The ScreenSkills Tick:
Application Guidelines and Accreditation Criteria

Guidelines for courses 2019-20

This document is designed to provide guidance for courses who will be applying for accreditation or re-accreditation during the academic year 2019/20. It gives information on the criteria, application and assessment process, the timelines and the people involved.

For help at any point please contact tick@screenskills.com where you will be put in touch with a member of the Tick team.

Tick Team
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Please use these guidelines in conjunction with the **Tick Application Form**.

1. Background

ScreenSkills

ScreenSkills leads the UK Screen industries' skills and talent drive, improving productivity, innovation and competitiveness to achieve a world-leading UK screen sector.

As part of our remit we work with further and higher education courses that supply talent to the screen industries. ScreenSkills' course accreditation scheme, managed by ScreenSkills on behalf of employers, is devised in consultation with industry and education and recognises courses within the UK that provide exceptional standards of industry relevant training. Each accredited course undergoes a rigorous assessment by industry professionals in order to be awarded the ScreenSkills Tick - a quality mark indicating the courses best suited to prepare new entrants for a career in the screen industries.

History and aims of the Tick

The Tick was set up in higher education for animation, games and screenwriting in 2005. Between 2012 and 2015 ScreenSkills expanded the Tick across a wider range of sectors. There are currently over 200 ticked courses across the UK. Subject areas cover film, television, animation, games, VFX. Since 2005 we have assessed over 400 HE, FE and Apprenticeships for the Tick and engaged over 500 employers in the process.

The aims of the Tick are to:

- Signpost prospective students to the courses that will provide them with industry-relevant skills, and good links with those working in the industry 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 and engagement activities on courses that have been identified as having an industry-facing ethos.
- Establish a continuous improvement plan with ScreenSkills accredited courses through the accreditation process and annual monitoring.

The headlines of the Tick criteria are courses that demonstrate a particular focus on:

- Graduate employment rates
- High standards of student work
- A focus on professional preparation of students including team work, professional skills and business skills
- Relationships with employers
- An industry focus of the curriculum and its delivery

Reviewing the Tick

The creative industries are one of the fastest growing sectors in the economy (8.9% growth per year) and with the continued disruption of digital technologies, convergence and globalisation, it has never been more important for training providers and higher education to provide the talent and skills the industry needs to continue to grow and thrive. Given all of these changes, we knew that we needed to review the Tick to make it sustainable for the future and to ensure the brand remains synonymous with job readiness.

In 2016 the industrial, political and economic context in which ScreenSkills and the Tick operated underwent significant changes:

- Government subsidy for skills development was at an end and the main focus of support focussed on apprenticeship development and provision
- In addition, tuition fees, the Teaching Excellence Framework and an increasing student focus on value for money, meant student employability became a greater priority.

As a result ScreenSkills consulted with industry and higher education providers on the purposes and value of the Tick. Building on the feedback from this review, we devised a new Tick process which we hope retains its value and streamlines its processes. The headlines of the process are that:

- In the application and assessment there is less of a focus on inputs (curriculum, course content) and an increased focus on the outcomes of courses – particularly those related to employability i.e. graduate employment rates, student work and evidence of students' professional preparedness.
- We have streamlined the application to have less reliance on supporting documents. The main evidence required is requested in the body of the application form.
- The establishment of new Tick Industry Panels in each of the sector areas, directly involved in assessing courses for the Tick – increasing high level industry engagement and ownership of the Tick course network.
- Both a written application and a course leader presentation to the Tick Industry Panel will be required and will form the complete process – without the requirement for an accreditation visit.

2. The Accreditation Process

Eligibility
The headline eligibility criteria are:

- Already in operation and have produced one cohort of graduates, with evidence available to demonstrate that a good proportion of them have either progressed to Masters level and/or gained employment in the screen industries.
- Industry practice-centred with strong input and relevance to the screen industries.

Accreditation Process
Timelines to be agreed following Expression of Interest.

Application Form Submitted Course submits application form and supporting evidence – initial non-refundable fee of £605.
Assessment Stage 1 – Desk Based Industry and quality evaluators assess the application, supporting evidence and graduate employment/student work, and feedback via a Stage 1 report. Unsuccessful courses are offered feedback and advice on course development. Successful courses are provided with feedback regarding what they need to present at the next stage - the Tick Industry Panel presentation – fee is due of £2,394.

Student Questionnaires

Industry and Quality Evaluators will devise and send a confidential questionnaire to go to all students from the applicant course. A 60% response rate will be required before progressing to a Tick Industry Panel presentation.

Assessment Stage 2 - Tick Industry Panel presentation to be held at ScreenSkills offices in London

An industry panel made up of senior representatives from the relevant sector meet to hear presentations from course leader/s and 3 or 4 student representatives from each course. We require the course leader/s to attend in person however we do not expect all institution staff and students to attend with Skype/ Google hangouts used to conduct the Q&A sessions.

Before hearing the course leader presentation the panel will receive summary feedback from the Industry evaluator on the written application and the results from the student survey.

Presentations from course leaders will cover areas arising from Stage 1 as well as information on facilities and industry input in to the course. Presentations from students will include information on project work and how they follow the creative process criteria. Further examples of student work should also be provided. The industry Panel will prepare an accreditation report with an accreditation decision which will then be communicated to the course.[1]

4 year Accreditation cycle and annual monitoring

Courses enter a 4 year accreditation cycle with annual monitoring requested mid academic year. Annual monitoring requires courses to report any major staffing, resource or curriculum changes as well as providing graduate employment information, updates on course development plans and industry input and engagement. At the end of the 4 year cycle the process is repeated and courses apply for re-accreditation.[2]

Application Form and Supporting evidence

As outlined above, at the application stage, courses are asked to submit an application form along with some supporting evidence. The Tick application process requires less supporting evidence and places more emphasis on information contained within the application form.

The application form should be self-explanatory but please contact ScreenSkills at any point for advice and guidance if unsure. It requires narrative answers against the employer engagement criteria below and tabled information on graduate employment rates, work experience, staff experience, staff/student ratios, lists of industry input as well as cohort profiles (application/enrolment/retention numbers and diversity information).

The list of supporting evidence below consists of all of the additional mandatory information that we need in addition to the application form. In exceptional circumstances additional pieces of information can be submitted by the applicant course but these should be discussed with ScreenSkills in advance.

Supporting Evidence

Course Content and Structure:

- Course structure diagram clearly defining progression routes from year to year.

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[1] **Accreditation Decisions:** At the end of the presentations the industry panel may provide informal feedback but will not always provide an indication of the accreditation decision. They will complete a Stage Two report which provides detailed feedback against the criteria as well as a formal accreditation decision. The purpose of the report is also to highlight any particularly innovative areas of the course as best practice and to provide a course development plan highlighting areas for development. If the industry panel judge that a good majority of the accreditation criteria have been met, the report will recommend accreditation. This accreditation can be subject to formal conditions or subject to satisfactory monitoring against any areas for development. If the industry panel team judge that critical areas of the accreditation criteria have not been met, the report will decline accreditation and will provide feedback on areas that need to be addressed in order to better align with the criteria in the future.

[2] **Terms and Conditions:** All successfully accredited courses will be under contract with ScreenSkills during their accreditation cycle. Requirements of the contract will include the submission of annual monitoring, maintenance of accreditation standards, payment of annual fees and active promotion of the Tick through their own channels and the ScreenSkills website and compliance with branding and communication guidelines.

Course Monitoring and Development:

- External examiners' reports from the past two years
- Examples of feedback from students

Industry Engagement:

- Information relating to live briefs

Facilities and Equipment:

- An outline of relevant facilities
- A list of relevant equipment, with quantities
- Details of technical and/or IT support and student access to facilities and equipment

Student Work:

- Eight or more recent pieces of individual student work from their final major projects, along with feedback and assessment information for each (for undergraduate courses this should be work from the final year, and for postgraduate courses from the final term/semester). The range should include work assessed as top, average and borderline fail.
- Eight or more recent pieces of individual student work from their interim projects, along with feedback and assessment information for each. For undergraduate courses, this should be work from the second year (third year for four year courses). For postgraduate courses, this should be from the middle term/semester. The range should include work assessed as top, average and borderline fail.
- Eight or more recent samples of industry-facing work showcasing the best student talent from the course, such as show reels, exhibitions/showcase, etc.

For those courses that produce actual artefacts– only digital images/videos should be provided to support the application at the first stage. A sample of actual artefacts should then presented to the Industry panel. For courses submitting games student work, the application form requires you to detail any specialist software evaluators will need in order to view the material (e.g. engines, 3D models, specialist video).

Submission format

We require an electronic copy of your application and supporting materials:

- Preferred submission format – file sharing via Dropbox (other file sharing/transfer sites will be accepted)
- USB Stick/External hard drive (please note we are not able to return these)
- Email (under 10Mb). Please follow up with email with no attachments in case it is mistakenly in Quarantine/Junk folder
- Maximum 10Gb for all files

The application must clearly reference the provided evidence. ScreenSkills may reject any applications which do not comply with the submission recommendations, in which case it will need to be returned to the applicant un-assessed for re-formatting and referencing.

General Privacy Policy

ScreenSkills (*or any successor in title)* ('we', 'us', 'our') is committed to protecting and respecting your privacy. For the purposes of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and any subsequent UK legislation covering data protection the Data Controller is ScreenSkills (our Information Commissioner's Office registration number is **Z8941934**)

This Policy covers ScreenSkills in relation to the collection and use of the information you give us. It sets out why we collect personal information and how we use that information. It explains the legal basis for this and the rights you have over the way your information is used.

We may change this Policy from time to time. If we make any significant changes we will advertise this on the website. Please check this Policy occasionally to make sure you are happy with any changes: https://www.screenskills.com/about-us/privacy-policy/

If you have any questions about this Policy or concerning your personal information please contact ScreenSkills, Data Protection Officer(s) at: data.protection@screenskills.com, or by post to Data Protection Officer, ScreenSkills, 94 Euston Street, London, NW1 2HA.

3. Accreditation Criteria

The ScreenSkills criteria outline the standards of excellence required by employers to produce confident, highly skilled and creative students with the appropriate knowledge and skills, who are reflective practitioners, with entrepreneurial flair and leadership skills, aware of ethical, legal and compliance issues, and a sense of responsibility to those who use and consume their products. The criteria define the outcomes of course design, curriculum and delivery that will meet these challenges and needs. The accreditation criteria is as follows:

- The industry focus and employer engagement criteria. These are assessed at each stage of the process.

Industry Focus and Employer Engagement Criteria

The following criteria are designed to enable courses to demonstrate how they have a specific focus towards:

- Current industry practice
- Professional preparation for students
- Significant involvement of industry in course design, curriculum and delivery

The application form will guide you through each section of the criteria, and provide you with guidance on how to provide evidence that your course meets them.

A. Graduate Achievement – Initial criteria check

Criterion: Provide evidence of successful progression of students into the screen industries.

Information should be provided on where at least 60% of graduates from the past 1 year, preferably 3, are employed

Of these, a good proportion of graduates should be employed in roles relevant to their degree or in creative/transferable roles in other industries, with evidence of progression towards senior roles after a few years

A proportion of current students and/or graduates should be achieving festival awards, industry and professional accolades, reviews, promotions or newsworthy achievements.

Postgraduate courses should enable students to specialise in the field above the level expected from undergraduate students and gain in-depth knowledge and experience of their field at a professional level. Graduates from postgraduate courses should progress to senior levels in their career more quickly than their undergraduate counterparts.

B. Student Work

Criterion: Demonstrate that student work produced on the course is appropriate for the level of the course and the discipline.

- Student work should reflect current industry practices where appropriate, but creativity, innovation and challenges to current practice should also be encouraged
- Assessment standards should take into account degrees of industry readiness appropriate to the stage of the course, the requirements for access to appropriate further training and career development
- Graduate level work should be judged according to entry requirements for the chosen industry/sector

C. Recruitment and Selection Procedures

Criterion: Demonstrate effective and fair recruitment and selection procedures for students from diverse backgrounds who wish to embark upon or further develop careers in the screen industries.

- Effective procedures should be in place to identify those applicants who are innovative, creative and who have the potential to establish careers in the screen industries
- Proactive recruitment practices should be in place to encourage wider access and diversity
- Pre-course information should clearly outline what students can expect during the course and should emphasise its vocational purposes
- Teaching staff should be able to filter and refuse places to applicants that they judge unable to complete the course successfully. All shortlisted students should be interviewed, either face-to-face or by telephone and/or provide portfolios or equivalent where appropriate

D. Close links and interaction with the screen industries

Criterion: Demonstrate close links and interaction with the screen industries

- Curriculum design should have regular input from the industry including where appropriate:
    o industry advisory board
    o consultation with industry professionals on course design
    o industry assessment of student work and providing feedback to students
    o external examiners with professional backgrounds
- Appropriate visiting and guest industry lecturers should be regularly scheduled
- Students should have access to relevant industry experience via work experience/work placements/internships
- Students should have the opportunity to take part in live briefs, work simulation and project work. However live briefs and project work should not undermine commercial business opportunities.

E. Staff Industry Backgrounds and Professional Development

Criterion: Ensure that all practice staff have credibility as practitioners and are up to date with contemporary industry practices.

- All practice staff should demonstrate a suitable background in professional practice in the relevant industry sector/s

- Clear procedures should be in place to ensure that all production staff are required to regularly refresh their industry practice. This may include
  - dispensation to deliver commissions or work
  - placements with appropriate companies, etc.
  - development should not be restricted to attending courses or conferences
- Senior management should have systems in place to keep track of staff professional development and ensure all staff have sufficient time and are enabled to put the above in to practice

F. Professionally Relevant Education and Business Skills

Criterion: Provide a track record in high quality education relevant to the screen industries.

- Students should be provided with an overview of the structure of the screen industries and the sector(s) relevant to the programme, including job roles, key current issues, further training, employment or career development, including freelance work.
- Professional preparation should be an embedded part of the course and should provide students with the financial, legal and business skills to further their career upon graduation, with an emphasis on freelance employment if appropriate for the discipline.
- Methods should be in place to develop students in the soft skills required of a successful industry professional, such as
  - team working
  - personal development planning
  - competitive pitching and presenting
- Courses should show how students and graduates develop their entrepreneurial skills within their chosen field(s), for example through specialist mentors and incubator units.
- Students should develop appropriate skills to promote and showcase their work and to market their skills after graduation. Students should be aware of current industry issues and developments relevant to their sector, including
  - sector priorities
  - business environment for sector
  - IP
  - technological divergence and convergence and impact of digital networks

G. Professional Resources

Criterion: Have resources which will enable students to practise their skills in environments which reflect creative industry practice.

- Sufficient dedicated access to professional facilities and resources that replicate current industry practice
- Students should have sufficient out of course workshop hours access to facilities and equipment
- Sufficient dedicated access to supervision and technical support should be available to all students

4. Next Steps

Once you've read these guidelines, in conjunction with the application form, please contact ScreenSkills with any questions and to talk through your own individual application.

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