

## Picture Researcher

Picture researchers find suitable photographs or illustrations for use in a wide range of media such as books, magazines, websites and television. Their employers include media or advertising companies, picture agencies or libraries, and museums or art galleries.

### The Work

You could be:

- meeting with clients to discuss their requirements and agree on a suitable fee
- reading briefs provided by clients on the subject they want illustrated
- considering the format, colour and dimensions for the image, as well as target audience and number of copies to be printed
- deciding where to look for images, including searching online image banks, picture library databases or gallery catalogues
- selecting pictures gathered from your research which are most suitable to your client's requirements and meet quality requirements
- negotiating with suppliers for the best prices on borrowing or buying images, including terms and conditions of use or return
- hiring a photographer to take any new pictures needed
- preparing captions (descriptions) or credits for images, and maybe editing images using computer software
- storing or filing pictures, and arranging the payment of invoices.

### 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.

Starting salaries for picture researchers are between £20,000 and £28,000 per year.

With experience, this could rise to around £30,000 per year. Picture editors can earn around £35,000 a year.

Freelance rates are usually per day, and vary according to the area you are working in. For example, recommended rates for books can be £160 to £190; broadcasting £200 a day; glossy magazines £180 a day; and national newspapers £180 a day. ([National Union of Journalists Freelance Guide website](#), September 2025).

### Conditions

- You will work at a computer in an office, or from home if you work freelance.
- You work normal office hours, Monday to Friday, but may have to work evenings or weekends to meet

deadlines.

- You will spend a lot of time on the phone to suppliers or other agents.
- You might have to visit companies to search their picture collections.
- You may have regular deadlines to meet and work under pressure.

## Getting In

- Entry is competitive.
- Employers usually ask for an HND (SCQF Level 8) or degree (SCQF Level 9 and 10). Relevant degree subjects include art history, history, science or photography.
- For entry to an HND course you normally require 1-2 Highers plus some subjects at National 5. For entry to a degree course you need 4-5 Highers.
- It is common for new entrants to undertake some unpaid work to strengthen their CV and improve their employment prospects.
- You will need knowledge of photo editing software, spreadsheets and online content management systems.

## What Does It Take

You need to have:

- a good visual memory and imagination
- excellent research skills
- good IT skills and knowledge of imaging software
- excellent communication skills
- persistence and good negotiation skills
- knowledge of copyright law and licensing issues
- good admin and organisation skills
- knowledge of data storage and management.

You need to be:

- able to multitask
- accurate and methodical
- able to work within a budget
- interested in photography
- well organised and able to meet deadlines.

## Training

- Training is through experience, on the job.
- The London School of Publishing (LSP) runs a 2-day course in Picture Research for new entrants. It is approved by the British Association of Picture Libraries and Agencies (BAPLA).

## Getting On

- You can move between organisations to gain a wider range of experience.
- You could work on a freelance basis once you build up a network of contacts and clients.
- With enough experience, you could gain promotion to senior picture researcher or picture editor.

## More Information

[BAPLA](#) lists job vacancies on their website as well as individual employers such as picture libraries or art galleries.

## Contacts

### Picture Research Association

Website: [www.picture-research.org.uk](http://www.picture-research.org.uk)

X: @PRA\_Association

### Publishing Training Centre

Tel: 020 8874 2718

Email: [courses@publishingtrainingcentre.co.uk](mailto:courses@publishingtrainingcentre.co.uk)

Website: [www.publishingtrainingcentre.co.uk](http://www.publishingtrainingcentre.co.uk)

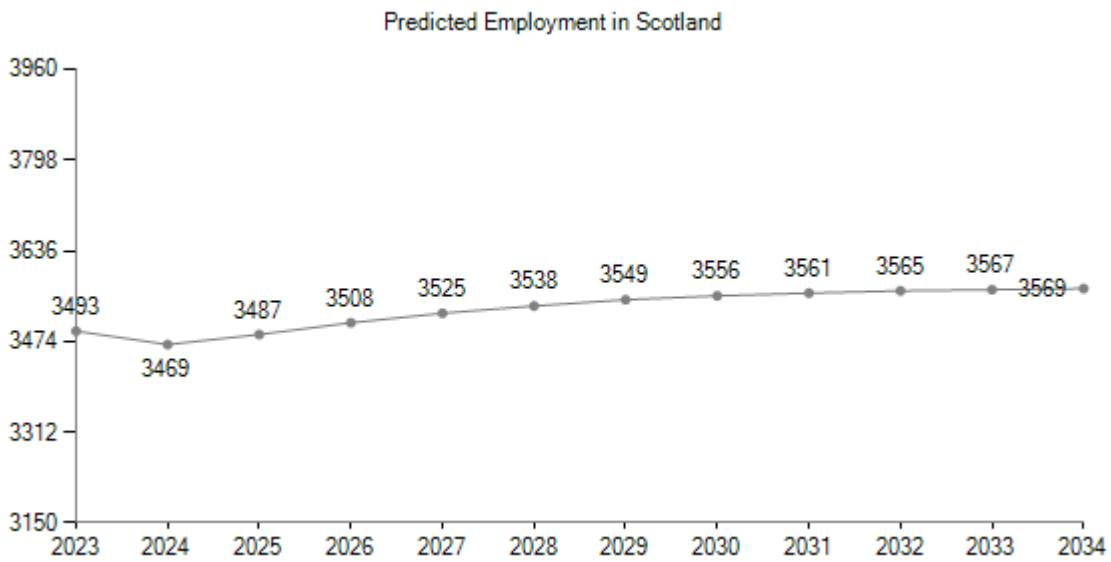
X: @PTCBookHouse

**Statistics**

Employment Status : Not available this career.

**Past Unemployment - Scotland**

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)