Unit 52: Factual Writing for Print

Unit code: K/600/6632

QCF Level 3: BTEC National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

● Aim and purpose

This unit aims to develop learners' understanding of, and ability to apply, the techniques and skills required to produce factual material for print-based media. Through following this unit learners will understand the qualities essential to successful factual communication.

● Unit introduction

Factual writing is present in nearly all forms of printed media, with products as diverse as lifestyle magazines, instructional leaflets, packaging material and advertisements all requiring accurate factual content. Employment opportunities in journalism, copywriting, public relations and corporate promotion continue to grow. The ability to express factual information in a written form efficiently and effectively is highly prized in many areas of the media industries.

Learners will analyse examples of factual material, examining their effectiveness and clarity, and identifying techniques employed to convey information. This will enable them to broaden their experience and understanding of informative written copy and imagery. Learners will move on to generate material of their own, presenting it using appropriate media, methods and processes. Learners will put the methods they have identified from their analysis into practice, producing copy as well as completed products that are fit for their intended purpose and appropriate for an identified audience. Completion of this unit should expand learners' understanding of the qualities essential for the production of successful factual communication.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

1   Understand the qualities necessary for effective factual communication in print products

2   Be able to produce factual copy for print

3   Be able to present factual copy and imagery for an identified purpose in an appropriate format

4   Be able to reflect on own work.

Unit content

1 Understand the qualities necessary for effective factual communication in print products

Factual communication in print: informative documents, eg leaflets, instruction manuals, how-to guides; factual journalism, eg reporting on events, research findings; copy; supporting illustrations and diagrams; typography choices, eg use of colour, bolding, font

Effective communication: clarity; conciseness; accuracy; avoiding ambiguity; bias; register; evidencing of argument; referencing sources; legal constraints; codes of practice

2 Be able to produce factual copy for print

Research content: primary sources, eg contacts, interviews; secondary sources, eg reviews, internet, archives, broadcast material; validation of sources

Produce copy: apply rules of written English, eg grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation; register; tone; style, eg formal, informal, slang, dialect; explanations of jargon; draft; redraft; review; revise; correct; use word-processing software

3 Be able to present factual copy and imagery for an identified purpose in an appropriate format

Visuals: eg diagrams, illustrations, maps, graphs, tables

Sourcing materials: original copies; photography; books; magazines; journals; web pages; legal and ethical constraints, eg copyright, permissions

Identified purpose: intended audience; product role; purpose within context

Format: eg leaflets, flyers, manuals, newspaper articles, magazine articles, packaging, labels

4 Be able to reflect on own work

Sources of information: self-evaluation; comments from others, eg audience, peers, tutors, clients

Process: planning; preparation; time management; reviewing work in progress; technical competencies, creative abilities

Finished product: extent to which intentions have been realised; appropriateness to audience; content; style; skills evidenced; skills development; areas for improvement

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 describe the qualities necessary for effective factual communication in print products with some appropriate use of subject terminology	M1 explain the qualities necessary for effective factual communication in print products with reference to detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology	D1 critically evaluate the qualities necessary for effective factual communication in print products with supporting arguments and elucidated examples, and consistently using subject terminology correctly
P2 write accurate factual copy for an identified purpose expressing ideas in an appropriate style with sufficient clarity to communicate them and with some assistance [CT]	M2 write accurate and effective factual copy for an identified purpose with good recognition of audience and a good technical standard of written English with only occasional assistance	D2 write accurate factual copy for an identified purpose with precise recognition of audience and expressing ideas fluently in technically correct written English, working independently to professional expectations
P3 combine factual copy and imagery for an identified purpose in an appropriate print format working within appropriate conventions and with some assistance [CT]	M3 combine factual copy and imagery for an identified purpose in an appropriate print format effectively, showing some imagination and with only occasional assistance	D3 combine factual copy and imagery for an identified purpose in an appropriate print format showing creativity and flair and working independently to professional expectations
P4 comment on own work with some appropriate use of subject terminology. [RL]	M4 explain own work with reference to detailed illustrative examples with generally correct use of subject terminology.	D4 critically evaluate own work in the context of professional practice 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

Learners can analyse a wide range of products at this stage, covering both informative print products and factual journalism. Products such as instruction cards from DIY stores, government health information leaflets, flyers, and promotional materials featuring directions or maps could all be usefully considered. Such documents can be sourced from a range of outlets at little or no outlay and learners are likely to have access to a range of similar materials – for example, packaging and instruction booklets for household goods, instruction manuals for media products such as computer games, and information leaflets from healthcare products.

While it is essential that teaching includes coverage of journalistic bias as a factor when analysing the accuracy of factual writing, it should not become the sole focus of the analytical activities. Learners should be aware of the difference between factual journalism and editorial or opinion-based reporting. They should be encouraged to identify examples of these as part of their analysis of existing print products, defining the qualities that constitute factual reporting. The process of analysis could be undertaken individually, or in small groups, with learners producing evidence of their findings in a variety of ways.

When generating their own copy, learners should identify, or be provided with, a definite purpose for their material before beginning work. This will help to ensure they are employing the correct techniques from the beginning. Consideration of the audience they are writing for, the context their text will appear in and the basic information to be conveyed should all be agreed before they begin. Encouraging learners to formalise this information, perhaps in the form of a proposal, would ensure they are clear on these areas and able to reflect at the end of the process on the extent to which they have met their intentions.

Learners should use word processing packages throughout the drafting stages in line with current industry practice. It may be of benefit to encourage learners to print out and save drafts of their work to show the development of their ideas and adjustments made to suit their purpose. They should also be taught how to save and track electronic versions of their work.

Production of a factual product should allow learners to put into practice the understanding gained from analysing existing products. It should also offer them an opportunity to put the copy they have generated into a suitable context. Depending on the nature of the factual copy they have chosen to focus on, learners may need to carry out further research into the requirements, features and conventions of the product. Learners should be encouraged to observe the conventions of the type of product they are producing when working on this element of the unit.

Suitable products could be a leaflet or double-sided flyer, an information card, selected pages of an instruction manual or a newspaper or magazine article. In planning this piece, learners might use more traditional paper-based layout techniques, or use digital design methods from the outset. This would depend largely on the abilities and preferences of the learner group. However, either method should evidence an appreciation of the communication intended in the product and the conventions of that product type.

Learners should be encouraged to source images and illustrations from a number of sources and, where possible, use original pieces such as photography or computer-generated imagery as part of their page layouts and designs.

A live brief from a client would be ideal for 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 the client as well as getting feedback throughout the process and on the final product, which will support their evaluation of the effectiveness of their own work.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way of planning the teaching and assessment of this unit.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities
Introduction to unit and unit assessment.
Introduction to factual communication in print products.   Learners have classes on: • factual communication in print, looking at types and styles of products   • methods of communicating information   • the effectiveness and accuracy of different means of communication.
Assignment 1 – The Qualities of Factual Writing   Brief is to write an article for a writers' magazine on the qualities necessary for effective factual communication in various types of print product.   Learners will individually write an article evaluating: • different ways of communicating factual information in print   • the qualities necessary for effective factual communication in different print products.
Introduction to factual copy production.   Learners have classes on how to write effective factual copy. Classes will look at: • current industry practice   • research for factual writing   • utilising different word processing formats   • changing and formatting fonts and paragraphing   • ensuring proper use of grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation.
Introduction to production of drafts.   Learners will: • practise producing effective drafts in preparation for production of factual copy   • produce and manipulate images for design and layout.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities

Assignment 2 – Producing Factual Copy

Brief is to produce a leaflet giving guidance to people about what to do in a flu epidemic.

Learners will research:

- the purpose and context of the leaflet
- the basic information to be conveyed
- the audience they are writing for.

They will then:

- produce drafts
- produce layouts and designs
- produce or obtain images
- prepare images
- check and proof copy
- produce final copy.

Evaluation techniques.

- Learners will have classes on how to:
- undertake individual and peer group evaluations
- evaluate products and provide feedback
- interpret feedback
- collate and present feedback using formats such as charts, graphs and written evaluations.

Assignment 3 – Evaluation

Learners will:

- undertake peer, audience and tutor review of product
- collate, annotate and evaluate reviews
- complete individual evaluation of own product
- prepare and give a presentation evaluating own work.

Unit learning and assessment review.

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.

The portfolio could include video-recorded presentations with supporting documentation, or reports in an interactive form using multimedia software. Learner responses to a group-based or individual question and answer session could also be recorded on video. Tutor observation records could be used to support evidence of achievement in the case of classroom-based activity. If such assessments are based on conversations recorded in writing (ie witness or observation reports) care must be taken to ensure that at least 50 per cent of such assessments are subject to internal verification.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 1 could consist of a written or verbal evaluation of a number of pieces of factual writing, identifying the qualities within the work that make it a good or bad communication tool. It could also be a video or audio tape recording of a group or pair discussion of pieces of factual writing.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 2 could consist of a body of copy, the amount to be determined by the tutor. The purpose of the copy should be agreed with the tutor before work commences.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 3 should consist of a finished print product (or a portion of one, dependent on the nature of work chosen). This could, for example, take the form of a leaflet, pages ready for inclusion in a magazine or newspaper, or a press release.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 4 could be presented in a variety of different ways, including verbal presentation with visual aids, written report, essay or within a suitable audio, moving image or interactive medium.

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 provide a basic description of the qualities that are necessary for factual communication in print documents to be successful. All aspects of the description will be accurate and relevant. Whatever is being dealt with will be covered substantially – though not necessarily completely. Whilst not explaining why these qualities are important learners will demonstrate knowledge of the kind of issues that need to be considered. A learner's response might include comments such as, 'Those writing factual pieces need to check that they explain any terms that their audience might not understand.'

P2: content will be accurate and relevant facts will be derived from simple research. The style will be appropriate to the audience addressed but will not be precisely focused at all points and learners will find it hard to move outside their own personal style. Written English will be substantially correct, though there may be occasional minor technical errors and there will typically be a lack of understanding of the more complex technicalities of written English. Proofreading skills will be weak and heavily dependent upon the an electronic spell checker.

P3: learners will present the copy they have produced, along with supporting images, within a print product. They will demonstrate basic technical abilities in inserting copy and images, and show some understanding of the conventions of the product being produced. In terms of the aesthetic or imaginative qualities of their work, learners will not move beyond the conventional, but the conventions applied will be appropriate to the form or genre within which they are working.

P2 and P3: learners will need frequent assistance and support, though they will take note of and make use of this help when it is given. If they are in frequent need of such help but fail to make positive use of it, they should not be considered for a pass grade for this unit.

P4: learners will consider their own work in such a way that they move beyond merely describing it. They will make comments upon what they have done but these comments will be assertions that are not supported by evidence or exemplification. A pass grade learner might write, 'I think that the facts I found in my research helped back up the message of my piece.'

P1 and P4: 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.

NB: given the nature of this unit, higher levels of technical skills in written English are required for the actual product than for the work generated in response to the content requirements for learning outcomes 1 and 4.

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 need to go beyond straightforward description to clearly explain the qualities that are necessary for factual communication in print documents to be successful, supporting their points with examples from their research. Learners will talk about techniques in such a way as to show how or why they are used, or are the way they are. Examples given to support what is said will be relevant, but the learner will not elucidate these examples to show how they illustrate the point they support. Comments may be made such as, 'It is important to make sure that you check that things you state as facts are backed up with evidence. In my research I have found that sometimes newspapers fail to do this.'

M2: content will be accurate and relevant facts will be derived from research. The style will be carefully chosen for the audience addressed, with appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures, and it will be generally maintained throughout the copy. Written English will be correct with no minor technical errors but with some mistakes in the more complex technicalities of written English. Proofreading skills will be good, but will still often be dependent upon an electronic spell checker.

M3: learners will present their work effectively, demonstrating a sound understanding of the requirements and demands of the product and its audience. They will still be working within recognisable generic conventions, but there will be some imaginative thought behind the work so that relevant codes and conventions will be employed with some inventiveness. Finished products will be well presented and indicate an awareness of the requirements of professional print products.

M2 and M3: learners will need occasional support, particularly when dealing with more complex matters or trying to apply more sophisticated techniques. Like the pass grade learner, they will benefit from this support.

M4: learners will explain what they have tried to accomplish and how they have worked to achieve what they have set out to do. They will explain decisions made and exemplify these explanations through relevant and detailed reference to their own work, though the examples they give will not be further elucidated. A learner might comment, for example, 'I feel that I explained the dangers of drink driving effectively by explaining what a unit of alcohol was and how much an adult can drink.'

M1 and M4: learners will use technical vocabulary for the most part correctly, but may make mistakes or be unsure about usage at times.

NB: given the nature of this unit, higher levels of technical skills in written English are required for the actual product than for the work generated in response to the content requirements for learning outcomes 1 and 4.

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 discuss the qualities that are necessary for factual communication in print documents to be successful, developing ideas critically (ie comparing, assessing and discriminating). They will justify points made using supporting arguments or evidence, drawing out of an example precisely what it is about it that exemplifies the point it illustrates. Distinction grade learners might make comments such as, 'In the leaflet about the environmental dangers of fly-tipping, the writers referred to figures supplied by the Environmental Protection Agency. This not only helped to reinforce how severe the problem is, but also added to the validity of their claims, as readers may trust what a government body has found out, rather than a charity which might be biased.'

D2: content will be accurate at all points, and supported by fully documented and well-focused research where appropriate. The style will be right for the audience addressed, using suitable sentence structure and the appropriate vocabulary, and it will be consistent throughout the copy. Written English will be technically correct throughout and will be fluently used. Proofreading skills will be excellent, with the ability to pick up the type of errors that an electronic spell checker would not recognise.

D3: learners will produce work that comes very close to industry standards in terms of presentation, application of product conventions, use of typography techniques and other design features. Distinction grade learners will apply their writing skills not just with imagination but with ingenuity and even elegance, and codes and conventions may be used with occasionally surprising results.

D2 and D3: 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: learners will make an accurate and critically objective assessment of their own achievement with detailed reference to elucidated examples taken from that work. They will make critical comparisons of their own work with current or past practice in a relevant area (that is, the same genre or format as they have worked in). Responses might include comments such as, 'I found that explaining jargon was very useful for readers new to a subject. My leaflet includes a glossary of some of the key words I used. I displayed these in coloured box-outs, similar to those in the fire safety leaflet I analysed, to attract the reader's attention.'

D1 and D4: technical vocabulary will be secure and used correctly and confidently at all times.

NB: given the nature of this unit, higher levels of technical skills in written English are required for the actual product than for the work generated in response to the content requirements for learning outcomes 1 and 4.

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 – The Qualities of Factual Writing	Article for a writers' magazine on the qualities necessary for effective factual communication in various types of print product.	• All class notes. • Written article.
P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3	Assignment 2 – Producing Factual Copy	Learners have been commissioned by a government department to produce a leaflet giving guidance to people about what to do in a flu epidemic.	• Planning documentation. • Drafts. • Proposals. • Final copy.
P4, M4, D4	Assignment 3 – Evaluation	Commissioning department is holding a review of the campaign and requires an evaluation of the success of the leaflet used in that campaign.	• All evaluative research materials. • Collated and annotated research findings. • Presentation slides and notes. • Recording of presentation.

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

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

Level 2	Level 3
Factual Production for the Creative Media	Factual Programme Production Techniques for Radio
Writing for the Creative Media	Factual Programme Production Techniques for Television
	Page Layout and Design
	Writing Copy

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

- PUB22   Edit text
- PUB24   Edit images
- PUB25   Proofread teat and collate corrections.

Essential resources

Learners will need access to desktop publishing or page layout packages (for example, QuarkXPress or Adobe Illustrator) and colour printing facilities.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should develop links with local newspapers and magazines. It is always beneficial for learners to speak directly with people working in the industry and editors and journalists would be able to provide an excellent insight into industry products and practices.

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

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

- www.aimhighersw.ac.uk/wbl.htm – work-based learning guidance
- www.businesslink.gov.uk – local, regional business links
- www.nebpn.org – National Education and Business Partnership Network
- www.vocationallearning.org.uk – Learning and Skills Network
- www.warwick.ac.uk/wie/cei – Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick – work experience and workplace learning frameworks.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

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

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

Berry J and Black R – *Contemporary Newspaper Design: Shaping the News in the Digital Age* (Mark Batty, 2003) ISBN 978-0972424035

Hicks W et al – *Writing for Journalists – Media Skills v. 10* (Routledge, 2008) ISBN 978-0415460217

McWade J – *Before and After Page Design* (Peachpit Press, 2003) ISBN 978-0201795370

Rudin R and Ibbotson T – *An Introduction to Journalism: Essential Techniques and Background Knowledge* (Focal Press, 2002) ISBN 978-0240516349

Spencer L – *A Step-by-Step Guide to Informative Writing* (Rosen Publishing Group, 2005) ISBN 978-1404202139

Websites

www.bbc.co.uk/keyskills/comms/index.shtml – the BBC provides some excellent materials including a section detailing the skills necessary to write a good report

www.computerarts.co.uk – the site of the Future Magazine publication is updated regularly and is useful for tracking trends and fashions in the industry

www.plainenglish.co.uk/guides.html – the website of the Plain English Campaign containing free guides to the writing of effective, factual English

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 …
Creative thinkers	planning and carrying out research for their assignments, analysing and evaluating information and judging its relevance and value
Reflective learners	inviting feedback on their own work and dealing positively with praise, setbacks and criticism
	evaluating their finished work to inform future progress.

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 …
Independent enquirers	exploring issues, events or problems from different perspectives when carrying out research for their assignments
Team workers	managing discussions to reach agreements and achieve results when working in a team to produce factual written material
Self-managers	dealing with competing pressures, including personal and work-related demands when carrying out their assignments.

Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	effectively storing research and written work using safe storage methods such as USB keys
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching factual communications using the internet, library catalogues, databases and CD ROMs
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	presenting factual information and imagery for identified purposes
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	using different formats to present work, such as PowerPoint, Word, Excel
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	using email to contact outside agencies for information and research purposes
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 surrounding the moral issues regarding journalistic bias
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching the qualities necessary for effective factual communication
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	producing factual writing on different topics for different audiences.