

Unit 15 : Co-ordinating writing and production

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Introduction

This manual has covered the jobs an editor does in sequence. In the first part the emphasis was on working with writers, while the last part put more emphasis on working with production staff, such as typists and designers. This unit will look at the complete process of course development, show how the different bits fit together, and examine the key role of the editor throughout the process.

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- * describe the editor's role at each stage of course development;
- * devise and use a course development schedule;
- * make emergency plans when things go wrong.

Keep your own institution in mind as you work through this unit. It will be of more use to you if you can adapt the ideas and advice to fit your own circumstances.

The unit will only take about an hour to complete, and has no assignment.

1. The editor's role in course development

The table below shows the main stages of course development with editorial jobs listed alongside. Sometimes one person will do all these jobs. In other cases certain tasks can be allocated to different people by a managing editor. The table assumes a decision has been made to offer a new course. Some stages may take place in a different order in some institutions.

<u>Stages</u>	<u>Editorial job</u>
1. Identify writers	Selection and appointment of writers (sometimes done by management)
2. Brief or train writers	Done by editor
3. Plan course	Editor is part of team
4. Make writing and production schedule	Done by editor
5. Draft sample material	Advise writer
6. Assess sample material	Organised by editor
7. Revise sample material	Brief writer in light of assessment
8. Testing of sample material	Organised by editor, who analyses results and reports to writer
9. Write all units and revise them	Get drafts typed Organise assessment in course team Take part in assessment Seek copyright permissions Check availability and suitability of support materials Edit Commission illustrations Keep writer on schedule
10. Units agreed	Copy edit and mark up
11. Units typeset	Keep typist to schedule
12. Proof reading	Editor is one reader
13. Corrections typed	Keep typist to schedule
14. Check corrections	Editor does

15. Make up pages	Advise designer
	Keep up to schedule
16. Check make up	Editor does
17. Print	Brief printer
	Keep up to schedule
18. Check	Editor does
19. Despatch	Prepare course contents list
	Open file for comments and errors
EDITOR'S ROLE IN COURSE DEVELOPMENT	

2. Devising and checking a schedule

The table makes it clear that course development is a lengthy, complex process. It is not just a matter of a writer handing scripts to an editor on a given date. You need a comprehensive schedule to manage the process. It is best to arrange it unit by unit. Here is an example of part of a schedule for one unit.

Course: _____		Unit: _____	
Job	Date due	Date done	Signed
First draft			
Typed			
First edit			
Assessed/tested			
Revised			
Copyright permissions sought			
Pictures commissioned			
Text approved			
Typeset			
Proof reading			

You will find that you will need several different schedules at different stages of course development, some quite simple and some rather complicated.

EXERCISE 1

Consider the stages of development you use in your own institution. Can you fill in a blank table like the one above with an imaginary but realistic schedule for one of your courses? Include all the stages from first draft to printing, and write dates in the 'dates due' column.

(15 minutes)

Once you have made a schedule, you have to keep to it. This, of course, requires effort. The ideas below may help you.

- * Post the schedule on the wall, where you can always see it.
- * Always check off each step as soon as it is complete, so the schedule is always up-to-date and accurate.
- * Make several copies of the schedule for each course. Prepare a copy for each person involved, marking clearly the tasks which involve that individual. For example, you would highlight the date for commissioning illustrations on the illustrator's copy. Hand each person their copy.
- * Arrange regular course production progress meetings. These should be at least once a month. Some institutions have short meetings once a week. All problems are aired at these meetings.
- * Check the schedule regularly. A routine check of progress on every course you are working on should take place every week. You can remember to do this if you fix a regular day and time for it.

3. Critical points in course development

There are some points where things are more likely to go wrong than others. You should by now have a good idea of the trouble spots.

EXERCISE 2

List two or three points that you think are critical ones. Use the table in section 1 to help you.

(3 minutes)

Comment

The biggest trouble spot is stage 9. Writers tend to fall behind schedule, or even write nothing at all. Writers who do not produce reduce

many an editor to a state of despair. The next most serious problems arise at stage 5. Again, it concerns writers, who may prove unsuitable when they submit sample material, or may withdraw because they do not want the job after all, or you may have to withdraw your offer to them because they are too slow. If this happens, you are back to square one, identifying a writer. A third problem can occur at stage 9 again. You may not be able to obtain permission for use of copyright material or, more seriously, you may discover that supplementary materials you were relying on, like a textbook, are no longer available.

The production and printing stages bring their own problems, some of which have been mentioned in Unit 13. The course units have to pass from person to person frequently during production, and if one person is late, then everyone else is affected. It is almost impossible to make up time lost during stages 12 to 18.

4. Dealing with emergencies

A good schedule will help avoid emergencies. But let us suppose a crisis occurs. What do you do? Crises are almost always a matter of time. If deadlines do not matter, work can start again in the normal way. But time usually does matter, so we must consider how to act quickly. Here are some ideas.

* To shorten writing time:

- . Find as many writers as you can and get them to produce a small number of units each. You may be able to do this in a workshop. You will need extra editorial capacity as well.
- . Produce a low-cost temporary course. Find a reasonable textbook, and get a short study guide written based on the textbook.
- . Offer the course for a year or so, until you have time to prepare a full course.

* To shorten rewriting time:

- . When materials are not available, and part of a course must be rewritten, in many cases the editor could draft the amendments. You could do this with guidance from the writer, who would check and finalise everything. While you rewrite, the writer carries on writing new material.

* To shorten course development:

- . Cut out testing.
- . Arrange group or outside assessment on only one or two sample units. Process the rest immediately.
- . Typeset straight from handwritten material. Cut out the typing of drafts.

You may not like these ideas. Can you think of any other, better ways of dealing with emergencies? A distance-teaching institution is responsible to its students, who must come first. You have to resolve conflicts between the wish to produce high quality materials and the need to serve students.

EXERCISE 3

Here are some events which might occur.

- . A part-time writer sends you a unit in the post, without keeping a copy. The unit is lost in the post.
- . The textbook used with the course goes out of print just before you print.
- . The designer does artistic drawings which nobody can understand.

Imagine you are the course editor who has to deal with this situation. Discuss what you would do with a colleague.

(15 minutes)

Comment

There are several ways of dealing with each situation. The examples come from a game called 'On course', which is part of IEC's manual on The Administration of Distance Teaching Institutions. If you have a copy of the manual in your institution, you may like to arrange a training session for editorial and production staff to play the game.

Summary

This final unit has reminded us that the editor is at the centre of course development and is largely responsible for co-ordination. It has also reminded us that an editor is concerned with administration and relations with colleagues as well as with editing. By working through this manual you should have developed confidence to handle all these aspects of your work. It remains to wish you good luck.