

Overview of Role

Reporting to the director of photography, the camera operator in High-end TV, scripted film and drama is responsible for planning camera movement, framing and composing shots and checking their quality against production requirements. As well as being able to set up and operate camera equipment, they advise on the specification of camera equipment and supervise the camera department as necessary to obtain the desired shots.

To carry out their role, they liaise primarily on set with the director of photography, the director, the first assistant camera technician and the grip, as well as other members of the camera department, while at all times being aware of the requirements of those working in other departments.

Core Responsibilities:

These core responsibilities are provided as a guide and are not exhaustive. For a more detailed breakdown of the camera operator's required knowledge and skills, please refer to the National Occupational Standards for Camera.

1. Input to the pre-production process

- Attend pre-shoot production meetings and reces to identify filming requirements, shooting issues and camera configurations
- Familiarise self with shooting script and interpret proposed shooting style
- Recommend camera equipment that meets required technical and artistic shoot requirements
- Ensure familiarity with selected camera equipment
- Identify any limitations and suggest alternatives if chosen equipment is not suitable
- Work with director of photography and first assistant camera technician to recommend and select additional camera crew
- Attend any required pre-shoot technical, artistic or actors' film tests

2. Set up shots during rehearsal

- Line up individual shots in liaison with director and director of photography, discussing focus and other choices which may have a visual impact
- Instruct first assistant camera technician about lens selection for line-ups
- Ensure camera crew have required time to mark-up actor and camera positions
- Liaise with grips to ensure the suitability of required camera mounting equipment
- Position cameras for shooting, liaising with crew of any additional cameras

3. Supervise camera crew on set

- Read daily call sheets and relevant script pages each day to ensure familiarity with work scheduled
- Pass on relevant information to camera crew about shot requirements and intentions
- Liaise with dolly grip about camera movement and timing
- Liaise with first assistant camera technician about appropriate camera configuration
- Discuss and rehearse any in-camera zooms with first assistant camera technician / second assistant camera technician

- Discuss and resolve any points of loss of image integrity, soft or incorrectly placed focus with first assistant camera technician
- Monitor camera crew, giving them any necessary information, feedback or advice

4. Frame and compose shots

- Re-create shots as established during rehearsal
- Communicate with actors to ensure positions and timing work together
- Rectify any practical problems which might hinder desired composition
- Position and move cameras to frame and compose shots to meet aesthetic, technical and continuity requirements
- Compose each set-up to conform to acceptable visual continuity and match eye-lines of other shots in intended sequence
- Maintain desired framing and composition during takes
- Compose set-ups which take into account any relevant post-production vision mixing, CGI effects, optical or laboratory processes
- Coordinate action and continuity with other camera operators
- When working with stunts, special effects, pyrotechnics and other hazardous situations, liaise with first assistant director and other relevant personnel to make sure cameras are positioned safely, and protection or safety equipment is rigged securely

5. Ensure shots meet production requirements

- Ensure all discrete camera movements, zooms and focus changes are in harmony and work together to achieve desired artistic and technical results
- Analyse shots against aesthetic requirements, suggesting alternatives when they are not met
- Analyse shots for technical faults, resolving those within your area of expertise and reporting those that are not
- Discuss any variations or changes in action with director, director of photography or actors
- When director of photography is unavailable, monitor exposure and camera settings to deal with issues caused by lighting

6. Liaise with other people and departments to meet production requirements

- Communicate with others to make sure there is sufficient time for rehearsal or preview of shots
- Identify and interpret information which is directed to other personnel, but which may affect your operating role
- Communicate with crew members at appropriate times, routing any communications via a suitable third party when necessary
- Communicate with art department when required
- Observe suitable protocols when communicating with production teams or other departments
- Discuss movements and timings of camera with all personnel and departments who may be affected
- Advise production and other departments about the application and operation of the skills in your area of responsibility
- Raise any concerns with production about travel, meal breaks and general welfare of camera crew

7. Follow health and safety requirements

- Read any risk assessments supplied by production and comply with required health and safety recommendations

- Consider health and safety requirements of any specialised camera and associated grip / crane equipment
- Work in line with health and safety practice for all aspects of own role
- Respond to any health and safety queries from camera crew, raising any on-set concerns with first assistant director when necessary

Role Specific Skills:

- Identifying filming requirements, shooting issues and specifying camera configurations to meet production needs
- Setting up and operating cameras to achieve desired shots
- Assessing shot quality against aesthetic and technical requirements
- Troubleshooting technical faults

Other / Transferable Skills:

- Communication: interpreting other's requirements of shots and communicating camera department requirements to crew and colleagues
- Teamworking: collaboration within own and with other departments
- Planning: planning movement of camera crew to meet shot requirements
- Problem-solving: resolving issues with shot quality so that production requirements are met
- Management and leadership: managing camera crew during production

Attributes:

- Resilience, enthusiasm and curiosity: adapts positively to changing work priorities and patterns, ensuring deadlines continue to be met. Proactive and explores new ideas and non-standard ways of working which will enhance and deliver the best results for the production
- Productivity: organises work effectively and achieves required results within deadlines. Demonstrates the drive and energy to get things done in pressurised situations and escalates appropriately when necessary
- Ethics and integrity: honest and principled in all their actions and interactions. Respectful and inclusive of others, and meets the ethical requirements of their profession
- Flexibility: willing to both listen and respond to changing priorities and working requirements, while at all times maintaining high standards in a constantly changing production environment