

Unit 47: Audio Books and Guides

Unit code:	J/600/6606
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit aims to develop an understanding of the audience for audio books and guides and the editorial and technical skills needed to produce them for entertainment, training and information purposes, as well as audio material for the visually impaired.

● Unit introduction

There is a growing market for audio books and guides, as consumer prosperity and the sophistication of retail distribution networks and outlets increases over time. Audiences for these products range from the very young to the very old. Some audio guides are used in specific locations, such as museums or exhibitions, and increasingly sophisticated playback equipment means they are no longer restricted to removable discs or older tape formats. This means a higher than ever level of interactivity can be achieved in such products, as chapter selection, rewind and fast-forward can be achieved with a minimum of fuss.

In addition, the visually impaired find these audio products (and others developed especially for them) both functional and entertaining, so they fulfil a very worthwhile social function in enabling blind or partially sighted people to experience more of the world around them. Modern distribution technology means that this material can now be accessed as podcasts over the internet or as downloads to mobile phones.

The unit offers opportunities to investigate and produce material that is appropriate for groups with specific needs and it will help learners to appreciate the problems of distribution, in some cases to a wide geographical area.

Audio production for non-broadcast uses such as these requires a number of pre-production, production and post-production skills, many of which are similar to those needed in the radio industry. They include selection and scheduling of material according to its purpose and the contexts within which it is to be heard.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Understand how a range of audio books and guides relate to different audiences
- 2 Be able to select and use appropriate material for adaptation and pre-production
- 3 Be able to create and produce appropriate material for a specific target audience
- 4 Understand economic constraints on production and means of distribution.

Unit content

1 Understand how a range of audio books and guides relate to different audiences

Consumers: demographic factors (age range, gender, ethnicity, culture, language); appeal of content; market demand; durability of shelf life

Visitors: context for audio guides (visitor attractions, museums, exhibitions); suitability for diverse audiences (acceptable to young and old, foreign visitors); fitness for purpose (informative, educational, entertaining)

Visually impaired people: partial and total blindness; importance of sound quality; style of delivery; need for information and entertainment; dependence on regular service

2 Be able to select and use appropriate material for adaptation and pre-production

From research sources: news; phone calls; internet; press releases; press officers; television; radio; books; magazines; newspapers; eyewitnesses; teletext

Adaptation: working to a pre-agreed brief; adapt original content for target audience; accessibility; copyright considerations; relevance; interest; duration; content, eg novels, plays, biographies, news bulletins, news stories; create treatments; prepare production scripts

Pre-production: selection of contributors; selection of voice actors; sourcing actuality, archive content, sound effects, music; documentation, eg schedules, budgets, call sheets, crew lists, edit sheets, recording logs

3 Be able to create and produce appropriate material for a specific target audience

Production: follow script; ensure fitness for purpose; recording dialogue, eg on location, in studio; clarity of recorded components

Post-production: editing; mixing; balancing; dialogue, sound effects; music; use of silence; mastering ensuring clarity of sound

4 Understand economic constraints on production and means of distribution

Distribution: formats; hardware (disc systems, solid-state systems, speaker distribution); packaging; returning discs; subscription; retail distribution

Duplication: number of copies; length; consistency of quality; durability; labelling; packaging

Economic constraints: production costs (salaries, fees to contributors, number of contributors, copyright fees); advertising; sponsorship; audience size; economies of scale; audience profile

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 how audio books and guides relate to different audiences [IE]	M1 explain how audio books and guides relate to different audiences, with reference to detailed illustrative examples	D1 critically assess how audio books and guides relate to different audiences with supporting arguments and elucidated examples
P2 research, select and use appropriate material for adaptation and pre-production working within appropriate conventions [CT]	M2 research, select and use appropriate material for adaptation and pre-production showing some imagination	D2 research, select and use appropriate material for adaptation and pre-production showing creativity and flair
P3 create and produce appropriate material for a specific target audience with some assistance [CT; SM]	M3 create and produce appropriate material for a specific target audience to a good technical standard and with only occasional assistance	D3 create and produce appropriate material for a specific target audience to a technical quality that reflects near-professional standards and working independently to professional expectations
P4 describe economic constraints on production and means of distribution, with some appropriate use of subject terminology. [IE]	M4 explain, with reference to detailed illustrative examples, economic constraints on production and means of distribution, with generally correct use of subject terminology.	D4 comprehensively explain economic constraints on production and means of distribution with elucidated examples and consistently using subject terminology correctly.

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

Both teaching and learning in this unit can be stimulating and rewarding, as the focus on audio books and guides can appeal to learners from all backgrounds. The unit is likely to be taught through a variety of lectures, tutorials, workshops and demonstrations. A systematic approach to the use of examples would most effectively promote learning, and allow relevant conclusions to be drawn.

Learners should be encouraged to develop their skills in planning and producing audio products for a specific target audience, while analysing the background issues of successful and creative sound usage. Learners should then produce their own audio products, providing evidence of planning and pre-production decisions as well as the finished material itself.

Learners should be given as much time as possible to research the audio products that they will be producing. They could combine their investigation into professional practice with their own skill development by preparing and practising script reads, then comparing them with found examples.

The most effective approach to promoting understanding and creating work (and to achieving the higher grades) is to encourage learners to produce materials for different audiences and use a number of styles. Tutors and learners are, therefore, advised to investigate and work in different formats and contexts rather than concentrating on a single style, as that will limit the development of knowledge and understanding. In the industry, producers readily work for a range of different audiences.

Visits to talking newspapers and talks from practitioners will be helpful, as will personally experiencing the range of audio products covered by the unit. Learners should gather responses to them from consumers, visitors and the visually impaired. Seeing a duplication bank in action will reinforce classroom teaching about the principles and logistics of mass production and distribution would be more readily understood following discussion with employees at a logistics company, the RNLB audio book distribution centre or one of the mail order or internet based retailers of recorded audio products

Tutors should note that, when learners work in production teams, care must be taken to ensure that each learner produces separate evidence for assessment.

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.
Audiences for audio books and guides – whole-class lectures and playback of examples.
Assignment 1 – Audiences for Audio Books and Guides Learners are to respond to a brief from an ‘investor’ who is seeking market research into how audio book and guide products relate to potential audiences. Learners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• receive an assignment brief• research different audio book and guide products and relate them to their target audiences• prepare materials for assessment• present their findings for assessment• receive assessment feedback and have further opportunities to address grading criteria.
Assignment 2 – Adaptation and Pre-production Learners are to work towards the completion of a finished audio book or guide product, developing ideas, researching and selecting material for scripts and production. Learners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• receive a brief seeking an original audio book or audio guide product• prepare, in response to the client brief, a proposal for either an audio book or an audio guide• following approval, develop the proposal as a treatment• use the treatment and research findings to prepare a script• identify audio to include in the production.
Assignment 3 – Production Learners may use a combination of original and found material in the production of a finished audio book or guide product. Learners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• find and review material to incorporate into the audio book or guide• develop a script• consider whether and how such material can be accommodated in the product• source additional pre-recorded music and sound effects• record, edit, mix and balance content into a finished product.
Distribution and production constraints – whole-class lectures and playback of examples.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities

Assignment 4 – Production and Distribution Constraints

Learners prepare and present evidence to explain the context within which audio products are developed.

Learners will:

- receive an assignment brief
- inform their understanding of audio book and audio guide production methods and techniques through a combination of own experience and research undertaken into industry methods of audio book and guide production
- conduct research into the means by which audio books are distributed to consumers
- conduct research into the manner in which audio guides reach their target audience
- prepare a presentation on the production and distribution of audio books and guides
- present their findings in a format which provides permanent evidence for assessment.

Unit learning and assessment review.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

Achievement of learning outcomes 1 and 4 can be evidenced in report form or by a presentation. Presentations must be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification.

For learning outcome 1, evidence should cover a full range of products and the markets for them, as well as relate practice in the research and production processes to the particular needs of the market.

Some evidence for learning outcome 1 might be compiled through production of an audio sampler containing different examples, perhaps with an audio commentary, and supported by an accompanying logbook of explanation and analysis. Learners should be encouraged to sample, investigate and evaluate a wide range of audio products.

Achievement of learning outcomes 2 and 3 could be evidenced through work generated in response to a brief generated in the centre. Learners could be encouraged to use their own work and voices and perhaps use some of the audio material produced for other units where appropriate. However, it should be remembered that neither the vocal quality of a learner-voiced piece nor material produced and assessed as part of another specialist unit may be assessed as part of this unit. In order to demonstrate learning outcome 2, learners should show how they select and begin to work with material that is then used in a final product for learning outcome 3

Actual bulk production and distribution are not required for achievement of learning outcome 4, but the principles involved should be investigated and understood, and learners must provide evidence of this understanding.

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: learners will describe correctly the key characteristics of the different types of audio books and guides covered by the unit, focusing on how different types and styles relate to different audiences. However, if any conclusions are drawn, they will lack breadth of research and depth of understanding. Learners will be able to give an accurate account of the ways in which audio books and guides are used to earn revenue from or provide a public service for target audiences of different kinds covering the relevant ground substantially though not necessarily completely.

P2: learners will combine a number of the key characteristics in simple and conventional ways to demonstrate their skills in and understanding of the selection and pre-production of material for audio books and guides for different audiences. There will be only limited evidence of research and planning, and the added content may be only partially relevant to the intended audience. The selection of text and audio material for inclusion will lack clear justification at times. Ideas will be simple, often derivative, and sometimes only partially related to the target audience. Pre-production paperwork will not be extensive or even accurate, and the material selected and pre-produced will demonstrate only basic skills.

P3: learners will produce simple and conventional audio book and guide material. Generally, at pass grade production values will be basic, as will technical quality, and the material may be heavily reliant on rudimentary adaptations of found material, while there may be occasional faults, such as the inappropriate balancing of sound levels, or unclear or unsophisticated linking material. Where pre-recorded packaged speech material is used, its selection and incorporation within sequences may be unsophisticated and inappropriate. Work that relies exclusively on 'found' material will not meet the pass grade. 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 accurately describe economic constraints on production and distribution in terms that show basic awareness of the subject, without necessarily making appropriate connections between constraints and outcomes produced. They will cover the relevant ground substantially but not necessarily 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.

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 the key characteristics of the different types of audio books and guides covered by the unit, focusing on how different types and styles relate to different audiences and providing relevant and detailed illustrative examples. The choice of examples will show some sophistication, and they will exemplify most of the points being made but learners will not elucidate these examples to show how they illustrate the points they support. Learners will explain many of the ways in which the various elements of audio books and guides are used to engage with target audiences of different kinds, although their work will lack detailed and systematic analysis.

M2: learners will combine several of the key characteristics in a number of ways to demonstrate their skills in and understanding of the selection and pre-production of material for audio books and guides for different audiences. The selection of most material for inclusion will be done with care and clearly justified. Ideas will be fairly well developed, not always derivative, and will relate well to the target audience. Learners may well 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. Pre-production paperwork will be detailed and accurate, and the material selected and pre-produced will demonstrate good preparation and competent technical skills. There will be evidence of good engagement with the target audience.

M3: learners will create and produce well-developed audio book and guide material. Generally, at merit grade, production values may be unsophisticated, but technical quality will be good. While there may be occasional minor faults, such as inconsistent sound levels, or unclear or unsophisticated linking material, these will not predominate. There will be clear evidence of detailed research and planning, and the content will be mostly relevant to the intended audience. Where pre-recorded speech material is used, its selection and incorporation within the audio products will be appropriate. When engaged in practical activities, learners will need occasional support, particularly when dealing with more complex technology or trying to apply more sophisticated techniques. Like the pass grade learner, they will benefit from such support.

M4: learners will explain thoughtfully economic constraints on production and distribution in terms that show a well-developed awareness of the subject, making some appropriate connections between constraints and outcomes produced and providing relevant and detailed illustrative examples. The choice of examples will show some sophistication, and they will exemplify the points being made, but learners will not elucidate these examples to show how they illustrate the points they support. Learners will use technical vocabulary for the most part correctly, but may make mistakes or be unsure about usage at times.

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: when considering how products relate to audiences, learners will justify points made using supporting arguments or evidence, develop ideas critically (ie compare, assess and discriminate) and will illustrate ideas using sophisticated examples. They will draw out of an example precisely what it is about it that exemplifies the point it illustrates. The conclusions drawn will demonstrate breadth of research and depth of understanding.

D2: learners will provide evidence of near-professional standards of work in the selection and pre-production of material for audio books and guides for different audiences. The selection of almost all material for inclusion will be clearly justified in terms of the context and target audience. Pre-production paperwork will be accurate and produced to near-professional standards, and material selected and pre-produced will demonstrate excellent presentation and technical skills without obvious faults. There will be extensive evidence of research and planning, and the content will be highly relevant to the intended audience.

D3: where pre-recorded speech material is used, its selection and incorporation within the audio products will demonstrate high levels of sophistication. There will be clear evidence of engagement with the target audience, approaching professional standards. Learners will be able to effectively create and produce well-developed audio book and guide material to near-professional standards. Production values will be high, and all ideas and skills used in production will demonstrate creativity and flair, resulting in a polished and stimulating product. 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. Ideas will be fully appropriate in each case to the target audience. Technical quality will be close to professional levels, with very few, if any, errors, such as the inappropriate balancing of sound levels. In all practical activity, 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.

D4: fuller and more extensive explanation of the constraints on production and distribution, better application of examples, and provision of argument to support points made, plus the higher quality expression, will discriminate between this grade and the merit. Technical vocabulary will be secure and used correctly and confidently at all times.

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 – Audiences for Audio Books and Guides	Prepare and deliver a briefing for an investor considering investing in the audio books and guides sector on the kinds of products made and their audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collated research data. • Presentation (recorded).
P2, M2, D2	Assignment 2 – Adaptation and Pre-production	Originate, research and develop a number of different ideas for audio books and guides, to a set brief which specifies purpose and target audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal and treatment for each idea. • Pre-production material.
P3, M3, D3	Assignment 3 – Production	Produce a final product using the adapted and/or pre-produced material.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final product. • Production documentation.
P4, M4, D4	Assignment 4 – Production and Distribution Constraints	Prepare and deliver a briefing for the investor on the constraints on production and distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collated research data. • Presentation (recorded).

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	Audio Production Processes and Techniques
	Presentation Techniques for Broadcasting
	Radio Drama
	Scriptwriting for Radio

There are opportunities to relate work done for this unit to Skillset National Occupational Standards in Sound as follows:

- S1 Work effectively in sound production
- S3 Assess studios and locations
- S11 Acquire sound using a microphone
- S14 Mix recorded sound
- S15 Work with supplementary sound material
- S16 Make sound recordings
- S19 Document and store media
- S20 Edit sound.

Essential resources

Resources should include professional-standard portable recording equipment, editing facilities, and a studio with associated equipment. Audio or radio production and post-production facilities are needed to provide evidence for learning outcome 3. It is unlikely that centres will have, or want to invest in, bulk duplication facilities, and learners might usefully visit such a facility, rather than using one themselves.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Audio book and guide production is quite specialised, but the Audio Book Publishing Association lists those producers in the UK who are members of the association (www.theapa.net/index.php). Many areas will have a talking newspaper association, and most of them will be voluntary in nature. As such, they may welcome contact from learners interested in this field. The Talking Newspapers Association UK also has a useful website – www.tnauk.org.uk/.

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/.

Skillset's National Occupational Standards in Radio Production also provide useful information on job roles, giving an overview of the knowledge, understanding and skills required for each one.

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

Byers J and Byers A – *Words on Tape: How to Create Profitable Spoken Word Audio on Cassettes and CDs* (AudioCP Publishing, 1997) ISBN 978-0965572149

Shriver R, Collins K and McDaniel D – *Fundamentals of Audio Production* (Allyn & Bacon, 2007) ISBN 978-0205462339

Websites

www.audiofile.com/audiobooks – example of a commercial site

www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom – guidance for scriptwriters from the BBC

www.members.madasafish.com/~misterdisco/writersresources.htm#Radio%20Scripts – resources for scriptwriting

www.theapa.net/index.php – Audio Book Publishing Association

www.tnauk.org.uk – The Talking Newspapers Association UK

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 audio books and guides and how they relate to different audiences analysing and evaluating information about distribution and economic constraints on production supporting conclusions, using reasoned arguments and evidence when studying audio books and guides
Creative thinkers	generating ideas and exploring possibilities to create appropriate material for adaptation and pre-production trying out alternatives or new solutions to create appropriate material for a specific target audience asking questions to extend their thinking when creating sound effects for audio books and guides
Self-managers	organising time and resources and prioritising actions when producing audio books and guides working towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance when producing audio books and guides dealing with competing pressures, to manage their time towards completion of assessments.

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	reviewing progress, acting on the outcomes in order to produce audio books and guides more effectively
Team workers	collaborating with others to work towards common goals by taking on roles as actors in narrated or dramatised audio books and guides.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	researching information and presenting research findings carrying out pre-production, production and post-production work
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	researching information and presenting research findings carrying out pre-production, production and post-production work
Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	researching information and presenting research findings carrying out pre-production, production and post-production work
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching information and presenting research findings
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	researching information and presenting research findings
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	presenting research findings, laying out scripts according to scriptwriting conventions
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	carrying out pre-production, production and post-production work
Mathematics	
Understand routine and non-routine problems in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations	using timings in carrying out pre-production, production and post-production work
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	taking part in production meetings
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	comparing texts for an audio book production
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	presenting research findings.