Unit 26: Researching Current Issues in Travel and Tourism

Unit code: K/600/9689

QCF Level 4: BTEC Higher National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to enable learners to develop skills in research methodology and use these to explore the complexities of the travel and tourism sector and the key issues that affect it.

Unit introduction

This unit will develop research and self-management skills which are invaluable in employment and for those who wish to progress into higher education following their BTEC National programme. It is recommended that delivery should take place towards the end of the programme.

The Travel and Tourism sector is dynamic and constantly changing. It is both proactive, in that it can stimulate economic growth, and reactive, in that it is sensitive to ever-changing global markets. There are some factors, issues and events that cannot be anticipated and organisations must ensure they are flexible and responsive to deal with them effectively.

People entering the sector at graduate level need to be able to understand the nature of the industry and the key issues that are affecting it. This unit will support learners who may wish to further their studies in higher education to gain a greater understanding of these issues.

This unit focuses on current issues: those issues that have arisen in the last five years and those that are likely to have an effect on the travel and tourism sector. Learners will gain an overview of a range of issues but will have the opportunity to study one of these in depth. Through the study learners will consider the effects of that issue on travel and tourism, both from an industry and society perspective. To gain an understanding of the issue and its effects on travel and tourism, learners will develop skills appropriate to undertaking sustained and planned research, similar to those adopted in academic research.

When working in the travel and tourism sector and assisting organisations in preparing responses to issues, it is essential that information and data used is wide ranging, current, accurate and relevant. Through this unit, learners will gain an understanding of different approaches to research and the relative merits of each of these.

Crucially, through research learners will be able to analyse information and data. They will learn to question their findings in order to develop their understanding of the effects of current issues on travel and tourism.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

1   Understand methodology for researching complex current issues affecting the travel and tourism sector

2   Be able to conduct research into complex current issues affecting the travel and tourism sector

3   Understand impacts of complex current issues on the travel and tourism sector.

Unit content

1 Understand methodology for researching complex current issues affecting the travel and tourism sector

Research methods: eg intervention, non-intervention, action research

Research sources: primary; secondary

Research data: qualitative; quantitative

Types of current issue: eg relating to changes in demand for products and services, relating to current affairs, environmental, health

Travel and tourism sector: eg the travel and tourism sector in general, component industries (retail travel, tour operators, conferences and events, visitor attractions, accommodation services, transport providers)

2 Be able to conduct research into complex current issues affecting the travel and tourism sector

Research plan: setting of hypothesis; terms of reference; aims; objectives; planned outcomes; determining possible sources and resources; task dates; review dates; monitor process; contingencies; ethical issues; evaluation

Sources of information: eg books, journals, newspapers, websites, TV, published research papers, official statistics, questionnaire results

Referencing: standard system, eg Harvard; bibliography

Communicate findings: present own and others' arguments; draw conclusions; summarise data; engage audience

Appropriate media to communicate findings: eg extended document, group discussion, presentation, report

Appropriate conventions to communicate findings: use of vocabulary; grammatical expression; emphasis; structure; logical sequence

3 Understand impacts of complex current issues on the travel and tourism sector

Impacts: eg loss of customers, development of new markets, loss of revenue, changing demands, additional costs, changes to products and services

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 explain methodology for researching a complex current issue affecting the travel and tourism sector		
P2 plan and carry out research into a complex current issue affecting the travel and tourism sector (IE 2)	**M1** explain how the proposed research plan enables exploration of complex current issue	
P3 present a detailed analysis of results from research into complex current issue affecting the travel and tourism sector (IE 3, IE 4)	**M2** conduct independent research into a complex current issue, using at least four different types of sources of information, showing awareness of limitations of sources	**D1** evaluate the research undertaken and recommend improvements to own research skills in the future
P4 discuss how complex current issue impacts on the travel and tourism sector (IE 3, IE 4).	**M3** communicate information about a complex current issue clearly, concisely and coherently using specialist vocabulary, making connections and synthesising arguments.	**D2** use findings from research into the complex current issue to recommend actions for the travel and tourism sector.

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 level 4 unit requires learners to develop the skills needed to undertake a significant research project independently. While significant time will be needed for learners to undertake the research, the skills required must be developed. Delivery activities should therefore focus on developing the knowledge, understanding and skills required to access the assessment requirements.

Learning outcome 1 focuses on the theory of different approaches to research which could be used to undertake a significant research project. Learners need to be able to understand the relative merits of different approaches. The unit content will introduce learners to research terminology that may be unfamiliar. Input from a tutor on each of these terms could enable learners to develop a glossary that could subsequently be used as a checklist when preparing for assessment. This activity would be predominantly tutor-led and could then be followed by a discussion regarding research already undertaken to complete other units in the qualification or other qualifications or possibly to complete tasks when working in industry. Learners could attempt to give examples of when each aspect of a methodology was used in an attempt to compile a comprehensive list. They could be given a short research task to interview learners on other qualifications to determine if other sources have been used. This survey could include a basic evaluation of the methodology used. Learners could present their findings to the class. This could be through a series of short learner-led seminars, with each group of learners considering a number of research methods. These latter activities could then be used to link to the learning required for learning outcome 2.

Learners could then start to consider the methods they will adopt when researching a current issue and how these could be incorporated into a plan. It may be difficult for them to fully understand the most appropriate methods to use until they have determined the issue they will research. Initial ideas of issues could be presented so that they are able to fully consider the implications of those that are being considered. Tutors could present an issue and how it was researched, showing them a copy of a plan used. Learners could be given, or in a class or small group develop, a template for presenting their research plan. This would include all the elements of the unit content. This content will need to be discussed and possibly explained to ensure that learners understand the requirements. Learners could potentially use this template when completing assessments or tasks for other units, and the methods proposed discussed and evaluated in basic terms. The production of a bibliography and the use of a referencing system such as Harvard may have been introduced and used throughout the delivery of other units. Learners could be referred to their induction manual or similar resource. Short activities could be presented to ensure learners fully understand how to use these systems.

The focus of the unit is to research a current issue. The issue can be something that has arisen some time ago but it must be having a significant effect during the year of completion of the unit. It may be useful to clarify with learners exactly what is meant by the term 'issue' and what is acceptable as an issue to research. Learners should not be considering specific events or factors. An issue must be something that can have an ending and be resolved. Learners could be presented with a series of terms which have the potential to be issues but are not presented as such, eg epidemics, technology, economic climate. Learners could then turn these into a hypothesis which would form the issue, eg the strong UK economy led to an increase in travel to European destinations in the last five years, leading to increased demand for low-cost scheduled flights to Europe. The weakening of the pound against the Euro during 2008 has led to a decrease in travel from the UK into the Eurozone, impacting on many organisations. It is essential that learners are able to develop and debate an argument in their presentation of findings; the learning activities could therefore focus on discussions and debates so that they are able to consider and present a range of viewpoints.

Learners must ultimately be able to comment on how an issue has affected the travel and tourism sector. The travel and tourism sector includes specific organisations, component industries and also society. Learners could be presented with issues that are no longer current so that discussions could follow on the effect they have had on travel and tourism. To prepare those learners who have the potential to achieve at distinction level, discussions could predict responses of the industry and society to the issue followed by research into actual responses.

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 delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction and overview of the unit and assessment requirements
Tutor introduction to research methodologies – terminology and types
Tutor introduction to research sources – secondary
Tutor introduction to assessing validity of resources and cross-referencing
Practice with secondary resources
Research sources – primary
Practice with primary sources (questionnaire design, focus group, interviewing)
Preparation for assessment **Assignment 1: Research Methods (P1)** Feedback on assessment
Discussion of current issues with potential for research
Research plans – components – tutor input and discussion
Referencing and bibliographies – producing exemplar bibliographies
Report Writing – reviewing guidelines
How to give an oral presentation
Confirmation of research plans with tutor
Preparation for assessment **Assignment 2: Complex Current Issue – Research (P2, P3, M1, M2, D1)** Feedback on assessment
Carrying out independent research
Reporting and presentation
Evaluations
Preparation for assessment **Assignment 2: Complex Current Issue – Report (P4, M3, D2)** Feedback on assessment and unit review

Assessment

The assessment criteria can be grouped together to enable learners to expand on one criterion in order to gain higher grades. Where possible learners should be encouraged and given the opportunity to meet the relevant higher grades at the same time as they attempt the appropriate pass criteria.

Centres should design their assessment strategies to meet a range of individual needs and the local work environment. Assessment should encourage the learners to apply knowledge gained from this unit and reflect on understanding gained from other units.

The assessment criteria show what learners are required to do in order to pass each learning outcome.

P1

For P1, learners should describe different sources, methods and data, supported by their reasons why a number of research methods could be effective. At least two methods and all sources and data from the unit content should be submitted, showing depth of reasoning and exemplification.

P2 – P3 – M1 – M2 – D1

For P2, learners must develop a research plan which addresses all applicable unit content, with reference to both qualitative and quantitative sources. The plan should set out the hypothesis to be tested, the terms of reference and the aims, objectives and planned outcomes. Likely resources for the research should be given. The different stages of the research, eg review dates should be given. Learners should state how the research will be monitored and evaluated and what their contingency plans are. There should be an explanation of ethical considerations. For P2, learners must also complete research as per their plan, using a range of sources. This requires different types of sources to be used, not merely different examples of the same type. There must be evidence of referencing of all sources used by an accepted convention, this is likely to be evidenced by a bibliography, using Harvard referencing or another accepted method. For P3, learners must present a detailed analysis of their results.

To achieve M1, learners will explain why the research methods they have chosen are suitable for research into their chosen issue. For example, research into online check-in might include interviewing as the best way of reporting on the air passenger experience of check-in

To achieve M2, learners must conduct their research independently, and use at least 4 different types of sources, demonstrating awareness of the limitations of each source; for example, data reported is only available for the preceding year and therefore not completely up to date.

D1 will be awarded where learners are able to evaluate their research and recommend future improvements. For example, a learner might find that their data was unreliable, as they failed to validate their source. The recommendation would be to always validate and cross-reference. They might find that their chosen research method was unsuitable, for example, using a questionnaire that failed to ask appropriate questions.

P4 – M3 – D2

For P4, learners must choose an appropriate convention to communicate their findings on a current issue in travel and tourism; this may be either written or oral. When learners decide to present their findings orally, an appropriate observation sheet should be completed. Accompanying notes and handouts should be submitted. Learners must explain the impact that their chosen, researched issue has on the travel and tourism sector. Evidence must be clearly reasoned and explanatory, not merely descriptive, at this level.

To achieve M3, the presentation will be clear, concise, coherent and demonstrate understanding of specialist vocabulary. Learners will show that they are able to present a convincing argument, having considered all aspects of the issue and reached a firm conclusion on their hypothesis.

D2 will be awarded where there are clear, justified recommendations for action on the researched issue.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the 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	Assignment 1: Research Methods	Working for a research agency. Exploration of research methods and their applications	Written description of methods and uses
P2, P3, M1, M2, D1	Assignment 2: Complex Current Issue – research	Individual research plan and research into chosen complex current issue	Written research proposal. Evaluation of research skills and suggested improvements for future research
P4, M3, D2	Assignment 3: Complex Current Issue – report	Production of a report about chosen complex current issue	Report on research findings and recommendations (written or oral)

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

This unit forms part of the BTEC travel and tourism sector suite. This unit has particular links with:

Level 2	Level 3
The UK Travel and Tourism Sector	Investigating the Travel and Tourism Sector
Development of the UK Travel and Tourism Sector	The UK as a Destination
Travel and Tourism Group Project	Marketing Travel and Tourism Products and Services
	Responsible Tourism
	Tour Operations
	Passenger Transport for Travel and Tourism

The unit offers progression from the BTEC Level 3 units in Travel and Tourism and progression to the BTEC Higher Nationals in Travel and Tourism Management.

Essential resources

It is essential that learners have access to a range of research tools such as abstracts, statistics, trade journals and the internet.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Bell J – *Doing Your Research Project* (Open University Press, 2005) ISBN 0335215041

Burns R – *Introduction to Research Methods* (Sage Publications, 2000) ISBN 0761965939

Veal A J – *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism* (Prentice Hall, 2006) ISBN 0273682008

Journals

Annals of Tourism Research

Insights

Locum Destination Review

Tourism Intelligence Quarterly

Travel and Tourism Analyst

Website

www.statistics.gov.uk   UK Government statistics

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)

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

Skill	When learners are …
Independent enquirers	planning and carrying out research into a complex current issue affecting the travel and tourism sector (IE 2)
	presenting a detailed analysis of results from research into a complex current issue affecting the travel and tourism sector (IE 3, IE 4)
	discussing how a complex current issue impacts on the travel and tourism sector (IE 3, IE 4)

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 …
Self-managers	managing the research and the assessment of the unit

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	planning and carrying out the research
Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system they have used	planning and carrying out the research
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	storing information for the research
Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	ongoing
Troubleshoot	as required
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	carrying out the research
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	carrying out the research
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 findings from the research
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	presenting findings from the research
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	presenting findings from the research
Evaluate the selection and use of ICT tools and facilities used to present information	presenting findings from the research
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	communicating as part of the research process
Mathematics	
Understand routine and non-routine problems in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations	analysing and presenting the results from the research
Identify the situation or problem and the mathematical methods needed to tackle it	analysing and presenting the results from the research

Skill	When learners are ...
Select and apply a range of skills to find solutions	analysing and presenting the results from the research
Use appropriate checking procedures and evaluate their effectiveness at each stage	analysing and presenting the results from the research
Interpret and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar routine contexts and situations	analysing and presenting the results from the research
Draw conclusions and provide mathematical justifications	analysing and presenting the results and conclusions from the research
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	discussing the research and presenting findings
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching the issue
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions effectively and persuasively	presenting findings from the research