

APPRENTICESHIP STANDARD – POST-PRODUCTION TECHNICAL OPERATOR

Occupational area: Post-Production (TV, Film and Commercials)

Typical roles: Technical Operator, MCR Operator, Grade/Edit Assistant, Offline Assistant, Data Wrangler, Digital Imaging Technician (DIT), Dailies Operator, Quality Control Operator, Media Operator and Input/Output Operator

A Post-Production Technical Operator is responsible for applying technical knowledge and understanding to the post production process in film, TV and Advertising. They are employed by audio and picture post-production companies, visual effects companies, broadcasters and by film and TV production companies who have their own facilities. This is an entry level position into the Master Control Room (MCR) department. Post-Production Technical Operators are given high levels of responsibility with sensitive material, working to specific and varied technical standards within time-limited deadlines. The main purpose of the role is to provide support, assistance and delivery within the technical operation at the post-production company. The core objective of the role is to ensure that the technical operations are fulfilled effectively and efficiently to the technical specification provided. Each company engaged in post-production, of whatever size, employs Technical Operators to prepare, manage and deliver the assets and creative media handled during the post production process. These Technical Operators are known by a variety of job titles, depending on the specific services provided by their employer, however the core technical understanding that they use applies across the industry. Core duties include (but are not limited to) first line technical and edit support for the workflow and lifecycle of the content in post-production, media backup, ingest and export. The role is often shift based and may involve working alone or as part of a larger team. Although it is a technical role, there is a need to have an eye for the creative processes in post production such as editing, audio mixing and colour grading. The roles require an understanding of current digital file-based workflows as well as legacy media. Creatives in edit suites depend on the picture and audio files produced by technicians in this role.

Level

This apprenticeship is set at level 4

Duration

This apprenticeship will typically take 12 months to complete

KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING: A Post-Production Technical Operator knows and understands:

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

- The purpose of post-production within the end-to-end production process
- The commercial context of post-production with the film, TV and commercials industry
- How to interface effectively with other departments and processes within a production

WORKING PRACTICES

- How to deliver good customer service in a creative environment
- How to comply with relevant health and safety legislation and company policy to ensure a safe working environment for themselves, colleagues and customers.

VIDEO and AUDIO TECHNOLOGY

- The principles of video signals for film and TV in the digital and analogue domains including: resolution, colour science, display technologies and emerging and legacy video formats/standards
- The principles of audio signals in the digital and analogue domains including: audio basics, mono, stereo, surround sound, object-based audio, audio levels and loudness

METADATA, LOGGING AND LABELLING

- The use of metadata and other forms of content documentation
- The use of timecode and other frame labelling protocols
- The unambiguous labelling of content, using clock numbers and file naming conventions

FILE FORMATS AND COMPRESSION

- The audio and video file formats in common use in production, post-production and delivery
- The file formats used for still images and graphics held as bitmaps or vector images and the file formats used for moving images held as sequential single frame files
- The principles of encoding, transcoding and compression of digital audio and video

WORKFLOW AND TROUBLESHOOTING

- The functional role, capabilities and limitations of the equipment used in post-production
- The importance of agreed workflows and how to adapt these to meet the needs of a production
- The principles of non-linear editing systems
- How to provide operational assistance and first-line support to creative personnel and problem solve within agreed governance constraints
- The principles of effective content security measures both electronic and physical
- The principles of high speed file transfer across LAN and WAN

QUALITY CONTROL

- The technical standards and customer specifications used for UK and international delivery of programmes, films and commercials to cinema, TV broadcast and online VOD platforms
- The requirements of international productions to aid localisation, such as textless backgrounds
- The correct environment for quality control and assessment
- The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) classification of quality issues and the ITU 5-point quality assessment scale
- The correct terminology for the description of sub-optimal quality issues
- The regulations regarding flashing images and stimuli causing photo sensitive epilepsy
- The regulations and specifications for on-screen text and graphics such as safe areas, minimum text height and minimum durations for legal information in commercials
- The importance of intelligibility of dialogue and how this is impacted by a complex range of factors, especially age-related hearing loss

MEDIA CONTENT MANAGEMENT

- The management of media throughout the data lifecycle including storage and archiving
- The principles of good digital content governance, resilience, security, confidentiality and the value of media content to the business and its customers
- Protocols for secure, audited receipt and despatch of content via physical and electronic transfer

SKILLS: A Post-Production Technical Operator is able to:

GENERAL SKILLS

- Work in line with agreed workflows, adapting to changes as they occur
- Interpret the work order and technical specification to complete the scheduled tasks
- Work accurately with a high degree of attention to detail
- Use process documentation and work order reporting systems for efficient, accurate and timely communication with other departments about the progress of the work in hand
- Multitask on simultaneous projects (often for different clients), prioritising the work to ensure that all tasks are completed on schedule
- Follow organisational Health and Safety policies and practices, identifying, mitigating and reporting any incidents or risk to the appropriate person
- Deliver good customer service in a creative environment

MEDIA INGEST, EXPORT AND DELIVERY

- Despatch and receive physical assets to/from external organisations and audit the process

- Securely transfer data between client supplied sources and post production storage systems, performing data integrity and virus checks.
- Ingest and export media content and metadata to/from post-production systems, syncing the audio to video and applying colour transforms (LUTs) as necessary
- Encode and transcode audio and video data to required specifications
- Export finished content with metadata from post-production systems to required specifications
- Advise clients on an appropriate file specification for a given requirement
- Use file transfer software for fast, secure and audited delivery of assets to external destinations

SUPPORT CREATIVE COLLEAGUES

- Provide frontline operational support to clients in editing suites to ensure that they can find and work with their media
- Take ownership to resolve and/or escalate faults/incidents to the appropriate person
- Perform and check data conforms of sequences prior to colour grading or online editing
- Relink ingested media to updated sequences as editorial changes occur
- Prepare audio data for transfer to dubbing suite
- Perform basic manipulation of graphics and still images using software such as Photoshop
- Perform basic editing functions necessary for the preparation of media and sequences for creative processes, or for formatting of finished content for delivery such as adding line-up signals

MONITOR QUALITY CONTROL

- Assess and advise on the quality of audio, video and data to colleagues, customers and suppliers
- Perform technical Quality Assessment Reviews of finished content in accordance with technical specifications and client requirements
- Interpret the results of reports from audio and video test equipment
- Consistently spot faults in content and use the correct terminology to describe them accurately
- Take an objective and pragmatic view of quality control and decide what is acceptable and what is not depending on the context of the material and its intended use
- Write accurate and concise Quality Assessment Reports with clear indications of mandatory failures and advisory warnings

MEDIA MANAGEMENT

- Manage post-production storage to ensure the timely availability of the right resolution media
- Manage access by clients to shared storage systems
- Backup, archive and restore media, sequences and metadata according to company practice
- Safely delete media as instructed

BEHAVIOURS

- Demonstrate a passion for post production, the media industry and its productions
- Display a strong work ethic and commitment to meet the standards required
- Think creatively and logically to solve technical issues
- Contribute to a process continual improvement of workflow and technique
- Proactively keep up to date with latest developments within the industry
- Uphold ethical and professional standards
- Maintain company and customer confidentiality, acting as an ambassador for their employer

Qualifications - Apprentices without English and Mathematics at level 2 must achieve level 2 prior to taking their End Point Assessment. For those with an education, health and care plan or a legacy statement the apprenticeships English and maths minimum requirement is Entry Level 3, and British Sign Language qualifications are an alternative to English qualifications for those whom this is their primary language.

Review date - This standard will be reviewed three years from publication.