

Photographic Technician

Photographic technicians process images for output either as photographic prints or on other media, such as posters, banners or t-shirts. In large companies photographic technicians usually specialise in film processing (developing and printing the film), digital scanning and manipulation of images, or print finishing (laminating and mounting the prints for display).

The Work

You could be:

- mixing chemicals to develop photos and loading films into processing machines and setting controls
- checking negatives and correcting marks before printing
- making adjustments to digital images using specialist software
- using a machine to print photos in large numbers or printing individual photos by hand
- saving processed images digitally onto CD, DVD or memory (USB) stick for customers or clients
- regularly checking the accuracy of digital and printing equipment
- using precision cutting and laminating equipment and mounting prints
- preparing and packaging images for exhibitions and displays
- if working for a retail company, carrying out general customer service tasks.

As most photo images are now digital, there are fewer jobs in film processing.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Salaries may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Salaries for working in retail organisations, such as supermarkets, tend to be based on the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage. As of 1 April 2019 the National Minimum Wage is £6.15 an hour for workers aged 18 to 20 and £7.70 an hour for workers aged 21 to 24. The National Living Wage is £8.21 for workers aged 25 and over.

Starting salaries for specialist photographic technicians, working in labs, in the UK tend to be in the range of £14,000 to £18,000 a year. With more experience, salaries can rise to £30,000 a year and above.

Some photographic technicians run their own business. They charge a fee for processing films. They often sell photographic materials to help increase their income.

Conditions

- Digital photographic work involves long periods spent sitting at a computer.

- In traditional film processing you might work in a laboratory.
- Modern techniques mean that very little time is now spent working in a darkroom.
- Some traditional labs still use chemicals to develop films. If using chemicals, you would have to wear protective clothing such as gloves and goggles.
- In many laboratories shift work is common.
- You may have to work overtime when there are deadlines to meet.
- In a retail environment, you would be working with customers face-to-face.

Getting In

- For direct entry to employment, you do not always need formal qualifications. However some employers may prefer English, Maths and science subjects at National 4 or 5.
- Experience of photography is helpful.
- Computer skills are important as most photography is now digitised.
- It can help to have a qualification in photography. There are courses at a variety of levels – NC, NQ, HNC, HND and degrees.
- For entry to an NC or NQ you may not need formal qualifications, although some colleges may ask for up to 4 subjects at National 4 or 5. HNCs or HNDs require 1-3 Highers or an NC or NQ, and degree courses require 3-5 Highers. Competition for places can raise entry requirements above the minimum.
- Studying for a relevant Foundation Apprenticeship in S5 and S6, such as Creative and Digital Media, can provide work experience and may be accepted as entry to a course or job. Entry requirements vary between colleges, but you usually require some subjects at National 5 including English and Maths.
- A good portfolio of work is also required for entry to most photography courses and many jobs.

You might work for a high street photographic shop, a supermarket with photo processing department or a specialist company.

What Does It Take

You should have:

- an interest in operating machinery
- good practical skills
- good computer skills
- a responsible approach and awareness of health and safety issues – you may be using chemicals
- patience and good concentration
- accuracy – mistakes may lead to the loss of photos which cannot be replaced
- the ability to work under pressure
- good customer service skills.

Training

- Training is usually on the job.
- You might attend short courses run by the makers of the processing machinery.

Getting On

- You might start as a junior or trainee, and move on to be a photographic technician.
- In larger companies you may be promoted to senior technician.
- You might become a laboratory manager.
- With experience you might set up your own business, perhaps taking up a franchise for processing films.

More Information

The widespread use of digital cameras is likely to reduce further the amount of traditional film processing in the future.

Contacts

ScreenSkills

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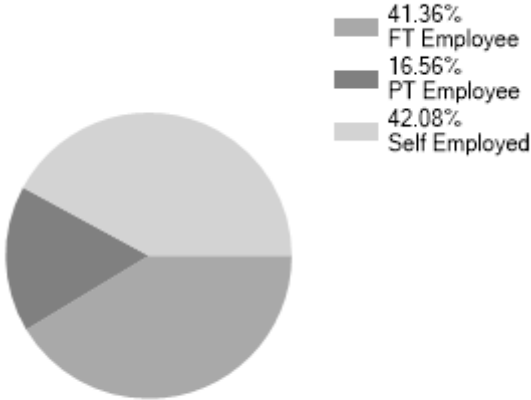
Website: www.screenskills.com

X: @UKScreenSkills

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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

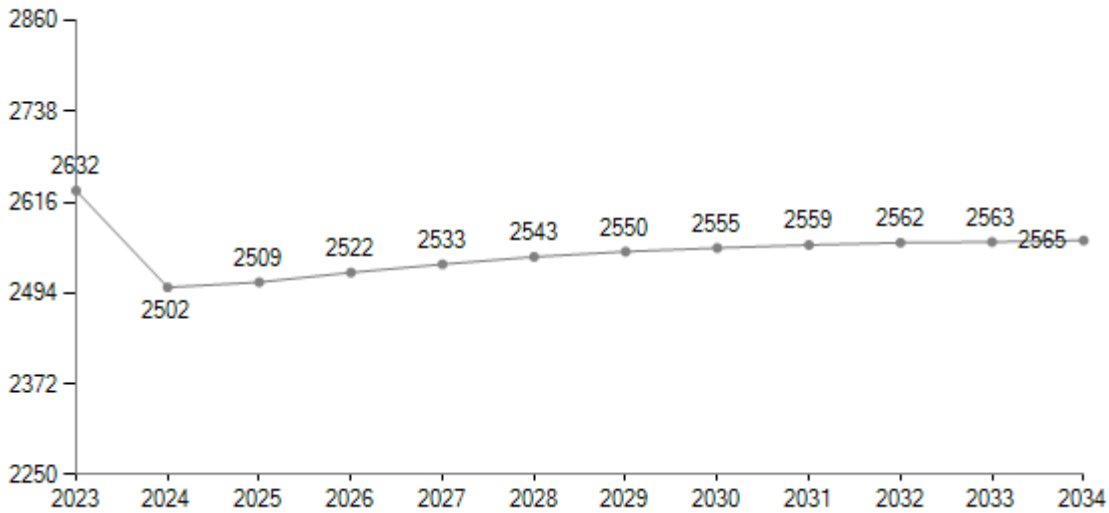


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)