

Unit 43: Special Subject Investigation

Unit code:	L/502/5406
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit gives learners the opportunity to carry out an in-depth and practical investigation into a chosen area of interest.

● Unit introduction

This unit gives learners the opportunity to carry out an in-depth and practical investigation into a chosen area of interest. The potential for areas of exploration is wide, and learners will be expected to choose an appropriate area of study, which they can then justify as suitable for investigation, promising ample scope for detailed study. Suggested examples of the types of topic for investigation include the history and development of a style of music or dance; the work of a drama practitioner, theatre company or set designer; the career of a particular musician, composer or choreographer; a development in music or theatre technology; social and cultural influences of and on a music or drama genre etc.

Learners will submit a proposal, identifying their choice of subject matter along with intended resources and materials. Learners will work independently in identifying information sources, extracting, collating and interpreting information and keeping a record of their research trail. The eventual presentation of their findings and conclusions will be delivered to others in the cohort, encouraging sharing of knowledge and information.

The unit content and assessment requirements will benefit any learner, enhancing both academic and vocational skills, and provide valuable preparation for learners wishing to progress to higher education. The self-directed nature of the unit will encourage learners to work with independence. This unit could serve as grounding for learners who might wish to progress to careers in, for example, writing, journalism, teaching, publicity or promotion.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know how to identify an appropriate subject area for investigation
- 2 Be able to plan a research project
- 3 Be able to carry out research
- 4 Be able to produce and present results of an investigation.

Unit content

1 Know how to identify an appropriate subject area for investigation

Identification: chosen subject/topic/area of interest

Justification of subject: appropriateness/suitability of subject; particular focus/angle/perspective on subject-matter; practicality of choice; availability of resources; availability of research material; practicality of project

2 Be able to plan a research project

Plan: decide on appropriate methodology; appropriate sources and material; variety of information forms

Research project timescales: timetable, research deadlines; scheduling eg interviews, visits; first draft, tutorials, seminars, second draft, review; fine-tuning of final submission and presentation of project

3 Be able to carry out research

Range of sources: primary and secondary sources eg books, journals, newspaper, video recordings, sound recordings, CD ROMs, internet, interviews

Organisation: logging the research trail; keeping within deadlines

Select: collect and audition material from a wide variety of sources, discard inappropriate or duplicated material; collect in a range of formats eg written, recorded, video, graphics, ICT; collate and prioritise in accordance with point of view, focus of topic, etc

4 Be able to produce and present results of an investigation

Presentation techniques: eg written, verbal, seminar, audio, video, IT, website, blog, demonstration, performance (or a combination of any of these); appropriateness of form(s) to subject

Comprehension: accuracy; understanding; comparison; conclusion; evaluation; critical discussion

Reference to research: eg bibliography, URL, title, author, artist, composer, playwright, manufacturer, organisation, individual.

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 select a subject for investigation describing the appropriateness of choices made [CT]	M1 select a subject for investigation explaining the appropriateness of choices made	D1 select a subject for investigation justifying the appropriateness of choices made
P2 produce a research proposal that describes planning and research methodology and includes clear timelines for the project [SM]	M2 produce a research proposal that explains planning and research methodology and includes clear timelines for the project	D2 produce a detailed research proposal that justifies planning and research methodology and includes clear and considered timelines for the project
P3 undertake research into a chosen subject generating material of variable quality [IE, SM]	M3 undertake research into a chosen subject generating relevant and useful material that explores the subject in some detail	D3 undertake research into a chosen subject generating high quality material that explores the subject in detail
P4 produce a research log that identifies the research trail [IE, SM]	M4 produce a detailed research log that describes the research trail	D4 produce a well-organised and thorough research log that explains the research trail
P5 present the results of research and investigation.	M5 present the results of research and investigation in a well-structured manner, with clearly reasoned and valid judgements and conclusions.	D5 present the results of research and investigation in a well structured and fluent manner, with fully argued and supported judgements, analysis and conclusions.

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 CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

Tutors will initially need to provide learners with opportunities to develop their research skills. Teacher presentations and practice activities should cover primary and secondary research methods, suitable sources of information and should provide guidance to learners on how to keep a research log. Input from key skills tutors, librarians, resource departments and ICT staff will be valuable. Guided visits to learning resource centres, libraries, exhibitions, organisations and venues could be considered, as well as use of handouts on research techniques.

Topics chosen by learners should ideally have vocational and subject relevance, and must be approved at the outset of the project as appropriate and affording realistic opportunities for detailed and penetrating research and study. Whilst the unit entails independent study, tutors should provide support and guidance regarding choice of subject. This may be through discussing and analysing examples of projects completed by previous learners, and/or identifying subject titles and themes that are likely to initiate meaningful research.

Learners will need to present their choice of research topic and provide an outline of their planned research, including suggested resources and materials, methodology and timescale. This should be in the form of a project proposal that might be presented during a seminar, allowing learners to 'pitch' their choice of project, encouraging deeper consideration in response to questions from tutors and peers.

Once learners have had their proposals agreed activities to develop skills in the handling and collating of data should be introduced. Learners should also explore way in which they can respond in a critical way to the work of others. Regular review points and 'milestones' to allow reflection and revision of work-in-progress should be built into the delivery of the unit.

A range of presentation skills for the results of their investigation should be considered and the advantages and disadvantages of different methods discussed. Good practice in the delivery of verbal presentations, presentation of written work should be considered. The final outcome of the investigation could be presented in a number of ways eg a written report, recorded aural presentation or web-based piece.

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 in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to the unit and structure of the programme of learning.
How to research – teacher presentation and practice activities (LO 2/3). Primary and secondary research methods. Sources of information. Keeping a research log.
Finding an appropriate subject – teacher presentation and discussion (LO1). Case studies providing examples of good/poor choices.
Assignment 1: Subject Choice and Research Proposal – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2 Identify an appropriate subject for the project. Produce a research proposal.
Feedback from assignment – tutorial sessions. Discussion of proposals and research plans. Actions required prior to progressing to assignment 2.
Introduction to critical methodology – teacher presentation and practice activities (LO3/4). What is a critical response? How to analyse the work of others in a range contexts.
Presentation Methods (LO4) – teacher presentation and discussion. Advantages and disadvantages of a range of methods. Good practice in the delivery of verbal presentations, presentation of written work as appropriate.
Assignment 2: Research and Presentation – P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4, P5, M5, D5 Undertake research/investigation. Keep a research log. Collate and present results.
Feedback from assignment.

Assessment

This unit is assessed through the learner's engagement in a research project that culminates in the presentation of the results of their investigations.

Grading criteria 1 and 2 requires the learner to find an appropriate subject for investigation and produce a proposal that outlines the methods they will use to research the topic. This might be evidenced through a written document or recorded oral presentation.

To achieve P1 the learner should be able to produce clear but unelaborated reasons for their choice of topic. For M1, the learner will provide more thoughtful explanations for the choices made. To achieve D1 the learner should be able to vindicate their choices in a fully rational manner.

For P2, the proposal will provide an unelaborated description of the methods they will use during their investigation and will include deadlines for the completion of the research and presentation of their results. The learner achieving M2 will produce a proposal that gives reasons for the planning and research methods they intend to use. They will also break the project into stages identifying dates for the important milestones in the process. To achieve D2 the learner will be able to fully explain the research methodology they intend to use and will provide a detailed and well-considered timeframe for their work.

Grading criteria 3 and 4 assesses the learner's ability to undertake their investigation. This will be evidenced through tutor observations and a research log. The learner who achieves P3 will approach research in a somewhat patchy manner and not all of the material gathered will be of relevance to the topic. For M3, the learner will work in a more detailed and focused manner gathering material that is appropriate. To achieve D3 the learner will need to gather highly relevant material that allows them to investigate the subject in detail.

For P4, the learner will demonstrate a rather inconsistent approach to the keeping of a research log. The log itself is likely to lack detail, merely listing material gathered, and will not be completed in a methodical manner. The learner achieving M4 will produce a log that is complete and demonstrates a more systematic approach to research. For D4, the learner's research log will be an activity integral to their investigation and will be approached in a well-disciplined manner.

Grading criterion 5 will be used to assess the learner's ability to present the results of their investigation and demonstrate their understanding of their chosen topic. The learner achieving P5 will present their findings in a largely appropriate manner however the structure of the presentation will not always aid the communication of ideas and information. For M5, the learner will present their findings in a clear and coherent manner. The learner achieving D5 will produce a presentation that is reasoned and articulate. At this level conclusions will be fully reasoned and justified.

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 P2 M2 D2	Subject Choice and Research Proposal	Identify an appropriate subject for project and produce a research proposal.	Presentation of project proposal.
P3 M3 D3 P4 M4 D4 P5 M5 D5	Research and Presentation	Undertake research/ investigation before collating and presenting the results of investigations.	Research log. Tutor observations. Presentation of results.

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

This unit forms part of the BTEC Music and Music Technology sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Music and Music Technology suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
	The Development of Music	

Essential resources

Resources for this unit will depend largely on the individual learner's choice of subject and presentation method. However, all learners will require access to general library facilities, internet, CD ROMs, journals, newspapers, books, sound recordings and video recordings.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Allison B, O'Sullivan T, Owen A, Rice J, Rothwell A and Saunders C – *Research Skills for Students (Transferable and Learning Skills)* (Routledge, 1996) ISBN 9780749418755

Bowden J – *Writing a Report: How to Prepare, Write and Present Effective Reports, 8th Edition* (How To Books, 2008) ISBN 9781845282936

Chambers E and Northedge A – *The Arts Good Study Guide* (Open University Press, 2008) ISBN 9780749217082

Cottrell S – *Critical Thinking Skills (Palgrave Study Skills)* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) ISBN 9781403996855

Gravett S – *Write Reports: That are Accurate, Clear, Concise and Effective (The Right Way to)* (Elliot Right Way Books, 2003) ISBN 9780716021025

Mounsey C – *Essays and Dissertations (One Step Ahead)* (Oxford University Press, 2002) ISBN 9780198605058

Smith P – *How to Write An Assignment: Proven Techniques from a Chief Examiner That Really Get Results* (How To Books, 1995) ISBN 9781845283520

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	undertaking research of their chosen topic keeping a research log
Creative thinkers	identifying a topic for their research project
Self-managers	producing a project proposal.

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 ...
Creative thinkers	considering the form they use to present the results of their investigation
Reflective learners	consider the skills and knowledge gained during their work in the unit
Self-managers	ensure they meet their project deadlines.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	creating a database of research sources
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	using the internet to research a topic
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	using PowerPoint to present the results of their investigation
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	presenting their research findings orally
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	using texts to investigate a topic
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	producing a project proposal presenting their research findings in written form.