Unit 27: Factual Programme Production Techniques for Television

Unit code: H/600/6631

QCF Level 3: BTEC National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

● Aim and purpose

This unit aims to provide learners with the opportunity to develop the full range of skills needed for factual programme production, from researching and planning of productions through to the production process.

● Unit introduction

Factual programme production is one of the largest areas of television output, providing an extensive range of opportunities and professional roles within the industry.

This sector is the prime communicator of information in relation to worldwide events, local issues or opinion, and attitudes within society and communities, from the most serious global issues to the purely entertaining. It provides enormous scope for potential production ideas.

The genre includes news, documentary, educational, magazine, discussion, review, chat show, special interest (hobby, makeover, and how-to formats), 'reality' TV and other sub-genres. It involves engagement with the key media issues of representation, access, objectivity, subjectivity and communication of meaning.

This unit builds on general pre-production, production and production management skills and provides opportunities to develop more advanced specialist skills such as broadcast journalism, interview and presentation techniques and the professionalism required when working with the public.

Though 'factual' is the basic definition of the genre there is a wide range of opportunities for the development of creativity both within the production process and in the topic or subject content, including opportunities for learners to work on projects that they find personally interesting and challenging.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

1   Understand issues relating to factual programming for television

2   Understand codes and conventions of factual programming for television

3   Be able to plan and research a factual programme for television

4   Be able to produce a factual programme for television.

Unit content

1 Understand issues relating to factual programming for television

Issues: accuracy; balance; impartiality; objectivity; subjectivity; opinion; bias; representation; access; privacy; contract with viewer

2 Understand codes and conventions of factual programming for television

News: studio news readers; field reporters; links to studio; mode of address to viewer; interviewing; experts and witnesses; report structure; actuality footage

Documentary: documentary formats (expository, observational, interactive, reflexive, performative); realism; dramatisation; narrativisation

3 Be able to plan and research a factual programme for television

Genres: news; documentary, eg docudrama, docusoap, infotainment, 'reality' TV, educational, wildlife, special interest, makeover; magazine; discussion; review; chat show

Develop ideas: programme concept; target audience; development techniques, eg creation of narrative, scenario, synopsis, research process, interview questions

Research: primary sources, eg contacts, interviews; secondary sources, eg broadcasts, reviews, internet, archives; checking information

Legal and ethical considerations: filming in public; clearances and permissions; privacy; libel and defamation; requirements of the Broadcasting Act 1994; BBC producers' guidelines; Ofcom

Planning: production organisation; roles and responsibilities; schedules; interview and contacts appointments; location recces; budget (planned, evolving); risk assessments; documentation

Proposal: subject idea; format; genre; style; audience; intended aim; budget

4 Be able to produce a factual programme for television

Production techniques: filming (general views, interviews, cut-aways); graphics; scripted pieces to camera; studio; location; public space; sound (ambient sound, wild track, interviews, presenter's descriptions, studio sound)

Production management: monitoring progress; identifying and solving problems; production organisation, eg call sheets, equipment booking, location management, logistics management

Editing: creating narrative; conveying meaning; illustrating topic

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 issues relating to factual television programmes with some appropriate use of subject terminology [IE]	**M1** explain issues relating to factual television programmes with reference to detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology	**D1** comprehensively explain issues relating to factual television programmes with elucidated examples and consistently using subject terminology correctly
P2 describe codes and conventions of factual television programmes expressing ideas with some appropriate use of subject terminology [IE]	**M2** explain codes and conventions of factual television programmes with reference to detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology	**D2** comprehensively explain codes and conventions of factual programmes with elucidated examples and consistently using subject terminology correctly
P3 plan and research a factual programme for television working within appropriate conventions and with some assistance [IE, CT, SM]	**M3** plan and research a factual programme for television effectively showing some imagination and with only occasional assistance	**D3** plan and research a factual programme for television to a quality that reflects near-professional standards, showing creativity and flair and working independently to professional expectations
P4 produce a factual programme for television working within appropriate conventions and with some assistance. [CT, SM, TW]	**M4** produce a factual programme for television competently showing some imagination and with only occasional assistance.	**D4** produce a factual programme for television to a technical quality that reflects near-professional standards, showing creativity and flair and working independently to professional expectations.

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	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

Lectures, presentations and seminars with group discussions of factual programmes can be used to introduce the key issues and debates surrounding the genre and to initiate production ideas. Watching and discussing a wide range of formats will stimulate diversity and originality in learners' production proposals. Discussion of, and feedback on, those proposals can also provide opportunities to raise key issues by questioning the proposer's objectivity, journalistic balance or the adequacy of their subject research to enable them to present a valid opinion.

Factual programmes encompass a wide range of formats but have common techniques applied within them. Practical exercises in interview and presentation techniques, camera and microphone usage and editing methods should be carried out early in the teaching schedule. These can also be done alongside seminars on scripting questions, on health and safety issues relating to working in public spaces, on research techniques and on sources.

During the production phase regular team presentations or progress reports are advisable as, particularly in documentary formats, learners' self-managed productions can tend to drift, lose focus or simply run out of steam. If this happens learners will require guidance on problem solving or changes of direction. Reviews of rushes or recordings can be used to provide guidance on creating narrative or communicating meaning as a starting point for an edit plan.

Learners' production schedules should allow for review of initial edits, with time for re-shoots, 'pick-up' shots, links or recording of commentary or 'balance' interviews for insertion.

Arranging production screenings or airings for programmes, ideally to the target audience but at least to the group and possibly to participants, people featured or associated with the programme topic, can serve the dual function of gaining feedback on the production's effectiveness and, if a prearranged date is made, can motivate learners to work to a fixed deadline, mirroring professional practice.

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 of planning the teaching and assessment of this unit.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities
Introduction to unit and unit assessment.
Introduction to factual programme production: tutor-led lecture on the nature of factual content within television schedules, its purpose and audience use of such content.
Discussion of content of programming from the factual genre related to examples and, where possible, directors' commentaries on the production of this content and the challenges faced by them.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities
Assignment 1 – Issues in Factual Programming Learners receive a brief to produce a media production textbook chapter on the issues facing producers of factual programming and the impact this has on their work Learners will: • research further the issues facing the producers of factual programming • select particular examples found within their research and investigate these further • produce a textbook chapter on the issues facing producers of factual programming and the impact these have on their work.
Tutor led group discussion of a range of factual programmes and identification of codes and conventions, with consideration of the effects of these conventions and how they inform an audience.
Assignment 2 – Codes and Conventions of Factual Programming Learners will: • analyse existing examples of factual programming and identify common codes and conventions • produce an illustrated PowerPoint presentation on codes and conventions of factual programming showing how these codes and conventions inform or determine audience responses.
Visitor: factual programme producer workshop on generating and developing ideas for factual programme production.
Assignment 3 – Production Learners receive a brief to research and produce a nine-minute item for a television factual magazine programme. Launch of the brief with guided discussion on a range of issues and suitable topics. Learners will then individually: • generate ideas for the item • choose and fully research one idea • develop a proposal for the chosen idea • pitch the proposal to the commissioning editor of the programme, highlighting the main findings of their research and justifying their choice of subject • build a portfolio of pre-production documentation needed to effectively produce the item • carry out their production • present their finished work in an appropriate format.
Unit learning and assessment review.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcomes 1 and 2 could be a report or presentation which would require the production proposal to be 'pitched' in the context of the codes and conventions of the genre, and key issues and debates.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 3 could be provided by a research file detailing sources and range of primary and secondary research with an evaluation of the validity and objectivity of the research and by tutor observation of team meetings and the notes of those meetings. Further evidence can be generated through the planning and production documentation for the final programme.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 4 will principally be the actual production. However, this needs to be matched with tutor observation or recording of the production process – production meetings, progress reviews, rough edit reviews etc.

Where learners work in groups on a production tutors must ensure that learners produce evidence that will enable them to be individually assessed against all the criteria.

For some elements of this unit, and for some learners, a formal viva voce assessment might be appropriate. When more than one learner in a cohort is assessed in this way care must be taken to ensure that all learners are asked equivalent questions, and that all are given equal opportunities to expand or clarify their answers. Interviewers must also ensure that questions are not phrased in such a way as to provide or suggest an answer. Formal vivas should be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification and at least 50 per cent of such assessments must be internally verified.

Application of grading criteria

When applying the grading criteria, tutors should follow the advice given below. Please note that any examples of evidence given here are indicative only. This advice is not exhaustive and the examples need not specifically be included in a learner's work in order for that learner to achieve the exemplified grade.

Pass

To achieve a pass grade, learners must achieve all the criteria at pass level. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

P1: 'describe' means that all aspects of the description are accurate, that they are relevant, and that the subject under discussion is covered substantially, though not necessarily completely.

P2: a simple list of the issues and the codes and conventions of factual programmes is not sufficient evidence for achievement of this criterion. An outline of the key features of the issues, codes and conventions must be given.

P1 and P2: evidence will show a basic understanding of technical terminology but learners will generally be unsure about this vocabulary and will make fairly frequent mistakes when they do use it.

P3: learners will provide planning and research documentation (for example, arrangements with interviewees, location recces) though not in full detail. They will have actively contributed to the planning if this a team production. In terms of the originality or creative qualities of their ideas, learners will not move beyond the conventional though the conventions applied will be appropriate to the format or genre within which they are working. They may, in effect, plan their own version of an existing programme.

P4: what is achieved will not fully realise what was intended, but the activity will have been purposeful with the deliberate application of appropriate techniques behind it. Learners will have fulfilled a substantial production role if in a team production.

P3 and P4: the creative qualities of the production will be limited to the application of the conventional, though the conventions applied will be appropriate to the format or genre within which they are working. Learners working at the pass grade will need frequent assistance and support, though they will take note of and make use of this help when it is given. If they are in frequent need of such help but fail to make positive use of it they should not be considered for a pass grade for this unit.

Merit

To achieve a merit grade, learners must achieve all the pass and all the merit grade criteria. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

M1: learners will discuss issues relevant to factual programme production in such a way as to show how they might affect those involved in producing factual programming or they will explain how they affect or relate to their own proposal.

M2: learners will talk or write about codes and conventions in such a way as to show how or why they are used, or they will show how they are to be used and are appropriate in relation to their own proposal.

M1 and M2: relevant examples will be given to support what is said, but learners will not elucidate the examples to show how they illustrate the point they support. Learners will use technical vocabulary for the most part correctly, but may make mistakes or be unsure about usages at times.

M3: research and pre-production work will be approached methodically, with adequate preparation, and ideas will be worked out and presented neatly.

M4: learners will show facility and some confidence in relation to skills, the handling of equipment and the application of techniques. Processes will be undertaken with care and, on the whole, work will be free of technical errors. Contribution to a group production will be similarly competent.

M3 and M4: though learners might still be working within recognisable generic conventions, there will be some thought behind the concept for the production. Generic and technical codes and conventions will be used with some inventiveness. Learners will need little assistance, though typically they will still need some support when dealing with more complex technology or trying to apply more sophisticated techniques. Like the pass grade learner, they will benefit from it.

Distinction

To achieve a distinction grade, learners must achieve all the pass, all the merit and all the distinction grade criteria. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

D1 and D2: when discussing issues relating to factual programme production and their codes and conventions, or when showing how these matters relate to their own proposed production, learners will justify any points made using supporting arguments or evidence, and draw out of an example precisely what it is about it that exemplifies the point it illustrates. Technical vocabulary will be secure and used correctly and confidently at all times.

D3 and D4: 'with creativity and flair' means learners show ingenuity and imagination in the way they develop ideas. Their productions will therefore move beyond the conventional, using generic conventions with ingenuity and occasionally surprising results. They will evaluate the validity and objectivity of sources and make every effort to verify the information's reliability. Documentation of production planning and research will be thorough. The term 'near-professional standards' means that technical and production skills are beginning to approach and bear comparison to professional standards. Learners will show ingenuity in the way they use technical skills and codes to realise their ideas. 'Working independently to professional expectations' means learners are capable of working autonomously and effectively and that they are able to work on their own initiative, do not need constant support or supervision, give the work their full commitment, work positively and cooperatively with others, and meet deadlines. In other words, they have the kind of self-management skills that would be expected of them in a professional context.

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
P1, M1, D1	Assignment 1 – Issues in Factual Programming	Brief to produce a textbook chapter on the issues facing producers of factual programming and the impact these have on their work.	• Research portfolio. • Written chapter.
P2, M2, D2	Assignment 2 – Codes and Conventions of Factual Programming	Brief to conduct a short seminar presentation on the common codes and conventions of the factual television genre.	• Research Portfolio. • Copies of PowerPoint slides, speaker's notes and handouts. • Recording of PowerPoint presentation.
P3, M3, D3 P4, M4, D4	Assignment 3 – Production	Brief to: • research a suitable idea for a nine-minute item in a factual television magazine programme • pitch proposal to commissioning editor • produce it.	• Research portfolio. • Pitch presentation – recorded. • Tutor observation notes. • Pre-production documentation portfolio including storyboarding, scripts, budgets, call sheets, health and safety consideration etc. • Production documentation portfolio. • Finished, edited product presented in an appropriate format.

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

This unit forms part of the BTEC Creative Media Production suite. This unit has particular links with the following units in the BTEC Creative Media Production suite:

Level 2	Level 3
Factual Production for the Creative Media	Film and Video Editing Techniques
	Interview Techniques for Creative Media Production
	Single Camera Techniques
	Soundtrack Production for the Moving Image

There are opportunities to relate the work done for this unit to Skillset National Occupational Standards in Broadcast Journalism, Camera, Directors, Editing, Lighting for Film and Television, Production (Film and Television), and Sound as follows:

Broadcast Journalism

B1   Comply with law and broadcast industry regulations

B3   Originate and pitch ideas and gather information for news stories

B6   Acquire content for programmes

B10   Prepare for and conduct interviews

B11   Write news scripts for audio and video

B13   Edit audio-visual material

Camera

C1   Assess and agree studios or locations for shoot

C2   Specify camera equipment required

C4   Obtain, prepare and return camera equipment

C28   Position and move the camera to frame and compose the image

CCL1 Prepare camera equipment for each day's shoot

CCL2 Set up camera equipment

Directors

D1   Investigate the viability of ideas for productions

D4   Input into pre-production planning

D5   Select a creative and technical team

D6   Review the suitability of potential locations and studios

D7   Direct the production

D9   Direct the contributors (documentary)

D10   Supervise the post-production process

Editing

E1   Identify and agree editing outcomes and process

E11   Edit materials using nonlinear equipment

E14   Produce first cuts

E15   Evaluate first cuts materials and agree changes to them

E16   Produce fine cut/locked out materials for final post-production

Lighting for Film and Television

L2   Conduct a recce locations from an electrical viewpoint

L6   Identify and select the lighting requirements for film

L7   Lighting for a single camera

L11   Set lighting to meet the desired effect

Production (Film and Television)

P1   Contribute ideas for productions

P2   Assist with the preparation of a budget for the production

P3   Prepare a budget for the production

P5   Identify sources of information and present findings

P6   Obtain archive material

P8   Organise pre-production activities

P9   Plan and schedule production activities

P10   Control the overall planning of the production

P11   Contribute to the drafting of scripts, cues, links or written content

P13   Clear copyright materials

P16   Assist in managing resources for the production

P18   Co-ordinate activities to support production

P19   Assist performers, contributors and crew

P20   Identify and recommend contributors

P22   Facilitate communication between the director and other members of the production

P23   Brief and manage contributors and performers prior to filming

P30   Research and assess location

P31   Prepare and confirm use of locations

P32   Assist with the running of a location

P33   Manage locations for a production

P34   Brief contributors during shooting

P35   Co-ordinate activities during production

P36   Produce a location shoot for a programme insert

P37   Produce a location shoot for a complete programme

P38   Assist documentary productions

P40   Monitor and control the progress of productions

P45   Assist with the post-production process

P47   Supervise the edit of a complete programme

P48   Plan and schedule post-production activities

Sound

S2   Identify, devise and manage the sound requirements

S3   Assess studios and locations

S5   Rig sound equipment

S14   Mix recorded sound

S15   Work with supplementary sound material

S16   Make sound recordings

S18   Record sound through single camera operations

S19   Document and store media

S20   Edit sound.

Essential resources

Learner will need access to video or film production and post production facilities. Video edit facilities should have the facility to insert graphics or sub-titles.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should aim to incorporate contact with practitioners from relevant fields wherever possible in teaching of this unit. Talks from documentary film-makers, representatives from production companies, distributors or broadcasters will all benefit learners. Site visits to television companies or local news production companies will also help.

Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the creative media sector, has a substantial section of its website dedicated to careers, including job descriptions – www.skillset.org/careers/.

Further general information on work-related learning can be found at the following websites:

● www.aimhighersw.ac.uk/wbl.htm – work-based learning guidance

● www.businesslink.gov.uk – local, regional business links

● www.nebpn.org – National Education and Business Partnership Network

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

● www.warwick.ac.uk/wie/cei/ – Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick – work experience and workplace learning frameworks.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Baylis P, Freedman A, Procter N et al – *BTEC Level 3 National Creative Media Production, Student Book* (Pearson, 2010) ISBN 978-1846906725

Baylis P, Freedman A, Procter N et al – *BTEC Level 3 National Creative Media Production, Teaching Resource Pack* (Pearson, 2010) ISBN 978-1846907371

Adams S – *Interviewing for Journalists* (Routledge, 2009) ISBN 978-0415477758

Barnouw E – *Documentary* (Oxford University Press, 1992) ISBN 978-0195078985

Berger A – *Media Analysis Techniques* (Sage, 2004) ISBN 978-1412906838

Boyd A – *Broadcast Journalism: Techniques of Radio and Television News* (Focal Press, 2008) ISBN 978-0240810249

Bruzzi S – *New Documentary: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2006) ISBN 978-0415385244

Dovey J – *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television* (Pluto Press, 2000) ISBN 978-0745314501

Emm A – *Research for Television and Radio* (Routledge, 2002) ISBN 978-0415243889

Evans R – *Practical DV Film Making* (Focal Press, 2005) ISBN 978-0240807386

Evans H – *Essential English for Journalists, Editors and Writers* (Pimlico, 2000) ISBN 978-0712664479

Hartley J – *Television Truths: Forms of Knowledge in Popular Culture* (Whiley Blackwell, 2007) ISBN 978-1405169790

Hicks W – *Writing for Journalists* (Routledge, 2008) ISBN 978-0415460217

Jarvis P – *The Essential TV Directors Handbook* (Focal Press, 1998) ISBN 978-0240515038

Jones C and Joliffe G – *The Guerrilla Film Makers Handbook* (Continuum, 2006) ISBN 978-0826479884

Rabiger M – *Directing the Documentary* (Focal Press, 2009) ISBN 978-0240810898

Rudin R and Ibbotson T – *An Introduction to Journalism: Essential Techniques and Background Knowledge* (Focal Press, 2003) ISBN 978-0240516349

Winston B – *Claiming the Real* (British Film Institute, 2008) ISBN 978-1844572717

Journals

Broadcast

The Journalist

Websites

www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines – BBC producers' guidelines

www.bbctraining.com/journalism.asp – BBC online training modules including links to modules on interviewing for radio; streaming content and text versions available

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	planning and carrying out research into the codes and conventions common to factual products and exploring the issues surrounding the content of their own factual television product
Creative thinkers	asking questions about and generating ideas for their own factual product and trying out alternative ways to present information in an engaging way
Team workers	collaborating with others towards a common goal and adapting their behaviour to suit different roles and situations when working in a team to produce a factual television product
Self-managers	organising their time and resources and working towards their goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance, when planning for and producing their own factual programme.

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 ...
Reflective learners	assessing themselves and others and inviting feedback, dealing positively with praise, setbacks and criticism when reflecting on their work
Effective participators	acting as an advocate for views and beliefs that may differ from their own when producing a factual programme based on a community issue.

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	presenting information using word processing or digital presentation methods
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	collating and storing research materials and written work
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	involved in research and analysis activities
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: • text and tables • images • numbers • records	presenting evidence for assessment in the form of written reports, collated research portfolios, pre-production documentation or digital presentations
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	presenting evidence for assessment in the form of written reports, collated research portfolios or digital presentations
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	presenting evidence for assessment in the form of written reports, collated research portfolios or digital presentations
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	communicating between contributors and team members within the production process
Mathematics	
Draw conclusions and provide mathematical justifications	budgeting within the pre-production process and detailing the financial constraints of factual programme production
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	contributing to debates on the issues surrounding factual content production
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	engaging in research into factual programme production
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	presenting pre-production documentation and written evidence for assessment.