

Wardrobe Assistant - Film, TV or Theatre

Wardrobe assistants help to select, assemble, maintain and make the costumes for actors in film, television or theatrical productions. They make sure that the costumes look authentic.

The Work

Depending on the type and size of production there are sometimes two wardrobe departments: the 'making wardrobe' department who research and acquire or create the costumes, and the 'running wardrobe' who organise and maintain the costumes and assist in the changes of costumes during the shoot.

You could be:

- searching specialist shops for clothes and accessories to hire or buy
- working to deadlines, helping the cutters to make up the costumes and adapting the costumes to fit by hand and machine sewing
- cleaning, ironing and steaming garments
- sometimes ageing and distressing garments to make them look dirty, old or worn
- looking after wigs and arranging for wigmakers to dress them
- packing and unpacking clothes, wigs and other accessories
- during performances, helping actors to change outfits quickly and doing any emergency repair work
- keeping photographic and detailed records of costumes and accessories such as shoes, jewellery, masks, crowns and headdresses used in each scene
- storing costumes and returning any hired items after the show.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

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

The Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU) website publishes the latest recommended rates (last updated July 2023).

- Costume assistant in film: £235.40 - £338.80 (based on an 11 hour day)
- Costume assistant in TV: £227.15 - £338.80 (based on a 10 hour day)

Conditions

- You will go with the company on tour or on location, living away from home and possibly abroad.
- If you work for film or TV, your hours will be mostly regular, although days can still be long.
- In theatre, you will have daytime hours during the rehearsal periods, but evening and weekend work during performances which can last for weeks.

- You might get several weeks off in between shows to make up for these long hours.
- You might work in the backstage of a theatre, film or TV studio or in temporary premises out on location.
- Work areas can be cramped and cluttered.
- Work may be on a short contract basis, lasting a few weeks or months, until a production is finished.

Getting In

You do not need formal qualifications for entry, but many employers require some subjects at National 4 or 5, or equivalent. As entry is competitive, one of the following relevant courses may be useful.

- The BA degree (SCQF Level 9) in Production Arts and Design at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) includes subjects in costume design and costume construction. To get in you need 3 Highers and present a portfolio or samples of practical work.
- The BA Hons degree (SCQF Level 10) in Performance Costume at Edinburgh College of Art, at the University of Edinburgh. For entry you need 4-5 Highers plus National 5 English. You need a portfolio.
- The BA/BA Hons degree in Costume Design and Construction at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. For entry you need 4 Highers including an art based subject and 2 from English, Drama and History. You also need English and preferably Maths or Applications of Maths at National 5. You also need a portfolio.
- Some HNC (SCQF Level 7) courses in art and design include options in theatre costume design. For entry you usually need 2 Highers, preferably English and Art and Design, or a relevant NQ (SCQF Levels 4-6).
- You might get in through a Modern Apprenticeship in Creative and Cultural. Entry requirements vary depending on the employer.
- You need good sewing skills.
- Experience in drama, such as involvement with student or amateur productions, is an advantage.
- Dressmaking or bespoke tailoring skills would be relevant.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- good sewing skills and manual dexterity
- an eye for style and colour
- an understanding of fashion and period clothing
- attention to detail
- perseverance
- good people skills
- good communication skills.

You should be:

- interested in the performing arts and its history
- helpful, calm and tactful
- well organised
- inventive and flexible
- able to work as part of a team
- able to work quickly, to deadlines and stay calm under pressure.

Training

- If doing a Modern Apprenticeship, you would study Technical Theatre & Production Operations at SCQF Level 7.
- Training is on the job supervised by experienced staff.
- Training includes making garments from patterns, using sewing machines and studying styles and fabrics.

Getting On

- There may be some openings in fashion houses as well as in entertainment.
- There are no formal barriers to moving from one sector to another (film, TV or theatre). As many posts are filled through networking, wardrobe assistants often remain in the sector which they first enter.
- With experience on the job and further skills, you may be able to move on to be a wardrobe supervisor or into costume design (see [Costume Designer](#)).
- Developing drawing skills and gaining qualifications may help you to get on.

More Information

The [Creative Scotland](#) website lists opportunities, both voluntary and paid, for working in the creative arts industry.

Take a look at [The Stage](#) online magazine for information on jobs. You can even download a Jobs and Auditions app for your iPhone.

Trainee Finder is ScreenSkills flagship new entrant programme which offers paid work placements across a range of roles in film and TV. Recruitment will usually begin around September of the year before placement. Find out more and apply online by visiting the [Film Trainee Finder website](#).

Contacts

4 Careers

Website: careers.channel4.com/4skills
X: [@Channel4Skills](#)
Facebook: www.facebook.com/Channel4Skills

BBC Recruitment

Website: careers.bbc.co.uk
X: [@BBCGetIn](#)

BECTU Scotland (Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union)

Tel: 0141 370 1590
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Website (2): careersmart.org.uk
X: [@bectu](#)
Facebook: www.facebook.com/BECTUOfficial

ITV Careers

Website: careers.itv.com
X: [@ITVCareers](#)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ITVCareers

ScreenSkills

Tel: 020 7713 9800

Email: info@screenskills.com

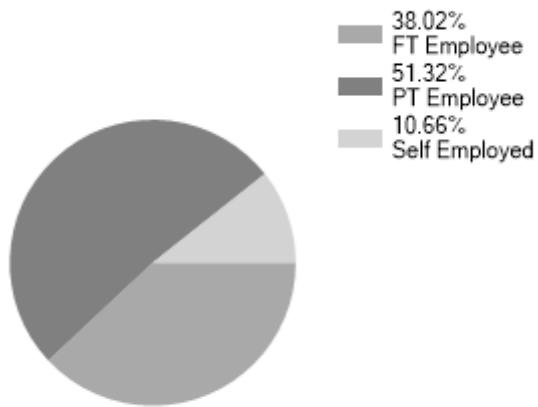
Website: www.screenskills.com

X: @UKScreenSkills

Facebook: www.facebook.com/UKScreenSkills

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

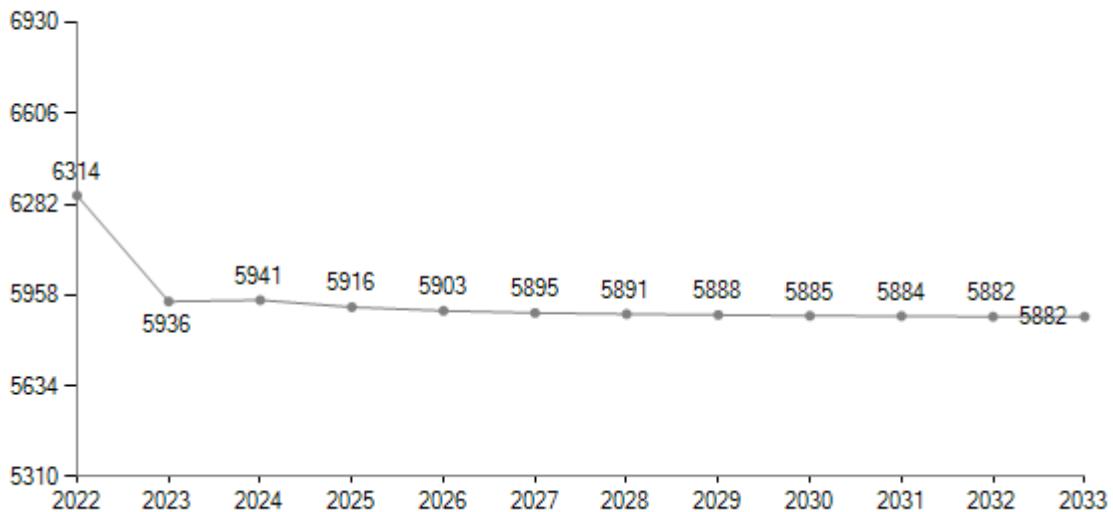


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)