



# Unit 29: Health and Safety in the Workplace

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## Delivery guidance

The aim of this unit is to enable learners to develop knowledge of the legislation and regulations relating to health and safety in a business workplace, and to understand the responsibilities of employers and employees in respect of health and safety in the workplace. Having this knowledge and understanding will enable learners to conduct a workplace health and safety audit, carry out a risk assessment in the workplace, and make appropriate recommendations to address any issues.

## Approaching the unit

Learners could be introduced to this unit by completing an activity that requires them to identify health and safety issues, risks and hazards in different types of business. For example, the chosen businesses could be a manufacturing business, an office environment and a retail outlet. Learners would be expected to identify the risks and hazards in relation to *both* employees and third parties. Following this, learners could identify the potential risks to the business if any of the identified potential health and safety issues materialised. Learners would likely identify possible legal action taken out against them but a teacher-led classroom discussion could get learners to focus on other outcomes when health and safety issues arise, such as:

- increased costs resulting from legal action
- impact of increased costs on profit levels
- impact on the reputation of the business
- potential negative response from consumers, leading to a decrease in market share.

Learners may also be unaware that, in some countries, failure to adhere to health and safety practices may result in criminal prosecution against the owners, leading to, in the most extreme cases, imprisonment of owners/directors.

This approach will allow the teacher to emphasise that, far from being of secondary importance to some of the other business functions, such as finance, marketing and human resources, health and safety is a key management function of all businesses. As such, it must be effectively managed and monitored, and subject to the same rigorous quality checks and performance improvement strategies which are more usually associated with the traditional business functions.

Learners should be introduced to health and safety legislation and the regulations and requirements that form the basis of health and safety practices in all workplaces. A detailed knowledge of health and safety legislation is not required but learners should be familiar with the legislation applied to all businesses and examples of specific health and safety legislation applicable to specialist businesses, such as food preparation and manufacturing businesses that use hazardous substances. Learners can be set a series of tasks that require them to research the relevant health and safety legislation. Government websites will contain useful summaries of such legislation. Learners could be divided into small groups, each allocated specific areas of research.

This research could then form the basis of class presentations, backed up by teacher-led class discussions which reinforce the importance of managing health and safety. The aim is not to create learners who are experts in this field, but to develop a level of knowledge that would be expected of a new employee in an organisation to ensure they comply with health and safety requirements.

This active learning approach should be central to the delivery of this practical unit. If learners are to successfully complete the assignment programme for this unit, they must be encouraged to develop the ability to assess, analyse and evaluate potential health and safety risks within a workplace, and to be able to formulate realistic recommendations for improvements in health and safety practices.

Learners must be able to prioritise and justify their recommendations with reference to the current health and safety legislation. Learners might also suggest recommendations which go above and beyond the current legislation requirements, and which mirror best practice within an industry. However, learners must take care that their recommendations are realistic. One way of determining if a recommendation is realistic is to consider the size of the organisation and its available resources.

These skills can be developed in the activities completed by learners, coupled with a formative assessment schedule that supports the formal summative assessment programme.

This approach could be based on activities that centre on key questions which would be addressed by learners, such as:

- What risks have you identified?
- Why is it a risk?
- What will its impact be on the business, employees and third parties?
- What can be done to reduce the risk (your recommendations)?
- How much will it cost? What are the direct and indirect costs (e.g. training) of implementing your recommendation?
- What will be the timescale for implementing your recommendation?
- What will be the implications for the organisation if your recommendation is not implemented?

Other central themes will be developed when delivering this unit, such as:

- the notion of compliance, and the implications for the organisation and its workforce of non-compliance
- the need for all staff to be made aware of their roles and responsibilities in respect of health and safety in the workplace
- how safe working conditions can contribute towards the success of the organisation.



One final point to emphasise in the delivery of this unit, and one which learners may not be familiar with, is the notion of the 'emotional wellbeing' of individuals in the workforce. Workplace stress, and the increasing demand and pressures of technology and continuous performance improvements, can all take their toll on individuals, resulting in:

- lower productivity
- increased absenteeism
- increased labour turnover
- increased costs for the business.

Learners must be made aware of the strategies that far-sighted employers have introduced to support the welfare of their workforce. Once again, the notion that health and safety is not a key business function should be dispelled.

## **Delivering the unit aims**

Learning aim A focuses on understanding legal and regulatory responsibilities of employers and employees for health and safety in the workplace. Learners must develop an understanding of the key principles of current legislation and regulations, as well as the regulations governing specific sectors. Learners could use case study material of their experiences in full - or part-time employment to study the way organisations implement health and safety policies. Learners could research case study material and be guided towards analysing the causes of hazards. They could carry out workplace risk assessments, possibly starting with their own centre. It would be useful for learners to go on to visit local workplaces and to explore the risks present and the health and safety policies implemented in each organisation. Again, the centre's own health and safety policy and practices could be used as source material.

Learning aim B explores the health and safety factors that impact on practices in workplace environments. Learners will need to consider the procedures for dealing with accidents and emergencies, along with the processes involved in reviewing and evaluating health and safety after events. Questions of financial investment in facilities, or the blocking of fire exits to reduce draughts and save on heating bills, all arise from real-life experience. The learning aim looks at different types of working environments and the kinds of problems that can arise in each. It explores ways to manage both physical and mental health in the workplace. On their own, these topics can be 'dry' but will be brought to life by using real-world scenarios and human interest perspectives.

A good starting-off point for learning aim C is for learners to undertake an audit of the centre's own health and safety policies and procedures. The person responsible for health and safety in the centre could be invited to give an overview of the centre's approach to health and safety and the practical implications for its implementation. This should include reference to:

- how health and safety policies and procedures are communicated to managers, employees and third parties
- arrangements for the induction of new centre staff
- signage and adaptations to the physical environment

- how the emotional wellbeing of the workforce is supported.

Learners could then follow up the presentation with their own on-site audit to evaluate how far the centre has met the requirements of its own health and safety policy and practices. The learners could then write a report as part of the formative assignment schedule; this could be presented to the member of staff in the centre responsible for health and safety, or the member of staff could be invited back into the classroom to receive a verbal report from the learners.

Since learning aim C focuses on health and safety risk assessments in a given work environment to ensure compliance with current regulations, it is advisable for learners to base some learning activities on a selected organisation to gain an appreciation of the possible responsibilities in a business job role. This could be the organisation they work for or one chosen with tutor guidance. This unit deals mainly with legalities in the workplace, and care should be taken to ensure that learners are able to relate this to 'real' situations.

The need for emergency procedures and accident reporting could be taught through practical exercises. Accident report forms can be filled in using a scenario, and examples of organisations' evacuation procedures can be evaluated. An 'at risk' evaluation of security will prove equally useful. A good source of reference would be an organisation's own health and safety policy.

### Assessment model

| Learning aim  | Key content areas   | Recommended assessment approach  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>A</b> Understand legal and regulatory responsibilities of employers and employees for health and safety in the workplace   | <b>A1</b> Health, safety and welfare legislation<br><b>A2</b> Implementation in the workplace<br><b>A3</b> Consequences of non-compliance   | A report identifying relevant health and safety legislation and regulations applicable in different workplace situations.  |
| <b>B</b> Explore health and safety factors that impact practices in workplace environments                                    | <b>B1</b> Impact of work environment and equipment<br><b>B2</b> Managing physical health and safety in the workplace<br><b>B3</b> Managing wellness and employee emotional health | Undertake research for a specific organisation on the health, safety, and welfare procedures in place, supported with a risk assessment and recommendations for improvements to practices and systems. |
| <b>C</b> Conduct health and safety risk assessments in a given work environment to ensure compliance with current regulations | <b>C1</b> Types of workplace hazard and risk<br><b>C2</b> Risk assessments  |  |



## **Assessment guidance**

This unit is internally assessed through two assignments. The first (a report identifying relevant health and safety legislation and regulations applicable in different workplace situations) covers learning aim A. The second covers learning aims B and C (research for a specific organisation on the health, safety and welfare procedures in place, supported with a risk assessment and recommendations for improvements to practices and systems).

Centres are free to determine the structure of the paperwork for the health and safety audits and risk assessments conducted in the final summative assessment. Some centres may decide that such paperwork should be determined by the learner. However, whatever approach is taken, it is strongly suggested that health and safety audits and risk assessments be recorded in a tabular format; examples of such formats are available on relevant websites. For example, in the UK, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), produces a number of templates for conducting risk assessments in a range of different businesses (see [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)).

Learners may select and research their own choice of business organisations in which to conduct their health and safety audit and risk assessment, or the centre may allocate specific organisations to individual learners. Given the delicate nature of some health and safety issues, it is strongly suggested that the centre authorises the choice of the organisation. It is good practice to write a letter to the organisation detailing the nature of the assignment which is being completed by the learner. It is also good practice for a member of the organisation's management team, in which the audit and risk assessment is being conducted, to confirm the authenticity of the evidence submitted by the learner. Throughout the unit, learners will show individuality of thought, and independent collection, collation and judgement of evidence.

## Getting started

This gives you a starting place for one way of delivering the unit, based around the specification.

### Unit 29: Health and Safety in the Workplace

#### Introduction

This unit is best taught by using case studies and real-life examples showing why health and safety policies are so important in the workplace. You can source case studies from trade union material, the government website and local, national and international newspapers and radio stations.

#### Learning aim A: Understand legal and regulatory responsibilities of employers and employees for health and safety in the workplace

- Introduce the unit by asking learners what they consider to be a safe and healthy environment. Have learners identify a variety of ideas that could be used to facilitate a discussion about the types of legislation required to ensure an environment is safe and healthy. Then introduce the major pieces of legislation. For example, a learner may suggest that employees need to wear gloves when using cleaning materials. Follow this up with research into health and safety legislation in different working environments (see the section 'Approaching the Unit' for further details).
- For content area A1, once the major pieces of legislation have been introduced, learners could undertake group research on specific pieces of legislation and present their findings. Presentations could include an element of role-play to highlight the specific risks involved and/or the production of posters to be used in the workplace.
- Content area A2 looks at the implementation of health and safety policies in the workplace. Learners must understand the health and safety responsibilities of key personnel within a selected organisation. Learners could select an organisation with which they are already familiar and research the risks present in that organisation, and the health and safety policies in place to manage those risks. If learners are in part-time employment they may want to study their own organisation. They could identify the specialist roles and responsibilities of individuals within the workforce who are responsible for health and safety; for example, health and safety officer, first aider, fire officer, site maintenance.
- To cover content area A3, learners must understand the consequences of non-compliance with health and safety regulations. Learners could work in pairs to research case studies that highlight the issues that can arise and the penalties that can occur through non-compliance.
- Invite a guest speaker to talk to learners about the legal and regulatory responsibilities of employers and employees for health and safety in the workplace.

### **Learning aim B: Explore health and safety factors that impact practices in workplace environments**

- Content area B1 focuses on the impact of the work environment on health and safety. Give learners specific case studies involving different working environments so they can analyse the risks present in a variety of workplaces. Introduce simple case studies of extreme cases when workplace accidents have occurred (perhaps from the news) that easily highlight the need for a specific piece of legislation. Then ask learners to research more complex cases involving multiple pieces of legislation. If learners have been involved in work experience, they may be able to draw on this and analyse the effect of health and safety legislation on that working environment.
- Content area B2 considers managing physical health and safety in the workplace. This links with content area B3, where learners must analyse how having a safe and healthy environment contributes to a productive working environment and improves the emotional health of employees. Learners must first understand what makes a productive working environment. They could work as a group to make a mind map of important factors. This should include factors in the physical environment, the equipment used in an organisation, and how the employee feels if they are given the appropriate facilities and resources to undertake their work. You could discuss, with the group, what can happen if workers are not healthy or safe. The learners could identify problems such as short- and long-term absenteeism, accidents, legal proceedings and reduced efficiency; each of these could have a financial impact on the business. Learners could be asked to analyse the practical elements of the physical environment and equipment in relation to reducing costs; for example, issuing an employee with the correct safety equipment compared with the costs of absenteeism due to injury.
- Invite a guest speaker to discuss health and safety factors that impact practices in workplace environments.
- Content area B3 focuses on managing wellness and employee emotional health. Lead a class discussion on workplace factors that influence the emotional health of employees (such as stress, bullying, workload and work patterns). Then encourage learners to engage in a role-play session, looking at how organisations can help to manage the emotional health of their employees.

### **Learning aim C: Conduct health and safety risk assessments in a given work environment to ensure compliance with current regulations**

- Content area C1 focuses on types of workplace hazard and risk. Ask learners to identify a range of specific working environments (for example, a building site, an office, a shop) and research the specific requirements that these environments may have. In small groups, learners then select different items of equipment or different physical environments, and describe the requirements of the legislation associated with them. For example, they could consider display screen equipment for an office, moving and handling regulations in a hospital, or electricity and noise in a factory. Photographs of offices and shops could be used to highlight health and safety features, such as emergency exit signs and workstation ergonomics. Ask learners to design their own healthy and safe working environment and the equipment that it must contain.
- Content area C2 covers risk assessments. Introduce learners to a variety of risk assessment formats and ask them to identify the common components of a risk assessment. Learners then design their own risk assessment form for a selected environment, incorporating

some or all of the components they identified. Within their plan, learners should consider the format, content and how often the risk assessment should be completed.

- To conclude, learners must carry out a risk assessment for a selected work environment. Introduce this by having the learners observe a risk assessment being carried out in a real working environment. The learners then carry out their own risk assessment, using either the documentation they created for content area C2 or the documents normally used by the organisation they are assessing.
- Invite a guest speaker to speak to the learners about the way health and safety risk assessments are carried out in their workplace to ensure compliance with current regulations.
- Ask learners to research the costs of implementing recommendations drawn from a health and safety audit and risk assessment. They should clearly differentiate between the direct and indirect costs associated with their recommendations, and the potential benefits which would arise to the organisation if the recommendations were implemented. Recommendations should be prioritised, with those at the top of the list focusing on meeting the relevant statutory requirements.





## Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications, and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit links with all other units in the specification.

### Resources

In addition to the resources listed below, publishers are likely to produce Pearson-endorsed textbooks that support this unit of the BTEC International Level 3 Qualifications in Business. Check the Pearson website (<http://qualifications.pearson.com/endorsed-resources>) for more information as titles achieve endorsement.

Some of these resources are UK government publications. Centres may wish to consider similar government publications in their own country.

#### Textbooks

Atkin, B and Brooks, A – *Total Facilities Management* (Blackwell Science (UK), 2000) ISBN 9781405186599

Barclay, L – *Small Business Employment Law for Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons, 2005) ISBN 9780764570520

Frohwen, R and Smith, G – *The Pocket Idiot's Guide to Copyrights* (Alpha Books, 2004) ISBN 9781592572281

Health and Safety Executive – *Successful Health and Safety Management* (Guidance Booklets) (HSE, 1997) ISBN 9780717612765

Martin, M and Jackson, T – *Employment Law Pocketbook* (Management Pocketbooks, 2004) ISBN 9781903776445

Ridley, J – *Health and Safety in Brief* (Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd, 2004) ISBN 9780750686396

Stranks, J – *Health and Safety Law*, 4th Edition (Prentice Hall, 2001) ISBN 9780131976467

Stranks, J – *A Manager's Guide to Health and Safety at Work*, 6th Edition (Kogan Page, 2001) ISBN 9781846964800

#### Journals

*Business Review* (Philip Allan Magazines) – a journal designed for Business Studies learners that includes relevant theoretical articles, as well as information on companies and markets.

*Health and Safety Commission Newsletter* (Health and Safety Executive)

#### Videos

TED-Ed offers a variety of relevant education videos. Search online for 'TED-Ed'.

TED Talks offers online videos of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less) covering almost all topics. Search online for 'Ted Talks'.

## Websites

The Health and Safety Executive website is useful and can be found by searching online for 'UK government Health and Safety Executive'

*Pearson is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites. It is essential for tutors to preview each website before using it in class so as to ensure that the URL is still accurate, relevant and appropriate. We suggest that tutors bookmark useful websites and consider enabling students to access them through the school/college intranet.*