

## Knowing your worth, New freelancer finance.

So, we have made it this far. You've been working hard at college or make-up school, learning and developing the skills needed to start taking your first steps in the world of work. You're suddenly a freelancer and self-employed to some extent.

If you have been fortunate enough to land a trainee position on a TV or film set, or even as a wig assistant in a theatre, your rate of pay will hopefully be reasonable, adequate and appropriate to your career level and experience. Maybe, as an employee, your tax and National Insurance contributions are being taken care of too, as part of your contract or grade. So, no need to be running out to find an accountant or wrap your head round self-assessment tax returns just yet, unless you have another source of income that has to be declared by law.

## Let us begin with the two most common types of employment in the make-up world

### **Employed (PAYE)**

This is very common at trainee and some junior levels on television and film productions. In theatres this may well also apply to entry level roles but may vary depending on the size of the theatre. If you are employed as an employee it is the responsibility of your employer to ensure that correct tax and National Insurance contributions are taken from your salary and paid on your behalf to HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs "the tax man"). As an employee you are also entitled to contribute to a workplace pension scheme, receive sick pay, holidays and maternity/paternity leave.

If you are engaged as an employee, it is your employer's responsibility to supply you with the tools and equipment necessary for you to carry out your job, along with any PPE (personal protective equipment) you need to ensure your health and safety is protected whilst working. Your employer's equipment and tools provisions should cover products and equipment specific to the production, but it should be noted that it is customary to arrive with the basics, like a small set of make-up brushes, combs, stocked set bag and a small versatile kit. These are considered tools of the trade and arriving with these on your first day will make a good first impression. By law, as an employee, it is not your responsibility to purchase any equipment, materials or tools for your job out of your own pocket however, as you transition to more senior roles and begin working as a freelance self-employed make-up artist, you will undoubtedly have to invest in your kit to expand it in line with the work you're undertaking.

### **Self Employed (Schedule D), Freelance, Sole Trader**

This is the norm for some senior-junior roles and above, for example make-up artists, supervisors, designers, key make-up artists and personal make-up artists. When working in this capacity it is very important that you treat yourself and your work like a business because that's exactly what it is. In more senior grades it's not uncommon for people to work as a Limited Company, but that will be a little further in your future so best to cross that bridge when you reach it.

Working under any of the above titles; Self Employed (Schedule D), freelance or sole trader; you will likely have to submit an invoice for your salary itemising the dates you've worked, any incurred overtime, penalty payments and agreed kit-rental fees.

Working in this manner means it is your responsibility to save for and pay your own tax and National Insurance contributions on time. You have very limited access, under very specific conditions, to Statutory Sick Pay and maternity/paternity pay. You are your own boss, choosing what work you take or don't take, along with deciding when or if you take any holidays.



Under these conditions it is your responsibility to provide the tools and equipment needed to do your job. The purchase of these tools, along with any other costs you have to cover out of your own pocket, will need to be evidenced with receipts or bank statements as expenses on your tax return. Expenses are any costs or outgoings that are solely and directly for the purpose of your work or business.

On some low budget and independent projects, all crew may well be engaged as freelancers. If an opportunity as a trainee is offered to you on this basis it's important that you weigh up the opportunity against the potential costs or benefits associated with being self-employed. Below is a table of some common expenses incurred by freelance make-up artists, though it is by no means comprehensive.

Make-up	Hairdressing scissors	Electrical styling tools	Computers (iPad)
Development training (courses)	Outdoor or wet-weather gear	Car (mileage incurred commuting to and from work)	Accommodation (costs whilst working away from home)
Make-up brushes	Shavers	Air brushes	Combs and brushes
Hair products	Hairdryers	Accountant fees	Books (reference)
Accountancy fees	Public liability insurance	Kit insurance	Wigs and facial hair
Storage costs	Property rental (business space, studio, salon)	Bectu membership	Subsistence (food costs when working away from home)

## Where to begin on the uncomfortable subject of naming your price?

Now that we have covered a bit about the different types of employment, the next most common question asked is what should I be getting paid for the work I do? And if I'm asked what my rate is how do I calculate it? Below some resources are outlined to help you gauge roughly what you need to be earning a day just to cover your basic living expenses and what we believe you should be asking for when taking your first steps in your career.

### Ratecards

As a Bectu member there are some documents to help you understand what the going rate is for each grade in different sectors of the make-up industry. These documents are called ratecards. The ratecards have been put together by working make-up artists in each sector based on what they are commonly paid, depending on the role they undertake. They are great tools for finding out what people are currently being paid so that you don't sell yourself short. The ratecards can be found by following the link below and scrolling down to the hair and make-up section. These ratecards reflect what you should be getting paid if you are working on a professional production.

[Bectu Rate Cards](#)

### The cost of standing still and making no profit

Another useful tool we have available is a very basic spreadsheet (link below) which you can use to enter your personal monthly outgoings, along with how many days per year you would ideally like to take off (as holiday). The spreadsheet will calculate your yearly outgoings and produce an approximate figure of what you would need to earn per day just to cover your day to day living costs, tax and National Insurance contributions.



basic daily income  
calculator.xlsx

## Experience. You can't get a job without the experience and you need a job to get the experience.

This conundrum is a modern-day version of “which came first, the chicken or the egg?”

We have all been there, cutting our teeth on micro-budget or no-budget music videos, short films, TFP photoshoots, test shoots and community theatre productions. You name it, we all started somewhere. Now, although some of these small independent projects may allow you more freedom to flex your creative muscles, they may not necessarily be able to pay you the going rate of a properly budgeted professional production or photoshoot. However, they are valuable for gaining experience of working with others and learning how to communicate and function effectively as part of a bigger team, working toward a common goal.

Although these types of experiences are invaluable in building confidence and the interpersonal skills required in the industry, it is important to view each potential opportunity through a realistic lens. When deciding if a project is for you there are some key points to consider:

- Will the proposed fee be enough to cover your bills and the expenses incurred from taking the project on?
- Is there a budget allocated for all the materials, resources and products required to complete the requested hair and make-up looks?
- Will you be required to use your own products and materials to fulfil the make-up and hair requirements for the project and, if so, is there an additional fee being paid to you to replenish your stock that will be used?
- Is the role or opportunity a progression in your cv?
- Does it allow you to take on more responsibility? Maybe going from assisting on a small project to heading up a small project.
- Is the time allocated for any prep work realistic for the level of work requested?
- Are the requirements for the project clearly outlined for you to plan ahead and complete the task?
- Will this project afford you the ability to reach your career goals?
- Will this project lead to better future opportunities?
- Are the requirements for the production going to take up more time than the allocated budget and rate require?
- Will you be credited in the final cut or any publications related to the project?
- Will the “credit” or “exposure” get you noticed by other potential employers that could potentially bring you more lucrative or progressive opportunities?
- Is the target audience or market for the final project, one that is likely to provide you with further work or opportunity?

Ultimately each opportunity is a personal choice for each individual and everyone's personal circumstances are different. It's common for new entrants to build relationships with other new graduates to work on collaborative projects but sometimes doing this for a long period of time creates relationships built on friendship where everyone works for free to create one person's passion project. The problem that can arise from this is that you spend a great deal of your own hard-earned cash replenishing stock in your kit which you will essentially be donating to the production of someone else's vision/dream; not to mention the time, energy and sacrifices you will have to contribute to make it all possible. When it comes time to ask these people for some reasonable or decent money to pay your bills in return for your efforts, it can prove to be an uphill battle after working for very little or nothing. In this type of situation, it's common for those in control of the purse strings to be resistant because they are so used to having your skills, knowledge, dedication and kit at their disposal for very little or nothing. This is also particularly dangerous as mentally it makes those outside our craft view our abilities and skills as being cheap and easily acquired, which can make it difficult for us to be taken seriously as professionals and in turn makes it more difficult to negotiate acceptable, reasonable and liveable rates for the work, services and skills we provide. This is often why some people treat make-up artists as hobbyists, especially when trying to get new entrants to work for "exposure" or "credit".

Whilst building your experience, it's important to bear in mind your current level and what your career goals are. It's important to remember that when you're negotiating a rate or deal with an employer it is in their interest to create a deal which suits them and they won't always have your best interests or needs in mind. When negotiating, it's important that you are aware of current rates of pay and employment terms and conditions. If you don't know what the established standards are then it's a lot easier for others to take advantage of you and sell you a bad deal.

Knowingly underselling your skills and craft in order to secure work is known as "undercutting". This practice is frowned upon by most freelancers and is very damaging to the employment standards that have been fought for and negotiated by previous generations of make-up artists for your benefit. Undercutting is not only damaging to the industry as a whole but is also very damaging to a freelancer's personal reputation and how others perceive how trustworthy they are. While it might not be such an issue in fields where you work in isolation or on your own, make-up departments are very social, team-orientated environment and if you're known as someone who undercuts it could have the potential to damage your career and reputation amongst your peers and seniors.

## Case studies based on real life experiences and situations.

The scenarios below are based on the lived experience of real people and the names given are fictional.

### Scenario 1

Laura was contacted by Thomas who was planning to shoot a promotional video for his online gaming forum. The video would be 3-4 mins long in total and would consist of a one-day shoot. Along with basic straight make-up on one female cast member, the project also required a full monster look head to toe. After some discussion it emerged that Thomas required the monster to be a very extensive and original make-up. When Laura considered how much the materials would cost and how many days it would take to fabricate the monster to a standard she would be happy to be associated with, along with the cost of her time and the day's shoot, she quoted Thomas £3,000 to complete the job. Thomas explained he had only budgeted £200 for all the required work and that because his gaming website was one of the UK's largest, it would be a great opportunity for her work to be seen by a lot of people.

### Outcome 1

Laura decided against undertaking the project. She decided that the "benefits" of the production were not worth the time and large financial investment required from her to make someone else's dream and business marketing material a reality. Laura decided the "exposure" gained from the website will not be lucrative to her future, as the target market would be gamers and they would be very unlikely to pursue the services of a professional make-up artist.

### **Scenario 2**

Kevin made contact with a very experienced local make-up artist named Karen who regularly worked on television and film productions. Karen offered him the opportunity to assist her with a local community theatre production she was working on for three weeks through the summer. There was no budget to pay him a wage as an assistant and all the materials, products, equipment and wigs for the production were being provided by her. The theatre show would run Monday – Saturday for two weeks with one show each evening Monday to Friday and an afternoon and evening show on each Saturday. Kevin would be required for 12 days whilst the show was running and for 3 days of prep; 15 days in total.

### **Outcome 2**

Kevin decided to take this opportunity. He could afford to give his time and take early shifts at his day job so that his income wouldn't be adversely affected. As the production was local any travel costs would have been minimal and, in Kevin's opinion, this was a relatively small and worthwhile investment in his future. He was not expected to supply any equipment or kit and having no previous theatre experience he viewed this as a great opportunity to learn, develop and grow. It also seemed like a great opportunity to prove himself to an established make-up artist who could potentially offer him further employment and development opportunities in the future.

### **Scenario 3**

Saima had been contacted by a graduate producer she had previously worked with. He was looking for a make-up artist to take on the role of make-up designer for his new project, a short film he was aiming to enter into film festivals. He had explained to her he couldn't afford to pay her a daily rate but had set aside a small fee for the rental of her kit and an additional budget for the purchase of some of the things he thought would be specific to the make-up needs of the project. When the project was complete these items were to be gifted as additions to Saima's kit. The project was scheduled to be shot over 2 consecutive weekends (4 days).

### **Outcome 3**

Saima decided to take this opportunity. As a low/no budget project, she thought the opportunity to take on the responsibility and role as a designer would be a good way for her to learn and carry out a role that she had previously observed. Although there was no daily rate to be paid, as a low/no budget project, with a crew mainly comprised of graduates, she knew she wasn't undercutting established working professionals. There was a small fee for the rental of her kit, which she calculated would almost cover the kit and products she would need to replace. The budget for products specific to the production, though small, was adequate for what was needed and those items would become hers to keep after the production finished. With the project scheduled over two consecutive weekends Saima was happy to be involved, as her income from part-time employment on a make-up counter wouldn't be adversely affected and she could use some holiday to cover her Saturday shifts.

#### **Scenario 4**

Marcus had been a barber for 15 years and was looking to use his skills to transfer into a new career. His friends who were make-up artists in the television and film industry suggested he could use his barbering skills to transition into their line of work. Marcus thought this made perfect sense and, through his friends, received contact details for a crowd room supervisor who they knew had some big 1940s crowd days coming up on a big period production. Marcus emailed Claire, the crowd supervisor, and explained he was a barber of 15 years looking for a trainee positions, either full time or on a dailies basis, as he was looking for a career change and trying to break into the television and film industry as a trainee in the make-up department. Claire contacted Marcus and offered him 3 days of work experience in the crowd room, unpaid, and asked that he bring his barbering kit with him.

#### **Outcome 4**

Marcus accepted the opportunity as he had no previous experience of working in a make-up department, or a crowd room and thought it would be a valuable learning and networking experience. When Marcus arrived, Claire explained that for the next three days they were doing fittings and asked if he would mind helping with doing the men's haircuts. Marcus agreed thinking it would be an opportunity to show his skills and make the most of the opportunity. After the three days Marcus thanked Claire for the opportunity to obtain some experience in the crowd room and asked her to please keep him in mind should if there be any opportunity for him to attend on a filming day on work experience or as a trainee. When Marcus excitedly told his friends about his three day experience they were shocked. They explained to him that they had passed him Claire's contact details in the hope he would be able to learn something from a few days on the production. They explained that they felt Marcus had been exploited by having his 15 years of skill and knowledge used to benefit the production without being paid for his contribution. They also pointed out that, in his naivety, he had effectively robbed another trained and qualified professional of three days work and £720. Marcus was not contacted again by Claire and learned very little from his three days of work experience because he was so consumed with the practical task of cutting men's hair, which he already had 15 years' experience doing, when he should have been paid an appropriate daily rate for his skill and work.

## Work Experience

Work experience is a great way to observe a working environment and get an idea of how the workplace functions. In the past, however, the term has been surrounded by confusion and in some cases has caused new entrants and students to be exploited. On the Bectu website there is a document available to help productions and individuals navigate how work experience should be planned and delivered. The full document can be found by following the link and the paragraph below is a compilation of information from the document

[Link to Work Experience Guidelines Document](#)

**Individuals on placements are not used to perform roles that are inconsistent with mutually agreed learning objectives and/or would otherwise be undertaken by paid staff or crew, whether permanently employed, casual or freelance. Our advice is that generally two weeks is an appropriate period for an unpaid placement, but where, for it to be a genuine learning experience, it is appropriate for it to be longer, it should run for no more than four weeks. Our recommendation is that unpaid placements should only be offered in circumstances where the National Minimum Wage Regulations do not apply. However, if the National Minimum Wage applies then the minimum wage should be paid for the length of the placement regardless of how short the placement may be. Suggesting limiting attendance to 40 hours a week (including meal breaks) is sensible from both insurance and health and safety perspectives. It is also in line with the spirit of the Working Time Regulations 1998. You can use a simple timesheet, signed by the individual and their supervisor/mentor, to keep a record of attendance times. Give details of what expenses the individual can claim in the written confirmation and ensure that information about how to claim expenses is included as part of the induction. We suggest that you highlight the importance of submitting evidence of the expense such as a sales receipt. It is reasonable for placement providers to ask individuals on work experience placements to agree to maintain confidence as to any information relating to the business (or its customers, clients, suppliers etc) that comes to their knowledge during the placement. Individuals on all types of work experience placements are inexperienced and need support and supervision. Identify a member of staff who has some time and is prepared to take responsibility for overseeing the person's activities and to whom they can turn to for advice and support. Work experience placements are intended to be learning opportunities so it is essential to agree specific learning objectives for the individual at the outset. After identifying and agreeing learning objectives, try to ensure that you provide a balance of tasks and observation that will enable the individual to achieve them. Always remember that a volunteer, who is unpaid, should not be under an obligation to perform activities in accordance with your instructions. If an unpaid volunteer becomes subject to a sufficient degree of obligation to undertake tasks just like a worker, or employee, or fulfils an actual job, then National Minimum Wage should be paid. In short, if a genuine volunteer placement becomes more than a volunteer learning activity, National Minimum Wage may be applicable.**

## In conclusion

If you wish to be taken seriously and respected as a make-up artist by your seniors and peers alike, it is important that you take the craft of make-up artistry seriously and treat it with respect. This means valuing the time, effort, expense and sacrifices that you have invested in learning and developing your skills. Expanding and honing your craft continues long after your formal education. It's only once you accept how little you know that you will find the joy of ongoing learning. Our craft is always evolving thanks to the constantly innovating industries it services. Just as the young have much to gain from the wisdom and experience of their seniors, so seniors have much to gain from the curiosity and unjaded eyes of youth. After completing your training, it is up to you to consider your skills honestly and with a keen eye for improvement. The role of a make-up artist is varied and requires a broad range of skills. Your formal training is only the beginning of your journey and you should be committed to maintaining the skills in which you have strengths and improving those you honestly identify as lacking. With every opportunity that comes your way, you owe it to yourself to weigh the rewards carefully against any potential sacrifices you may have to make in undertaking it.

You should be comfortable working with all hair texture and skin tones and if there are any areas of the craft you feel your formal education hasn't prepared you for it is your responsibility, as a young professional, to seek out chances to learn and develop these skills. No one expects total competency in all areas immediately after graduating but be aware that the abilities you have or don't have as a professional are solely your responsibility. We are blessed to work in a profession that has the potential to inspire us daily, where there is great opportunity to grow and learn, as well as to share and teach each other skills. We hope that you get to experience all of this to its fullest.