

The letters 'AI' are rendered in a white, outlined font and are positioned in the center of a camera lens. The lens is dark and shows concentric circular elements, with some light reflecting off its surface. The entire lens is framed by a thick, rounded pink border.

AI

A pink speech bubble with a rounded top and a pointed tail pointing towards the 'AI' text. Inside the bubble, the text 'What to ask about AI before you start a job' is written in white.

**What to
ask about
AI before
you start
a job**

Many freelancers and workers already have a sense of what worries them about AI – even if they’re not quite sure how to put it into words. At the same time, it’s also not unusual to still be on the fence about the technology: the landscape is shifting quickly, the terminology can be opaque, and it’s not always obvious what any of it means for your day-to-day working life.

There’s no shortage of high-level commentary about whether AI is “good” or “bad” for the creative industries, and those conversations matter. But even the people leading them – studio executives, academic researchers, intellectual property lawyers – often find themselves pulled between big ethical questions on one side, and cold business calculations on the other. The practical, day-to-day realities for workers can get lost in the middle.

That’s why Bectu asked me to put together some questions Bectu members can use to set clear expectations and protect their work. I am a film and TV lawyer who has been advising actors, production companies, and other creative professionals on AI since 2019.

The questions are designed to be asked in a normal professional conversation to help you make sense of what you’re hearing when you get an answer.

Kelsey Farish

Film & TV Media Lawyer
kelseyfarish.com

❓ – Why this matters.

💡 – What this can tell you.



Will AI be used to modify or reproduce any of the work I produce on this project – and if so, what might that look like?



There's nothing new about editing in post-production – colour grading, sound mixing, and similar changes are understood and expected. But AI can modify your work in ways that fundamentally alter its character, or generate new material in your name, without your involvement.



The key here is to figure out whether the production has actually thought about this, or whether AI is being treated as a non-issue. A good answer will describe specific use cases; whereas vague or dismissive responses should be treated as a red flag. How a production responds to a reasonable professional question tells you how seriously they take crew concerns and professional standards. It's also worth paying attention to whether they draw any distinction between AI-assisted processes and fully AI-generated output, because those are meaningfully different things.

If changes are made to my work using AI tools, would I be consulted first – or at least informed?



Consultation and transparency aren't just professional courtesies: they're the difference between AI being used as a tool within a collaborative process, and AI being used to quietly replace or alter your contribution after the fact.



Even if you don't require the option to veto every decision, you should expect to be informed about how your work will be used – this is a basic standard of fair working practice. If the production hasn't considered this question at all, that suggests AI use isn't being treated as something that requires crew buy-in. If they say consultation or discussion with contractors and freelancers isn't standard practice, it's worth asking whether this can be reflected in your contract and your fee, particularly where your creative contribution is central to the work.

Can you confirm whether the work I'm providing for this production will only be used in connection with this production or related projects?



Whether your work might be reused in sequels, trailers, reboots, or spin-offs is a question the industry has always had to grapple with – but it's worth asking explicitly, because “related projects” can mean very different things depending on the circumstances.



“Related projects” should be defined: a sequel in production is one thing, a reboot ten years later is another. If the scope of permitted use isn’t specified in your contract, this should be clarified before you sign. A production that’s thought about this should be able to point you to specific contract language. If not, it may indicate outdated contract terms that don’t properly address AI-related use.

Might my work be processed through any AI tools that retain or learn from uploaded content?



Some AI tools (but not all) use uploaded content to train or improve their own systems. If this sort of algorithmic training and data retention occurs, it means work uploaded could be used by someone else or used to make similar copies, even if that wasn't the original intent.



As of May 2026, tools like Adobe Firefly and Microsoft Copilot don't use uploads to improve their algorithms, but Midjourney does. Other tools like ChatGPT require a user to manually “switch off” the algorithm retraining option. It’s reasonable to ask that it gets checked before certain categories of your work are processed through those tools. If the production doesn’t know whether your work might be retained by the AI platform in question, it might suggest that the production hasn’t properly considered how your work may be used or retained. Productions that have genuinely engaged with this will be able to give you a specific answer.

Can you give me a broad picture of where AI is being used – in the office, on set, in post?



There's a significant difference between a production using AI to draft scheduling emails and one using it to generate visual assets or process creative work – but both count as “using AI,” and you can't assess the implications without knowing which is which.



You're not asking them to account for every piece of software – you're asking for a general picture. Administrative use (drafting, scheduling, summarising meetings) is low-stakes from a creative rights perspective. Tools that touch creative output – generative image platforms, AI editing assistants, music or voice generation tools – are the ones that warrant closer attention. If the production can't or won't give you a general overview, that's worth flagging: transparency about workflow is a reasonable professional expectation.

Is there a list of approved or commonly used AI tools that crew and contractors are working with?



Knowing which specific tools are in use lets you make informed decisions – about your own comfort level, about what you might need to learn, and about whether any of those tools raise concerns you'd want to raise before you start.



Many productions won't have a formal approved list yet, and that's not unusual at this stage of the industry. What you're listening for is whether there's any awareness of the question – whether someone has thought about which tools are appropriate and why. If there's no list and no policy, it may be worth asking who is making those decisions, and whether there's a route for crew to raise concerns about specific tools mid-project.

Am I allowed to use AI tools as part of my own workflow?



Using an AI tool to help organise your research is very different from submitting AI-generated work as a final deliverable. Unfortunately, some companies may not be upfront about their expectations, leaving everyone in the dark until something goes wrong. To make matters worse, there's no industry-wide standard on this yet, meaning every company can approach it differently. That's why being clear upfront can protect you professionally.



If there's no written policy or guidance about what you can and cannot do, the uncertainty can create risk for you. Different productions will draw the line in different places, and it's reasonable to ask where that line is before you start. If you're unsure whether a specific use is appropriate, getting an answer in writing is often the best approach for everyone involved.

Does the company have an internal AI policy?



In addition to knowing whether you're allowed to use AI (and if so, how) it's also important to know what the company's own position on AI actually is. An internal policy will explain how a company uses AI, and will often include certain requirements on things like responsible use, transparency, data protection, and ensuring that a real person is kept in the loop.



Although not all companies will have an internal AI policy, not having one can be a bit of a red flag as AI becomes more embedded in standard workflows. A company with a thoughtful internal policy – even a simple one – is demonstrating that they take responsible use seriously. If there's a named point of contact and a documented process, you have somewhere to go if you have questions or concerns. If there isn't, that's important to know before you start work.

Does the company have a public-facing statement on how it approaches AI?



A public statement goes a step further than an internal policy. Rather than just keeping things behind closed doors, the goal of a public statement is to explain to workers, regulators, and audiences how a company is approaching AI more generally.



Not having a public position isn't unusual right now, but studios, broadcasters, and other large industry bodies are increasingly sharing theirs. Public statements come in all shapes and sizes: some are short and unambiguous ("we never use AI in our creative process"); whereas others are more nuanced. For example, they might set out what types of AI tools they use and why, or provide contact details for who to ask for more information. A company that shares its position publicly signals that it values transparency in what is a notoriously opaque area.

A note on the bigger question

Whether AI is going to change the job market, whether the skills you've built will still be valued in five years, whether the industry is going to look fundamentally different, whether audiences even care about content being modified or generated by AI – these are real concerns. Unfortunately, they simply cannot be answered right now.

But that doesn't mean you can't protect yourself in the meantime. It's always a good idea to keep clear records of your own creative work and contributions, so your independent authorship is documented. It's more important than ever before to read contracts carefully, and to ask questions if certain points about AI aren't being addressed clearly.

And of course, Bectu can support members to navigate the feelings of overwhelm and confusion. The screen sector and the creative industry more broadly is under enormous pressure, and the pace of change is genuinely hard to keep up with. The most important thing is to keep asking these questions – collectively as well as individually – so that clear standards on AI use cannot be ignored across the industry.

The productions that take your questions seriously are the ones worth working with.



Bectu
100 Rochester Row
London SW1P 1JP

T 0300 600 1878

bectu.org.uk

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