

Unit 36: Interview Techniques for Creative Media Production

Unit code:	Y/600/6643
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit aims to give learners the opportunity to develop the skills and understanding necessary to conduct interviews effectively for a range of media products. The unit develops learner appreciation of the techniques employed by other practitioners in the field before moving on to give them first-hand experience of preparing for and conducting interviews.

● Unit introduction

Effective and efficient communication skills are undoubtedly one of the key abilities any individual needs to succeed in the media industry. The ability to communicate ideas and intentions to others is essential. However, communicating with others in order to gain information or enhance understanding through the means of an interview is a very specific and highly valued skill, particularly in areas such as print and broadcast journalism.

Through their work on this unit, learners will expand their understanding of interview techniques and improve their ability to conduct effective, successful interviews for realistic purposes. Having completed the unit, learners will be able to identify the techniques used by others and put in to practice their own skills, gaining first-hand experience of this often complex but rewarding process.

It is important that a distinction is made between the more generic career-development skill of performing well in job interviews, which this unit does not focus on, although many of the skills developed in this unit may help in such a situation. This unit focuses solely on the media industry practice of interviewing individuals for research or presentation purposes in order to gain information, opinions, or a better understanding of a topic.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Understand interview purposes and techniques
- 2 Be able to conduct research in preparation for an interview
- 3 Be able to plan and structure interviews for identified purposes
- 4 Be able to conduct and record interviews for identified purposes.

Unit content

1 Understand interview purposes and techniques

Interview techniques: question types (open, closed, single, multiple, direct, suggestive); interview styling, eg hard news, combative, light-hearted, entertainment, investigative, promotional; structuring (introduction, developmental questions, confidence building, key questions, soundbites, summary, wind-up); communication skills, eg building rapport, active listening, body language; telephone techniques, eg gathering information, obtaining comments

Journalistic contexts: eg print, television, radio, online, news, sport, feature-writers, editorial

Purposes of interviews: research; enhancement of audience understanding; informational, eg presenting information; interpretive, eg expressing or explaining opinion, justification, accountability; emotional, eg allowing audience insight to a situation

2 Be able to conduct research in preparation for an interview

Purpose of research: identify key facts about topic; identify potential issues; identify potential areas of interest; highlight areas of interest or concern surrounding topic; identify relevant matters in interviewee's background

Preparatory research: observe or read previous interviews; establish key facts and dates about topic; themes surrounding interviewee, eg issues or products interviewee is involved in, previous activities of interviewee, response of others surrounding issue or product, comments of others regarding interviewee

Methods of research: primary; secondary, eg books, magazines, websites, discussion forums, television programmes, DVD commentaries, interviews with others, observation of events, other things interviewee involved in

3 Be able to plan and structure interviews for identified purposes

Purposes: eg lifestyle magazine article, lifestyle television or radio programme article, television or radio documentary, children's news website, commercial blog, local television news, national radio news, reality television contestants

Interview planning: location; date and time; appropriate setting; recording methods; ambient considerations; talent liaison considerations; requirements of interview

Structuring: question formulation; scripting of interviewer input; consideration of interview style; definition of structural progression, eg introduction, progressive questions, summary

Preparation: client liaison; talent management dealings, eg agreements, interview question previews, preparatory press briefings; editorial compliance (fair dealing with contributors, gaining consent, copyright issues)

4 Be able to conduct and record interviews for identified purposes

Conduct: follow structure when interviewing subject; take back-up notes; ensure required information has been gathered; wind-up session with interviewee

Record: using appropriate technology, eg dictaphone, mini-disc, video camera, webcam, live link up

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 techniques used by professional interviewers or journalists with some appropriate use of subject terminology	M1 explain techniques used by professional interviewers or journalists with reference to detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology	D1 comprehensively explain techniques used by professional interviewers or journalists with elucidated examples and consistently using subject terminology correctly
P2 conduct research for preparation and interview planning with some assistance [IE, SM]	M2 conduct research for preparation and interview planning competently and with only occasional assistance	D2 conduct research for preparation and interview planning to a quality that reflects near-professional standards working independently to professional expectations
P3 design interviews for identified purposes with some assistance [CT]	M3 design interviews for identified purposes competently and with only occasional assistance	D3 design interviews for identified purposes to a quality that reflects near-professional standards working independently to professional expectations
P4 conduct and record interviews for identified purposes with some assistance. [SM]	M4 conduct and record interviews for identified purposes competently and with only occasional assistance.	D4 conduct and record interviews for identified purposes to a quality that reflects near-professional standards 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

One of the core requirements of this unit is the ability to understand the techniques employed by professionals when conducting interviews. This understanding is paramount to success in this unit as it forms the basis of the grading criteria and will underpin all the work that learners produce.

Tutor-led discussion may form the basis of initial investigations into this area, leading to identification of the purpose of interviews and the media products in which audiences experience them. It would be useful to stress the many and varied ways in which interview material is presented in media products, perhaps contrasting an overt on-camera investigative interview with the use of interview for a more editorial style piece about an individual in a magazine. Learners are likely to be less aware of the more covert usage of interviews in media products and a clear understanding of their widespread use and the variety of methods employed in conducting such interviews will assist them as they progress.

From this basis, teaching could move on to the consideration and analysis of interviews in existing media products. This could take the form of group viewings of television or internet broadcast material, or playback of radio programming which includes interview content. Text-based interviews featured in newspapers, magazines and websites could also be studied and analysed. The techniques that may be considered could include identifying and analysing the following: use of tone and style in delivery, the interview styles being implemented, the question types being used, the structure, and considerations of the target audience for the product. Learners will need to be able to refer to these examples effectively in order to achieve the higher grades in this unit. Careful documentation of their findings at this point will, therefore, be advisable.

Learners can then move on to planning, researching and structuring their own interviews. As the criteria state, learners are expected to work towards conducting more than one interview. It would be appropriate for interviews to be on the same theme or surrounding the same issue, but this is not essential. Depending on the learners and tutors involved, the choice of subject may vary, but perhaps an issue of recent local debate could be considered, or an issue of current speculation or controversy. It should be noted that learners do need to conduct the interviews they have planned and, given the vocational nature of this qualification, it would not be appropriate for learners to interview people who are merely pretending to be famous individuals. Nor would interviewing peers or family members be an ideal scenario for practising these skills. It is important that learners are guided to choose attainable, appropriate subjects for interview to ensure a realistic, vocational experience. There is no limit on the length of the interviews conducted, but it is advisable that the duration is of a suitable length to ensure that an effective structure can be implemented.

Tutor re-enforcement of the importance of structure at this stage would be of great use to learners, as would opportunities for practise or rehearsal interviews before live interviews take place.

To achieve learning outcome 3 learners need to demonstrate an ability to plan and produce clear structures for proposed interviews. Criterion 3 requires learners to identify scenarios and media products in which interviews would play a part. The work produced as evidence for assessment needs to demonstrate that learners are aware of the eventual use of the interviews they intend to conduct, and their context in a wider media product or environment. It will also need to show that learners can build and present an appropriate plan for the interview, including information such as intended location, time, intended interview style, intention or aim of the interview and pre-interview requirements, such as forwarding questions to a subject.

It may be appropriate, both for the collection of evidence and the enhancement of learner understanding, to ask the group to present their structure and research findings to peers before conducting an interview. This would provide an opportunity to see the real need for background information, as well as build confidence in their ability to eventually conduct the interview.

Whilst the unit does not require the completion of a media product which includes the interviews, it should be noted that evidence of the interviews themselves will be required as evidence for P4, M4 and D4. Tutors may, therefore, wish to combine the teaching and assessment of this unit with another in which the final interview can be written up or edited into a finished product. To this end, the final interview could be written up as a contributor profile for a television programme and this information given to the presenter and director for briefing purposes.

It is also important to note that criteria P3 and P4, M3 and M4, D3 and D4 all refer to interviews in the plural. It is expected that learners will demonstrate their interviewing skills on more than one occasion to fulfil these criteria. Whilst there is no upper limit to the number of times interviews may be planned and conducted, it may be wise to build this unit into other projects throughout the programme to allow ability and confidence to grow. Initial pass or merit learners may reach the distinction grade through repeated 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.
Introductory illustrated lecture outlining the use of interviews in selected media products and highlighting the key purposes of interview content.
Group, tutor-led investigation into examples of interviews in print, audio and moving image products, including deconstruction to identify purpose, type, structure and question types. Examples of successful and unsuccessful interviews will be deconstructed within the investigation.
BBC training online activities on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interviewing for the radio • voxpop technique • 'interviews from hell.'
Talk from local journalist working on regional television news on professional practice and how to conduct interviews successfully.
Assignment 1 – Investigating Interview Techniques
Learners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigate chosen examples of interviews conducted by professionals • present their findings as a PowerPoint presentation with embedded clips of the examples discussed • receive tutor and peer feedback on their comments.
Tutor-led introduction to research methods and the use of research in preparing for interview activities (three sessions).
Activity introducing interview research. Learners are given a time limit to source information about a figure of current popular interest identifying features that an audience would want to hear about in an interview on <i>Friday Night with Jonathan Ross</i> . Peer analysis of findings.
Group discussion regarding potential subjects suitable for interview and methods of contacting them.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities

Assignment 2 – Research Is Everything: Research Portfolio Building

Learners will:

- conduct own investigative research in preparation for interviews with members of college management about proposed cuts in staffing
- clearly annotate, log and reference the materials found
- present all their findings in a research portfolio.

Tutor-led session on the importance of planning carefully for interview covering the content related to learning outcome 3 with care and including examples of poor preparation and planning and its impact on the resulting work.

Practice planning activity.

Learners are given a blank prep report to complete for a scenario which would require consideration of talent liaison, security or safety, editorial guidelines, and selection of locations.

Peer and tutor feedback on completion.

Assignment 3 – Be Prepared: Planning to Interview

Learners will:

- begin to make arrangements with potential interviewees
- produce clear planning documents detailing all planning decisions and arrangements in the form of preparation reports (one report to be completed for each intended interview)
- present to a small peer group a summary of the planning conducted and presented in prep reports
- take note of peer feedback and evaluation.

Assignment 4 – On the Record: Conducting Interviews

Learners will:

- conduct interviews in line with plans
- make note of any changes made to preparation reports
- present their interview content in an appropriate edited form.

Feedback on interview technique from peers, visiting practitioners and tutor on playback of recordings.

Presentation of all work in a completed portfolio ready for assessment.

Unit learning and assessment review.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

This unit requires quite a lot of learner autonomy. However, it also requires careful evidencing of development that may be easily lost or discarded. This is a factor that should be highlighted to learners as early as possible.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 1 could take many forms including a written report, a one-to-one tutorial supported by a tutor observation, a blog over the course of a period of time, a video recorded presentation, or group discussion. 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.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcomes 2 and 3 may be presented in a range of forms, perhaps as a portfolio (electronic or paper based) of labelled or annotated sources, or as part of a verbal presentation to a small group or tutor. Presentations must be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification.

To achieve learning outcome 4 learners must conduct interviews, recording them in an appropriate format. The actual number is less important than that the learner has covered a range of different purposes or contexts. Three or four substantial interviews on wide ranging topics for different purposes would be as acceptable as ten or so brief interviews which duplicate the same purposes or contexts. Producing a plan for, and subsequently conducting, a single interview would not be sufficient to meet the pass criteria for this unit.

Tutors will need to observe interviews being conducted either via audio-visual or audio media, or in person.

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: learners will describe the main interview techniques such as choice of question types, interview styles and use of tone or pitch. All aspects of the description will be accurate, relevant and covered substantially though not absolutely completely. 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.

P2: learners will present some basic research into the theme or subject of the interview they intend to conduct. Whilst it will be appropriate, it may not be highly detailed or entirely relevant. However, it will show that learners have some ability in assessing what information they may need to conduct their interviews and how to source this.

P3: learners will be aware of the eventual use and context of the interviews that they intend to conduct. They will outline (though with little detail) the intended structure of the interview, including a breakdown of questions which shows some basic understanding of industry practices. The language used may occasionally be inaccurate or unsophisticated.

P4: in conducting the interviews, learners may falter during their delivery (leading to 'dead-spots' in the interviews), stray from the planned structure or fail to achieve all their intentions. The interviews will have been achieved through the application of relevant skills and techniques but they will typically lack a clear sense of purpose or focus.

P2, P3 and P4: 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.

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 explain techniques, saying where and why these techniques are employed and showing that they understand the motives behind such techniques. This will be supported by reference to particular examples but learners will not elucidate these 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.

M2: learners will take a more cohesive approach to research, building a collection of research materials that is not only appropriate but also effective. Learners will have carefully selected materials that clearly relate directly to the development of their preparations. Whilst simply collecting a larger mass of material should not be rewarded with higher grade banding, merit grade work will be of greater depth and reflect a good level of understanding of both the purpose of and uses for good research.

M3: learners will show clarity in their planning, providing good detail on the nature of the proposed interviews. The structure of the interviews will be clear and the questions appropriate and clearly written, though they may lack economy of expression. It will be clear from their work that learners have a good understanding of the need for careful, accurate planning and have defined goals and purpose.

M4: learners will conduct interviews effectively (speaking relatively confidently), achieve the goal of the interviews (identified in their plans) and succeed in utilising the structure they have built to interview their subject. The interviews will typically lack a crisp pace or will have the very occasional 'dead-spot'.

M2, M3 and M4: learners will generally show ability and some confidence in relation to skills and techniques. Work will be approached methodically and with adequate preparation, ideas will be worked out and presented neatly. Processes will be undertaken with care and, generally speaking, thought will be put into the work. Learners will need little assistance, though typically they will still need some support when 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: learners will show an excellent understanding of the techniques that can be employed, where and when they are appropriate and their strengths and limitations. Points made will be justified with supporting argument and with reference to detailed examples. In the examples they give, learners will make clear why any given technique has been employed, and the effect it has on the quality of the final interview. Learners will draw out of an example precisely what it is about it that that exemplifies the point it illustrates. Technical vocabulary will be secure and used correctly and confidently at all times.

D2: learners will present a body of research that demonstrates a clear focus on the requirements of their intended interviews and a very good understanding of the value of research. Research will be from wide-ranging and imaginative sources, showing an intelligent approach to finding information and a mature understanding of the nature of interview techniques.

D3: learners will describe the purpose of the interview fully. The structure will be clear, and the phrasing and organisation of the questions will give the interview a sharp focus. Learners will demonstrate an excellent grasp of the requirements of interview planning and the value of planning and structuring the interview in advance. The language employed will be clear, precise and economical.

D4: learners will have considered all aspects of the interviews, dressing in an appropriate manner, conducting themselves with confidence and a professional approach when dealing with their interviewee and following a well-thought out structure. They will not only have a thorough grasp of the techniques used by interviewers but will also be able to implement them in their own practice. The interviews will have a clear structure and focus, and run fluently without padding or 'dead-spots'.

D2, D3 and D4: work will exhibit near-professional quality throughout. 'Near' means that skills are beginning to approach the professional standard – they bear comparison with it. Distinction grade learners will be capable of working autonomously and effectively. The term 'working independently' means 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. 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.

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 – Investigating Interview Techniques	Brief to present a discussion about interview practice at a careers event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All research notes. PowerPoint presentation slides and notes. Recording of presentation.
P2, M2, D2	Assignment 2 – Research Is Everything: Research Portfolio Building	Brief to research a celebrity, identifying features that an audience would want to hear about in an interview on <i>Friday Night with Jonathan Ross</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annotated, compiled research portfolio. Research log detailing activities and references for all materials gathered.
P3, M3, D3	Assignment 3 – Be Prepared: Planning to Interview	Brief from college radio station to interview members of college management about proposed cuts in staffing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All planning documentation. Word processed preparation reports for each interview with appropriate appendices.
P4, M4, D4	Assignment 4 – On the Record: Conducting Interviews	As above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recorded interviews. Annotated and updated preparation reports.

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
Audio Production	Digital Communication
Research for Creative Media Production	Factual Programme Production Techniques for Radio
Video Production	Factual Programme Production Techniques for Television
Writing for the Creative Media	Research Techniques for the Creative Media Industries
	Writing Copy

There are also opportunities to relate the work done for this unit to Skillset National Occupational Standards in Broadcast Journalism as follows:

- B10 Prepare for and conduct interviews.

Essential resources

Learners will need access to a range of different media products such as television and radio recordings, magazine articles, newspaper articles, and research facilities. They will also need equipment to record their interviews depending on the purpose of their interview.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should aim to build links with professionals currently working in relevant media industries. Talks from practitioners in any of the fields identified as relevant to interview practice will enhance the vocational relevance of the unit, as will visits to radio stations or newspapers.

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 978-846907371

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

Beaman J – *Interviewing for Radio* (Routledge, 2000) ISBN 0-415-22910-3

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

Chantler P and Stewart P – *Basic Radio Journalism* (Focal Press, 2003) ISBN 978-0240519265

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

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

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

McLeish R – *Radio Production, 5th Edition* (Focal Press 2005) ISBN 0-240-51972-8

Metzler K – *Creative Interviewing: The Writer's Guide To Gathering Information by Asking Questions* (Allyn & Bacon, 2002) ISBN 978-0205262588

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

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	investigating interview techniques and practice in the work of others researching for their interviews and developing plans for conducting interviews
Creative thinkers	when designing interviews and finding solutions to the problems or challenges faced in making content relevant and interesting
Self-managers	organising their time and resources and prioritising actions when carrying out a series of interviews in different places.

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 ...
Team workers	working as a member of a crew assisting others in conducting their interviews.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	doing internet research using other electronic sources such as CD ROMs, DVDs or streaming video
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text and tables • images • numbers • records 	producing spreadsheet or database information which may be sourced when researching
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	taking part in discussions focused around identifying techniques in broadcast or published interviews
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	using written interviews for research purposes
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	writing a report or essay identifying techniques in broadcast or published interviews.