

A guide to the 'Professional Context VLOG' (PCV) in unprecedented times!

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This guide has been developed to support a VLOG that focuses on student's voice and confident argumentation in a professional context.

Students are discouraged from focusing on the animation or crafting/curating of video inserts in this VLOG model; not that these are not fun and useful skills. This type of VLOG is seeded by industry need for students to confidently pull together a credible and authentic presentation for the boardroom or as an alternative to a physical briefing, focusing on their voice, and with or without some text/visual. The idea being graduates work on their digestion and confident delivery of their communication (brief or business case), confidently able to relay via camera to a remote or geographically dispersed team in pressurised or strategic contexts should they need to (the current Coronavirus circumstances being a key example).

This VLOG is aimed at a student's own organisation, so this assignment is typically aimed at part-time professional students, so they may work to apply new knowledge and understanding to their own personal work contexts. This type of VLOG differs from reflective design used for formative or summative assessment, or ones that focus on various media curation. There is a respectful recognition that a whole array of VLOG designs are available/used, and are all relevant and credible, tuning into different skill sets and development.

Students may have already worked on, or will be asked to work on different types of VLOGGING outcomes in the future. VLOGGING is very flexible, adaptable and creative device, so they should be advised to pay attention to the key VLOG criteria set within the specific assignment. This guide focuses on a 'professional context VLOG'.

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Felicity Healey-Benson Guide to VLOGGING March 2020

1. Why VLOG production is important to develop as a skill set:

Professional Vlogging requires:

- Critical thinking
- High-level oracy
- Authenticity
- Authority
- Transparency
- Digital storytelling

Communicating professionally over real-time or recorded video requires the ability to:

- Relax in front of a camera/screen
- Overcome self-consciousness
- Digest content before starting to record/deliver key messages
- Potentially convert longer scripts/directives into prompts for explanation
- Show a confident level of engagement with the audience
- Have the discipline to summarise the work with flow
- Have an awareness of being 'evidence-based' and 'fit for context'
- Reflect/be self-aware of presenting skill
- Show verbal confidence, tone and personal brand

Some background to this VLOG design – including student experience

<https://emergenthinkers.com/2019/03/03/to-vlog-or-not-to-vlog-for-industry-4-0/>

<https://emergenthinkers.com/2020/03/15/the-vlog-a-key-tool-for-business-education-in-crises/>

<https://emergenthinkers.com/2019/04/01/an-industry-advocate-for-graduate-vloggers/>

<https://emergenthinkers.com/2020/04/25/guest-a-student-advocate-for-the-professional-context-vlog-assessment/>

2. The 'professional context' VLOG assignment design parameters and options

Vlog entries often combine video with supporting text, images, and other metadata. In this assignment design students may make use of some slides or text, but there are limits on number of slides to be used. An average maximum is recommended as set as 8 slides for a longer vlog e.g. 15 minutes. Discourage an emphasis on slide/text dependency. It depends on the assignment design as to how much space to afford to slide or text on the screen as a way to emphasise/highlight key messages, just note that the higher the text used, the reduced emphasis on the student's oracy and personal story-telling skills development.

A number of practical options are available to student to technically design and create their VLOG

- **Student presents only to camera only**

A full video in which the students presents/talks to the screen (can be filmed on a laptop or phone camera default recording in-built software). Tip: use horizontal view rather than vertical. This can be saved as a MP4 and uploaded directly to you-tube to create a unique http link for supply to TurnItIn copied when copied into a document with their list of references.

Past students on MACs have reported making using Quick time Player -File - New Movie Recording, also free iMovie and lightworks

- **Student presents to screen but drops/edits in supporting text/slides or materials**

A video in which you drop/add text or insert slides as you see fit (you will need to make use of editing software such as Adobe Premiere or Windows Movie Maker [free for editing]. In past some students have even referred to a flip-chart in the background.

- **A PowerPoint in which the student appears presenting in a window of the screen**

University's tool of choice is often Panopto. This an easy to use tool to record professional-looking videos of yourself and your on-screen content.

I typically request that that I DO NOT want a fully narrated (voice-over) power-point – where students are not physically visible. Whilst these types of video production require useful skill development (example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5dgwwa5XRA>, this does not demonstrate skills to confidentially present to the camera in a professional (business or other) context, which is the key focus of skills development in this assignment.

Think about continuum of skills for someone who knows their material confidentially in a Tedx presentation compared to someone reading our slides from a PowerPoint – this type of VLOG focuses towards the TEDX confidence end. The main focus on the presentation is the ability to present confidently, clearly and professionally, with/without sides/text material. In pressurised circumstances, in a real context graduates need to be confident to create an authoritative VLOG without relying on curated media content, which they may have neither the resources/time to make use of.

There is a trade off on the higher level of authentic voice identified, story-Telling in Context, stretch in personal confidence and overall skills development reported when there is a move to multi-media and full voice-over narration as seen in fig. 1

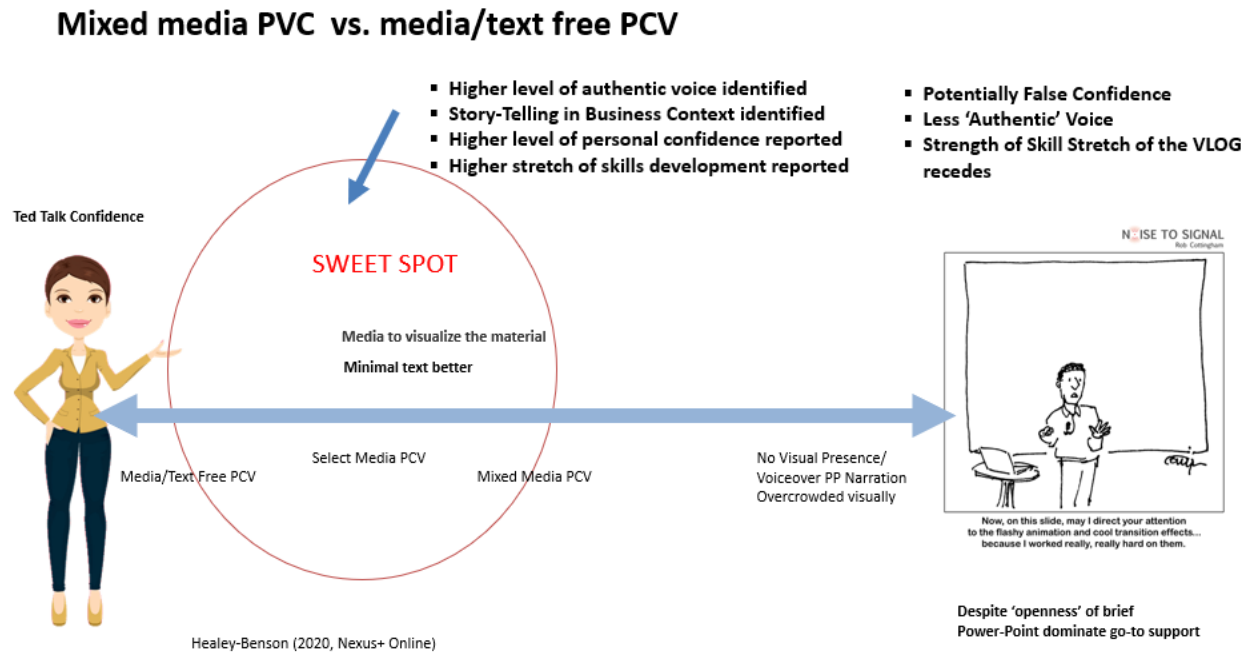


Fig 1: Trades off on skill development mixed mixed vs media/text free PCV

3. Purpose of Script

A script or scripted set of bullet points will keep students keep focus on the requirements of the brief.

Advice given to students:

- Start your prep off by authoring an argument, or selection of detailed notes to answer/cover all the elements of the brief. Use your time to make sure you have answered all aspects of the brief as best you can, without going off on a tangent, ensuring you have integrated as many sources/pieces of literature as you can manage to underline your points or validate your position/claims, as required at the level of study.
- You do not want to read this out in a mono-tone voice, reading out in reading out of an essay like format so you should try to chunk it into an appropriate communication of key ideas, recommendations, action.
- Be prepared to nip/cut/tighten your sentence (don't lose the referencing though!) to make your points clear and to the point.
- *It is ok to write an essay-type draft first but be more ambitious with your redrafting/fine-tuning when you cut it into a brief-focused format.*
- In the past, many students have left their script on the laptop open, and use this to read through/refer to as they record themselves using the laptop record facility.
- Don't try to 'learn your script' – it is neither necessary or expected! The VLOG is not a test of memory. Students in the past have reported referring to post-it notes or notes on their desk or walls in front of the them/side of their camera. Some students have reported a more natural approach by disciplining themselves to refer to bullet points or the key citations/references they make.
- You are supplied an estimate of words to just give a ball park figure for a script in progress, but the final script word count/notes may vary according to how fast you speak... the limitations are typically placed on **the vlog time in minutes**. The marker will not be counting words. You must stick to the minutes requested. Anything longer will take much longer to upload and risk not being marked as it is a form of being over word count.
- Your lecturer will not be marking you on the script or notes that you supply in the turnitin link supplied alongside a VLOG assignment submission link. It is used as important source of data to help with the marking process – tracking of originality and references verbally embedded in the VLOG presentation.

4. VLOG Audience & their expectations

This is a business briefing vlog scenario, so the student must role play that they are delivering a presentation to the brief's specified audience e.g. a Board of Directors.

For some students who are nervous, ask them not to over think the format - think of it as the online alternative being expected to deliver a literature-underpinned presentation in a face-to-face classroom, with the welcome exception they have the opportunity to record and publish the final version they are happy with, and want to submit (much better control if this was a live assessment recorded!). In my experience it takes a few experiments before they get the timing right!

Typically, a VLOG would be used in a real context as a briefing (not a reading of an essay) so suggest they:

- Focus on holding the audience attention
- Consider what the audience need to know
- Highlight clearly to the audience why they should be bothered/interested in the VLOG content
- Convince the audience on what you want them to support/finance (according to the assignment brief) with strong argumentation and justification through the use of credible and where possible contextualised evidence/research
- Think ahead on challenges/concerns/questions and try to second guess the type of information the audience may need to make an effective decision (*promotes the student taking a balanced view*)

Possibly recommend they approach the design of the VLOG in 2 distinct stages as follows:

4.1. Development of the 'VLOG brief'

First ask students to consider what format would make a good business briefing. Then emphasize this is academic exercise too, so academic criteria should also be keenly referenced.

There is expectation the VLOG is prepared as contextualised to the organisation/industry selected as possible using literature of currency/context. The student must work to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the module subject matter e.g. HRM, as well as a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights. They should be able to break the assignment brief down into key parts, make inferences, compile, compare and contrast information. This means not just describing what! But also justifying: Why? How? When? Who? Where? At what cost? At all times, there is a need to provide justification for arguments and judgements. Students should evidence that they have reflected upon the ideas of experts within the subject area, providing a reasoned and informed argument for any actions/recommendations built towards.

4.2. Tone & overall professional look of presentation

Once a student has completed a 'briefing' script, they need to work on ensuring it meets the estimated word count or time parameters (e.g. 2500 words). They can then chunk it in to practical parts before practicing for the camera. They can work becoming animated in tone, so that it does not come over as a monotone reading through of a script! They can work on techniques for persuasive speech.

Remind that the background should look professional – avoid sitting on the bed/in a bedroom where possible. Some tools allow for a blurring out of backgrounds.

5. Importance of the assessment marking criteria

Whilst vlogging skills should be fit for real-world context, student need to pay strong attention to the fact they are being assessed against academic marking criteria. Claims made must be underpinned by a good range of academic research. If this was a typical presentation format they would be expected to display or distribute sources on/from the PowerPoint slides. Instead, as they are talking, they have to evidence use of literature by weaving in/signposting them verbally. This may feel strange at first, especially if not used to doing this at work, but the student is being encouraged to validate/substantiate the claims/points expressed, which professionals would be encouraged to do.

For example: *'According to Jones (2010), there is.....', or there is a plethora of evidence from the x industry, gathered by Davies (2018) that would suggest this is an effective course of action'*.

Advice for students aiming for 70+/higher level marks should take key note of the following:

Literature translates into marks!

Make sure you are blending in a good source of literature to underpin your points/claims. At level 7, a good rule of thumb is 10 references per 1000 words, which would mean at least 20-25 references of good quality in this context. This may be hard to pack into the actual recording, but still note the unused research/that which has been edited out into your extended bibliography.

It is so important that you verbally reference your sources throughout the vlog.

High contextualisation and through argumentation

Check that you have made the contents fit to the context of the specified/selected organisation

Check:

- Have you made clear why an action recommended fits the specific context/culture of your organisation?
- Are you using any statistics/research that fits with this context – if you are using stats which are more general, is this due a paucity of research, are you happy you have researched effectively (use **Boolean operators** where possible).
- Have you employed the **Socrates questioning** in your approach to examining the facts?
- Have you ensured recommendations are evidenced-based rather than following on a new management fad/whim or your own personal opinion?

Structure

Have an appropriate welcome (introduce yourself (real name) in role play) as specified in the brief e.g. HR director. Set the context and purpose of the video briefing clearly and succinctly. Don't burn time introducing the detail of your company, but remind the audience of the business and its key mission. Toward the third end of the VLOG you will be closing down with a call to action e.g. a set of recommendation or request for support or buy-in from the board.

Don't over pack with content so that you are talking so fast it all becomes 'noise'.

*I do hope you have found this guide to be of use. I will continue to work on its development. Kind regards
Felicity.*

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