Unit 3: Research Techniques for the Creative Media Industries

Unit code: L/600/6669

QCF Level 3: BTEC National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to develop understanding of and skills in research relevant to creative media production. Learners will present their findings in both written and oral forms and will learn how to cite and reference their sources.

● Unit introduction

Research is fundamental to all aspects of creative media production and is the essential starting point for productions of any scale. It can be used to determine the financial viability of a future production, to gather a range of information relevant to the content of the production, or to assist with the planning of technical and logistical requirements.

There are also media companies which conduct extensive research using a range of sophisticated methods to gather data about audience consumption of media products and services. This has become increasingly necessary in the highly mixed and competitive environment media industries operate in.

Learners who are looking for a job which requires research skills might consider employment in a research agency, or in pre-preproduction for radio, television or film, whilst a knowledge and understanding of research techniques is vital in a number of roles in advertising and marketing. They are also, of course, important in journalism. However, some ability to undertake research is essential for anyone working in the media industries.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

1   Understand the nature and purposes of research in the creative media industries

2   Be able to apply a range of research methods and techniques

3   Be able to present results of research.

Unit content

1 Understand the nature and purposes of research in the creative media industries

Types of research: quantitative research, eg programme ratings, readership circulation figures, hits on a website, box office figures, sales of CDs and DVDs; qualitative research, eg film reviews, game reviews, fanzine websites, attitudes to media products, responses to news coverage, responses to advertising campaigns, discussion

Methods and sources of research: secondary research (books, journals, reference-based books and directories, periodicals, newspapers, film archives, photo libraries, worldwide web, searching internet forums, CD Rom databases, audio material, ratings, circulation figures, government statistics); primary research (interview techniques, observations, questionnaires, surveys, types of questions, focus groups, audience panels, participation in internet forums); data gathering agencies, eg Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB), Radio Joint Audience Research Ltd (RAJAR); self-generated eg, own video, audio or photographic records of events

Purposes of research: audience research (audience data, audience profiling, demographics, geodemographics, consumer behaviour, consumer attitudes, audience awareness); market research (product market, competition, competitor analysis, advertising placement, advertising effects); production research (content, viability, placement media, finance, costs, technological resources, personnel, locations)

2 Be able to apply a range of research methods and techniques

Secondary research: quantitative research, eg programme ratings, readership circulation figures, hits on a website, box office figures, sales of CDs and DVDs; qualitative research, eg film reviews, game reviews, fanzine websites, attitudes to media products, responses to news coverage, responses to advertising campaigns, searching internet forums

Primary research: quantitative research, eg questionnaires, surveys; qualitative research, eg interviews (face-to-face, telephone, email), focus groups, participation in internet forums, audience panels; self-generated, eg observations, own video, audio or photographic records of events

Audience research: audience classification (socio-economic, geodemographic, psychographic, ethnographic, age, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, education); media preferences; product preferences; buying patterns

Market research: product market; competition; competitor analysis; advertising placement; advertising effectiveness

Production research: content; resources, eg personnel, talent, finance, suppliers, facilities, locations, logistical support; costs; viability; placement, eg publication, broadcast, webcast, podcast, audience

Interpreting results: collate; evaluate; summarise

3 Be able to present results of research

Format: written report; oral presentation, eg individual, group, PowerPoint, overhead transparencies, multimedia, video diary, audio diary; illustration, eg graphs, pie charts, bar charts, graphics, video clips, audio clips

Content: procedures; data; findings; conclusions; proposals

Quotation and reference: bibliography styles, eg Harvard, Modern Languages Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA); quotation and citation; footnotes; acknowledgements; credits; appendices; acknowledgement of copyright material, eg print, film, video, audio, photographs, published letters; disclaimers

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 describe the nature and purposes of research in the creative media industries with some appropriate use of subject terminology [IE]	**M1** explain the nature and purposes of research in the creative media industries with detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology	**D1** comprehensively explain the nature and purposes of research in the creative media industries with elucidated examples and consistently using subject terminology correctly
P2 apply research methods and techniques with some assistance [IE]	**M2** apply research methods and techniques competently with only occasional assistance	**D2** apply research methods and techniques to near-professional standards working independently to professional expectations
P3 present results of research.	**M3** present results of research competently.	**D3** present results of research to near-professional standards.

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

As this is a mandatory unit, teaching it should be focused on the pathway being followed, and the finer detail of the content adapted accordingly where necessary. For example, learners following a print and publication pathway with a slant towards journalism would be expected to know about market research, but would look at production research from a narrower perspective than learners looking at it in a film and television production context.

The first part of the unit introduces learners to the reasons for research in the media industries. Whilst some of this material can be taught through fairly formal means there are opportunities for learners to put their own research skills to use in exploring, for example, the purposes for which market research is carried out. Thinking about why and how production research is undertaken can, perhaps, be more profitably linked to learners' own production activity in other units.

In covering learning outcome 2, learners should be encouraged to engage with a range of research methods both independently and through group tasks. Where possible it would be useful for the class as a whole to visit archives and specialist libraries.

Again, learners will gain a greater understanding of the range, purpose and limitations of research methods and techniques if the learning is linked to projects being undertaken for other units. In preparing a proposal or treatment for film, radio or television production, for example, learners could work in small groups. Each group should employ a range of primary and secondary research methods to explore the viability of the proposal. If, for example, learners were researching material and ideas to produce a proposal and treatment for a new radio comedy, then it would be expected that they would listen to radio comedy as part of their primary research. In considering secondary sources learners would look at data such as that produced by RAJAR. It is vital, of course, that individual learners keep a record of this research work in their portfolios for assessment purposes.

When the research has been completed a small presentation to the whole class could be set in order to enable learners to share what they have learned from doing the exercise – how their procedures worked, what results they obtained, the comparative value of qualitative and quantitative research methods, etc. In order to engage learners with the vocational relevance of their study primary research methods can also be taught through role plays and simulations such interviews and focus groups.

When presenting the results of their research, learners might be asked to present the process and findings of their research activities in both written and oral forms. One-to-one tutorials present the opportunity to go through learners' notes and portfolios in order to ensure a good range of research activity has been evidenced, and to provide opportunities for evaluation and reflection.

NB: This mandatory unit has been designed so that it can be taught in the context of all the endorsed titles (or pathways) in the BTEC Nationals in Creative Media Production. If centres are unsure about how to cover or interpret any of the content in relation to a particular endorsed title they should contact Edexcel.

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 teaching and assessing this unit. The assessment of this unit can also be based on assignments run in other units.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities
Introduction to unit and unit assessment.
Introduction to methods and techniques. Learners will: • receive a lecture on and discuss the purposes, types and methods of research used in the media industries • visit library for introduction to cataloguing methods, complex web searches, use of journal searches, etc.
Assignment 1 – Research Methods and Techniques Brief is to write an entry for a reference book on the creative media comparing pros and con of different research methods and techniques. Learners will be given three topics to research. Keeping a research log of their activities, they will then: • research the topics through conventional resources available in a library • research the topics through any other appropriate means available • research the topics through the internet • collate all notes in research log • write entry.
Talk on formulating research strategies: • purposes of research • methods and techniques appropriate to different purposes.
Talk and mini tasks on citation and bibliographies.
Talk on presenting research.
Assignment 2 – Undertake Research Introduction to assignment. Task 1: propose a strategy for researching a new product launch. In small groups learners will: • determine purpose of research project • determine methodology to be used • present strategy to class. Task 2: undertake secondary research. In small groups learners will: • undertake secondary audience and market research using both web and conventional sources to determine possible market opportunities • generate ideas and form an initial proposal for the product launch.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities
Task 3: undertake primary research.
In small groups learners will undertake primary audience and market research to develop the proposal and determine its viability. This could include: • preparing questionnaires • testing questionnaires on peer group and revising accordingly • collecting live responses to questionnaires from target audience • collating results • developing proposal and undertaking production research to ascertain viability. • presenting proposal to small focus group and collecting primary qualitative research.
Assignment 3 – Present Research Learners will: • assemble portfolio of research work (learners should clearly document their individual contribution and ensure work uses correct citations and bibliography) • develop presentation of research findings • give oral presentation of research findings and conclusions to class.
Unit learning and assessment review.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 1 can come from presentations both written and oral. For some learners a formal viva voce assessment might be appropriate. When more than one learner in a cohort is assessed in this way care must be taken to ensure that all learners are asked equivalent questions, and that all are given equal opportunities to expand or clarify their answers. Interviewers must also ensure that questions are not phrased in such a way as to provide or suggest an answer. Formal vivas should be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification and at least 50 per cent of such assessments must be internally verified.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 2 can come from notes and research trails, research logs and diaries of research processes and techniques as well as the material gathered. More creative and independent responses will come from learners who take the initiative to make contact with relevant individuals who can be interviewed and from those learners who undertake visits to archives and specialist libraries themselves.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 3 is likely to be in the form of a presentation, a written report, or both.

Presentations must be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification.

Application of grading criteria

When applying the grading criteria, tutors should follow the advice given below. Please note that any examples of evidence given here are indicative only. This advice is not exhaustive and the examples need not specifically be included in a learner's work in order for that learner to achieve the exemplified grade.

Pass

To achieve a pass grade, learners must achieve all the criteria at pass level. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

P1: learners will outline the main purposes of research, covering audience research, market research and production research. They will also outline the main methods and sources of research covering primary, secondary, qualitative and quantitative. All aspects of these descriptions will be accurate and relevant. Whatever is being dealt with will be covered substantially – though not necessarily absolutely completely. Concerning the purposes of research, a pass grade learner might write, 'There are a lot of reasons for researching in the media industries. If you are making a film or game you have to research to find out who your audience is, and who your competitors are. You also need to find out how much it will cost you to make it and if you have the right equipment.' Evidence will show a basic understanding of technical terminology but learners will generally be unsure about this vocabulary and will make fairly frequent mistakes when they do use it.

P2: learners will apply some research methods, such as surveys or questionnaires, to obtain useful and relevant information. They will be able to use secondary as well as primary sources. Learners will obtain relevant qualitative material but will not evaluate it or draw clear conclusions from it, presenting data and information without reflecting on issues such as influence or bias. Quantitative research will be accurate and relevant but thin. Work at this level is likely to show limited understanding of procedures and is also likely to rely too heavily on internet research. Learners will need frequent assistance and support, though they will take note of and make use of this help when it is given. If they are in frequent need of such help but fail to make positive use of it they should not be considered for a pass grade for this unit.

P3: presentation of results will be basic, and, in oral presentation of results, delivery will lack confidence. Though visual aids or graphics will be unsophisticated and will typically not be clearly linked to the content of the presentation or report they will nonetheless provide the basic relevant information. Findings are likely to be basic and conclusions drawn will be assertions lacking support. Referencing and citation of sources may typically be incorrectly formatted and imprecise.

Merit

To achieve a merit grade, learners must achieve all the pass and all the merit grade criteria. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

M1: learners will talk about research in the media industries in such a way as to show not just what is done but why it is done, covering audience research, market research and production research substantially. Concerning the purposes of audience research, a merit grade learner might expand, 'If you are making a film or game you need to identify your audience and find out whether your production will appeal to them. Audiences can be classified by age, sex, geographical location, etc. For instance, there would be no point in questioning 14 year olds about whether they would enjoy a zombie movie that is likely to be released with an 18 certificate.' Relevant examples of methods and sources of research in these areas will be given to support what is said, but the learner will not elucidate these examples to show how they illustrate the point they support. Learners will use technical vocabulary for the most part correctly, but may make mistakes or be unsure about usages at times.

M2: learners will employ a wide range of research techniques more discriminatingly and with greater independence. Their findings will show a clear understanding of the limitations and possibilities of primary and secondary research. Qualitative research will be evidenced by well-focused material and learners will evaluate it to draw conclusions from it. Learners will be able to reflect on how procedures may influence findings. Quantitative research will be accurate and substantial, and carefully analysed. Work will show an understanding of various procedures and will have moved well beyond reliance on internet research. Work will be approached methodically and with adequate preparation. Processes will be undertaken with care and, generally speaking, thought will be put into the work. There will be evidence of emerging independence

to seek out wide ranging material through various methods and techniques, so that learners will need little assistance, though typically they will still need some support when trying to apply more sophisticated techniques or working in more difficult circumstances. Like pass grade learners they will respond positively to any help given.

M3: learners will make careful, detailed presentations, whether in written or oral form, which reflect a good range of research techniques and wide ranging examples of their research methods. Oral presentation skills will be good, and delivery will be clear. Visual aids or graphics will provide information clearly though they will not always be obviously linked to the conclusions of the presentation or report. Listeners or readers may occasionally find themselves having to make these links for themselves. Findings will be derived from the evidence though support for them will not be strong and there will be a tendency towards assertion rather than argument. Quotation from and referencing of sources will be generally good though may still contain some small areas or omissions in formatting.

Distinction

To achieve a distinction grade, learners must achieve all the pass, all the merit and all the distinction grade criteria. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

D1: fuller and more extensive explanation, better application of examples, and provision of argument to support points made, plus the higher quality expression, will discriminate between this grade and the merit. Learners will justify points made using supporting arguments or evidence, tending to develop ideas critically (that is, compare, assess and discriminate) and will draw out of an example precisely what it is about it that exemplifies the point it illustrates. Concerning the purposes of audience research, a distinction grade learner might expand, 'If you are making a film or game, before going to the expense of production, you need to identify your audience and find out whether your production will appeal to them. Audiences can be classified by age, sex, geographical location, etc. You could look at the audiences for existing products to identify your own audience. For example, if you were considering making a zombie film, you could research who the audience was for *Diary of the Dead*. In doing so you could identify the target audience for your own zombie film as being primarily males between 18 and 25 and use this demographic as a basis for your further research.' Technical vocabulary will be secure and used correctly and confidently at all times.

D2: learners will undertake extensive and independent research confidently, looking beyond the obvious sources of information. They will be able to use the full range of techniques and procedures, all of which they will clearly understand. Evidence will typically include contact and communication with relevant organisations, agencies and individuals. All material gathered will be focused on the topic of the research, and will be thoroughly analysed so that conclusions drawn will make full use of the material and will clearly derive from it. All this will be approaching the standards that would be expected of a professional researcher. Learners will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular research method over another for a specific purpose and will be able to judge how procedures may have influenced findings. Distinction grade learners will be capable of working autonomously and effectively. The term 'working independently' means that they are able to work on their own initiative, do not need constant support or supervision, give the work their full commitment, work positively and cooperatively with others, and meet deadlines. In other words, they have the kind of self-management skills that would be expected of them in a professional context. Note also that this criterion should not be taken to mean that learners do not seek advice or that they work without discussing things with their tutor, but rather that they are not dependent upon the support of others and that when they take advice they weigh it carefully for themselves.

D3: learners will present their findings, whether orally or in writing, with fluency and confidence, using a wide vocabulary and using both general and technical language with accuracy. Whether written or oral, presentational skills will approach professional standards. Visual aids or graphics will provide information clearly and will be explicitly linked to the content of the presentation or report. Findings will be clearly derived from the evidence and will be supported by sound argument. There will be consistently precise quotation from and referencing of sources.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and 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, M1, D1	Assignment 1 – Research Techniques and Methods	Entry on research techniques and methods for a reference book on the creative media.	• Preparatory notes. • Reference book entry.
P2, M3, D2	Assignment 2 – Undertake Research	Working for a market research company learners have been asked to conduct research for a new product launch. (Product could be made relevant to pathway as required.)	• All preparatory work and notes. • Minutes of meetings. • Strategy proposal. • Questionnaires. • Collated results. • Presentation slides and notes. • Record of presentation.
P3, M3, D3	Assignment 3 – Present Research	As above.	• Preparatory notes. • Presentation slides and notes. • Record of presentation.

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

This unit forms part of the BTEC Creative Media Production suite. This unit links with all units in the BTEC Creative Media Production suite.

Dependent on the pathway and product being researched there are opportunities to relate the work done for this unit to Skillset National Occupational Standards in Multimedia and Print Journalism, Production (Film and Television), and Radio Content Creation as follows:

Multimedia and Print Journalism

2   Carry out research

Production (Film and Television)

P5   Identify sources of information and present findings

Radio Content Creation

RC6   Undertake research for radio.

Essential resources

This unit will require access to public and specialist libraries and archives as well as the internet.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should develop links with local interactive media production studios which could be approached to provide visiting speakers, study visits or samples of typical products.

Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the creative media sector, has a substantial section of its website dedicated to careers, including job descriptions – www.skillset.org/careers/.

Further general information on work-related learning can be found at the following websites:

- www.aimhighersw.ac.uk/wbl.htm – work-based learning guidance
- www.businesslink.gov.uk – local, regional business links
- www.nebpn.org – National Education and Business Partnership Network
- www.vocationallearning.org.uk – Learning and Skills Network
- www.warwick.ac.uk/wie/cei/ – Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick – work experience and workplace learning frameworks.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Baylis P, Freedman A, Procter N et al – *BTEC Level 3 National Creative Media Production, Student Book* (Pearson, 2010) ISBN 978-1846906725

Baylis P, Freedman A, Procter N et al – *BTEC Level 3 National Creative Media Production, Teaching Resource Pack* (Pearson, 2010) ISBN 978-1846907371

Bertrand I and Hughes P – *Media Research Methods: Audiences, Institutions, Texts* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) ISBN 978-0333960950

Blaxter L et al – *How to Research* (Open University Press, 2006) ISBN 978-0335217465

Danscombe M – *The Good Research Guide* (Open University Press, 2007) ISBN 978-0335220229

Davies M – *Doing a Successful Research Project: Using Qualitative or Quantitative Methods* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) ISBN 978-403993793

Dawson C – *A Practical Guide to Research Methods* (How To Books Ltd, 2007) ISBN 978-845282301

Kumar R – *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners* (Sage Publications, 2005) ISBN 978-1412911948

Sparkes G – *Media Effects Research: A Basic Overview* (Wadsworth, 2009) ISBN 978-0495568544

Wimmer R D and Dominick J R – *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (Wadsworth, 2005) ISBN 978-0534647186

Journals

Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods

Qualitative Market Research

Research Magazine

Websites

www.alertnet.org/aletnet.nsf – Reuters news agency

www.archive.org/ – an internet archive site

www.bbcfootage.com – BBC film archives

www.britmovieco.uk – British movie archive

www.businessballs.com – a great business site with lots of information on research techniques, demographics, etc

www.gamasutra.com – a sister publication to the print magazine Game Developer

www.guardian.co.uk – *The Guardian* and *The Observer*

www.imdb.com – internet movie database

www.monitor.bbc.co.uk – BBC Worldwide News Monitoring

www.rcuk.ac.uk/ – Research Councils UK site

www.red3d.com/cwr/games – portal site with links to game research and technology

www.research.scea.com – Sony game research

www.research-live.com/ – *Research Magazine* website

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

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

Skill	When learners are …
Independent enquirers	applying research methods and techniques to creative media production and creative media products.

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 …
Creative thinkers	developing a proposal from the research they have undertaken
Reflective learners	assessing their individual contribution to a group research project
Team workers	working in teams to undertake primary and secondary research and make a portfolio of findings
Self-managers	working independently on any areas of the research, such as conducting individual secondary research on a specific area or interviewing on a one-to-one basis.

● 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	conducting complex internet searches
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	creating a portfolio of research work
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	conducting complex internet searches and creating a portfolio of research work
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	
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	creating a portfolio of research work and presenting work using tables, graphs, etc
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	
Evaluate the selection and use of ICT tools and facilities used to present information	
Mathematics	
Understand routine and non-routine problems in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations	interpreting existing secondary research data creating tables and graphs from own primary research data interpreting results of own data
Identify the situation or problem and the mathematical methods needed to tackle it	
Select and apply a range of skills to find solutions	
Use appropriate checking procedures and evaluate their effectiveness at each stage	
Interpret and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar routine contexts and situations	
Draw conclusions and provide mathematical justifications	

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	contributing to discussions on purposes, types and methods of research contributing to oral presentation of results
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	undertaking secondary research contributing to portfolio of research and oral presentation of results
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	contributing to portfolio of research and justification of proposals.