

Unit 24: Current and Media Affairs in Public Services

Unit code:	F/600/6104
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to develop learners' knowledge of the role of the media in reporting information and how they are regulated. Learners will also understand how public services are portrayed in the media and develop skills in reviewing current affairs affecting public services.

● Unit introduction

This unit gives learners with an insight into the variety, and extent of media forms, the information gathering and disseminating capabilities of modern technology and how the media influences and informs society, in particular the public services. Through studying this unit, learners will be able to make an informed judgement on how public services are portrayed in the media and how the services use the media.

This unit examines how the capabilities of technology have produced a huge demand for information, and how the different media forms occupy niches in the information industry. There is also a study of how news gathering can influence events, by reporting on hitherto hidden news and by mobilising public opinion. The regulation and control of the media is examined, including voluntary codes of conduct, censorship, political influence and the interests of advertisers.

The public service role as a source for media stories, and as a user of the media, is examined through case studies of factual and fictional portrayal of public services.

The impact of positive and negative images on service morale and public perception are also studied. The importance of media influences on the services, and vice versa, are explored in case studies. These case studies link to current affairs illustrating issues that are currently affecting and impacting on the public services.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know the role of the media in the reporting of information
- 2 Understand how the media is regulated
- 3 Understand how the public services are portrayed in the media
- 4 Be able to review current affairs affecting public services.

Unit content

1 Know the role of the media in the reporting of information

The information age: the growth of information technology and the increase in demand for information, history and technological developments in the last 10 years, including the development of television from terrestrial to satellite and cable; speed of reporting; ability to collect news from, and transmit it to, remote and difficult areas

Types of media: including TV, radio, newspapers and journals; specialist magazines; the worldwide web and the internet

Media effects: public perceptions of issues affecting public services eg the G20 summit riots in London 2009; media influence on riots and public unrest; media engaging public opinion and sympathy eg African famine, Israel and Palestinian conflict

2 Understand how the media is regulated

Regulation: Broadcasting Standards Authority; confidentiality and data protection; Ofcom; Press Complaints Commission; right to privacy; libel; human rights legislation; costs and benefits of tight controls; censorship in other countries eg north Korea, Burma and Libya

Self-regulation: control, or otherwise, of the internet; freedom of the press; freedom of information; voluntary codes of practice; possibilities of bias and propaganda

Ownership and revenue generation: media empires, eg News International and Rupert Murdoch; independence of the BBC; political bias; influence of advertisers; ratings wars; quality of reporting versus quantity of readers/viewers; reporting unpopular truths versus populism

3 Understand how the public services are portrayed in the media

Positive and negative images of the public services: courage, brutality, self-sacrifice, corruption, care, racism, discipline, blind obedience, adaptive, out of date; effects on public perception, service practice and morale, eg stop and search, recruitment of ethnic minorities

Public service usage of the media: public health and information campaigns such as drink driving, requests for assistance, eg *Crimewatch*, press conferences, disaster management and dissemination of information, censorship, eg media censorship at Beijing Olympics, training of public service personnel in interview techniques, PR and recruiting

4 Be able to review current affairs affecting public services

Case studies: studies comparing the way the public services are portrayed with the realities of working in the services

Fact: eg death of Jean Charles Menendez, G20 Summit policing, and news coverage of wars and conflict; TV programmes, eg *Ross Kemp in Afghanistan*, *Traffic Cops*

Fiction: eg *occupation*, *Casualty*, *The Bill*

Assessment and grading criteria

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

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 describe how changes in technology have affected the gathering and presentation of information in different types of media	M1 analyse how changes in technology affect the gathering and presentation of information in different types of media, and its ability to affect events	
P2 outline how the media can affect events as well as report them [IE3]		
P3 identify the methods used in the regulation and self-regulation of the media in the UK		
P4 assess the independence of the media from owners, revenue generators and politicians [CT4]	M2 analyse the independence of the media from owners, revenue generators and politicians	D1 evaluate the independence of the media from owners, revenue generators and politicians
P5 explain how positive and negative images affect public perceptions of the public services	M3 analyse how positive and negative images affect public perceptions of the public services	D2 evaluate how positive and negative images affect public perceptions of the public services.
P6 review current case studies of media portrayal of the public services, including one factual and one fictional case study. [CT2]	M4 analyse current case studies of media portrayal of the public services, including one factual and one fictional case study.	

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 suited to a practical and investigative approach. Where possible, learners should be allowed to choose the stories and issues they want to pursue, but care must be taken that they differentiate between the message and the manner in which the message is conveyed. This is particularly the case when studying controversial issues.

The unit is an ideal opportunity to cultivate objectivity in the learner. The unit covers a great deal of ground and care must be taken not to swamp learners with detail. Evidence is best assembled by the use of case studies, which could have a local flavour. Case studies used should be as recent as possible. The best examples would be live and ongoing as the unit is studied. Care must be taken when using case studies that learners receive a rounded picture of the story used. The value of the case study is in examining the relationship between the media and the public services. It is interesting to see how a particular service can be praised in one context and then vilified in another. It is also valuable to compare fictional and factual accounts of a service. Learners should be encouraged to use a wide range of media. Particular value can be gained by examining how the same story is covered in a variety of media types.

When delivering the content for learning outcome 1 the tutor must emphasise the importance of considering a range of media and how this has developed over time. Learners must ensure that they utilise more than one method of reporting and the use of a wide range of case studies will support this.

For learning outcome 2 the learners should be given access to the regulatory instruments used by the media, and also the use of a debate into the regulation of the internet would be a useful activity here. This will allow learners to develop an appreciation of the issues raised by the Human Rights Act in relation to media reporting.

Learning outcome 2 will involve the use of case studies and visiting speakers from a range of public services to illustrate the positive and negative portrayal that takes place. It would be useful here to allow learners to investigate one case study and see different reports of this to highlight how the use of reporting can influence the portrayal of a service.

The final outcome will require learners to investigate current affairs that are impacting on the public services and relate these to how the services are being portrayed by the media. It is useful to incorporate both factual and fictional portrayal in this, and there are many television programmes and films available to facilitate this. Tutors must ensure that learners cover at least two current case studies including at least one factual and one fictional case study.

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 assessment methodology.
Teaching activity – development of the media over recent years.
Learner research activity – range of media available.
Teaching activity – media effects on the public services through the use of a range of case studies.
Assignment 1: Media Today and Yesterday
Learner-led presentation on how the media has developed over recent years using examples of the effects the media has on public services (P1, P2, M1).
Formal assessment of learner presentations.
Feedback to learners on assessment and reworking.
Teaching activity – media regulation group activity investigating different regulation methods, and then seminars to disseminate the knowledge.
Case study analysis – powers of the media.
Assignment 2: Media Regulation
Report into the regulation of the media includes learner research (P3, P4, M2, D1).
Formal assessment of learning outcome 2 – regulation report.
Feedback to learners on assessment and reworking.
Teaching activity: public service portrayal through the use of case study and video – showing positive and negative portrayal of the media.
Case study analysis of how the public services have used the media to improve service.
Assignment 3: Media Portrayal
News article (written or oral presentation) showing how the services are portrayed in the media (P5, M3, D2).
Feedback to learners on assessment and reworking.
Teaching activity – how to identify and access reliable media sources surrounding current affairs.
Learner research into selected current affairs.
Assignment 4: Media Review
Formal presentation of research findings through the use of case studies including factual and fictional cases (P6).
Unit evaluation and review.

Assessment

A number of assessment strategies can be used to measure achievement in this unit, including audio visual presentations and reports and investigations, as well as written assignments. Evidence could be produced at unit or learning outcome level. All work throughout the unit should be supported by examples of current affairs. It is expected that all evidence will be supported by examples from within 12 months before delivery.

To achieve P1, learners will typically need to describe how changes in technology have affected the gathering and presentation of information. They should ensure that they utilise a wide range of research methods investigating a number of media types to illustrate their work.

P2 requires learners to use examples of how the media have influenced events that affect the public services. As with all other assessment criteria in this unit, learners should use up-to-the-minute cases to illustrate their work, and use current affairs to support it.

M1 is an extension of P1 and P2, requiring learners to analyse the changes in technology. To achieve this learners should show the good and bad sides of the development of the media, for example the announcement of loss of life of service personnel in conflict zones before relatives are informed.

P3 will require learners to identify how the media is regulated. They should give examples of government regulation within the UK and beyond, and how the media is self-regulated. For example where the media makes an agreement to not report on certain issues, or respect individuals' privacy.

P4 will assess the control exerted by owners, revenue generators such as advertisers, and politicians and the impact it can have on the public services, for example the use of political bias to report on the G20 riots and the effect this has on public perception on the public services.

M2 and D1 extend this activity, requiring a more detailed analysis and evaluation of the work. Learners will analyse the independence of the media from owners, advertisers and politicians, reaching conclusions on who actually controls the media. This could include a discussion of whether the media follows or leads public opinion, with reference to issues such as the treatment of paedophiles or asylum seekers

P5 requires learners to explain case studies relating to the positive and negative images of the public services, and how these affect public service personnel. By using at least two case studies, learners will evaluate positive and negative portrayals of the public services and the subsequent effects on morale and public perception.

P6 requires learners to review at least two current affairs case studies to support their work, one of which should be factual and one should be fictional. These could be from TV programmes, films, video clips, newspaper articles, books, podcasts or YouTube clips.

M3 and D2 extend this, requiring analysis and evaluation of the case studies to demonstrate depth of knowledge and understanding.

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, P2, M1	Media, Today and Yesterday	As an employee of a local authority you have been asked to investigate the development and availability of media.	Presentation.
P3, P4, M2, D1	Media Regulation	Further information is required on the regulation of the media.	Report.
P5, M3, D2	Media Portrayal	As an employee of a local authority, you have been asked to produce an educational package for public service organisations, to show new recruits how the media may affect their personal and professional lives.	News article.
P4	Media Review	As an employee of a local authority, you have been asked to feed back on current affairs to your superior officers showing how public services can be portrayed in a fictional and factual context.	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 Public Services sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the Public Services:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Public Service Project	Research in Public Services	Extended Research in Public Services

Essential resources

Learners must have access to a wide range of media materials. Examples would be CD ROMs, major newspapers, a selection of specialist magazines, and journals such as *The Economist*. Learners should be encouraged to use media in a critical way, especially newspapers and television. As part of the unit, learners should be looking at different media and assessing their independence and freedom from bias. Learners should therefore be involved in selecting their own resources.

Access to the internet, particularly media sites such as the BBC and the Electronic Telegraph, is important. Internet sites should be used with the knowledge that they are unregulated and may contain material that is offensive or untrue. The resources needed for this unit would prove useful for many other units in the qualification.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

This unit gives learners the opportunity to conduct research into any topic within public services. As such, the scope for employer engagements will be vast and the resulting vocational context will vary depending on the area and type of research investigation conducted.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbook

Peak S and Fisher P (editors) – *The Guardian Media Guide* (Canongate Books Ltd, published annually)
ISBN 1841154237

Journals

Fire!

Health Service Journal

Jane's Police Review

Navy News

RAF News

Soldier

Websites

Advertising Standards Authority	www.asa.org.uk
BBC Trust	www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/index.shtml
Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom	www.cpbf.org.uk
Confederation of British Industry – Public Services Media	http://publicservices.cbi.org.uk/media
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	www.culture.gov.uk
Government Communication Network	http://gcn.civilservice.gov.uk/welcome
Independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communication industries	www.ofcom.org.uk
Information Commissioner's Office	www.ico.gov.uk

Ministry of Defence – Media Relations

www.mod.gov.uk/defenceinternet/aboutdefence/corporatepublications/mediaandpubliccommunication/publications/mediarelations/

Ministry of Justice

www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/freedom-and-rights/freedom-of-information/FOI-assumptions-press.htm

News International

www.newsinternational.co.uk

The Press Association

www.pressassociation.com

Press complaints commission

www.pcc.org.uk

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	outlining how the media can affect events as well as report them
Creative thinkers	assessing the independence of the media from owners, revenue generators and politicians reviewing current case studies of media portrayal of the public services, both factual and fictional.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Reflective learners	undertaking case study analysis, learners will be able to reflect on the learning undertaken and apply it to the case studies.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching media portrayal of cases and compiling the information to be fit for purpose for assessment
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	researching media portrayal of cases and compiling the information to be fit for purpose for assessment
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text and tables • images • numbers • records 	preparing documents for assessment activities
English	
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	reading case studies to analyse the influence of the media keeping up to date with current affairs as part of the unit.