

DGC GCR

DIRECTORS GUILD OF CANADA
GUILDE CANADIENNE DES RÉALISATEURS

DIRECTOR OBSERVER INITIATIVE **OBSERVER CHECKLIST**

Questions or concerns please reach out to:

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What is the DGC Director Observer Initiative?

The DGC Observer initiative is a finely tuned framework to easily enable producers to discover new talent and invest in the future of their production through an on-set placement of a Director Observer (sometimes called a ‘Shadow’).

What are the expectations on the DGC?

The DGC is here to help ensure that this placement is a success for you. Our goal is to provide an easy and high-quality placement that can painlessly plug into your existing production. The DGC will help facilitate finding great candidates for your show, and provide frameworks to ensure the experience is smooth and fruitful for all involved.

To find candidates, the DGC will inform our membership of the opportunity and facilitating finding Directors who desire to accumulate experience in the format and genre of your show. We provide a list of Directors who are trained, experienced and ready to potentially direct on your production should the opportunity arise after the observing experience. In some cases, upon request, we can also provide the Director Observer’s self-identified traits to allow the choice be as well informed as possible.

In addition to monitoring established daily and weekly goals, the DGC will send out a post-placement survey to the Director Observer and Director Mentor and will also schedule a debrief meeting with the Producer, Director Mentor and Director Observer after the placement is complete, to provide valuable feedback to the Director Observer, the Producer and the DGC in order to continue to improve the Initiative.

The DGC is here to help you have a positive and collaborative experience. We will check in with you and the Director Mentor regularly to make sure you have everything you need.

[Harassment, Anti-racism and Violence Emergency Network \(HAVEN\) Helpline](#)

This helpline provides direct 24/7 access to incident reporting and counselling services for DGC members for incidents of harassment, violence, discrimination, and racism.

[DGC Ontario Workplace Anti-Harassment Toolkit](#)

What are the expectations on the Director Observer?

We are excited for you to have this opportunity to advance your career development in scripted television. Clear communication of goals and expectations, and building trust are key to establishing an honest and respectful relationship with the Director Mentor. Each of you will be bringing different experiences and unique perspectives to the program. Think about what you want to accomplish during your time together and come ready to communicate your goals and expectations to the Director Mentor.

As part of the placement, you will be provided with meaningful access and engagement in all aspects of pre-production, production, and post-production, creating an invaluable experience, and preparing you to potentially work on the show in the future.

That being said, the Director Mentor needs to prioritize their job at all times and may not always be available to engage, communicate or share wisdom about their process. You should expect mentorship as time or attention allows. If it's not possible to receive mentorship during a shooting day that is ok, simply observing will still be very valuable for the Director Observer.

When time allows, please have questions ready for the Director Mentor and take notes of the insights they share about choices around blocking a scene, shot order, actor direction or how they gave notes.

When observing it is especially valuable to prepare as if you are directing the episode. Break down the script, build a shot list, figure out blocking, and silently role-play what notes you would give to cast and crew to privately compare your choices to those of the Director Mentor.

You will be introduced to all key players on the Production, including the Showrunner, Network or Broadcaster executives and other Directors on your first day in the office, and on set to the cast and crew at crew call, so everyone knows you are a new team member.

You are to be included in the Production's distribution list and have access to all prep and production paperwork congruent to the Shooting Director Mentor – this includes the shooting script(s), one-liner, shooting schedules and breakdowns and the Shooting Director Mentor's shot lists and/or storyboards (if applicable). On set, the Observer is to be provided access to a comtec or similar device and a place at "video village".

In Post Production, you are to audit the Director's cut when possible, to get valuable insight into how decisions in prep and production have come together into the edit.

Below is a suggested list of items for the Director Observer to complete:

Before the first day:

Confirm the production schedule with the DGC and Producer.

Confirm details of any travel and accommodation (if applicable).

Research the show ahead of time. Watch past episodes if available, and learn the style, tone and format of the show. Research the past work of the Showrunner, Producing Director, Mentor Director and Writer.

Participate in an introductory meeting with the Producer and Director Mentor facilitated by the DGC to discuss the goals and expectations of all involved when in production.

Ask how and when does your Mentor want to be asked questions? If you are driving in together, on the drive in? At lunch? At the end of the day?

Ask how will the Mentor signal to you that they need you to step back or when it is not a good time for you to ask them questions?

Ask what tips for success does your Mentor have for you? Helpful tools? What is their process? What information does your Mentor believe is important for you to have? What information do you believe is important for you to have? i.e. Do you want a shot list every day? Or storyboards (if applicable)?

Ask what meetings should you expect to be included in? And which will you not be included in? Ideally you are invited to all meetings but in some circumstances, it may not be possible or appropriate.

Ask how should you network without being distracting to your Director Mentor and others? Do you want your Mentor to facilitate introductions to all the HODs, Showrunner, Executives and/or help set up meetings with them?

Ask how the Director Mentor thinks you can best hope to achieve your goals and objectives while observing them.

First day of Prep:

Make sure you are always on time (or early) and prepared.

The Producer and your Director Mentor should introduce you to the pre-production crew and at all meetings (virtual and in person). Be prepared and ready to introduce yourself.

Ideally you are assigned a work space in reasonable proximity to your Director Mentor - with your name on the door or office station (if applicable). If this doesn't happen speak to your Director Mentor and the Producer, or your DGC contact.

Ideally you are included in Production's distribution list, and given access to and copies of all prep and production paperwork congruent to the Shooting Director Mentor (including digitally) – this includes the shooting script(s), one-liner, shooting schedules and breakdowns and the Shooting Director Mentor's shot lists and/or storyboards (if applicable). If this doesn't happen speak to your Director Mentor and the Producer, or the DGC.

Ideally you are recognized as a member of the episodic production team during your time on the Production, and provided with access to and inclusion in distribution of invitations for all meetings during prep and production, casting sessions if the Shooting Director Mentor is present (if possible), and HOD meetings with Production Designer, DOP, Art, Costume, VFX, location scouts and tech surveys, etc. If this doesn't happen speak to your Director Mentor and the Producer, or the DGC.

If you are participating in a paid Director Observer placement, ensure the Producer has all the information they need to pay your invoices (if applicable).

First day on set:

Ideally the Producer and/or your Director Mentor should introduce you to the cast and crew - so be prepared and ready to introduce yourself.

Ideally your name should appear on the call sheet and crew list every day during the placement. If this is not the case, speak to your Mentor and the Producer.

Ideally you will be given access to a comtec or similar device and a place at “video village” when applicable, while observing all COVID-19 protocols, if any.

Every day:

Check in with the Director Mentor. When appropriate, have questions ready
What decisions are they making? How did they make that choice? Why?
Ask your Mentor how they deal with time management, people & equipment management, their best practices and what works for them. Ask what are the keys to success as an episodic TV director: What are the tips & tricks? What are the pitfalls?

Imagine you’re the director. Stay present at all times, privately role playing the decisions and choices you would make, and compare those to the choices the Directing Mentor makes.

After the placement ends:

Attend a post-placement meeting which will be scheduled by the DGC with the Director Mentor and Director Observer after the placement is complete.

Make sure your profile on Directors.ca is up-to-date.