Unit 55: Graphic Narrative Production

Unit code: J/600/6640

QCF Level 3:   BTEC National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

● Aim and purpose

Learners will develop an understanding and practical skills for producing graphic narratives.

● Unit introduction

Graphic narratives exist in a variety of formats such as comic books, graphic novels, cartoon strips, children's books, photo-stories, packaging, advertising and publicity material. They ensure that a particular narrative, or a series of related actions, comes together to create meaning and has the desired effect.

This unit gives learners an opportunity to focus on the production of graphic narratives. They will be able to apply their own ideas and creativity to produce narratives using a variety of production methods.

It is important that learners are able to show the development of their work and include all the relevant planning material and notes, such as original scripts and sketches, research, feedback and product development. Learners will need to apply sequential art effectively and understand the principles of character, dialogue and plot through visual storytelling.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

1   Be able to develop ideas and designs for graphic narratives

2   Be able to use appropriate technology and processes to produce graphic narratives

3   Be able to reflect upon own graphic narrative work.

Unit content

1 Be able to develop ideas and designs for graphic narratives

Ideas generation: creative thinking, eg mind mapping, brainstorming, group discussion; research, eg past and current commercial practice; responses to a brief; feedback collection; ideas presentation; recording ideas, eg notes, scripts, sketches, collages, trial examples

Design origination: initial planning, eg thumbnails, ideas sheets, flick books, storyboards, scripts; concept drawings, eg using text, typography, illustration, line, tone, colour; traditional and digital means; use of design software for image and text construction and manipulation

Media: publications, eg books, newspapers, magazines, TV, film, online; formats, eg illustration, cartoon, comic strip, flick book, photo-story, storyboard, film, video, animation; new technologies, eg digital animation, interactive media

Considerations: costs; available resources; quantity; audience; target market; quality factors; codes of practice; regulation; legal issues, eg copyright; ethical issues, eg decency, representation, cultural sensitivity

Pre-production: eg budget, resources, time, personnel, clearances, health and safety

2 Be able to use appropriate technology and processes to produce graphic narratives

Processes: desktop publishing; image manipulation; illustration software; online; typography; photography; applications; presentations; photographic material; one-off; multi channel; traditional processes eg drawing, painting, collage, print, mixed media, screen process, lithography, letterpress

Contexts: eg newspaper production, magazine production, online, publicity material, packaging, comics, books, flyers, posters

Health and safety: health and safety regulations; display screen equipment regulations; safe practices in studios and workshops

3 Be able to reflect upon own graphic narrative work

Narrative structure: types of structure, eg open, closed, single strand, multi-strand, linear, non-linear, realist, anti-realist, non-narrative; components, eg opening, conflict, resolution, cause and effect, enigma, equilibrium, climax, motivations, manipulation of time and space

Image construction: eg form, texture, shape, pattern, line, tone, colour; anchorage, eg captions, slogan, combination of words-images-text; signification, eg technical codes, symbolic codes, cultural codes, connotation; representation, eg gender, race, age, sexuality, class, social groups, societies, cultures, religions

Historical and cultural context: range of references, eg society, race, religion, politics, economics, art and design, popular culture, technology

Production processes: technical competencies; creative ability; time management, responding to feedback

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 produce ideas and designs for graphic narrative working within appropriate conventions and with some assistance [IE; CT]	**M1** produce ideas and designs for graphic narrative to a good technical standard, showing some imagination and with only occasional assistance	**D1** produce ideas and designs for graphic narrative to a technical quality that reflects near-professional standards, showing creativity and flair and working independently to professional expectations
P2 produce graphic narrative using appropriate technology and processes, working within appropriate conventions and with some assistance [TW; SM; EP]	**M2** produce graphic narrative using appropriate technology and processes to a good technical standard, showing some imagination and with only occasional assistance	**D2** produce graphic narrative using appropriate technology and processes to a technical quality that reflects near-professional standards, showing creativity and flair and working independently to professional expectations
P3 comment on own graphic narrative work with some appropriate use of subject terminology. [RL]	**M3** explain own graphic narrative work with reference to detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology.	**D3** critically evaluate own graphic narrative 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

Working to a real or simulated client brief would support vocational relevance and learners should have the opportunity to present their ideas and work in progress to a notional client, allowing them to understand the relevant constraints and respond to feedback. Learners should experience progress through realistic stages of working on a brief, such as conducting research, meeting the client and presenting drafts, conducting focus groups, responding to a range of feedback and monitoring the development of their work and progress.

All projects in this unit should be supported by ongoing technical exploration of media, materials and processes. Learners should be asked to keep records of work to provide further evidence of understanding and creative control. Tasks to create awareness of compositional elements, aesthetics and contextual issues such as representation and semiotics, should be introduced alongside technical tasks. Learners should be able to explore the way that production processes work through practical activity, experimenting with drafts and different applications.

Finished products could include a short photo-story for a magazine. These products are, by convention, short and concise and, where learners engage with such material, a series, including a run of examples, should be produced. Alternatively, a portfolio might contain a single, complete illustrated children's book or graphic novel, allowing learners to apply a variety of techniques when exploring narrative production. A series of storyboarded sequences would, in each of these cases, provide diversity within a learner's work.

Whilst there is a strong practical element to this unit, learners need to be aware that, in media production, technical skills and expertise cannot necessarily make up for lack of narrative considerations, and teaching should create opportunities to debate and explore this concept, using examples to illustrate points. Learners should be introduced to a wide range of graphic narrative products, both historical and contemporary, and should develop the confidence to reflect on meaning and practical qualities. The learner's own work, and the work of others, will need to be approached using appropriate visual language, analysing narrative structures, the visualisation of the narrative, the suggested audience or consumer and the likelihood of products being effective and successful. Learners should here draw on their experiences of analysing media texts in other parts of their course. In this way learners should develop thoughtful and well-informed responses to the constructed narratives that form an integral part of everyday life.

Analyse these in terms of their historical contexts, fitness for purpose and production techniques.

One important element in the teaching of this unit is to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to discuss their own responses to graphic narratives and to bring in examples of what they themselves enjoy. This could lead to a debate on the role of graphic narrative production and its influence in different cultures around the world.

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.
Introductions to: • graphic narratives – designed to meet the needs of audience or client • the role of a written proposal for a graphic narrative • ideas generation – mind mapping around themes • the role of research within the production process • the role of pre-production within the production process • planning material and pre-production techniques.
Exercise: learners prepare and present an analysis of a chosen existing graphic narrative to group.
Visiting speaker: producer or production manager from industry.
Workshop: learners study pre-production material and documentation for an existing graphic narrative.
Assignment 1 – Any Ideas? Learners receive a brief to produce a graphic narrative version of a novel. Learners will: • generate ideas for the graphic narrative • generate content material (initial sketches, designs, drafts etc) • develop chosen idea into a proposal.
Assignment 2 – Getting Ready Learners complete pre-production work for the proposal developed in Assignment 1 with consideration of: • budget • time • personnel • facilities • clearances • copyright (intellectual property) • health and safety • codes of practice and regulation.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities
Assignment 3 – Get It Made
Following on from Assignment 2, learners apply production techniques to create the product: • manipulate and arrange content • present interim production work to client (or audience) to gain feedback • post-production – finishing touches • present final production work to client (or audience) for responses.
Assignment 4 – Did It Work?
Learners evaluate their own graphic narrative production work covering: • narrative structure • image construction • historical and cultural contexts • production processes.
Unit learning and assessment review.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

Evidence for achievement of the learning outcomes should be generated through research, pre-production, practical examples and evaluation. The final graphic narratives produced should be fully supported by planning material, with a rationale for the selection of techniques and technologies.

Evidence for achievement of learning outcome 1 will be the learner's developmental work. Through experimentation with a range of techniques, learners should prepare a number of ideas that could form the basis of graphic narratives. These may be developed from their existing work or originated from a series of briefs specially devised for this unit. Evidence for ideas generation and design origination should be presented in appropriate formats, such as sketchbooks, or blog.

Evidence for achievement of learning outcome 2 will most likely come from the culmination of investigation, planning and production work resulting in a portfolio containing completed examples of graphic narratives (or one extended example), originated by the learner. Learners will need to keep and present all work showing the different stages of progress and development.

Evidence for achievement of learning outcome 3 might be in the form of a written evaluation, a presentation or an audio or audio-visual recording or presentation, supported by sketchbooks, notebooks, developmental images, screen-grabs, annotated printouts and test prints. 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 the examples of evidence given here are indicative only. This advice is not inclusive and the examples need not be included in a learner's work in order for that learner to achieve the exemplified grade.

Pass

To achieve a pass grade, learners must achieve all the criteria 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 produce ideas and designs for graphic narratives that have been developed and incorporated into graphic narrative products (or a single extended product) using appropriate technology and processes. What is achieved will not fully realise what was intended, but the activity will have at least been purposeful with the result that the outcome has some sense of design and the deliberate application of some appropriate techniques behind it. The range of material produced may be limited. 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. Learners may require frequent assistance, support and encouragement. 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.

P3: learners will consider their own work in such a way that they move beyond merely describing it. They will make evaluative comments upon what they have done but these comments will be assertions that are not supported by evidence or exemplification. Descriptions of narrative production work may be undeveloped with learners using basic but appropriate visual language when referring to their own work. 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 and M2: there will be evidence of detailed ideas and designs for graphic narratives (or a single extended product) that show an element of imagination and control. The learner will show facility and some confidence in relation to skills and the handling of equipment. There should be clear evidence of the developmental process in supplementary material such as sketchbooks, notebooks, developmental images, rough drafts, thumbnails and test pieces with annotations. Exploration of ideas will have been approached methodically and with adequate preparation, ideas being worked out and presented neatly. Appropriate technology and processes will have been selected in each case and applied to a good technical standard in creating the final products. Learners will still be working within recognisable generic conventions, but there will be some imaginative thought behind the work so that technical skills and codes and conventions will be employed with some inventiveness. Learners may still need occasional support, particularly when dealing with more complex technology or trying to apply more sophisticated techniques.

M3: learners will explain what they have tried to accomplish and how they have worked to try to achieve what they have set out to do. They will explain decisions made and exemplify these explanations through relevant and detailed reference to their own work, though the examples they give will not be further elucidated. 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 and D2: learners will typically explore ideas independently and produce effective and well thought-out original ideas and designs that are then incorporated into effective graphic narrative products (or a single extended product) approaching near-professional standards. Examples will show a very high technical standard as well as creativity and flair, technical skills being applied not just with imagination but with ingenuity, and codes and conventions being used with occasionally surprising results. Preparatory material will closely follow industry conventions for presentation, and production work will reflect the high standard of design and preparation work completed for D1. Learners will show that there has been a clear progression from original designs to their completed work, which itself evidences creativity and flair. Independent application of high quality technical skills will produce a portfolio of near-professional standard. 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.

D3: 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. They will fully justify the construction of the narrative itself, explaining the use of elements that create meaning for a specific target audience. Generally, learners will present evidence extremely effectively, whether in written form or through recorded presentations using audio or audio-visual technology. 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 Pearson assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Assignment 1 – Any Ideas? Assignment 2 – Getting Ready	A publisher commissions a graphic narrative version of a novel.	• All ideas notes, sketches and drafts. • Written proposal. • Tutor observation notes. • Project portfolio containing all pre-production documentation. • Tutor observation notes.
P2, M2, D2	Assignment 2 – Get It Made	As above.	• Completed product. • Production log. • Tutor observation notes.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P3, M3, D3	Assignment 3 – Did It Work?	As above.	• Learner report reviewing strengths and weaknesses. • Tutor observation notes.

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
	Digital Graphics for Print
	Photography and Photographic Practice.
	Producing Print-Based Media

Essential resources

Learners will need access to relevant technical resources for the selected medium, the precise resources required depending on which medium learners work in for their production project. All resources must be up to date, and of near-industrial standard and capability. A wide range of two-dimensional graphic narratives should be used for class reviews, helping to create an understanding of what constitutes effective narratives and those which are less successful.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Learners will benefit greatly from contact with industry practitioners with recent experience in graphic narrative production. Visiting speakers such as authors, artists, publishers and production managers will be helpful, as will an opportunity to study pre-production documentation from an existing production.

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

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	carrying out research to develop ideas for their own graphic narratives
	analysing and evaluating information, judging its relevance and value as applied to graphic narrative production work
	planning and carrying out research into graphic narrative products to develop their understanding of technologies and techniques
	exploring issues, events or problems from different perspectives when producing a proposal which addresses the needs of a client or set brief
	supporting conclusions, using reasoned arguments and evidence when evaluating strengths and weaknesses of own work
Creative thinkers	generating ideas for a creative and innovative proposal and exploring possibilities for graphic narratives
	trying out alternatives in production work and following ideas through, adapting ideas as circumstances change
	gaining feedback through asking questions to extend their thinking
	where working in a group (or for a client), connecting their own and others' ideas and experiences in inventive ways
	questioning their own and others' assumptions during group production work (or when working for a client)
	finding creative solutions to identifying and sourcing requirements
Reflective learners	reviewing and reflecting on their graphic narrative production and acting on the outcomes to modify and improve their work
	setting goals during pre-production and planning work, with success criteria for their development
	evaluating experiences and learning through explanation of strengths and weaknesses of own graphic narrative production work
	inviting feedback during production work and on the final product and dealing positively with praise, setbacks and criticism
	assessing themselves and others during monitoring of production work, identifying opportunities and achievements

Skill	When learners are …
Team workers	collaborating with others when working within teams (or for a client) towards common goals during production work
	adapting behaviour during production to suit different roles and situations
	taking responsibility during production work, showing confidence in themselves and their contribution
	reaching agreements when working within teams (or for a client), and managing discussions to achieve results
	showing fairness and consideration to others when discussing ideas and working together in teams (or for a client) and during production
	providing constructive support and feedback to others when working in teams (or for a client)
Self-managers	organising time and resources and prioritising actions when producing graphic narratives
	working towards goals and deadlines set for production work, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance
	seeking out challenges or new responsibilities throughout the process and showing flexibility when priorities change
	responding positively to changes during production, seeking advice and support when required.

Functional Skills – Level 2

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

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

Skill	When learners are …
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	taking part in mind mapping sessions to generate ideas, holding meetings, and presenting proposals and pre-production information to others presenting the final product to their peer group and talking about it
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	reviewing literature and websites to find examples of graphic narrative products and find out about techniques and technologies researching for production and the techniques and conventions of pre-production work
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	creating their project portfolio including ideas, notes, production documentation, writing treatments, scripts, schedules testing reports, and reflective comment.