



Unit 32: Business and Environmental Sustainability

Delivery guidance

Approaching the unit

Increasing awareness of the fragility of our environment has spurred both businesses and customers to consider the sustainability of business practices. Many organisations are working towards improved sustainability by reducing emissions and waste and by conserving energy. This unit concentrates on factors that influence business procedures and activities and their impact on the environment.

Before embarking on the content of the unit, present your learners with a clear definition and associated principles of 'sustainability'. One way you could do this is by asking learners to use the internet to research and record different definitions. You could then lead a class discussion to agree the definition that will be followed throughout the duration of the unit. Whatever definition you decide on, it should be based on a set of agreed principles, often referred to as the 'pillars of corporate sustainability'. Such principles cover aspects such as people, planet and profits.

This unit has many links to units that learners may have covered previously, particularly *Unit 20: Business Ethics*. However, no previous knowledge of business is assumed. It is therefore not a necessity to have covered certain units prior to delivering this one. All learners can use their experiences as customers, users and part-time employees as a starting point. This will give learners a real-life view of business.

The unit will explore how business activities can affect the environment and ways in which business organisations can aim to improve sustainability while still meeting the needs of their stakeholders. Learners could find examples of businesses in their local area and consider how their chosen businesses balance satisfying their stakeholders with being environmentally sustainable.

Learners should then explore the measures available to business organisations to reduce environmental impact and improve sustainability. They should consider the business activities of their chosen organisations and how these affect the environment, and look at how their organisations are planning and implementing changes to make them more environmentally sustainable.

When selecting case study material, care should be taken to ensure that it includes the key functional areas listed in the unit content. For strategic planning, learners could start by investigating their own school or college's strategic sustainability plan, perhaps supported by a talk from a visiting governor who could explain the planning process and what internal and external pressures influenced the plan. Learners could check objectives to see if they are SMART. Learners could undertake an activity where they are given some basic facts about a sustainability proposal for an organisation and have to design an organisational structure, write a mission statement and set strategic objectives.

A practical example of the inherent conflicts in promoting sustainable business practices could involve the learners in investigating the costs of business equipment such as computers or photocopiers. Learners could be asked to research the costs of such equipment and to make procurement recommendations based on environmental sustainability. Learners may find that their recommendations are more expensive than less 'environmentally friendly' alternatives that provide the same functions but at a lower initial cost. Similar issues may arise in respect of raw materials

and components used in the production process. Given that in most of the other units in the programme the emphasis will be on the importance of efficiency savings and cost control when conducting business activities, learners must begin to understand the cost-benefit features of sustainable business practices.

Research could involve the use of two international companies taking account of the impact that globalisation has on their activities. Alternatively, use could be made of any established links with countries in different regions. Learners should compare and contrast the environmental impact of businesses in different parts of the world and how the political, social and geographical situations in different countries affect a business's ability to become more sustainable. They will need information on 'doing business' in another country, perhaps through a guest speaker, learner-to-learner links, DVDs, publications, visits or internet research. It is useful for learners to see how sustainability is approached in different ways in different countries.

Learners should be introduced to the basic principles of environmental legislation and its importance in providing a framework in which businesses operate.

To complete this unit, your learners will need access to a range of research materials, which could include sources of information and tools on the internet, journals, magazines and books.

You can use a range of delivery methods in this unit, such as:

- discussions, e.g. class and small group discussions on business and environmental sustainability
- individual or group presentations, e.g. covering stakeholders and their importance in developing and maintaining a sustainable business
- case studies illustrating sustainable enterprise for both well-known and lesser-known businesses
- videos, e.g. TED talks on business and environmental sustainability.

Group work is an acceptable form of delivery, but you must ensure that each learner produces sufficient evidence on their own for assessment.

You can involve local employers in the delivery of this unit by inviting them as:

- guest speakers
- members of the audience for learner presentations
- contributors to case study material
- providers of work experience for learners, and of business materials as exemplars
- mentors for learners.



Assessment model

Learning aim	Key content areas	Recommended assessment approach
A Explore the relationship between business activities and their impact on the environment	A1 Business activities A2 Environmental issues A3 Business and environments in conflict	A critical review of how contrasting organisations can reduce the impact their business activities have on the environment.
B Examine measures available to business organisations to reduce environmental impact and improve sustainability	B1 Measures to reduce environmental impacts B2 Improving environmental sustainability B3 Benefits to businesses of improving environmental sustainability	
C Investigate ways to improve environmental impact and sustainability for a business organisation	C1 Investigation methods C2 Planning for improved practice	A report investigating how an organisation can improve its impact on environmental sustainability.

Assessment guidance

This unit is internally assessed through two assignments. The first covers learning aims A and B. The second covers learning aim C. Your learners should be given the opportunity of engaging in assignments that develop and support their knowledge of business and environmental sustainability, as well as utilising their generic skills.

Research activities should involve your learners using different source materials that require them to present their findings in a variety of formats such as reports, business articles and presentations. In their completed assignments, your learners should show evidence of data analysis and evaluation. This data analysis should be used to inform and justify any conclusions and recommendations that are included in the final submission.

For this unit, learners must have access to information on a range of businesses, including local, national and international.

It is expected that learners in a cohort will individually select and research their choice of business organisations. Throughout the unit, learners will show individuality of thought, independent collection, collation and judgement of evidence. The business organisations selected by the learner for learning aims A, B and C should be contrasting in terms of their features; for example, ownership and liability, purpose, sector, scope and/or size.

Getting started

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

Unit 32: Business and Environmental Sustainability
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Learners will study the organisational structure and functions of a range of companies and will consider how their business activities affect the environment. The unit introduces learners to a range of measures that can be put in place to improve business sustainability. It looks at potential conflicts between business activities, the desire for profit and ensuring environmental sustainability. Learners will consider the purposes of different organisations, the influence of stakeholders and how businesses organise themselves through strategic planning and organisational structures.</p> <p>Learners will also need to consider the environmental impact of businesses not adhering to sustainability legislation. They will learn about stakeholders involved with the environment such as the United Nations Environmental Programme, the UK Environment Agency and Greenpeace. Learners will also consider some of the benefits to businesses of improving their environmental footprint.</p>
<p>Learning aim A: Explore the relationship between business activities and their impact on the environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin by introducing the aims of the unit, giving an overview of the content of the learning aims, and explaining how your learners will be assessed. This would give a basis for the types of activities in which your learners will be engaged.• Lead a class discussion to agree a working definition of 'sustainability' in a business context. Learners research different definitions and the class agrees a definition that will be referenced throughout the delivery of the unit.• Learners could also maintain a glossary of key terms used when researching sustainability, such as carbon emissions, offsetting, environmentally-friendly business practices, the triple bottom line and carbon footprint.• Ask learners to share stories about their knowledge and experiences of working within different businesses, and to consider how environmentally sustainable their organisation is. You could then provide initial input for your learners on the different types of business ownership and how these relate to the operation of a business.• Learners need to develop an understanding of business activities that affect the environment (for example, the need to raise revenue and profits, to stimulate sales growth and to comply with environmental legislation). You could lead a group discussion looking at how business needs and environmental needs sometimes come into conflict. Learners could work in small groups to carry out secondary research on a range of businesses by looking at their websites, many of which have 'About us' pages that contain useful information regarding business activities, ownership, size and, increasingly, mission statements on how the company is aiming to operate in a more sustainable fashion. This could be followed by primary research, consisting of independent or accompanied visits to different businesses, to learn more about how the organisations are becoming more environmentally sustainable.• You could introduce the topic of environmental stakeholders by inviting a guest speaker from a local environmental group to come and speak to the learners about the issues facing the



environment as a result of business activity. They could also discuss any work they are doing with local businesses to encourage sustainability. Following the talk, learners could go on to work in small groups to research national and international environmental stakeholders. Allocate each group a different stakeholder (e.g. the United Nations Environmental Programme, the UK Environmental Agency, Greenpeace); learners make a presentation about their chosen stakeholder to present to the class.

Learning aim B: Examine measures available to business organisations to reduce environmental impact and improve sustainability

- This learning aim looks at the measures available to businesses to reduce the environmental impact of their business practices and operations. It also considers the business case for sustainability by looking at how increased efficiency and environmental sustainability can be beneficial to a business organisation.
- Encourage learners to work in small groups to create a group presentation on the benefits and impact of recycling and energy conservation.
- Use case studies of businesses that have successfully reduced their environmental impact and improved sustainability. You could ask a guest speaker from one such company to come and speak to the learners about how they improved their business practices to become more environmentally sustainable. Learners should consider what impact this has had on the stakeholders of the business, such as the owners, employees, customers and suppliers. Are these impacts all positive or are some negative? Lead a class discussion to get learners to consider their opinions.
- Learners could be asked to make recommendations in respect of the procurement of office equipment or office supplies that would highlight the cost/benefit issues relating to environmental sustainability in a practical business context.
- Encourage learners to conduct individual research into the potential benefits to businesses of improving environmental sustainability. For example, reducing the amount of energy used reduces costs and so should increase profits.
- Watch video clips on long- and short-term sustainability projects and then have a class discussion on the topic.

Learning aim C: Investigate ways to improve environmental impact and sustainability for a business organisation

- For this learning aim, each learner chooses a company to research. Learners produce a report on their chosen business, exploring the ways it can improve its environmental impact and how it can conduct business in a more sustainable manner.
- Introduce the learning aim by leading a group discussion on sustainable development strategies in different economic sectors/industries.
- Work with the learners to create a timetable for how and when they will produce their reports. They must plan their research, carry it out and create a clear picture of the current situation in which their business is operating. Learners must then go on to make suggestions about how and why their chosen company can change in order to become more environmentally sustainable.
- Direct learners towards appropriate video clips looking at what can be done to improve environmental impact and sustainability for a business organisation, in order to give them some ideas for their projects.
- Once learners have produced a report on their chosen business, they present their findings to the group. This gives all learners a wide range of examples of different businesses and how they



can become more sustainable. It would be useful if some learners researched local businesses, some looked at organisations in other countries and others multinational companies. You could follow the presentations with a brief group discussion looking at how companies in different areas of the world are addressing climate change.



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

This unit links to:

- Unit 1: Exploring Business
- Unit 3: Business Finance
- Unit 20: Business Ethics

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.

Textbooks

- Baker, S – *Sustainable Development* (Routledge, 2005) ISBN 9780415282116
- Bell, S and Morse, S – *Sustainability Indicators: Measuring the Immeasurable?* 2nd Edition (Earthscan, 2008) ISBN 9781844072996
- Blewitt, J – *Understanding Sustainable Development* (Earthscan, 2008) ISBN 9781844074549
- Blowfield, M – *Business and Sustainability* (Oxford University Press, 2013) ISBN 9780199642984
- Chiras, DD and Reganold, JP – *Natural Resource Conservation: Management for a Sustainable Future* (Benjamin Cummings, 2010) ISBN 9780132251389
- Defra – *The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy: Cm. 6467* (Stationery Office Books, 2005) ISBN 9780101646727
- Palmer, A and Hartley, B – *The Business Environment* (McGraw-Hill, 2006) ISBN 9780077109905
- World Commission on Environment and Development – *Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press, 1987) ISBN 9780192820808
- Worthington, I and Britton, C – *The Business Environment* (Financial Times/Prentice Hall, 2006) ISBN 9780273704249

Journals

- Business Review Magazine (Phillip Allan Publishers)
- The Economist (The Economist Newspaper Group Inc)

Podcasts

There are a wide range of podcasts available online looking at business and environmental sustainability. You could start by searching online for 'top 10 sustainability podcasts'.

Videos

- TED-Ed offers a variety of relevant education videos. Search online for 'ted ed'.
- TED offers online videos of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less) covering almost all topics. Search for 'ted talks' online.

Websites

- UNESCO has a useful section on its website called 'Education for Sustainable Development'. It can be found by searching online for 'Unesco Education for Sustainable development'.
- European Union Business Information Service has a useful website for keeping up to date with business news. It can be found by searching online for 'eu business'.
- The European Sustainable Development Network has a useful website that can be found by searching online for 'esdn'.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has a useful website that can be found by searching online for 'fao'.
- Green Futures has a useful website that can be found by searching online for 'forum for the future green futures'.
- One Planet Living has a useful website that can be accessed by searching online for 'one living planet'.
- A whole range of official UK statistics can be found on the government's statistics website. It can be found by searching online for 'UK government statistics'.
- The Sustainable Development Commission has a useful website that can be found by searching online for 'sustainable development commission'.
- The University of Salford, Manchester has a useful website with free materials and case studies. It can be found by searching online for 'the times 100 business case studies'.
- Unilever is a company that prides itself on its sustainable practices. Information can be found on its website by searching online for 'Unilever'.
- The United Nations has an Environment Programme. Information about the program can be found by searching online for 'United Nations environment programme'.
- The World Resources Institute has a useful website that can be accessed by searching online for 'World Resources Institute'.

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.