

Question bank for Journalism students: possible functional and perceptual questions for assessment OR learning activities

Functional questions and answers

Q. According to communication theory, what is a /communication channel/?

A. In communication theory, a channel is a pathway for message exchange.

Q. Referring only to Facebook, list three different communication channels and describe the differences between them.

A. In practical terms, a communication channel can refer either to the platform (e.g. Facebook) or to the channels within the platform (e.g. Facebook messaging, groups etc) [1 point]. Channels can vary in terms of scope (e.g. Facebook is really an 'ecosystem' of channels) and specificity [2 points]. Channels can have different characteristics (e.g. public/private) [3 points].

Q. What is 'encoding'?

A. Encoding is the process by which the meaning is translated into message form and uploaded for transmission.

Q. What is 'decoding'?

A. Decoding is the process by which the message is downloaded and translated into meaning.

Q. The encoding/decoding process inevitably introduces variability or instability into the communication process. True or false?

A. True.

Q. List three types of 'message' that can be sent using the team communication tool Slack.

A. Direct message, channel post, thread message.

Q. Is Trello primarily a tool for managing A) Workflow, B) Conversations, C) Security.

A. Workflow.

Q. Which of the following three tasks would be best performed using a Google Doc. A) Conducting and recording a group discussion B) Co-writing a story C) Agreeing a 'to do' list.

A. Co-writing a story.

Q. What does the acronym VPN stand for?

A. Virtual proxy network.

Q. i. What does a VPN do? ii. Why might this be useful?

A. (i) *VPN technology routes your internet connect through a proxy server before sending it on the destination address.* (ii) It therefore masks your internet identity from host servers and can be used to protect privacy and to confuse regional monitoring systems.

Q. What is encryption?

A. Encryption is the process of converting a human-readable message into a code or cypher [1 point] to prevent unauthorised access [2 points].

Q. Which is the most secure browser? A. Safari. B. Internet Explorer. C. Chrome.

A. Chrome.

Q. What is the difference between a Facebook group and a Facebook page?

A. A page is a dedicated profile for businesses, public figures, and organisations. It works much like a personal account. A group are a shared space for exchanges messages and media. When you create a group, you can decide whether to make it publicly available for anyone to join, require administrator approval for members to join or keep it private and by invitation only. Like with Pages, new posts by a group are included in the News Feeds of its members and members can interact and share with one another from the group.

Q. If you publish a story to Facebook, what factors influence who sees that story?

A. A FB post is added to the news feeds of FB friends. If that post is shared to a page or to a group, that post can be seen by followers of those entities. The post can be shared by friends and followers to their wider networks. Algorithms may pick up the post and share it more widely, based on interest and popularity metrics. furthermore, a user can pay to push a post into the news feeds of a target audience.

Q. What is the difference between a retweet and a reply?

A. A retweet 'forwards' a tweet on to a user's own list of followers. A reply is a response to an original tweet. When two people are replying to one another, only relevant people, such as those who follow the person who replied and the person in the conversation, will see the reply in their timeline.

Q. What sort of media can be embedded within a tweet?

A. Hyperlinks, images, recorded videos and live streaming videos, including vines, can be embedded within tweets.

Q. Why might you want to 'quote' someone's tweet?

A. By quoting a tweet, a user is able to add comments, context or information to the original tweet.

Q. If you tweet it will be seen by all of your followers. True or False?

A. False.

Q. Name a software application that you could use to edit video on 1. a smartphone; 2. a laptop; 3. via a browser on any computer.

A. for example... 1. Splice. 2. FinalCut. 3. YouTube

Q. You have published three stories to Facebook. What measures are available within Facebook to compare the performance of those three stories?

A. Facebook Insights will review likes, reactions, comments, shares, reach and visits.

Q. How can you tell how many people have read a blog post that you shared via Twitter?

A. Twitter Analytics will estimate how many users have potentially viewed a tweet and how many have 'engaged' with a tweet (e.g. open media, clicked on a link). Click through rate must be measured at source.

Q. According to network theory, what is an edge?

A. An edge is a connection between two nodes in a network. On Facebook, a friendship might be an edge, so might a reply to a comment.

Q. How could you identify key hubs within a Facebook group?

A. Hubs are defined by their connections, so on Facebook, a hub may be a person with a large number of friends, or a post with many comments.

Perceptual questions

Scenario 1.

Planning a series of articles on the anniversary of World War I engages multiple collaborators, among them reporters (to create the content), line producers (to shape the content), product developers (to package the content), UX design experts (to understand how audience intersects with the product), graphic artists (to create or enhance visual content), photographic researchers (to find content) and editors (to approve the final product).

Q. You want to direct researchers to search archives for suitable images.

1. What tool could you use to coordinate this task and to communicate with researchers as they source images.

Having identified a set of images, you want feedback from the team on how these images might be used.

2. What tool(s) could you use to share these images and coordinate this feedback.

Finding images is just one of several tasks involved in producing a series of articles.

3. Select an appropriate tool to manage these different tasks and to ensure that each is completed on time. Explain your decision.

Scenario 2

Building a database of potential statements to be fact-checked by journalists involves several key players including researchers (who will find the statements), audience members (who may suggest statements to be checked), reporters (to do the actual fact-checking), non-reporting outside sources (who may assist in proving or disproving the facts), production editors (who check the fact checks and question the reporter over any perceived inconsistencies), a graphics specialist (who may build related data visualisations), an editorial or reporting board (which may review the facts checks) and an editor (who will have the final say on whether the fact check is published).

Q. You use a Slack team to discuss workflow with your colleagues and run a channel through which you share statements.

1. Would you use the same platform to collect statements from audience members? Explain your answer.

You need to make sure that statements are fact-checked efficiently and in a timely manner.

2. What tool would you use to share statements with journalists?

Each day the editor and production staff prior must meet to discuss the day's reporting agenda, but the editor and production staff are frequently in different locations.

3. What would be the best tool to run these meetings? Explain your decision.

Scenario 3

A media company is looking to launch its titles on a new platform, a stand alone voice-activation device, that can be adapted for media usage and is 'owned' by a tech platform keen to work in journalism. There will be a series of work streams in this project organised by you, as project manager, among them a tech stream that will be largely staffed by developers but will require interaction with content generators to ensure the content meets user and publisher expectation — that it is fit for purpose.

The task requires: a regular stand up meetings of the key players (a); capturing and sharing of the minutes of those meetings (b); the creation of a specialised technical team who will discuss the programming aspects of the project but also include other key parties (c) and a series of short, medium and long term tasks (d).

1. Write a short statement explaining how you would make use of communication, collaboration, work planning and security tools to manage the successful implementation of these project tasks.

Scenario 4

You are working on a sensitive political story that involves several sources from different countries, each providing documents, and a team of journalists in the U.S., Australia, Indonesia and Singapore. You are concerned about the security of your sources and the risk of surveillance for the entire team.

1. Write a short description of how you would plan and support work flow in such a way as to prioritise the security and privacy of your sources and team.

Scenario 5

You want to capture information from a comment thread on a Young Liberals discussion board?

Q1. What technologies will be involved if you use a computer to access this data?

Q2. What technological or programming skills will you need to perform this task?

Q3. What readily available tools could you use to support this work?

A1. Web browsers/scrapers, protocols, HTML, JS etc

A2. i. Ability to install scraper; ii. Capacity to read DOM and identify objects to download; iii. Basic spreadsheet skills

Scenario 6

You have been given access to a large sample of documents from the Panama papers leak.

Q1. What sort of variables could be used to store information from these documents?

Q2. Where could this information be stored?

Q3. How could you search through this data for mention of Australian companies?

A1. Strings.

A2. Any named database. Data could also be written to text files or pickled, but these solutions are less efficient/desirable.

A3. String pattern matching: requires a simple script .

Scenario 7

You want to build a website to tell stories from a series about household budgets and living standards across Melbourne. You have conducted interviews and recorded audio and video.

Q1. What tools/technologies do you need to purchase before you can launch the site?

Q2. What open source content management systems are available and suitable for this task?

Q3. What features would your website need to tell the story of household income by suburb?