

Unit 15: Film and Video Editing Techniques

NQF Level 3: BTEC National

Guided learning hours: 60

Unit abstract

Editing of film and video material is an essential part of any production. Without the process of removing, adding and manipulating source material all film and video would have to shot in sequence and without mistakes.

The process of editing involves making creative decisions about source material. It provides an opportunity for the creative filming process to be continued through to the finished product.

This unit will develop learners' skills in, and understanding of, post-production processes. These can be practised and assessed through film editing, linear tape editing or nonlinear digital editing. Learners will also develop an understanding of the role of the editor in relation to the rest of the production process and understand how significantly their work can affect the final outcome.

Learners will be able to experiment with the editing processes and use their skills in the production of their own film and video products. They should learn that editing is not merely a technical process, but also an aesthetic one and they should be able to demonstrate this understanding through both their practice and the articulation of principles.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Understand the development and principles of editing
- 2 Be able to use preparation techniques for editing
- 3 Be able to edit moving image material.

Unit content

1 Understand the development and principles of editing

Development: in-camera editing; following the action; multiple points of view; shot variation; manipulation of diegetic time and space; film; video; analogue; digital

Principles: storytelling (engaging the viewer, providing and withholding information, development of drama, relationship to genre); combination of shots; 180° rule; creating pace

Techniques: seamless; continuity; motivated; jump-cutting; montage; parallel editing; crosscutting; point of view shot; shot-reverse-shot; cutaways; transitions, eg cut, dissolve, fade, wipe

Forms: fiction; non-fiction; advertising

2 Be able to use preparation techniques for editing

Preparation techniques: checking material for faults; synchronising rushes; producing a rushes log; marking up a script; labelling tapes; storing tapes or film; producing an edit decision list; clarifying the purpose of the work with a client or director

3 Be able to edit moving image material

Editing technology: nonlinear; linear; software, hardware; high definition; standard definition

Editing techniques: preparation process; online and offline editing; cutting on action; creating juxtapositions; using transitions; using sound to create impact

Preparing to edit: import clips; blank tapes; clear hard drives; select software package

Edit material: splice; use appropriate transitions; create continuity; use cutaways; cut on action; synchronise sound and vision; mix soundtracks; overlap sound; intercut; pace effectively; convey information effectively

Grading grid

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all of the learning outcomes for the unit. The criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

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 development and principles of editing expressing ideas with sufficient clarity to communicate them and with some appropriate use of subject terminology	M1 explain the development and principles of editing with reference to well-chosen examples expressing ideas with clarity and with generally appropriate use of subject terminology	D1 critically evaluate the development and principles of editing with supporting arguments and elucidated examples expressing ideas fluently and using subject terminology correctly
P2 apply editing preparation techniques with some assistance	M2 apply editing preparation techniques carefully and competently with only occasional assistance	D2 apply editing preparation techniques working independently to professional expectations
P3 apply editing techniques with some assistance.	M3 apply editing techniques to a good technical standard with only occasional assistance.	D3 apply editing techniques of technical quality that reflects near professional standards, working independently to professional expectations.

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

The first stages of this unit can be taught through seminar sessions in which the development and principles of editing are explored in key examples. This can be linked to the development of editing by taking examples from the very earliest films by the Lumiere brothers and the pioneer commercial film makers, the early experimentalists such as Griffiths and Eisenstein, and the mid-twentieth century and current practitioners (tutors will no doubt have their own favourites for the later periods). Learners could give presentations examining examples they have analysed and material they have produced themselves.

It would be instructive to compare examples from fiction, non-fiction and advertising, so that learners are acquainted with the main principles of editing for all three of the main moving image forms. Learners could compare, for example, an episode of *Inspector Morse* with its long stretches of uninterrupted continuity sequences, a thirty second commercial with many cuts, effects and elisions, and a news item cut in a more conservative and leisurely style using mainly montages of actuality footage. However, they may be well-advised to concentrate on one form for the practical elements of the unit.

Practical sessions with one-to-one instruction will be valuable in guiding learners through the preparation processes and enabling them to acquire skills with specific technology. Practical exercises will enable learners to become more proficient at undertaking routine preparatory tasks, whilst progressively demanding exercises which focus on specific editing techniques will facilitate the acquisition of technical and creative skills. Early in the learning process learners should be encouraged to work with material shot by someone else in order to experience the challenges faced by an editor and enabling them to appreciate the work of a skilled camera operator. Learners could also act as editors for each other's work, thus reflecting more accurately the division of labour in film and TV.

Learners should be encouraged to use this unit as an integral part of their moving image work. Once the initial skills have been developed they could start to edit their own material produced in other units in their programme of study.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

It is important that each learner has the opportunity to demonstrate ability individually in this unit and assessment instruments should be designed accordingly.

Achievement of learning outcome 1 can be assessed through an illustrated written report or a presentation. Presentations must be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification. 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.

One way to assess achievement of learning outcomes 2 and 3 would be to set up an editing 'test' in which the learner has a fixed time in which to produce an edited piece of work. Rushes could be shot by tutors and supplied in advance in order to enable logging to take place and an edit decision list to be produced. The final piece does not have to be extensive – something lasting two or three minutes can provide opportunities to demonstrate high level skills, provided that the aesthetic and technical challenges are sufficiently demanding. Alternatively, learners can edit a piece of work they are producing for another unit. In all cases evidence of preparation techniques should be provided through the submission of relevant documents.

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 the Pass grade, learners must achieve all the criteria at pass level.

P1: learners will provide an outline of the development and the main principles of editing, in which all aspects are accurate and relevant but detail will be limited. They may deal with the two matters separately, or demonstrate their understanding of the principles through their description of the development of editing. They might refer to individual films but will not select details from, or elements of, those films to exemplify points made. A pass level learner might note, 'One of the main rules of continuity editing is the 180° rule. This means that the camera must always stay on the same side of the line along which an action takes place.' When expressing themselves orally, learners' language skills will be sound and they will be able to express themselves with sufficient clarity to be understood, though vocabulary – and in particular technical vocabulary – will be limited, and register will not always be appropriate to the situation or audience. When expressing themselves formally in writing, learners' skills will be basic, typically with frequent errors of spelling and punctuation and occasional lapses in grammar and syntax. Generally, language skills will be adequate for learners to communicate simple ideas or deal with straightforward material.

P2: there will be evidence of an awareness of the necessary processes and preparation techniques for editing and of their application, but the application will be inconsistent. Documentation such as logging sheets and edit decision lists will be basic and lacking in detail.

P3: learners will demonstrate a basic ability to apply key techniques and principles but with some technical shortcomings such as occasional flash frames, jump cuts and poorly balanced sound. Techniques applied will not necessarily be suited to the genre or form of the edited piece.

P2 and P3: when engaged in practical activities, 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.

Merit

To achieve a merit grade, in addition to achieving all the criteria at pass level, learners must achieve all the criteria at merit level.

M1: in discussing the development of editing learners will be able to show how or why one stage developed from another. They will talk about the principles in such a way as to show how or why they have developed or will be able to say why they have become, as they are, basic to the process. They will be able to explain why particular techniques are used in specific circumstances or to explain the strengths and weaknesses of given techniques. Well-chosen exemplification drawn from details or elements of the films studied 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. A merit level learner might note, 'One of the main principles of continuity editing is the 180° rule. This means that the camera must always stay on the same side of the line along which an action takes place because if it did not the viewer would soon become confused about what was happening. A good example of this is the scene in Platoon where Barnes goes looking for Elias in the jungle in order to kill him.' When expressing themselves orally, learners' language skills will be good and they will be able to express intentions and ideas clearly using, for the most part, the right word in the right context, including technical vocabulary and the kind of language used in the industry. Register will be generally appropriate, with perhaps occasional lapses. When expressing themselves formally in writing, learners' skills will be sound with typically few lapses in grammar and syntax, though there might be some errors of spelling and punctuation. Generally, language skills will be good enough for learners to be able to express fairly complex ideas and to handle material of moderate difficulty.

M2: learners will apply editing preparation techniques systematically and the documents they produce will be functional and prepared with some care. There will be a recognition of why such documentation is necessary. However, rushes logs will typically lack full detail, edit decision lists over simplify sequences and the organisation of paperwork lack proper rigour.

M3: the edited work will exhibit only minor technical flaws. Flash frames and jump cuts should generally be absent and the techniques chosen should essentially suit the genre and form of the work. There may be flaws with timing and pacing, but generally there should be a sense of competent selection and combination of sound and vision. Learners will show facility and some confidence in relation to skills and the handling of equipment and work will be approached methodically and with adequate preparation.

M2 and M3: when engaged in practical activities, learners will need only occasional assistance, though typically they will still need some support when dealing with more complex technology or trying to apply more sophisticated techniques. Like the pass grade learner, they will benefit from it.

Distinction

To achieve a distinction grade, in addition to achieving all the criteria at pass and merit level, learners must achieve all the criteria at distinction level.

D1: in their discussion of the development of editing learners will develop ideas critically (ie, compare, assess and discriminate), supporting points with clear arguments and evidence. They will draw out of an example precisely what it is about it that exemplifies the point it illustrates. Typically distinction level learners will be able to merge discussion of development with discussion of the principles of editing, demonstrating their understanding of the latter through the former. They will show a sophisticated understanding of the principles of editing, being able to say exactly why a given principle has developed. A distinction level learner might note, 'The 180° rule developed very early, being used in the silent era. It was developed so that viewers could follow an action without getting confused, and is particularly useful when two different but related sequences of action are happening simultaneously. For example, in *Platoon*, when Barnes is pursuing Elias through the jungle in order to kill him, Barnes always moves from left to right across the screen, and therefore away from the rest of the platoon whilst Elias always moves from right to left, which is back towards his platoon and hence to safety. Once this sense of direction has been clearly established it is carefully maintained, so that as we cut from one to the other, we can tell not only who is going where, but are vividly aware of the fact they are about to meet each other.' When expressing themselves orally, learners will speak with fluency, using a wide vocabulary and deploying both general and technical language with accuracy and confidence. Register will always be appropriate. When expressing themselves formally in writing, learners' skills will be good with typically quite complex sentence structures, very few grammatical errors and infrequent errors in spelling and punctuation. Generally, language skills will enable learners to express complex ideas and to handle difficult material.

D2: work at this level will be characterised by preparation which is thorough, systematic and detailed. Rushes logs will show a full appreciation of the possibilities and limitations of shots, and edit decision lists will provide a fully detailed blueprint for the final piece. All paperwork will be clear and organised to a near-professional standard.

D3: editing at this level should be technically accomplished and exhibit flair in its use of structure, pace and combination of sound and vision. Techniques used will be entirely appropriate for the genre and form of the work. Again, work will approach professional standards.

D2 and D3: in all practical activity distinction level 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.

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

There are opportunities to link this unit with any other production unit in the Television and Film pathway, and with units which incorporate an examination of how editing generates meaning, such as *Unit 5: Critical Approaches to Media Products*, *Unit 24: Television and Video Studies*, and *Unit 25: Film Studies*.

There are also opportunities to relate the work done for this unit to Skillset National Occupational Standards in Editing as follows:

- E1 Identify and agree editing outcomes and process
- E5 Digitise pictures and sound for nonlinear editing
- E9 Edit materials using online video-tape equipment
- E10 Edit materials using nonlinear equipment
- E11 Assemble pictures and sound to specification
- E12 Produce first cuts
- E13 Evaluate first cuts materials for final post-production
- E14 Produce fine cut materials for final post-production
- E21 Realise complex effects.

Essential resources

There should be sufficient editing equipment available to enable simultaneous access for practice and assessment. Some thought should be given to the storage of multiple users' work on computers and portable hard drives may be a solution. Learners will need access to professional quality editing facilities. In addition they should have access to technical manuals and books on the craft of editing. It is worth building up a resource of, for example, interviews with editors from TV, radio and relevant magazines.

Indicative reading for learners

Books

Boyce E, Crisp M and Jarvis P – *Editing Film and Videotape* (BBC Television Training, 1986)

Crittenden R – *Film and Video Editing, 2nd Edition* (Blueprint, 1995)

Jack K – *Video Demystified: A Handbook for the Digital Learner, 3rd Edition* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2001)

Kindem G and Musburger R – *Introduction to Media Production: From Analog to Digital, 2nd Edition* (Focal Press, 2001)

Orlebar J – *Digital Television Production* (Hodder Arnold, 2001)

Roberts-Breslin J – *Making Media: Foundations of Sound and Image Production* (Focal Press, 2003)

Wohl M – *Advanced Editing Techniques in Final Cut Pro 5* (Peachpit, 2005)

Key skills

Achievement of key skills is not a requirement of this qualification but it is encouraged. Suggestions of opportunities for the generation of Level 3 key skill evidence are given here. Tutors should check that learners have produced all the evidence required by part B of the key skills specifications when assessing this evidence. Learners may need to develop additional evidence elsewhere to fully meet the requirements of the key skills specifications.

Communication Level 3	
When learners are:	They should be able to develop the following key skills evidence:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussing editing principles in relation to examples • presenting critical analyses of specific examples of editing • learning about editing principles through reading and summarising key texts • a analysing examples of editing • b producing a detailed edit decision list. 	<p>C3.1a Take part in a group discussion.</p> <p>C3.1b Make a formal presentation of at least eight minutes using an image or other support material.</p> <p>C3.2 Read and synthesise information from at least two documents about the same subject. Each document must be a minimum of 1000 words long.</p> <p>C3.3 Write two different types of documents, each one giving different information about complex subjects. One document must be at least 1000 words long.</p>
Information and communication technology Level 3	
When learners are:	They should be able to develop the following key skills evidence:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using editing software to select, refine and combine material on a timeline • presenting edited work using software. 	<p>ICT3.2 Enter and develop the information and derive new information.</p> <p>ICT3.3 Present combined information such as text with image, text with number, image with number.</p>

Problem solving Level 3	
When learners are:	They should be able to develop the following key skills evidence:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • producing an edit decision list, considering a range of options of combination • determining a creative editing strategy. 	<p>PS3.1 Explore a problem and identify different ways of tackling it.</p> <p>PS3.2 Plan and implement at least one way of solving the problem.</p>
Working with others Level 3	
When learners are:	They should be able to develop the following key skills evidence:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning post-production • reviewing whether the outcomes have been achieved and considering improvements. 	<p>WO3.1 Plan work with others.</p> <p>WO3.3 Review work with others and agree ways of improving collaborative work in future.</p>