Module	Media Reporting and Editing
Course code	BACH-MRE
Credits	5
Important Notes	Students ideally should have done some media writing.
Allocation of marks	60% continuous assessment 40% final examination

Module aims and objectives

To enable learners to attain the practical skills required to initiate, plan, research, write, edit and sub-edit quality news reports, feature articles and content for specific audiences; to equip learners with a practical and theoretical understanding of interview skills, pitching stories, freelancing, 'news values' and spot news, such as the reporting of demonstrations; to embed a critical awareness of the dynamics of a democratic public sphere and the role of a free press in maintaining it; and to design and publish as part of a team, a hardcopy magazine.

Minimum intended module learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, the learner will be able to:

(i) Conceive, research, write and self-edit news reports, feature articles and content of an acceptable quality, with interviews, for specific audiences.

(ii) Apply a practical grasp as well as a critical awareness of 'news values'.

(iii) Successfully pitch stories to editors as a staffer or freelancer.

(iv) Critically analyse how changing media technology, and consumer and political trends, impact on the production, distribution and financing of written media content.

(v) Demonstrate an understanding of clear, concise expression, using appropriate words with correct grammar and punctuation.

(vi) Structure different types of written stories as well as apply the use of good intros and accurate, impartial headlines.

     (vii)   Work as part of a media team to produce a well-designed, well-written, hard-copy magazine.

Module content, organisation and structure

The module is delivered over 12 weeks, with lectures and tutorials/practicals every week advancing simultaneously learners' critical and practical skills. The following topics are covered:

Topic: Good Writing is Good Thinking: Thinking and Planning News Reports and Feature Articles: Sources, features versus reports, finding the focus, target markets, follow-ups, clustering, outlines, trend stories. Features: Thinking visually, painting pictures with words; personal columns; reviews; profiles. Freelancing, pitching, and interview skills.

Topic: What is good English? Clear, concise expression: avoiding packed sentences; using active verbs as far as possible; be aware of sentence type and variation to avid monotony.

Topic: Working with words: Short vs. long; simple vs. complex; concrete vs. abstract; prefixes and suffixes; using mainly nouns and verbs; care with adjectives and modifiers; care with prepositions. Lists of wasteful use of words, redundant words and phrases, and clichés provided. Correct paragraphs and sentence length; using quotes and style sheets.

Topic: News intros: Importance of good intros; getting length and chronology right; avoiding source obsession, remembering relevance of readership; avoiding overloading. Three aids to good intros; special intro problems (quotes, tenses, wordiness, blending details or ideas, questions, abbreviations).

Topic: Structure of news stories: Action stories: most dramatic incident and human result; chronological development; background and assessment where appropriate. Statement-opinion stories: no set formula; only guidelines; news lead – 3 to 4 pars; substantiating news lead; not running ahead of reader's knowledge; reporting impartially.

Topic: Writing Headlines: Accuracy, intelligibility, impartiality and vigour; purpose is to distil news. Guidelines: strong, active verbs; present or future tense; active rather than passive voice; looking for specifics; using locations; being positive as far as possible; giving single thoughts). Label, freestyle, sports and business headlines. Avoiding headlinese: the "seven deadly sins".

Topic: Reporting On Protests and Demonstrations: How to do so well and safely. Studying the empirical evidence from academic journal articles as to why much media reportage of protests and demonstrations poorly reflects the actually event.

Topic: Usefulness and Limitations of News Values: Thinking Critically about Why Some Events Become News and Other Events Do Not: What is a 'news value'? Examples, using them for successful career; their limitations.

Topic: Citizen Journalism and The Public Sphere: Thinking Critically About Technology: applying Habermas's concept of the public sphere to online journalism; is citizen journalism an opportunity or threat?

Topic: Trends: Funding: subscriptions, micro-financing, not-for-profit, non-governmental organisations and civil society groups. Who should pay for the journalism which democracy needs?

Topic: Design for Magazines: refresh and advance, principles of design. Working as a team to produce a well-designed magazine with relevant content.