Unit 50: Writing Copy

Unit code:　　　　　　T/600/6701

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 develop the knowledge and skills needed for sourcing material and writing copy for different media products.

● Unit introduction

The production of original written words, or copy, is of fundamental importance to the construction of most media products. Producing original copy for a media text such as a newspaper, magazine, flyer or web page can be a demanding job. Journalists and copywriters often have to work to very tight deadlines and need to ensure that the words they use are clear and effective in getting the right message across to the target audience.

The composition of this target audience, the purpose and format of the media product, and the desired effect will all have an impact on the style and form of the writing that needs to be produced and will influence the choice of words, the style of the writing, the length of the sentences and the structure of the text.

Before starting to write, journalists and copywriters will invariably need to undertake various forms of research and gather additional information from both new and established sources and contacts, to provide them with the necessary raw materials from which the writing can be produced.

This unit aims to give learners the knowledge and skills needed to gather, store and manage information from both primary and secondary sources, and then to use this information as the basis for the production of original copy suitable for media texts such as newspapers, magazines, promotional material, web pages and apps. Learners will also have an opportunity to develop an understanding of the responsibilities and obligations that writers have when working within the industry.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

1　　Be able to gather information by different methods from primary and secondary sources

2　　Be able to store and manage information gathered

3　　Be able to produce copy in styles suitable for different audiences, publications and formats

4　　Understand the responsibilities and obligations of writers.

Unit content

1 Be able to gather information by different methods from primary and secondary sources

Gathering information: observation; interview; reading; note taking; recording

Sources: primary; secondary (official, unofficial, attributable, confidential)

Research: documentary sources; online sources; libraries; indexes

2 Be able to store and manage information gathered

Content: written, eg notes, cuttings, reference materials; audio and visual, recorders, video files, images, charts, diagrams; data; sources, eg people, organisations, websites, quotes, references

Labelling and storage: titles; referencing; cross-referencing; storage and backup

Index: subject areas; titles; key words; names; dates; referencing; file name conventions

3 Be able to produce copy in styles suitable for different audiences, publications and formats

Types of copy: codes and conventions; news stories (hard news, soft news); features (personal experience, investigative feature, informational, instructional); interviews (profile, personality); advertising; promotion

Style: discursive; question and answer; descriptive features; argument; register and mode of address

Formats: eg newspapers, magazines, books, flyers, leaflets, posters, web pages, adverts

Considerations: length; shortening; expanding; merging texts; accuracy, eg checking facts, correcting errors; balance; attribution; referencing; links with illustrations; audiences; markets

4 Understand the responsibilities and obligations of writers

Social and cultural awareness: representation, eg race, gender, sexuality; connotations; alternative readings, eg by children, by minorities, by victims

Readability: style; sentence length; paragraphing; clarity; vocabulary; register; spelling; grammar; syntax; punctuation

Credibility: objectivity; accuracy; truth; fairness; balance

Law and ethics: legal (defamation, contempt, copyright, children and young persons, confidentiality, official secrets); ethical (codes of practice, privacy, intrusion, harassment, equality, accessibility)

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 gather appropriate information from both primary and secondary sources with some assistance [IE]	**M1** gather useful information from both primary and secondary sources with only occasional assistance	**D1** gather precisely focused information from both primary and secondary sources working independently to professional expectations
P2 store and manage information with some assistance [SM]	**M2** store and manage information competently with only occasional assistance	**D2** store and manage information to near-professional standards working independently to professional expectations
P3 produce copy written for different audiences and contexts working within appropriate conventions and with some assistance [CT]	**M3** produce copy written for different audiences and contexts competently showing some imagination and with only occasional assistance	**D3** produce copy written for different audiences and contexts to near-professional standards, showing creativity and flair and working independently to professional expectations
P4 describe the social, ethical and legal obligations of writers. [RL]	**M4** explain the social, ethical and legal obligations of writers with reference to detailed illustrative examples.	**D4** critically assess the social, ethical and legal obligations of writers with supporting arguments and 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

This unit is intended to enable and encourage learners to explore the different processes and procedures that are undertaken to produce written copy for a variety of media texts. After researching and studying the area, learners will need the opportunity to develop and practise their own skills in producing original copy for specific media texts with a specified target audience. Learners will also need to develop an understanding of the responsibilities and obligations that writers have when working within the industry.

Learners should be encouraged to research a broad range of suitable print and interactive media texts for which original copy is produced. This will include a range of different newspapers, magazines, promotional material, web pages and apps. They should then be given the scope to apply their knowledge and skills to the production of written copy that would be suitable for a number of different formats, styles, purposes and audiences so that they can gain experience in as broad a field as possible before starting to develop an area of specialism.

Learners should use appropriate publishing or word-processing software throughout the drafting and production stages in line with current industry practice. Learners should be encouraged to publish and save drafts of their work to show the development of their ideas and adjustments made to suit their purpose.

The unit can be covered using a variety of activities in the teaching sessions. Tutors can use lectures, seminars, tutorials, case studies, examples and demonstrations, as well as research activities, practical writing sessions and workshops followed by time for analysis and reflection. Where possible, visits to relevant companies and organisations, or sessions conducted by media practitioners, should also be included to provide a firm vocational context to learners' studies.

There is clearly potential to link this unit with some of the production units. Learners can apply some of the methods and techniques they have studied here to producing and editing written copy for other media products.

If work placements are not readily available, strategies will be needed to provide learners with an appropriate vocational context to their studies. This could take the form of industry projects that are set and marked by industry practitioners, vocationally focused case studies, research projects that involve discussion with relevant agencies and industry representatives, guest speakers who are working within the industry, or educational visits.

A live brief for a client or for a designated purpose may be ideal for incorporation into this unit. This would give learners the opportunity to work in a truly vocational context, presenting their analysis, findings and proposals for their final product to a client as well as getting feedback throughout the process and on the final product, which will support their ability to comment on the social, ethical and legal obligations of writers.

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.
Group exercise – investigation and analysis of examples of written copy from the media world around us.
Whole-class introduction to relevant research and information gathering methods and techniques followed by paired exercise investigating primary and secondary sources.
Assignment 1 – Gathering Information from Sources A brief from a local newspaper to gather information for a feature on a current local issue, applying the main research methods to both primary and secondary sources. Learners will: • receive assignment overview • research and gather relevant information from both primary and secondary sources • produce log and compile portfolio.
Whole-class session on storage and management of information followed by paired exercises.
Assignment 2 – Storing and Managing Information A brief from a local newspaper to store and manage the information gathered in the previous assignment. Learners will: • receive assignment overview • research and investigate appropriate storage and information management processes and procedures • implement relevant procedures on information gathered during Assignment 1 • produce log and compile portfolio.
Analysis exercises – looking at the writing techniques used in a range of media products.
Assignment 3 – Writing to a Brief A series of briefs from a range of different media organisations in which the learners are asked to produce written copy for different audiences, publications and formats. Learners will: • receive assignment overview • develop ideas and undertake relevant research and information gathering • write material • produce log and collate portfolio.
Whole-class overview of the social, ethical and legal obligations of writers followed by case study work in small groups.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities
Assignment 4 – Social, Ethical and Legal Obligations
A brief to prepare and deliver a presentation to a conference for journalist trainees on the social, ethical and legal obligations of writers. Learners will: • receive assignment overview • undertake individual research • prepare presentations • deliver presentations • produce log/report and collate portfolio.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

Learners should work towards building a portfolio of evidence throughout this unit. If learners have worked in groups they must all clearly document their own contribution to the group project and identify roles they have undertaken at each of the production stages.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 1 will need to include explicit examples of the gathering of information from both primary and secondary sources. For primary research this may, for example, include recordings or transcripts of interviews that have been undertaken, or a copy of the questionnaire used in a survey, together with details of the results. An account of the secondary sources researched, together with a commentary on what information was found and how it was used, is far more relevant than simply photocopying pages of annotated documentation or printing material from the internet. Any secondary sources that are included in the portfolio should be annotated in some way so that it is clear what has been sourced from the relevant text.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 2 will be dependent on the types of research undertaken for learning outcome 1. For example, if a questionnaire was used to gather primary research for learning outcome 1, then the evidence for learning outcome 2 may include a copy of the tally sheet, table or spreadsheet in which the results were stored, together with an account of the results and a summary of the findings and the conclusions drawn. The commentary on the secondary sources used to evidence learning outcome 1 should be extended to include details of how the sourced information was stored and managed for learning outcome 2. Explicit evidence produced by the learner could be supported by witness statements and tutor observation reports of the ways in which learners worked during these stages.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 3 should be in the form of examples of learners' work and should show clear evidence of the developmental writing process. The written copy could be produced for actual media products that learners are developing or proposing, or for existing media products that learners are providing copy for within a simulated work context. It is important that copy is produced for a variety of different texts and for a variety of different audiences.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 4 could be through a variety of different means, including a verbal presentation with visual aids, a written report, an essay, or a statement in an audio, audio-visual or interactive medium. Presentations must be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification.

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 for that grade. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

P1 and P2: learners will provide explicit evidence of the gathering of information from both primary and secondary sources and demonstrate how this information was then stored and managed. The primary research undertaken may not have been particularly well designed or implemented, but will at least have been purposeful, with the application of some relevant techniques. The results obtained may not have been particularly successful, but will have been used with some sense of purpose. Any secondary sources included in the portfolio should clearly show what information was used, though this may be no more than simply highlighting key words or sentences. Learners will describe their use of secondary research and what they have tried to accomplish.

P3: learners will produce copy written for different audiences and contexts with the application of appropriate conventions. What is achieved will not fully realise what was intended, but the writing will at least have been purposeful with some sense of design and the deliberate application of appropriate techniques and conventions. For example, a popular style news item will be written in an appropriate format with at least some understanding of the relevant generic conventions. There will be a clear attempt to modify the style, register and mode of address accordingly, though this may not have been maintained throughout. The material will be sufficiently clear to be understood though there will typically be some errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

P1, 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 correctly describe some of the main social, ethical and legal obligations of writers. For example, comments on social and ethical issues might list such items as representation, privacy and bias, and provide a basic description of them. However, overall these descriptions will lack the detail and exemplification required for higher grades. Similarly, a description of legal obligations might incorporate the use of bullet points to list and describe the main rules on copyright, libel, contempt of court and stories involving minors, for example.

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 and M2: learners will provide explicit evidence that the gathering, storing and management of information have all been undertaken carefully and competently and with only occasional assistance. The primary research undertaken (for example, interviews or a survey) be carefully considered and planned, and competently and confidently implemented with the use of appropriate codes and conventions. The results obtained will be mainly successful, and used with care and a clear sense of purpose. Learners may need occasional support, particularly when trying to apply more sophisticated techniques. The secondary sources included in the portfolio will be carefully annotated in a manner that goes beyond simple highlighting and include brief comments and notes in the margin that show clear evidence that the research has been used in a meaningful way. Learners will explain their use of secondary research and what they tried to accomplish and how they worked to try to achieve what they have set out to do.

M3: the work submitted will be produced with care and competence, and not simply of the same quality but in greater quantity as at pass grade. It will show awareness of a wider range of audiences and contexts. The work will be approached thoughtfully and methodically, with adequate preparation, and will be presented neatly. Though learners might still be working within recognisable generic conventions, there will be some thought behind the application of these conventions and they will be used with some inventiveness. For example, a popular style news item will be written in an appropriate format and the style, register and mode of address will have been considered and will, in the main, be consistent throughout.

M1, 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 go beyond straightforward description and begin to explain, with reference to detailed illustrative examples, the social, ethical and legal obligations of writers, expressing ideas with clarity. For example, explanations about representation will include specific examples of stories or articles where the way in which the representation of gender, age, race or sexuality has been a significant factor. The explanation should also begin to examine the impact that these constraints have on the writer and the effects that they can have on the reader.

Distinction

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

D1 and D2: learners will work independently and effectively to gather, store and manage information in a manner that reflects near-professional standards. They will undertake effective research on their own initiative, and communicate with others using the range of personal and social skills that would be expected of them in a professional context. The primary research undertaken will be thoroughly planned and implemented with creativity and ingenuity. The results obtained will be highly successful, and effectively used to inform the writing process. The secondary sources included in the portfolio will be fully annotated in a confident and consistent manner that includes detailed explanations of why specific elements have been selected and for what purpose. Learners will explain their use of secondary research with fluency and confidence.

D3: learners will produce effective copy using a range of skills and techniques that reflect near-professional standards. For this grade, learners will produce fluent and well-organised copy that demonstrates creativity and flair, and that will be used within media products that are presented using appropriate formats and in appropriate styles for the target audience. For example, a popular style news item will be written for an appropriate format, such as a magazine, newspaper or website. The style, register and mode of address will have been carefully considered and will be consistent throughout. The material will be fluent with very few, if any, minor technical errors of English. Distinction grade learners will be capable of working independently and effectively on their own initiative. When working with others they should be able to work positively and cooperatively with them, meet deadlines and employ the range of personal 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.

D1, D2 and D3: in all practical activity distinction grade learners will be capable of working autonomously and effectively. The term 'working independently' should not be understood to mean producing poor quality work autonomously, nor the learners doing what they want, when they want, how they want. It 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: the explanations of social, ethical and legal obligations will be full and detailed and learners will justify points made using supporting arguments or evidence, develop ideas critically (ie compare, assess and discriminate) and draw out of an example precisely what it is about it that exemplifies the point it illustrates. There will be a clear and detailed understanding of the impact that these obligations and constraints have on the writer, and a fully coherent explanation of the subsequent social and cultural meanings that are generated and maintained. There will be some acknowledgement of the power the reader has to challenge and reject the preferred meanings that are circulated.

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 Pearson assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Assignment 1 – Gathering Information from Sources	A brief from a local newspaper to gather, store and manage information for a feature on a current local issue.	• Log of information gathered. • Portfolio of gathered information. • Tutor observation and notes.
P2, M2, D2	Assignment 2 – Storing and Managing Information	As above.	• Log of storage and management of information. • Portfolio of stored and managed information. • Tutor observation and notes.
P3, M3, D3	Assignment 3 – Writing to a Brief	A series of briefs from a range of different media organisations in which the learners are asked to produce written copy for different audiences, publications and formats.	• Log of writing process. • Completed pieces of written copy. • Report from clients. • Tutor observation and notes.
P4, M4, D4	Assignment 4 – Social, Ethical and Legal Obligations	A brief to prepare and deliver a presentation to a conference for journalist trainees on the social, ethical and legal obligations of writers.	• Research notes. • Presentation slides and notes. • Recording of presentation. • Tutor observation and notes. • Learner review of presentation.

Links to other BTEC units

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

Level 2	Level 3
	Factual Writing for Print
	Page Layout and Design
	Producing Print-Based Media

Essential resources

Access to the internet is essential. Learners should have access to a wide range of media products, with viewing, listening and reading facilities as appropriate.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should develop links with appropriate local media providers who are willing to come in and talk about the way in which written copy is used within their products.

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 for content, appreciating the consequences of decisions exploring issues, events or problems from different perspectives when identifying and gathering material to inform their writing
Creative thinkers	generating ideas and exploring possibilities when producing ideas and working on drafts of original copy trying out alternatives or new solutions and following ideas through when adapting ideas for their writing as circumstances change
Reflective learners	assessing themselves and others, identifying opportunities and achievements when reviewing own work setting goals with success criteria for their development and work when reviewing and evaluating their own work and the work of other learners
Self-managers	organising time and resources, prioritising actions when storing and managing information gathered working towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance when sourcing and drafting material.

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	reaching agreements and managing discussions to achieve results when collaborating with others to source and draft material when working in a group
Effective participators	discussing issues of concern through producing copy for a product which responds to a community issue.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are …
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	drafting and redrafting own written work
Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system they have used	creating an action plan reviewing end products
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	working on written copy
Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	
Troubleshoot	
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	gathering, sorting and managing information from secondary sources
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	
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	developing and redrafting own written 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	reviewing and evaluating own work
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	communicating with their sources and contacts sharing information gathered with other members of a production team

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	gathering information from primary sources
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	gathering information from secondary sources
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	working on own written work.