

Unit 24: Photographic Studio Techniques

Unit code:	J/502/5226
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to develop learners' knowledge and skills in the studio techniques and studio requirements associated with specialist types of studio photography. Learners will create specialist studio photographs and develop their ideas with reference to published examples of professional specialist studio photography. Learners will review their own specialist studio photographs with reference to the technical and aesthetic requirements of the identified specialist studio photography area.

● Unit introduction

This unit enables learners to specialise in selected types of studio photography and understand the techniques associated with specialist studio photography. Professional photographers usually specialise in particular types of photography and are highly skilled in meeting the needs of their particular client groups. Studio photography can be very rewarding. The subject can be positioned precisely with careful control of viewpoint and lighting. This high level of control over the environment permits attention to detail and the achievement of a highly refined creative result. A high level of visual skill, technical expertise and a disciplined approach are necessary to produce sophisticated photographs that meet client expectations routinely and reliably.

Professional photographers must become highly skilled in the techniques associated with different types of photography. For example packaging to advertise products may be simple square cardboard boxes or complex shapes with transparent and reflective surfaces. These objects require specific and very different techniques when compared to the photography of fashion models to advertise clothing. Often professional studio photographers work with others to realise an idea. A detailed brief, which is the product of a creative team, may be set by a client. To realise the brief in exact detail, the photographer needs a high degree of skill. Sometimes there is the opportunity to interpret and contribute to ideas about the way in which the subject is represented through discussion with the client.

Learners will specialise in selected types of studio-based photography, developing their ability to use the associated technology, media and techniques whilst creating photographs in the studio. Learners will develop their visual skills and understanding of professional practice through exploration of published examples of different types of studio-based photography. They will develop an understanding of the necessary preparations, with reference to appropriate health and safety measures. Learners will plan personal responses, produce photographs in the studio and review the fitness for purpose of their photographs with reference to the technical and aesthetic requirements of the vocational area.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know about specialist studio photographic techniques
- 2 Be able to create specialist studio photographs
- 3 Be able to review own specialist studio photographs.

Unit content

1 Know about specialist studio photographic techniques

Specialist types: advertising; editorial eg fashion, food, products; commercial and industrial eg public relations, corporate reports, technical reports; social eg portraiture; technical and scientific eg forensic, medical

Studio essentials: eg minimum dimensions, standard equipment (cameras, studio stand, lenses, accessories), lighting units, lighting accessories, power supply; health and safety eg Electricity at Work Regulations (Portable Appliance Testing) 1989, risk assessment, risk minimisation

Techniques: create atmosphere eg formality, informality, props, studio sets; camera controls eg depth of field, depth of focus; lighting eg quality (hard/soft), colour, contrast control, lighting ratios, evenness, intensity, flash synchronisation, flash blur, freezing movement, painting with light, tent lighting, macro, fibre-optic, strobe, time lapse, high speed; selection and application of tools eg media selection, technology selection; visual language eg composition, scale, framing, contrast, colour, shape, line, texture

2 Be able to create specialist studio photographs

Develop ideas: client requirements eg specialist type, creative intention, content, constraints, styling, target audience, output requirement; approaches and influences eg subject type, techniques, contemporary commercial practice, professional practice, ethical, political, published examples, visual language

Preparations: selection eg equipment, recording media, props, sets, techniques; arrangements eg hire, transport, bookings; contingency planning; legal and ethical eg insurance, model release; health and safety, risk assessments, public safety

Production: technology eg capture device, exposure measurement, recording media, light; techniques eg lighting, creation of atmosphere and scale, visual language, output

3 Be able to review own specialist studio photographs

Product: fitness for intended purpose eg intentions, client requirements, aesthetic qualities, technical qualities, technical competence

Production process: ideas development; research sources; ideas refinement; fitness of preparations; information sources; self-evaluation; peer evaluation; reference to published examples

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 describe different types of specialist studio photographic techniques [CT, IE, RL]	M1 explain different types of specialist studio photography with reference to the studio essentials needed for their associated techniques	D1 evaluate different types of specialist studio photography with well documented reference to the studio essentials needed for their associated techniques
P2 present ideas for specialist studio photography [SM, CT, RL]	M2 present developed ideas for specialist studio photography with considered reference to preparations	D2 present sophisticated ideas for specialist studio photography with well considered reference to preparations
P3 produce specialist studio photographs that realise planned intentions [SM, CT, RL]	M3 produce specialist studio photographs in which planned intentions that realise effectively	D3 produce specialist studio photographs that realise planned intentions fully and imaginatively
P4 present own specialist studio photographs. [SM, RL]	M4 explain own specialist studio photographs with justification of the production process.	D4 evaluate own specialist studio photographs with perceptive analysis of the production process.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

For this unit learners will need access to appropriate studio facilities to include image capture devices, media and lighting equipment for studio photography. Technology for image capture, processing and output will depend on the chosen media and may include access to traditional darkroom or digital image capture, processing and output facilities. Image capture devices, processing and manipulation software should be of a recognised industrial standard as should media and lighting equipment.

This guidance uses a sequential approach to assignment delivery in which learners are guided through the outcomes consecutively. An equally valid approach would be concurrent delivery through which the programme of assignments enables learners to address the outcomes on several occasions. Specialist studio photographs may be presented in different ways, for example screen or print. Reference to current vocational practice will assist in supporting decisions about styles of presentation. The emphasis placed on digital and traditional wet-based modes of production can also best be managed with consideration of current vocational practice.

To develop understanding of types of specialist studio photography for learning outcome 1, tutors need to support learners in their independent research by guiding them to appropriate research sources. Learner research should be supported by tutor-led presentations and class discussion about contemporary and historical practice which address the main features and vocational contexts of different types of specialist studio photography. Tutors need to deliver the underpinning theory to enable learners to understand the essentials of studio practice. Tutors must stress the conditions which are essential to ensure safe working practice in the studio. Tutors also need to support learners in their understanding of the theory specialist studio techniques, for example depth of field and exposure measurement. Theory must be contextualised by practical activities. To enhance understanding of techniques visits from professional practitioners and visits to appropriate vocational settings should form part of the delivery where possible. A structured process of tutorial, group discussion and presentation to consolidate learning will support learners to select their own area of specialism and in their further explorations of specialist studio photography. Learners should use sketchbooks to collate and annotate their research material to enable them to reflect on their learning about types of specialist studio photography.

For outcome learning 2 learners need to present their ideas for specialist studio photography with consideration of the necessary preparations. Realistic client briefs or scenarios, given or developed by negotiation with learners, will be helpful to focus attention on a specified purpose. Assignment briefs should be vocationally realistic including the parameters normally associated with client briefs in specialist studio practice. Learners will need to be taught how to interpret and respond appropriately to client briefs. Tutors also need to teach the importance of planning when preparing for studio photography, taking into account health and safety factors, ethical and legal considerations and documentation required. When preparing equipment, learners need to demonstrate their ability to make appropriate selections, for example camera and lens combinations for the specified task together with lights and lighting plans. To support learners in their preparations, tutors may use group activities to discuss the necessary preparations for given examples of specialist studio photography. A structured process of tutorial, group discussion and presentation will support learners in their explorations and ideas development. Learners should develop their ideas with reference to published examples of specialist studio photography. Collated annotated research material retained in sketchbooks will enable learners to reflect on their learning and use contextual the reference material when generating their own approaches to specialist studio photography. When producing specialist studio photographs that realise planned intentions learners need to use specialist studio techniques confidently. Tutor demonstrations of specialist studio techniques may need to include the use of image processing software and darkroom practice if learners are new to these techniques. Learners should use their sketchbooks to

record technical details, their annotated test images and their views on their own studio photography as they progress their work and produce their final photographs.

For outcome learning 3 learners need to review the fitness for purpose of their photographs with reference to client requirements, their ability to realise their creative intention and the technical and aesthetic requirements of the vocational area. Tutors should establish an ongoing structured approach to critique which encourages an evaluative approach to working practices. Learners have to make oral presentations describing their own specialist studio photography with reference to the evidence collated in their sketchbooks.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to unit and structure of the programme – whole class.
Introduction to studio techniques and types of specialist studio photography – whole class.
Assignment 1: Aspirations and Opportunities – Studio Techniques and Types of Specialist Studio Photography Learners work in groups to discuss and present information. Learners work individually to gather information for a short presentation on different types of specialist studio photography, studio essentials and techniques. Individual research sketchbook to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• examination of different types of specialist studio photography• typical techniques• studio essentials• constraints and opportunities• comparisons, influences, priorities and challenges• selection of own specialist studio photography area of interest• summary of findings.
Preparations for specialist studio photography – whole class.
Assignment 2: Set Brief – Fashion Shoot Develop Ideas and Create Specialist Studio Photographs Learners work individually to prepare their sketchbook to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• research for specialist studio photography brief• develop ideas for specialist studio photographs• consideration of preparations for tasks• reflection on and refinement of ideas for specialist studio photographs including test images. Production of own specialist studio photographs. Presentation of own specialist studio photographs. Review of own specialist studio photographs.
Create specialist studio photography for an identified purpose – whole class.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Assignment 3: Negotiated Brief – Specialist Studio Photography for an Identified Purpose

Learners work in groups to discuss and present information. Learners work individually to prepare their sketchbook to include:

- research for specialist studio photography brief
- develop ideas for specialist studio photographs
- consideration of preparations for tasks.

Reflection and refinement of ideas for specialist studio photographs including test images.

Production of own specialist studio photographs.

Presentation of own specialist studio photographs.

Review of own specialist studio photographs.

Assessment

For P1, to achieve a pass grade, learners must describe and give examples of different types of specialist studio photography. This is likely to be briefly articulated with scant reference to the studio essentials needed for their associated techniques. However, to achieve a pass grade evidence of understanding of health and safety must be present. Sketchbook content should provide evidence for assessment and include learner annotations and reviews of examples of published specialist studio photography.

For P2, ideas presented for specialist studio photography may be literal, lack development or clear underpinning by research. In consideration of the preparations for specialist studio photography, learners at pass grade may list the essential preparations only, giving limited detail about what is entailed. For example a learner planning to photograph an object in the studio may select an appropriate camera and lens combination but without any justification for the selection or any consideration of alternative solutions.

For P3, at pass grade learners should produce specialist studio photographs which realise planned intentions, demonstrate technical competence and relevance to the identified specialist studio area. The specialist studio photographs should show an understanding of the identified specialist studio photography area and be presented in a format appropriate to contemporary practice in that area. However, learners at pass grade may need tutor support in the studio to achieve the outcome.

For P4, Learner description of their own specialist studio photography may be limited to a literal account of production activities with reference to the positive and negative aspects of the experience. Learners should review their own specialist studio photography in terms of fitness for purpose in the context of the assignment brief. Reference to researched material, including the work of professional practitioners in the specialist studio area, may be made with limited comparison to the strengths and areas for improvement in their own work.

For M1, to achieve a merit grade, learners need to explain different types of specialist studio photography with reference to the studio essentials needed for their associated techniques. In explanation learners should give details about different types of specialist studio photography with some exploration of how these differ and how each is particular. Reference to techniques will be contextualised with evidence of understanding of the studio essentials needed to achieve the techniques.

For M2, when presenting developed ideas for specialist studio photography, learners need to show their ideas development through engagement with research materials in their sketchbooks. Learners should include details of their specific preparations related to the idea and some examples of how these preparations will assist in realising the idea.

For M3, at merit grade learners should produce specialist studio photographs, demonstrating in which effective use of the technology and techniques and realising planned intentions. At merit grade learners may need some occasional support in the studio to achieve the outcome.

For M4, when explaining their own specialist studio photographs, relevant annotated research material of published examples of specialist studio photography in learner sketchbook will be relevant in supporting some assertions. For example learners will make links between their own work and that commonly observed in published examples of specialist studio photography. Some strengths and areas for improvement in their own work may also be related to published examples of specialist studio photography. Learners should explain their own specialist studio photography in terms of fitness for purpose in the context of the assignment brief. Learners may justify some of the decisions made in the production process and use this information in their evaluation of their own specialist studio photographs.

For D1, to achieve a distinction grade, learner evaluations different types of specialist studio photography should be detailed and supported by collated sketchbook content which demonstrates perceptive comment in the annotated examples. Reference to the studio essentials needed for the techniques associated with different types of specialist studio photography should be well documented. Techniques should be explored and their relationship with different types of specialist studio photography contextualised and the studio essentials for their execution must be evaluated.

For D2, at distinction grade learners must present sophisticated ideas for specialist studio photography. Learners must show development of well considered ideas through engagement with research materials in their sketchbooks. Evidence of their own experiments with studio photographs may also be included with evaluative comments which contribute to ideas development. Reference to preparations should, extend beyond the essential to include well considered detailed explanation of specific preparations related to the idea presented. Vocationally relevant examples may be given to justify preparations.

For D3, at distinction grade learners should produce specialist studio photographs which demonstrate a high level of ability in production. Learners must demonstrate creativity and flair in fully realising planned intentions and this will be evident in the specialist studio photographs produced.

For D4, when evaluating their own specialist studio photographs, learners must make clear relationships between their own work and the selected specialist studio photographic area. Learners should evaluate their own specialist studio photography in terms of fitness for purpose in the context of the assignment brief. Learners should identify strengths and areas for improvement in their own work with clear comparison to researched material of the work of professional practitioners. Assertions must be justified and well supported by perceptive annotations of relevant research material of published examples of specialist studio photography in learner sketchbooks. Perceptive analysis of the production process will enable learners to justify decisions made and relate this information in a well considered manner in their evaluation of their own specialist studio photographs.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P2, M2, D2 P4, M4, D4	Assignment 1: Aspirations and Opportunities	Working as photographers learners individually plan and produce a photograph in response to a client brief.	Oral presentation. Written evidence including annotations of research material in sketchbook.
P1, M1, D1 P3, M3, D3	Assignment 2: Set Brief	Learners work in small groups and individually to prepare an individual media, techniques and technology research folder.	Oral presentation. Written evidence including annotations of research material in individual folder.
P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3 P4, M4, D4	Assignment 3: Negotiated Brief	Working as photographers learners individually plan and produce photographs to advertise an identified product.	Oral presentation. Written evidence including annotations of research material in sketchbook.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Art and Design sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Art and Design suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Introduction to Photographic Image Making	Working With Photography Briefs	Photography Media, Techniques and Technology
	Studio photography	Studio photography

National Occupational Standards

This unit also provides development opportunities for some of the underpinning skills, knowledge and understanding of the following National Occupational Standards:

Skillset Sector Skills Council

Photo Imaging

- P1 Store and Retrieve Photographic Equipment and Material
- P2 Organise and Carry Out Photographic Assignments
- P3 Take Standardised Portrait Photographs
- P4 Take Standardised Still-Life Photographs
- P5 Take Specified Photographs
- P6 Conceive and Take Photographs
- C3 Contribute to the Maintenance of Health, Safety And Security At Work.

Essential resources

Learners need access to appropriate image capture devices, media and lighting equipment for photography in the studio. Technology for image capture, processing and output will depend on the chosen media and may include access to traditional darkroom or digital image capture, processing and output facilities.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should develop links with practising photographers to deliver assignments to learners or to provide work experience.

Links with employers are essential to the delivery of the programme for work experience and future employment.

Vocational learning support resources:

- Learning and Skills Network – www.vocationallearning.org.uk

Business and finance advice:

- local and regional Business Link – www.businesslink.gov.uk

Creative and cultural skills (www.ccskills.org.uk), the Sector Skills Council for Design has launched the web portal Creative Choices (www.creative-choices.co.uk). This portal has a range of information about careers in the design sector, including job descriptions.

Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for Creative Media (www.skillset.org), provides details (www.skillset.org/careers) on careers and the industry and has plus a regularly updated news and events.

Assignments should be vocationally relevant; centres should consider the delivery of 'live projects' for example, to support the vocational content of the unit and programme.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Bilissi A and Langford M – *Langford's Advanced Photography* (Focal Press, 2008) ISBN 978-0240520384

Child J – *Studio Photography: Essential Skills* (Focal Press, 2008) ISBN 978-0240520964

Farace J – *Getting Started with Digital Imaging: Tips, tools and techniques for photographers* (Focal Press, 2007) ISBN 978-0240808383

Hedgecoe J – *John Hedgecoe's Photography Basics* (Sterling, 2006) ISBN 978-1402735653

Hedgecoe J – *The Book of Photography* (Dorling Kindersley, 2005) ISBN 978-1405304382

Hirsch R – *Light and Lens: Photography in the Digital Age* (Focal Press, 2007) ISBN 978-0240808550

Ingledeu J – *Photography (Portfolio Series)* (Laurence King, 2005) ISBN 978-1856694322

Kelby S – *The Digital Photography Book, Volume 2* (Peachpit Press, 2008) ISBN 978-0321524768

la Grange A – *Basic Critical Theory for Photographers* (Focal Press, 2005) ISBN 978-0240516523

Langford M, Fox A and Sawdon Smith R – *Langford's Basic Photography: The Guide for Serious Photographers, 8th Edition* (Focal Press, 2007) ISBN 978-0240520353

Marr D – *Beginner's Guide to Photographic Lighting: Techniques for Success in the Studio or on Location* (Amherst Media, 2004) ISBN 978-1584281337

Peres M – *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography, 4th edition* (Focal Press, 2007) ISBN 978-0240807409

Read S – *Exhibiting Photography* (Focal Press, 2008) ISBN 978-0240809397

Tarrant J – *Understanding Digital Cameras: Getting the Best Image from Capture to Output* (Focal Press, 2008) ISBN 978-0240520247

Journals

British Journal of Photography – Incisive Media

Digital Photo – EMAP

Practical Photography – EMAP

Website

www.skillset.org

The Sector Skills Council for Creative Media

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	researching studio techniques and studio requirements associated with specialist types of studio photography researching and generating ideas for their own specialist studio photographs
Creative thinkers	generating ideas for their own specialist studio photographs
Reflective learners	reviewing own specialist studio photography
Self-managers	selecting resources and organising their time when creating their own specialist studio photographs
Effective participators	discussing specialist studio photography in group activities.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	undertaking research and planning their own specialist studio photography
Creative thinkers	exploring different approaches to making specialist studio photographs
Reflective learners	evaluating their experiences and using these to inform future progress
Self-managers	independently using opportunities to explore studio techniques and studio requirements associated with specialist types of studio photography
Effective participators	when working in a group to critically review work in progress.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	researching examples of specialist studio photography and associated techniques
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	preparing their own specialist studio photographs, if using digital techniques
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching examples of techniques related to specialist studio photography and written information.