Animator

An animator uses drawing, modelling or 2D and 3D computer graphics to produce a series of images, which gives the illusion of movement. They might work on animated films or cartoons, computer games or adverts.

The Work

Animation involves highly detailed work so you would usually work on one project at a time.

Depending on the size of company or type of production, you could be:

- studying the storyboard which outlines the plot or story for the animation
- planning and designing the frames, or images, which tell the story
- drawing animation sequences using 2D computer software packages such as Illustrator, using a graphics pen and tablet
- creating 3D computer sequences (CGI, or computer generated imagery) using technical software packages to make the characters 'move' (the most common method of animation)
- drawing background or characters using a range of materials, such as pencil, ink or paint
- using digital equipment to copy drawn artwork hundreds of times over, with tiny changes in position
- working with an editor to add dialogue or a soundtrack
- making sure the action or character speech and movement follows the audio or soundtrack
- making puppets from clay or plaster, then changing their positions again and again, photographing the frames ('stop motion' animation).

Pay

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

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

Newly qualified animators may start off earning from £18,000 to £20,000 a year. With experience this can rise between £25,000 and £30,000 a year. Highly experienced animators can earn up to £65,000 or more.

Conditions

- You would usually work in an open plan office or studio.
- Depending on the type of animation, you would spend most of your time sitting at either a drawing board or computer. Stop motion animation might involve standing a lot of the time.
- You work standard office hours but will have to work overtime to meet deadlines.
- If you are freelance, your hours will be longer and may be irregular.
- Many contracts are on a temporary basis.

Getting In

- Most entrants have a degree (SCQF Level 9-10) in animation or an art and design related subject, such as multimedia, illustration, film and video or 3D design.
- Glasgow Caledonian University, the University of the West of Scotland, and the Universities of Dundee and Edinburgh offer animation and computer animation related degrees.
- You need a good showreel of animated work or else a portfolio of design work for entry to courses and jobs.
- For entry to a degree course you need 4-5 Highers, normally including English and Art and Design.
- You could start out by taking an HNC (SCQF Level 7) or HND (SCQF Level 8) course in animation, and gaining entry to a degree course later. Entry requirements for HNC and HND courses are usually 1-2 Highers.
- A relevant postgraduate qualification can be helpful. Glasgow Caledonian University and the Universities of Dundee and Edinburgh run relevant courses.
- Doing work experience may help you get into your first job.
- It's important to make contacts in the field and visit or email advertising agencies or animation studios on spec, perhaps offering to carry out work on a freelance basis in the first instance.

The fastest growing area is computer generated imagery (CGI) and there is a growing computer gaming industry in Scotland. These companies usually advertise jobs on their websites. Other employers include broadcasting companies, advertising agencies, animation studios, video producers or computer games companies. You might work freelance.

What Does It Take

You should have:

- imagination and creativity
- the ability to work to a brief as well as develop your own ideas
- good IT skills, to use specialist animation software such as Maya, Unreal Engine and MotionBuilder
- excellent drawing or sculpting skills
- good sense of colour and style
- an eye for small detail
- good concentration skills
- a good sense of timing
- creative ability to solve technical problems.

You need:

- patience
- the ability to accept criticism
- good communication skills to present ideas
- the ability to work to deadlines and under pressure
- the ability to work either alone or as part of a team
- business skills if you are self-employed.

Training

- Courses are available in animation and visualisation, 3D computer animation, animation and multimedia and computing for graphics and animation.
- The National Centre for Computer Animation at Bournemouth University runs postgraduate specialist courses.
- You need to keep up to date with new software packages.
- The ScreenSkills website has careers advice on working in the many areas of animation.

Getting On

- You could move into consultancy work, or get a job abroad. Animators are in demand internationally.
- If you are an employee of a production company you could progress to become director of animation.
- You could work in animated special effects. Current uses include advertisements and feature films for large screen and television, computer animated simulation rides, computer games and virtual environments and web graphics.

Contacts

British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA)
Tel: 0141 319 7559
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Website: www.bafta.org/programmes/uk-scholarship-programme
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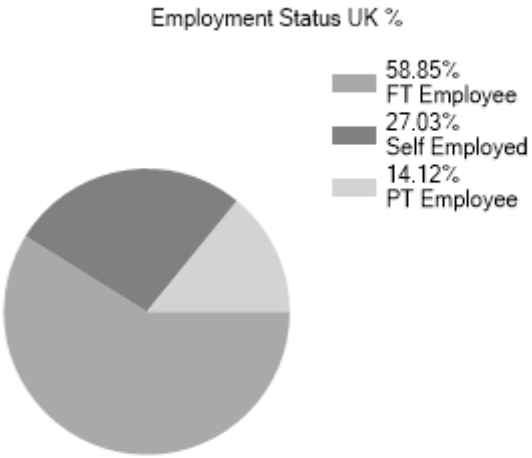
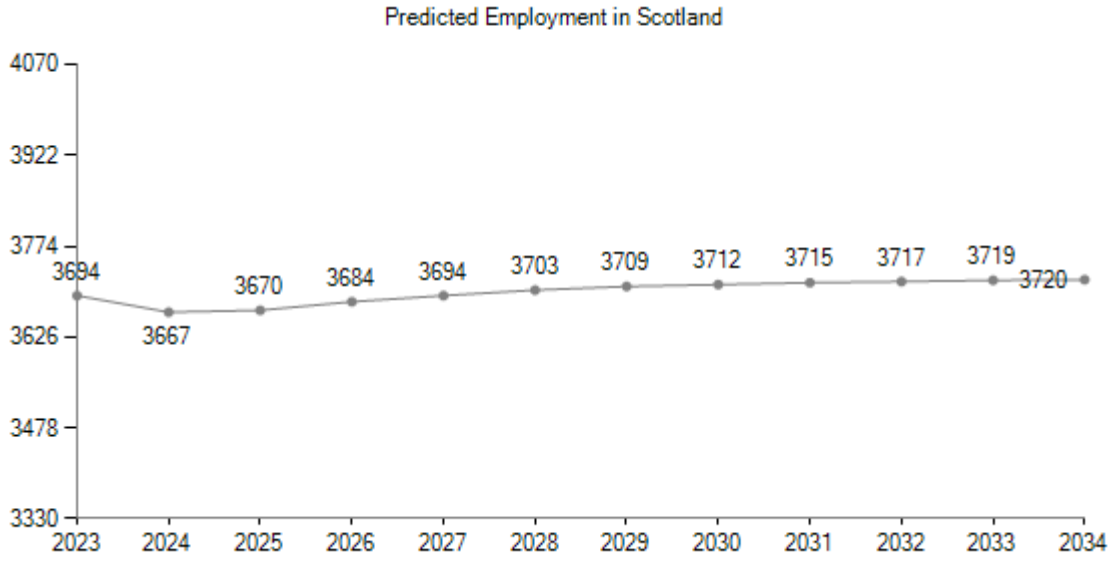
Statistics



Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by LMI for All



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