students:

- Have realistic expectations as to their future careers.
- Are aware of the employment and other opportunities available to them in the film/TV/radio/interactive/games industry nationally and internationally.
- Have career and development plans to help them to identify what they need to do to secure further opportunities.

3. PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Professional studies must include the following:

INDUSTRY, EMPLOYMENT AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- An understanding of production processes in film and television (and where appropriate, multimedia and games) from initial pitch to distribution/broadcast, and of the roles and functions of key personnel.
- An understanding of markets (arthouse/independent/commercial mainstream film; television channel remits, channel profiles and scheduling; radio and games audiences, etc).
- An overview of the economic structures of the film and television industry (and where appropriate, radio, multimedia and games industry).
- A full understanding of the commissioning process, writers' contracts, the role and function of agents and professional bodies.
- A knowledge and understanding of the law as it affects the operation of the film, broadcast and games industries (such as copyright, defamation/libel, obscenity, etc.), and forms of statutory and voluntary regulation (such as broadcasting watersheds, cinema, DVD and games ratings, etc.).

It is accepted that elements of professional studies may be delivered by means of complementary courses, modules or workshops available to the writer elsewhere within the educational institution, rather than as elements of the core writing programme.

Writing for games is distinct from traditional scriptwriting due to the diverse technical and creative constraints placed upon a writer, which can change drastically from game to game. As with writing for other media, it is important for writers to have some familiarity with common games production terminology and practices. Students specialising in screenwriting for games should be aware that:

- Writing for games is a competitive and specialised field requiring an unusual mix of creative skill and technical knowledge.
- Writing for games can mean anything from drafting written mission descriptions to huge cinematic sequences, snippets of dialogue to vast trees of interactive speech.

- To be a games writer you need to have some mechanical understanding of the games medium and how writing fits into the wider field of games development.
- The emphasis is on learning to write first, developing a craft and a voice.
- When studying writing in games they should ask themselves what is effective, what is memorable, what doesn't work and why.
- Every game will have different requirements for writing. Learning about game mechanics and design will help to work out these requirements.

WORK EXPERIENCE/MENTORING

An important part of professional development is exposure to the working environment in order to gain an actual appreciation of issues, procedures, standards and decision making.

Encouraging placements, helping students to source contacts and organising mentors are examples of good practice in accredited courses. Students should be encouraged to seek professional contacts within the industry, and provided with assistance to do so.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP) RIGHTS

Everybody working within the arts should have an understanding of IP rights and how it affects them. Students should be advised of any IP rights that apply to their work during the course of their studies.

They should be apprised of the arrangements that apply if they take part in external competitions or work to any briefs set by an external organisation.

They should also be taught the basics of IP rights as it might apply to screenwriting.

Students should appreciate the need to obtain necessary clearances for any soundtracks or images they may use in their own work and for any study materials they might record or copy during the course of their studies.

3. PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

RESOURCE AND TEACHING REQUIREMENTS

TUTORIALS

Student ambitions should be identified at an early stage in their studies and some focus on future careers should be introduced in tutorials about one-third through the duration of the course. Career planning and guidance should become a regular feature of tutorials thereafter.

REFERENCE WORKS

Colleges should retain details of key employers in the media sector relevant to the course and area of specialisation and a range of careers advice and guidance materials and information about self-employment.

Periodicals detailing key trends and new productions as well as employment opportunities should be available to students.

Details of further specialist training courses, training opportunities and training providers should be made available to students.

There should be a tutor identified as responsible for career planning and guidance. Institutions may want to consider asking practising scriptwriters to assist in advising students on preparing portfolios and giving one to one advice on portfolios and calling card scripts and treatments.

A freelancer should assist in teaching students about the realities of working freelance. Tutors should have a firm understanding of the media industry, the opportunities for postgraduates and employment trends.

ONLINE PROVISION

Each course is expected to have an online forum and mailing list that is open to all existing (and ideally also past) students to exchange information.

NEXT STEPS

WHAT DO COURSES NEED TO DO?

To apply for postgraduate course accreditation in screenwriting you need to:

- Read these course accreditation guidelines.
- Contact Skillset for any further advice and guidance on how to fill in the application form.
- Complete an application form (applications will only be accepted on the official form).
- Include your supporting evidence in support of your application.

You will be assessed under stage one using the information you provide in your application form and the evidence you submit.

We appreciate the stage one application can be time consuming and will gladly support any requests to your management for dispensation in order for lecturers/tutors to engage with this task.

WHERE SHOULD YOU SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION?

Please send two copies of your application on discs as well as three hard copies to:

The Development Team
Skillset
Focus Point
21 Caledonian Road
London
N1 9GB

T: [020 7713 9800](tel:02077139800)

E: developmenttick@skillset.org

Applications will only be accepted on the official form.

THANK YOU

SKILLSET WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCREENWRITING ACCREDITATION CRITERIA.

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