

Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Journalism: Social and Ethical Issues

Unit code: F1RE 35

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to enable candidates to recognise the main social and ethical issues which journalists face in their every day work. It prepares them for this task by giving them the underpinning knowledge they will need. The Unit will encourage candidates to debate issues facing the media. The Unit will also analyse the role of the Press Complaints Commission, the National Union of Journalists, Society of Editors and various watchdog organisations. On a wider perspective the Unit will also examine the role and limitations of the press in acting as a watchdog on government and government agencies at both local, national and international level.

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

- 1 Explain the roles and responsibilities of a journalist.
- 2 Explain the rights and responsibilities of a free press in a democratic society.
- 3 Explain why sections of the British press adopt diverse approaches in their coverage of social issues, and particular social groups.
- 4 Outline the arguments for privacy against the public's right to know, and explain the role of voluntary and regulatory organisations.

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

**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: Candidates should have good communication skills. These could be demonstrated by achievement of:

- ◆ F1N9 34 *Journalism: News Writing*
- ◆ Relevant work experience

It would also be advantageous if candidates had an understanding of Scots Law for Journalism. This can be evidenced by possession of or concurrent study of Unit F1RK 34 *Journalism: Scots Law* and Unit F1RL 35 *Journalism: Scots Law Advanced*.

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

General information for centres (cont)

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. The Unit is mandatory in the HND Practical Journalism. It is recommended that this Unit is delivered alongside the Unit F1NG 35 *Journalism: News Writing Advanced* and Unit F1N3 35 *Journalism: Feature Writing Advanced* where significant opportunity for cross assessment is presented.

Assessment: The Unit will be assessed by four individual assessments.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Journalism: Social and Ethical Issues

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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

Explain the roles and responsibilities of a journalist

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Role and responsibilities of the journalist in his/her organisation
- ◆ Role and responsibilities of the journalist in his/her profession
- ◆ Role and responsibilities of the journalist in society

Evidence Requirements

The candidate will provide correct explanations for each of the Knowledge and Skills items.

Evidence will amount to approximately 750 words.

The assessment will be undertaken in open-book, controlled and supervised conditions within a period of 2 hours.

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates could be asked to produce an extended response or answer restricted response questions covering all knowledge and skills items.

Candidates should be encouraged to relate to current media issues and cite recent examples.

Codes of conduct drawn up by professional bodies should also be used as source material.

Outcome 2

Explain the rights and responsibilities of a free press in a democratic society

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Basic press freedoms as set down in international treaties and conventions
- ◆ Press censorship and restrictive laws which operate in the UK and other countries
- ◆ Conflict between the press and the state

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Social and Ethical Issues

Evidence Requirements

The candidate will provide correct explanations for each of the Knowledge and Skills items.

Evidence will amount to approximately 750 words. In addition, a bibliography and cuttings should be submitted.

The assessment will be undertaken in open-book conditions and submitted to a deadline set by the tutor.

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates could be asked to produce an extended response or answer restricted response questions covering all knowledge and skills items.

Candidates may generate evidence in the form of newspaper cuttings, current issues relating to the law and media issues, and reports by media watchdogs to demonstrate all aspects of their knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome. Codes of conduct drawn up by professional bodies should also be used as source material. It may be that candidates are asked to compare and contrast the coverage of different papers and draw a conclusion.

Outcome 3

Explain why sections of the British press adopt diverse approaches in their coverage of social issues and particular social groups

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Why particular social groups are seen as good copy
- ◆ Guidelines for reporting on particular social groups
- ◆ How newspapers report on particular social groups

Evidence Requirements

The candidate must demonstrate evidence covering all of the Knowledge and Skills items for this Outcome.

The candidate will provide correct explanations for all of the knowledge and skills items.

Evidence will amount to approximately 750 words.

The assessment will be undertaken in open -book conditions and submitted to a deadline set by the tutor.

The candidate should be asked to compare the coverage of particular social groups against the standards laid down in the industry's codes and draw a conclusion.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Social and Ethical Issues

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates could be asked to produce an extended response or answer restricted response questions covering all knowledge and skills items.

Candidates will need evidence in the form of newspaper cuttings and reports by media watchdogs to demonstrate all aspects of their knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome. It is suggested that candidates also make contact and seek the views of agencies working with particular social groups. Codes of conduct drawn up by professional bodies should also be used as source material.

Outcome 4

Outline the arguments for privacy against the public's right to know and explain the role of voluntary and regulatory organisations

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ The argument for privacy laws versus the public's right to know
- ◆ Role of the Press Complaints Commission; its strengths and weaknesses
- ◆ The role of the National Union of Journalists, the Society of Editors, Ofcom, Ofcom, BBC/ITV, and the effectiveness of their codes of conduct
- ◆ Pressure groups critical of the media

Evidence Requirements

The candidate must demonstrate evidence covering all of the Knowledge and Skills items for this Outcome.

The candidate will outline correctly the argument for privacy laws versus the public's right to know. He/she will explain correctly the role of the voluntary and regulatory organisations in handling such matters as intrusion and sensitive stories.

Evidence will amount to approximately 750 words.

The assessment will be undertaken in open-book conditions submitted to a deadline set by the tutor.

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates could be asked to produce an Extended Response or answer Restricted Response questions covering all knowledge and skills items.

Alternatively, candidates could be asked to produce a journalistic assignment based on information obtained from primary and secondary research material. The quality of the assignment would be such that it would be suitable for publication in a UK national newspaper or radio/TV station. Candidates will need to generate evidence in the form of newspaper cuttings, current issues relating to the law and media issues, and reports by media watchdogs to demonstrate all aspects of their knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome. Codes of conduct drawn up by professional bodies should also be used as source material. Human Rights legislation could also be useful. It may be that candidates are asked to compare and contrast the coverage of different papers and draw a conclusion.

Administrative Information

Unit code: FIRE 35

Unit title: Journalism: Social and Ethical Issues

Superclass category: KD

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Version	Description of change	Date

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Journalism: Social and Ethical Issues

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

The Unit is primarily intended to enable candidates to become aware of the role and standards adopted by the media in reporting social and ethical issues in the UK. Therefore this Unit should help build to a wider understanding of issues facing those who wish to enter the journalism profession.

Outcome 1 seeks to explain the role of the journalist within his/her organisation, his/her profession and within society as a whole. Candidates should be encouraged to explore the guidelines laid down by professional organisations and compare and contrast with real-life situations involving the media

Outcome 2 seeks to explore the rights and responsibilities of a free press in a democratic society. Here candidates will be introduced to the idea of censorship, and the tension between the media and the state. Candidates could be asked to examine statements contained in government documents on the rights of a free press and compare and contrast with current events in both the UK and in other countries.

Outcome 3 seeks to explain why different sections of the British press adopt diverse approaches in their coverage of social issues and particular social groups. Candidates should build a file of press coverage and compare and contrast the coverage to the principles laid down in professional guidelines.

Outcome 4 outlines the arguments for privacy laws against the public's right to know. It also develops candidates' understanding of the role of regulatory organisations and their response to controversial coverage of social and ethical issues. The key idea is that there are outside bodies which influence the manner in which the press operates.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit will be delivered as part of the HNC/HND Practical Journalism Group Award.

Teaching should focus on helping candidates to understand and analyse the social and ethical issues which overlap into news reporting rather than produce material for journalistic assignments.

Group discussion on the current topics should be encouraged.

Wherever possible, links should be drawn between the social and ethical issues raised and their practical application in journalism.

Access to the internet will be required.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Journalism: Social and Ethical Issues

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.

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 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 application
- ◆ 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.

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 A1030).

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: Social and Ethical Issues

This Unit is designed to enable you to understand the social and ethical pressures on a journalist performing everyday tasks. It is hoped that through classroom debate and four assessments, you will develop the skills necessary for dealing with social and ethical issues which often form part of news coverage.

Outcome 1 will introduce you to the issues which a journalist may find within his/her own organisation by covering specific topics. You will be asked to explain the role of the journalist and his/her responsibility to his/her organisation, the role of professional bodies in maintaining standards, and the role and attitude of company management/proprietors.

Outcome 2 will introduce you to the rights and responsibilities for a free press in a democratic society. Here you will be asked to look at the working practices of UK newspapers and compare and contrast this with other countries. The central core of this Outcome is the tension between the media and the state. Source material can include various international press freedom organisations and declarations made by governments. Current issues facing the UK media should also be highlighted.

Outcome 3: You will be asked to explore why sections of the press adopt diverse approaches and representation of social issues and particular social groups. For this, you will be asked to research the professional codes of conduct and compare and contrast these guidelines against current coverage. You will be asked to analyse the reports in terms of angle and the use of language. You will then be asked to draw your own conclusions.

Outcome 4 outlines the arguments for privacy against the public's right to know. You will explore the role of the various professional bodies. Source documents which may be useful are to be found on the Press Complaint Commission's website.

The Unit may allow you the opportunity to develop the Core Skill component of Produce well-structured written communication on complex topics at SCQF level 6 and the Core Skill of Information Technology at SCQF level 5.

The Unit will be assessed by four individual assessments requiring you to produce extended responses or answer a series of restricted response questions.