



Association for Media Education in Scotland

AMES is a registered Scottish charity SC029408 (ames.scot)

Response to Call for written evidence to

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee

Scotland's Screen Sector – Implementation of SSLG recommendations

Note: A copy of this has been submitted to the Education and Skills Committee as AMES perceives these issues as both cultural and educational.

Introduction

AMES (Association for Media Education in Scotland) was formed in 1983, and currently has nearly 100 members, a majority of whom teach in the Scottish secondary and further education sectors. AMES holds an annual conference and publishes the *Media Education Journal (MEJ)* twice a year. It has published 61 editions and is probably the longest surviving media literacy journal in the world.

Its members serve as SQA qualification designers, examiners and markers. AMES also lobbies and cooperates with bodies such as Education Scotland, SQA, Creative Scotland and the British Film Institute on behalf of media education. It is funded by members' subscriptions and has no paid officials. It receives no external funding other than small conference grants from Scottish Film Education and Into Film, who also pay filmmakers to deliver workshop sessions at the conference.

AMES maintains close relationships with Scott Donaldson, Head of Film Education at Creative Scotland and Mark Reid, Head of Film Education at the British Film Institute.

Throughout its existence, the main goal has been to make media education a right for every Scottish pupil, believing that digital media literacy can contribute to lifelong learning, creativity and active democratic participation. AMES also believes that national qualifications should enable those with talent to find pathways into the media and creative industries.

The Scottish school system is divided into broad general education (BGE) beginning in early years and continuing to the end of S3 (the third year of secondary school). The senior phase covers S4-S6 and usually involves pupils following courses based on SQA's National, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications.

The Curriculum for Excellence's definition of literacy includes film literacy and AMES believes that film resources and filmmaking can be used effectively in any curriculum area. But most teachers lack the confidence to tackle film in class. The work of [Scottish Film Education](#) and of [Into Film](#) may go some way to addressing this issue, but AMES believes that more commitment is required from the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and Creative Scotland in concert with local authority Creative Learning Networks.

In schools, the main pathway into further study of any subject is through National and Higher qualifications. SQA provides qualifications in Media at National 3/4/5 and Higher levels but there are no such qualifications in Film. This is an anomalous situation in the UK in that school-level Film qualifications are available to school pupils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This lack of opportunity for Scottish young people has been highlighted in AMES August 2017 report [Media Education and Film Education in Scotland](#). AMES also gained evidence of demand for Film qualifications from 48 schools and 7 colleges.

AMES has lobbied the Scottish Government and SQA on Film qualifications. But the request to develop National, Higher and Advanced Higher Film qualifications has been rejected by SQA and the Education Secretary has simply echoed SQA's response. We received a response from the Learning Directorate of the Scottish Government on behalf of the Education Secretary. This was the response to the proposal for the development of National and Higher qualifications in Film:

With regard to developing a distinct film qualification, SQA staff have confirmed that they worked with AMES on the proposal and business case for the development of a new National Course in Film/Moving Image, but the proposal was not approved as there was not a strong enough rationale for creating an additional and separate National Course in this related area. However, I am pleased to note that SQA has moved forward with the development of a new National Progression Award at SCQF level 6 in Film and Media and that SQA has validated a new National Progression Award in Creative and Digital Media.

From a curriculum and qualifications perspective, it is important that national course provision and associated awards provide learners with a variety of options for development and progression in media studies. The awards outlined above are providing a range of opportunities for development and progression in this area. Likewise, SQA's national courses in English and Media are providing candidates with a wealth of opportunities to learn and apply their knowledge in film and the moving image.

Another key priority is the bridge between the tertiary sector and the workplace. This includes the recent decision by the National Film and Television School to set up a subsidiary in Scotland aimed to provide courses at that level. It also includes bursaries to further equal opportunities for students seeking to enter the media industry.

AMES management committee feels that this response fails to address the demands of schools and pupils for creative filmmaking qualifications at National, Higher and Advanced Higher levels. An NPA is a qualification which few head teachers would endorse as it has a negative effect on school 'league tables' of examination performance. NPAs may well be attractive to colleges and enable school pupils to study for such a qualification by attending college for part of the week. This is of course fraught with problems as college attendance, if available, often implies travel problems and a negative effect on school-delivered qualifications.

School pupils want Highers as a pathway into further and higher education. Not being granted the status of a Higher (Scotland's 'gold standard') alongside other Expressive Arts is plainly absurd.

AMES is disappointed at Mr Swinney's lack of independence from SQA here. We feel that a truly independent examination of the facts presented by AMES should have led to the conclusion that Scottish pupils lack educational pathways into the creative industries and that this demands urgent action and investment.

The Northern Ireland Moving Image Arts qualifications are highly regarded and can give pupils entry into film schools such as the Scottish Screen Academy. Screen Education Edinburgh uses this as the top end of their pathway (using four non-Scottish qualifications) which has enabled pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress to study at the Scottish Screen Academy.

There are hopeful signs of greater cooperation between Scottish film education organisations over the last two years. But there is a need for a unified film education policy financially backed up by the Scottish Government if a sound education and training foundation for the screen sector is to be established.

Northern Ireland has done it. But alas SQA and the Scottish Government seem unwilling to emulate them. To AMES, this seems more of a narrow 'economic austerity' decision rather than one which will benefit the wider 'creative economy' as well as the creative and economic prospects of our young people.

Response to Call for written evidence

We will restrict our comments to the education sector and have selected relevant questions from the four headings.

1. Leadership, Strategy and Support

How can we ensure that the Screen Unit has the remit and responsibility for providing the strategic vision and leadership across the sector? What changes to the current arrangements are necessary to achieve this?

The Screen Unit should not be in control of policy within the various levels of the screen sector but should be responsible for creating synergies and ensuring that there is fertile ground on which the sector can grow.

In the education sector, it may be necessary to ensure that film access organisations (the FANS network: GMAC Film, Media Education, Plantation Productions, Screen Education Edinburgh, SHMU, Voice of My Own (VOMO)) have a sound financial, administrative and policy base which enables them to fully contribute. Perhaps Scottish Film Education (which currently funds the delivery of the Northern Ireland Moving Image Arts qualifications by Screen Education Edinburgh) could have a role here.

How might the newly proposed BBC channel help support the industry in Scotland?

The [BBC Academy](#) already has excellent resources on creative practice and compliance. It would be beneficial to provide a Scottish education portal to these resources matched to SQA film and media qualifications.

Some of the new channel's productions could also provide excellent up-to-date case study resources e.g. production of Scottish news programmes, documentary and drama productions.

2. Talent Development, Skills and Training

How can Scotland nurture and retain domestic talent?

To nurture talent, it must first ensure that all its young people can study and create film. All young people can study STEM subjects and Scotland produces a constant stream of talented scientists. We should have the same provision for the film and media sectors. We need Government commitment and funding aimed at nurturing talent by ensuring all young people have access to creative film and media experience.

How might the new Screen Unit work across agencies to ensure a coherent approach to the development of talent?

The Screen Unit should ensure that there is a coherent plan for Scotland's film education and training and ensure that it tackles issues of diversity and universality of access to film education.

Are you aware of examples of best practice in Scotland, or elsewhere, which the Committee could draw upon?

The work of Screen Education Edinburgh with young people and teachers is exemplary and their experience should provide a sound basis for developing SQA National, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications as well as a Professional Development Award in Film/Media Education (for teachers and film educators).

Are there clear pathways from education through training to the workplace that deliver an industry-ready workforce?

Currently any there is a jumble of SQA non-vocational and vocational qualifications which would benefit from being reorganised into clearly identifiable and progressive pathways e.g.

- 1-year National, Higher and Advanced Higher courses which suit the needs of schools (i.e. general education of the film audiences as well as future creatives).
- National Progression Awards which would suit learners from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as adults.
- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas in film, animation, documentary, television news, advertising and the specialist skills such as scriptwriting, cinematography, sound, editing and film finance.

Some of these pathways already exist but any educator or learner to the field finds it confusing. The whole field of film and media education would benefit from having a visual guide which clearly illustrates the range of pathways into the creative industries.

Do you feel enough investment is present for the purposes of training specialist skills?

Teachers need training in film education but there is little investment in pre-service training or professional development. AMES is currently discussing the development of a teacher Professional Development Award in Media Education with SQA but has concerns about the funding of the delivery of such a PDA. Development of coherent online training linked to the Scottish curriculum and qualifications could alleviate this.

There is anecdotal evidence that in further education colleges funding is currently being diverted towards STEM subjects rather than those that could contribute to the creative economy. This is obviously a disturbing trend.

There should be investment in youth film studios managed by the FANS network so that there is a bridge for young people into the industry.

3. Infrastructure, Intelligence and Maximising Benefit to Scotland

How can we ensure the productions leave a positive legacy after filming?

As previously indicated, productions could provide resources which could be utilised as case studies and exemplars of current practice e.g. script extracts, storyboards, footage for editing and dubbing.

4. Distribution, Exhibition and Audience Development

How can we ensure/promote the consumption and production of domestic content in the digital age?

AMES would advocate the idea of a one-stop online shop for Scottish domestic content which combines contemporary content with access to the [Scotland Moving Image Archive](#). The archive should also receive increased funding so that it can convert Scottish-made film content currently held on outdated formats. Lottery funding may be one avenue for this.

There should be a means of organisations automatically archiving Scottish content created in educational and other contexts so that the archiving issue 'disappears'. Perhaps it could be possible to adapt the notion of the 'legal deposit' of books to national libraries to the automatic uploading and indexing of content to national film archives.

What measures can be taken grow audiences and encourage participation in the sector more generally?

Film education for all Scottish pupils would be the best of all starts.

The removal of unit assessments in National and Higher Media means that it should be much easier for schools and colleges to offer adult evening or daytime classes. Linkage of the FANS network to schools could provide a means of expanding filmmaking expertise.

Studios which receive government funding should have an educational remit so that the school pupils and the public can learn more about the sector.

**Rick Instrell, on behalf of the AMES management committee
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