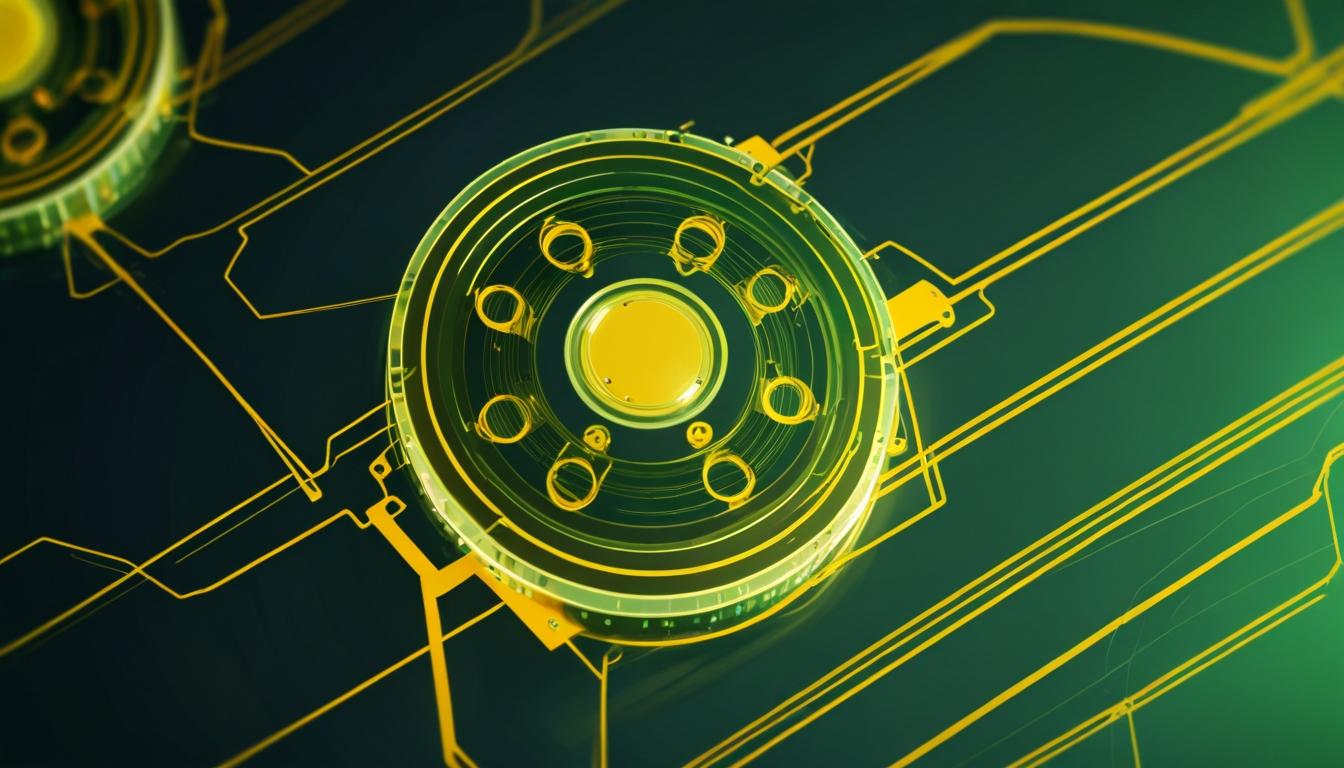
# BFI calls for urgent AI training overhaul to future-proof UK screen sector



A new report from the British Film Institute (BFI) warns that the UK’s screen sector must urgently enhance its workforce capabilities to keep pace with artificial intelligence. Titled AI in the Screen Sector: Perspectives and Paths Forward, the report stresses the need to build complementary skills that will allow creatives to harness AI without compromising the industry’s global competitiveness.

The report highlights a critical gap in formal AI training, particularly for freelancers, who often lack access to structured learning and resources. While much of the current education is informal, the UK’s strong base in AI research and its skilled creative workforce present an opportunity to transition talent into AI-enhanced roles. The BFI argues that such a move would safeguard jobs and strengthen the UK’s leadership in global screen production.

To support this transition, the BFI outlines nine strategic actions for the next three years. These include promoting ethical, cross-disciplinary collaboration, embedding data-driven sustainability practices, and establishing an ‘AI observatory’ alongside a ‘tech demonstrator hub’ for hands-on learning. These proposals have received support from the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee.

Rishi Coupland, BFI director of research and innovation, acknowledged both the opportunities and risks of AI integration. “AI represents an inflection point for the sector,” he said. “We need to act quickly across various strategic fronts to ensure that the UK’s world-leading industries can thrive.”

The report also draws attention to a broader skills crisis across digital content production, particularly at mid and senior levels. Post-Brexit immigration policies have further limited access to talent from Europe, and inconsistent training investment has left much of the workforce unprepared to meet new demands—especially in areas like video games and VFX.

In response, new initiatives are emerging to reform industry training. The Screen Sectors’ Skills Task Force has proposed the creation of a unified strategic skills body to overhaul the current system, including the restructuring of apprenticeships and stronger ties with educational institutions.

The BFI’s National Lottery Innovation Challenge Fund is also backing AI integration, recently awarding £192,500 to King’s College London to explore AI’s role in preserving and sharing screen archives. The project exemplifies a broader commitment to applying AI creatively and responsibly.

As AI continues to reshape the film and creative industries, the BFI underscores that only strategic investment in training and skill development will enable the UK screen sector to adapt and lead in the digital era.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.tvbeurope.com/artificial-intelligence/report-training-and-upskilling-essential-to-prepare-screen-workforce-for-ai-integration> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/home/digital-content-production-sectors-face-skills-shortage-says-bfi-report/5188519.article> - A BFI report highlights significant skills shortages in the UK's digital content production sectors, particularly at mid and senior levels. The study underscores the importance of fiscal incentives to attract a top-tier workforce and notes challenges in recruiting and retaining staff from Europe due to post-Brexit work permit requirements. The report also points out that the workforce is ill-equipped to meet the surge in demand for UK digital screen content, especially in the video games and VFX sectors, due to insufficient and inconsistent training investment.
3. <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/2023-year-ai> - An article in Sight and Sound discusses the integration of AI in the film industry, highlighting recent labour disputes in the US over AI's role in screenwriting and performance. The piece notes that AI cannot be an originating author of a script, and performers' images cannot be used without consent. It also mentions the potential for AI to become an extraordinary tool for film preproduction, with systems capable of automatically generating budgets, script breakdowns, shot-lists, storyboards, and animatics.
4. <https://britishcinematographer.co.uk/bfi-national-lottery-innovation-challenge-fund-awards-funding-to-ai-screen-archiving-project/> - The BFI National Lottery Innovation Challenge Fund has awarded £192,500 to King’s College London to support the development of Intelligent Systems for Screen Archives. This project aims to explore how UK moving image archives can creatively utilise emerging AI technologies to meet challenges and opportunities in archiving and sharing moving image heritage. The initiative seeks to advance understanding of AI's potential in screen archives and develop tools and skills to support audiovisual collections.
5. <https://www.ibc.org/news/screen-sectors-skills-task-force-unveils-uk-recommendations/10533.article> - The Screen Sectors’ Skills Task Force has published recommendations to develop industry skills in the UK. Among the recommendations are a new remit for a pan-sector strategic skills body, which will be created through the transformation of existing training organisation ScreenSkills. Other recommendations include apprenticeship reform, strengthening partnerships with the education sector, and new plans to develop a pan-sector funding model. The Task Force, made up of 28 organisations from across the sector, was convened to respond to the BFI Skills Review published in June 2022.
6. <https://www.screenskills.com/news/screenskills-publishes-five-year-strategy/> - ScreenSkills has unveiled a new long-term vision to shape the future of the UK’s screen industries, introducing an ambitious five-year strategy aimed at building a world-leading, inclusive, and agile workforce capable of meeting the evolving demands of the sector. This strategy, informed by broad consultation with industry professionals and key stakeholders, responds to the recommendations from the DCMS-commissioned BFI Skills Review and the Screen Sectors Skills Task Force.
7. <https://www.bfi.org.uk/industry-data-insights/reports/sustainable-future-skills-report-screen-sectors-skills-task-force> - The Screen Sectors’ Skills Task Force, comprising 28 organisations, has published a report with recommendations to transform the industry’s approach to skills development across the UK screen sectors. The report focuses on long-term, pan-sector gain and aligns with the Government’s Creative Sector Vision, aiming for £50 billion growth in the UK Creative Industries by 2030. Recommendations include creating a pan-sector strategic skills body, revising the apprenticeship levy, engaging with the Further and Higher Education sectors, and emphasising workplace training opportunities that support inclusion and accessibility.