



Production Assistant

Occupational Profile for CUNY Kingsborough Community College

SUMMER 2016

What is a Production Assistant? The Production Assistant (PA) position is the main point of entry into the television and film industries, as well as sound recording. PAs perform a wide range of tasks, which can vary day by day. They are expected to maintain a clean work area, drive people and equipment to and from shooting locations, gather and create graphics and other needed audiovisual elements, maintain cast and crew schedules – also known as “call sheets” – and keep track of project information, including budgets and spending. At times, production assistants may be asked to operate a camera or fill in a more professional capacity on set.

How do people land a PA job? Most PA jobs are not advertised like typical positions. Although some appear in online ads or in Craigslist, the majority of positions are filled through networks, word-of-mouth, and reputation.

Strictly speaking, it is not necessary to have a bachelor’s degree to land a PA job. However, most PAs land their first PA job after serving as an intern while they are earning their bachelor’s degrees in film, television, or communications, and media arts. Interns who make a positive impression obtain jobs when they are out of school, so it is important to work hard, have good technical skills, and be flexible and willing to do anything needed when asked.

The sites currently featuring ads for PA positions in the New York Metropolitan Area include entertainmentcareers.net, nycfilmcrew.com, LinkedIn.com, media-match.com, staffmeup.com, and mandy.com.

What is the work schedule like? PAs work on a per-project basis. There are times when they work full-time – more often, overtime – and times when they are between projects and not working at all. Some jobs last several weeks, like for a film or

television show, while others may be only for one day, like a sound recording or commercial.

How much do PAs earn? Smaller companies and start-up companies may not pay PAs at all. On relatively low-budget productions, employers may offer film credit instead of pay.

Otherwise, PAs are paid by the day, regardless of the number of hours they work. Entry-level pay ranges from \$125 to \$200 per day. National commercials tend to pay at the higher end of the wage scale. Occasionally, on longer-term contracts, PAs can earn weekly rates.

PA Jobs by the Numbers.

There were 260 **job advertisements** posted online within the last 12 months in the New York City Metropolitan Statistical Area, not including Craigslist (approximately 25 additional PA ads appear on Craigslist each month).

128 (50 percent) of these ads specified education requirements. Of those that did, **nine percent asked for an associate degree or less education** and 91 percent asked for candidates with bachelor’s degrees.

Top titles. Other than PA, the top titles advertised by employers are production associate, editorial PA, news PA, audience PA.

Where do they work? The top industries for PAs in New York are television, radio, motion picture and sound recording studios.

Top employers. NBC Universal, Cablevision, Thomson Reuters, Univision, Fox News, Turner Broadcasting, Disney, ESPN, CBS, JVN Systems, ABC, MTV, and Major League Baseball.



What are some of the core functions of the job?

- Maintaining schedules (aka “call sheets”)
- Ordering and creating graphics
- Gathering cuts, soundbites, and voiceovers
- Managing paperwork
- Recording production activities
- Maintaining safe and clean work area
- Assisting with film editing
- Controlling crowds
- Running errands

What are the important tools of the trade?

Some of the most important tools and technologies PAs need to know include:

Graphic Design. InDesign, Illustrator

Nonlinear Film and Video Editing. Adobe Premier Pro, Apple FinalCutPro, Avid Media Composer, or Sony Vegas Pro, Adobe After Effects

Sound Editing. Apple DVD Studio Pro, WavePad, Adobe Audition, Diamond Cut, Audacity

What qualifications do they need?

Education and technical training. PAs generally have bachelor’s degrees.

Experience. Many PAs get their foot in the door by serving as interns when they are in college.

Relevant Fields of Study. Communications, theater/drama, broadcast journalism, media arts, film.

What character traits do employers seek?

The key trait a PA must have is flexibility. Employers want people who are extremely organized, detail-oriented, and able to work under extreme deadlines and pressure, often overtime.

CUNY programs and degrees. Currently, Kingsborough Community College offers an Associate in Applied Science in that graduated 102 students in 2013-2014. Other CUNY community colleges offering relevant associate degree programs include BMCC and Bronx Community College, who collectively graduated 88 students in

the same year. The following summarizes the relevant education and training offerings in the five boroughs of New York City and the two counties of Long Island.

PROGRAMS	AWARD LEVEL	GRADS
11	Undergraduate non-degree awards (394)	386
29	Associate degrees	857
141	Bachelor’s degree (7,348 grads in 2014)	5,523
2	Postbaccalaureate certificates (30 grads in 2014)	6

PROGRAMS	FIELD OF STUDY	GRADS
64	Cinematography and Film/Video Production	3,296
15	Digital Communications and Media	189
24	Film/Cinema/Video Studies	308
3	Film/Video and Photographic Arts	118
64	Mass Communications/Media Studies	2,884
5	Film/Video Technology/Technician	80
60	Radio and Television Broadcasting	1,889

For details see the **Appendix: Regional Programs and Offerings.**

Career pathways and how to access them. To move up from PA to the next job, one must complete every task with care, detail, and willingness. There are different career paths for television, film, and sound. One sample career path would be to advance to Associate Producer, Producer, Senior Producer, and then to Director-Producer, Executive Producer, or Unit Production Manager. Another one might be to become an editor, second assistant director, then a first assistant director, and then a director or technical director.

Technical career paths tend to begin in other entry-level positions such as sound technicians, broadcast engineer, camera operator assistants, and so forth. There is some, though very little overlap between technical positions in television, radio, film and sound recording on the one hand and positions in technical theater production. For example, electricians, carpenters, sound technicians can be found in either setting. However, a majority of titles are unique to media and do not have close analogs in the theater.



Appendix: Regional Programs and Offerings

(Sources: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and online catalogues for each profiled institution.)



= industry recognized certificate program



= 2-year degree program



= credit-bearing certificate program













= 4-year degree program



= certificate of completion

CUNY:

School/Program	
CUNY BMCC	
	A.S. Multimedia Arts
	A.S. Multimedia Programming
	A.S. Video Arts and Technology
CUNY Bronx Community College	
	A.S. Media & Digital Film Production
CUNY Brooklyn College	
	B.A. Television and Radio
	B.S. Journalism and Media Studies
	B.A. Film
	Certificate: Film production
CUNY City College	
	B.F.A Film and Video Production

School/Program	
CUNY Hunter College	
	B.A. Media Studies
	B.A. Film
CUNY Kingsborough Community College	
	A.S. Media Arts
CUNY Lehman College	
	B.A. Film and TV
	B.A. Media Communications
CUNY Queens College	
	B.A. Media Studies
CUNY Queensborough Community College	
	Certificate: New Media Technology



New York City and Long Island Outside CUNY:

School/Program	School/Program
Adelphi University	B.F.A Communication & Media Production
B.A. Communications- Media Studies	New York University
Barnard College	B.S. Media, Culture and Communication
Film Studies	B.S./B.F.A. Film and TV
Brooklyn Workforce Innovations	Pace University - Manhattan
"Made in NY" Production Assistant Training Program	B.S. Digital Cinema and Filmmaking
Five Towns College	B.A. Communication Studies
B.F.A. Film/Video	School of Visual Arts
Fordham University	B.F.A. Film
Communications and Media Studies	B.F.A. Photography and Video
Digital and Media Technology	St. Francis College (Brooklyn)
Hofstra University	B.A. Communication Arts
Journalism, Media Studies and Public Relations	St. John's University
Sports Media	A.S. TV and Film
Radio/TV/Film	B.S. TV and Film
Iona College	Stony Brook University
Mass Communication: Broadcast Media	BA Journalism
LIU Brooklyn	Suffolk County Community College
B.A. Media Arts	A.A.S. Radio and TV Production
LIU Post	SUNY Purchase College
B.F.A. Broadcasting	B.F.A. Film
B.F.A. Film	B.A. Media, Society and the Arts
Manhattanville College	Technical Career Institute
B.A. Digital Media Production	A.A. Communication Media Arts
Marymount Manhattan College	Westchester Community College
B.A. Digital Media and Video Production	A.A. Communication Media Arts
B.A. Cinema, Television and Emerging Media	Wagner College
Mercy College	B.A. Film and Media Studies
B.S. Media Studies: Film/Culture	
B.S. Media Studies: Radio and TV Production	
The New School	
B.A./B.S. Media Studies	
Certificate: Film Production	
Grad Cert: Media Management	
Grad Cert: Documentary Media Studies	
New York Institute of Technology	
A.A.S. Communication Arts	
B.F.A Digital and Film Television Production	