UNIT 3 WRITING SCRIPTS FOR AUDIO AND VIDEO PROGRAMMES

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

"The radio show demands a daily product whether you feel personally up to it or not. Therefore inspiration is a moot word.

I usually get to the station at 5 a.m. for a 6 a.m. start. My first action is to throw a piece of paper into the typewriter and get down the task. This is a non-negotiable action. Something has to happen. Often I will first start without an idea, typing "Hello Frank, this is Ronald Reagan calling from the Oval Office". Suddenly an idea! What if Frank makes a comment that he was looking forward to talking to the Chief executive? "Good", says Ron, "I'll get Mommy and put her on the phone." Now I have a direction. Frank convincing Reagan that he's the chief executive and not Nancy.

Sometimes a skit will take a direction based on a type that reads funny, or a newspaper heading stares at you from the desk and gives you the direction in which to go. The harsh reality of this demanding exercise is 'good or bad - something has to happen.

With regard to inspiration, I have developed over the years an ability to remember those sketchy but valuable flashes of brilliance - or so we think - that hit you any time of day or night. Sometimes I will use the afternoon to then write and edit something without the strict time constraints of the morning. That's a luxury.

I have come to the salty, unromantic conclusion that writing is tough, inspired or not. But gritty determination and a developed self-discipline will get words on to paper ... "

Mike Cleary: *Getting words on to paper* (1989).

This unit is about writing scripts. Writing scripts is an essential part of the work in the agenda of a distance teacher, and on the face of it, may seem daunting. This unit discusses the details regarding how one might go about it. We outline style, formats and the purposes of the formats in relation to audio and video programmes. The process of writing a script - including the stages of developing a script - is the central point of discussion.

The units in the second block of this course dwelt on the scope of audio and video programmes in the instructional design of the distance learning system. The first unit of block 2 focussed on the pedagogical utility of various media and the extent to which they may be used to achieve the intended learning outcomes. In the first two units of this block you learnt about the basic production process and the language of television. To produce an audio/video programme, it is essential to have a script. Having said this, it is but natural for us to move on to one of the more practical aspects of the media namely, writing for audio and the video programmes.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to

- outline the purpose or focus of a typical script for an audio/video programme;
- distinguish between the various formats of programmes;
- explain the purposes of the formats;
- trace the various stages of development (in the process of writing a script); and
- develop your own script for a specific purpose.

3.2 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Before we venture on to the precise detail of script development, it will be pertinent to recall the nature, scope and purpose of educational programmes. At this juncture, let us make a distinction between educational and information based programmes. Now, what do we mean here?

People define the word "educational" in different ways. That became clear some years ago when a network and an educational organization each classified the network's offering in a number of categories. It turned out that the network placed a far higher percentage of its programmes in the educational group than the educational organization did. The reason was that the network classified all of its news broadcasts as educational, whereas the educational organization placed them in the informational category.

Before you proceed, pause for a moment and reflect on this.

Activity 1

What are the popular programmes in your local television network? How many do you watch regularly? Of these, how many would you classify as

- entertainment
- educational
- informational

Now move on to the next section.

3.2.1 The nature of educational programmes

Is a news programme educational? Since a quiz programme provides bits and pieces of information about a variety of subjects, should it also be called educational? Some would say "Yes". A few would even go so far as to argue that all experiences have educational value and that all programmes and films are, therefore, educational to some degree. To apply the term this broadly, however, deprives it of any special meaning whatsoever. We suggest that if a programme or film is to be called educational, it should meet two general criteria: (i) it should explore a subject or develop a treatment in a systematic, organized fashion, and (ii) it should aim to improve the knowledge of the recipients in some kind of permanent way.

Newscasts do not treat information in an organized manner but skip from item to item depending on what is happening. Quiz programmes present information, but in an aimless, haphazard way. In a sense the information provided by newscasts is of strictly temporary use, being valuable only until the next news programme comes along. The information provided by quiz programmes has little value or none at all. The newscast and quiz programmes, therefore, fail to meet the two criteria we described. We would classify newscasts as informational and quiz programmes as entertainment. More precisely quiz programme can be called 'info-tainment' programmes – a hybrid version of information and entertainment.

3.2.2 Types of educational programmes

The most structured type of educational programme is one that takes over the task of directly teaching a lesson in the regular curriculum. TV instruction that explains the concept of fractions in an elementary school arithmetic class or teaches subjects not included in the regular curriculum, such as a language, is an example of direct teaching. This type of broadcasting is also referred to as instructional television or ITV. The armed services and many corporations use training films in the same way to teach certain functions to their personnel.

A second type of educational programme provides a supplement to the teaching done by the regular teacher. A class of elementary school children studying the history of the United States might watch a film or television programme dealing with some aspect of George Washington's life, for

example. A university class concerned with the way in which films and television present stereotypes of certain minorities might watch a film called *Geronimo Jones*, which depicts in a moving way the emotional damage caused by the stereotyping of native American Indians.

A third type is the programme that integrates education and entertainment. Programmes such as *Captain Kangaroo* and *Sesame Street* have clear educational objectives and *Sesame Street*, particularly, engages at times in what might be called direct instruction in seeking to teach pre-school children to recognize numbers and letters, but both programmes also include segments obviously designed to entertain. The series *Victory at Sea* provided viewers with knowledge of the naval history of World War II at the same time that it gave them entertainment of the first order.

3.2.3 Advantages and limitations of the media

Writers should realize that the use of the various media for educational purposes has both advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages are the following:

- Broadcasting can be more up-to-date than printed material and films.
- Broadcasting and films can present notable people, other places, and a realistic portrayal of events in a way that is beyond the reach of the classroom teacher.
- Broadcasting and films can integrate learning by breaking down the rigid compartments into which much instruction is organized, thus approaching the situation prevailing in real life where people carry out such functions as spelling and reading together instead of practising them separately as children do in school.
- Broadcasting and films provide the writer with a host of special devices and means for accomplishing educational purposes which, used imaginatively, can often make a concept or a function clear in a way that no other teaching method can match.
- Broadcasting and films, by providing a variation in the traditional approach to teaching and by promising the pleasant experiences most people associate with television and the movies, can make learning more exciting.

If these advantages are to be realized, it is important to recognize that though television programmes and films under ordinary circumstances are isolated experiences, educational material succeeds only to the extent that viewers integrate it into the broader context of their lives. Instructional programmes, in particular, require preparation, appreciation, and follow-up – all forms of integration. Teachers who fail to utilize educational programmes as part of the whole learning experience diminish their effectiveness. Writers often play a part in preparing utilization materials.

These advantages of the media are countered by some of the following disadvantages:

- There is a lack of intercommunication between the presenter and the audience. Presenters are, in fact, blind as well as deaf, for since they cannot hear the sound of television dials whirling or the click of switches turning sets off, they do not even know when they have lost the audience completely. Some attempts have been made to meet this problem by providing a two-way communication system that permits viewers to ask questions and, in some cases, even take part in discussions. This is possible in broadcasting, however, only when use is made of the Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS), provided by the FCC for educational institution in engineering to the employees of companies located in Detroit forty miles away. The same opportunity is sometimes provided to people who receive instruction through cable television facilities.
- A programme or film is fixed in content and approach whereas its audience is heterogeneous in its background and interests. It may seem to one member of the audience to strike where the need is greatest, go over the head of a second person, or disappoint a third with its obviousness. This lack of adaptation to individual needs is a principal problem. It may mean that a programme provides an educational experience for some people in the audience, but not for others. Thus a music appreciation programme may educate those, whose tastes are subject to being sharpened but may be no more than entertainment for those with an already developed appetite for fine music.
- It is difficult or impossible to schedule programmes for schools at the optimum time for all classes. Schedules vary greatly and even in the same school system, classes in the various subjects meet at different times. Even when classes meet simultaneously, the speed with which they cover a specific course of study varies greatly. That is why broadcasters tend to concentrate on programmes that simply enrich or supplement the curriculum instead of trying to provide direct instruction that must fit in precisely. Films do not share the scheduling inflexibility of broadcasts, for they can be shown when they fit the course of study best. The inflexible nature of broadcast schedules also creates a problem for programmes directed at general audiences. People are not likely to see all of the programmes in a certain series, a fact which writers must take into account in planning and writing them.
- A disadvantage applying only to radio is its limitation to a single physical sense. Music, of course, suffers least from this restriction and may actually benefit from it by centering attention on the sound; it is not surprising, therefore, that a substantial proportion of educational radio programs deal with music. But because the teaching of most subjects requires visualization or demonstration, television lessons for schools have largely supplanted radio lessons.

3.2.4 Defining goals

To organize and prepare a successful educational series, writers must be keenly aware of the goals they seek. Defining goals in the educational field is a more complex challenge than it is in other fields. Writers of dramas

know what they want to do – namely, hold the attention of an audience by entertaining it. The comedy writer's goal is equally clear – to amuse people. Attaining these goals is not easy, of course, but defining them is. Educators, on the other hand, must choose from a wide number of goals. They must ask themselves whether they seek simply to add to a viewer's store of knowledge, or whether they also want to promote understanding of an issue. Perhaps they hope to develop a certain attitude or build a set of values. Their goal may be the utilitarian one of teaching viewers a certain skill or showing them how to carry out a particular process. They may be interested in building tastes and appreciation of literature, drama, or music. Because the attainment of these various objectives requires diverse approaches, writers must know what their objectives are before they began planning the program.

Sesame street, one of the most successful educational children's series ever produced, provides an excellent example of care in defining objectives. Before the first programme went on air, the Children's Television Workshop, which produced the series, carried out a carefully planned research effort. From this effort came a set of goals that outlined in specific terms exactly what the programmes should try to accomplish. Chief among these goals was teaching preschool children to recognize letters and numbers. The Workshop went on to describe in precise detail the conditions under which this recognition should take place. There were other goals also. The programmes taught children to recognize and name parts of their body, to discriminate among various visual forms, to distinguish one sound from another, to understand size relationships, to classify and order objects, to solve problems, and to recognize causality. The programmes also presented facts about the physical and social environment and encouraged meaningful and satisfactory interaction with others. Children tuning into the television set to watch *Sesame Street* may have been seeking entertainment. They were undeutortedly entertained, but at the same time they benefited in a most constructive way from programmes carefully designed to achieve certain educational objectives.

In the same way, Fred Rogers, creator and producer of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, carefully defined his goals before he wrote the script. One of his objectives was to build attitudes that would help children feel good about themselves and the world around them and cope with some of the problems that concern them. Research carried out at a number of institutions showed that the young viewers of the programme improved or developed characteristics as obedience of rules, tolerance of delay, and persistence in tasks.

Defining goals of an educational programme aimed at adults is just as important as defining them for children's programmes. This task may be somewhat easier on the adult level where it is assumed that basic attitudes and values have already been formed. The emphasis is, therefore, usually on transmitting information that will deepen understanding and widen knowledge of a particular field or on providing instruction aimed at developing or improving a skill.

3.2.5 Writing educational programmes: an overview

Programmes described as "educational" have a bad name in the broadcasting industry because education is usually equated with dullness. Long ago, broadcasters began avoiding the use of the term. Early in its existence NBC changed the name of its "education" division to its "public service" division. More recently, non-commercial radio and television stations have stopped referring to their broadcasts as "educational" and are using the term "public" instead.

It cannot be denied that many educational programmes are dull, as are many classroom presentations. Dullness is not inevitable, however. Educational programmes can be as exciting and stimulating as anything television and film can offer. The critical element is the treatment writers develop. If they resort to routine approaches, they are certain to end up boring their audiences. On the other hand, if they use the audio and visual media imaginatively and resourcefully, they can capture the interest and attention of their audiences at the same time that they are educating them. Arousing and holding interest is far more critical for television and film educators than it is for classroom educators. One reason is that viewers whose interest flags can easily leave the audience by throwing a switch. Students do not usually walk out on a dull classroom lecture, though they might be tempted to do so. A second reason why arousing interest is urgent is that most people turn on a television set in the expectation of being entertained, an expectation fulfilled by commercial television programs and used with great success in such programs as *The Electric Company* and *Sesame Street.*

Choosing the presentational framework

The most obvious procedure in presenting educational material on film and television is to follow the usual classroom practice of using a lecture. Those who do so are often denounced for relying on a "talking head" to present their material. The trouble with this approach is that it ignores the opportunities the visual media offers. A person who simply stands in front of a camera and lectures for the duration of a programme is almost bound to be dull. Writers of educational scripts have however, found it difficult to eliminate talking heads entirely. Programmes that present information usually need a host or narrator to introduce the material and to provide linkage as the program moves from one segment to another. This technique is entirely acceptable if these segments utilize the media's various resources in an interesting and stimulating fashion. Even talking heads in and of themselves may work well at times. A good example of their effective use occurs in every episode of *Mister Rogers' Neighbourhood,* when Mr. Rogers talks directly to his young viewers, often in a camera shot that does not change for a considerable period of time. The reason this approach succeeds is that Mr. Rogers has established himself as a trusting, caring individual who talks about subjects directly relevant to children's lives, such as the fears associated with what Mr. Rogers calls "the universal growth tasks of human development". Children, therefore, watch with fascinated interest. It is like a personal visit through an electronic medium.

In addition to the host-narrator framework, there are other possibilities for structuring educational programmes. The programme may be built around interviews with experts in the field or may feature discussions by informed individuals, as PBS's *The Weeks's News in Review* does. Some stations have dealt with public issues by presenting the debates printed in the *Congrcssional Record.* A quiz format has even been used as a means of leading into the discussion of a serious question. Excellent programmes have used still pictures as the primary visual element. Biographies of Abraham Lincoln and Mark Twain have been presented in this way. A memorable film was Pierre Berton's *City of Gold,* which, with a combination of still pictures and poetic narration, brought the Yukon gold rush back with such vivid reality that its participants seemed to breathe.

Writing the script

Your primary concern in writing an educational programme is to achieve clarity. Your secondary goals are to sustain interest and create memorability. All are essential to the writing of a successful programme. In reaching these goals, you must use the resources of the audio and visual media in an inventive and imaginative way. The first is to become thoroughly familiar with what the resources are. Only by seeing such elements as cameras, slides, switching techniques, and film inserts actually being used can you acquire the understanding needed to employ them in a practical and creative way.

The budget situation

One factor you cannot overlook is the budget situation under which you operate. It will determine what resources you may consider using. An excellent way to demonstrate a process, for example, is to produce an animated film. This is an expensive undertaking, however, which only the best-financed production organizations can afford. If animation is beyond your financial reach, you must think of cheaper ways to attain your goals. A number of production organization have approached the effectiveness of animation in a much less expensive way by creating graphics with movable parts that can be pulled to illustrate the steps in a process. You must demonstrate similar ingenuity in developing a wide variety of means for conveying information in a clear yet striking way. In doing so, do not forget the people who take part in your programme. They are probably your most important resource and you must do everything you can to use them well.

Opening the script

The way you begin the programme is crucial, for it is at that point that many people will decide whether to listen or to turn to something else. Somehow you must create curiosity and a sense of expectation. Educational broadcasters often employ the "teaser", a technique many dramatic programmes use as a way of stimulating interest at the opening. A teaser may take the form of a curiosity-arousing question to which the program promises an answer. A programme dealing with medical matters, for example, might open with the question: "Are we gaining on cancer?" and then provide a "yes" by describing recent advances n the treatment of leukemia. Another way to tease an audience into watching is to open the

program with an exciting segment taken from the body of the script. This technique has two disadvantages, however: its artifice is too obvious for some, and it may disorient the audience because it presents material out of context. For this reason, some prefer a straight introduction that seeks to stimulate interest by using such traditional devices as a striking statement, a quotation, a reference to the familiar, a promise of the unusual, or a recounting of a recent event. In addition to seizing attention, the introduction should also indicate the programme's subject matter. It is useful to remember that not everyone tuned in when your programme comes on is going to be interested in watching it. You need to let potential viewers know what the programme is about, recognizing that while some will say "this is not for me", others will be attracted by the content you promise.

The body of the script

We emphasize again that your most important responsibility in writing an educational script is to be clear. Only if you are clear can your viewers understand what you are presenting. And only if they understand are they likely to continue listening. Clarity, then, is essential if you are to hold attention and sustain interest.

There are also other attributes that help to make educational programmes interesting. Many are those we associate with dramatic writing. Writers of educational programmes, in fact, have often used a dramatic format in presenting information, especially when the material is biographical or historical. However, to employ a dramatic format and to attain many of the qualities we associate with drama, just as suspense writers do, you should try to develop expectations and even, to some degree, suspense in a gradual way through the programme so that complete satisfaction does not come all at once but is provided step by step. In some instances you can even include a situation of conflict. The final revelation can, in a sense, provide a climax to the programme. Thus, you should build an educational programme as you would a drama, on a plane that rises in interest to the conclusion.

Special problems

Creating educational programmes for children confronts writers with a number of unusual problems.

Writers must be keenly aware of the financial restraints under which they operate. Limited resources create many problems to which there are no ready answers. Writers must be ingenious in responding to them. They must also be aware of the conditions under which the production of programmes takes place. For example, in producing *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, Mr. Rogers, in addition to talking directly to children in his own person, also provides the voices for many of the puppets who appear in a fantasy segment called the Neighborhood of Make Believe. Mr. Rogers, who creates most of the programmes, is well aware of this circumstance, of course, and so are the others in the small group who write scripts. To help acquaint possible new writers with the circumstances under which *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* is produced, some guidelines were prepared.

Script formats

A script for an educational programme may be written out in full, or it may only be semi-scripted i.e. partly scripted for presentation by a host or narrator who speaks extemporaneously. The format for the fully scripted programme often follows the pattern for the documentary. Another type of format appears a little later in this chapter when we include a portion of a *Twentieth Century* script to illustrate the narration used in an information programme.

The ad-libbed or extemporaneous method is more common in educational broadcasting than it is in other kinds of programmes. The script format below illustrates a common pattern for semiscripted shows (See example 1). You will note that the lines provide cues or reminders of content, which the narrator then converts into a full exposition. The writer has written out the roll cues for the films in full, however, to guide the director in inserting the films into the programme at precisely the right moment.

Example 1

Format for Semiscripted Show

VIDEO	AUDIO
	Concepts of green leaves as food factories:
CHART: DIAGRAM OF CYCLE	1) Oxygen - CO_2
CYCLE	2) Water and nourishment up from roots
SLIDE # 1	3) Manufacture of chlorophyll
	Role of chlorophyll in growth of vegetation
FILM: 1'20"	FILM ROLE CUE: Now suppose we take a look at the inside of a green leaf and see for ourselves how the little dots of chlorophyll flow through the cells of the leaf substance. FILM ENDS WITH SHOT OF PULSING DOTS SLOWING DOWN TO A DEAD STOP

Before you proceed, take a break and work on this exercise.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: *a) Write your answer in the space below.*

b) Check and compare your response with that of the answer at the end of the unit.

i) List some of the considerations which must be kept in mind while writing for educational programmes.

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ii) Briefly describe the process of writing for an educational programme.

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3.3 WRITING STYLES

At one time, some social thinkers held that there were people who did not have 'culture'. These thinkers usually defined 'culture' as involving the elite arts – classical music, the opera, poetry, great literature – as well as some forms of social organization and literacy. But many people in the world do not have our elite arts or literacy. That does not mean that they do not have culture!

We now realize that all human beings have culture, for it is culture that makes us human. In the same vein, every writer or everyone who writes has a style of writing. It is just that most people do not write particularly well, so we tend to overlook their style of writing. We cannot write without style, but we can write in a style so bland and ordinary that our writing *seems* 'styleless'.

What is style then?

Style usually involved some form of expression – involving such matters as the way we comb (or style) our hair, the clothes we wear, the way we live (our life-style) and the way we write. We often make a distinction between fashion (which involves changes in style)and style itself which involves some kind of distinctiveness, uniqueness and personality in the ways we express ourselves. For our purposes, it is unique to the extent that we are able to achieve this. Think, for example of Hemingway. His style, which is remarkably simple (on the face of it) is highly distinctive.

3.3.1 Good writing vs. poor writing

How do you differentiate between a good style of writing and a poor one? It is indeed hard to say. Here we attempt to draw some general pointers, which may be acceptable.

Good writing	Poor writing
1) grammatically correct	grammatically incorrect
2) fluid, coherent	incoherent, fragmented
3) imaginative	dull, prosaic
4) having personality	undistinctive
5) with interesting ideas	expressing highly conventional idea
6) using figurative language	having a simplistic structure
7) easy to read	hard to read

Good writing needs rigorous training and constant practice.

There are also some features that may be adopted to give one's writing some colour and character. Let us see what they are.

3.3.2 Technical devices

Some common techniques in this category are the following:

- ***Alliteration:*** A device to achieve dramatic effect. This involves starting several words with the same sound.
- ***Repetition:*** The conscious repetition of certain words to enhance dramatic impact, this device should be used judiciously.
- ***Balance:*** When comparing things or dealing with ideas, this device lends a certain kind of structure and symmetry to the writing.
- ***Descriptive and figurative language*** such as metaphors and similes are used to convey visual richness to the writing.

3.3.3 Revision at post production stage

Woody Allen once said that he was a 'compulsive rewriter' who revised his work five or six times on an average. The most difficult task, in this light, is then to get the original idea and do the first draft on paper. Revision, then, can be done as many times as needed till you get things exactly the way you want them.

But in order to do that you must have a clear idea about the available techniques as well as the cues relating to formats and genres. The previous sub-sections dealt with the former. The subsequent sections will tell you a bit about the formats for audio and video programmes and the distinctions between genres.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: *a) Write your answer in the space below.*

b) Compare your answer with the key at the end of this unit.

Distinguish between good writing and poor writing by listing any three characteristics of each.

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3.4 GENRES AND FORMATS

Activity 2

We can make a distinction between a medium ('media in the plural) such as film or television and the kinds of programmes it carries/transmits, namely, genres. Some of the more popular television genres are as follows:

horror	commercials
science	fiction religious
spy fiction	soap opera
tough-guy detective	talk show
intellectual detective	sports show
news	situation comedy

In this exercise, first determine the basic conventions in each genre. Genres are very formulaic and have certain common traits on the basis of which they can be distinguished from each other:

location of story
kinds of characters involved (heroes, villains, etc.)
time (when the story is taking place)
basic conventions of the plot (what happens)
style of language used (tone, mood, etc.)
anything else you can think of

Here are the elements of the story. You can manipulate these elements any way you wish, depending upon the requirements of the genres you choose. Write two short radio plays, using the proper format with dialogue, music, sound effects, and so on.

1) Beautiful young woman, Virginia, is reading a book.
2) Door opens and handsome young man, Elmer, enters.
3) Virginia gets up. They embrace. Are interrupted by phone.
4) Virginia answers. Has a subdued conversation. She says something to Elmer, then takes an attache case and leaves.
5) She drives to the university and has an espresso in the Student Union. While she is sitting there, a man with grey hair comes over and says something to her. He sits down. She opens her attache case and shows him a piece of paper.
6) She glances at her watch. She gets up, runs out of the room, and is seen entering a large building where she gets lost in a crowd of students.
7) Your conclusion to the story.

In short, a medium is a means of carrying various popular art forms or genres. In the electronic media, these genres are commonly known as shows or programmes. A format on the other hand, refers to the way a script is designed, the specific conventions (of writing) that one adopts to script certain purposes.

Before we venture further, let us pause for a moment and recapitulate.

- While writing a script you have to keep in mind factors such as the style, the media and the genre.
- Whatever task you are attempting, remember to keep your writing.

  —simple;
  — fluent;
  — lively;
  — natural.

Do remember that techniques such as repetition, teasers and hook should be used carefully and in moderation. You must follow the specifications (time, budget) for the script assiduously. Before I move further, let me introduce to you various types of formats.

3.4.1 Types of formats

Media programme writers and producers use a variety of formats for presentation of their programmes. Most of these formats are common to radio, television, film, theatre and print. Radio and television have adapted these formats for more effective communication and better impact. Producers and writers of educational programmes often use an individual format or a combination of two or more formats which best suit their requirements of a particular topic or subject. At the initial programme development stage itself, a writer must devote some time to thinking over the choice of a suitable format for the effective presentation of his programme content. Decisions on the format are generally guided by the nature of the specific subject-matter, its requirements and objectives, interests of the audiences and lastly and more importantly the availability of appropriate production resources.

Kind of programme formats: Some of the standard formats used for presenting radio and television programmes are:

i) ***Story/straight talk:*** More suited to radio programmes but commonly employed in television, the straight talk or the story format generally uses one person as a narrator. Illustrated talks, special reports, newscasts and presenter-graphic-presenter-type programmes are covered under this category. To add a little variety, sometimes two persons/ voices are used for presentation of materials supported by appropriate visuals. Fully scripted in advance, stories and talks are often used for presenting a variety of educational materials through television and radio.

ii) ***Interview:*** In this format, two people - an interviewer and an interviewee-are engaged in a face-to-face dialogue. The interviewer talks to the interviewee on behalf of the viewers or listeners and attempts to elicit from the interviewee interesting information relevant to the topic under discussion. The interview format is useful for presenting programmes on current affairs, or such information and educational programmes in which a living scholar, scientist or expert talks to the audience, enhancing the interest and the credibility of the programme. Interviews are generally not scripted. Only the opening and concluding questions and remarks are written down and sometimes rehearsed. The rest of the programme is extempore and unscripted and much depends on the interviewer's confidence, skill and preparation. Relevant questions framed with clarity, arranged logically and asked with confidence, tact and spontaneity, are at the heart of a good interview.

iii) ***Panel discussion:*** This is an extension of the interview format. Here, a select panel consisting or three or more experts discusses some subject matter of public interest or controversy. A panel discussion brings

people of differing opinions and viewpoints on to one platform. The panel chairman guides and moderates discussions. It requires no script but the moderater or the host should prepare thoroughly. He should be very alert, well-informed, and tactful and should remain in full command of the situation to ensure a cordial, orderly and meaningful discussion.

iv) ***Feature :*** In this format, a single topic or subject is chosen for presentation of its various aspects and the discussion of facts, opinions, beliefs, arguments, controversies and counter-arguments - all about the same topic. For example, a feature on cave paintings, Khajuraho may be produced dealing extensively with various aspects of the subject.

v) ***Magazine:*** The term magazine comes from the medium of print. Just as a weekly or fortnightly magazine section of a newspaper or publication contains articles on different topics, a radio or television magazine programme can also have different kinds of items, often unrelated to each other. The difference between a 'magazine' and a 'feature' is that the former covers a variety of subject areas often addressed to different target groups in the same programme; whereas the later deals with various aspects of the same topic. A magazine programme is like a visit to a fair or departmental store where we find a variety of materials for a host of visitors or audience groups. The magazine programme can hold the attention of the viewers longer because of its variety of materials.

vi) ***Drama:*** Essentially a literary form of story-telling, TV and radio have borrowed this format directly from the theatre. Drama is a very interesting and entertaining format and is specially effective when it is intended to appeal to the emotions of the audience. Drama enables us to present and watch people, their behaviour, temperaments and characteristics in realistic or life-like situations. Writing and producing a good television drama is a difficult task. Nevertheless, numerous educational topics in History, Literature, the social sciences and other areas, lend themselves to perfect dramatic adaptation and presentation. Drama is acted out by a cast of actors and requires realistic sets to present situations and events.

vii) ***Documentary:*** As opposed to drama, the documentary format takes a factual approach to a subject. Here, an issue is treated in depth and all its aspects are factually investigated. The main emphasis in a documentary is on documenting real life - real people, real events, real sounds and the real experiences of people. A documentary film maker's main job is to research and investigate various aspects of the topic factually and in depth. He uses a variety of techniques for presenting his materials, e.g. narration, montage, interviews, discussions, eye-witness accounts, candid visuals and shots of real events, comments from the 'man in the street', expert's opinion - all put together in a logical way. The documentary format is suitable for presentation of current events especially social and political ones.

viii) ***Quiz:*** It is a useful format for presenting educational and current affairs. Quiz format is highly stimulating and participatory. It holds the

attention of the viewers, keeps them active and fully involved and engrossed in the programme.

It may be mentioned that most of the above formats are used independently as well as in combination with each other, depending on the choice of the programme writer and producer. The choice of the format or a combination of formats, however, again depends on the nature and objectives of the specific subject matter and availability of time, budget and resources.

You have just read about some of the programme formats commonly used by radio and television writers for presentation of their programmes. Now answer the following questions.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: *a) Space is given below for your answers.*

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this Unit.

i) List the major programme formats described in this Unit

ii) State the important factors which determine the choice of a particular programme format by a writer or a producer.

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3.4.2 Radio script format

Here are some general principles to follow when writing a radio script.

- Divide the page into two columns: instructions on the left and dialogue on the right.
- Names of characters and directions for music, sound effects and so on are all given in the left-hand column, double spaced and written in ALL CAPS. Everything except dialogue is written in capitals and single spaced.
- Dialogue is written only in the right hand column. Dialogue is always double spaced and written in upper and lower case (like typical prose). This is to differentiate it from instructions. This means that the cost and production crew can tell at a glance what is dialogue and what isn't.

- Instructions about how a line is to be read are in parenthesis as well as ALL CAPS and shown in the right hand side of the script in appropriate places.
- Directions for music and sound effects are not only shown in ALL CAPS but are also underlined.

3.4.3 Television script (documentary) format

The following suggestions are derived from universal logic and reason. As such, there are no rigid rules for formating television scripts.

- Divide the page into two halves. Video is given the left-hand side, audio (and dialogue) the right hand side. It is customary to write the words 'video' and 'audio' at the top of each page.
- ALL MATERIAL ON THE VIDEO SIDE IS TYPED IN CAPITALS. This involves instructions and camera shots.
- Dialogue is always double spaced in upper and lower case letters on the right hand side of the page, the audio side. Everything else is in ALL Caps.
- CHARACTER NAMES ARE TYPED IN ALL CAPS AND SHOWN ON THE AUDIO SIDE.
- SOUND EFFECTS AND MUSIC ARE EACH GIVEN IN SEPARATE LINES and are shown on the audio side.
- PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS ARE SHOWN IN THE CAPS ON THE VIDEO SIDE.

3.4.4 Documentaries

It may be well to begin by conceding that the term "documentary" is not an easy one to define. In the broadest sense, a documentary is any programme or film based on "documents". Defined this way, it is a form directed toward presenting a factual record about real people, things, and events, one that sets out mainly to explore a subject rather than to entertain. Under this definition, any material that simply dispenses information about historical or biographical subjects without reference to current social problems would be placed in the documentary category. It would even include material aimed mainly at providing cultural information, such as programmes on Michelangelo, Shakespeare, and the Louvre.

Media people do not usually call a programme a documentary simply because it deals with facts. Their definition is narrower. In addition to presenting information, to qualify as a documentary, a programme must take the further step of trying to change people's attitudes with respect to an important social or political issue of current significance. A documentary, then, is defined as a factual programme that attempts to persuade.

In carrying out this persuasive purpose, the producers may pursue one of several objectives: (1) Their goal may be to arouse public concern by making audiences aware of the existence of a pressing social problem. One of the most notable documentaries ever presented namely CBS's "Harvest

of Shame" narrated by Edward R. Murrow, made many people conscious for the first time, of the desperately deprived lives of migrant farm workers. (2) The documentary producer may aim at securing some type of remedial action. "Harvest of Shame", in addition to making audiences aware of a problem, clearly indicated that something needed to be done to correct it. (3) The goal may be simply to inspire or uplift the audience. A good example of this type occurred at the beginning of World War II when Norman Corwin, now a motion picture scriptwriter, wrote and produced a radio documentary called "We Hold These Truth." It depicted the sacrifices people had made to erect the structure of freedom we call the Bill of Rights, which the nation was then dedicated to defending against the threat of dictators who would destroy it.

Because documentary strives to influence people's thoughts and actions, it differs from other factual programmes in being imbued with a strong emotional quality. Its purpose is not merely to present facts and events but to focus on the most moving examples. As A. William Bluem in his book *Documentary in American Television* put a particular solution. Many set out only to present clearly the facts about a situation or a person. This is the aim of many informational and educational presentations. Not all programmes, however, fit neatly into an informational or a persuasive niche. A number of educational programmes, especially those aimed at young viewers, often include among their objectives an attempt to influence attitudes in a socially acceptable way. In this sense, they have a persuasive function. The informational and persuasive categories we have established are, therefore, not ironclad or absolute. Still, they provide a helpful guide to writers by suggesting the main direction or thrust of various programme forms.

Another kind of writing that may include some persuasive elements in its presentation of facts is the programme or film that portrays life as it is actually lived by certain groups of people. One early film with this purpose was Robert Flaherly's 1922 production *Nanook of the North.* Its essential achievement was the development of understanding in its viewers of a way of life utterly different from their own, through an in-depth portrayal marked by unique and creative insights. In the sense that the film provoked admiration for the courage and ingenuity of a people who clawed a meagre living from a harsh and threatening environment, it was also persuasive. Many have called it the first documentary, but programmes or films that simply set out to show objects, life, or people as they really are without attempting to raise the audience's level of consciousness, or without suggesting that something be done to change whatever conditions are presented, are not documentaries as we have defined them. Two films of the 1930's, *The Plough that Broke the Plains* and *The River,* produced by Pare Lorentz, which also portrayed life in difficult situations, clearly are documentaries under our definition, for their purpose was to persuade people to take action to correct serious social problems.

Another type of programme or film that makes use of factual material aims principally at entertaining its audience. Such programmes present a good deal of information and some may also have a persuasive purpose. Usually presented in completely dramatic terms, the form has come to be known in

recent years, as *docudrama.* Programmes and films of this type may adhere completely to the facts as they are known. The film *A Night to Remember,* about the "Titanic's", sinking, is an example. In other instances, the facts merely provide a springboard for the imagination of the writer who then proceeds to embellish them by creating fictional events and characters to mix with real events and people.

Many of the principles and techniques that apply in the writing of the documentary apply also to the writing of other scripts that present factual material. A requirement common to all these forms is to discover the facts. What we say about carrying out a programme of research and study in preparation for the writing of a documentary applies also to the preparation needed to write all of the other scripts based on facts. The documentary must have an organizational structure that moves the audience in an orderly, logical way from one idea to another and shows the relationships among them. Informational and educational programmes must also have a well-defined, logical structure.

An examination of this outline demonstrates that "Trip to Nowhere" contains ideas that should arouse concern about drug use among children. Moreover, these ideas fall naturally into the categories one looks for in an outline - clearly stated main points buttressed by subordinate ideas that prove and support them. It is obvious that this programme was well organized and its strong, logical structure contributed substantially to its effectiveness.

However, it is not enough merely to develop persuasive points and arrange them in the orderly pattern represented by an outline. "Trip to Nowhere" if presented just as the ideas occur in the outline would have been rigid in style and unvaried in approach and would have failed to develop its full potential. The producer must take the ideas in the outline and devise a way of presenting them that will accomplish a number of objectives: to seize and hold the attention of the audience; to make the points strikingly clear; to invest the ideas with an emotional charge powerful enough to change attitudes and move people to action.

NBC's 'Trip to Nowhere' is an outstanding example of a documentary. Narrated by Edwin Newman, it deals with the problem of drug use by high school students. A good method to ascertain the effectiveness of a documentary is to check whether it has a strong structural outline.

As you can see, this programme (i.e. Trip to Nowhere) falls readily into a logical pattern.

"Trip to Nowhere"

Produced by NBC

Narrated by Edwin Newman

Purpose: To arouse concern about drug use among school children.

Central Idea: Though the use of drugs among school children is widespread and dangerous, steps can be taken to alleviate the problem.

The Problem:

I) Student drug users come from all parts of siciety.

A) They include the poor and sufferers form discrimination such as blacks and chicanos.

B) They include affluent middle-class students.

1) Some school leaders use drugs.

2) Some athletes use drugs.

C) They include young children, among them fourth and fifth graders.

II) Drugs are available to students everywhere.

A) They can be obtained on the streets.

B) They can be obtained in schools where every child is approached by a drug pusher at one time or another.

C) They can be obtained at parks and music festivals.

III) Children use drugs in an attempt to escape various types of problems.

A) They try to escape faulty home relationships.

B) They try to escape what they see as a betrayal by society.

C) They try to escape insecurity.

IV) Drug use has serious consequences.

A) It brings on dangerous "trips".

B) It causes illness.

C) It sometimes results in death..

Solution:

I) Finding a solution to this problem is difficult:

A) Parent-child relationships create problems.

1) The parent's first impulse is to punish.

2) The child often suffers from alienation.

B) The law creates problems by requiring that minors treated by doctors for drug use be reported to legal authorities.

II) There are a number of possible approaches to the use of drugs among school children.

A) 1) They can speak out against drug use in school assemblies.

2) They can participate in rehabilitation units.

B) Various groups can be formed to combat the problem.

1) Physicians can organize the required medical help.

2) Parents can assemble to obtain mutual advice and help.

3) Civic groups can be established.

C) Therapy centres can be set up.

D) Adults and children can help drug users find alternatives to a drug oriented world.

3.4.5 Documentary writing techniques

A documentary, in general, has six major components. A good script achieves a skillful mix of these six elements. The six major components may be briefly described as follows:

***Narration*:** The narrator sets the stage and helps provide continuity, leading viewers from one scene or interview to the next. The amount of narration should be limited. In a documentary, characters should serve to weave things together, and not dominate by taking precedence over the main subject of the documentary.

Voice-overs: Here the narrator speaks but is not shown on screen. Instead, he or she provides commentary or explains something that we see on the screen. Voice-overs should be essentially used to move things along.

Interviews are used to give a taste of *on-scene* events to a documentary.

***Graphics*:** These may be captions, diagrams, or charts, maps and photographs.

Music is used to establish a mood.

Natural sound and sound effects are used to enhance a mood

To briefly recapitulate what we discussed: a good script is characterised by

- visual complexity (variety of shots)
- intellectual complexity (different perspectives)
- structural depth (interviews weaving in and out to make a 'dialogue')
- a good balance between narration and visuals.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: *a) Write in the space given below.*

b) Check and compare your response with the answer given at the end of this unit

i) What are the techniques commonly used in a documentary?

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ii) Briefly describe the formats of audio and video scripts.

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3.5 Scriptwriting

The script is the basic building block of any successful production – whether in theatre, radio, film or videotape. It is a carefully devised blueprint, which charts out instructions for actors, directors and technicians.

Scriptwriting for television is largely a co-operative activity. It may be seen as a sort of dialogue between the scriptwriter, producer and other members of the production team. This dialogue is mainly a collaborative activity, which begins with the programme idea finally produced.

To put it differently, video or television scripts are evolved step by step. Creativity, imagination and co-operative efforts are the key words in the scripting process. Television scriptwriting may be seen as a process consisting of a series of steps or processes, which do not necessarily operate sequentially or separately from one another. In fact, these steps or processes operate together and often overlap. But the basic pattern of the scripting process remains almost the same and TV scriptwriters, whether consciously or unconsciously, go through certain stages in one way or the other. These stages are as given below:

- Programme idea
- Programme outline/brief
- Programme research
- Message planning/programme design
- Programme structure and visual treatment
- Story board making
- Draft-script
- Final-script
- Camera-script

To give you further insight into this process, a descriptive presentation of each of the above processes involved in scriptwriting is given here.

3.5.1 Major stages in the scriptwriting process

Programme idea: Discuss the idea and evaluate it against media selection criteria for video production. If it satisfies the criteria, finalize and accept the idea for possible production.

Programme brief/outline: Expand the selected and tested programme idea into a programme brief, defining the precise details in terms of: title, target audience, duration, programme objectives (in behavioural terms), and content outline or synopsis. Programme brief is the first written statement which forms the basis of a television/ video script.

Research: Plan and carry out thorough research on the topic and your target audience. Look for visual materials and other important, interesting information on the topic. Consult books, encyclopaedias, journals, experts and knowledgeable people. Know your target audience well. Get authentic information about their background, their interests, their likes and dislikes, etc. Also keep in mind viewing conditions and the context of viewing.

Selection of materials: Select the most relevant materials, resources and ideas, which match your programme objectives. Estimate and determine how much content should be included in the final programme. Eliminate what is not directly relevant to your objectives. Keep your objectives and programme length in view and estimate sufficient content for inclusion in your final programme.

Programme design strategy/message planning: Message planning is the most decisive and creative stage of programme development. Here, think about and decide on programme design and presentation strategy. Explore and create interesting ways of dishing out your programme to your audience. Always keep in view your viewer's interests, the nature of your subject/topic, your programme objectives and the visual possibilities that your medium can offer.

Give a serious thought to such considerations as: presentation format or a combination of formats, programme style, pace and approach, information-size and emphasis, media possibilities, visual analogies and examples, attention-getting devices, humour, repetition of key ideas, use of graphics, animation and other production resources/gimmicks.

Programme structure and visual treatment: The stage where the programme begins to unfold its structure or shape. It is concerned with the creative process of giving the programme a clear shape and a form. Here, give some thought to such questions as: which sequences will form the middle (body) of the programme? Think of a good beginning for your programme because it is the opening sequence of a programme, which holds the attention of the audience, and it can certainly make or mar the whole show. Also think of a good and realistic ending.

Work out detailed visual treatment for the middle parts or sequences of your programme. Think of visual representations/visual analogies for abstract ideas and key concepts. Give a logical and natural order to your programme segments, so that they appear to be evolving from one sequence to the other.

Also think of possible visual and/or aural links or transitions from one sequence to the other. Keep an eye on time and objectives. Draw a time-line showing how much time should be devoted to each sequence keeping in view the coverage of the content and weightage or emphasis on programme objectives and key teaching points. The treatment should give a full description of what the viewers will see, hear, think, and feel.

Storyboard making: Storyboard means a detailed, shot-by-shot description of the programme on a sheet of paper divided into two vertical columns. The rectangular boxes (3:4) in the left hand column are used for drawing pictures/sketches with shot-size described on each and the right-hand column is used for writing supporting words, sound effects and music, as shown here.

STORY BOARD

Visual	Spoken Words (Commentary, Diagrams, Music, Sound Effects, Noise, etc.)

The story board is important because:

- It forces the writer to think in terms of visuals.
- It is at this stage that the TV/video script begins to appear as evolving into a series of pictures in sequential continuity, with sound and action described alongside.
- It is easily possible to study the overall development and progression of the script with the use of the storyboard.
- It is possible and advisable to make script changes, if any, by adding, deleting, shifting or reshaping of shots and sequences.
- It is useful for all members of the production team to study the storyboard.

There are three main stages of script development. These are:

i) ***Draft script:*** First full-length script with a complete listing and description of all visuals/captions, accompanying commentary or dialogue, music and sound effects.

Discuss your draft script with your colleagues, experts and production team members to get their reactions and suggestions.

Be ready to accept criticism of your draft script and be open to ideas for improvement.

ii) ***Final script:*** At this stage, all suggestions made at the draft script stage are incorporated. And the final script goes over to the producer who should analyse it from the viewpoint of production and should work out a camera script. Usually, the scriptwriter goes off the scene after this stage, and the producer takes over, but the interaction between the scriptwriter and the producer continues upto the point the programme has been finally produced.

iii) ***Camera script:*** This is the critical phase of script development: the final script prepared by the scriptwriter is converted into a camera script for the use of the producer and his team. It is indeed a technical script in which shot division is done; instruction for production crew are given; music, effects and dialogue are indicated in a logical sequence. In short, a camera script represents the inter-relationships of all programme elements and resources. It is an important working document for the producer.

Testing of the script: The last stage of script development is the testing of its effectiveness. Testing the script with the target audience is advisable at least once when the production of a series of several programmes is to be undertaken. The main idea of script-testing is to assess the presentation and comprehensibility of the content, the difficulty level of the language and the relevance and variety of materials used/to be used in the programme. In the case of a complete script, the contents are actually read out to the target group for testing their strengths and weaknesses. Some researchers attempt to dramatize the story sequences as they appear in the actual script. In the light of the feedback obtained through such testing, the content and organisation of the script and the design, sequence and number of visuals may be altered by the scriptwriter. Script-testing is a technique of formative evaluation which provides a quick feedback on various aspects of the product which can then be suitably modified before its actual production.

Check Your Progress 5

Notes: *a) Space is given below for your answer.*

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Beginning with the programme brief stage, list the major steps involved in the development of a video programme script.

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3.6 STAGES OF SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT: THE IGNOU CASE

In IGNOU, for example the process of developing a script for an audio or video programme can be seen at three distinct stages:

- preliminary research and the development of a programme brief.
- the elaboration of the programme brief into an academic note.
- the development of the academic note into a script.

3.6.1 Programme brief

In essence, the programme brief is the beginning of the actual work for an audio/video programme.

The programme brief contains details on

- the target group
- working title
- objectives
- format and style
- content outline
- any additional information

3.6.2 The academic note

The academic note is literally an amplification of the content outline. This contains suggestions for visual material, sound effects, locations, and the cast. You may describe the content of an academic note in the following terms:

1) **Media content**
   i) Self contained TV
   ii) TV as part of a multi-media package
3) **Learner's characteristics**
   i) Age, knowledge, commitment, culture, conditions
3) **Teaching objectives**
   i) Affective
   ii) Motivational
   iii) Experiential
   iv) Cognitive
4) **Format and style**
   i) Studio/location/mixed
   ii) Presenter in vision/out of vision
   iii) Documentry/Docu-drama
   iv) Demonstration/illustrated lecture/ case-study.
5) **Outline of the content**

3.7 LET US SUM UP

The main focus of this unit is the process of developing a script – primarily for educational programmes.

What can a script writing exercise do for a distance teacher? The answer to this question has been implied at many places in this unit. In summing it up, it is essential for us to spell out this point.

Apart from the tactical reasons for encouraging distance teachers to write scripts, there are good pedagogical and intellectual reasons as well. Scripts rely on the power of dialogue. The power of dialogue has been discussed in detail by many literary theorists (the most important being the Russian literary theorist, M.M. Bakhtin) and distance education professionals. The entire teaching learning transaction in a distance education context depends to a large extent on the teacher's ability to initiate and sustain a dialogue across a distance.

Having established the legitimate place of a script writing exercise in the agenda of a distance teacher's repertoire of skills, this unit tackles issues such as:

- the nature and scope of educational programmes
- writing style
- genres and formats of media.

The unit dwells in detail on educational/ informational programmes (documentaries), their principal features and the various techniques of script writing in relation to such programmes.

3.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: THE KEY

1) i) The primary objective (of writing for an educational programme) should be to achieve clarity. The secondary goals are to sustain interest and to create a memorable impression on the viewers.

   ii) The process includes decisions on the theme, presentational framework, setting the educational objectives, a budget, the opening, the body and closing of the programme.

2) Good writing is characterised by grammatical correctness and fluency, a good imagination and interesting ideas and distinctive personality i.e. the stamp of the author. Bad writing is generally incoherent, grammatically incorrect, and full of cliches.

3. i) Common Programme formats are as follows:

   - Story/straight talk or narration
   - Interview
   - Panel discussion
   - Feature
   - Magazine
   - Drama
   - Documentary
   - Quiz

   ii) Important factors for determining the choice of a particular presentation format:

   - Nature and requirements of the specific subject matter
   - Nature and requirements of programme objectives
   - Nature of the target audience - their interests, likes, dislikes, needs, etc.
   - Availability of resources - studio, budget, time, etc.

4) i) Narration, voice, interviews, graphics, music and sound effects.

   ii) The audio/radio script has no visual elements. Hence the auditory elements are grouped according to their relative importance. Dialogue is written on the right hand side of the page and thus can be distingiushed from instructions and other features.

   iii) A video or television script has two major elements - auditory and visual. Therefore the distinction here is between these two. All matter pertaining to the video elements is typed in capitals on the left side of the page while the right side of the page is reserved for dialogue. It is, customary to label 'audio' and 'video' elements separately.

5. Major stages involved in the development of a video programme script are:

   - Programme brief (or idea stage)
   - Programme research and selection of materials
   - Programme design/message planning strategy.
   - Programme structure and visual treatment
   - Story board making
   - Draft and final programme script

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Dear Student,

While studying the units of this block, you may have found certain portions of the text difficult to comprehend. We wish to know your difficulties and suggestions, in order to improve the course. Therefore, we request you to fill out and send us the following questionnaire, which pertains to this block. If you find the space provided insufficient, kindly use a separate sheet.

Questionnaire

Enrolment No. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

1.How many hours did you need for studying the units?

Unit no.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
No. of hours				

2. Please give your reactions to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Items	**Excellent**	**Very Good**	**Good**	**Poor**	*Give specific examples, if poor*
Presentation Quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Language and Style	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Illustrations Used (diagrams, tables, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Conceptual Clarity	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Check Your Progress Questions	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Feedback to CYP Questions	☐	☐	☐	☐	

3. Any other comments:

Mail to:
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