Unit 7: Digital Photography

Delivery guidance

Approaching the unit

This unit involves learners taking control over the process of producing photographs for a specific media product. If learners are to produce photographs that tell a story and convey the intended message, they will need to experiment widely with compositional, photographic, lighting and editing techniques.

Learners will need access to a camera, such as a DSLR camera or smartphone, and a tripod. Although not essential, if learners have access to different lenses, such as wide angle, telephoto, fisheye and macro, they will have more options when taking photographs. Access to lighting equipment, such as portable LED lights and modifiers (e.g. diffusers and reflectors), will be beneficial to learners when learning to control lighting, although again not essential.

Learners will need access to editing software or an editing app to edit their photographs. Although learners will need to access more advanced image editing software to apply image manipulation effects, centres do not have to purchase any software as free image editing software will enable learners to undertake all the unit content.

Delivering the Learning aims

Learning aim A requires learners to move beyond a recognition of different compositional techniques to understand the different effects created by the way photographs in digital media products have been composed. Inviting a local freelance photographer as a guest speaker is one way for learners to gain an insight into how different compositional techniques create different effects.

Learners need to investigate how photographs in different digital media products and in different contexts convey meaning to their specific audiences. In other words, learners should explore beyond media products that share the same context or purpose, for example different fashion magazines or different promotional media products for the same event.

Although learners should be encouraged to find their own examples of media products to study, teachers will want to select some specific examples of photographs in context, for example from newspaper and magazine pages, web pages and print advertisements, to ensure that learners have access to an appropriate range of digital photography. Teachers may want to compile an image bank of photographs in context that is accessible to all learners.

Learning aims B and **C** involve learners planning and producing their own photographs for a specific purpose. Learners can be provided with templates for their planning documentation, such as a risk assessment, model release form and resource list.

Although Learning aim A will introduce learners to compositional techniques, learners will need to experiment with different shot compositions, camera settings and styles if they are going to create photographs that convey meaning to the audience. One way that learners can develop the digital photography skills and techniques required to take impressive photographs for a digital media product is through teacher-led practical workshops on compositional, photographic, lighting and editing techniques.

Learners must have opportunities to experiment with applying image editing and image manipulation techniques to their photographs and this is an area where an industry professional

could explain to learners how image editing and image manipulation techniques can be used to enhance digital photographs.

Learners will need to engage in a process of on-going review to refine and improve outcomes. Learners will also need to produce a record of the production process, including evidence of planning, experimentation with digital photography techniques, applying image editing and image manipulation techniques and reviewing and refining outcomes, and may need support to select suitable methods of maintaining a portfolio of evidence.

Assessment model

Learning aim	Key content areas	Recommended assessment approach
A Explore photography in digital media products	**A1** Investigating compositional techniques **A2** Investigating the use of photography in digital media products	A written report, video or presentation comparing examples of photography in different digital media products.
B Plan and take photographs for a digital media product	**B1** Planning for photography shoots **B2** Taking photographs for a digital media product **B3** Reviewing and selecting photographs	A portfolio of development work, including evidence of: • planning • experimenting with digital photography techniques • applying image editing and image manipulation techniques • reviewing and refining outcomes. Photographs for a digital media product.
C Edit photographs for a digital media product	**C1** Applying digital editing techniques to photographs **C2** Applying image manipulation techniques to enhance photographs **C3** Reviewing outcomes and exporting final photographs	

Assessment guidance

This unit is internally assessed. There is a maximum number of two summative assignments for this unit. Teachers should refer to the assessment guidance in the specification for specific detail, particularly in relation to the requirements for Pass, Merit and Distinction grades.

It is suggested that **Learning aim A** is assessed through a written report, video or presentation. In the report, video or presentation, learners must compare how selected photographs from different contexts and different media products are composed and the combined effect of the different compositional techniques used. Learners will also need to explore how the photographs communicate meaning to a specified audience. This includes comparing the context of the photographs, such as the digital media product they appear in, its target audience and the size, position and purpose of each photograph.

Learners should carefully consider the photographs they select for their assignment. They must select photographs from different contexts and different digital media products, such as photographs that tell a story, capture attention, communicate a message, and represent a product, place, issue or event.

The written report, video or presentation should be carefully structured and include copies of the selected photographs. Presentations should include the presentation slides, or slide deck, and either speak notes or the presenter's script. Leaners do not need to deliver their presentations but if they choose to, then an audio or audio-visual recording of the presentation should be submitted for assessment. Videos can take any appropriate format, such as the learner speaking over images of their chosen photographs or a video of the learner's presentation.

In response to Learning aims B and C, learners must produce photographs for a specific purpose. Learners should produce at least three photographs for their chosen digital media product and make appropriate use of file formats and export settings when exporting their chosen photographs.

Learners will also need to produce a portfolio of development work, including selecting ideas based on research outcomes, planning documents, annotated photographs of experimentation with digital photography techniques, contact sheets and review of photographs taken, annotated screen shots, narrated screen recordings or annotated photographs of image editing and image manipulation and evidence of reviewing and refining the final photographs.

Getting started

This gives you a starting place for one way of delivering the unit, based around the recommended assessment approach in the specification.

Introduction
Introduce this unit by showing learners examples of photographs in different contexts and different media products – such as photojournalism in a newspaper that tells a story, website hero images that capture attention, magazine feature photography that represents a person, print advertisements that communicate a message – to demonstrate that the photographs that appear in digital media products have different purposes and to highlight the importance of compositional techniques that guide the viewer's eye through the image.
Learning aim A – Explore photography in digital media products
- Learning aim A requires learners to compare photographs in different contexts and different digital media products. Learners should be provided with a shared image bank of photographs in context, such as newspaper and magazine pages, web pages, app screenshots and advertisements. Encouraging learners to collect their own examples of photography in digital media products will support independent learning and provide learners with valuable source material to use throughout the unit.   - For A1, learners could combine research and practical activities, including taking their own photographs in pairs, to investigate the effect of different compositional techniques, including compositional rules, full frame composition, symmetry and balancing the visual weight of a composition. Inviting a local photographer to talk to learners about their techniques for achieving balance through visual weight when composing a photograph will provide learners with some insight into the different effects that can be created when composing photographs.   - Learners could find examples of how different techniques have been used to create a focal point and discuss the impact upon the composition of the photograph.   - Exploring the denotation and connotations of different representations of the same person, place, product, issue or event will provide learners with an appreciation of how representations are constructed and how they can be interpreted in different ways.   - For A2, learners could investigate photographs without any context to speculate on the possible purpose and context of the photographs and to emphasise the importance of context when comparing how meaning is conveyed through digital photography. Learners will also have to explore how to describe the context of photographs, such as the genre and style of the media product, the gender, age and lifestyle of the target audience and the size and position of the photograph within the media product.   - Learners will have to break down different photographs to understand how meaning is communicated to the intended audience. Comparing the combined effect of the compositional techniques used in different photographs, the subject matter, the style and the context will help to consolidate learners' understanding of how different photographs convey stories, emotions and messages.
Learning aim B: Plan and take photographs for a digital media product
Learning aim B is focused on developing skills in taking digital photographs. In preparation for their summative assessment, learners could be given a mock brief (i.e. a practice task

that is written in the same style as the final assignment brief) to engage in each stage in the production process and gain the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to produce photographs for a digital media product.

- For B1, learners will need to research photographs in similar digital media products to help generate ideas in response to the mock brief. Compiling an inspiration board of ideas can support learners with the process of generating, rejecting and refining ideas for the content, locations and style of their photographs.

- The mock brief will also allow learners to produce planning documentation, such as risk assessments, model release forms and resource lists, for different photo shoots.

- For B2, learners will need opportunities to take photographs using different photographic techniques. Practical workshops will allow learners to experiment with creating different effects through different exposures, long exposure photography, freezing and capturing fast moving action and using different lenses.

- A practical workshop on controlling the depth of field will allow learners to experiment with shallow depth of field to simplify backgrounds, emphasise part of a composition, create an effect and create layers in the composition.

- Lighting workshops will provide learners with an opportunity to experiment with different techniques for controlling light. Taking product shots of an object will allow leaners to experiment with modifying natural or artificial light and taking portraits in natural light will allow learners to experiment with the different effects created by shooting in soft light and hard light and shooting into the light, with the light or with side light.

- Taking a series of photographs that represent themselves, such as a self-portrait, activity or object, will allow learners to experiment with the camera settings, lighting, angles and shot composition.

- For B2 and B3, learners will need to use their planning to take a series of photographs for their chosen digital media product in response to the mock brief. Creating a digital contact sheet will allow learners to review each other's photographs and suggest possible improvements, which will support learners to better communicate the intended message, story or emotion. Encouraging learners to re-take photographs will also help learners to improve outcomes.

- The mock brief will also give learners an opportunity to organise and store their photographs in an appropriate folder structure, duplicate photographs for editing and save photographs with appropriate file names.

Learning aim C: Edit photographs for a digital media product

- Learning aim C is focused on editing digital photographs to enhance the final images.

- For C1, learners will need to practise image editing techniques on sample photographs, and their own photographs taken for the mock brief, by importing photographs into the image editing app or software. Learners will need practice to navigate the editing panels in the chosen image editing app or software, such as comparing the edited photograph with the original, undoing and redoing changes, reverting to the original, using auto settings to automatically adjust the sliders in a panel, and fine tuning the individual sliders in a panel.

- Editing workshops should cover adjusting compositions, including cropping, straightening, rotating and correcting perspective issues.

- Learners will need to experiment with adding and customising filters/presents to their own photographs, including adding, combining and adjusting filters/presets. Learners must also experiment with applying manual edits to their photographs. A guest speaker, such as a local freelance photographer, could talk to learners about their techniques for making manual edits to photographs, including adjusting brightness, colour tone, colour intensity and enhancing details.

- Learners should experiment with making edits to parts of a photograph. This will involve making and refining sections, inverting selections, feathering and applying edits.

- For C2, learners can be shown before and after shots of photographs that have been subtlety, and more radically, enhanced through image manipulation techniques. Learners will again need sample photographs to experiment with image manipulation techniques, including techniques for removing unwanted content, moving content and transforming elements in a photograph.

- Learners will need access to more advanced image editing software to be able to experiment with applying image manipulation effects to enhance photographs, including:
    - creative effects, such as blurring, duotones, double exposure, glitch, halftone, neon
    - combining elements, such as composite images, replacing backgrounds, overlaying images, photomontage, panorama.

- For C3, learners should review their edited photographs to identify areas for improvement. Rehearsing the process of reviewing the photographs they edited in response to the mock brief in collaboration with other learners will support learners to identify further digital image editing that would improve the fitness for purpose of the final photographs, e.g. adjustments to the composition, adding filters, applying manual edits to photographs or parts of the photographs, retouching and enhancing the photographs through image manipulation effects.

- As part of the editing workshops, learners should be shown how to make appropriate use of file formats and export settings, such as dimensions, resolution and quality, when exporting their final photographs.

- The mock brief will also provide learners with an opportunity to experiment with ways to compile a portfolio of development work e.g. a digital portfolio with an index page and links to each section of the portfolio, a blog with links to each section, a presentation or slide deck.

Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications, and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit may be taught alongside or following on from *Unit 1: Research, Develop and Propose Ideas for a Digital Media Product*, and the assignment may continue on from the ideas generated in that unit.

This unit also links to:
- Unit 6: Digital Print Production
- Unit 10: Advertising Production
- Unit 12: Creative Media Production Project.

Resources

In addition to the resources listed below, publishers are likely to produce Pearson-endorsed textbooks that support this unit of the BTEC International L2 Qualifications in Creative Media. Check the Pearson website at: (http://qualifications.pearson.com/endorsed-resources) for more information as titles achieve endorsement.

Textbooks

Adekile, W. (2020) *Smartphone Photography: Shooting like a Pro*, Independently Published, 979 8669189280

Bradford, J. (2018) *Smart Photography*, CICO Books, 978 1782495628

Gatcum, C. (2017) *Complete Photography*, Ilex Press, 978 1781573464

Carroll, H. (2014) *Read This if You Want to Take Great Photographs*, Laurence King Publishing, 978 1780673356

Websites

https://www.cambridgeincolour.com
Cambridge in Colour – learning community for photographers

https://photographylife.com
Photography Life – news, articles and reviews

https://fstoppers.com
Fstoppers – news, inspiration and tutorials

https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/photography-4162939
The Spruce: Photography – advice and further reading

https://digital-photography-school.com
Digital Photography School – Photography tips and tutorials

https://camerajabber.com
Camera Jabber – Tips and tutorials on photography and editing

Pearson is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites. It is essential for teachers to preview each website before using it in class so as to ensure that the URL is still accurate, relevant and appropriate. We suggest that teachers bookmark useful websites and consider enabling students to access them through the school/college intranet.