

Documentary making

Method	Documentary making
Introduction	
<p>In documentary making students are asked to create short documentary-style videos on a given subject or issue related to their course. Very often given as a task to groups of students, this method is usually connected to a course rather than an individual lesson as it can take up quite some time and resources on the part of students. Documentaries are a format familiar to all students and nowadays the means to create such documentaries are within the reach of practically all students who have smartphones with built in video cameras. Not only is this method a very useful way to build certain competences amongst your students along with a fuller knowledge of a particular subject, but it is also a useful way to get students out into the real world and to help them learn what it takes to work in a team.</p>	
Aim	To further students' knowledge in a specific discipline as well as their communication and collaborative skills.
Target group	While documentary making is often used in media and communication studies, it can be applied to practically any discipline and at any level. Certain subjects which have a strong visual component do lend themselves better to the art of documentary making.
Intended learning outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge about the documentary subject • Enhanced communication skills, digital skills and ability to work in a team. • Better understanding and knowledge when it comes to the rights and obligations of self-created video material and material available from other sources. 	
Description	
<p>Students are first divided into groups (groups of 3-5 usually work best)</p> <p>They are then asked to identify a suitable subject and to research and then create a storyboard for their documentary – these storyboards can be used in a first round of peer review and evaluation to refine the ideas and plans of each group.</p> <p>Students need to then record and edit their documentaries checking all the time for scientific accuracy and relevance in relation to the subject under scrutiny.</p> <p>Showing the edited versions of the documentaries provides a second peer review and assessment opportunity as well as a useful way to discuss the content of each.</p> <p>Teaching staff member provides support and any additional skills training as well as feedback as and when requested</p>	
Preparation by teaching staff	This method needs to be well prepared by the teaching staff making sure students are fully familiar with the task, the

	<p>expected outcomes and the extent to which the end product will be used in assessment. Account needs also to be taken of how and where the end outputs will be published.</p>
Required resources and equipment	<p>All student groups need to have access to suitable recording and editing equipment.</p>
Success factors	<p>The choice of initial idea of subject for each specific documentary can have an influence on the success or otherwise of this method as some subjects lend themselves better to documentary making – so make sure to spend enough time and effort on the initial ideation phase.</p>
Advantages	<p>This method helps to build students subject knowledge as well as a wf other skills and competences including communication and team skills.</p>
Disadvantages	<p>One disadvantage to this method is that students who are already skilled in video production may have an advantage over those who do not.</p>
Additional Information	<p>For a description of how this method is being used with final year science students in Ireland, read this case study written by the lead academics in the March 2018 issue of the Media & Learning Newsletter.</p> <p>This guide provides some useful tips when starting documentary making with your students.</p> <p>You can also check out the resources data base of the Media & Learning Association here for recording tips, free images and sound sources etc.</p>