

# Television Documentary at the University of Huddersfield

## The Situation

This video case study is part of a three year consortium project that is looking at Group Work Assessment in Media Production. Six higher education institutions have been involved in recording their method of assessing student groups involved in different areas of media production.

[Music sting]

***Narrator:** The University of Huddersfield boasts some 16,000 students and has been teaching media courses for more than twelve years on a variety of joint pathways as well as dedicated pathways.*

**Stephen Kelly:** My name is Stephen Kelly, I'm Fellow in Media here at the University of Huddersfield and I'm module leader for a module which is known as Location Based Documentary Video Production, which is a bit of a mouthful, but it's a module which lasts for twelve weeks over one semester and runs parallel with a module called Studio Based Video Production. It's a module worth 20 credits and normally has a class of around 17 or 18 students.

The module is taught by myself and a technician called Caroline Pringle and it's taught on a weekly basis, a two hour class.

Well there are three parts to the assessment. Part one are the various classroom exercises which they do, that's the filming of vox pops and GVs and interviews. For that they get a total mark of 25% and they also get a 25% mark for a critical analysis which they have to write, and then finally they get 50% for the assignment, which is the six minute documentary.

What we're trying to do is to assess both the process and the actual product itself. The process is assessed mainly through the classroom exercises, because you can see those classroom exercises developing from week one through to week six, so it's quite easy to see a development there and to be able to reward that process. The product I guess is probably more assessed with the final product. Every week when they've done their classroom exercise they bring it back to the class and we, as a class, look at what each group has produced. We tend to be critical from a professional point of view and just take a look and see what the weaknesses of their product are, what the strengths are, how they can better improve it, that way they all begin to learn.

**Adele (student):** The feedback from the classroom exercises was good because it was done in front of a group and you can compare and contrast your different work, and I think that it helps you with your progress as well as it shows what you should be doing and what you're doing wrong and it made the rest of the group think about what they should be doing and oh maybe we haven't worked as hard as we should be working.

[Music sting]

**Stephen Kelly:** Well we're now just over half way through the module. The students have worked together in groups of four or five to do the classroom exercises and now they'll go off and they'll do their assignment, which is a six minute documentary film. We've had a little change around in some of the groups, but for the main part the groups are exactly the same as they were. The principle problem which we've had with the groups is that two groups came to me and complained that some members of the team weren't doing enough work. Although they were attending the class, when it actually came to going out filming and doing the editing they weren't showing up, so that was a problem which I had to resolve.

**Claire (student):** It was the same three of us that were doing everything and we just didn't think it was fair that we were doing more than twice the amount of work as they were and we were all going to come out with the same mark at the end of it.

**Stephen Kelly:** I resolved that problem by taking those who weren't putting much into the team effort and putting them together, and doing a switch around with the other people who were putting in the effort, so in other words, two bad people from one group are now with two bad people from another group and two good people from the group are with the other two people from the good group. This may seem slightly unfair on those members who weren't having any input because there are now four of them who weren't having any input, but maybe it'll shake them up and make them realise that they've got to work.

**Claire (student):** I think this module has really affected the way I look at group work in the future because I mean you learn from your mistakes, don't you? And you get to know who works and who doesn't, and you can't just go with your best friends because that isn't always the case, and it got to the point where we were actually falling out over it, when I was in the original group with the lads, we were actually falling over what was happening.

**Stephen Kelly:** The only way that I found out whether students are having some kind of input into the classroom exercise and the final assignment is from the other students within that particular team. There's no way I can find that out. I don't go out filming with them, it would be impossible.

**James (student):** I don't think there's many other ways that you can really do it because they can't be there all the time and unless after each session we go to them and say oh so and so didn't turn up now, he did this, he did this... then we can't actually get a mark

individually. We can get an over all mark from the final product and that's basically all they're going to see.

**Stephen Kelly:** It's impossible to predict how the teams will work. I always say to students... I give them one piece of advice, which is to be careful who they choose to have in their team. Make sure that the people they've got in their team are responsible people. They know each other better than I do.

**James (student):** I'd say the best way to choose a group would be to make sure you know the person well enough to know that they're going to be there. It's probably better to have five people who are going to turn up, who are average workers, than having two that are going to turn up every now and then, but are brilliant workers.

**Jonathan (student):** Yeah, I think a lot of important lessons are learnt about group work through the modules, which aren't necessarily on the syllabus, but it's an important thing to learn.

**Jakob (student):** I love working in groups. I think individually it may be fairer, but I think you get to know other people and you get to give and take and compromise, which is important I think for everyday life, really... yeah, I think it's good.

[Music sting]

**Stephen Kelly:** Well the assessment of the module really takes two forms. First of all I might have a look at it myself, have a look at their final projects myself, but I prefer to have a second marker in with me and usually one member of the staff will come in with me and we'll sit and look at the film and mark it together, it's as simple as that. It will then also be sent to an external marker, like our external examiner and he too will look at it and at this very moment he has in his possession a number of the videos. So it's in two parts, the kind of assessment that we have.

(Assessing video)

**Stephen Kelly:** Most of the members of the group work together quite well. There was one guy who frequently didn't turn up....

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lecturer:** Oh right, so...

**Stephen Kelly:** With the film and with the classroom exercises I'm marking both and we're marking the process and the product. You might get instances where, I mean for example a very good instance here with the films that we often choose. There was one film about... a Brazilian dance fight, which was an extremely good film, and in fact did get the highest mark, but it was a very well made film, it used slow motion techniques, it was beautifully shot, it was very well done. So the product was very good, but the process would have got a lesser mark, simply because it was an easy film to make. It was all shot on one site, on one location, so setting up that film was very simple, filming it was also very simple. Take

another group, I mean a group for instance they did a film about Christmas coming to Huddersfield. That involved filming on a number of locations, they filmed the vicar, did an interview with the vicar in the church, they interviewed a Father Christmas, they interviewed in a garden centre and they interviewed in a shop and a butcher's and they also interviewed somebody from the council about Christmas and putting up the lights. As a product it was very, very poor, but I had to give them some extra marks for the process because it was quite a difficult film to make.

The dossiers can help us assess the individual input because you can usually get a good feel from the dossier as to how much work a particular student has done and if they are analysing the films and analysing the work that's been done in a very coherent and detailed way then you have a good idea that they have put a lot of effort into the particular films. With those students who haven't put much work into it, it shows up usually in the critical analysis.

**Student:** In the essay I was quite, what's the word... condemning.

**Student:** The marks differ probably because, whereas my essay probably wasn't very good but still the grade that I received for the actual group work obviously wasn't any different than the other members of the group, which meant that going into the essay they were all on a level playing field and that isn't my strongest area. My strongest area is the practical work, but because they don't mark that individually I have got a worse grade than the other members of the group, who tried a lot less than myself.

**Stephen Kelly:** Again though, when we're looking at the critical analysis, we're not looking purely at writing skills, we're looking at whether they analyse it, whether they talk about it in a coherent way, whether they've done a good analysis of the way they worked together as a group, of the kind of skills they've learned, so it's not just about writing that we are marking, we're marking on a whole number of other bases.

**Student:** I think the assessment was fair in the end, because what I've heard people talking about, people seem to have got marks that they did deserve.

**Stephen Kelly:** I give feedback in a number of ways. One is when they get the critical analysis back, there will be remarks on the critical analysis and secondly I will give each group member a memo about the film which they made, which will be my views of that particular film.

**Ben (student):** You need to know if you're going in the right direction, so you need these points and you need people to direct you and things like that, so that always helps and we've got a good teacher and he knows what he's talking about so... we do alright that way.

**Adele (student):** Yeah, I really enjoyed it and that's why I've sort of changed my degree so that I can do more like it. I think it's good to have group work, even though it's not marked as fairly as you'd like, because it takes a lot of the stress off... when it's an individual piece

and it's a lot more clearer on what you're meant to be doing and you've got people to refer to rather than just struggling on your own.

**Ben (student):** I really enjoyed this module because basically I love doing film work and I was doing the camera work most of the time. I used to be an actor and used to be in front of the camera, but I've realised that now I really like being behind the camera.

**Student:** In spite of the problems I loved the module, yeah.

[Music sting]

[End of programme].