Unit 31: Social Action and Community Media Production

Unit code: J/600/6671

QCF Level 3: BTEC National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to enable learners to apply production skills in a community context. Learners will investigate existing social action and community media products and then apply their understanding through the production of a piece of work with a specific social action and community purpose. Finally, they will evaluate the effectiveness of the finished product.

● Unit introduction

The media can have a profound impact on attitudes and behaviour and much media work is designed to engage with people in specific ways – for example to change the way in which an issue is seen, to promote a cause, to challenge dominant ideologies or to instigate charitable giving. This can be described as social action media.

The growing field of community media is typified by its service to a community combined with the participation of that community in its production. Community media has had a boost in the UK since the legalising of full-time community radio stations in the Community Radio Order 2004.

In both cases, the work produced is not primarily designed for entertainment or profit, but in response to a specific social or political agenda.

Social action and community media production work can take a variety of forms. It can include work intended for distribution to a mass audience, such as campaigning work for charities, public information or political parties. However, it can also include work which is primarily intended to bring about localised community improvement and for which mass distribution and exhibition are much lower priorities. Community media also places an emphasis on the benefits derived by participants from being involved in the production. Social action and community production work is not always non-fiction as it can also incorporate dramatic work drawn from, and intended to highlight, specific social and community issues.

Through following this unit, learners will develop an understanding of the relationship between the purpose of a work and its techniques, the conditions of production, and the intended distribution and exhibition of the work, not only in relation to community media but also in relation to the media in general. They will take into account issues of access, funding and representation. They will then implement this understanding through the production of a piece of work with a genuine social action or community purpose, based on research. Finally, they will evaluate the effectiveness of the finished product.

This unit requires not only technical skills, but also a degree of maturity in dealing with members of the public and potentially sensitive or controversial issues. Consequently, it may be more appropriate as a second year unit.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

1 Understand the purpose and impact of social action and community media production work

2 Be able to research for social action and community media production work

3 Be able to plan and produce a piece of social action or community media production work

4 Be able to reflect upon own social action or community media production work.

Unit content

1 Understand the purpose and impact of social action and community media production work

Purpose: to bring about local, national or global change; to change attitudes; to raise awareness; to create access to media production for non-traditional groups; to challenge dominant representations and agendas; to create or strengthen community ties; to provide information; to campaign; to change voting behaviour; to infiltrate mainstream media; to build relationships with subjects

Impact: evidence of any change being brought about through projects

2 Be able to research for social action and community media production work

Research techniques: primary; secondary; qualitative; quantitative

Research issues: aims and objectives; social; personal and political issues; ethical considerations; awareness of sensitivities around subjects; community resources and characteristics; access issues; existing comparable work; funding issues; opportunities for distribution and exhibition

3 Be able to plan and produce a piece of social action or community media production work

Planning: developing form and style appropriate for message; use of devices specific to the medium; liaison with participants, contributors and clients; scheduling production and post-production activities; coordinating personnel and resources

Production: pre-production; production; post-production; using techniques appropriate for the medium, context and subject

4 Be able to reflect upon own social action or community media production work

Sources of information: self-evaluation; documentation, eg notes, sketches, storyboards, thumbnails, mood boards, trial layouts, production logs; comments from others, eg audience, peers, tutors, client

Finished product: fitness for purpose; clarity of communication; appropriateness to audience; compared with original intentions; effectiveness of techniques; effectiveness of content; impact of work; technical qualities; aesthetic qualities

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 the purpose and impact of social action and community media production work [IE]	**M1** explain the purpose and impact of social action and community media production work with reference to detailed illustrative examples	**D1** comprehensively explain the purpose and impact of social action and community media production work with elucidated examples
P2 undertake research for social action and community media production work with some assistance [IE, SM, EP]	**M2** undertake research for social action and community media production work competently with only occasional assistance	**D2** undertake research for social action and community media production work to a near-professional standard working independently to professional expectations
P3 plan and produce a social action or community media product working within appropriate conventions and with some assistance [CT, TW, SM, EP]	**M3** plan and produce a social action or community media product to a good technical standard showing some imagination and with only occasional assistance	**D3** plan and produce a social action or community media product of technical quality that reflects near-professional standards showing creativity and flair and working independently to professional expectations
P4 comment on own social action or community media production work. [RL]	**M4** explain own social action or community media production work with reference to detailed illustrative examples.	**D4** critically evaluate own social action or community media production work in the context of professional practice with elucidated examples.

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

Learners should be introduced to a wide range of work which falls into the category of social action and community media, for example, charity products, public information work, campaigning work, party political work, alternative news and community projects. Throwing light on the historical background to media activism and community work would help learners put contemporary work into a political and cultural context and, generally, every opportunity should be taken to raise awareness of social, political and economic issues. Learners could be assigned case studies leading to mini-presentations or the production of material for the learning environment in order to provide breadth and depth of understanding of the purpose, techniques and impact of such work. Inviting practitioners, such as video activists and community groups, into the classroom to discuss their work will enhance this aspect of the unit.

Learners' research techniques and ability to present research findings would benefit from focusing on the specific needs of researching this type of media product. Learners must be made aware of the particular responsibilities to a group or issue that are involved in this kind of work and hence be encouraged to approach the project with appropriate commitment, sensitivity and seriousness.

Formative exercises could include identifying contemporary issues (perhaps from a newspaper) and asking learners to specify research strategies for gathering relevant information on the subject. They will also benefit from having the opportunity to devise creative media forms and techniques for communicating a range of different issues, presenting these and getting constructive feedback.

When research and production start in earnest it will be beneficial for learners if tutors monitor the work at regular intervals and provide formative feedback on work being produced. This should highlight any problems with work during these stages while there is still time for learners to amend it.

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: • the role of social action and community media production   • social action and community media – existing products – designed to meet the needs of a client or audience.
Recap from previous specialist units: • the role of research within social action and community media production   • the role of pre-production and risk assessment   • types of pre-production within various media forms.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities

Visiting speakers:

- producer or production manager from a recent social action or community media production
- client or social group to discuss
  - ◊ the need and intended impact of the product
  - ◊ sensitivities and ethical considerations in its production.

Assignment 1 – Who's It For?

Individual or group presentations which describe the purpose and impact of social action and community media production (with examples).

Assignment 2 – Any Ideas?

Learners have been approached by a community group to produce a television programme about the proposed demolition of the town's old cinema.

- ideas generation and research
  - ◊ mind-mapping around exploration of themes
  - ◊ researching issues and needs
  - ◊ ethical considerations
- develop final ideas into proposal
- present final proposals to potential client group.

Assignment 3 – Get It Made

Learners will complete planning and pre-production work for programme idea developed in Assignment 2 and apply pre-production techniques, considering:

- budget
- time
- personnel
- facilities
- locations
- clearances
- copyright (intellectual property)
- health and safety
- codes of practice and regulation.

Apply production techniques to create the product:

- gathering content and recording material
- editing, manipulating or arranging content
- post-production – finishing touches.

Feedback:

- present interim production work to client group – gain formative feedback
- respond to feedback – make adjustments.

Assignment 4 – Did it Work?

- Present final production work to client and audience to gain summative feedback.
- Write report evaluating own production project work.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

Evidence for achievement of learning outcome 1 could be a formal report examining specific examples of social action and community projects, or a presentation incorporating relevant clips or examples addressing the same questions. If presentations are used it will be worth developing learners' skills in this area in order to ensure that achievement at the upper end of the scale is possible. Presentations must be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification.

Evidence for achievement of learning outcome 2 will most likely be paper-based evidence of research and for learning outcome 3 it will be the final product. This could be a piece of video or audio work intended for broadcast or direct distribution, or a print-based or interactive media campaign. If the work is collaborative it is important for tutors to be able to identify the precise contribution of each individual in order to differentiate between them for assessment purposes.

Evidence for achievement of learning outcome 4 could be a formal written evaluation, or a presentation with illustrative extracts.

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.

NB: to achieve a grade for this unit learners working in groups must provide individually generated evidence of achievement of the unit content.

Application of grading criteria

When applying the grading criteria tutors should follow the advice given below. Please note that the examples of evidence given here are indicative only. This advice is not inclusive and the examples need not 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: learners will provide a substantial description of the purposes and impact of social action and community media products in which all aspects of the description are accurate and relevant. Learners should demonstrate that they know a range of examples of social action and community production work and that they can describe their purpose and impact (actual or potential) but these examples will be whole products and learners will not select detailed exemplification from these examples.

P2: research into a specific issue for production purposes will be relevant but superficial, being dependent, for example, on an internet search and some brief conversations with relevant people. Nevertheless, there will be some evidence of understanding how this research could be channelled into the product.

P3: production work will have a sense of purpose, but it will not be entirely effective in communicating its message or performing its function. Techniques may not be well-chosen and there are likely to be technical flaws. In terms of the aesthetic or imaginative qualities of their work, learners will not move beyond the conventional, but the conventions applied will be appropriate to the form or genre within which they are working.

P2 and P3: when engaged in practical activities, learners 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.

P4: learners will consider their own work in such a way that they move beyond merely describing it. They will make evaluative comments about what they have done but these comments will be assertions that are not supported by evidence or exemplification. Learners will typically identify some technical flaws and make some reference to feedback from tutors, peers and client (if there is one), but will not fully appreciate the reasons why the techniques are not effective and conclusions are likely to be simplistic.

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' understanding of social action and community media work will be deeper and they will explain clearly the purposes, techniques and impact (actual or potential) of specific examples in some detail. They will be able to talk about social action and community media products in such a way as to show how or why they are used, and how or why they have had the impact they have had. Detailed exemplification will be drawn from products looked at in order to support what is said, but the learner will not elucidate these examples to show how they illustrate the points they support.

M2: research will be relevant, detailed and will be approached methodically with adequate preparation. It will be presented neatly. This research will result in specific creative decisions.

M3: learners will show some confidence in relation to skills and the handling of equipment though there will typically be occasional technical flaws in the finished product. Production work will have clarity of purpose and processes will be undertaken with care. Learners will still be working within recognisable generic conventions, but there will be some imaginative thought behind the work so that technical skills and codes and conventions will be employed with some inventiveness.

M2 and M3: when engaged in practical activities, 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 respond positively to any help given.

M4: learners will explain what they have tried to accomplish and how they have worked to try to achieve what they have set out to do. They will explain decisions made and will exemplify these explanations through relevant and detailed reference to their own work, though the examples they give will not be further elucidated. Evaluative work will clearly explain strengths and weaknesses of technical aspects and refer in detail to relevant feedback from tutors, peers and client (if there is one).

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: work will be characterised by a sophisticated appreciation of the purpose and impact (actual or potential) of specific examples of social action and community media work. Understanding of the relationship between techniques, intention and context will be highly developed. Learners will justify points made using supporting arguments or evidence, develop ideas critically (that is, they will compare, assess and discriminate) and draw out from detailed examples precisely what is about them that exemplifies the points they illustrate. Fuller and more extensive explanation, better application of examples, and provision of argument to support points made, will discriminate between this grade and the merit.

D2: research will be relevant, focused, systematic and executed largely autonomously. It will incorporate a wide range of primary and secondary sources. In terms of procedures, effectiveness and presentation it will be approaching near-professional standards. Information gathered will be used with precision in the creation of the final product.

D3: production work will have clarity of purpose and learners will use their technical skills in the chosen medium to convey their intended message with flair. Their finished product will approach near-professional standards in execution and technical flaws will hardly be evident. Learners will apply their technical skills not just with imagination but with ingenuity and even elegance, and codes and conventions will be used with occasionally surprising results.

D2 and D3: in all practical activity learners will be capable of working autonomously and effectively. The term 'working independently' means that they are able to work on their own initiative and will not need constant support or supervision; they will be fully 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. Note also that this criterion should not be taken to mean that learners do not seek advice or that they work without discussing things with their tutor, but rather that they are not dependent upon the support of others and that when they take advice they weigh it carefully for themselves.

D4: evaluative work will fully explore the implications of feedback from tutors, peers and client (if there is one) and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of devices and techniques employed. Learners will make an accurate and critically objective assessment of their own achievement with detailed reference to elucidated examples taken from that work. They will make critical comparisons of their own work with current or past practice in a relevant area (that is, the same genre or format as they have worked in).

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 – Who's It For?	Preparatory to their own production, learners will investigate the purpose and impact of social action and community media production.	• PowerPoint slides, speaker's notes and handouts. • Recording of presentation. • Tutor observation notes.
P2, M2, D2	Assignment 2 – Any Ideas?	Learners work with a community group to produce a radio or television programme on a community issue, or a community website.	• All ideas notes, sketches and drafts. • Research plan. • Research results. • Proposal. • Tutor observation notes.
P3, M3, D3	Assignment 3 – Get It Made	As above.	• Project portfolio with pre-production documentation. • Completed product. • Production log. • Tutor observation notes.
P4, M4, D4	Assignment 4 – Did It Work?	As above.	• Learner report. • Tutor observation notes.

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
All production units	All production units

Opportunities to relate the work done for this unit to Skillset National Occupational Standards will depend upon the nature of the individual learner's project.

Essential resources

Learners should have appropriate access to relevant resources for the selected medium (video, audio, print, animation, web, multimedia, interactive media etc). A good range of existing social action and community media products would be central to generating a strong awareness and appreciation of their purpose. Some of this, such as alternative news, is available for purchase, but tutors should consider building up their own library of relevant broadcasts, multimedia and print examples. Learners will also need access to texts on media activism, politics and sociology, magazines, newspapers, trade journals and specialist publications.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Learners will benefit greatly from contact with industry practitioners who have recent experience in media production. A visiting speaker such as a producer or production manager for a recent production will also be very helpful as will an opportunity to study pre-production documentation from an existing production.

Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the creative media sector, has a substantial section of its website dedicated to careers, including job descriptions, as well as giving an overview of the knowledge, understanding and skills required – 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

Bann D – *The All New Print Production Handbook* (Watson-Guptill Publications, 2007) ISBN 978-0823099924

Barron A E and Ivers K – *Multimedia Projects in Education: Designing, Producing and Assessing* (Libraries Unlimited Inc, 2005) ISBN 978-1591582496

Bowyer P – *Express Community: Bringing Social Action to Life* (Authentic Media, 2004) ISBN 978-1850785835

Curran J and Seaton J – *Power without Responsibility* (Routledge, 2009) ISBN 978-0415466998

Franklin B – *Packaging Politics: Political Communications in Britain's Media Democracy* (Hodder Arnold, 2004) ISBN 978-0340761946

Harding T – *The Video Activist Handbook* (Pluto Press, 2001) ISBN 978 -0745317700

Hardy P – *Filming on a Microbudget* (Pocket Essentials, 2008) ISBN 978-1842433010

Hoskins, R – *Ban the Plastic Bag: A Community Action Plan for a Carrier Bag Free World* (Alastair Sawday, 2008) ISBN 978-1906136161

Jones C and Jolliffe G – *The Guerrilla Film Maker's Handbook* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006) ISBN 978-0826479884

Klein N – *No Logo* (Flamingo, 2001) ISBN 978-0006530404

Ledwith M and Springett J – *Participatory Practice: Community-based Action for Transformative Change* (Policy Press, 2009) ISBN 978-1847420121

Smith H and Smith M – *The Art of Helping Others. Being Around, Being There, Being Wise* (Jessica Kingsley, 2008) ISBN 978-1843106388

Stauber J and Rampton S – *Toxic Sludge is Good for You: Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry* (Common Courage Press, 1995) ISBN 978-1567510607

Websites

www.adobe.com/products/director/multimedia_authoring_software – the Adobe website

www.bbctraining.com – guides to radio, television, audio/video recording, web design, post production and journalism etc

www.bectu.org.uk – the trade union for those working in broadcasting, film, theatre, entertainment, leisure, interactive media and allied areas

www.cabinetofficegov.uk/social_action – The Council on Social Action brings together innovators from every sector to generate ideas and initiatives

www.chain-reaction.org – shares learning and generates new ideas for social change locally, nationally and globally

www.infed.org/socialaction – explores the nature of social action; key social action thinkers, some important social action arenas, and some of the central ideas informing social action

www.sharedteaching.com – free website for tutors and learners

www.theory.org.uk/student-tips.htm – website offering a set of original online resources and relative links

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	analysing and evaluating information, judging its relevance and value as applied to media production work
	carrying out research to develop ideas for social action and community media production
Creative thinkers	generating ideas for a creative and innovative proposal and exploring possibilities for social action and community media production
	trying out alternatives in production work and following ideas through, adapting ideas as circumstances change
Reflective learners	reviewing and reflecting on their social action and community media production and acting on the outcomes to modify and improve their work
	setting goals during pre-production and planning work, with success criteria for their development
	evaluating experiences and learning through explanation of strengths and weaknesses of own social action and community media production work
Team workers	collaborating with others when working within teams towards common goals during production work
	adapting behaviour during production of media product, to suit different roles and situations
	taking responsibility during production work, and showing confidence in themselves and their contribution
Self-managers	organising time and resources and prioritising actions when researching and producing social action and community media production work, whether working on their own or in a group
	working towards goals and deadlines set for production work, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance
Effective participators	acting as an advocate for views and beliefs that may differ from their own through taking part in a production which responds to or benefits the community.

● 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	using the internet when researching materials and resources for pre-production handling digital media technology systems to develop, edit or author their social action and community media product
Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system they have used	presenting proposal ideas via PowerPoint presenting reports on research and pre-production techniques planning for the development, editing or authoring of their social action and community media product
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	managing assets sourced and created for their social action and community media product using digital file management when editing or manipulating product content using spreadsheets within production management
Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	handling digital media systems to develop, edit or author their social action and community media product conducting risk assessments regarding safe use of ICT
Troubleshoot	handling digital media systems to develop, edit or author their social action and community media product
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	using the internet when sourcing assets for their social action and community media production
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	using the internet when researching asset types and their limitations for use within social action and community media products using the internet to research and evaluate materials and resources for pre-production handling digital media systems to develop, edit or author their product

Skill	When learners are …
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	building and presenting their project portfolio including: • interpretation of the brief • generation and development of ideas • presentation of proposal ideas • presentation of production material • progress review of pre-production work • consideration of legal implications • review of their own work
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	
Evaluate the selection and use of ICT tools and facilities used to present information	preparing a report explaining how information technology was used in the creation of the product
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	researching issues and communicating with social groups writing proposal and contacting others such as client group gathering feedback on their own production work as part of their self-reflective practice
Mathematics	
Understand routine and non-routine problems in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations	planning schedules and budgets that fall within the resources available and analysing costs for materials and resources
Identify the situation or problem and the mathematical methods needed to tackle it	
Select and apply a range of skills to find solutions	
Use appropriate checking procedures and evaluate their effectiveness at each stage	
Interpret and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar routine contexts and situations	
Draw conclusions and provide mathematical justifications	

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	taking part in brainstorming sessions to generate ideas in response to the needs of a community group's creative brief
	taking part in meetings and presenting proposals and pre-production information to others
	presenting the final product to their peer/client group and talking about it
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	reviewing literature and websites to find examples of social action and community media productions
	researching for production and the techniques and (technologies) conventions of pre-production work
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	creating their project portfolio, ideas, notes, production documentation, writing treatments, scripts, schedules testing reports, and reflective comments.