

What the standards are for and where they come from

Standards to help you help your clients

The standards for Business Support will help you if you work with small businesses, sole traders or the self employed.

- How do you make sure the information you provide is up to date?
- How do you develop their trust and confidence in you?
- When do you refer them to specialists?
- What do you need to know about basic business practice in order to give them good advice?
- How do you encourage them to act for themselves?
- How do you turn them into a “client for life”?

Standards for all that have been widely researched

We have widely researched the standards for Business Support among small business support staff. The standards contain all the things that those who have successfully worked with small businesses say are important.

We researched the standards with people who are giving information to businesses as well as those who are advising them. The standards were tested with those working with businesses at pre-start and start up as well as those that were working with established and high-growth businesses. Examples of them are advisers and mentors from the Prince's Trust and Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust, Business Link information staff and business advisers, members of the Institute of Business Advisers, Enterprise Agency business advisers, Technology Means Business advisers, advisers and information staff in Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Investors in People advisers, advisers and information staff who work through LEDU - Northern Ireland as well as hundreds of private training providers and consultants that work with small businesses.

People who have used the standards have made the following comments.

“It has given me the ability to give a more effective delivery of accurate business information specific to our clients.”

“It has focused my direction. Most importantly, it has provided me with further knowledge into upgrading my skills to provide SMEs with a higher quality mentoring and benchmarking service.”

“It enabled me to make improvements to how I carry out my role. The whole process has further confirmed my view that you are never too old to learn.”

Standards with good results

The standards for Business Support replace the SFEDI produced standards for Business Information and Business Counselling which have been used by thousands of business advisers and business information staff over the past five years. They also replace the Business Link Adviser and Information standards.

What the standards are for and where they come from

The benefits of the new standards

Although people found the old standards useful, the New Standards for Business Support are even better.

- The new standards are being used by all the major business support organisations throughout the UK - meaning that there is one recognised framework for all business support staff no matter where they work.
- They do not exclude those who work only with start-ups or growth businesses.
- They present the roles of business support in a framework that can be used by all.
- They define exactly what business advisers need to know and understand about actual business practice.
- They cover more subjects in greater detail.
- They are more flexible which means they give greater choice to different business support staff.
- They are easy to understand and use because the Plain English Campaign have approved them and awarded them the Crystalmark for clarity.

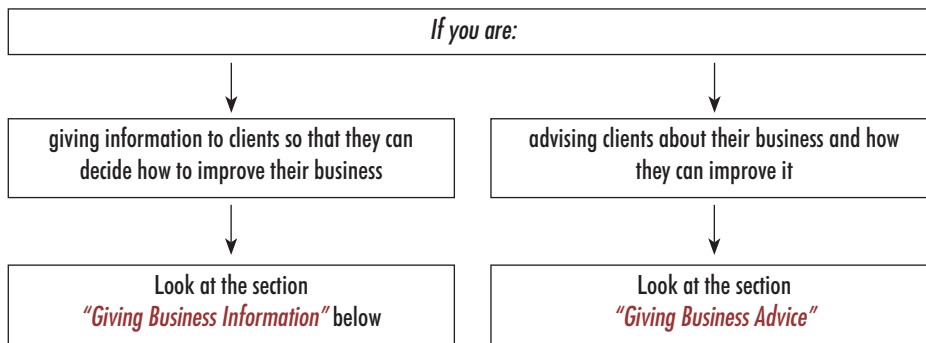
The standards are the key to your work

The standards include all the important things that you should do to make sure you are helping the clients in the best possible way. They make sure you:

- build up positive working relationships with your clients;
- give them the information and advice that they need;
- get the most from networking;
- constantly develop your professional skills;
- keep your knowledge of business practice up to date;
- store and access key information as you need it; and
- develop ways for clients to improve their business.

Helping your clients with their business

These standards are aimed at two main types of job.



Business Support

Helping your clients with their business

Giving business information

Our research showed us that all business information staff should cover the following core areas.

Getting on with clients

The most important thing when working with clients is to build a positive relationship with them. This will have a direct effect on the level of service that you give them and the satisfaction they will feel from the quality of the information you have provided.

It will help you to:

- better interpret their needs;
- make sure you meet their needs; and
- constantly improve the service you offer.

It will help them to make informed decisions about using your service or other support services.

Unit 1 can help you with this.

Getting on with colleagues

Nobody works in isolation. You will not be able to carry out your job properly and help clients unless you have a strong network of colleagues and other contacts to draw upon. There may come a time when you do not have access to the information you need to help your client or when you need to refer your client to a specialist. This is when a network of contacts will prove invaluable.

A good network of contacts can:

- help you sift the information available so that you can go back to your client more quickly;
- help you check the validity of something before you go back to your client;
- help you identify experts to help your client;
- advise you of other sources of information that you have not come across; and
- make the service you offer to clients appear more comprehensive and seamless.

Unit 3 can help you with this.

Helping your clients with their business

Giving the right information to clients

The crux of your job is making sure you give the right information to your clients. You can build up the best working relationships in the world but if you cannot actually find the information to help them they will soon go elsewhere.

The most difficult part of this is probably finding out what they actually want. Once you have identified what depth and breadth of information is going to be most useful to them then you can find it for them, making sure you sift it down so that you are not confusing them with unnecessary detail. Once you give them the information, it is quite likely that they will follow it up with questions and you will need to be prepared to answer these so that they have confidence in the information you have provided.

Unit 4 can help you with this.

Continually improving your skills

Nobody can afford to stay still in their job. The nature of business is constantly changing as well as the information that is relevant to it. You will need to keep a constant check on the changing information that is available as well as thinking how that information will be useful to your clients.

You will need to make sure that you continue to give the best service possible and decide if there are areas of training, reading or research that you need to carry out in order to do your job better.

Unit 6 can help you with this.

Other parts of your role

Depending on what you do in your job, there may be other things that you need to think about.

Quickly work through the following questions. These will help you decide which other units you may find useful in your job.

Question	'Yes' or 'No'	What to do
Do you have to decide how information will be grouped for easy access?		If 'Yes' look at 'Organising information'.
Do you have to catalogue information?		If 'Yes' look at 'Organising information'.
Do you have to create an index for information?		If 'Yes' look at 'Creating an index of information'.
Do you have to identify when new sets of information are needed?		If 'Yes' look at 'Setting up new information'.
Do you have to collect, collate and set up new information?		If 'Yes' look at 'Setting up new information'.

Helping your clients with their business

Question	'Yes' or 'No'	What to do
Do you have to solve problems your clients may have with the service?		If 'Yes' look at 'Solve clients' problems with the service'.
Do you have to work out how to change the service to stop problems happening again?		If 'Yes' look at 'Solve clients problems with the service'.
Do you have to collect feedback from clients about their satisfaction with the service?		If 'Yes' look at 'Making sure service to clients is always good'.
Do you have to monitor service to clients to make sure it is always good?		If 'Yes' look at 'Making sure service to clients is always good'.

Organising information

Deciding how information will be grouped for storage and catalogued correctly are very useful skills for anyone who needs to access it quickly.

Before you can do this you will need to classify it and decide how it will be marked. Both of these things need to be thought through before it can be stored and catalogued, whether the storage system is electronic, paper-based or using some other storage method such as microfiche.

Unit 8 can help you with this

Creating an index of information

Information is no use unless it can be accessed quickly and easily. You may find that your job will be easier if you create an index. To do this, you will need to analyse each piece of information and group it in a way that will be logical to the user. You will also need to think about any cross-referencing that may make it easier to use.

It is a good idea to check your index for consistency and work out how you will make sure it is always up to date.

Unit 9 can help you with this.

Setting up new information

You may find that you identify some new information that is needed to enhance the service you give to clients. If you do this, you will need to work out exactly what is needed, how much it will cost to obtain and whether any parts of it are confidential and must not be circulated to certain people.

Once you have collected it, you will need to record the information, making sure that you keep an accurate note of the source, any expiry dates and any mechanisms for updating it.

Unit 10 can help you with this.

Helping your clients with their business

Solve clients' problems with the service

Clients can be completely happy with a service for years, then as soon as something goes wrong that is all they remember. Anyone that deals with clients needs to be able to spot and deal with problems straight away. Clients tend not to notice a service until it goes wrong. The more efficiently their complaint is dealt with, the more impressed they will be.

The key to this is then thinking whether that problem could occur again, either with the same client or a different client. If you think that it could, then working out a way to stop it happening again will save you a lot of time and give you happier clients. In fact, the best type of service you can offer to your clients is if you can spot and solve problems before your customers even know about them.

Unit 11 can help you with this.

Making sure service to clients is always good.

If you are constantly involved in delivering a service to your clients, it is not a bad idea to monitor the service they receive to see if it can be improved in some way. You may be able to collect feedback from clients which will help give you an idea of what they really think. This will help you to identify if there are any problems with the service they receive and decide if you can do anything about it. When thinking about possible changes you will need to balance the costs and the savings of those changes. This will help you to get support from your colleagues who may also be involved.

Once you have changed the service, it is extremely important to continue to collect feedback from customers. It could be that your changes can be developed further or that another part of the service can then be improved.

Unit 12 can help you with this.

Giving Business Advice

Our research showed us that all business advisers should cover the following core areas.

Knowing about business

No one can give business advice, unless they know how business works. It is really important that every business adviser has a sound knowledge about business. This will mean that the advice you give is more robust and more queries can be answered before referring the client to a specialist. Every generalist business adviser needs to know about the following.

- How small firms work.
- Finance and accounting.
- ICT and E-commerce.
- People.
- Innovation and technology.
- Marketing and sales.
- Operations and processes.

The section called 'Knowledge and understanding of key areas of business' can help you with this.

Helping your clients with their business

Getting on with clients

The most important thing when working with clients is to build a positive relationship with them. This will have a direct effect on the level of service that you give them and the satisfaction they will feel from the advice you have provided.

It will help you to:

- better interpret their needs;
- make sure you meet their needs; and
- constantly improve the service you offer.

It will help them to act for themselves as well as encourage them to use business support services in the future.

Unit 2 can help you with this.

Getting on with colleagues

Nobody works in isolation. You will not be able to carry out your job properly and help clients unless you have a strong network of colleagues and other contacts to draw upon. There may come a time when you need specific information to help your client or when you need to refer your client to a specialist. This is when a network of contacts will prove invaluable.

A good network of contacts can:

- help you respond to your client more quickly;
- help you check the validity of something before you go back to your client;
- help you identify experts to help your client;
- advise you of other sources of support that you have not come across; and
- make the service you offer to clients appear more comprehensive and seamless.

Unit 3 can help you with this.

Giving the right advice to clients

The crux of your job is making sure you give the right advice to your clients to enable them to make informed decisions. You can build up the best working relationships in the world but if you don't actually give them the right advice they will soon go elsewhere.

You will need to help them balance what they need personally against what they want for their business. You must make sure that you get all the relevant information from them otherwise you may help them towards a decision which is not right for them.

You will need to assess their situation and outline all the different options that they can take. You will need to do all this in such a way that it encourages them to look at their business in the long term and increases their confidence to act for themselves.

Unit 5 can help you with this.

Helping your clients with their business

Continually improving your skills

Nobody can afford to stay still in their job. The nature of business is constantly changing as well as the information and advice that is relevant to it. You will need to build up a sound business knowledge base so that you can constantly give up-to-date and relevant advice to your clients.

You will need to make sure that you continue to give the best advice possible and decide if there are areas of training, reading or research that you need to undertake in order to do your job better.

Unit 7 can help you with this.

Other parts of your role

Depending on what you do in your job, there may be other things that you need to think about.

Quickly work through the following questions. These will help you decide which other units you may find useful in your job.

Question	'Yes' or 'No'	What to do
Do your clients use you as a consultant to plan changes to their business?		If 'Yes' look at 'Designing ways for clients to improve their business'.
Do you work with your clients in their business as part of a team to implement change?		If 'Yes' look at 'Working with clients to improve their business'.
Do you sell the benefits of change to your clients' staff?		If 'Yes' look at 'Working with clients to improve their business'.
Are you responsible for staff development in your place of work?		If 'Yes' look at 'Developing staff'.
Are you sometimes responsible for staff development in a client's business on a consultancy basis?		If 'Yes' look at 'Developing staff'.

Designing ways for clients to improve their business

Occasionally, if you have the right skills and experience you may be asked by a client to act as a consultant to their company. They may want you to actually plan how to improve their business.

You will need to analyse the situation carefully, making sure you have all the information you need to make a realistic plan. You will need to look at how the business works and how any changes will affect it. You will need to make sure that any changes contribute towards what your client wants for the business in the future. Most importantly, you will need to make sure that your plans can actually be carried out by the people involved.

Unit 13 can help you with this.

Working with clients to improve their business

Your clients may want you to actually help them improve their business. As long as you have the right skills and experience you should be able to do this. This would involve working as part of a team with your client, and possibly their staff, to help them improve the business. You would need to make sure everything starts when it should and that everyone knows what they are doing. You will need to monitor progress against the original plan, overcome unforeseen problems and make changes as necessary. At the end of the work you will need to evaluate the changes and make recommendations for future improvements.

You may even have to sell to staff the benefits of any changes, encourage them to take part and possibly even develop the skills of the owner or staff so they can act for themselves in the future.

Unit 14 can help you with this.

Developing staff

You may be responsible for staff development in your place of work, or you may have a contract that involves staff development in a client's business. Wherever you do it, the same basic techniques apply.

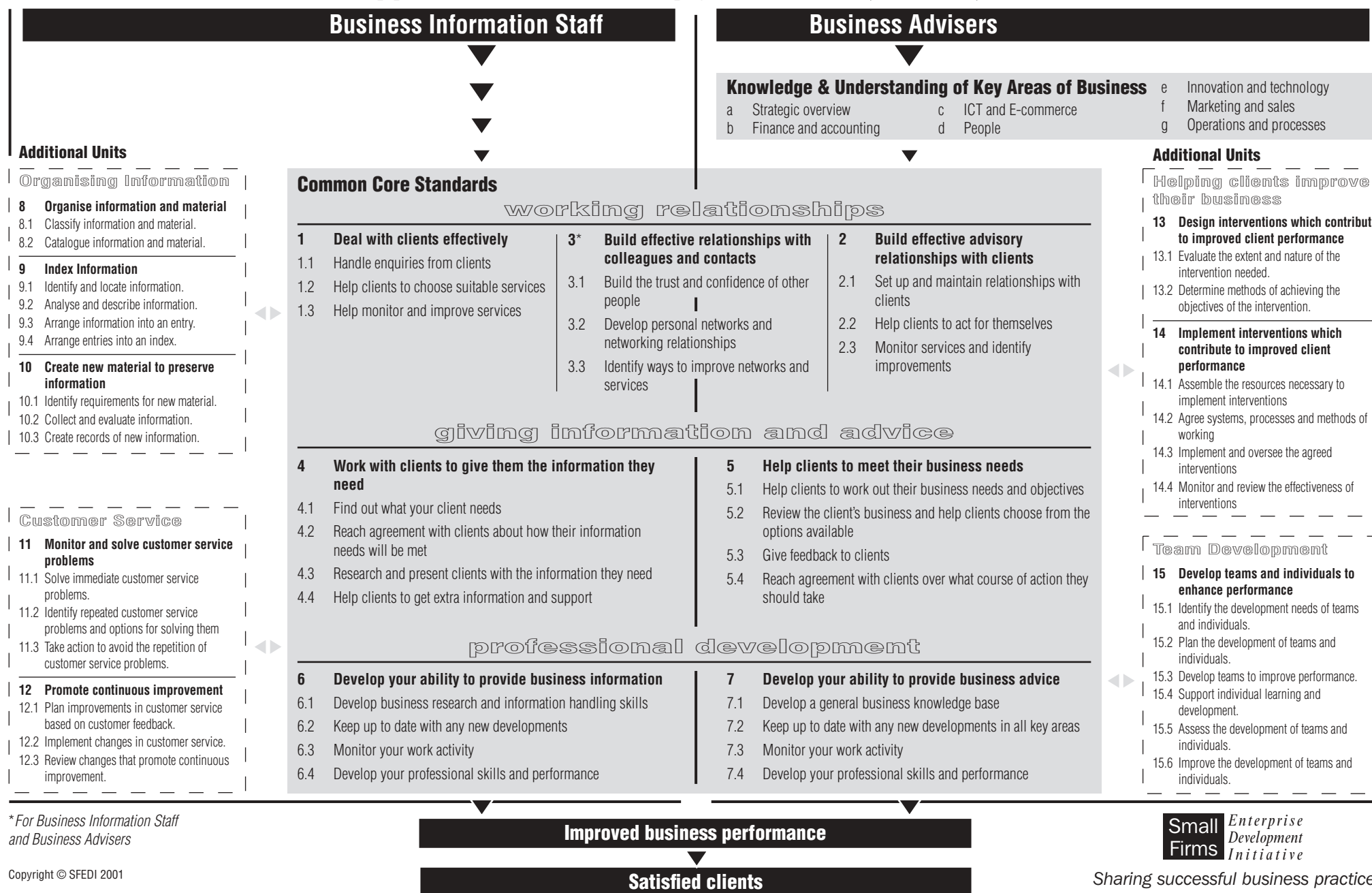
You will first need to identify training or staff development that will benefit the business. You will then need to look at the different ways it can be met and decide which will be most effective for that individual or team in that particular circumstance. Once that training or development is being carried out you will need to support the learners to make sure they are benefiting from it and see if there is any way it can be improved. Finally you will need to make sure that it has met both the needs of the individual and the business.

Unit 15 can help you with this.

Business Support

Helping your clients with their business

How to use the Business Support standards to help your clients (a summary)



*For Business Information Staff and Business Advisers

To improve your skills

The standards will help you improve the way you carry out your work in the following ways.

- To show your clients that you are operating to national best practice.
- To improve the way you currently do your job.
- To develop new skills.
- To identify areas where you may need some training or some development.
- To prove that you are carrying out your job correctly.
- To benchmark yourself against others.
- To check that you have enough knowledge about business.
- To improve your knowledge of business.

To help your company

The standards will help your organisation in the following ways.

- To recruit members of staff.
- To verify that staff are carrying out their jobs properly.
- To identify training needs.
- To assure quality of service delivery.
- To prove to clients that business support staff are qualified to carry out their jobs.
- To show clients that business support staff are using best practice standards.

To help national business support organisations

The standards will help national business support organisations in the following ways.

- To identify the level of service required.
- To monitor the level of service being delivered.
- To form the basis of nation-wide recognition schemes.
- To identify nation-wide training needs.
- To increase the credibility of their service amongst small firms.

Getting recognition for what you do

If you work in one of the national business support networks, you will probably find that an assessment or development programme based on the standards has been developed. You will also probably find that you are expected to participate in this, in order to secure your continued employment. If you are responsible for designing one of these programmes or assessment system, please contact SFEDI on 0114 241 2155 for a copy of the SFEDI assessment strategy.

If you don't work in one of these networks, but you would like to prove to your clients that you are operating to best practice, then SFEDI can provide you with a list of organisations that can carry out a formal assessment for you. Contact SFEDI on 0114 241 2155 for further information.

How to use the standards

Linking in to best practice for small firms

As well as using the Business Support standards as good practice to improve your own performance, you might also want to use one of three sets of standards of good practice for small businesses. These are:

- Exploring Enterprise. For those that might one day want to start a business or work in a small business.
- Business Start Up. For those planning and starting a business.
- Business Development. For those running or developing a business.

Support from us

As well as each of the standards, we also offer a range of development products, training programmes and qualifications to support these standards. These are recognised by the SFEDI endorsement mark as being the best practice in the field. Please contact our helpline on 0114 241 2155 or visit our website on www.sfedi.co.uk for more information.

We hope you enjoy using the standards!

Summary

What this is about

This is about developing positive relationships with clients so that you can give them a good service. It involves:

- handling enquiries from the client and communicating effectively so that you can interpret their needs;
- providing information about available services so that clients can make informed decisions about using your service or other support services; and
- monitoring your response to make sure they meet client needs and, where appropriate, suggesting improvements to the service.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- regularly respond to questions from clients over the phone, or by e-mail or face-to-face; or
- are concerned about the quality of service you provide to clients.

The main topics

When you develop effective working relationships with clients, you will need to do the following.

- 1.1 Handle enquiries from clients.
- 1.2 Help clients choose suitable services.
- 1.3 Help monitor and improve services.

What your work involves

You need to develop effective working relationships with clients that meet the national standard. You will need to show your ability to work with different types of client, for example:

- business start-ups;
- existing businesses;
- businesses that hope to develop and expand;
- clients who are linked to your organisation; and
- different types of business (such as sole traders, partnerships, limited companies, social enterprises and non-profit-making organisations).

You will also need to be able to handle different types of enquiries, such as:

- frequently-asked questions; and
- enquiries that need research.

These activities may overlap with those in sections 4 and 6.

Deal with clients effectively

Working relationships

Common Core standards

Deal with clients effectively

What you need to know and understand

If you want to develop effective working relationships with clients, you need to understand and use each of the following.

Interpersonal and communication skills

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- dealing with clients;
- building long-term relationships;
- listening and questioning;
- interviewing and negotiation;
- giving, receiving and passing on feedback;
- guaranteeing client confidentiality; and
- dealing with difficulties and keeping conflict and difference to a minimum.

You also need to know about the benefits and drawbacks of different kinds of communication (such as face-to-face contact, phone, fax, and e-mail).

Providing support services

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- identifying the needs of your target clients and markets;
- responding to the client's values, ways of thinking and business needs; and
- improving the way you deliver services.

You should follow any guidelines for providing support services set by your organisation or professional body about:

- maintaining confidentiality in different working environments (for example, your own organisation's premises, the client's premises or a public space);
- ethics, values and professional standards;
- equal opportunities, diversity and social inclusion;
- funding and other support available to the client;
- using information management systems;
- invoicing systems, pricing and credit-control policies; and
- procedures for quality assurance and handling complaints.

You will also need to know about:

- the features and benefits of the business support services you provide, and any other services that you direct clients to; and
- the role of your organisation in developing competition among local businesses.

Information and communications technology [ICT]

You need to develop methods and techniques for making the most of:

- word-processing, spreadsheet and database packages; and
- e-mail, intranets and the Internet.

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

1.1 Handle enquiries from clients

- a Deal with client enquiries quickly and politely.
- b Clearly explain your organisation's policy on record-keeping and confidentiality, and make sure that all your contact with clients is in line with the policy.
- c Encourage clients to tell you what they need and ask for more information and help, if and when they need it.
- d Communicate with clients in a way that shows you understand their needs and concerns.
- e Encourage clients to think of your service as reliable and available to respond to their business needs.
- f Make sure that any agreed actions, and any information needed by colleagues, are accurately recorded.

1.2 Help clients choose suitable services

- a Encourage clients to explain what they want to achieve.
- b Reply to questions and concerns and explain the features and benefits of the support services available.
- c Identify and agree the most suitable support services to meet client needs.
- d Direct clients to other sources of information and provide contact details or make introductions, where appropriate.
- e Help clients to choose suitable products and services from the range of options.
- f Make sure that the information you give to clients is accurate and up to date.

1.3 Help monitor and improve services

- a Use follow-up procedures to make sure that clients receive the best possible service.
- b Encourage clients to report any problems they are having with the service before the problems become too serious.
- c Pass on any client feedback to relevant people.
- d Recommend any improvements to the service to the relevant people, where appropriate.

Deal with clients effectively

Summary

What this is about

This is about the skills you need to build your clients' trust in you and in the organisation you work for. It involves:

- arranging suitable business support with your clients;
- working with your clients to develop their businesses; and
- monitoring the progress and effects of the advice offered, so that any problems are dealt with quickly and appropriately.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- respond to enquiries from clients about business advisory services;
- develop and manage relationships with clients;
- help to develop clients' business understanding and skills; and
- have an interest in the quality of service provided to clients.

The main topics

When you build effective advisory relationships with clients, you will need to do the following.

- 2.1 Set up and maintain relationships with clients.
- 2.2 Help clients to act for themselves.
- 2.3 Monitor services and identify improvements.

What your work involves

You need to build effective advisory relationships with clients that meet the national standard. You will need to show your ability to work with different types of client, for example:

- business start-ups;
- existing businesses;
- businesses that hope to develop and expand;
- clients who are linked to your organisation;
- different types of business (such as sole traders, partnerships, limited companies, social enterprises and non-profit-making organisations);
- owner-managers, partners, senior managers or directors of companies; and
- individuals and groups.

These activities may overlap with those in sections 5 and 7.

2

Build effective advisory relationships with clients

Working relationships

Common Core standards

Build effective advisory relationships with clients

What you need to know and understand

If you want to build effective advisory relationships with clients, you need to understand and use each of the following.

Interpersonal and communication skills

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- dealing with clients;
- building long-term relationships;
- listening and questioning;
- interviewing, reviewing and deciding on needs;
- negotiation;
- giving, receiving and passing on feedback;
- guaranteeing client confidentiality; and
- dealing with difficulties and keeping conflict and difference to a minimum.

You will also have to know about the benefits and drawbacks of different kinds of communication (such as face-to-face contact, phone, fax, and e-mail).

Advisory relationships

You need to understand and take account of:

- the conditions for accepting clients onto the business advisory service;
- the benefits and drawbacks of working in different physical locations (for example, your organisation's premises or your client's premises);
- the boundaries of the relationship between you and the client;
- the ways that different clients prefer to work; and
- the limitations of your role and responsibilities, and any relevant contractual obligations.

You also need to know the limits of your own abilities and understanding of business practice.

Supporting client development

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- combining and co-ordinating support services;
- developing your client's self-confidence; and
- helping your clients to review and develop skills that will improve their ability to compete with other businesses.

Funding and resources

You will need to know about:

- the funding and other support available to the client; and
- funding agency procedures.

Providing support services

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- identifying the information your target clients and markets need;
- responding to the client's values, ways of thinking and business needs; and
- taking action to improve how you deliver services.

You need to follow any guidelines for providing support services set by your organisation or professional body about:

- maintaining confidentiality in different working environments;
- ethics, values and professional standards;
- equal opportunities, diversity and social inclusion;
- funding and other support available to the client;
- using information management systems;
- using invoicing systems, pricing and credit-control policies; and
- procedures for quality assurance and handling complaints.

You will also need to know about:

- the features and benefits of the business support services you provide, and those of any other services that you direct clients to; and
- the role of your organisation in developing competition among local businesses.

Monitoring services

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- analysis and evaluation;
- identifying improvements in how your organisation delivers services; and
- preparing and presenting feedback about the quality of services.

You need to follow any guidelines for evaluating services set by your organisation or professional body, about:

- the conditions and measures of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, value for money and quality;
- the effect of financial and time limits on services; and
- any local or regional priorities and problems.

Information and communications technology [ICT]

You need to develop methods and techniques for making the most of:

- word-processing, spreadsheet and database packages; and
- e-mail, intranets and the Internet.

2

Build effective advisory relationships with clients

2

Build effective advisory relationships with clients

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

2.1 Set up and maintain relationships with clients

- a Prepare and hold effective meetings with clients.
- b Encourage clients to clearly explain what they want to achieve, so that you can identify and arrange support services that may help them.
- c Encourage clients to share their views and concerns freely.
- d Direct clients who need specialist advice to other kinds of business support.
- e Consult clients to agree a proposal for services (including costs) that meets their needs.
- f Advise clients about any funding that they can claim for the business support services.
- g Make sure that your clients understand the roles and responsibilities of the advice process.
- h Keep up-to-date and accurate records of client contact at all stages of the relationship.
- i Guarantee client confidentiality at all times.
- j End relationships with clients in a way that makes it possible for them to contact you for support in the future.

2.2 Help clients to act for themselves

- a Encourage your clients to develop trust in you and in the business advice process.
- b Work with your clients to review their needs and abilities, and compare these with current business practice.
- c Encourage your clients to develop any skills needed to meet their personal and business goals.
- d Encourage your clients to use different viewpoints when evaluating, considering and using information to improve their own skills and the performance of their business.
- e Give clients new information in a clear and understandable way.
- f Encourage clients to identify and consider the needs and abilities of groups they work with.
- g Identify any conflicting interests between group members and attempt to deal with them.

2.3 Monitor services and identify improvements

- a Consult with clients to decide how often to review the progress of the business advice programme and in how much detail.
- b Help clients to review their progress and examine the effect of the support service on their business objectives.
- c Encourage clients to identify any concerns or problems with the service before they become too serious.
- d Agree to change any part of a particular service if it will improve how effective the service is.
- e Monitor your work to make sure that it meets the legislation, advisory regulations and organisational guidelines that apply to your services.
- f Investigate any problems with the services provided and take action or refer the problem to the relevant people.
- g Recommend any improvements that can be made to the quality of the service to the relevant people.

Summary

What this is about

This is about the development and use of personal contacts and networks to help you:

- respond to clients; and
- identify business support opportunities that may help clients.

It involves:

- establishing, developing and maintaining relationships with colleagues and contacts based on trust and respect;
- developing and maintaining contacts and identifying opportunities for support which may be passed on to clients; and
- developing contacts that will maintain and improve the effectiveness of the service.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- develop relationships with colleagues and contacts in your local area and more widely; and
- make links with others that will help you to provide information and advice to clients (personal networks).

Good contacts and networks will help you to provide a better service to clients.

The main topics

When you build effective relationships with colleagues and contacts, you will need to do the following.

- 3.1 Build the trust and confidence of other people.
- 3.2 Develop personal networks and networking relationships.
- 3.3 Identify ways to improve networks and services.

What your work involves

You need to build effective relationships with colleagues and contacts that meet the national standard. You will need to show your ability to work with colleagues and contacts:

- in your organisation and any related organisations;
- who provide general and specialist services to small businesses;
- who you meet through formal methods (for example, joining specialist groups or associations) and informal methods (for example, meeting someone at a conference or through an on-line chat room); and
- in other local, regional, national or international services.

Build effective relationships with colleagues and contacts

Working relationships

Common Core standards

Build effective relationships with colleagues and contacts

What you need to know and understand

If you want to build effective relationships with colleagues and contacts, you need to understand and use each of the following.

Communication and interpersonal skills

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- listening and questioning;
- giving, receiving and passing on feedback;
- keeping conflict and difference to a minimum;
- passing on client information; and
- guaranteeing client confidentiality.

You will also need to know about your colleagues' and contacts' interests, skills and preferred ways of working with you.

Teamworking

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- planning and time management; and
- working in a group of people with different working styles.

You will also need to know about the skills of colleagues.

Networking

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- building personal contacts and forming networks;
- identifying where local networking opportunities exist and where there are gaps;
- identifying people and organisations who have the potential to benefit you and your clients; and
- maintaining network contacts.

Providing support services

You need to follow guidelines for providing support services set by your organisation or professional body about:

- maintaining confidentiality in different working environments
- ethics, values and professional standards;
- equal opportunities, diversity and social inclusion;
- funding and other support available to the client;
- using information management systems;
- using invoicing systems, pricing and credit-control policies; and
- procedures for quality assurance and handling complaints.

Evaluating networks

You need to develop formal and informal methods for:

- monitoring your own personal conduct; and
- comparing the service provided by others.

You will also need to know about the way your organisation networks with other organisations.

Information and communications technology [ICT]

You need to develop methods and techniques for making the most of:

- word-processing, spreadsheet and database packages; and
- e-mail, intranets and the Internet.

You will also need computer-based information on contacts and organisations that provide business support.

3

Build effective relationships with colleagues and contacts

Build effective relationships with colleagues and contacts

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

3.1 Build the trust and confidence of other people

- a Communicate with colleagues and contacts in a way that promotes trust and goodwill.
- b Identify the people who can help you to meet your client's business support needs.
- c Work with others in a way that makes the best use of the time and resources available and the talents of the people involved.
- d Help colleagues, where possible, when they ask for support or encouragement.
- e Make sure that you provide colleagues and contacts with the information they need to meet agreed deadlines.
- f Keep colleagues informed about your work, and about any opportunities that may arise for your organisation.
- g Guarantee client confidentiality at all times.

3.2 Develop personal networks and networking relationships

- a Evaluate new contacts to see if they can add value to the service provided to clients.
- b Make sure that your relationships with colleagues and contacts follow any guidelines set out by your organisation.
- c Use contacts in a way that benefits your clients.
- d Encourage clients to develop and use contacts and networks to increase the business opportunities open to them.

3.3 Identify ways to improve networks and services

- a Regularly monitor your existing networks and contacts, and identify ways of improving effectiveness.
- b Develop new contacts to improve the quality of your service.
- c Monitor the information and support given by other organisations to see if they can improve the business support services you provide.
- d Identify ways to improve the quality of information you get from contacts and network organisations.
- e Study the opportunities, costs and benefits of new contacts and networks.

Summary

What this is about

This is about working with clients to give them all the information they need. It involves:

- finding out what clients need, and deciding the best way to respond;
- finding and researching the relevant business information for clients;
- responding confidently to enquiries by offering information and support; and
- helping clients to identify what information they need, and getting it for them.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- investigate how clients' information needs can be met;
- respond to frequently-asked questions, and queries that involve planning and research; and
- direct clients to other sources of information and support.

The main topics

When you work with clients to give them the information they need, you will have to do the following.

- 4.1 Find out what your client needs.
- 4.2 Reach agreement with clients about how their information needs will be met.
- 4.3 Research and present clients with the information they need.
- 4.4 Help clients to get extra information and support.

What your work involves

You need to work with clients to give them all the information they need in a way that meets the national standard. You will need to show your ability to work with different types of client, for example:

- business start-ups;
- existing businesses;
- businesses that hope to develop and expand;
- clients who are linked to your organisation; and
- different types of business (such as sole traders, partnerships, limited companies, social enterprises and non-profit-making organisations).

You will also need to be able to handle different types of enquiries, such as:

- frequently-asked questions; and
- enquiries that need research.

These activities may overlap with those in sections 1 and 6.

4

Work with clients to give them the information they need

Giving information and advice

Common Core standards

Work with clients to give them the information they need

What you need to know and understand

If you want to give your clients the information they need, you have to understand and use each of the following.

Communication and interpersonal skills

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- dealing with clients;
- building long-term relationships;
- listening and questioning;
- interviewing and negotiation;
- presenting information to meet clients' needs and learning styles; and
- dealing with difficulties and keeping conflict and difference to a minimum.

You also need to know about the benefits and drawbacks of different kinds of communication (such as face-to-face contact, phone, fax, and e-mail).

Information sources

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- collecting, judging and presenting relevant information;
- researching different information systems (for example, CD-ROMs, the Internet, videos, journals and reference books); and
- keeping details about client enquiries using databases (client tracking).

You need to understand:

- the importance of up-to-date information;
- the legal and regulatory conditions relating to the use of information; and
- the reasons for maintaining the security and confidentiality of information.

You will also need to know about the advantages and disadvantages of a number of different kinds of information, including:

- local information;
- statistical information;
- market research;
- in-house or online databases, business directories and guides;
- information on companies and products; and
- legislation (for example, Employment Law, Health and Safety Law, business taxation, environmental protection, intellectual property, international trade).

You will also need to know about the services provided by organisations that undertake commissioned research.

Information and communications technology [ICT]

You will need to develop methods and techniques for making the most of:

- word-processing, spreadsheet and database packages; and
- e-mail, intranets and the Internet.

Giving information and advice

Common Core standards

Client information needs

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- providing information and help;
- responding to frequently-asked questions from clients; and
- dealing with the enquiry in a way that satisfies the client.

You will also need to know about:

- your clients' business operations;
- your clients' personal and business objectives and needs; and
- the kinds of issues that face small and medium-sized businesses;

so that you can respond to client business needs.

Providing information services

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- customer service;
- maintaining the security and confidentiality of information; and
- providing a 'seamless service' of support to clients. (This means the information is relayed to the client through a number of people without the client having to repeat their question.)

You need to follow any guidelines set by your organisation or professional body for providing information services about:

- ethics, values and professional standards;
- equal opportunities, diversity and social inclusion;
- changes in the way services are provided, information and legislation;
- the limitations of your role, your responsibilities and any relevant contractual obligations;
- funding and other support available to the client;
- using information management systems;
- health and safety;
- invoicing systems, pricing and credit-control policies; and
- procedures for quality assurance and handling complaints.

You will also need to know about:

- the range of available business support services;
- roles and responsibilities within your organisation; and
- alternative courses of action and forms of support.

Problem solving

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- defining problems;
- identifying goals and targets;
- assessing advantages;
- making choices within an agreed plan;
- deciding what resources are needed; and
- setting deadlines and timescales.

4

Work with clients to give them the information they need

Giving information and advice

Common Core standards

Work with clients to give them the information they need

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

4.1 Find out what your client needs

- a Ask questions that allow you to understand what your clients need, and decide upon the services that will help them the most.
- b Recognise that clients' stated needs may not be their real needs.
- c Ask for advice and guidance if you do not understand the client's business.

4.2 Reach agreement with clients about how their information needs will be met

- a Offer a range of support options that are likely to meet the client's needs.
- b Help clients to review appropriate options and select those that are most likely to meet their needs.
- c Agree action plans, costs and timescales with clients.
- d Agree any changes to action plans with clients when they are needed to improve the service.

4.3 Research and present clients with the information they need

- a Efficiently identify a range of sources likely to meet the client's needs.
- b Carry out any searches for information in a way that follows legal, regulatory and organisational guidelines.
- c Decide on which information sources are most likely to be relevant and appropriate for the client.
- d Give clients the information they need to benefit their business.
- e Make sure that the information you give to clients is accurate, relevant and up to date.
- f Present information to clients in a way that helps them make decisions.
- g Encourage clients to assess the usefulness and suitability of the information you provide, and to ask for any extra help they may need.

4.4 Help clients to get extra information and support

- a Correctly identify where clients may be better helped by getting extra support from other organisations or more specialist support services.
- b Give clients accurate information about other sources of advice and help.
- c Explain to clients what other support your organisation can provide.
- d Help the client to make contact with other support organisations.
- e End the relationship in a way that makes it possible for the client to contact you for support in the future.

Summary

What this is about

This is about working with clients to help them meet their needs and achieve their objectives. You need to be able to give advice to clients on all stages of business practice (from preparing to start-up a business through to business growth). It involves:

- helping clients to work out where they are now, and where they want to be;
- reviewing the client's business and agreeing ways of helping them to meet their objectives); and
- supporting clients during any changes or improvements to their business.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you provide advice to businesses by:

- investigating a client's personal needs and business objectives;
- reaching agreement with the client about which support options would be suitable and arranging for them to be provided;
- giving feedback and advice to clients about their aims; and
- working with clients to improve their ability to compete with other businesses.

The main topics

When you advise clients to help them meet their business needs, you will need to do the following.

- 5.1 Help clients to work out their business needs and objectives
- 5.2 Review the client's business and help clients choose from the options available.
- 5.3 Give feedback to clients.
- 5.4 Reach agreement with clients over what course of action they should take.

What your work involves

You need to advise clients to help them meet their business needs in a way that meets the national standard. You will need to show your ability to work with different types of client, for example:

- business start-ups;
- existing businesses;
- businesses that hope to develop and expand;
- clients who are linked to your organisation;
- different types of business (such as sole traders, partnerships, limited companies, social enterprises and non-profit-making organisations);
- owner managers, partners, senior managers or directors of companies; and
- individuals and groups.

For a generalist adviser, this would involve looking at the whole business. For a specialist adviser, this will mean only looking at their area of expertise.

These activities may overlap with those in sections 2 and 7.

5

Help clients to meet their business needs

Giving information and advice

Common Core standards

Help clients to meet their business needs

What you need to know and understand

If you want to help clients meet their business needs, you must understand and apply each of the following.

Communication and interpersonal skills

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- dealing with clients;
- building long-term relationships;
- listening and questioning;
- interviewing, negotiation and presentation;
- giving, receiving and passing on feedback; and
- dealing with difficulties and keeping conflict and difference to a minimum.

You also need to know about the benefits and drawbacks of different kinds of communication (such as face-to-face contact, phone, fax, and e-mail).

Diagnostic techniques

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- carrying out an initial assessment of client needs;
- collecting data about business performance;
- evaluating problems and opportunities;
- financial appraisal;
- risk assessment; and
- passing business reviews on to your clients in a clear and understandable way.

You will also need to know about:

- the benefits and drawbacks of using different diagnostic techniques;
- common problems and opportunities; and
- the involvement of particular people within the client's business and your organisation.

About the client's business

You will need to know about:

- the client's business operations and processes;
- the strategy, structure and shared values of the client's business;
- the client's situation and business aims; and
- the client's personal culture and business objectives, needs, general capabilities and particular strengths, and (where appropriate) those of their stakeholders.

Giving information and advice

Common Core standards

Business performance

You need to develop methods, techniques and business strategies for:

- building support for policies, strategies and plans;
- improving competitiveness;
- drawing your client's attention to the benefits and drawbacks of different kinds of competition; and
- clearly defining business objectives, actions, organisational structures, roles and responsibilities.

You will need to know about:

- business performance indicators;
- the importance of market appraisal, correct pricing and evaluating the different types of products offered (product mix);
- cash flow forecasts and survival planning;
- profit and loss accounts, balance sheets and cash flow statements;
- business, financial and legal rules and methods;
- what makes a business plan a practical and useful management tool;
- trends and developments that may affect the client's business;
- any outside factors that could affect business performance (such as consumer demand, new technology or government legislation); and
- extra sources of information and advice that may help your client.

Key areas of business advice

You need to know about methods, techniques and business strategies for:

- finance and accounting;
- ICT and e-commerce;
- managing people;
- designing business identity and products;
- maintaining activities using new technologies and traditional methods;
- exporting goods and services;
- environmental management; and
- marketing and sales.

Problem solving

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- identifying possible problems and opportunities;
- monitoring and evaluating progress; and
- evaluating the benefits and drawbacks of different decisions.

You will also need to know about:

- the most suitable options and the options most appropriate to specific issues;
- the impact of different forces or limits;
- possible barriers to achieving solutions; and
- dealing with problems and difficulties that may exist in achieving solutions for the client.

5

Help clients to meet their business needs

Giving information and advice

Common Core standards

Help clients to meet their business needs

Action planning

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- planning, setting objectives and deciding what is important;
- alternative implementation strategies;
- overcoming obstacles, barriers to achievement and challenges;
- contingency planning and risk assessment; and
- risk-benefit comparisons.

You will also need to know about the importance of:

- identifying and setting goals and targets for each stage of the action plan; and
- identifying resources and timescales.

Providing business advice

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- developing clients' self-confidence;
- combining and co-ordinating business support; and
- planning, time management and effective delegation.

You must follow any guidelines set by your organisation or professional body for providing advisory services about:

- client service and confidentiality;
- ethics, values and professional standards;
- equal opportunities, diversity and social inclusion;
- changes in the way you provide services, information and legislation;
- the limitations of your role and responsibilities and any relevant contractual obligations;
- funding and other support available to the client;
- your organisation's policy, strategy and service options;
- health and safety;
- using information management systems;
- invoicing systems, pricing and credit-control policies; and
- procedures for quality assurance and handling complaints.

You will also need to know about:

- the dynamics of business advice relationships; and
- the limits of your own skills and knowledge.

Information and communications technology [ICT]

You need to develop methods and techniques for making the most of:

- word-processing, spreadsheet and database packages; and
- e-mail, intranets and the Internet.

Giving information and advice

Common Core standards

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

5.1 Help clients to work out their business needs and objectives

- a Help your clients seek and share information, views and concerns freely.
- b Help clients to explain their current business position, and analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) that may affect their business.
- c Help clients to evaluate their current situation using established measures and rules.
- d Help clients get any extra information and advice they need to review their business.
- e Help clients to set practical, specific and challenging personal and business objectives for the short-, medium- and longer-term.
- f Help clients to identify any problems or opportunities.

5.2 Review the client's business and help clients choose from the options available

- a Review the client's business performance and use the findings to make a fair evaluation of the client's objectives.
- b Consult the client about which parts of their business activities would benefit from change.
- c Encourage clients to consider if proposed changes will help them meet their business and personal objectives.
- d Help clients to evaluate the risks, benefits and outside factors involved in each proposed change so that they can make informed decisions.
- e Help clients to put the changes in order, so that urgent problems are dealt with first.
- f Make sure the client understands what may be involved in achieving the results they would like.

5.3 Give feedback to clients

- a Give clients advice and information that is appropriate to their business.
- b Present advice and information to clients in a way that helps them make decisions.
- c Build clients' commitment and confidence in developing and running their business successfully.
- d Help clients to make changes to their business by providing accurate information and challenging their ideas.
- e Encourage clients to adopt a strategic (long-term) view about how to achieve their goals.
- f Give clients advice that is up-to-date, legal, ethical and relevant to their business and their needs.
- g Ask for support from specialists when you are not sure what to do.
- h Introduce clients to specialists if they are needed.

5 Help clients to meet their business needs

Giving information and advice

Common Core standards

Help clients to meet their business needs

Reach agreement with clients over what course of action they should take

- a Help your client to develop an action plan, set short-term goals and organise work so that it is dealt with in order of importance.
- b Make sure your client is committed to undertaking the agreed action plan and gaining support from other people involved.
- c Help clients to work out what resources will be needed, where they will come from and how they will be used.
- d Help clients to clearly define the roles and responsibilities needed to manage or carry out the action plan.
- e Identify anything that may affect the results of the action plan with your client.
- f Help clients to monitor the action plan and make realistic decisions about the possibility of achieving their objectives.
- g Help clients to consult with and convince the people who will have to carry out the action plan.
- h Make sure that the agreed action plan includes the review points and your role in the process.
- i Encourage the client during the action plan by contributing any extra support or information agreed.

Develop your ability to provide business information

Summary

What this is about

This is about reviewing and improving your performance. It involves:

- developing and maintaining your skills in researching business information;
- keeping up to date with developments in business information, and identifying how these may affect the support services you provide to clients;
- monitoring your performance to make sure that it meets professional standards; and
- taking whatever action is necessary to meet your professional development needs.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- want or need to check your ability and performance against national standards;
- want to keep up to date with developments affecting business practice and business information services; and
- want or need to develop your skills and expertise.

The main topics

When you develop your ability to provide business information, you will need to do the following.

- 6.1 Develop business research and information handling skills.
- 6.2 Keep up to date with any new developments.
- 6.3 Monitor your work activity.
- 6.4 Develop your professional skills and performance.

What your work involves

You need to develop your ability to provide business information so that it meets the national standard. You will need to show:

- that you have an approved level of knowledge about business information;
- that you can work with new and established businesses; and
- you have improved your skills and expertise through recognised review processes.

These activities may overlap with those in sections 1 and 4.

Professional development

Develop your ability to provide business information

What you need to know and understand

If you want to develop your ability to provide business information, you need to understand and use each of the following.

Research and information handling

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- collecting and studying secondary data (information that has been researched by others);
- interpreting measurements and surveys (such as surveys of market activity, client needs);
- knowing and using different searches to find enough accurate information; and
- using different kinds of information systems (for example, CD-Roms, the Internet, videos, journals and reference books).

You will also need to know about:

- the principles of effective desk-based research;
- the importance of checking for bias, validity and reliability; and
- the legal and regulatory requirements for the use of information.

Information sources

You will also need to know how to get information from a wide range of sources and about the advantages and disadvantages of those sources, for example:

- local information;
- statistical information;
- market research;
- the Internet;
- in-house or online databases, business directories and guides; information on companies and products; and
- legislation (for example, Employment Law, Health and Safety Law, business taxation, environmental protection, intellectual property, international trade).

You will also need to know about the services provided by organisations that undertake commissioned research.

Performance monitoring techniques

You need to understand informal and formal methods, techniques and processes for:

- monitoring conduct;
- reviewing the performance of staff in your organisation; and
- self-appraisal (evaluating your own performance).

You will also need to know about:

- the reasons for monitoring business support activity;
- the limitations of self-appraisal;
- how performance can be affected by the type of client and their business needs; and
- any performance goals set by your organisation.

Classifications and layout

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- the layout and structuring of information; and
- using computer and machine-based systems.

Ethical and professional considerations

You need to follow any guidelines set by your organisation or professional body for information services, about:

- ethics, values and standards of good practice; and
- client service and confidentiality.

Personal action planning

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- improving your practice generally, or in particular areas;
- setting objectives; and
- planning actions.

You will also need to know about:

- the reasons for continuing professional development [CPD];
- your strengths and weaknesses;
- the advantages and disadvantages of different types of development activities; and
- the way your organisation works (including resources, objectives, targets and training and development budget).

Improving your performance

You need to develop methods and techniques for improving your knowledge and experience about providing business information, and how small businesses work (in general or in particular areas). You will also need to know about:

- different personal development activities (for example, using advice from mentors or seeking more opportunity to practise); and
- opportunities for training and development (for example, attending conferences, workshops or masterclasses, undertaking work placements or joining specialist groups).

Information and communications technology [ICT]

You need to develop methods and techniques for using computer-based:

- planning tools; and
- training and development (for example, on line, CD-Rom, intranet). You will also need to know about the limitations of ICT in training and development.

Develop your ability to provide business information

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

6.1 Develop business research and information handling skills

- a Make sure your research methods demonstrate an acceptable level of skill and understanding, in line with confidentiality, health and safety procedures and the law.
- b Maintain an acceptable level of knowledge about a wide range of information sources that are likely to be helpful to new and established small businesses.
- c Understand how to check that information is likely to meet clients' particular needs.

6.2 Keep up to date with any new developments

- a Monitor and review new areas of information that may be relevant to small businesses.
- b Identify the effects, benefits and limitations of using ICT in business information services.
- c Identify how changes to legislation or advisory regulations, that apply to business activities, may affect the business information you provide.
- d Identify how national schemes, or changes to the way your organisation works, may affect how you provide business information.
- e Make sure that you have the best available information, given the time and cost available.
- f Keep colleagues, contacts and clients informed about what you find, and how it affects support services.

6.3 Monitor your work activity

- a Make the best use of your organisation's procedures for contacting and assessing possible clients.
- b Make sure that the service you deliver to clients is the service you agreed to deliver.
- c Monitor your performance to check that you behave ethically and professionally towards clients.
- d Make sure that any problems with client confidentiality are dealt with so they are not repeated in the future.
- e Use your strengths and weaknesses to your own advantage.
- f Use feedback from others, and self-appraisal, to identify your development needs and areas for improvement.

6.4 Develop your professional skills and performance

- a Identify the skills you need to work effectively with clients and other people.
- b Identify opportunities, costs, timescales and targets for training and development within your organisation's objectives.
- c Agree a personal action plan that identifies what you need to do to maintain and develop your role.
- d Review your progress against your objectives, and update your action plan to include new aims or achievements.
- e Spend time on training and development that improves the quality of your work and the services you provide to clients.
- f Change the way you work in line with any changes in business practice and how business support is provided.
- g Share your knowledge and experience with others, as appropriate.

Summary

What this is about

This is about reviewing and improving your performance. It involves:

- developing and maintaining your skills in the key areas of business;
- keeping up to date with developments in business practice, and identifying how these may affect the support service you provide to clients;
- monitoring the development of your performance to make sure that it meets professional standards; and
- taking whatever action is necessary to meet your professional development needs.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- want or need to check your ability and performance against national standards;
- want to keep up to date with developments affecting business practice and business advisory services; and
- want or need to develop your skills and expertise.

The main topics

When you develop your ability to provide business advice, you will need to do the following.

- 7.1 Develop a general business knowledge base.
- 7.2 Keep up to date with any new developments in all key areas.
- 7.3 Monitor your work activity.
- 7.4 Develop your professional skills and performance.

What your work involves

You need to develop your ability to provide business advice so that it meets the national standard. You will need to show:

- that you have an approved level of knowledge about business advice;
- that you can work with new and established businesses; and
- you have improved your skills and expertise through recognised review processes.

These activities may overlap with those in sections 2 and 5.



Develop your ability to provide business advice

Professional development

Common Core standards

Develop your ability to provide business advice

What you need to know and understand

If you want to develop your ability to provide business advice, you need to understand and apply each of the following.

Key areas of business advice

You need to develop methods, techniques and business strategies for:

- finance and accounting;
- ICT and e-commerce;
- managing people;
- designing business identity and products;
- maintaining activities using new technologies and traditional methods;
- exporting goods and services;
- environmental management; and
- marketing and sales.

You will also need to know about the effects of a range of issues, including:

- political and social;
- economic; and
- geographical (for example, local, regional, national and international).

Performance monitoring techniques

You need to understand informal and formal methods, techniques and processes for:

- monitoring conduct;
- reviewing the performance of staff in your organisation; and
- self-appraisal (evaluating your own performance).

You will also need to know about:

- the reasons for monitoring business support activity;
- the limitations of self-appraisal;
- how performance can be affected by the type of client and their business needs; and
- any performance goals set by your organisation.

Ethical and professional considerations

You need to follow any guidelines provided by your organisation or professional body for business advice services, about:

- ethics, values and standards of good practice; and
- client service and confidentiality.

Personal action planning

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- improving your practice generally, or in particular areas;
- setting objectives; and
- planning actions.

You will also need to know about:

- the reasons for continuing professional development [CPD];
- your strengths and weaknesses;
- the advantages and disadvantages of different types of development activities; and
- the way your organisation works (including resources, objectives, targets and training and development budget).

Improving your performance

You need to develop methods and techniques for improving your knowledge and experience about providing business advice, and how small businesses work (in general or particular areas). You will also need to know about:

- different personal development activities (for example, using advice from mentors or seeking more opportunity to practise); and
- opportunities for training and development (for example, attending conferences, workshops or masterclasses, undertaking work placements or joining specialist groups).

Information and communications technology [ICT]

You need to develop methods and techniques for using computer-based:

- planning tools; and
- training and development (for example, on line, CD-Rom, intranet).

You will also need to know about the limitations of ICT in training and development.

**Develop your
ability to
provide
business advice**

Develop your ability to provide business advice

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

7.1 Develop a general business knowledge base

- a Maintain an acceptable level of knowledge and understanding of all key areas of business advice.
- b Maintain an acceptable level of understanding of the basic issues in each key area.
- c Maintain an acceptable level of understanding about how the basic issues relate to new and established businesses.

7.2 Keep up to date with any new developments in all key areas

- a Monitor and review information on trends and developments in all key areas of business practice that may affect small businesses.
- b Identify the effects, benefits and limitations of using ICT in business activities and business support services.
- c Identify the things that may affect key areas of business practice.
- d Plan for possible opportunities and changes in the market that may affect your clients.
- e Make sure that you have the best available information, given the time and cost available.
- f Keep colleagues, contacts and clients informed about what you find, and how it affects support services.

7.3 Monitor your work activity

- a Make the best use of your organisation's procedures for contacting and taking on possible clients.
- b Make sure that the service you deliver to clients is the service you agreed to deliver.
- c Monitor your performance to check that you behave ethically and professionally towards clients.
- d Make sure that any problems with client confidentiality are dealt with so they are not repeated in the future.
- e Use your strengths and weaknesses to your own advantage.
- f Use feedback from others, and self-appraisal, to identify your development needs and areas for improvement.

7.4 Develop your professional skills and performance

- a Identify the skills you need to work effectively with clients and other people.
- b Identify opportunities, costs, timescales and targets for training and development within your organisations objectives.
- c Agree a personal action plan that identifies what you need to do to maintain and develop your role.
- d Review your progress against your objectives and update your action plan to include new aims or achievements.
- e Spend time on training and development that improves the quality of your work and the services you provide to clients.
- f Change the way you work in line with any changes in business practice and how business support is provided.
- g Share knowledge and experience with others, as appropriate.

Summary

What this is about

This is about organising information and other material (eg printed, recorded and filmed material). It involves:

- classifying information and material, allocating information and material to appropriate classes;
- selecting and creating appropriate classification notations;
- entering information and material onto the system; and
- cataloguing information and material.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you organise information and material within your working environment.

The main topics

When you organise information and material you will need to do the following.

- 8.1 Classify information and material.
- 8.2 Catalogue information and material.

What your work involves

To organise information and material to meet the national standard you will need to show you can classify two of the following types of information and material:

- printed material, such as books and journals;
- recorded material, such as audio tapes, videos and CDs; or
- filmed material such as microfiches or filmed images.

You will also need to show you can:

- select or create at least one of the following types of notations:
 - location marks;
 - class numbers; or
 - names; and
 - use manual or electronic systems.

You will need to answer questions about those things listed that you do not actually show you can do.

Key Words

Classification notations

The convention used in your organisation to assign a unique identifier (or identifiers) to a record. They may be manual or electronic.

Classify

To assign a thing to a category, usually within a system.

Where this unit is from

This is the same as unit IL3/5 from the Information and Library Service Standards.

Organise information and material

What you need to know and understand

If you want to organise information and material you need to understand and use each of the following.

Classification

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- distinguishing between overall and subsidiary subject matters;
- allocating information/material to classes;
- selecting appropriate classification notations; and
- creating classification notations.

You will also need to know:

- how the information classified is likely to be used; and
- about types of user groups the organisation serves.

Cataloguing

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- determining the priority and relevance of material;
- integrating records onto the system; and
- finding existing records.

You will also need to understand how to use:

- the cataloguing standards used by your organisation; and
- local applications for cataloguing standards.

Organise information and material

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

8.1 Classify information and material

- a Determine overall and subsidiary subject matters accurately.
- b Allocate information and material to appropriate classes within the system.
- c Select appropriate classification notations.
- d When required, create appropriate classification notations.

8.2 Catalogue information and material

- a Check information and material against any existing record.
- b Enter information and material onto the system in accordance with local application of prescribed standards.
- c Catalogue information and material in accordance with its priority and relevance.
- d Integrate the new record into existing system.

Summary

What this is about

This is about indexing information and materials for use in business information services. It involves:

- identifying the purpose of the index;
- collecting the information needed for the index;
- analysing and describing the information;
- grouping information into the patterns or fields which comprise the index;
- using appropriate conventions to classify, order and cross-reference the information;
- organising the entries for use;
- checking the index for consistency;
- editing it for currency; and
- establishing a procedure for updating the index.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this you are responsible for creating indexes. This includes stand alone indexes and indexes in publications.

The main topics

When you index information you will need to do the following.

- 9.1 Identify and locate information.
- 9.2 Analyse and describe information.
- 9.3 Arrange information into an entry.
- 9.4 Arrange entries into an index.

What your work involves

To index information to meet the national standard you will need to show your ability to work with at least two of the following:

- a stand alone index on paper;
- a stand alone index in card form;
- a stand alone index which is a database on a computer; or
- an index which is part of a publication, or set of publications.

You will need to show you can identify and locate information by at least three of the following:

- the range of users of the index;
- the availability (to users) of relevant indexes elsewhere;
- the space to be taken up by the index;
- the format for the index; or
- a specification for the index prepared by someone else.

Organising information

Index Information

You will also need to show you can form and assign index terms by at least two of the following:

- assigning them from a prescribed list;
- taking them from pre-existing formulations;
- deriving them from the text; or
- forming them to meet the needs of users.

You will need to show you can arrange information into an entry by:

- grouping the elements of the entry either into patterns or fields;
- using different types of locator by at least one of the following:
- volume/document number, page number, column number, image number, document or file reference number and electronic reference); and
- using the required conventions for entries to do with layout, font type, size and style and punctuation.

You will need to show you can arrange entries into an index by:

- organising entries in at least two of the following ways:
- alphabetically;
- numerically; or
- hierarchically;
- using the required conventions for indexes to do with layout, font type, size and style and punctuation; and
- producing explanatory notes about at least three of the following:
- coverage;
- arrangement;
- terminology; or
- the use of abbreviations and what they are, how to access the index and typographical features.

You will need to answer questions about those things listed that you do not actually show you can do.

Key words

Elements

The parts of an entry in the index, such as the title of a document, its author, publishing history, provenance, manufacture, cross-references, and so on.

Expression of an entry

The information about the entry in the index and the way it is presented (its format).

Information

The information to be entered into the index.

Where this unit is from

This is the same as unit IL3/6 from the Information and Library Service Standards.

What you need to know and understand

If you want to Index information you need to understand and use each of the following.

Planning indexes

You need to know why indexes are used and who will use them. You need to know how:

- to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information; and
- this index relates to others in the organisation.

You also need to understand what:

- typical purposes indexes serve;
- the subject matter of the information to be indexed is; and
- typical formats can be used for indexes.

Forming indexes and assigning index terms

You need to know why it is necessary to derive concepts as a basis for indexing. You need to know how:

- to identify concepts;
- to form index terms; and
- to verify the clarity and consistency of index terms.

You also need to understand what:

- use the index will have
- the subject matter of the indexed information is;
- degree of cross-referencing is appropriate; and
- are the recognised standards for citations relevant to the particular index.

Creating entries

You need to know why you should use indexing standards, guidelines for the citation of references, a thesaurus and approved presentation conventions. You need to know how:

- to group elements in an entry;
- to use a thesaurus;
- to check for consistency; and
- to create the presentation required.

You will also need to understand what:

- use the index will have;
- the subject matter of the indexed information is;
- locators to use;
- degree of cross-referencing is appropriate;
- the recognised standards for citations relevant to the particular index are; and
- guidelines to use.

Index Information

Organising entries

You need to know why:

- indexes are used
- it essential to check the internal consistency of the index
- the index may need updating or extension (and when)

You need to know how:

- to check that the index is up-to-date, consistent and that it complies with conventions
- to compose explanatory notes and guidance

You also need to understand what:

- users' needs for the index are
- conventions should be used for the particular index

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

9.1 Identify and locate information

- a Accurately identify the factors which determine the scope and range of uses of the index.
- b Carefully assess the information available for the index for its relevance and significance.
- c Accurately identify and discard information which is not significant.
- d Note accurately the precise location of information to be included in the index.
- e Note accurately for later use any factors which affect the organisation of the index, and which you identify as you assess the information.

9.2 Analyse and describe information

- a Clearly describe the information within the context of the discipline concerned.
- b Clearly differentiate major from minor references.
- c Derive appropriate concepts from an accurate and thorough analysis of the subject field and the context of the information.
- d Select terminology appropriate to the subject matter, consistent with recognised standards and relevant to the uses to which the index will be put, in order to form index terms to represent concepts.
- e Assign index terms so that they logically relate to the purpose of the index.
- f Clearly indicate relationships between your index by correct cross-references.
- g Record your decisions systematically.
- h Verify that your selected index terms are unambiguous and consistent in representing the concepts.

9.3 Arrange information into an entry

- a Select appropriate criteria from grouping the elements of each entry.
- b Group the elements consistently within and across entries, by applying the selected criteria.
- c Check that, once grouped, the information is clear and presented consistently.
- d Synthesise and organise headings and sub-headings insistently.
- e Include the correct locator(s) and all the relevant information for each entry.
- f Correctly apply appropriate indexing standards and guidelines for the citation of references.
- g Select and use an appropriate thesaurus.
- h Apply correctly the convention required by your organisation for the presentation of the information.

9.4 Arrange entries into an index

- a Organise the entries so that they meet users' needs.
- b Check the complete index for internal consistency.
- c Check that the required conventions for presenting the information are used throughout.
- d Check that the terminology and information in the index is current, and that the way it is expressed is transparent to users.
- e Promptly update any terminology or information which is not current.
- f Improve the expression of any entry the meaning of which is not transparent to users.
- g Write clear and accurate explanatory notes and guidance for the users.
- h Identify accurately and install promptly procedures for updating and adding to the index

Summary

What this is about

This is about creating new materials to preserve information about business practice. It involves:

- identifying the requirements for new material, establishing the cost and research required;
- planning for any restrictions on the use of information;
- collecting and evaluating information;
- recording the provenance of information; and
- creating new records in a suitable format within timescales and budgets.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this you preserve information by creating new material.

The main topics

When you create new materials to preserve information you will need to do the following.

10.1 Identify requirements for new material.

10.2 Collect and evaluate information.

10.3 Create records of new information.

What your work involves

To create new materials to preserve information to meet the national standard you will need to show your ability to identify requirements for new material, by:

- creating records in different formats in at least one of the following ways:
 - photograph;
 - written on paper;
 - microform;
 - via database; or
 - and scanned;
- identifying and planning for different restrictions of at least two of the following:
 - time;
 - copyright;
 - commercial confidentiality;
 - data protection legislation; or
 - personal sensitivity.

You will need to show you can collect and evaluate information, by identifying doubtful information with regard to currency, accuracy, bias and relevance.

You will also need to show you can make records for present and future users.

You will need to answer questions about those things listed that you do not actually show you can do.

Key words

New information

Information which will meet user's requirements, and which does not already exist in your organisation's collection or database. The information may be held in a manual or electronic record.

Doubtful information

Information which:

- 1 may not be of relevance to users;
- 2 may be questionable as to its accuracy or authenticity; and
- 3 may be superseded by other information in the near future.

Where this unit is from

This is the same as unit IL3/7 from the Information and Library Service Standards.

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Create new material to preserve information

Organising information

Additional Units

Create new material to preserve information

What you need to know and understand

If you want to create new material to preserve information you need to understand and use each of the following.

Requirements for new materials

You need to know what:

- the organisation's standards are for recording information; and
- groups will use the new material and their needs, and how the balance between future and present needs will affect this.

You will need to understand how:

- copyright law affects the creation of new material;
- data protection legislation affects the creation of new material;
- to establish the cost and research required to create new material;
- to determine the format of record creation; and
- to organise information for use and preservation.

Creating records

You need to know:

- what copyright implications there are for any format change; and
- how to use the appropriate equipment for the format of the record.

You need also need to understand why it is important to complete the record within timescales and budget.

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

10.1 Identify requirements for new material

- a Identify and analyse the need for new material
- b Establish the cost and research required to create new material.
- c Determine the format of record creation in accordance with available resources and suitability for preservation.
- d Identify and plan for any restrictions on use of information.
- e Ensure that all activity is within the organisation's policy on data collection and storage.

10.2 Collect and evaluate information

- a Gather information which is appropriate to users' needs.
- b Organise information appropriately for use and preservation.
- c Identify any doubtful information clearly.
- d Record the provenance of information appropriately.

10.3 Create records of new information

- a Complete the record within necessary time and budget.
- b Ensure that the record is as permanent as possible and necessary.
- c Ensure that the record covers all details required within the organisation's established practice.
- d Ensure that the record is in the format most suitable for users' needs.
- e Allocate a unique identifier where appropriate.

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Create new material to preserve information

Summary

What this is about

This is about the part of your job that involves solving immediate customer service problems. It is also about changing systems to avoid repeated customer service problems. It involves:

- delivering and organising excellent customer service; and
- spotting and solving other problems before your customers even know about them.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- deal with customer problems; and
- seek to impress customers by sorting out those problems efficiently and effectively.

The main topics

When you monitor and solve customer service problems you will need to do the following.

- 11.1 Solve immediate customer service problems.
- 11.2 Identify repeated customer service problems and options for solving them
- 11.3 Take action to avoid the repetition of customer service problems.

What your work involves

To monitor and solve customer service problems to meet the national standard you will need to show your ability to solve problems from customers who are internal or external to your organisation or a combination of both. The problems you solve will be:

- identified by your customers;
- identified first by you and/or by your colleagues;
- a difference between customer expectations and the products or services of your organisation;
- a problem resulting from system or procedure failures; and
- a problem resulting from a shortage of resources or human error.

You must show you can solve problems using:

- formal organisational procedures; and
- agreed/authorised exceptions to usual practice.

When you note repeated problems you may use a company system or one you have set up.

You must show that you have considered the options for solving problems from your customer and the organisation's point of view.

All options you have considered must be based on the existing products or services offered by your organisation unless specifically agreed by a manager.

These activities may overlap with those in unit 1.

Where this unit is from

This is the same as unit CS3/4 from the Customer Service Standards.

Monitor and solve customer service problems

Customer service

Additional Units

Monitor and solve customer service problems

What you need to know and understand

If you want to monitor and solve customer service problems you need to understand and use each of the following.

Context of your organisation

You will need to show that you are aware of the position of your organisation in the wider context. You will be expected to show you recognise:

- the major competitors of your organisation;
- the effects of legislation on the performance of your organisation;
- the implications of a change of structure, products or services for your organisation; and
- the implications of other market place activities on your organisation. Organisations policy and working practices

You need to follow guidelines, policy and procedures set by your organisation about:

- what your customers' rights are and how these rights limit what you are able to do for your customer;
- the specific aspects of:
 - health and safety;
 - protection;
 - equal opportunities;
 - disability discrimination; and
 - legislation and regulations that affect the way the products or services you deal with can be delivered to your customers.
- industry, organisational and professional codes of practice and ethical standards;
- any contractual agreements that your customers have with your organisation;
- the products or services of your organisation relevant to your customer service role;
- the guidelines laid down by your organisation that limit what you can do within your job;
- the limits of your own authority and when you need to seek agreement with or permission from others;
- any organisational targets relevant to your job, your role in meeting them and the implications for your organisation if those targets are not met; and
- how to communicate in a clear, polite, confident way and why this is important.

Solving customer problems

You need to follow procedures and systems set by your organisation for dealing with customer service problems. You also need to understand how:

- the successful resolution of customer service problems contributes to customer loyalty with the external customer and improved working relationships with the internal customer; and
- to negotiate with and reassure customers while their problems are being solved.

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

Solve immediate customer service problems

- a Respond positively to customers' problems according to organisational guidelines.
- b Solve customer problems when it is within your own area of authority.
- c Work with others to solve customers' problems.
- d Keep customers informed of the action being taken.
- e Check with customers that they are satisfied with the action taken.
- f Solve problems within service systems and procedures that might affect customers before they become aware of them.
- g Inform the appropriate authority and colleagues of the steps taken to solve specific problems.

Identify repeated customer service problems and options for solving them

- a Work individually or with colleagues to identify repeated customer service problems.
- b Identify the options for dealing with repeated problems and consider the advantages and disadvantages of each option.
- c Work with others to determine an agreed way forward for solving repeated problems.
- d Select the best option for both your customers and your organisation.

Take action to avoid the repetition of customer service problems

- a Negotiate with the appropriate authority changes to customer service systems and procedures that will reduce the chance of problems being repeated.
- b Action your agreed solution.
- c Keep your customers informed in a positive and clear manner of steps being taken to solve any service problems.
- d Monitor the solutions you have implemented and make any suitable changes to ensure that no further problems occur.
- e Action changes to customer service systems and procedures brought in by your organisation.

Monitor and solve customer service problems

Summary

What this is about

This unit is about the key competence of the customer service professional – organising and seeing through change that is sustainable and is in the spirit of continuous improvement in customer service. This involves:

- identifying potential changes,
- thinking through their consequences
- making them work.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you are dedicated to the continuous improvement of customer service and this involves organising changes in service.

The main topics

When you promote continuous improvement, you will need to do the following.

- 12.1 Plan improvements in customer service based on customer feedback.
- 12.2 Implement changes in customer service.
- 12.3 Review changes that promote continuous improvement.

What your work involves

To promote continuous improvement to meet the national standard you will need to show you can respond to customers in your workplace. Your customers can be internal or external to the organisation or a combination of both. You must also show that you have organised changes that have resulted in sustainable continuous improvement to your customers, lasting over a period of time. Your proposals for improvements need to be:

- based on planned and analysed customer feedback;
- take into account all relevant regulations; and
- take into account the costs to the organisation.

You may carry out this work alone or with colleagues. However you must show that you have taken a leading and active role in:

- collecting and analysing feedback;
- proposing initiatives for change;
- implementing the change; and
- evaluating and reviewing the change.

The changes that you propose and initiate may be changes:

- in how products or services are supplied; or
- in how you and your colleagues behave when delivering products or services.

These activities may overlap with those in core section 1.

Where this unit is from

This is the same as unit CS3/5 from the Customer Service Standards.

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Promote continuous improvement

Customer service

Additional Units

Promote continuous improvement

What you need to know and understand

If you want to promote continuous improvement you need to understand and use each of the following.

Context of your organisation

You will need to show that you are aware of the position of your organisation in the wider context. You will be expected to show you recognise:

- the major competitors of your organisation;
- the effects of legislation on the performance of your organisation;
- the implications of a change of structure, products or services for your organisation; and
- the implications of other market place activities on your organisation.
Organisational policy and working practices

You need to follow guidelines, policy and procedures set by your organisation about:

- what your customers' rights are and how these rights limit what you are able to do for your customer;
the specific aspects of:
 - health and safety;
 - protection;
 - equal opportunities;
 - disability discrimination; and
 - legislation and regulations that affect the way the products or services you deal with can be delivered to your customers.
- industry, organisational and professional codes of practice and ethical standards;
- any contractual agreements that your customers have with your organisation;
- the products or services of your organisation relevant to your customer service role;
- the guidelines laid down by your organisation that limit what you can do within your job;
- the limits of your own authority and when you need to seek agreement with or permission from others;
- any organisational targets relevant to your job, your role in meeting them and the implications for your organisation if those targets are not met; and
- how to communicate in a clear, polite, confident way and why this is important.

Improving customer service

You will also need to show that you know and understand:

- how service improvements in your area affect the balance between overall customer satisfaction, the costs of providing service and regulatory requirements;
- how customer experience is influenced by the way service is delivered;
- how to collect, analyse and present customer feedback; and
- how to make a business case to others to bring about change in the products or services you offer.

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

12.1 Plan improvements in customer service based on customer feedback

- a Plan ways of capturing customer feedback that will help you identify areas for improvement.
- b Gather feedback from customers.
- c Analyse feedback to identify opportunities to improve customer service.
- d Discuss with others the potential effects of any proposed changes for your customers and your organisation.
- e Agree improvements based on feedback with the appropriate authority.

12.2 Implement changes in customer service

- a Plan and organise the implementation of agreed changes.
- b Implement the changes according to organisational guidelines.
- c Inform appropriate people inside or outside your organisation of the changes made and the reasons for them.
- d Monitor early reactions to changes and make appropriate adjustments.

12.3 Review changes that promote continuous improvement

- a Collect and record feedback on the effects of the change.
- b Analyse feedback and share your findings on the effects of change with others.
- c Summarise the advantages and disadvantages of changes made by using your findings.
- d Use your evaluation of changes to identify opportunities for further improvement.
- e Present these opportunities to the appropriate person.

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Promote continuous improvement

Summary

What this is about

This unit is about designing interventions which will enable clients to improve their organisational performance. It is part of a group of units, contribute to the implementation of client interventions. It involves:

- planning and designing activities which will enable the client to improve their organisational performance;
- proposing interventions which enable the client organisation to develop, based on a clear analysis of the current position and the future requirements; and
- using technical expertise.

The interventions may be followed through by the management consultant or by the client organisation itself.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- action plan for and with clients to design programmes to improve their organisational performance;
- diagnose the nature and scope of activities required to achieve improvement; and
- develop detailed analysis of ways and means of putting action plans into practice.

The main topics

When you design interventions which contribute to improved client performance you will need to do the following.

13.1 Evaluate the extent and nature of the intervention needed.

13.2 Determine methods of achieving the objectives of the intervention.

What your work involves

To design interventions which contribute to improved client performance to meet the national standard you will need show you can evaluate the nature and extent of interventions, based on all of the following:

- gained internally from the client organisation;
- gained externally from the client organisation; and
- arising from specially commissioned research.

You will also need to be able to show that you can agree objectives in respect of each of the following objectives:

- customers and staff of the client organisation;
- other stakeholders with an interest in the client organisation;
- processes of operation and management within the client organisation;
- the impact of changes on customers and the market;
- profitability; and
- management and organisational structure.

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Design interventions which contribute to improved client performance

Helping clients improve their business

Additional Units

Design interventions which contribute to improved client performance

Key Words and Concepts

Existing methods

based on current best practice, own experience, in respect of organisational development; for business functions in respect of people, finance, processes, plant, equipment and materials.

Facts, information and data

internal and external; specially commissioned; confidential and non-confidential.

Interventions

the actions, systems and processes which will enable clients to achieve their objectives and to sustain that achievement.

Objectives

people, process, customer/market impact, profitability management and structure.

You must show you can assess interventions in respect of three of the following:

- processes;
- equipment and materials;
- finance; and
- people.

You must also show you can identify the potential for innovation and creativity in each of the following:

- problem solving;
- designing change; and
- implementing and managing change.

You must show that you can involve both of the following types of clients in the design of the implementation:

- customers and staff of the client organisation; and
- other stakeholders with an interest in the client organisation.

These activities may overlap with those in core section 5.

Where this unit is from

This is the same as unit MCI from the Management Consultants' Standards.

- The performance criteria can be found under the heading What you need to show.
- The knowledge requirements can be found under the heading What you need to know and understand.
- The evidence requirements can be found under the heading What your work involves.

Design interventions which contribute to improved client performance

What you need to know and understand

If you want to design interventions which contribute to improved client performance you need to understand and use each of the following.

Analysis and evaluation

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- analysing information both qualitatively and quantitatively and draw accurate conclusions (13.1, 13.2);
- assessing recommendations to check whether they are reliable (13.2);
- deciding on targets, standards and monitoring methods (13.1, 13.2); and
- diagnosing and analysing client problems using a variety of data gathering, problem solving and analytical techniques (13.1, 13.2).

You will need to understand the importance of:

- effective planning in the management of activities and change (13.1, 13.2); and
- effective management of resources to organisational performance (13.1, 13.2).

You will also need to understand:

- the principles of effective time and resource management and how to apply them for monitoring purposes (13.2);
- the principles and methods of quality assurance (13.2).

Health and safety

You will need to understand the importance of health and safety at work and your role and responsibilities in relation to this (13.1, 13.2).

Intervention design

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- designing interventions which are based on data gathered from relevant sources cell, (13.2)
- identifying potential obstacles to improvement and develop solutions (13.2)
- planning interventions and allocate roles and responsibilities (13.2)
- developing action plans and plans for change with clients (13.2)

You will need to understand what principles and processes of management consultancy are available and appropriate for the required intervention (13.2)

Helping clients improve their business

Additional Units

Design interventions which contribute to improved client performance

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

13.1 Evaluate the extent and nature of the intervention needed

- a Gather facts about the client organisation as part of the design process.
- b Establish the purpose of the intervention, and its intended effect on the client organisation's mission, values and performance
- c Determine the technical aspects of the intervention, and define which areas of the client organisation will be most involved.
- d Agree the objectives of the intervention, and its intended impact on the client organisation.

13.2 Determine methods of achieving the objectives of the intervention

- a Assess which existing methods are relevant to the objectives.
- b Assess the opportunities for innovation and creativity for the client organisation in adapting existing methods and developing new ones.
- c Identify who should be involved in which aspects of the intervention.
- d Establish where the client organisation is now and how progress towards the required objectives should be made.
- e Establish a timetable for achievement, linked to objectives and schedules.
- f Identify overlaps and interfaces between different aspects of the intervention, and explain how they will be integrated.
- g Involve the clients in the development.

Summary

What this is about

This is about working with clients to put in to practice plans and solutions that enable them to achieve their objectives. It includes working with clients and their staff and others, as part of a team approach to the required action, as well as working alone with the client. The interventions may be specially designed for the client, or may consist of tried and tested actions to achieve an improvement in performance. It involves:

- co-ordinating the acquisitions and assembly of resources, and evaluating the use of and performance of resources;
- explaining what is needed, action planning and agreeing quality and evaluation criteria;
- making sure everything starts when it should, that everyone knows what they are doing, monitoring progress against the original plan overcoming unforeseen problems and improving things as they proceed; and
- assessing interventions and presenting formal findings of evaluations with recommendations for future improvements.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- work with clients and their staff to implement programmes and plans which aim to improve performance;
- oversee resource utilisation and allocation with clients;
- manage the plans in action; and
- evaluate their success in achieving improvements.

The main topics

When you implement interventions which contribute to improved client performance you will need to do the following.

- 14.1 Assemble the resources necessary to implement interventions
- 14.2 Agree systems, processes and methods of working
- 14.3 Implement and oversee the agreed interventions
- 14.4 Monitor and review the effectiveness of interventions

What your work involves

To implement interventions which contribute to improved client performance to meet the national standard you will need to show you can implement and oversee interventions with three of the following types of client:

- owner managers in small and medium enterprises (SMEs);
- directors and senior managers in larger organisations;
- public sector organisations; and
- private sector organisations.

You must show you have managed the interventions in respect of each of the following:

- gaining the acceptance of the client and their staff to the activity;
- encouraging their participation in the activity; and
- developing the client and their staff.

You must also show you can:

- co-ordinate resources in respect of all of the following - people, premises, plant and equipment, raw materials and intellectual property;
- negotiate with relevant individuals in respect of both internal and external resource allocation;
- agree systems, processes and methods in respect of three of the following – organisational development, people, processes, plant and equipment and materials.

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Implement interventions which contribute to improved client performance

Helping clients improve their business

Additional Units

Implement interventions which contribute to improved client performance

You must also show you can explain the aims and purposes of the intervention plan to at least two of the following types of relevant people:

- the main client contact within the client organisation;
- other members of staff within the client organisation;
- colleagues within your own organisation working at the same level as yourself; and
- higher-level managers or sponsors in your or your clients' organisation.

You must show you can implement interventions based on systems, processes and methods in respect of three of the following - organisational development, people, processes, plant and equipment and materials.

You must show you have:

- set objectives for each of the following - process, participation, aims and achievements;
- assessed each of the following against the agreed objectives:
 - the extent to which agreed objectives were achieved overall; and
 - the performance of resources during the intervention.

You must also show you can present formal evaluations to at least two of the following relevant people:

- team members and participants in the intervention;
- colleagues working at the same level as yourself in your and the client organisation;
- higher-level managers or sponsors;
- the client and the client organisation; and
- suppliers.

Key words and Concepts

Evaluation

the process of judging achievements and effectiveness

Implementation

means putting into practice the activities, systems and processes which are intended to improve client performance.

Interventions

the activities and actions agreed with clients with the aim of meeting identified needs and improving business performance.

Relevant individuals

internal to the client organisation; with authority and responsibility for resource allocation and use.

Resources

people, premises, plant, equipment, raw materials.

Systems, methods and processes

in respect of organisational development and change; for business functions in respect of people, finance, processes, plant, equipment, materials.

Where this unit is from

This is the same as unit MC2 from the Management Consultants' Standards.

- The performance criteria can be found under the heading *What you need to show*.
- The knowledge requirements can be found under the heading *What you need to know and understand*.
- The evidence requirements can be found under the heading *What your work involves*.

Helping clients improve their business

Additional Units

Implement interventions which contribute to improved client performance

What you need to know and understand

If you want to implement interventions which contribute to improved client performance you need to understand and use each of the following.

Change management

You will need to understand:

- how people react to change and how to minimise disruption and conflicts before and during change (14.1, 14.2, 14.3);
- the principles of change management (14.2, 14.3, 14.4);
- the importance of negotiation and consultation in change management and methods to achieve this (14.1, 14.2, 14.3);
- the importance of effective management of resources to organisational performance this (14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.4);
- the principles and methods of effective budgetary control (14.1, 14.2, 14.3); and
- the organisational values and objectives which have a bearing on the interventions being made and how to interpret their implications (14.1).

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- identifying and evaluate the implications of proposed changes for people in the client organisation (14.2, 14.3, 14.4);
- identifying the implications of change and impact on quality of the organisation's work (14.3, 14.4);
- devise strategies to minimise adverse effects of change this (14.2, 14.3);
- promoting change effectively (14.1, 14.2); and
- developing action plans and implement solutions with clients (14.2, 14.3).

Communication

You will need to understand:

- the importance and use of effective communication methods this (14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.4); and
- the importance of enabling those affected by change to contribute to the process of implementation and how to achieve this (14.1, 14.2).

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- motivating people and win their commitment and participation (14.1, 14.2, 14.3);
- organising, presenting and communicating plans and budgets effectively according to the needs of people within your own and the client organisation (14.1, 14.2).

Health and safety

You will need to understand the importance of health and safety at work and your role and responsibilities in relation to this (14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.4).

Human Resource Development

You will need to understand the importance of equality of opportunity in implementing development activities and how to apply this (14.3).

Monitoring and evaluation

You will need to understand the importance of:

- agreeing the organisation's development plans with those involved (14.2); and
- regular reviews of activity and rescheduling of work to achieve planned objectives this (14.2, 14.3, 14.4).

You need to develop methods and techniques for monitoring and assessing how effective and efficient interventions are and how to identify potential improvements this (14.3, 14.4).

Helping clients improve their business

Additional Units

Implement interventions which contribute to improved client performance

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

14.1 Assemble the resources necessary to implement interventions

- a Co-ordinate the bringing together of the resources needed for the intervention.
- b Negotiate with relevant individuals for resource allocation and use
- c All the resources are available when they are needed.
- d Develop a contingency plan for resource shortfalls.
- e Evaluate resource performance and use.

14.2 Agree systems, processes and methods of working

- a Explain the aims and purposes of the intervention to the relevant people.
- b Work with the client organisation to establish roles, responsibilities and objectives.
- c Support those involved in developing their understanding of what is expected of them.
- d The systems, processes and methods you have selected will help to achieve the objectives of the intervention.
- e Agree quality and evaluation criteria for the systems, processes and methods you have selected.

14.3 Implement and oversee the agreed interventions

- a The implementation starts at the agreed date and time, and that everyone involved knows what they are doing and why.
- b Maintain the resource supply, and assess maintenance of quality of input and output.
- c Assess progress against plan at agreed intervals and against agreed criteria with the client.
- d Establish procedures for dealing with deviations from plan.
- e Respond to opportunities to improve and adapt the intervention.

14.4 Monitor and review the effectiveness of interventions

- a Assess the extent to which agreed objectives were achieved with relevant people.
- b Assess any negative effects of the intervention.
- c Assess the resource impact of the intervention.
- d Assess any achievements in excess of expectation, and consider the reasons why.
- e Present formal evaluation as required, and identify potential future improvements.

Summary

What this is about

This is about developing your team's skills and knowledge to ensure the best possible results at work. It involves:

- identifying the development needs of your team and its members, planning their development and using a variety of activities to improve team performance; and
- your role in supporting individuals' learning, assessing teams and individuals against agreed development objectives, and continually improving development activities, policies and overall practice.

Deciding if you need to do this

You need to do this if you:

- allocate work to others;
- achieve specific results by using resources effectively within a defined area of authority; and
- contribute to, or controlling, substantial operational programmes and budgets.

The main topics

When you develop teams and individuals to enhance performance you will need to do the following.

- 15.1 Identify the development needs of teams and individuals.
- 15.2 Plan the development of teams and individuals.
- 15.3 Develop teams to improve performance.
- 15.4 Support individual learning and development.
- 15.5 Assess the development of teams and individuals.
- 15.6 Improve the development of teams and individuals.

What your work involves

To develop teams and individuals to enhance performance to meet the national standard you will need to show your ability to identify both of the following types of development needs:

- to meet organisational objectives
- to meet individual aspirations.

You must also show you can identify development needs for at least four of the following types of personnel:

- internal;
- external;
- permanent;
- temporary;
- full-time;
- part-time;
- paid; and
- voluntary.

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Develop teams and individuals to enhance performance

Team development

Additional Units

Develop teams and individuals to enhance performance

You must also show evidence that you seek guidance from at least one of the following types of specialists:

- within your organisation; and
- from outside your organisation.

You must show you can use at least two of the following types of development activities:

- naturally occurring learning opportunities at work;
- specifically designed learning opportunities at work;
- formal training; and
- informal training.

You must show you can provide at least two of the following types of support:

- mentoring;
- coaching; and
- provision of learning opportunities at work.

You must show you can support at least one of the following types of individuals:

- team members;
- colleagues working at the same level as yourself;
- people working in another team whom you have been asked to support; and
- people working temporarily in your organisation.

You must show you can carry out assessments for at least two of the following purposes:

- to identify further development needs
- to evaluate the effectiveness of development processes
- to appraise performance
- to recognise knowledge, skills and competence at work.

You must also show you can carry out at least two of the following types of assessment:

- testing of knowledge and skills;
- observing performance at work;
- assessing the contributions of colleagues and team members; and
- taking part in appraisal discussions.

You must also show you can evaluate and improve at least two of the following types of development activities:

- naturally occurring learning opportunities at work;
- specifically designed learning opportunities at work;
- formal training; and
- informal training.

You must also show you can present your plans and pass on your recommendations to at least two of the following types of relevant people:

- team members;
- colleagues working at the same level as yourself;
- higher-level managers or sponsors; and
- specialists.

Develop teams and individuals to enhance performance

Assessment against development objectives

using various techniques such as tests, observations of performance and discussions to measure team members' current skills, knowledge and performance against the agreed objectives for development.

Confidentiality

only providing information to those who are authorised to have it.

Development activities

any activities you organise to develop knowledge and skills, such as carrying out work-based projects or assignments, observing an expert colleague at work, reading books and specialist journals, undertaking open learning or computer-based training, attending training courses or conferences.

Equal access feedback on performance

giving every member of your team the same opportunity to be involved in activities or to use resources information you give to team members on how well they are performing against the objectives which have been agreed.

Identification of development needs

identification of the gap between the demands of your and team members' jobs (both now and in the foreseeable future) and your and team members' current level of performance, knowledge and skills.

Individual aspirations

the personal wishes of individual team members to improve their performance at work, their career prospects or their personal circumstances.

Objectives

clearly defined results which you need to achieve which are specific, measurable, agreed with others, realistic and time-bound.

Obstacles to learning

physical obstacles, such as lack of resources, time or appropriate development opportunities, or mental obstacles, such as the attitude of the learner, yourself or your colleagues, which need to be modified if effective learning is to take place

Organisational objectives organisational procedures

clearly defined and measurable results which your organisation is scheduled to achieve procedures to be followed in your organisation when developing teams and individuals and recording information

Personnel

all people working for your organisation; these may be internal or external workers, permanent or temporary, full-time or part-time, paid or voluntary

Plans for the development of teams and individuals

documents or spoken plans, which describe the development to be undertaken, when, by whom, to what standard and with what resources, in order that requirements and objectives can be met

Relevant people

specialists and people outside your organisation

Develop teams and individuals to enhance performance

Resources

the people, time, equipment, materials, services, energy and premises which you have at your disposal people who work with you as part of a functional or project team; team members may report to you either as their line manager or as the manager in charge of a specific project or activity on which they are working

Team members

team members, colleagues working at the same level as yourself, higher-level managers or sponsors, personnel

Values

the values of your organisation which may be reflected in your organisation's mission, standards of work, relationships between individuals at work, relationships with suppliers, customers and other stakeholders, personnel management and reward systems, training, equal opportunities, health and safety and environmental policies.

Where this unit is from

This is the same as unit C10 from the Management Consultants' Standards.

- The performance criteria can be found under the heading What you need to show.
- The knowledge requirements can be found under the heading What you need to know and understand.
- The evidence requirements can be found under the heading What your work involves.

What you need to know and understand

If you want to develop teams and individuals to enhance performance you need to understand and use each of the following.

Communication

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- presenting your plans in a way which will positively influence the decision making of relevant people; and
- presenting development needs to relevant people in a way which is likely to influence their decision making positively.

Continuous improvement

You will need to understand:

- the importance of human resource development to organisational effectiveness;
- the importance of continually reviewing and improving development activities to ongoing organisational effectiveness; and
- the information which is needed to evaluate the usefulness and applicability of development activities

You need to develop methods and techniques for evaluating the contribution which development activities make to achieving team and organisational objectives and identify better alternatives.

Equal opportunities

You will need to understand the importance of equality of opportunity:

- in planning the development of team members;
- in human resource development; and
- in implementing development activities and how to ensure this.

Information handling

You need to develop methods and techniques for collecting and validating the information you need to identify development needs. You will need to understand the importance of:

- good record-keeping; and
- confidentiality when carrying out and reporting assessments.

Involvement and motivation

You will need to understand the importance of:

- agreeing development plans with those involved, and processes which may be used to achieve such agreement;
- providing your team members with opportunities to identify their own development needs and those of the team as a whole;
- giving opportunities to those involved to contribute to the evaluation and improvement of development activities;
- team members contributing to the assessment of their own progress and how to encourage and enable them to do so; and
- showing your own commitment to development activities.

You need to develop methods and techniques for encouraging and enabling:

- team members to identify development needs
- those involved to provide useful feedback

Develop teams and individuals to enhance performance

Develop teams and individuals to enhance performance

Organisational context

You need to understand:

- the team objectives and organisational values which have a bearing on the identification of training needs;
- the correct procedures for presenting plans for the development of teams and individuals;
- procedures for reporting the results of assessment; and
- procedures to follow when making recommendations to improve development activities.

Planning

You need to understand:

- the importance of effective planning to human resource development
- the principles of good practice which underpin human resource development planning
- how to develop effective and realistic plans for individual and team development

Training and development

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- identifying development needs for your team and the information needed to do so;
- ensuring that development activities meet agreed objectives and plans; and
- selecting and implementing development activities which are appropriate to the team members, their development needs and work, the context in which you are operating and the available resources.

You need to understand:

- the types of support and guidance which may be needed from specialists and how to get them.
- the team development needs which you have identified, and how your plans will help to meet these
- the importance of prioritising development activities and how to do this
- the range of activities which you may use to develop your team
- the importance of assessing team members against development activities
- the team's development objectives
- the range of purposes which assessments have
- the principles of fair and objective assessment
- the methods which may be used to assess the development of team members
- the information required to assess team members' development.

Monitoring and evaluation

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- monitoring and evaluating individual progress and make adjustments according to a range of factors which you identify;
- encouraging and enabling the individuals you support to provide useful feedback; and
- providing feedback according to the individual and the circumstances. You need to understand the importance of:
 - monitoring individual progress;
 - gathering feedback on the quality of support you provide; and
 - providing accurate, objective and constructive feedback to individuals on their progress.

Providing support

You need to develop methods and techniques for:

- choosing methods of support which are appropriate to individuals' needs;
- motivating staff and win their commitment to, and participation in, development activities; and
- presenting a positive role model in this regard to team members;

You need to understand:

- the importance of managers supporting individual learning and development; and
- the types of support for individual learning and development which your team members may need;
- the importance of ensuring that methods of support fit the individuals' needs, objectives and preferred learning styles; and
- the range of obstacles to learning and development which individuals may encounter; how to identify these and strategies to use in response to them.

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Develop teams and individuals to enhance performance

Develop teams and individuals to enhance performance

What you need to show

You must make sure that you can show the following.

15.1 Identify the development needs of teams and individuals

- a Give opportunities to team members to help identify their own development needs and those of the team as a whole.
- b Identify development needs accurately and base your decisions on sufficient reliable and valid information.
- c Identify development needs for all the personnel you are responsible for.
- d Where required, you seek guidance from competent specialists.
- e Provide information on development needs to authorised people only, in the format required and to agreed deadlines.
- f Your records of identified development needs comply with organisational procedures.

15.2 Plan the development of teams and individuals

- a Your plans reflect the identified training and development needs of all the personnel you are responsible for.
- b Your plans contain clear, relevant and realistic development objectives.
- c Your plans clearly identify the processes you will use and the resources you need.
- d Your plans are capable of being implemented within the defined timescales.
- e Where resources are insufficient to meet all identified needs, your plans accurately reflect organisational priorities.
- f You present your plans to relevant people in an appropriate and timely manner.
- g You update your plans at regular intervals after discussion and agreement with relevant people.

15.3 Develop teams to improve performance

- a The development activities which you organise support your team and organisational objectives.
- b The development activities which you organise make best use of available resources.
- c Provide all team members with equal access to relevant development activities.
- d Demonstrate your own commitment to individual and team development through your personal support for; and involvement in, the development activities.

15.4 Support individual learning and development

- a The support you provide is consistent with the individuals' needs, their objectives and preferred learning styles.
- b The support you provide takes account of the individuals' work constraints and overall team objectives.
- c Give all team members equal access to support relevant to their learning needs.
- d Monitor the individuals' learning and development carefully so that you can modify support promptly, according to their needs.
- e Encourage, collect and respond constructively to feedback from individuals on the quality of support you provide.
- f Give feedback to individuals at points most likely to reinforce learning and development.
- g The feedback you give is accurate, objective and helpful.
- h Identify and remove any obstacles to learning effectively and with the agreement of the individuals involved.

15.5 Assess the development of teams and individuals

- a Agree the purpose of the assessment and your own role in it with relevant people.
- b Give opportunities to team members to contribute to their own and their team's assessments.
- c Give all team members equal access to assessment against development objectives.
- d Carry out the assessments objectively against clear, agreed criteria
- e Base the assessments on sufficient, valid and reliable information.
- f Provide information on the results of the assessments to authorised people only in an appropriate format and to agreed deadlines.

15.6 Improve the development of teams and individuals

- a Give opportunities to those involved to help evaluate and improve development activities.
- b Your evaluation of the usefulness and applicability of development activities is based on sufficient valid and relevant information.
- c Your evaluation demonstrates the contribution development activities make to achieving team and organisational objectives.
- d Where development activities prove ineffective or inappropriate, you agree alternatives which are capable of meeting the development needs you have identified.
- e Present your recommendations for improving overall development practice to relevant people in an appropriate and timely manner.

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Develop teams and individuals to enhance performance

Knowledge and understanding of key areas of business

Introduction

As a business adviser you have wide-ranging knowledge which you use to help your clients at various stages of their business.

The level of knowledge you have reflects your general business awareness as well as your particular speciality or area of expertise.

Whatever your role, you still need to know about the key areas of a business, including the areas listed in these guidance notes.

Unit 7 'Develop your ability to provide business advice', states that you must show an acceptable level of knowledge and understanding of all key areas of business advice. This means you must have the following.

- A basic understanding of the effect each business area has on the overall health of the business.
- A broad understanding of the basic issues in any business area so you can accurately explain them to a client.
- A general knowledge of what might need to be done to improve a particular key area.
- Sufficient knowledge and understanding to know whether or not a client should be referred to a specialist adviser or a specialist advice organisation.
- Knowledge of how important it is for the business to have a strategy for its development.
- An awareness of the importance of the client accepting responsibility for business concerns and, where appropriate, an understanding of how to persuade them of the need to change.

The **key areas** of business advice listed in units 5 'Help clients to meet their business needs' and 7 'Develop your ability to provide business advice' are as follows.

- a Strategic overview
- b Finance and accounting
- c ICT and E-commerce
- d People
- e Innovation and technology (covering activities using new technologies and traditional methods)
- f Marketing and sales (including exporting goods and services)
- g Operations and processes (including design and environmental management)

Unit 5 'Help clients to meet their business needs' gives examples of the range of businesses, including the following.

- Business start-ups
- Existing businesses
- Businesses that hope to expand
- Clients who are linked to your organisation
- Different types of business (sole trader, partnerships, limited companies, social enterprises and non-profit-making organisations)
- Owner-managers, partners, senior managers or directors of companies
- Individuals and groups

a Strategic overview

In order to help clients meet their business needs, you should have sufficient knowledge to know whether or not the client should be referred to a specialist adviser or a specialist advice organisation.

So you should have a general understanding of the key issues facing small businesses and their owner-managers, plus a broader understanding of the basic business functions.

You will be expected to know and understand the following.

- Why some small businesses succeed when others fail.
- The strengths and weaknesses of different types of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with regard to:
 - the market sectors those enterprises are in;
 - the enterprises' growth potential;
 - their stage of growth; and
 - their management capabilities and styles.
- The business objectives of the person who owns or manages the business and (where appropriate) how these may affect those relying on that business's success.
- How to overcome the political and social changes, along with the economic, geographical and ICT challenges, facing SMEs.
- How the major business functions (including business planning, finance, sales and marketing, and business management) link to and support each other.
- Business performance indicators, including how they are relevant to the client's business.
- The main features and benefits by which SMEs may be measured, including:
 - Investors in People;
 - Business Excellence Model; and
 - ISO9000.
- The benefits and disadvantages of using various analytical and diagnostic techniques, including SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and PEST (political, environmental, social and technological) analysis.
- Techniques to help clients accept and manage change, including:
 - overcoming barriers or obstacles;
 - comparing risks against benefits; and
 - dealing with the attitudes of owners and managers.
- Where clients can get specialist advice (when appropriate).

b Finance and accounting

You should have sufficient knowledge to allow you to understand why each of the following areas is significant to each particular business.

You will be expected to know and understand the following.

- Accounting systems (manual or computer-based), including accurate information for recording, monitoring and reporting on how the business's finances are managed.
- Financial statements, including cashflow forecasts, profit and loss accounts, balance sheets and performance indicators which allow you to assess the current financial position of the business.
- Key ratios including:
 - Gross profit % (the percentage gross profit is to turnover);
 - Net profit % (the percentage net profit is to turnover);
 - Break even (the turnover level at which the business will break even);
 - Gearing (the ratio of debt to equity);
 - Stock turn (how fast stock is being sold);
 - Debtor days (how long, on average, money is owed to the business);
 - Current ratio (the ratio of current assets to current liabilities);
 - Acid test (the ratio of current assets, except stock, to current liabilities);
and
 - Return on capital employed (the business's profit compared with the capital used in the business).
- Performance compared with benchmarks for appropriate sectors.
- The current tax, VAT and national insurance levels appropriate to the business and the owners.
- The sources and types of finance available to meet the needs of the business (including venture capital, business angels, banks, factoring, government and local authority loans, grants and awards) and any financial risks involved in their type of business.
- Where clients can get specialist advice (when appropriate).

c ICT and E-commerce

You should have sufficient knowledge to allow you to understand how information and communication technologies (ICT) and E-commerce could help in the planning and development of the business.

You will be expected to know about and understand the following.

- The basic principles and capabilities, which underpin the information and communication technologies and the potential effects on the SME.
- The basic capabilities of E-business, and how they can be used by an SME to improve their performance and gain access to new markets and opportunities.
- An understanding of the E-business opportunities that can be taken advantage of.
- The risks involved in undertaking ICT and E-business projects, along with ways of managing these risks and the consequences of failing to do so.
- The main components of a PC, the range of PCs, desktops and other versions (such as laptops) available; and the relative merits associated with each.
- Extra components which are needed to use the Internet (a modem, an Internet service provider, browser software).
- The advantages of a computer network, including sharing printers.
- Business software commonly used to improve productivity.
- The main features of an intranet and extranet, the advantages and some of the uses.
- The requirements of the Data Protection Act and how specific SMEs can meet those requirements.
- Where clients can get specialist advice (when appropriate).

You should have sufficient knowledge to allow you to understand that staffing is important when developing the business so you understand when a client might benefit from developing their workforce.

You will be expected to know and understand the following.

- A number of different ways in which SMEs can:
 - attract, recruit, develop and keep the staff they need;
 - train and develop all their people, using external qualifications as appropriate;
 - review the effectiveness of their training and development policies;
 - manage their staff's performance;
 - cope with losing key workers;
 - develop teams and improve their performance; and
 - encourage and manage different skills within their teams.
- How organisational structures and cultures affect the success of an organisation and how SMEs can:
 - create efficient and effective organisational structures to deliver their business plan; and
 - develop and maintain an organisational culture which encourages staff to achieve the business's goals.
- How SMEs can benefit from becoming 'Investors in People'.
- How the following laws affect SMEs and how they could take steps to keep to them.
 - Employment and contract law
 - Equal opportunities laws, including the Disability Discrimination Act
 - Health and safety laws
- The main sources of information on employment issues and laws, and explain the nature and limitations of each.
- Where clients can get specialist advice (when appropriate).

e Innovation and technology

You should have sufficient knowledge to allow you to understand the importance of innovation and technology when planning and developing the business.

You will be expected to know and understand the following.

- The changes in the way organisations are using technology, including:
 - supply-chain management systems;
 - workstation design;
 - operations design;
 - product and service design; and
 - marketing and distribution systems.
- Typical strategies SMEs can follow to encourage innovation, including:
 - financial and other incentives;
 - culture change;
 - organisation development;
 - business process re-engineering; and
 - leadership.
- The benefits and risks involved in adopting innovative approaches to business and using technology, including:
 - marketing benefits;
 - improvements in organisational efficiency;
 - access to new markets; and
 - increased survival rates.
- Where clients can get specialist advice (when appropriate).

f Marketing and sales

You should have enough knowledge to know and understand the key areas of marketing and sales.

You will be expected to know and understand the following.

- How marketing activities contribute to sales and developing customer relationships.
- What contribution marketing planning and sales planning can make to achieving the best return from limited staff, finance and resources.
- Which processes or activities are involved in developing an appropriate product or service for a certain customer group.
- How to diagnose the current elements of the product or service by referring to the price, promotion (including selling), place (location and distribution channels) and people the product or service is aimed at.
- How to diagnose what the product or service offers, or could offer, to customer groups in existing or new markets.
- What parts make up the selling process, in particular understanding the time and complexity differences in the sales cycles (for example from contacting the customer to closing the sale).
- How to describe products or services in terms of features, benefits and unique selling points.
- How to find out what national or international market opportunities may exist for the client's product or service.
- How to get market information on the design and development of products and services, and information on logos, devices, branding and E-commerce.
- Sources of advice and technology to help the client with the plan and implement business strategies. What methods are available to improve routes to markets, the design and use of promotional media and campaigns, pricing, the effectiveness of the sales force and customer service.
- Which areas of law affect marketing, selling, customer service and international trade activities, and where the client can get appropriate advice.
- What is involved in producing strategic objectives and outlining plans for national and international sales, marketing and customer service.
- What methods successful businesses commonly use to measure the effectiveness of their national and international sales, marketing, promotion and customer service activities.
- How to describe the main benefits and risks (including risks related to E-commerce) of exporting products or services.
- Where clients can get specialist advice (when appropriate).

g Operations and processes

You should have sufficient knowledge to allow you to understand the significance of operations and process matters when planning and developing the business.

You will be expected to know and understand the following.

- The significance and principles of strategic operations and process matters when developing the business.
- How performance is measured, including costs, speed, flexibility, dependability and quality.
- The options available to improve the efficiency of the business.
- How the business can respond to major changes and how this affects the organisation's capability
- How the health and safety laws affect the business and the consequences of not keeping to those laws.
- The key issues the business may face and how they relate to different activities in the business.
- How to present health and safety issues (including risk assessments, risk control and monitoring) as a relevant and active part of business operations.
- Any other laws that may apply to the business.
- Current environmental laws and the principles of environmental management.
- The effect the business's products and services have, or are likely to have, on the environment they operate in.
- Opportunities to reduce energy costs or minimise waste.
- The range of strategies the business has for keeping to and benefiting from environmental laws.
- The significance of design process when planning and developing the product or service and the business.
- The basic type of design services and uses available, how these could be used by the client, and how the client can get them.
- Principles and laws relating to intellectual property rights and copyright, and ways of protecting those rights.
- The relevant sources of expertise in intellectual property rights and copyright laws.
- Where clients can get specialist advice (when appropriate).