



JLS 624

**FEATURE
WRITING**

Course Guide



JLS624
FEATURE WRITING

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Published by:
National Open University of Nigeria 2008

First Printed 2008

ISBN: 978-058-880-9

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Introduction

Welcome to JLS624: Feature Writing

Feature writing is a 3 credit unit course designed to drill students of Journalism. The essence is to improve the writing skills of the students so that they can effectively practise Journalism, especially the print medium.

This course treats the fundamental principles required for writing good feature articles. Be it for the newspaper or the magazine. It particularly highlights the functions of features which make them unique and distinct from straight news. The course is developed essentially for Nigerian students hence, the sample presented and examples used are typically Nigerian in orientation and setting. JLS624 takes into consideration, the professional and academic needs of the Postgraduate Diploma students of Journalism and Mass Communication.

This Course Guide is meant to give you basic information about this course. Hence, it specifies the amount of time you are required to spend on each assignment. It equally directs you on how to go about your Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs). It advises you on how to make the best out of your course materials through reading them, attending tutorial classes and actively participating at these tutorials.

What You Will Learn in this Course

JLS624 is meant to expose students to the basic concepts in writing stylistically for the reader's relaxation and pleasure. Features are, more often than not, the in-depth, and well-researched version of news stories, interviews or even personality profiles. The structure, characteristics, types and functions of feature articles will all be discussed in this course. The characteristics of a good feature writer as well as features themselves are treated in this course. Others include the sources of features, language of features, opinion, personal and service columns. Finally, it equips you effectively, so as to inculcate in you, the writing skills required for this course.

The thorough understanding of this course will help you appreciate the differences between feature writing and other types of writing. It will equally empower you to face the challenges of writing in appreciate style that will be pleasurable to your audience. It will nurture you for creative thinking and writing.

In studying this course, you stand a good chance of valuing the **agenda setting uses and gratification** theories of mass communication. Your

adequate exposure to feature writing will empower you to write feature articles for both the newspapers and magazines as well as carry out good news analysis for the broadcast medium.

This Course Guide is meant to help you accomplish the aims and objectives of this course. Hence you are advised to read it carefully so as to get the best out of your course.

Course Aims

The primary aim of this course is to inculcate in you the appropriate skills for writing, analyzing and marketing factual articles for newspapers, general and specialized magazines. It is equally aimed at training you for effective ‘subject research’ investigation of editorial issues as well as manuscript preparation.

Course Objectives

Certain objectives must be achieved from the study of this course. So at the end of this course, you should be able to:

- i. Define “feature” and discuss the nature of features
- ii. Discuss the characteristics of features
- iii. Identify the different types of features and the sources of feature articles
- iv. Write at least one each, of the identified types
- v. Demonstrate effective writing skills through the marketability of your feature articles

Working through this Course

To maximally benefit from this course, you should read the study units provided through your course material. You equally do the self assessment exercises which you will find under every unit of this course. Try as much as you can to locate the texts recommended for further readings. Please read some of them to complement what you already have in your course materials.

There are also Tutor Marked Assignments at the end of each unit which constitute your continuous Assessment for the course. At the appropriate time the School will inform you of which of the TMAs to do and when to submit them.

Remember, all the components of this course are very important as they all contribute to your total scores and eventually your success.

Course Materials

The major materials you will need for this course are:

- i. Course Guide.
- ii. Study units.
- iii. Assignments file.
- iv. Relevant textbooks including the ones listed under each unit
- v. You may also need to listen to programmes and news on the radio and television.
- vi. As a beginner, you need to read newspapers and interact with other mass media as often as possible.

Study Units

There are 16 units in this course. They are listed below:

Module 1 General Overview of Features

Unit 1	Features: A Starting Point	
Unit 2	Another Look at Feature Story Ideas	
Unit 3	Special Features and Profiles I	10
Unit 4	Interview Feature and Profiles II	
Unit 5	The Feature Sidebar and Feature Series	

Module 2 Writing Columns

Unit 1	Opinion Columns
Unit 2	Personal Columns
Unit 3	Service Columns I
Unit 4	Service Columns II: Travel Guide

Module 3 Reviews and Language of Features

Unit 1	Arts Reviews
Unit 2	Special Correspondents
Unit 3	Language of Features

Module 4 Writing Tasks

Unit 1	Writing the Feature Story
Unit 2	Writing the Feature: The Intro
Unit 3	The Features Sub-editor
Unit 4	Writing Tasks

Textbooks and References

Certain books have been recommended in the course. You may wish to purchase them for further reading.

Assessment File

An assessment file and a marking scheme will be made available to you. In the assessment file, you will find details of the assignments you must submit to your tutor for marking. There are two aspects of the assessment of this course; the tutor marked and the written examination. The marks you obtain in these two areas will make up your final marks. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the Assignment file.

The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total score.

Tutor Marked Assignment (TMAs)

You will have to submit a specified number of the (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a tutor marked assignment. You will be assessed on four of them but the best three performances from the (TMAs) will be used for your 30% grading. When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a Tutor Marked Assignment form, to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submissions. If for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor for a discussion on the possibility of an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination will be a test of three hours. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the units all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions, which reflect the kinds of self assessment exercises and tutor marked assignment you have previously encountered. And all aspects of the course will be assessed. You should use the time between completing the last unit, and taking the examination to revise the entire course.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments (Best Three Assignments out of four marked)	= 30%
Final Examination	= 70%
Total	100%

Presentation Schedule

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date of completing the study units and dates for examinations.

Course Overview and Presentation Schedule

Unit	Title of work	Weeks Activity	
Course Guide			
Unit 1	Features: A Starting Point	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	Another Look At Feature Stories	Week 2	Assignment 2
3	Special Features And Profiles	Week 3	Assignment 3
4	Interview Features And Profiles	Week 4	Assignment 4
5	The Feature Sidebars	Week 5	Assignment 5
6	Opinion Columns	Week 6	Assignment 6
7	Personal Columns	Week 7	Assignment 7
8	Service Columns 1	Week 8	Assignment 8
9	Service Columns 11: Travel Guide	Week 9	Assignment 9
10	Arts Reviews	Week 10	Assignment 10
11	Special Correspondents	Week 11	Assignment 11
12	Language of Features	Week 12	Assignment 12
13	Writing the Feature Story	Week 13	Assignment 13
14	Writing the Feature: The Intro	Week 14	Assignment 14
15	Writing the Feature Sub-editor	Week 15	Assignment 15
16	Writing Tasks	Week 16	Assignment 16
	Revision	1	
	Examination	1	
	Total	17	

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecture. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to the lecturer. In the same way a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you where to read, and which are your text materials or set books. You are provided exercises to do at appropriate points, just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit, and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. The moment a unit is finished, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If this is made a habit, then you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a Reading section. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment.
2. Organize a Study Schedule. Design a 'Course Overview' to guide you through the Course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the Assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates and schedule of work for each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their course work, if you get into difficulties with your schedule, please, let your tutor know before it is too late to help.
4. Turn to Unit I, and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. You will need your set books and the unit you are studying at any point in time. As you work through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.
6. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.

7. Well before the relevant due dates (about 4 weeks before due dates), keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignment carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.
8. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor.
9. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
10. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignments.
11. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the Course Guide).

Tutors and Tutorials

Information relating to the tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must take your tutor-marked assignments to the study centre well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor if you need help. Contact your tutor if:

- you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings
- you have difficulty with the exercises
- you have a question or problem with an assignment or with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to-face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the

course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussion actively.

Summary

The course guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. The course teaches you the basic principles of **Feature Writing and Art Reviews** and how these principles can be applied. It also acquaints you with the legal and ethical rules guiding your job as a reporter.

We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.