



## Higher National Unit specification

### General information

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

**Unit code:** H4WX 34

**Superclass:** KD

**Publication date:** August 2013

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 01

### Unit purpose

This Unit is aimed at those wishing to pursue a career in journalism. The purpose of the Unit is to allow learners to develop the basic skills and knowledge necessary to write news items aimed at different media platforms. The learners will also develop an understanding of how their work fits into the general production cycle of a newspaper/broadcast centre/multi-media operation.

### Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Describe the recent history and trends affecting the media in the UK.
- 2 Describe a news gathering operation(s).
- 3 Analyse the editorial content of a newspaper/broadcast/multi-media operation.
- 4 Produce basic news stories and additional material for newspapers/broadcast/multi-media operations.
- 5 Produce news leads based on changing developments in a story.

### Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 7 (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)

## Higher National Unit specification: General information (cont)

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

### Recommended entry to the Unit

Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners should have competence in communication skills at SCQF level 6 or equivalent. This could be demonstrated by achievement of one of the following:

- ◆ *Higher English* (C270 12)
- ◆ *Communication 4* (FA1W 12) and *Literature 1* (FA58 12)
- ◆ *Communication* (F3GB 12)
- ◆ Relevant work experience

In addition, centres may wish to set an entrance exam for prospective learners to gauge their ability levels in grammar, punctuation, spelling and current affairs. Learners who struggle with these basics may find it difficult to achieve this particular HN Unit.

### Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for this Unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Unit.

### Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes. The Unit is mandatory in the HNC/HND *Practical Journalism*.

If the Unit is taught within the HNC/HND *Practical Journalism* framework, progression to H4WY 35 *Journalism: News Writing Advanced* is recommended.

It is also recommended that this Unit is delivered alongside F1RD 34 *Journalism: Research and Interview Skills*, where significant opportunity for cross assessment is presented.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this Unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.2769.html>)

### Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements)

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

### Unit title: Journalism: News Writing

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

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. Learners 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

Describe the recent history and trends affecting the media in the UK.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ The historical background of the media in the UK
- ◆ Recent technological developments which affect news gathering and production capabilities of the media
- ◆ Recent technological developments in other areas of the media which have challenged the traditional press
- ◆ The growth of multi-title media business empires

### Outcome 2

Describe a news gathering operation(s).

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Sources of news
- ◆ The role of the journalist
- ◆ The importance of contacts
- ◆ The structure of a news gathering operation
- ◆ Copy flow in a news gathering operation
- ◆ Editorial selection of copy, pictures and multi-media content
- ◆ The follow-up process of the story, eg, below the line comments

### Outcome 3

Analyse the editorial content of a newspaper/broadcast/multi-media operation.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Identification of genre of the newspaper/broadcast/multi-media operation
- ◆ The vocabulary and terminology of news writing
- ◆ Construction of news items, their news values and the prominence given to them
- ◆ Target readership/audience

## **Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)**

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

### **Outcome 4**

Produce basic news stories and additional material for newspapers/broadcasts/multi-media operations.

#### **Knowledge and/or Skills**

- ◆ The recognition of the importance of house style
- ◆ Writing and presenting copy/script in a professional style
- ◆ The structure of a news introduction
- ◆ Writing news stories from media releases
- ◆ Writing picture/additional broadcast captions
- ◆ Writing lead articles from given source material

### **Outcome 5**

Produce news leads based on changing developments in a story.

#### **Knowledge and/or Skills**

- ◆ Reporting on a running news story
- ◆ Understanding and analysing information
- ◆ Structuring a news intro
- ◆ Structuring a news story
- ◆ Editing and updating a news story
- ◆ Interviewing

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

### Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills across all Outcomes by showing that they can:

#### Outcome 1

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by producing 600–700 words that correctly describe the recent history and trends affecting the media in the UK.

The assessment will be undertaken under open book conditions within a period of 90 minutes. Students will be supervised during assessment.

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

#### Outcome 2

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by producing the equivalent of 600 words correctly describing sources of news and the role and duty of the journalist in news gathering, the importance of contacts and the selection and production process. Students should be allowed to choose any platform of interest.

Learners must show awareness of changing procedures and reflect current industry practice.

The assessment will be undertaken under closed book conditions within a period of two hours. Students will be supervised during assessment.

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

#### Outcome 3

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by analysing correctly the principal news pages/news items of two contrasting media operations, using the correct terminology.

The analysis will be the equivalent of 600 words. It will be supported by sample pages or news items in an appropriate format (eg, URL link) from media operations of the learner's choice.

The assessment will be undertaken under open-book conditions within a period of two hours. Students will be supervised during assessment.

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

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

### Outcome 4

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ Select and caption pictures for print or online or select audio/video material for broadcast.
- ◆ Write stories of a specific length based on media releases.
- ◆ Improve intros of existing news stories from given material in terms of structure, angle, clarity and brevity.
- ◆ Write clear news leads of a specific length from supplied material.

Learners will produce 12 pieces of evidence made up of three picture captions (or three broadcast/multi-media text items); three stories from media releases; three introductions and three news leads.

The work must be of a quality suitable for publication in a newspaper, news broadcast or news website.

The assessment will be undertaken under open-book, supervised conditions. Each skill should be assessed separately over a period of time, with deadlines set to recreate the atmosphere of a media centre.

The learner must demonstrate evidence covering all the Knowledge and Skills items for this outcome.

### Outcome 5

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by producing two news leads, one of 300 words, the other of 500 words, or the broadcast equivalent. Learners will report changing developments in a running news story, using additional information as it becomes available.

The work must be of a quality suitable for publication in a newspaper or broadcast.

The assessment will be undertaken under closed-book, supervised conditions with a deadline set to recreate the atmosphere of a media centre.

The learner must demonstrate evidence covering all the Knowledge and Skills items for this outcome.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 80 hours.

### Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

The purpose of the Unit is to provide learners with sufficient knowledge to understand the structure of specific media organisations and to develop skills that will allow them to write news stories for different media platforms.

In addition, learners should be encouraged to read and research the style and structure of a variety of news stories and to plan, research and write a variety of news stories from primary and secondary sources.

The Unit is designed to be delivered alongside other HNC/HND *Practical Journalism* Units such as F1RD 34 *Journalism: Research and Interview Skills*.

On completion of this Unit, progression may be made to more advanced HND *Practical Journalism* Units such as *Journalism: News Writing Advanced* and to further qualifications at BA Degree and NCTJ/BJTC Diploma level.

### Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

#### Outcome 1

This is designed to give learners background knowledge of the UK media and its history. The emphasis is on recent technological changes that have affected the media. Centres may wish to compare how these changes have affected the media in their area, but should also analyse the impact of social media, smartphones, tablets, multi-channel digital television and RSS feeds on traditional media. Multi-title media empires and the rise of citizen journalism should also be considered.

#### Outcome 2

This deals with the step-by-step process of news gathering. Learners will be introduced to the main sources of news (including the role played by social media outlets), the role of the journalist, and a typical news gathering operation in a newspaper/broadcast/ multi-media operation. The role of the editors and the decisions affecting the choice of news stories and images/clips should be explained. It would be helpful if learners could visit the offices of a media operation to see the process first-hand.

## Higher National Unit: Support Notes

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

### Outcome 3

Learners will be asked to analyse the layout of newspapers or websites/running orders of news broadcasts to determine the readership/viewing audience being targeted. Learners should be made aware of the importance of house style and news values that contribute to the finished product. Learners could be asked to debate and analyse the coverage given to certain stories by media operations.

### Outcome 4

This is the first of the practical Outcomes. Learners may be introduced to tasks, such as rewriting items from supplied materials to meet the needs of a newspaper/broadcast/multi-media operation. Once the basic skills such as writing captions and intros have been mastered, the learners should be encouraged to tackle longer items and leads. Assessment for this Outcome should take place over the duration of the Unit. Each skill should be assessed separately over a period of time, with deadlines set to recreate the atmosphere of a media centre.

### Outcome 5

This Outcome introduces learners to the skills needed to successfully report on a developing news story. It is suggested that learners are given a briefing on a story, possibly based on initial information provided by a media release, and then asked to rewrite this story at least once based on changing developments. These changes could, for example, come from a news agency RSS feed, a social media site or a statement given by an interviewee.

### Additional Guidance

It is recommended that the Outcomes for this Unit are delivered in numerical order to ensure that learners have the necessary Skills and Knowledge to progress.

Some input from guest speakers who work in the industry would add to the learning experience, as would class visits to media operations.

Anything that gives the learner real-life experience would also be beneficial, so visits to council committee meetings and courts of justice should be encouraged. These types of activity will also increase the learner's employability skills, as knowledge and experience of court and council reporting are often regarded as essential by news editors.



## Higher National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

### Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

There is no sampling of Knowledge and Skills in this Unit. All items of Knowledge and Skills are assessed.

#### Outcome 1

Learners could be asked to produce a report or answer a series of restricted response questions covering all Knowledge and Skills items.

The Outcome should be assessed to demonstrate learners' knowledge of the recent trends that have shaped the industry. In particular, the Outcome should give examples of changes brought about by the introduction of new technology, for example, smartphones, tablets, social media sites and RSS feeds, as well as the growth of multi-title media empires.

The assessment will be undertaken under open book conditions within a period of 90 minutes. Students will be supervised during assessment.

#### Outcome 2

Learners could be asked to produce a report or answer a series of restricted response questions covering all Knowledge and Skills items.

The Outcome will assess learners' knowledge of a news gathering operation in a newspaper or multi-media operation. This Outcome could be linked to a visit to a media operation where the practicalities of news gathering could be explored first hand.

The assessment will be undertaken under closed book conditions within a period of two hours. Students will be supervised during assessment.

#### Outcome 3

Learners need to know the vocabulary and terminology of news writing in order to understand the stories they are writing or researching. This terminology is best taught from current examples of newspapers/websites/news broadcasts. Learners should be asked to compare contrasting media operations.

The assessment will be undertaken under open-book conditions within a period of two hours. Students will be supervised during assessment.

## Higher National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

### Outcome 4

This assessment should take place over a period of time with strict, separate deadlines in place to recreate the atmosphere of a media centre.

To encourage learners to write and present copy in a professional style, they could be encouraged to use a blogging website such as WordPress.

To assess the ability to write news intros, learners could be given real life examples that have mistakes inserted, giving them the opportunity to clarify and improve them.

The assessment will be undertaken under open-book, supervised conditions. Each skill should be assessed separately over a period of time, with deadlines set to recreate the atmosphere of a media centre.

### Outcome 5

The Outcome will assess learners' ability to handle a running story that changes over time and should take the form of a live exercise. It is suggested that the assessment take the form of a media release that is then developed as more information becomes available. This additional information could, for example, come from a news agency RSS feed, a social media site or a statement given by an interviewee.

The various sources of information should be introduced at suitable intervals throughout the exercise to create the impression of a changing news story.

The assessment will be undertaken under closed-book, supervised conditions with a deadline set to recreate the atmosphere of a media centre.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

## Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*, such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at [www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment](http://www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment)

## Higher National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Journalism: News Writing

### Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

This Unit provides a range of opportunities for developing the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and Information and Communication Technology (*ICT*) at SCQF level 5, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components. It can also support the development of other transferable skills, such as essay writing, referencing, citation and bibliography skills, and thinking, analytical and critical skills. The extent of development will depend on the learning opportunities chosen by the learner or the delivery and assessment methods selected by the tutor.

It is possible to develop Communication at SCQF level 6 if the assessment takes the form of an essay or oral presentation. For written communication at SCQF level 6, the skill is: produce well-structured written communication on complex topics. To develop this skill, learners can be encouraged in both formative and summative assessment to present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order; use a structure that is organised and use paragraphing to make distinctions between facts, opinions, arguments and conclusion; and use spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structures which are consistently accurate.

The learners could be tasked with producing a written communication which presents, analyses and evaluates a substantial body of information. These skills can be developed through formative activities without being formally assessed for certification of the Core Skill.

For oral communication at SCQF level 6, the skill is: produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic. In both formative and summative assessment, the learner could be encouraged to give a detailed oral presentation on a complex topic.

For the Core Skill of *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* at SCQF level 5, the skills are: 'Accessing information — use ICT independently, effectively and responsibly to access information within a range of tasks' and 'Providing/Creating Information — use ICT independently, effectively and responsibly to carry out a range of processing tasks'. Specific areas of accessing information using internet searches or VLE use and providing and creating information can be developed in such tasks. Creating a blog or a website for the summative assessment is another way in which this Core Skill can be developed. This could be used where learners (and their lecturer) have particular skills and interest in ICT.

There is ample opportunity to develop other essential skills as well as employability skills in this Unit given the requirement to produce writing aimed at different media outlets.

In general, employability skills can be seen as a set of achievements, understanding and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation. Employability includes areas such as effective time management, planning and organising, the ability to work with others and achieve a common goal and to manage and be managed by others.

Many of the skills being developed in this Unit and across the HNC/HND in *Practical Journalism* will help to develop a learner's skills as a prospective employee.

## Higher National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

### Unit title: Journalism: News Writing

Whilst studying for this unit and in general across the HNC/D in *Practical Journalism*, learners should be assisted in developing the following skills and attributes:

#### 1 Self-Management

- ◆ Management, goal setting, punctuality and meeting deadlines.
- ◆ Personal effectiveness.
- ◆ Ability to take responsibility for one's own learning.

#### 2 Team working

- ◆ Respecting others, co-operating and contributing to discussions.
- ◆ Negotiating/persuading to achieve common goals.
- ◆ Awareness of interdependence with others.
- ◆ Opportunity to manage or be managed.

#### 3 Problem Solving

- ◆ Analysis of facts and situations.
- ◆ Apply creative and critical thinking to develop appropriate, imaginative and informed solutions.

#### 4 Communication and Literacy

- ◆ Ability to produce clear, structured written work.
- ◆ Oral communication, including listening and questioning.

#### 5 Numeracy

- ◆ Manipulation of numbers.
- ◆ General mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts.

#### 6 Information and Communication Technology

- ◆ Basic IT skills

#### 7 Research Skills

- ◆ Evaluating and interpreting information

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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## General information for learners

### Unit title: Journalism: News Writing

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This Unit is a double credit Unit (80 hours) designed to help you develop skills which will allow you to carry out basic journalistic tasks in print, broadcast or multi-media journalism. It will give you a working knowledge of the production of newspaper/website/broadcast articles.

In order to achieve success in this Unit, you should be confident in your abilities in grammar, punctuation and spelling, and should have a keen interest in news and current affairs.

On successful completion of this Unit, progression may be made to more advanced HND *Practical Journalism* Units such as *Journalism: News Writing Advanced* and to further qualifications at BA Degree and NCTJ/BJTC Diploma level.

**Outcomes 1, 2 and 3** will give you an introduction to the recent history and trends affecting the UK media. The workings of a news gathering operation will show the reporter's role and you will analyse the selection of news for a particular media operation. All of these Outcomes will be assessed by writing reports or answering restricted response questions.

**Outcome 4** will introduce and develop the skills required to write basic news stories, scripts and captions for a variety of sources. You will be asked to produce news material based on given sources and information.

**Outcome 5** will introduce the skills needed when handling a running story that changes over time, based on live interviews and other news sources that introduce developments in a story. You will be asked to write two news leads of specific lengths based on material that is supplied to you.

You will also be encouraged to analyse different aspects of the media at national and local level using the correct terminology.

This Unit may allow you the opportunity to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6 and the Core Skill of *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* at SCQF level 5.

There is ample opportunity to develop other essential skills as well as employability skills in this Unit given the requirement to produce writing aimed at different media outlets.

In general, employability skills can be seen as a set of achievements, understanding and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation. Employability includes areas such as effective time management, planning and organising, the ability to work with others and achieve a common goal and to manage and be managed by others.

## General information for learners (cont)

### Unit title: Journalism: News Writing

Many of the skills being developed in this Unit and across the HNC/HND in *Practical Journalism* will help to develop your skills as a prospective employee.

Whilst studying for this unit and in general across the HNC/HND in *Practical Journalism*, you should be assisted in developing the following skills and attributes:

- 1 Self-Management
  - ◆ Management, goal setting, punctuality and meeting deadlines
  - ◆ Personal effectiveness
  - ◆ Ability to take responsibility for one's own learning
- 2 Team working
  - ◆ Respecting others, co-operating and contributing to discussions
  - ◆ Negotiating/persuading to achieve common goals
  - ◆ Awareness of interdependence with others
  - ◆ Opportunity to manage or be managed
- 3 Problem Solving
  - ◆ Analysis of facts and situations
  - ◆ Apply creative and critical thinking to develop appropriate, imaginative and informed solutions
- 4 Communication and Literacy
  - ◆ Ability to produce clear, structured written work
  - ◆ Oral communication, including listening and questioning
- 5 Numeracy
  - ◆ Manipulation of numbers
  - ◆ General mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts
- 6 Information and Communication Technology
  - ◆ Basic IT skills
- 7 Research Skills
  - ◆ Evaluating and interpreting information