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Developing
Professional
Recognition in the
Creative Industries

Report

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2023

Introduction

The UK creative industries continue to demonstrate significant cultural and economic impact, driven by a workforce that combines technical expertise with creative innovation.

However, despite this contribution, there still remains a key need for unified professional framework to formally recognise the technical workforce operating within the sector.



This report outlines the findings from initial consultation, pilot activity, and sector engagement undertaken by the Institute of Science and Technology (IST), in collaboration with key stakeholders across the creative industries. It identifies the need for a structured professional registration framework and sets out the proposed direction of travel based on feedback from technicians, employers, and sector bodies.

Context and Rationale

The creative industries are characterised by diverse working patterns, including freelance, project-based, and short-term contractual roles. While this flexibility enables innovation, it also presents challenges in demonstrating career progression, consistency of skills, and professional standing.

Feedback gathered from across the sector highlighted a number of key issues:

1

A lack of clear, recognised benchmarks for technical competence

2

Difficulty for individuals in evidencing skills across multiple roles and employers

3

Limited visibility and recognition of technical roles compared to other professions

4

A need for clearer progression pathways within technical careers

Existing professional registration models, particularly those aligned with science and engineering, were reviewed. While these models provide robust standards, stakeholders indicated that they do not fully reflect the hybrid nature of creative and technical practice.



Sector Engagement and Feedback

Engagement activities were carried out with technicians, managers, educators, and industry representatives across a range of creative disciplines, including media production, performing arts, digital technologies, textiles, and design.

The feedback consistently emphasised the importance of:

- A framework that reflects both technical and creative competencies
- Recognition that is portable across roles, organisations, and projects
- A structure that supports progression from entry-level through to senior practice
- Language and criteria that resonate with the realities of creative work

Participants also highlighted the need for the framework to be inclusive of individuals without formal qualifications, recognising that many professionals develop their expertise through experience and practice rather than traditional academic routes.



“ Creative Tech Practitioners deserve a structured pathway that supports progression from entry-level roles to senior professional practice.”



Early Framework Development

In response to this feedback, the IST had already begun adapting its existing Registered Practitioner Programme to better align with the needs of the creative sector. Early iterations of the framework focused on:

- Defining core competency areas relevant to creative technical practice
- Establishing indicative levels of practice aligned to career progression
- Developing assessment approaches that allow individuals to demonstrate applied knowledge and skills

Particular attention should be given to ensuring the framework can accommodate a wide range of disciplines while maintaining consistent standards of assessment.



Key Findings and Recommendations

The consultation and pilot phase identified several areas requiring further development to ensure the framework meets sector needs:

1

Clear Level Differentiation: There was strong support for a tiered structure; however, further work was required to clearly differentiate between levels of practice. Respondents indicated that progression should reflect not only increased technical complexity, but also greater autonomy, responsibility, and influence.

2

Strengthening Entry-Level Accessibility: Feedback highlighted the importance of making the entry level accessible and relevant to early-career technicians. This includes recognising practical competence, supporting structured development, and providing clear guidance on expectations. This will play a key role in refining the entry-level competencies, ensuring they accurately reflect the practical realities of technicians beginning their careers while maintaining appropriate professional standards.

3

Enhancing Advanced Practice Definition: At the upper end of the framework, stakeholders emphasised the need to better articulate what constitutes advanced or expert practice. This includes leadership, innovation, and the ability to influence organisational and sector-wide practice. This will contribute significantly to the development of the advanced-level competencies, strengthening the framework's ability to capture strategic thinking, technical leadership, and sector impact.

4

Alignment with Professional Standards: There was a clear expectation that the framework should align with recognised professional standards while remaining distinct from existing science-based models. This includes ensuring credibility, robustness, and external recognition.

5

Flexibility and Inclusivity: The framework must support individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, including those without formal qualifications. The introduction of an equivalency route was identified as a key requirement to allow applicants to demonstrate competence through experience.



Proposed Enhancements

Based on the findings, the following enhancements were recommended for the next phase of development:

- The introduction of three clearly defined levels of registration to reflect progression within the sector
- The refinement of competency language to better reflect creative technical practice
- The development of an equivalency process to support applicants without formal qualifications
- Greater emphasis on personal and professional development (PPD) and ongoing skills advancement
- Improved guidance and support materials to assist applicants and employers

These recommendations form the foundation for the next iteration of the framework.



Moving Forward

The outcomes of this report have informed a revised approach to the development of the new professional registration framework for the creative industries. The next phase will focus on:

- Finalising competency frameworks across all levels
- Strengthening partnerships with sector bodies
- Expanding engagement with employers and practitioners
- Developing a clear and accessible application process



This work represents a significant step towards establishing a professional standard that recognises and supports the technical workforce within the creative industries.

Conclusion

The 2023 consultation and development phase has confirmed both the need and the opportunity for a dedicated professional registration framework within the creative sector.

By responding directly to sector feedback and building on existing professional standards, the Institute of Science and Technology, Creative UK and its partners are well positioned to deliver a framework that is relevant, credible, and impactful.

This report sets the foundation for the enhanced framework presented in the subsequent publication, reflecting a collective commitment to improving visibility, recognition, and career development for creative technical professionals.



END OF REPORT