Unit 24: Front Office Operations in Hospitality

Unit code: R/601/0500

QCF Level 3: BTEC National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to enable learners to gain knowledge of the structure, role and requirements of front office operations and gain skills to use systems and procedures involved in reservations and registration, and guest accounting and interpret data and room statistics used to assess and improve the performance of front office operations within hospitality businesses.

● Unit introduction

The front office, traditionally known as reception, is the focal point of most activities within a hospitality business, whether it be a large or small hotel, a cruise liner, a holiday centre, a time-share resort or a youth hostel. The front office is the first and last place where a guest has direct contact with the business, and is also the most visible of all departments. The front office is a term accepted as including 'back of house' responsibilities, such as switchboard, accounts, cashier and night audit, front desk, concierge and guest services.

Learners wishing to enter the hospitality industry, especially the hotel sector, will benefit from a sound understanding of front office operations. This unit provides an introduction to the world of front office operations. Learners will develop skills in front office operations, including advanced reservations, guest registration and guest accounting procedures. The unit requires learners to use the front office systems, from traditional manual systems to modern fully-integrated computerised systems. They will also learn about the ways in which data, such as room occupancy statistics, are used to assess performance.

Interdepartmental cooperation and communication are vital to the running of any hospitality business, and front office staff are often key to this. Learners will develop a greater understanding of how the front office links to other departments, for example housekeeping, food and beverage, sales and marketing and accounts. Professionalism in the hospitality industry is vital to the success of the hospitality business and to the success of employees' future careers. This unit enables learners to appreciate and demonstrate a professional manner, while undertaking the activities within this unit.

In order to complete this unit, learners must have access to relevant computer software for advanced reservations, registration and guest accounting.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

1   Know the structure, role and requirements of front office operations within hospitality businesses

2   Be able to use systems and procedures involved in reservations and registration

3   Be able to use systems and procedures involved in guest accounting

4   Be able to interpret data and room statistics used to assess and improve the performance of front office operations.

Unit content

1 Know the structure, role and requirements of front office operations within hospitality businesses

Structure: organisation of department eg reporting structure, shift patterns; types of staff eg reservations, front desk, switchboard, concierge, guest services, hall porters

Role: advance reservations; registration; dealing with enquiries; checkout; interdepartmental communications; administration

Requirements: professionalism (behaviour, presentation, communication); managing the guest cycle; maximising revenue and occupancy; customer service eg importance, types of customers, customer needs and expectations; product knowledge; personal selling; dealing with complaints, incidents, emergencies; links with other departments eg housekeeping, food and beverage, sales and marketing, accounts

Hospitality businesses: hotels; restaurants; inns; contract food service providers; hospitality services; membership clubs

2 Be able to use systems and procedures involved in reservations and registration

Reservations: sources eg individuals, agencies, central reservations; types of enquiry eg letter, fax, telephone, email; electronic and manual systems (diary, conventional chart, density chart, internet booking); types of tariff; procedures eg provisional, confirmed, guaranteed, deposits, release times, overbooking; documentation eg arrival and departure lists

Registration: electronic and manual systems; keys (issue procedure, types); records; guest histories; guest requests eg early morning calls, newspapers; trends eg automated check-in; legal requirements eg legislation relating to guest registration, fire safety, data protection, disability discrimination

Communication: one-way eg using public address; two-way; verbal eg face-to-face, telephone; non-verbal eg written; electronic eg email, internet; listening skills; barriers to communication

3 Be able to use systems and procedures involved in guest accounting

Systems: manual systems eg tabular ledger; electronic and manual systems eg Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS); types of accounts eg resident, non-resident, individuals, groups, extras accounts; floor limits

Procedures: posting charges (accommodation, bars, restaurant, room service, sundries, Visitor Paid Outs (VPO)); balancing; credit control; bad debts

Checkout: express checkouts; late checkout

Payments: cash; foreign currency; cheque; credit card; debit card; charge cards; account to company; split bills; deposits; refunds; security; taxation

4 Be able to interpret data and room statistics used to assess and improve the performance of front office operations

Data: guest histories; sales; mailing lists; databases; accounts; compliments; complaints; legal implications (data protection legislation)

Room statistics: room occupancy; sleeper occupancy; average room rates; room yield; revenue per available room (RevPar); gross operating profit per available room (GopPar)

Assess and improve: revenue; promotions; discounts; forecasting; trends; strategies

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	**To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:**	**To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:**
P1 describe the structure, roles and requirements of front office operations in hospitality businesses **P2** describe systems and procedures for reservations, registration and guest accounting in hospitality businesses [IE 1, 2, 4, 6]	**M1** compare the structure, systems and procedures of front office operations in different hospitality businesses	**D1** analyse the structure, systems and procedures of front office operations in hospitality businesses, commenting on how these affect customer service
P3 demonstrate the skills required for reservations and guest registration, using electronic and manual systems **P4** demonstrate the skills required for guest accounting, using electronic and manual systems [CT 2, 5, 6, SM 5, 6, 7]	**M2** independently demonstrate confident and effective reservations, registration and accounting skills	
P5 interpret data and statistics used to assess and improve the performance of front office operations. [IE 4, CT 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]	**M3** use relevant data and statistics to assess the performance of front office operations.	**D2** evaluate front office operations, making valid recommendations for improvements in their performance.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

This unit is designed to give learners a thorough insight into the operations of a front office, whether it is in a hotel, time-share resort, holiday centre, youth hostel or a cruise ship.

Learners should visit different types of hospitality venues, including hotels with different star ratings, in order to observe and research different practices and procedures. This will also give learners the opportunity to investigate the growing importance of customer service and personal selling skills, together with different job roles, services and responsibilities. Talks from guest speakers could enhance learners' understanding of this area of the hospitality business. Broadcasts of commercial TV programmes may benefit some learners who have limited access to hospitality venues.

The development of learners' skills in advanced reservations, registration and guest accounting procedures is vital, and there should be opportunities for practice through manual in-tray exercises, role plays and appropriate software applications. It is essential that learners have access to fully integrated computerised systems, whether in a real or a simulated situation.

Emphasis needs to be put on learners having the right professional attitude in terms of personal, technical, social and customer care skills, when working and communicating with others. Learners must also understand the growing importance of selling and yield management in front office operations. Case studies or real commercial data will help to underpin this area of study.

Although this unit develops essential practical skills in front office operations, it could be delivered jointly with *Unit 5: Supervisory Skills in the Hospitality Industry*, offering the opportunity to organise and supervise a team in the provision of front office operations. Work placements associated with *Unit 26: Industry-related Project in Hospitality* may offer opportunities to generate evidence from real, rather than simulated, situations.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to the unit and the programme of learning and assessment.
Learners interview employers and find out their front office operations structure.
Learners visit a business with and find out about the importance of roles and requirements of front office operations.
Assignment 1 – The Structure, Role and Requirements of Front Office Operations in Hospitality Businesses (P1, P2, M1, D1)
Learners create a presentation about the structure, role and requirements of front office operations based on visit and interview.
Group discussion to determine the systems and procedures involved in reservations and registration for different types of hospitality businesses.
Visit to a hospitality business and observation of different systems and procedures involved in reservations and registration used – follow-up poster showing different systems and procedures.
Learners interview a member of staff from a hospitality business on the use of systems and procedures.
Visit to hospitality business to find out about the business's perspective on systems and procedures involved in reservations and registration.
Assignment 2 – Systems and Procedures Involved in Reservations and Registration (P3, M2)
Based on learners demonstrating the use of systems and procedures involved in reservations and registration.
Group discussion to determine the systems and procedures involved in guest accounting for different types of hospitality businesses.
Visit to a hospitality business and observation of different systems and procedures involved in guest accounting – follow-up poster showing different systems and procedures.
Learners interview a member of staff from a hospitality business on the use of systems and procedures.
Visit to hospitality business to find out about the business' perspective on systems and procedures involved in guest accounting.
Assignment 3 – Systems and Procedures Involved in Guest Accounting (P4, M2)
Based on learners demonstrating the use of systems and procedures involved in guest accounting.
Learners investigate methods of monitoring and evaluation used in a business.
Assignment 4 – Data and Room Statistics Used to Assess and Improve the Performance of Front Office Operations (P5, M3, D2)
Learners investigate a business leading to a piece of written work.
Tutorial support and feedback.
Self-initiated learning time.

Assessment

Any evidence submitted for criteria requiring the practical demonstration of skills, for example role plays or the ability to work independently, must be supported by observation sheet(s) signed by the assessor identifying how and why specific criteria have been met.

The sub-headings in this section mirror the funnelling opportunities in the grading grid. They suggest how assessment can be grouped to allow learners to progress to the higher grades; however, they are not prescriptive.

P1 – P2 – M1 – D1

For P1, learners must describe in general terms the organisational structure of the front office operations for two different hospitality businesses as well as outlining in general terms the role and requirements. The businesses should be sufficiently different so that learners can compare them for M1, for example a large hotel, a smaller hotel or guest house, time-share resort, holiday centre, hostel or a cruise ship, and will include a description of the roles and requirements of the staff who undertake the front office operations.

For P2, learners need to describe the practices and procedures for advance reservations, registration and guest accounting found in the two businesses used for P1.

To achieve M1, learners must use evidence from P1 and P2, comparing the structures, systems and procedures, where applicable, explaining the reasons for this. An example of this might be comparing a large city centre hotel using a fully integrated system such as Fidelio, with a small guest house using manual systems.

To achieve D1, learners need to research the two hospitality businesses in detail and analyse their structure, systems and procedures. They will comment on the positive and negative aspects and how these affect customer care. An example of this type of response could be that 'the guesthouse does not accept credit cards and instead asks guests to send a cheque as a deposit through the post in advance. This allows it to keep costs low, but it might put some guests off visiting as it is more trouble to go to than just giving a credit card number over the phone or online.'

P3 – P4 – M2

The use of fully integrated computer software, such as Fidelio, is a requirement for learners to fully achieve P3 and P4. Observation records and witness testimonies can be used as evidence for carrying out simulated or real activities, along with copies of paper records where possible. The observation sheets will indicate clearly how the learner has achieved evidence for a particular criterion. Evidence for the use of manual systems is required to underpin the principles of computerised systems, such as a conventional bookings chart and tabular ledger. However, it is expected that learners will need support in using computerised systems, and the standard expected is basic competence rather than high proficiency. For P3 and P4, learners are required to demonstrate as much as possible of the unit content for reservations, registration and guest accounting, either through real or through simulated situations. It may not be possible to demonstrate a few of the tasks, such as managing express checkouts, taking foreign currency and issuing keys, but these will have been covered by the descriptions in P2.

To achieve M2, learners must work independently and demonstrate confidence in using the software and documentation. When assessing 'an independent approach' and 'demonstrating confident and effective skills', it is expected that some support be given to learners, provided that a major part of the work is carried out by learners on their own. Learners must also be monitored and assessed on their professional manner and customer care skills, using appropriate witness statements or logs/diaries.

P5 – M3 – D2

Maximising revenue has, in recent years, become a major role of the front office department. P5 asks learners to describe the data and statistics used to interpret and assess the performance of front office operations. Tutors should use data and statistics in the form of a case study or separate exercises, to enable learners to identify which performance indicators and/or formulae need to be applied to produce relevant results. Learners also need to show an awareness of the ways in which the data and statistics can be used to assess for the purposes of improving performance. However, they do not need to actually carry out such an assessment.

M3 requires learners to use data and statistics to assess the performance of two front office operations in detail. This could be taken from a prepared case study or from a real business if available.

D2 builds on the work carried out for M3. Learners must evaluate two front office operations and make recommendations for improvements. Recommendations will be realistic and applicable in real situations, even if case studies are used. Learners will also assess the impact that implementing the recommendations might have. For example, implementing a promotional campaign for periods that have been found to be quiet will, in turn, have a cost attached.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Pearson assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, P2, M1, D1	The Structure, Role and Requirements of Front Office Operations in Hospitality Businesses	Learners take the role of a front office manager at a local hotel and are required to prepare a presentation for new staff on the structure, role and requirements of front office operations.	Learners prepare a presentation for new staff.
P3, M2	Systems and Procedures Involved in Reservations and Registration	Learners continue in the same role of front office manager and show the new staff the procedures involved in reservations and registration.	Role play or work placement supported by observation sheets.
P4, M2	Systems and Procedures Involved in Guest Accounting	Learners continue in the same role of front office manager and show the new staff the procedures involved in guest accounting.	Role play or work placement supported by observation sheets.
P5, M3, D2	Data and Room Statistics Used to Assess and Improve the Performance of Front Office Operations	Learners continue in the same role of front office manager and produce a report on the data and statistics used to interpret and assess the performance of front office operations.	Learners prepare a report for new staff.

Links to other BTEC units

This unit forms part of the *BTEC Hospitality* suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the Hospitality suite:

Level 2	Level 3
	Principles of Supervising Customer Service Performance in Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism
	Providing Customer Service in Hospitality
	Supervisory Skills in the Hospitality Industry

Essential resources

It is essential that all learners have the opportunity to visit two different hospitality businesses to enable them to research front office operations. It is also essential that learners have access to fully integrated computerised systems, whether in a real or simulated situation, to carry out role play activities for advanced reservations, guest registration and guest accounting.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Visits to different hospitality businesses would enhance learners' understanding of front office operations and how they can differ depending on the size and nature of the business. Learners should be given realistic exercises to carry out both in a classroom and in role play situations to practise skills in advanced reservations, guest registration and guest accounting.

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are …	
Independent enquirers	P1	describing the structure, roles and requirements of front office operations in hospitality businesses [IE 1, 2, 4, 6]
	P2	describing systems and procedures for reservations, registration and guest accounting in hospitality businesses [IE 1, 2, 4, 6]
	P5	interpreting data and statistics used to assess and improve the performance of front office operations [IE 4]
Creative thinkers	P3	demonstrating the skills required for reservations and guest registration, using electronic and manual systems [CT 2, 5, 6]
	P5	interpreting data and statistics used to assess and improve the performance of front office operations [CT 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,]
Self-managers	P3	demonstrating the skills required for reservations and guest registration, using electronic and manual systems
	P4	demonstrating the skills required for guest accounting, using electronic and manual systems.
		[SM 5, 6, 7]

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are …
Reflective learners	assessing themselves when demonstrating the skills required for reservations, guest registration and guest accounting, using electronic and manual systems. [RL 1]

Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are …
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	demonstrating skills using computerised systems and software for advanced reservations and guest accounting
Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system they have used	
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	
Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	
Troubleshoot	
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: • text and tables • images • numbers • records	describing data and statistics used to assess and improve the performance of front office operations
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	
Evaluate the selection and use of ICT tools and facilities used to present information	
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	

Skill	When learners are …
Mathematics	
Understand routine and non-routine problems in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations	
Identify the situation or problem and the mathematical methods needed to tackle it	using relevant data and statistics to assess the performance of front office operations
Select and apply a range of skills to find solutions	
Use appropriate checking procedures and evaluate their effectiveness at each stage	
Interpret and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar routine contexts and situations	
Draw conclusions and provide mathematical justifications	demonstrating the skills required for guest accounting using computerised and manual systems
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	describing systems and procedures for reservations, registration and guest accounting in hospitality businesses
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	writing documents.