

Unit 56: Theatre Front of House Operations

Unit code:	K/600/0149
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to develop learners' knowledge of the activities that take place to service audience needs in the front of house (FOH) area. Learners will research and undertake FOH roles.

● Unit introduction

Front of house is the first impression that the audience receives of the theatre or venue. The FOH area covers the foyer and auditorium areas. This is an opportunity to create the first impression given to the audience and to set the scene for the performance. The responsibilities include ways to entice the audience into a venue and event, making their environment welcoming and ensuring their needs are fully met.

Learners will be given the chance to investigate and carry out FOH duties. They will also investigate the job roles carried out within different venues' FOH teams, and how the size and complexity of the teams differs between the types and sizes of venue. Current legislative requirements will have to be researched and incorporated into the job role to be carried out. Learners will then be expected to take a role working as part of a front of house team in a performing arts organisation for a performance.

Learners will carry out a range of FOH tasks including ticket sales, ushering, pre-show checks, and tasks such as preparing the foyer area and welcoming and admitting customers. Learners will also demonstrate a working knowledge of licensing requirements and how this affects the job roles within the entire FOH team.

FOH staff need to have a good understanding and working knowledge of customer care skills along with knowledge of the legislation governing their work. Customers' main contact will be with FOH staff and their experience of the venue will largely be determined by these staff; therefore presentation of the team and areas within their responsibility is paramount. The skills learned in this unit will be transferable to any customer service or administration-based job role in any sector.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know FOH procedures and roles
- 2 Be able to devise customer care guidelines
- 3 Know current legislation for the theatre
- 4 Be able to undertake roles within a FOH team.

Unit content

1 Know FOH procedures and roles

Box office: booking systems eg using computerised systems, face-to-face procedures, telephone bookings procedures; interaction with public; types of booking eg individual, group, concession; cash and credit card handling; initial information; marketing information

Foyer/auditorium: ticket collection; ushering; programme/merchandise; refreshment selling; information source; starting show; interval procedures; house lights

Safety: auditorium check; hazards; safe seating; gangway spacing; fire extinguishers; safety and emergency exits; emergency lighting; positioning of attendants

Emergency: evacuation of foyer and auditorium; reporting fire/power failure; dealing with disturbances

2 Be able to devise customer care guidelines

Responsibilities: comfort and safety of customers

Creating an ambience: welcoming atmosphere; temperature; light; sound; staff training; facilities; displays; information

Communication: welcoming; providing relevant information; ticket collecting; programme selling; ushering; accommodating customers with special needs; self presentation

3 Know current legislation for the theatre

Safety of self and others: Health and Safety at Work Act; environmental health legislation; COSHH

Customer rights: Disability Discrimination Act; public liability; consumers' rights

Licensing: theatre; alcohol; copyright on incidental music and display material

4 Be able to undertake roles within a FOH team

Roles: eg house manager, box office, receptionist, telephonist, cashier, foyer ticket collectors, programme sellers, merchandise and refreshment attendants, auditorium ushers

Responsibilities: efficient operation of accepted procedures; customer care

Good working relationships with: other team members; other theatre departments; visiting companies

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 identify main areas of FOH activity and note venue variations [IE]	M1 describe the main areas of FOH activity, providing details of venue variations	D1 explain the main areas of FOH activity in a variety of venues
P2 devise guidelines for customer care in an area of FOH activity [CT]	M2 devise effective and descriptive guidelines for customer care in an area of FOH activity	D2 devise comprehensive and evaluative guidelines for customer care in an area of FOH activity
P3 list legislative requirements affecting FOH job roles	M3 identify the impact of the legislative requirements on FOH job roles	D3 explain the impact of the legislative requirements on FOH job roles
P4 comment on the tasks and procedures followed in an area of FOH activity	M4 explain the procedures followed in an area of FOH activity, making reasoned comments on the tasks carried out	D4 make detailed, structured and analytical comments on the procedures followed in an area of FOH activity
P5 undertake a role within a FOH team, fulfilling responsibilities and procedures, with support and guidance. [TW]	M5 undertake a role within a FOH team, fulfilling responsibilities and procedures, with minimal support and guidance.	D5 undertake an autonomous role within a FOH team, fulfilling responsibilities and procedures.

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

The delivery of this unit should be planned to combine the development of knowledge and understanding with the necessary practical experience. A range of activities combining tutor input, primary and secondary research projects including field trips and meetings with visiting practitioners with work experience and role-play could be undertaken.

The use of ICT in FOH activities requires that learners be given the opportunity to develop necessary keyboard skills and become familiar with the appropriate software. The software could range from an Excel spreadsheet to a professional box office system depending on centre requirements and system availability.

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 front of house, and type of work that may exist in front of the curtain.
Assignment 1: Researching Job Roles – P1, M1, D1 Group research work. Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• carry out research into FOH staff roles in a variety of types of theatre• compare job roles and duties found in small amateur, regional and West End venues• analyse tasks undertaken in each role• visit to theatre/discussion with FOH staff• observation of jobs undertaken and legislation governing the activities undertaken.
Using research carried out in Assignment 1 learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• analyse roles required FOH for learners' own production• discuss roles that can be combined .
Assignment 2: Carry out Customer Care Exercises – P2, M2, D2 Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• carry out a range of simulations and exercises in dealing with:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ customers on the telephone◇ customers in person◇ dealing with complaints or abusive customers.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Assignment 3: Create Job Descriptions and Analyse Legislative Requirements Affecting FOH Work – P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4

Learners:

- create job description to be followed for FOH operation
- list tasks to be undertaken pre-event, before, during and after performance and post-event
- describe health and safety tasks/legislative requirements of the role
- create a person specification of skills and qualities required for the role.

From the information found in the exercises learners:

- devise guidelines for customer care to be followed alongside job description to be undertaken
- explain why each guideline should be followed and how it improves the customers' experience.

Assignment 5: Carry out Chosen FOH Role – P5, M5, D5

Learners:

- carry out the tasks identified in job description
- carry out checks/setups before, during and after performance
- carry out identified health and safety tasks
- carry out identified customer care activities
- write up diary/show notes.

Learners carry out an evaluation of own performance.

Assessment

There are three elements to the assessment of work for this unit:

- demonstrating through application an understanding of FOH roles
- the application of appropriate customer care skills
- knowledge of legislative requirements affecting FOH roles.

Evidence of knowledge and understanding can be generated through primary and secondary research projects, and written assignments. It can be presented in various textual forms, for example written reports, accounts, charts, information packs, and oral forms for example, presentations, recorded discussions and role play.

The assessment can be presented in various textual forms, for example written reports, accounts, charts, numerical data, plans; visual forms for example marketing artefacts, display material; and orally, for example presentations, recorded interviews and role play.

Evidence of practical skills will be generated in the context of work experience placements, learner productions and simulation exercises. It will take the form of tutor reports, observation schedules and learner logs.

In the process of carrying out this unit learners should have the opportunity to:

- present research findings into the FOH operations of at least two different venues
- record the procedures for at least one FOH activity and produce guidelines
- explain at least two legal requirements associated with FOH operation
- produce a list of roles and responsibilities for a FOH team
- produce job descriptions for at least two roles in a FOH team
- undertake at least two different roles within a FOH team.

Each element can be documented in a number of ways to produce sufficient and reliable evidence for assessment purposes. Some assessment can be through the presentation of a written or practical research project which can include the use of ICT in the form of visual, textual and/or aural material. Learners should maintain a working log/diary.

Evidence of background research material should include venue research undertaken along with a presented report either written, spoken or using ICT as to the types of FOH role and the venue variations, justifying the key findings.

The role description will include a range of job tasks, with examples of research of existing job descriptions, and a justification of the legislative requirements that affect the jobs undertaken.

The customer care plan will include practical customer care activities, and well thought out customer care guidelines.

Learning outcome 1 requires learners to demonstrate their knowledge of the front of house role they are undertaking. This will include how the FOH role works, and how it links to other theatre staff, and their roles and responsibilities

Differentiation between pass, merit and distinction will be apparent through the depth of research and the factors taken into account when devising their series of events.

At pass level, learners will identify potential front of house roles, and undertake some venue research as to the roles in small, medium and large venues covering both amateur and professional venues, listing roles, areas of responsibility and numbers of staff involved

At merit level, learners will describe job roles, exploring a range of types of venue and looking in more depth as to the implications of each team in terms of jobs undertaken before, during and after an event.

At distinction level, learners will explain a range of venues and roles, listing pros and cons of each type of structure, and relating the market research undertaken to the job role they are to undertake in the chosen performance. The market research should drive the jobs and responsibility list, looking at how the responsibilities can work together. Learners may make suggestions in terms of roles that can be undertaken simultaneously, for example box office pre show and bar sales during the interval.

Learning outcome 2 requires learners to develop a customer care policy and undertake activities demonstrating customer care.

At pass level, learners will devise and list the customer care activities to be undertaken.

At merit level, learners will go into more detail about what should be done, how it needs to be done and why it needs to be done for several customer care activities. This can be carried out through role play to the policy devised; for example dealing with a complaint, would be handled sympathetically, with apologies, and resolution if in learners' capability, or referral to the next level.

At distinction level, learners should have a detailed customer care plan, with rehearsed scenarios for a range of common questions and problems.

Learning outcome 3 requires learners to take several legislative requirements and show how they affect the job roles to be undertaken.

At pass level, learners will list a range of legislative requirements from research undertaken, giving examples of where the legislation can be found.

At merit level, learners will identify the impact of the legislative requirements and adapt job descriptions explaining which members of the FOH teams would undertake these roles and what they need to do to satisfy the legislation.

At distinction level, learners will be explain the impact the legislation has on the job roles identified, what the consequences for non-compliance would be, and come up with ways that would ensure that these would be complied with.

Learning outcome 4 requires learners to research tasks undertaken within each role and produce job descriptions to be followed when the role is carried out. These should be detailed enough to assess if learners carry out this role to the best of their ability and give enough range and scope for this to happen in learning outcome 5. The procedures should be detailed to allow for contingency planning and refer to line management and staff hierarchy.

At pass level, learners will list a range of procedures and tasks from research undertaken, giving examples of when it would be undertaken.

At merit level, learners will explore and explain the procedures to be followed and adapt job descriptions explaining which members of the FOH team would undertake these roles and what they need to do to within each procedure.

At distinction level, learners will be effective communicators, providing structured and analytical comments on the procedures to be followed.

For learning outcome 5 this should be implemented during one of the events undertaken, and will require planning and then execution of the requirement. Several options should be considered, and several may be covered by carrying out the role during the event.

At pass level, learners will undertake the role described in learning outcome 4 with help and support.

At merit level, learners will undertake the role with minimal guidance, providing knowledge of why they are undertaking tasks, suggesting areas that they could improve.

At distinction level, learners will be effective operators, carrying out the role on their own and self evaluating their performance and making modifications and suggestions to the roles and procedures created.

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 Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Research FOH Job Roles	Learners will investigate a range of types and sizes of theatre front of house roles.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collated research data • research log • report • comparison of roles and justification • task analysis.
P2, M2, D2	Carry out Customer Care Exercises	Learners will carry out customer care activities, face to face, on the telephone, and deal with complaints.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • customer care guidelines • video evidence of customer care activities • evaluation of own practice.
P3, M3, D3 P4, M4, D4	Create Job Descriptions and Investigate Legislative Requirements Affecting FOH Work	Learners investigate legislative requirements and tasks undertaken in a range of FOH roles.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • legislation affecting FOH roles • job description/role research • ideas on what tasks need to be undertaken in centre's show • job description created from research for college role.
P5, M5, D5	Carry out FOH Role	Learners will carry out a FOH role to a job description on a real performance.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • checklists • setup notes • diary of activities • photo/video evidence.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Preparing Performing Arts Work	Performing Arts Production Process	Arts Administration
Presenting Performing Arts Work	Crewing for Stage Performance	Performing Arts Events Management

This unit also has links to the following National Occupational Standards:

Cultural Venue Operations

- CVI – Provide visitors with general assistance
- CCSI – Provide effective customer service.

Essential resources

In order to meet the practical evidence requirements of this unit learners must have access to at least one performance venue. Two examples of venues can be found in '*Essential Guide to the Performing Arts Business*'. It is important that good relationships with venues are cultivated, if possible, to assist with the primary research element of the unit.

Resources for secondary research may include library resources, CD ROM, internet sites, specialist publications, video and playback facilities.

A box office resource may also be useful.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres are encouraged to develop links with local venues, and work experience and job shadows can be sought in local venues. Learners can see in real life what tasks are undertaken. Interviews of FOH staff as to roles and responsibilities would be useful.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Arrowsmith K and Venning H – *The Methuen Amateur Theatre Handbook* (Methuen Drama, 2002)
ISBN 9780413755704

Cohen G P – *The Community Theater Handbook – A Complete Guide to Organising and Running a Community Theater* (Greenwood Press, 2003) ISBN 9780325004419

Freakly V and Sutton R – *Essential Guide to Business in the Performing Arts* (Hodder Arnold, 1996)
ISBN 9780340655252

Pick J and Anderton M – *Arts Administration, 2nd edition* (Spon Press, 1995) ISBN 9780419189701

Websites

www.nortechsoftware.co.uk

A box office package

www.tmauk.org

Theatrical Management Association

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	carrying out research into FOH roles
Creative thinkers	devising customer care guidelines
Team workers	carrying out a FOH role.

● 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	using box office systems
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching information, using different sources, and multiple search criteria
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● text and tables ● images ● numbers ● records 	devising job descriptions and customer care guidelines
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	working front of house with the public.