

East Midlands Universities Careers Services Network
Your guide to starting a career in the media



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Welcome to your guide to careers in the media. If you are seeking a career in ‘The Media’, this is a great place to start. This booklet is packed full of useful advice and tips for getting started and progressing in your career. It should provide you with plenty of ideas and inspiration for getting into a media career. We have chosen to focus on the audio-visual sector, although recent media convergence due to technological advancements have blurred many boundaries.

If you have any further questions or issues concerning your future career, do not hesitate to contact your university’s Careers Service.*

*details on page 10 of this booklet

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“Make use of the resources and need to be constantly developing and writing or producing material that could sell. Think future – next step – listen to tutors advice – this will potentially lead to something big eventually.”

Dan Hobson, BA (Hons) Creative Writing with Film Studies and Jon Bridle, BA (Hons) English and Creative Writing

First of all, what do YOU mean by ‘The Media’?

There are a range of job titles and descriptions commonly found within the media industry.

For many, ‘The Media’ often means those jobs within the broadcast sector including TV, radio, interactive / multimedia and film. However, it can also mean print journalism in newspapers or magazines and for some media means advertising, public relations (PR) or publishing.

Recent advances in digital technology, and our engagement with social media, have brought about rapid changes in the sector making it increasingly hard to distinguish between these career areas. There is much media convergence. Many current media roles exist in this new hybrid world.

Take a look at the range of areas, and see whether this ties in with your perceptions. www.prospects.ac.uk/links/pubmedarts

www.skillset.org/careers/jobs

What is certain is that many employers within ‘the media’ will not be impressed with a CV or application form that states that you ‘want to work in the media’ or even that you ‘want to work in television’.

They will want to know what **SPECIFIC ROLE** or **GENRE** you are interested in such as Research, Sound, Production, Journalism or Design with regards to the role or Documentary, Light Entertainment, Children or Computer Games for the genre.

What have you done so far?

What is certain is that you will need to demonstrate motivation and commitment, often through **work experience**. Getting experience can be a challenge, even from identifying where and who to contact in the first place, and finding out the best way of contacting people. Work experience is generally unpaid and can take you to the London area but the time and effort required may prove to be an invaluable investment for your future career. See the section on work experience in this booklet.



Ask yourself these questions:

- How well do you know your chosen sector of the industry?
- Are you a consumer of their product(s)?
- Can you comment on the different output?
- Do you know what you like and why, or even what you do not like?
- Do you know how and where it takes place?
- Who are the main movers and shakers in this sector / genre?

If you do not do this, there are many out there who will.

However, please don’t be put off. If you decide that this is what you really want, those already in the industry say that they simply did not give up and that persistence does pay off, even after a shaky start.

The Careers Information Room at your university has a range of information that could be useful to you. Please feel free to ask.



“The most important thing I have learnt is that the key to getting where you want to go isn’t all about what you know its who you know; friends and contacts. Don’t turn down any work, stay positive, leave a good lasting impression and you’ll go far.”

**Nikki Aaron, BA Media Studies
Chief Editor and Creative Director Metro Style Bilingual Magazine, China**

With so many people graduating each year, a degree alone is often only part of a bigger picture viewed by prospective employers. So for any student at university, it is a good idea to get involved with something outside your studies.

For those interested in the media, it is essential. Potential employers, and even training courses, will expect you to have shown your motivation towards this competitive sector while at university.

So how do you achieve this?

Here are some starting points:

Student magazine / newspaper / radio

This is an obvious first port of call as the facility is readily available. Along with a more regular commitment, there can be the opportunity to submit one-off articles / reviews about an area of interest such as music, sport, travel or entertainment.

Shadowing / work experience at a local organisation

Getting local papers, radio or TV companies to take you in is always a challenge. You need to be persistent and try more than once. Think about situations where you may be able to make contact with key players.

Think too about writing reviews, blogs, writing for the Internet, especially for specialist areas of interest.

Attending media careers events

Many media events are open to the public and attract both people already working in the media as well as those interested in finding out more about the sector. These

include film festivals, launch events and trade shows. Seminars, Q&A sessions, workshops and ‘master-classes’ provide industry insights and advice from experts helps to keep you informed about possible future roles. These events allow you to gather information and make vital contacts. It is surprising how few students follow up contacts made from these activities.

The Network event at the MediaGuardian Edinburgh International Television Festival is one such event.

www.mgeitf.co.uk/home/thenetwork.aspx

The Skillset website and local screen agencies are good sources of information about events in the region.

Contact your Careers Service to find out about events in your area.

Use your local screen agency

Screen agencies are development agencies with responsibility for supporting and promoting regional film, television and interactive media industries.

There are screen agencies around the UK. The local one for the East Midlands is EM Media www.em-media.org.uk

You can register with them online and receive email alerts about what is going on in your region connected with the audio-visual industry, including interactive media.

Make good use too of the Skillset resource – www.skillset.org/uk – which has a wealth of information and provides details of events taking place in the region.

Other volunteering

Through volunteering at, for example, a local charity, many students have gained valuable experience of writing newsletters, sending press releases to local media and even going on radio / local TV to help publicise something they are involved with. It is also possible to get involved with organising an event.

It may be possible for you to develop something you are already involved in, from sporting, community-related or other work activities, to name a few. Can you think of a way to link some aspect of these with your interest in the media?

Learn some useful skills

Investigate the roles you are interested in and identify what technical and practical skills would be useful to have: digital editing skills, experience of Final Cut Pro, familiarity with Apple technology or social media networking skills. Find opportunities to develop these skills. Free or subsidised courses are often offered through universities or local FE colleges.

In addition management, leadership and business skills are major needs across the workforce of all Creative Media industries therefore any work experience that enhances these skills will be useful.

Keep a log

Keep a log of every project you work on and every piece of equipment and / or software you use. This will be extremely useful to you when you need to compile a CV, complete an application form or prepare for an interview.

University staff

Do you have tutors who may be able to help?

Make good use of your university Careers Service.

Using vacations

Can you organise something which is not necessarily in your university or even home town to gain additional experience?

This can be tricky as this sort of activity is often unpaid, or poorly paid, and therefore may need to be fitted in around other activities.

Think about accommodation. Do you know anyone who would let you stay with them for a short period?

“You will also need to be thick skinned. You will have to cope with rejection and criticism, some of which can be very personal (e.g. ‘I don’t like the sound of your voice’). It is vital you realise that everyone will experience similar and yet have the ability to bounce back from this, so keep going and prove them wrong.”

**Daniel Pallet, BSc Chemistry
Senior Broadcast Journalist (sport) BBC TV**

Effective networking

Networking is an important activity in the media business; it happens all the time for sharing ideas and collaborating on projects. Many people find work through contacts they have made. Networking is more likely to lead to a job or work experience than sending speculative applications. It’s about making friends in the right places.

- Start with your tutors; they will have established networks in their own fields.
- Seek out friends of friends or relatives who may work in the industry you want.
- Work experience and voluntary work are good sources of contacts.
- Attend media careers fairs, festivals and other events organised by the media sector.
- Join a professional group related to your area of interest.
- Introduce yourself to guest speakers after seminars and ask if you can contact them to talk about their work.
- Collect business cards from any conferences / courses you attend.

You are not asking for a job; you are asking for contacts within organisations for people you can talk to about opportunities that may be available, to update your knowledge of what is happening in the industry or to gain information about future projects. Contacts can help you target the right people in organisations: the decision-makers.

For networking to be effective you need to nurture your contacts, make sure you write and thank any contact who helps you, keep details of the information you gain and remember that networks are two way; it is about helping each other so be prepared to share your information.

There are many media-related membership organisations where active networking takes place. The Skillset website www.skillset.org is an excellent source of information.

Cold calling can work

Cold calling is when you approach a prospective employer in person. It could also involve a telephone call.

- Try to identify who is the person responsible for recruitment or the head of department / section and ask to speak to them directly.
- Be persistent but polite. Ask if they have time to meet you or set up an appointment for a later time. You may want to develop a script to help you remember the important points to get across about your skills, related experience and interest.

It can be a bit daunting to cold call an employer but it can be one of the most effective ways of getting a job as it demonstrates initiative, enthusiasm and determination, all sought-after qualities required by the media sector.

Research into how people get jobs suggests that only a minority of positions are filled through adverts. In the media sector, many vacancies are never advertised. Whether you are looking for a job or for work experience within the media sector, there is likely to be fierce competition for opportunities and it is crucial you explore alternative methods of contacting employers rather than waiting to apply solely for advertised vacancies.

Whichever approach you use, it is essential to have a clear focus for it to be effective. Before you start contacting employers, you need to know what you want to do for them and be able to match your skills, experience and interests to those required by potential employers. You may want to consider listing the activities you have done in the past and the skills you have developed through those activities. This will help when you begin to ‘sell’ yourself to employers.

Making speculative applications

This does have important advantages as it gives you the initiative in job seeking. When taking this kind of initiative, you are also less likely to be in direct competition with others. Speculative applications are more effective if:

- you approach a named person who is in a position to help you;
- it is relevant and interesting;
- you have something to offer which they want;
- you include evidence of having researched the organisation and its output;
- you are specific about what you want (but with some flexibility);
- there is some reason why your application stands out (including show reels, articles you have produced if relevant to the sector and role, etc.).

Remember to follow up speculative applications with a telephone call to check their progress. Always be prepared for an informal interview by phone.

The audio-visual industry in the East Midlands

“I started as a Reporter at Northants 96 in Northampton. They offered me a few months work after making a good impression during a work experience placement. During this time I got to know the Deputy News Editor for the entire radio group, who was keen to keep me in the company and encouraged me to go for a Broadcast Journalist vacancy at Heart FM in Kent. I got the job – which involved collating and editing news for the early part of the day, and writing and reading bulletins at drive time. I now do the same job at Heart FM in Berkshire.

“I think it’s fair to say I would not have got any of these jobs without devoting a lot of my time at the University’s student radio station. Not only did Student Radio fuel my passion for the medium, but it enabled me to learn all the basic skills I needed to actually be useful whilst on work experience placements. Just little things like knowing how to ask good questions during an interview, how to edit audio and an idea of what makes a good story for a particular audience meant news editors would remember me as someone with potential.”

Anna, BA (Hons) French Studies

Facts and figures

- The region is made up of the counties of Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Northamptonshire. The cities of Nottingham, Leicester, Derby and Lincoln dominate the audio-visual industries in terms of number of companies and employees.
- The Office of National Statistics 2009 survey of businesses estimates that there are around 1,740 audio-visual establishments in the East Midlands.
- The industries in the East Midlands are dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, with 66% having a workforce of fewer than 5, 30% employing between 5 and 50 and only 30 establishments in the region having more than 100 employees.

- Around 20,000 people work in creative media industries in the East Midlands, about 4% of the industry’s UK workforce.
- Over recent years TV in the region has seen a reduction in studio-based productions, whilst web design, interactive media and games development have been steadily growing. The East Midlands has a strong reputation for low budget and digital film-making.
- Interactive media employs by far the largest numbers (around 2,100) in the

audio-visual sector, covering web design, internet, interactive TV and offline multimedia.

- Around 800 work in radio – public funded, commercial, community and voluntary stations – and 600 in TV, the region having several independent production companies.
- Animation in the region employs around 100, computer games around 400 and facilities (post-production, studio and equipment hire, special effects and outside broadcasting) over 1,000.



Data above compiled from information provided by Skillset and the Office of National Statistics

Finding opportunities and support in the East Midlands

“After graduating the prospect of entering the media and creative industries seemed extremely daunting, especially considering that this period in time was the aftermath of the economic recession. However, through persistent networking to personal contacts and actively seeking work through recruitment agents in London I started off by interning at Youth Music Theatre: UK and then at Company Pictures (makers of Channel 4’s *Shameless* and *Skins*) and then continuing on to do a three month internship at Paramount Pictures International.”

Adam, BA (Hons) English Studies

The East Midlands Incubation Network has been set up to nurture new businesses in the region. The Creative Industries cluster is based at the University of Lincoln and is capable of housing up to 18 companies. The centre offers specialist equipment including television studios and editing suites to support fledgling media companies. www.sparkhousestudios.co.uk

EM Media based in Nottingham is one of nine regional screen agencies in the UK. It works closely with the UK Film Council and *emda* and organises industry specific events aimed at film and media practitioners at all levels. It manages a database of contacts ‘The Source’ which provides an online list of film and digital media companies and key personnel working in the East Midlands. It is possible to receive a free weekly newsletter by registering on their website: www.em-media.org.uk

Creative Industries Network (CIN) is a networking organisation which runs regular events, showcases local initiatives and co-ordinates an online membership directory. Their aim is to encourage collaboration, to provide a forum for discussion and to help individuals and organisations to develop opportunities in areas such as film, video and multimedia. www.creative-cin.co.uk

Skillset is the industry body for the Audio Visual Industries (broadcast, film, video, interactive media and photo imaging), provides extensive advice and information on opportunities in the audio-visual industries across the UK. www.skillset.org/uk

Creative Launchpad is a project offering support services to the creative industries, including the media. As part of its menu of services, it organises free seminars on a range of business-orientated topics aimed at getting projects off the ground. Based in Nottingham and Birmingham, it can also act as a referral agency, signposting other sources of assistance. www.creativelaunchpad.co.uk

Channel 20-20 is a production company based in Leicester which manages a Media Academy aimed at aspiring media professionals. The scheme provides successful applicants with three months’ intensive training in a variety of roles. www.channel2020.co.uk

Confetti Studios in Nottingham provides a range of one-to-one tailored courses that focus on a range of production roles including video production, lighting techniques and storyboarding. www.confettistudios.com

Threshold Studios in Northampton specialises in creative learning opportunities for people through digital video production workshops. Groups are assisted to develop ideas into a script, before having the opportunity to organise and shoot a film. Associates of the studios are local filmmakers with broadcast credits and experience of teaching at further and higher education levels. A support network exists to assist individuals with job and college applications, specialist employment training and micro-business start-ups. www.thresholdstudios.tv

Britfilms Ltd is an organisation based in Nottingham which runs a website dedicated to showing the work of small independent film makers. www.britfilms.co.uk

MATV Channel 6 This channel operates out of Leicester and has strong links with the local Asian community. www.mediauk.com

Leicester Sound a local radio station. www.leicestersound.co.uk

Training and further study

“After spending a year at Mercury FM, reporting, news reading and making good contacts, I moved to a much larger station, RadioCity in Liverpool which actually covers three stations. I read and write for all three and am part of a bigger team. I’m lucky enough to cover major sporting and music events. The highlight of my career to date has been winning a national award for a 45 minute documentary I produced on a trip to Afghanistan in 2009, spending time with the soldiers and going out on night patrols. It has certainly given me an appetite to be a war correspondent but I’m currently very happy where I am, and I still have much to learn.

“Whilst this is a tough industry I believe that if you are proactive, have a passion for what you do and prove yourself indispensable then you can create opportunities.”

Louise Martin, BA Communication Studies, MA TV Journalism

Postgraduate qualifications

A postgraduate qualification can be advantageous for candidates whose first degree is unrelated to their chosen career, such as Broadcast Journalism or Interactive Media.

A major advantage of postgraduate courses is that they usually include work placements. Look for high levels of practical content in any course you are thinking of doing and make sure industry-standard equipment is used and qualifications are recognised. Check out whether you can apply for bursaries or whether you have to pay.

You can also ask Skillset for advice about the most appropriate type and level of course for the jobs you are seeking: www.skillset.org/courses

A searchable database of postgraduate courses can be found on the Prospects website at: www.prospects.ac.uk/pgdbase

You can also search for UK film, television, radio, animation, interactive media and photo imaging courses in the comprehensive BFI / Skillset Media Courses Directory, available at: www.skillset.org/qualifications

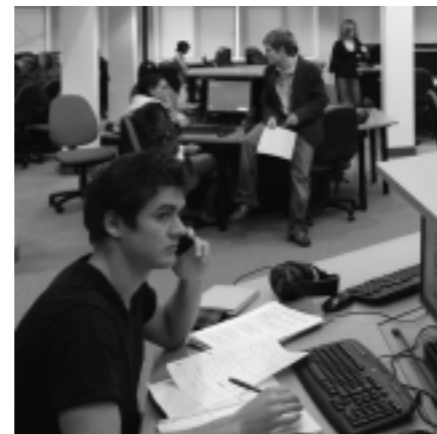
Competitions and short courses

Competitions and short courses can enhance your CV and provide you with the chance to network. Examples include:

- **BBC New Talent:** www.bbc.co.uk/newtalent
- **The Guardian Student Media Awards:** <http://media.guardian.co.uk/studentmediaawards>
- **Channel 4 Talent:** www.4talent.channel4.com
- **Digital Shorts** (UK Film Council Scheme): www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/filmmaking/shorts/digitalshorts
- **Animate!** (Channel 4 and Arts Council Scheme): www.animateonline.org
- **CSV Media** (CSV is the UK’s largest volunteering and training organisation): www.csv.org.uk/Services/Media

Skillset: Industry Induction Programme / New Entrants Schemes

If you are new to the audio-visual industries and have a few months’ experience but need to take the next step, take a look at Skillset’s short course database for relevant induction courses related to your needs. www.skillset.org/courses



Not getting anywhere?

Perhaps it’s time to review your strategy. Consider the following action plan.

Are you really clear about the sector(s) and the job(s) you are targeting?	As we keep saying, a generic approach to all sectors and jobs is less likely to be successful. Go back and thoroughly research the sector. Find out the latest developments taking place. Analyse what and why some production formats are successful. Armed with this information, you are more likely to be able to exploit your talents and skills.
Have you exhausted all potential employers?	Are you reading all the relevant trade journals and directories, national and local press? Do you know what is going on in your local area? Your regional screen agency will be able to tell you of any initiatives happening in your area. Contact details can be found on the Skillset website. If you are not sure where to find this information visit: www.prospects.ac.uk/links/BroadcastSB www.skillset.org
Reassess your skills and experience	List all your production-related skills including your knowledge and experience of equipment, software, techniques, etc. Do the same for your business-related and personal skills e.g. project management, financial awareness, ability to meet tight deadlines, etc. This way you will be better able to match your skills, etc., with the requirements of the jobs you are trying to get and thus make more effective applications. This exercise will also enable you to see if there are any gaps you need to plug.
How good is your CV?	What impression of you is your CV creating? Producers want to see bright, lively, enthusiastic, talented and skilled individuals. Are you conveying this in your CV? Having listed your skills above, check that these are reflected in your CV. The Skillset website provides advice and tips on compiling a CV for the audio-visual industries: www.skillset.org
How are you approaching employers?	Be brave. Phone companies and find out who you should approach and what is the preferred method of contact: CV, show reel, conversation, etc.
Have you got enough experience?	If you can’t get a job as a runner what about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital radio • Stagehand at a local theatre • Working with a local photographer • Work as a media / IT support technician at a school, college or university • Administration work at a TV or radio station Such experience may provide you with those elusive contacts.

Try not to get disheartened!

This is a tough, competitive business to get into but remember lively, enthusiastic, passionate and interesting people are the ones who get hired so it is important to remain positive, active and upbeat.



Your initial work experience is likely to be on a voluntary basis within most media fields and it is important to try and take stock of what you have gained and what you need to do next in order to land that prized paid position. The Skillset website suggests thinking about the following things:

Skills: Does the field / role you are working towards require a specific qualification before you have a real chance of getting paid work?

Experience: Do you need to broaden out your experience to be considered for paid work?

Contacts: Just as contacts are essential for getting your first work experience opening, they will prove to be just as essential in developing your career further. Keep in touch with all the people you have worked for and find out where new projects are coming up.

Recognition: Are you getting credit for the work you do? Have you built up a portfolio of work that demonstrates your abilities?

Below is an example of how you could manage a move forward from an unpaid "runner" role:

Plan: unpaid runner to paid runner or to junior researcher or to post production / editing or production control / management.

Strategy: network with ex-producer, keep in touch with other runners, update your CV, identify where new projects and potential paid work is coming up.

There is a growing debate about the ethical issues around unpaid internships currently taking place amongst professionals, trade unions and careers advisors. You may see references to this debate in the media, but you can also read more about the TUC's campaign for changes at: www.rightsforinterns.org.uk

Useful National websites:

Skillset: www.skillset.org comprehensive careers information

Skills for Media: www.skillsformedia.com information on getting in and getting on

Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk > access 'Sectors' for media, advertising insights

Monster: <http://mediabuzz.monster.com> careers information and lots more

PACT: www.pact.co.uk contains a Directory of UK companies and in About PACT access Useful Links which includes regional screen agencies and much more

Media Directory Online: www.mediauk.com directory of online media companies

Film-TV.co.uk: www.film-tv.co.uk useful Film and TV directory and Starting Out Guide

National Film and Television School: www.nftsfilm-tv.ac.uk linked to Skillset funding

The Knowledge: www.theknowledgeonline.com listing 15000 film-related companies

The Runners Club: www.therunnersclub.co.uk dedicated agency for Runners

BBC Work Experience: https://jobs.bbc.co.uk/fe/tpl_bbc03.asp?ne_wms=info6

Talent: www.startinTV.com helping newcomers get started in TV

Edinburgh International Fringe Festival: www.mgeitf.co.uk access 'About Us' concerning The Network talent scheme

The Radio Academy: www.radioacademy.org useful Knowledge Bank section

New Media Age: www.nma.co.uk/Jobs

British Interactive Media Association: www.bima.co.uk

Recruit Media: www.recruitmedia.co.uk

New Media Knowledge: www.nmk.co.uk

Creative Pool: www.creativepool.co.uk containing useful advice and media opportunities

National Union of Journalists: www.nujtraining.org.uk section on careers and training

Broadcast Journalism Council: www.bjtc.org.uk resources on Broadcast Journalism

Kidon Media Link: www.kidon.com/media-link/index.shtml companies worldwide

Pathfinders Media Recruitment: www.pathfindersrecruitment.com specialises in entry level roles

Useful Regional websites:

Skillset Regional Report: www.skillset.org/uk/eastmids/industries/article_6795_1.asp also provides names of organisations in the area

East Midlands Media: www.em-media.co.uk Screen Agency for the East Midlands region

Creative Leicestershire: www.leicestershirecreatives.org.uk online directory of creative services and support for the development of small arts, media and design businesses

Creative Industries network: www.creative-cin.co.uk online directory of Derbyshire companies and a good Information Centre section

ArtsLink: www.artslinknetwork.org.uk a Leicestershire support network of arts and media companies

If you'd like to speak to a careers adviser, contact your University Careers Service:

De Montfort:

www.dmu.ac.uk/careers or Email: careers@dmu.ac.uk

Derby:

www.derby.ac.uk/careers or Email: careers@derby.ac.uk

Leicester:

www.le.ac.uk/studentdevelopment or Email: sdzhelpdesk@le.ac.uk

Lincoln:

www.ulcareers.co.uk or Email: opportunities@lincoln.ac.uk

Loughborough:

www.careers.lboro.ac.uk or Email: careers@lboro.ac.uk

Northampton:

www.northampton.ac.uk/careers or Email: careers@northampton.ac.uk

Nottingham:

www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers or Email: ccd-enquiries@nottingham.ac.uk

Nottingham Trent:

www.ntu.ac.uk/careers or Email: careers.service@ntu.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

This booklet has been put together by the East Midlands Universities Careers Services Network.

This group is made up of Careers Advisers working in all the universities throughout the East Midlands and all the members have a particular interest in the media industry.

The group liaises with EM Media, the Screen Agency for the East Midlands.

The information in this booklet was correct at the time of going to print. It is not intended to be a definitive source of information about every single organisation connected with the media in the East Midlands region or beyond.