Equity is the trade union representing over 42,000 people working in the UK’s film, television, theatre, dance, variety and music industries. Our membership includes actors, singers, dancers, stage managers, circus artists, theatre directors and many other performers and creative workers. We also have over 5000 student members who are currently training at accredited drama schools and other recognised higher education institutions.

The creative sector is an important driver of the UK economy, accounting for £87.4bn of value in 2015 and 1.86 million jobs. The sector has grown by 34% since 2010. Since 2011, the number of jobs in the Creative Industries has risen by nearly 20 per cent - almost triple the rate of the UK economy. 2017 has seen a significant increase in the amount of filming in Scotland but to date we have no hard figures to quantify that.

Equity has been able to negotiate and maintain collective agreements covering most of the major areas of work in film and television for ‘front of camera’ talent. These collective agreements set minimum rates of pay and terms and conditions which provide security for workers and employers in our industries.

Equity members are forced to be peripatetic. Currently we have 2,400 members resident in Scotland but there is a bigger Scottish diaspora in London, Los Angeles and New York.

Flexible labour has been a long running characteristic of the screen industries. Availability of talent, often at short notice, is crucial for many employers. However, Equity wishes to challenge the recruitment practices in the screen industries. We believe that employers should deliberately assign greater time and resources to the casting and recruiting process in order to achieve a fairer and more deliberate outcome. At the moment, too much casting and recruiting is last minute resulting in many employers going back to the ‘tried and trusted’. One unintended consequence of this is a serious lack of diversity in the workforce.

Equity’s most recent survey of members found that 11% earned nothing from their work in the entertainment industry and 67% earned either nothing or under £10k per year. Nearly half of respondents (46%) had worked in the entertainment industry for no pay in the previous twelve months and of those who had 51% received no expenses. Theatre and film were identified as parts of the entertainment industry in which ‘no pay’ practices were widespread. Of those who had worked for no pay in the past twelve months 47% had worked in theatre and 25% in film.
Below we are responding to the questions that are relevant to Equity members living or working in Scotland:

**Leadership, Strategy and Support**

*How can the industry successfully implement the recommendations outlined in the Screen Sector Leadership Group report?*

*What is your view of the current leadership of the screen sector through Creative Scotland and other supporting bodies?*

Equity believes Creative Scotland is making progress against a hostile landscape. We have serious reservations about Scottish Enterprise’s interest or ability regarding the Screen Sector.

*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?*

It is hard to be effective when responsibility is shared with a partner with a separate agenda.

*What are your views on the availability of funding and support for all content development?*

Recent increases in resources are welcome but significant further resources are needed to help the sector reach its potential.

*Do you consider the support provided by Scottish Enterprise to be adequate?*

*How might they or other bodies work to provide appropriate support for the industry?*

No, especially on the Studio debacle. Equity would recommend reallocating Scottish Enterprise resources to Creative Scotland. Scottish Enterprise’s submission and presentations to various Parliamentary Committees on the subject of the Screen Sector give the impression of a body that thinks it is above Parliament.

*How can we nurture and maintain funding for production companies?*

*How can Ofcom work to support the sector in its new role as regulator?*

Ofcom should amend its definitions of ‘out of London’ production (and therefore of a Scottish production) to include front of camera talent/activity.

At the moment, the current rules are a bureaucratic exercise that are not understood by the viewer and work in favour of ‘front of camera’ talent living in London.

*What are your views on the state of commissioning for Scottish content?*

It is imperative that what is commissioned includes a balance to reflect the diversity of the UK and its population, including Scotland.
How might Brexit impact the Scottish screen industry?

This is a potential danger as it may disrupt European funding.

There is also a potential impact on the free movement of people and its relevance to work opportunities for talent. Free movement of people within the EU allows the sector to benefit from visa-free exchange and touring throughout the EU and from EU nationals making Scotland their creative base. There is a concern that the requirement of visas for EU exchange risks deterring new creative collaborations and potentially threatens the attracting and retaining of talent. These issues could affect the ability of the Scottish screen industry to grow their international work and profile.

In regards to film and TV production, official co-productions are only possible between countries which have signed a treaty defining co-production rules. The European treaty, the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production, and was signed in October 1992 in Strasbourg and refers to its signatories as “member States and the other States Parties to the European Cultural Convention”. The UK signed the original treaty as a member of the EU so conceivably would need to sign up again as a “European non-member State”. The co-production framework is important because it allows international film producers to work together to create a film which can gain state protections and tax benefits from multiple countries at the same time. Being outside of that framework, or the uncertainty of having to re-sign up to it could be damaging for the film industry in Scotland.

How do you view the role of broadcasters in supporting the sector?

The Broadcasters’ support is crucial in supporting the sector, especially in giving opportunity to new talent. It is important that the broadcasters ensure proportionality by population of production spend to Scotland.

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

Hopefully this Channel will help increase the amount of Scottish production to redress the current balance in the BBC portfolio. It is also an opportunity for new or young talent to gain exposure and experience.

How can Scotland become a key destination for UK and international productions?

Scotland is an hour’s flight from London. The reality of filming in the M25 studios in London involves daily commutes through grid locked traffic, early starts, long days etc. A major studio facility (or facilities) in Central Scotland could provide a superior experience for all on set with better transport and communications.

Why have film and TV producers selected Scotland in the past as a location for production?

What is your view on the current network of regional film offices across the country?

Are you aware of examples of best practice in Scotland, or elsewhere, which the Committee could draw upon?
Talent Development, Skills and Training

Sustainable growth in the sector will depend, in part, on Scotland’s ability to nurture and retain domestic talent, in front and behind the camera. To better understand the challenges facing the sector, the Committee would be interested in your views regarding the following areas:

How can Scotland nurture and retain domestic talent?

It is important that opportunity is given to those living in or educated in Scotland. At the moment, Scottish educated talent often has to go elsewhere to find work due to insufficient opportunity. Priority must be shifted from the talent pool living in London to local talent.

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

There is a dilemma here. The screen Unit is funded by money from the Scottish Government. There is a growing expectation that Scottish based or Scottish educated talent should benefit from this investment but there are no published criteria that ask for this. The Screen industry is London-centric and there is a danger of Scottish public investment ending up in London.

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

How can development, skills and training keep pace with the ever changing needs of the industry?

Are there skills deficiencies or gaps which might impede productions choosing to come to Scotland?

Does Scotland have the requisite level of domestic talent to accommodate an increase in productions coming to the country?

Emphatically yes! Scotland produces phenomenal front of camera talent

What infrastructure, support and investment is required to ensure continuing development of talent in Scotland?

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

How do we address the problem of inconsistent work for employees in the Scottish screen sector?

Do you feel there is a lack of diversity amongst employees in the screen industry? And if so, why might this be and what can be done to promote diversity?

Yes, there is a lack of diversity in the screen sector based on all the protected characteristics. This is partly caused by the casual processes and insufficient time used when recruiting in the sector.
Do you feel enough investment is present for the purposes of training specialist skills?

Are there ways in which film and TV productions can be encouraged to utilise Scottish cast and crew where appropriate?

Yes, once headline talent has been identified, be it cast or crew, funded projects should be encouraged to show how much local employment they offer for both behind and in front of camera positions.