**Above the Line and Below the Line**

In terms of the film and television industry, above and below the line concerns the budget and salary that crew earn. Above the line are the people who contribute to the creative process and narrative of the film and they have a fixed cost. So for example, if an actor has a small scene or if a scene is cut from the script, the actor and the screenwriter will still earn the same amount of money.

Below the line job roles include all behind the scene personal. Department heads, costume designers, lighting, sound mixers, grips, runners, cinematographers and editors, including many more are considered to be below the line. The difference between the two is that below the line workers have their pay subject to what is needed. For example if a scene is cut that is set in a small location but the location is only seen then, the set wouldn't need to be built or the costumes for that particular scene won't need to be made. This means that the department or workers wouldn't be paid for this because it is not needed.

A key characteristic and skill that is essential to any role within the industry is experience. By taking work experience job on sets or in production offices, shadowing a person in the role you wish to have in the industry or doing producing small experiments on the Internet to demonstrate your abilities in the job role you wish to have. There are multiple websites dedicated to specific careers within the industry in which you can visit and enquire to show you have an interest.

**Above the Line Jobs**

**Executive Producers**

There are several types of producers in the industry. An Executive producer is the person or persons that both supervise and help prepare the filmmaking process. They are vitally important to the process because they are the ones who pitch a film idea to big studios in order to gain funding. Once a film has been green-lit the executive producer could begin to focus on the business and budgetary side of the production and legal contracts however they still oversee the entire process.

A deep knowledge in business management, along with a cooperative attitude and organized mindset are key skills in becoming a producer. Because of the number of jobs a producer takes on they themselves will need to be able to take on a heavy load of work and work through them at a professional and quick pace (depending on the task). There are several film degrees that offer knowledge in the production and practical elements that can help future aspiring producers. From a degree level the aspiring producer could go straight into a job for a studio as someone lower down the job ladder and then move their way up the ladder until they are a producer. Another way could be to work your way up through other jobs within the industry like a writer or editor or director even. Another way in which you could go straight into a producing role is to seek out an independent film crew who could possibly be looking for a producer or with a group of a crew of aspiring film industry workers, could start producing their own short or feature films on a low budget.

**Director**

The director is the most influential creative person in the filmmaking process. The role of the director is to ensure the flow of the plot by directing actors, camera movements and lighting to ensure a creative and astatically pleasing, well told and acted story. Despite the control over the process and the influence the director has they are still under the producer in terms of control because it is the producer who liaise between the studio and director to ensure that the film is to the standard of the studio. The director can sometimes also be a producer meaning they have more control over the business side to the process as well as the creative side.

There are many ways to become a director but there are several skills that one must have in order to be a good one and to stand out against others. Communication, creativity, knowledge of the story and an understanding of what you want the film to be are all key traits of a good director along with things like creative flares and trademarks that are distinguishable for that director. Working your way up through the ranks is a common way for many aspiring young directors, from a runner, 1st AD or 2nd AD up through to an assistant director or DoP and then finally a director. Some people start out as writers like Quentin Tarantino or have been directing from the start like Christopher Nolan or Gareth Edwards. These tactics are less common because it take an incredible amount of unique talent to be noticed so early on in their careers.

**Screenwriter**

The screenwriter quite literally the person who writes the screenplay which is then purchased and converted into a feature length film, short film or television episode. Many people who start out in the screenwriting profession begin working freelance, meaning they go unpaid. Starting out on spec scripts, freelance writers could spend years writing such scripts as an attempt to enter the industry and eventually become represented by a talent agency which could help get their scripts to studios meaning the writers would begin getting paid.

**Actors**

Another creative job that is significantly boosted by having a talent agency represent you, acting is fundamentally important to a film or television show. Although there are several experimental films that do not feature any actors, a higher percentage of films do. Acting is essential to drive the plot forward and good acting is essential to make the story believable. The actors work closely with both the director and screenwriter (at times) in order to get a clear picture of the characters motivations. The director and screenwriter however only have a certain amount of influence over the actors because it is ultimately them who have to portray the character in a certain way and sometimes the type of actor, method or classical, will have an influence over the character they act.

To become an actor, no degree is definitely required but a degree in acting does help those who take it to better themselves as actors. The ability of the actor themselves is a majority of how well they will do in the industry. A talent agent is also helpful in landing auditions for projects but actors without can attend open auditions, which gives them a chance to show their talent to scouts. Acting is usually a talent explored in early childhood although there are a number of practitioners who started out later in their lives. Progressing from an amateur actor to an A-list celebrity (although it is not the goal of some actors) is a difficult task and although some have gone from independent features to big studio franchises, launching them into stardom (Jennifer Lawrence is notable example). The more roles and acting jobs an aspiring actor takes, extras and background roles, it will hopefully lead them to supporting and eventually lead roles. Some actors then begin to take on other roles like producers (Sarah Jessica Parker), writers (Wentworth Miller) and even directing (Angeline Jolie) whilst acting, in order to further their talents and influence in the industry.

**Below the Line Jobs**

There are more below the line jobs than the ones listed below but these are several different roles in different departments.

**Assistant Directors**

1st, 2nd and 3rd Assistant Directors (usually abbreviated as AD) are in charge of organizing the schedules and overseeing a lot of the running of the production. Working with the director and other assistant directors, they sort out the necessary shooting schedules; call sheets and logistical elements for the days, weeks and months to follow. The AD's are also responsible in calling the attention of everyone on set to begin filming and calling out such things as 'Final Check', 'Lock It Down' or 'Set' at different point during the pre-shooting portion of the scene.

Like a number of roles in the film industry, a higher education degree is not essential. Organizational skills, budgeting and a level of knowledge in health and safety regulations is basic knowledge someone should have if they wish to go into this profession. Starting as a runner or in a production office is a good place to start and then working up the ranks through the 2nd and 3rd AD’s.

**Sound Recorder**

A sound recorder is the person who is responsible for recording all sound on location or on set, monitoring the quality of sound during production. They work closely with the director and boom operators so that they can record quality sound. Most of the recorders work takes place in production but they can work closely with a sound mixer in post-production.

A degree in either sound technology, audio engineering or music technology could show that you have an interest in the field to a possible employee but again it is not essential to have a degree. Just knowledge in the area, experience and enthusiasm for the role you wish to peruse. To work your way up through the ranks starting somewhere in radio, shadowing a professional or doing sound work in theatre is a good place to start and then move through different roles like boom operator or a sound assistant until you become a recorder.

**Hair and Make-up Artist**

Hair and make-up is an important but not excessively recognized in movies. The artists themselves work under the designers and execute the designs that have been approved by the director. Instead of designing the make-up and hair designs, the artist is responsible for applying the make-up and doing the hair. They would need to keep continuity throughout the film and ensure that the continuity is kept throughout.

To be an artist in this field you would need to have a qualification (Level 2 or above) in media make-up and an NVQ in hairdressing. Experience is also essential because it will equip aspiring artists with skills working on a set and working to a strict schedule. Before working on feature films an aspiring artist would start as a trainee within the industry and then over a decade or so move up through the ranks and could eventually become a designer depending on the skill demonstrated.

**Director of Photography / Cinematographer**

A DoP is the person who is in charge of both the camera and lighting teams on a film or television set. The DoP works closely with the director so that they can get an idea of the directors vision for the scene so that they can then direct the lighting crew. Depending on the director, the DoP might have room to make some decisions themselves on how some scenes should look. Some directors might be strict and have the DoP do everything that the director envisions.

Knowing about camera equipment, having a creative mind and the ability to find inspiration in all sorts of places are all key skills that a DoP would need to have. A degree in photography would give the aspiring DoP a good understanding of composition and lighting but a degree in film/media production would also give you a foundation in the film industry. Working as a still photographer on the film set, working in the lighting department, camera operating or doing second unit work could give you the skills and experience needed to become a successful DoP. Some DoP's also go into directing.

**Runners**

There are several different types of runner in the industry in different departments. A floor runner is on set working with the directing crew ensuring that both people and certain things are in place and ready for the scene. The needs of the cast and crew are what the floor runners primary task is, whatever it might be. A production runner comes on board just before principle photography begins. Their job is to keep communication between the crew departments through paperwork like call sheets, notes and maybe scripts. A 'rushes' runner does not work on set but is still an experience to get into the business with. The 'rusher' is tasked with transporting the footage shot that day from the set to the post-production location. Some companies will have office runners, which are tasked with various duties around production offices, which can give runners a way into post-production side of filmmaking or production work.

Almost everyone in the film industry starts as a runner. Getting in on a short film is a good way of getting experience as a runner so that you could work up to a feature film and then work your way up from there to a desired job role. There are no degrees needed to become a runner but you would need to be punctual, willing to do anything, work hard and do exactly as the person asking tells you.

**Gaffer**

A gaffer is the head electrician on a film or television set. They are responsible for managing all sorts of lighting equipment, mounts, apparatus and other electrical equipment under the direction and guidance of the DoP or lighting director. This job can involve a lot of improvising and experimenting with lighting in order to achieve new and interesting techniques with light.

To become a gaffer you would need to be a qualified electrician. From here you could start as a lighting electrician and then work your way up to a best boy – gaffers assistant- and then to a gaffer. From there you could progress up to a lighting director, which would allow you to choose the lighting for the film and work closely with the director.