

## Key Stage 4

### English Career Resources for Teachers

(Career Education Guidance Objective 8)

#### Research

Career Education Guidance for English KS4 No. 8 asks that students be able to 'identify, select and use a wide range of careers information and distinguish between objectivity and bias.'

At KS4 students are generally expected, in their reading, to be able to discriminate clearly between fact and opinion and to be able to detect a bias in the text they are studying. These objectives are less often demanded of students in their own writing. This Careers Education Guidance objective therefore offers English teachers the opportunity of challenging their students to read independently and widely and then to synthesise their research material while showing an awareness of bias.

#### ***Being clear about outcomes – broad and balanced reading***

In this case study, students are asked to research an aspect of a career which interests them by looking at a wide range of different sources. Some of these sources may simply be about promoting the chosen career and therefore focus on only its positive aspects. An example of this, is the Ministry of Defence website which provides the would-be soldier with a lot of detailed information. Other sources of information – particularly unofficial ones such as blogs and chat rooms – will offer views which complement the 'official one'. A key point to communicate to students is that none of these sources sets out to deceive or be 'economical with the truth': it is a matter of fact that the skilled researcher reads 'around' a topic in order to achieve a rounded picture. This is done through a process of reading, critical evaluation and synthesis.

#### ***End task – write to inform and explain***

It is a truism that competence and attainment in reading are best demonstrated by requiring students to do something with texts rather than simply answering questions. In this case study, students are given the end task at the outset:

*'By Y11 teenagers are expected to begin to make career decisions which can affect the rest of their working lives. Write an article for a careers magazine which is part of a series aiming at providing a detailed picture of an aspect of a career. The series' title is: "Warts and all" and the aim is to give the reader information about a career which goes beyond the officially promoted view of it. Articles which balance*

*positive and negative aspects of the career will be most highly rewarded.'*

Students will find this assignment sheet useful as it will remind them of them of the purpose this work:

### **Background:**

You work as a **trainee journalist** on a careers magazine which is distributed free to all secondary schools in the UK.

The magazine specialises in giving school students **accurate** information about all sorts of careers.

You have been working on a series of articles which give a balanced picture of different careers. '**Balance**' means that you aim to include different people's opinions about the work. In other words, you will be using information which does not just come from the people who are recruiting for that career. You will be looking for facts and opinions from people who actually do the job. This means doing some research.

**Research** is not just a matter of going on the internet and cutting and pasting tons of information. You need to make sure that what you collect is relevant. This will – in turn – mean you will first of all have to decide what you want to find out. Writing down a list of questions will help with this.

Once you have collected the information, you will need to think about the best way of **presenting** it. Begin by looking at other magazines for ideas about layout. Make sure that you include lots of quotations from different sources – you do this by putting the quote inside speech marks and by showing where you got the information from.

As you work, keep asking yourself: **Can I trust this source of information?** Because choosing your career is one of the most important things you will do in life and you want to use the best information to do this.

### ***Setting the ground rules for the writing***

English teachers are well aware that students write most effectively and successfully where they are clear about key requirements. Students are therefore reminded early on in the unit about what they need to apply in order to write successfully.

#### **GROUND RULES FOR WRITING**

**Informative writing is:**

- Clearly organised and sequenced
- Full of facts
- Sometimes divided into sections using headings and sub-headings
- Not always in continuous prose
- Completely focused on the topic

**Writing to explain is:**

- Clear and logical
- Reasoned and developed
- Balanced and looks at all sides of an issue
- Convincing

### ***Independent research – “the big idea”***

Students choose as their focus a career which they are interested in as a possible future occupation for themselves. They therefore need to be able to independently use website browsers such as Google to select and retrieve information about one aspect of their career. To start with, students brainstorm the career to identify a suitable focus for their research. Most students find it helpful if they turn this ‘focus’ into a question which they want to answer by carrying out the research.

### ***Googling – “seeing the wood for the trees”***

As an example, a student choosing to research a career in the Army might come up with the question: “What is life really like in the modern Army and would it suit me?” Entering “army life” into the browser throws up numerous pages of links. [www.armyjobs.mod.uk](http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk) occurs a lot in various different guises together with other possibilities such as: “Taking the strife out of army life” at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/501261.stm>. At this point it is worth pressing the

pause button and exploring with students the whole notion of 'bias and objectivity'.

### ***Fact and opinion***

You will need to introduce or revise fact and opinion with your students.

- Remind them that a ***fact is a piece of information which is TRUE***. Its truthfulness can be checked out. For example, it is a fact that Madrid is the capital of Spain.
- Remind them that ***opinions are what people think or believe***. For example, 'Manchester United is the best football team in the world' is an opinion. A Sheffield United fan, for example, might not agree with this opinion!
- Ask pupils to bring in newspaper articles and circle facts and opinions in them.
- Asking pupils to circle facts and opinions which the writer uses to *persuade* or *convince* the reader.
- Ask pupils to explain how the facts and opinions are used.

As an alternative, ask students to do a **card sort** – see the example which takes facts and opinions from a soldier's blog at

<http://www.fromthefrontline.co.uk/blogs/index.php?blog=7> .

#### ***Here's how to do the card sort:***

- Get pupils to work in groups of 3 or 4.
- The aim is to sort the cards into two columns.
- One column should be headed with the FACTS card which reminds students what facts are.
- The other column should be headed with the OPINIONS card.
- One person reads out a card for the group to decide whether it is a fact or an opinion.
- At the end of the exercise, students can look at other groups' work to see if they all agree on what is fact and what is opinion.

### ***Different texts make for different versions of reality – “horses for courses”!***

In undertaking their own research students will be encountering a vast and bewildering array of online texts. It makes sense therefore to explore some of the different ways in which format, audience and purpose interact to produce a variety of readings of related topics. This work also reminds pupils of the importance of format-audience-purpose in planning for their writing. Giving students a **format/audience/purpose** card sort is an effective way of beginning to deal with range of information sources online. Once students have successfully matched the formats to purpose and audience, they can also rank each format to identify its level of objectivity. Having completed the

card sort they can then conduct the same evaluation of the websites which they have selected as most useful for their research. It is a really good idea to limit students to between 5 to 7 sources of information in order to ensure the task is manageable.

### ***Interim presentations – “how’s it going?”***

As ever with teaching, there are choices to be made and these have to take into account such variables as: time available, student ability, access to the internet (some sites might be blocked!). If time permits, it is a good idea to encourage students to work in pairs or trios so that they can discuss their research and hopefully challenge one another’s ideas. Once the selected websites have been examined, students can take screen-grabs which can be saved and more easily accessed repeatedly. Presentations using PowerPoint provide the opportunity for teacher and class to challenge student researchers before they commit their ideas to paper.

### ***Useful acronym’s KWL and QuADS frameworks***

Given half a chance many students will be tempted to shortcut any critical selection of their materials and simply ‘cop out’ by printing out everything they have read. This is where research frameworks are invaluable supports for students as they sift the wheat from the chaff.

Know/Want/Learned (KWL) grids are used to activate students’ prior knowledge when they record what they already **know** about a topic in the first column. In the second column they record what they **want** to find out and in the third column they write down what they **learned**.

<b>Know</b>	<b>Want</b>	<b>Learned</b>

QuADS frameworks are even more useful to student researchers. Firstly, students must pose their own **questions** and then record their **answers**. Then they can provide more **details** and finally make a record of their **source**. QuADS frameworks give students a handle on the information cornucopia which is the internet and they also have the advantage of encouraging students to be completely upfront about where they found the information.

You can find more information about KWL and QuADS grids by googling the term. Visit [www.wiganschoolsonline.net/afl/Masters/KWL%20and%20KWFL%20grids.pdf](http://www.wiganschoolsonline.net/afl/Masters/KWL%20and%20KWFL%20grids.pdf) for a one-page pdf guidance sheet. See the example QuADS sheet which addresses the question: “What is Army life *really* like?”

### ***“Getting the balance right” – detecting bias***

Once students are ready to commit their ideas to paper, it is worth avoiding the temptation to give them writing frames which more often turn out to be the writing equivalent of nineteenth century corsets. Begin by asking pupils to evaluate the various bits of knowledge and sorting them across a continuum which goes from:

Extremely positive ----- Neutral -----Extremely negative

This exercise will help students to ensure that (a) they have recognised different biases in their raw data and (b) that they have achieved a “warts and all” balance before they start writing.

### ***Provenance – “it would say that, wouldn’t it?”***

A key area of critical reading in research is the whole thorny question of provenance and authority. In other words, how reliable is my source? The internet is in many senses a very level playing field and this quality makes it difficult to judge which sources of information are trustworthy and which are not. So critical judgement becomes an important life –as well as literacy – skill. Students can be offered some ‘tests’ which will help them.

#### **Questions of provenance and authority**

- Is the information source the work of an individual or an organisation?
- If it is an individual, are they famous or in a position of authority?
- If it is an organisation – then do they have anything to gain by influencing the reader? (e.g. promoting something?)
- Is the information source, publicly funded or a charity? (This might make them more reliable but does not mean they won’t be biased.)
- Can I find evidence from another source (preferably at least TWO) which corroborates or confirms what this source says? (This is sometimes called ‘triangulation’ and is an ‘industry-standard’ method of achieving quality assurance.)
- How long has this information been posted on the site? (Many sites are set up and then never re-freshed, this can radically affect their reliability. Things change over time.)

### ***“Getting it onto paper” – organising ideas into whole texts***

The whole process of critical reading, from activating prior knowledge to assess textual authority, should have equipped students well for writing their magazine article. However, because the focus has largely been on reading and amassing information, students will find some writing guidance useful.

### **Guidance on writing the article**

- Keep in mind the needs of your target audience. It is not a general adult readership – the magazine you write for is read by 16 year-olds.
- Decide what order to present your ideas in by numbering the different aspects of your topic on your QuADS sheets.
- If you sequence the points well, you will be able to make some links between paragraphs. Some paragraphs will:
  - Develop what you have just written
  - Deal with a different aspect of the topic
  - Contrast with what you've just written.
- Decide on your headline.
- Be up-front about where you got your information from. Do this by attributing sources (giving the name) and by sparing use of quotation.
- Does this article need any sub-headings? It may well do if you are offering a range of different viewpoints.
- Decide on your opening sentence and your last sentence.
- Finally, make sure you list your sources so that readers can consult them for themselves.



### ***Critical evaluation – “how did I do?”***

Teachers can finish with the final article. However, students can be asked to discuss the various information sources they used and how they handled the challenge of synthesising them into one coherent text. Students can be encouraged to think critically about their own writing processes by being asked to draw a 7cm margin down their page. The students use this big margin for jotting down comments,, while they are in the throes of composition. For example, a student who is aware that they have just used a very heavily biased source might note: “Need an alternative point of view.” In so doing, students are re-visiting once again that old notion that: “in English you can never be wrong, provided you can justify your position with relevant evidence”!

## Fact and opinion - card sort (example)

<p>The amount of dust in February and March is astounding</p>	<p>My first impressions are of a mundane character</p>	<p>Oh the joys of being in the military</p>
<p>I'm still chuffed to bits about being in Afghanistan</p>	<p>Greetings from the sandy spaces of Helmand, I have arrived</p>	<p>Having a prize winning British army chef putting together the menu is fantastic</p>
<p>The guys staying in Upper Gereshk Valley, Kajaki, Garmsir and elsewhere live off MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat) or similar type rations</p>	<p>It's kind a strange feeling being in a warzone/zone of conflict,</p>	<p>Living and working in pods (UK army tents) and old decrepit buildings usually leaves my kit covered in a thin film of dust and waking up in the morning most of the time includes a blocked nose</p>
<p>I reckon people tend to think of British army cooking as being something out of Lad's army</p>	<p>FACTS: pieces of information that are true. You can check them out to see if they are really true. For example, it is a fact that Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan.</p>	<p>OPINIONS: what people think. For example, "Manchester United is the best football team in the world" is an opinion.</p>

## Format, Audience, Purpose – Card Sort

FORMAT (What type of text is it?)	AUDIENCE (Who is it aimed at?)	PURPOSE (What is the writer trying to achieve?)
 <p>www.armyjobs.mod.uk/jobs</p>	Men and women aged 16-34; considering Army career.	Positively promote the image of the soldier's life; inform about job opportunities
<p><a href="http://universalsoldieruk.blogspot.com/">http://universalsoldieruk.blogspot.com/</a></p> 	Fellow soldiers; ex-Army people; people researching Army career; general public.	Inform browsers about "the tale of my life serving Her Majesty. Some of it is funny. Some of it isn't."
<p><a href="http://www.google.co.uk">www.google.co.uk</a> → soldier's life</p> 	People researching Army career; general public.	Provide gateway to websites answering to the keywords.
<p><a href="http://www.HMForces.co.uk">www.HMForces.co.uk</a></p> 	Designed exclusively for the British Army, The Royal Navy, The Royal Marines and The Royal Air Force.	New online space, to connect and develop UK military community careers.

Format/audience/purpose card sort

Objective: (1) successfully match audience and purpose to format; (2) identify levels of objectivity.

## QuADS framework – example research sheet

QuADS – Target: obtain a rounded picture of an aspect of your chosen career through research.

Focus: What is Army life *really* like?

Question	Answer	Details	Source
How tough is life in the Army?	Training isn't easy - you wouldn't expect it to be - designed to get the best out of you - to help you succeed. So if you arrive in the right frame of mind you should be fine.	Basic training lasts 14 weeks for adults (17-29 years old) and between 20 and 42 weeks for juniors (16-17 years old and 1 month). After basic training you progress to specialist training according to your chosen trade or job.	<a href="http://www.armyjobs.mod.uk/toughquestions/pages/Howhardissoldiertraining.aspx">www.armyjobs.mod.uk/toughquestions/pages/Howhardissoldiertraining.aspx</a>
What support is there to help with these challenges?	Army life is demanding, but your NCOs and officers will always be there for you	Service can ask a great deal of you: living away from home, working under extreme conditions, facing danger. But whatever problems you might encounter, you don't have to book an appointment or end up talking to a stranger. Your officers and NCOs advise and support you, because they'll have faced the same fears. Being in the Army is nothing like a boss and his employees. This is family.	<a href="http://www.doing-alright.army.mod.uk/Team/Pastoral+Care/story.aspx">www.doing-alright.army.mod.uk/Team/Pastoral+Care/story.aspx</a>
Is it all being yelled at and square-bashing?	softly-softly approach - officers say intelligence more important than ability to obey command without question.	drill day in and day out used to be a staple part of military life, but now recruits can expect to do no more than one week a year as the army moves further away from its square-bashing image.	<a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/501261.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/501261.stm</a>