



Guidance Note

Annotated Scripts

Factual & Culture

Background

The ABC is Australia's most trusted source of news and information. At a time of media disruption and decline in trust, it is more important than ever that we uphold the value our audiences place in us as the nation's most trusted storyteller.

Maintaining trust in the ABC depends on ensuring that our factual content is accurate, in accordance with the recognised standards of objective journalism. A key requirement for ensuring accuracy is fact checking. This guidance note outlines our expectations in relation to your obligation to provide annotated scripts as part of Delivery Materials.

Producer responsibility

In accordance with the Licence Agreement/Licence and Investment Agreement, where the content contains factual information, the Producer is required, amongst other things, to ensure that all material facts contained in the content are accurate.

The Producer must provide annotated scripts as part of the deliverables.

A thorough fact check process will benefit the Producer, as well as the ABC, to ensure programs are editorially and legally robust prior to publication.

What is an annotated script?

This is a fact checked script which includes annotations, or footnotes. For assertions of fact, you should provide two *credible* sources. You should also fact check statements made by talent in interviews to make sure what they say is accurate.

There are two types of sources you can rely on:

- *Primary* source - provides first-hand testimony or direct evidence, for example transcripts of court, police reports, scientific papers.
- *Secondary* source - relies on a primary source for information, for example a reference in a book or a newspaper article.

Where possible, primary source information should be sought to confirm facts.

Providing source material

Providing original source material to the ABC is critical. It is important that we are able to review the source material referred to in an annotation if we have any questions.

In some cases, the source may be available online and a link can be provided as part of the annotation. Often source information will not be online. In this case, scanned original documents should be made available to the ABC via Dropbox or Google Drive. Each source document should be numbered to match the annotation listed in your script.



True Crime and other investigations

Investigative content has a high bar in relation to establishing the facts. Information relied upon for investigative content, including true crime, can be difficult to obtain. However, sourcing information to confirm the facts of an investigation is one of the most important steps in producing this kind of content. If sources cannot be produced and included in the annotated script due to privacy or security concerns, this will be evaluated by the Commissioning Editor in conjunction with the ABC's senior editorial management team. We may require you to talk us through the steps taken to confirm the information and provide all available evidence to support it.

The ABC understands the importance of protecting confidential sources. If your program relies on the testimony of unnamed sources, the ABC requires that a plan be put in place to manage this, prior to production. An upward referral process may also be adopted to protect sources whilst maintaining the integrity of the editorial process.

Factual Drama

Dramas based on real events must be handled carefully to ensure the editorial standards for accuracy, impartiality and fair and honest dealing are met. The ABC has prepared a [Factual Drama Editorial Policy Pack](#) containing guidance and templates for producers for factual dramas. Further information about how to use these documents is available from your Commissioning Editor/ Executive Producer.

Accuracy

The ABC requires that reasonable efforts be made to ensure accuracy in all fact- based content. The ABC accuracy standard applies to assertions of fact, not to expressions of opinion. An opinion, being a value judgement or conclusion, cannot be found to be accurate or inaccurate in the way facts can. The accuracy standard requires that opinions be conveyed accurately, in the sense that quotes should be accurate, and any editing should not distort the meaning of the opinion expressed.

The ABC's Editorial Standard in relation to accuracy can be found [here](#).

The ABC's Guidance Note on Accuracy can be found [here](#).