



Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Journalism: Research and Interview Skills

Unit code: F1RD 34

Unit purpose: The purpose of this Unit is to develop research and interview skills that will enable candidates to undertake journalistic assignments.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Use secondary source research material.
- 2 Use a range of interview techniques.
- 3 Use primary and secondary research material.

Credit points and level: 1 HN credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the Centre. However, candidates would normally be expected to have competence in communication skills at SCQF level 6 or equivalent. This could be demonstrated by achievement of one of the following:

- ◆ Higher English (C115 12) or its component Units
- ◆ Communication 4 (EE3T 12) and Literature 1 (E9X8 12)
- ◆ Communication (D01B 12)
- ◆ relevant work experience

Core Skills: There are opportunities to gather evidence towards Core Skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components. Further detail is provided in the Support Notes.

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed in the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes. This Unit is mandatory in the HNC/HND Practical Journalism. It is recommended that this Unit is delivered alongside the Unit F1N9 34 *Journalism: News Writing* and/or Unit F1N2 34 *Journalism: Feature Writing* where significant opportunity for cross assessment is presented. The importance of the links with Unit F1RK 34 *Journalism: Scots Law* should also be emphasised.

Assessment: This Unit will be assessed by three assignments.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Use secondary source research material

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Identifying and obtaining basic secondary sources of information
- ◆ Accessing information from a range of electronic sources
- ◆ Interpreting written, financial, statistical and/or graphical information

Evidence Requirements

The candidate must produce evidence covering all of the Knowledge and Skills items for this Outcome demonstrating their correct use. He/she must produce a journalistic assignment based on the use of secondary source research material.

The quality of the piece will be such that it will be suitable for publication in a UK newspaper, radio or TV station.

The assignment will be approximately 500 words in length or the broadcast equivalent. The candidate will produce the assignment under controlled and supervised conditions within a period of 90 minutes. Access to initial research material will be allowed. The research will have been carried out in the candidate's own time.

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates will research and produce a journalistic assignment which demonstrates knowledge of available secondary sources. Candidates could be asked to produce a short feature based on material obtained from library and/or internet sources. The collection of the material will be at the candidates' discretion. All sources of evidence must be included as an appendix. The research for this article could be used for Outcome 3 of F1N2 34 *Journalism: Feature Writing*. The article could also be used for Outcome 4 of F1N2 34 *Journalism: Feature Writing*.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Research and Interview Skills

Outcome 2

Use a range of interview techniques

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Primary and secondary information sources
- ◆ Identification of different types of interviews including vox pops
- ◆ Preparation of appropriate questions in terms of purpose of interview
- ◆ Phrasing questions appropriately
- ◆ Identification of appropriate interview source
- ◆ Making initial contact with interviewee
- ◆ Appropriate selection of material in terms of achieving the given brief
- ◆ Use of appropriate layout and house style for the given brief
- ◆ Ensuring that the assignment is completed to the set deadline

Evidence Requirements

The candidate must demonstrate evidence covering all of the Knowledge and Skills items for this Outcome. He/she must produce a journalistic assignment based on information obtained from primary and secondary research material.

The quality of the piece will be such that it will be suitable for publication in a UK national newspaper or radio/TV station.

The assignment will be approximately 500 words or the broadcast equivalent.

The candidate will produce the assignment in controlled and supervised conditions within a period of 90 minutes. Access to initial research, including notes taken at the time of the interview, will be allowed. The research and interview will have been carried out in the candidate's own time.

The candidate should also include a list of interview questions and information on how interviews were arranged and undertaken.

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates will produce a journalistic assignment with material gained from using a range of interview techniques. Candidates could be asked, for example, to interview a well known local personality on a current issue for a UK newspaper, or a radio/TV station. The research for this article could be used for Outcome 3 of F1N2 34 *Journalism: Feature Writing*. The article could also be used for Outcome 4 of F1N2 34 *Journalism: Feature Writing*.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Research and Interview Skills

Outcome 3

Use primary and secondary research material

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Identifying appropriate interview sources
- ◆ Maintaining and updating contacts
- ◆ Selecting material from both primary and secondary sources
- ◆ Using appropriate layout and house style for the given brief
- ◆ Ensuring that the assignment is completed to the set deadline

Evidence Requirements

The candidate must demonstrate evidence covering all of the Knowledge and Skills items for this Outcome. He/she must produce a journalistic assignment based on information obtained from primary and secondary research material.

The quality of the piece will be such that it will be suitable for publication in a UK newspaper, radio or TV station.

The assignment will be between 600 and 800 words or the broadcast equivalent.

The candidate will produce the assignment under controlled and supervised conditions within a period of 90 minutes. Access to initial research, including notes taken at the time of the interview, will be allowed. The research and interview will have been carried out in the candidate's own time.

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates could be asked to produce a news story/feature based on primary and secondary sources, including interview, for a UK weekly newspaper, radio or TV station. All sources of evidence must be included as an appendix. The research for this article could be used for Outcome 3 of F1N2 34 *Journalism: Feature Writing*. The article could also be used for Outcome 4 of F1N2 34 *Journalism: Feature Writing*.

Administrative Information

Unit code: F1RD 34

Unit title: Journalism: Research and Interview Skills

Superclass category: KD

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History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Amendments to guidance on the content and context	20/10/08

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Journalism: Research and Interview Skills

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

Outcome 1

The candidate could produce an *On This Day* item based on research material obtained from newspaper/library archives. This is a simple research exercise. It will involve the candidate carrying out a basic research task at a local reference library to obtain material for an *On This Day* feature of approximately 500 words. Using editions published on the candidate's birthday, and at intervals of 25 years, 50 years and 100 years before the starting date, the candidate should be able to produce an entertaining piece of journalistic work. The candidate will only succeed if he/she gives full details of the historical events and characters mentioned.

The candidate could also produce an article based on financial, statistical and/or graphical information. For example, rises in council tax, the UK inflation rate, the unemployment rate.

As some of the research work will be carried out at local reference libraries, it is suggested that the centre contacts the relevant librarian in order to ensure that visits by candidates are not unexpected. The candidates will also require access to the internet.

Outcome 2

It is suggested that the following types of interviews be covered:

- ◆ general interview: This section deals with the basic approach, identifying and making contact with the key player/spokesperson in the assignment, understanding the difference between leading and neutral, open and closed questions. This section will also deal with the importance of obtaining good quotes for the journalistic assignment.
- ◆ door step interviews: This section deals with approaching a member of the public at home by identifying the subject/house through public documents (eg the Electoral Register) and initial contact. It is recognised that often a door step interview will involve cases of personal grief or shock. Reference should be made to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) guidelines which state that approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively.
- ◆ telephone interviews: This section builds on the lessons learned in general and doorstep interviews. It is important to recognise that because of the pressures on a modern newsroom, much of today's reporting is done by office-based reporters obtaining their information via telephone interviews.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Research and Interview Skills

- ◆ the vox pops should take a current affairs topic which is based on research, and should reflect different opinions of the subjects questioned. The candidate will be expected to obtain personal details of the subject (eg name, occupation, etc) followed by his/her opinion on the subject which should be a minimum of 40 words. The candidate will also be expected to write an introduction or standfirst to the article. The total word count will be approximately 500 words. While each individual vox pop should be the same overall length, the candidate will only succeed if he/she demonstrates a variety of views on the subject being reported.

Outcome 3

The candidate will use his/her skills obtained in the earlier sections of this Unit to obtain information to complete a journalistic assignment. The candidate will do his/her own research and work on his/her own story. The assignment could take the form of a mock press conference where a spokesperson makes a statement/issues a press release and answers follow up questions. To add realism, it may be possible for officials from outside bodies, (eg local government/museums/ voluntary organisations) to play the role of the spokesperson. Alternatively, the candidate could obtain primary and secondary research material to complete an individual assignment.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit should be delivered within the HNC/HND Practical Journalism Group Award.

Teaching should focus on helping candidates to understand and apply the principles of developing research and interview skills rather than producing material for journalistic assignments.

Wherever possible, links should be drawn which will enable the candidate to understand the connection between the skills acquired and its application in the context of journalistic assignments. Close liaison with other tutors teaching on the HNC/HND Practical Journalism course is recommended in order to enhance subject integration. Research and articles produced may be used for F1N2 34 *Journalism: Feature Writing* and/or F1N9 34 *Journalism: News Writing* Outcomes.

Regular visits to libraries and research on the internet are advised for the successful completion of this Unit. Access to computers will be required for accessing the internet for research, possibly for emailing clients and for further research and for word processing.

Candidates should be encouraged to develop oral communication skills such as face-to-face and telephone interview skills.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The Communication Core Skill component of — *Produce well-structured written communication on complex topics* — at SCQF level 6 could be developed in this Unit.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Research and Interview Skills

The specific skills for this Core Skill component are:

- ◆ present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order
- ◆ use a structure which takes account of purpose and audience and links the major and minor points in ways which assist the clarity and impact of the writing
- ◆ use conventions which are effective in achieving the purpose and adapted as necessary for the target audience
- ◆ use spelling, punctuation and sentence structures which are consistently accurate
- ◆ vary sentence structure, paragraphing and vocabulary to suit the purpose and target audience

The Core Skill component of — *Produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topics* — at SCQF level 6 could be developed in this Unit.

The specific skills for this Core Skill component are:

- ◆ use vocabulary and a range of spoken language structures consistently and effectively at an appropriate level of formality
- ◆ convey all essential information, opinions or ideas with supporting detail accurately and coherently and with varied emphasis as appropriate
- ◆ structure communication to take full account of purpose and audience
- ◆ take account of situation and audience during delivery
- ◆ respond to others, taking account of their contributions

The Core Skill component of — *Using Graphical Information* — at SCQF level 5 could be developed in this Unit.

The specific skills for this Core Skill component are:

- ◆ interpret information from tables, graphs, charts or diagrams
- ◆ select an appropriate form of tables, graphs, charts or diagrams and communicate information in that form

The Information Technology Core Skill of — *Using an IT system effectively and responsibly to process a range of information* — at SCQF level 5 could be developed within this Unit.

The specific skills for this Core Skill are:

- ◆ make effective and responsible use of the range of IT equipment in everyday use
- ◆ carry out straightforward processing in two types of software applications
- ◆ carry out complex processes to use one further application in depth
- ◆ integrate different types of data in a piece of work
- ◆ carry out two searches to extract and present relevant information from electronic data sources

The Core Skills could be developed without formal certification.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Research and Interview Skills

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by open learning provided suitable open or online learning materials were developed. However, it would require planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence. Arrangements would have to be made to ensure the evidence for all Outcomes is generated by assessment undertaken in the mode(s) detailed in the Evidence Requirements for each Outcome.

For further information and advice, please see *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* (SQA, February 2001 — Publication code A 1030)

Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).

General information for candidates

Unit title: Journalism: Research and Interview Skills

This is a one credit Unit designed to give you a practical understanding of the importance of research and interviewing to gain information for the production of journalistic assignments. It is designed to give you hands-on experience in both these areas.

Outcome 1 provides an introduction into simple research, using secondary sources. You will also be shown how the internet and traditional libraries can be utilised.

Outcome 2 will introduce you to the different types of interviews needed to obtain information from a primary source for an assignment.

Outcome 3 will show you how to combine both primary and secondary sources of information for a journalistic assignment.

The emphasis is not on remembering key facts and figures but learning how to use sources appropriately for a journalistic assignment.

The Unit will allow you the opportunity to develop the Communication Core Skill components of Produce well-structured written communication on complex topics and Produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic at SCQF level 6. The Core Skill of *Information Technology* and the component Using Graphical Information could also be developed at SCQF level 5.

You will undertake three assessments, each requiring you to produce a journalistic assignment of 500 words or more.