

BSBIND201

Work effectively in a business environment

Release 1

Learner guide

BSBIND201

Work effectively in a business environment

Release 1

Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.1

Copyright Warning

**This product is copyrighted to Aspire Training & Consulting
(ABN 51 054 306 428).**

Aspire Training & Consulting owns all copyright to its products. Except as permitted by the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) or unless you have obtained the specific written permission of Aspire Training & Consulting, you must not:

- reproduce or photocopy this product in whole or in part
- publish this product in whole or in part
- cause this product in whole or in part to be transmitted
- store this product in whole or in part in a retrieval system including a computer
- record this product in whole or in part either electronically or mechanically
- resell this product in whole or in part.

Aspire Training & Consulting:

- invests significant time and resources in creating its original products
- protects its copyright material
- will enforce its rights in copyright material
- reserves its legal rights to claim its loss and damage or an account of profits made resulting from infringements of its copyright.

Aspire is committed to developing quality resources that meet the needs of our customers. However, occasionally Aspire finds, or is notified of, errors. Please refer to our website at www.aspirelr.com.au to see if there are any updates that may be relevant to you.

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this book is accurate; however, the author and publisher accept no responsibility for any loss, damage or injury arising from such information.

Except where an information source is acknowledged, the names and details of individuals and organisations used in examples are fictitious and have been devised for learning purposes only. Any similarity to actual people or organisations is unintentional.

All websites referred to in this unit were accessed and deemed appropriate at time of publication.

Aspire Training & Consulting apologises unreservedly for any copyright infringement that may have occurred and invites copyright owners to contact Aspire so any violation may be rectified.

BSBIND201 Work effectively in a business environment Release 1

© 2017 Aspire Training & Consulting
Level 1, 464 St Kilda Road
MELBOURNE VIC 3004 AUSTRALIA
Phone: (03) 9820 1300

First published April 2017

Cover design: Rewind Creative
Printer: Doculink Australia Pty Ltd, 1d/28 Rogers Street, Port Melbourne VIC 3207

e-ISBN 978-1-76059-390-2 (PDF version)
ISBN 978-1-76059-389-6

Contact details

Participant
Name:
Start date:
Phone number:
Email:
Work location
Name:
Address:
Postal address:
Workplace supervisor name:
Phone number:
Fax:
Email:
Registered Training Organisation (RTO)
Name:
Address:
Postal address (if different):
Phone number:
Fax:
RTO contact name:
Mobile:
Email:

Contents

Before you begin	vii
Topic 1: Work within organisational requirements	1
1A Identify and read the organisation's requirements and responsibilities and seek advice	2
1B Understand employee and employer rights and responsibilities	10
1C Comply with relevant legal responsibilities and organisational goals and objectives	28
1D Identify roles and responsibilities of colleagues and immediate supervisors	40
1E Inform the right person if standards and values are not upheld	42
1F Contribute to a safe work environment	46
Summary	50
Learning checkpoint 1: Work within organisational requirements	51
Topic 2: Work in a team	65
2A Be courteous and helpful at all times	66
2B Complete allocated tasks	68
2C Seek assistance when difficulties arise	69
2D Ask questions to clarify instructions and responsibilities	73
2E Use a non-discriminatory attitude in all communications with others	76
Summary	79
Learning checkpoint 2: Work in a team	80
Topic 3: Develop effective work habits	85
3A Identify work and personal priorities and achieve a work–life balance	86
3B Apply time-management strategies to work duties	90
3C Dress and behave appropriately for the job role	94
Summary	100
Learning checkpoint 3: Develop effective work habits	101

Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBIND201 Work effectively in a business environment*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples and case studies	Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help
Summary	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.



Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews documentation to identify relevant information for requirements of job role and organisation
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes documentation necessary for work tasks and reporting requirements using clear, concise and accurate grammar and language
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies requirements and responsibilities of job role and organisation by using effective questioning and listening techniques to seek advice, information and feedback Contributes to an effective working environment by communicating with others, by behaving courteously and using non-discriminatory language
Navigate the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows clear instructions within defined level of responsibility Identifies and accepts responsibility for working within common law work frameworks Recognises organisational expectations and follows explicit protocols and procedures Seeks clarification when required
Interact with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises common differences in other people and implements basic strategies to address own reaction to these differences Uses basic communication strategies to implement and complete work tasks including seeking advice when required
Get the work done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows clearly defined instructions and sequencing, and monitors own progress for tasks, seeking assistance when necessary

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Work within organisational requirements	1A Identify and read the organisation's requirements and responsibilities and seek advice	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Understand employee and employer rights and responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Comply with relevant legal responsibilities and organisational goals and objectives	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Identify roles and responsibilities of colleagues and immediate supervisors	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1E Inform the right person if standards and values are not upheld	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1F Contribute to a safe work environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2 Work in a team	2A Be courteous and helpful at all times	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Complete allocated tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Seek assistance when difficulties arise	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Ask questions to clarify instructions and responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

continued ...

... continued

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
	2E Use a non-discriminatory attitude in all communications with others	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3 Develop effective work habits	3A Identify work and personal priorities and achieve a work-life balance	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Apply time-management strategies to work duties	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Dress and behave appropriately for job role	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

Topic 1

Work within organisational requirements

Employees and employers have responsibilities and requirements that must be applied when working in a business environment. Most organisations have a clear set of goals and objectives that govern how they operate and set out what they want to achieve. Working in a way that supports these goals and objectives contributes to the success of the organisation. In all workplaces there are legal and regulatory requirements that are applied to ensure everyone is able to do their job safely, effectively and without discrimination.

Understanding the legal and organisational requirements, employee and employer responsibilities and the direction of the organisation will enable you to work effectively in most business environments.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Identify and read the organisation's requirements and responsibilities and seek advice
- 1B Understand employee and employer rights and responsibilities
- 1C Comply with relevant legal responsibilities and organisational goals and objectives
- 1D Identify roles and responsibilities of colleagues and immediate supervisors
- 1E Inform the right person if standards and values are not upheld
- 1F Contribute to a safe work environment

1A

Identify and read the organisation's requirements and responsibilities and seek advice

When a person starts a new job, it is important to ensure they have a good understanding of the requirements of the organisation and the responsibilities of their job. In many cases the new employee will attend an induction program or their supervisor or manager will discuss what they need to know about the job and the organisation.

There are specific rules, regulations, policies and procedures that all employers and employees must understand and follow. For example, all organisations and employees must abide by work health and safety (WHS) regulations, which are compulsory in Australia. There are penalties that individuals and organisations can incur for not meeting these regulatory requirements.

There are many ways to find out what your organisation expects of you and what policies and procedures you need to understand and follow.



Induction programs

Most employers run an induction or initiation session, or provide an induction kit for new employees to introduce them to the organisation. An induction session can be a formal session where the employee is given detailed information about the organisation and the roles and responsibilities of each department; or it may be conducted informally, with the employee taken around the office and introduced to each worker. Large employers use online training modules as part of their staff induction. The type of induction offered depends on the size and nature of the organisation.

An induction kit generally contains a manual of policies and procedures and other information relating to the organisation. The policies and procedures manual may have a plan of the office and an organisational chart showing employees' names, their titles and the location of their offices, as well as the new employee's position description and list of duties. Ensure your induction kit is readily available so you can easily refer to it when necessary.

At the end of the induction period, you may be asked to sign a form or complete an online checklist stating that you have read and understood the information provided to you.



What does an induction program include?

Most induction programs or introduction into an organisation follow a similar line.

Induction programs usually cover:

- legal requirements such as WHS obligations
- regulatory requirements; for example, in the government sector certain forms need to be completed
- terms and conditions of the job such as holiday and sick leave entitlements, hours of work and reporting requirements
- the strategic directions of the organisation, its policies and procedures and organisational structure
- annual reports, sales reports and promotional brochures
- payroll and time sheet arrangements
- introductions to key members of staff
- specific job-role training.

Paper and electronic documentation

There are two types of documents used in an organisation. Each type has pros and cons to be aware of, some of which are outlined below.

Paper-based information

Documents in paper-based format will be available in the organisation's library, a central filing system or a central office. If you use a paper-based version of a document, particularly one related to a policy or procedure, always ensure you are using the latest version of the document. Check the date at the start of the document, or ask your supervisor if you are unsure.

It is easier to read long or complex documents in hard copy (on paper). People often print out important documents to proofread (check for mistakes) even if the document will be distributed electronically.

Electronic information

Electronic documents are kept on a central electronic file system or an organisation's intranet. This is convenient when there are a large number of policies, procedures and forms, or if frequent changes are made to the documents. Always check the central electronic filing system to make sure you have the latest version, rather than relying on a copy that you printed out or downloaded earlier.

Electronic documents (soft copy) are easy to search, update and distribute to staff in remote locations.

Where to find help to understand documents

When you start a job it may be difficult to locate documents and understand particular words and phrases. If this happens, you can obtain information and explanations from a number of sources. People will be able to help you understand documents related to their particular work areas. For example, if you are not sure about an item on your time sheet, then you can ask a colleague in your payroll or human resources department.

In some cases, you will need to make an appointment to talk about documents you don't understand. This will allow the person you are consulting to set aside time to speak to you. In the case of a brief query, you can make a phone call or send an email.

Assistance to understand and interpret documents may be obtained from:

- your supervisor
- a more-experienced colleague
- a department manager, such as the human resources manager
- a contact person at a client's organisation
- an industry body or association
- a union

- WorkSafe
- the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Clarify organisational documents

At times you may need to ask for further information about where documents are located, or request that certain information contained in documents is clarified or explained in a different way. It could be that the document was not well written in the first place, and your questions may prompt a change in the way documents are worded. Or the document may present concepts and vocabulary that is new to you.

If you have trouble reading workplace documents due to a disability or condition that makes reading a challenge, or because English is not your first language, don't hesitate to ask for help. There is always someone who is willing to help you understand.

Never pretend you understand a document when you really don't – this could lead to many problems. It is always better to ask questions than to make a mistake that could be costly or dangerous to yourself or someone else.

Organisational strategic plans

An important document in any organisation is the strategic plan, which outlines the organisation's vision, mission, goals and objectives for the future.

As a management tool, a strategic plan is used to:

- help an organisation do a better job
- focus the organisation's energy
- ensure that members of the organisation are working toward the same goals
- assess and adjust the organisation's direction in response to a changing environment.

Example: mission statement and vision

The mission of the organisation or the purpose for its existence is stated in general terms in the mission statement. The vision of an organisation describes what it desires for its future. You will often see a company's vision and mission displayed in the reception area or on the home page of the website.

Mission

Our mission is to provide the best-quality clothing to our customers at the best price.

Vision

We see ourselves as being the name that springs to everyone's mind when they think of buying clothes.

Other documents used in the operations of the organisation

There are many other documents that are used in the operations of an organisation. These may include the following.

Business plan

A business plan documents the organisation's short- and long-term objectives and the strategies for achieving them. It sets the direction for the business and keeps the organisation on track once it is up and running. It is also necessary for an organisation to present its business plan when seeking finance. Other documents arising from the business plan include monthly reports and annual reports.

Department plan

Each department or team in an organisation has its own plan to show how it fits in with the overall goals of the organisation. Each employee needs to have their own individual work plan outlining their specific tasks that contribute to the organisation's bigger goals.

Policies manual

An organisation's policies and procedures manual outlines all the procedures that employees need to follow so they can do their job effectively. The manual tells staff about their legal obligations as an employee, their employment contract, leave entitlements, travel arrangements, performance and development reviews, professional development processes and meeting procedures.

Charter

A charter sets out the standards of behaviour expected of staff when dealing with people both inside and outside the organisation. These detailed guidelines ensure that staff behaviour is consistent throughout the organisation. For example, there will be procedures to follow for answering the telephone, dealing with customer complaints and following up customer queries.

Quality assurance plan

Many organisations have a policy of continually updating and improving their systems and processes. This may be part of a focus on improving the overall quality of the organisation, or it may be done to meet the accreditation requirements that apply in some industries.

Documents relating to the legal requirements of an organisation

As well as documents to help in the running of their business, organisations must also provide a range of documents to satisfy legal requirements. The following documents relate to the legal requirements of an organisation.

Legislation	Work health and safety policies, procedures and programs Providing a safe work environment is an important responsibility for all employers, who must follow work health and safety (WHS) legislation. WHS information may be documented in a special booklet or included in the organisation's policies and procedures manual. WHS notices for the safe operation of equipment may be displayed near the machines. Evacuation procedures may be displayed in central locations in the office. Many organisations periodically run training programs and hand out information brochures or leaflets.
Policy	Access and equity principles and anti-discrimination policies An organisation may outline its policies on access, equity and discrimination in its policies and procedures manual, or include them in a separate document. These policies explain how the organisation will act on access and equity issues. Employers are required by law to make sure they do not discriminate on the basis of sex, age, race, religion or disability when making decisions about their employees.
Codes of practice	Codes of practice Many industries also have a code of practice that defines legal and ethical behaviour, such as privacy and confidentiality issues. Codes of practice provide advice on how an industry can comply with laws and regulations relating to it. Encompassed in most codes of conduct are ethical standards. Ethical standards set a benchmark from which to perform in the workplace.

Documents relating to multiple areas

Many documents, policies and procedures relate to more than just one area of operation of the organisation. For example, WHS is a legal requirement, but it is also an important part of the general functioning of the organisation. Some documents may be found in more than one location, or there may be simplified versions that have been written for particular people in the workplace to use.

In some cases, you will not be able to read a certain document because you do not have the right level of authority or security. Some documents are kept confidential and can only be read by managers or supervisors. Others may only be available to people who are members of a particular working group. For example, an incident report related to a health and safety issue may only be available to the WHS representative, the manager and the employee involved in the incident. Limiting access to some documents protects important information and ensures the privacy of employees and employers.



Practice task 1

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Maslow has just started work as an administrative assistant for a large government department. When he arrives, he finds out that several people have recently been made redundant in the department, and one person has just been promoted. He has an induction kit with the department's organisational chart, but the chart is quite complex. Maslow notices that his position is listed as reporting to three people. He is not sure whether the chart he has been given reflects the recent changes to staff.

1. Is it possible that Maslow is meant to report to more than one person in the organisation?

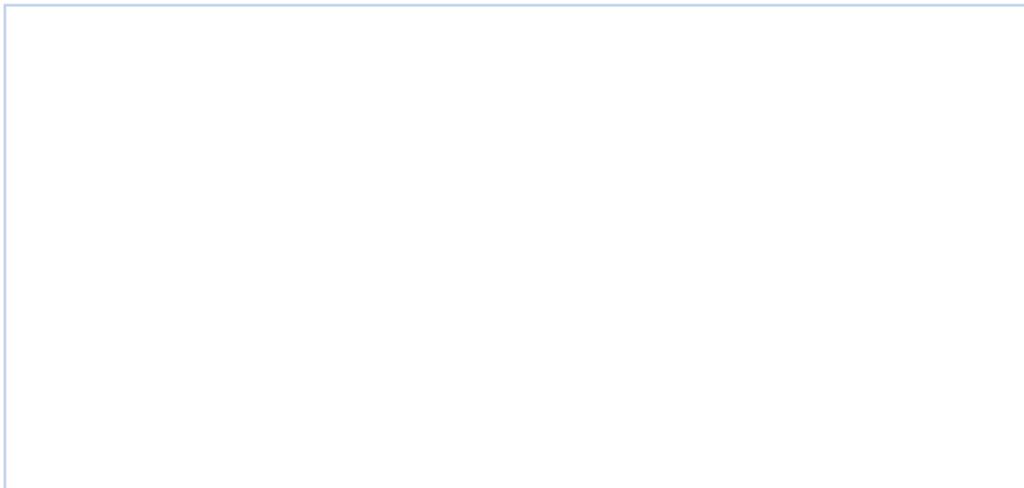
continued ...

... continued

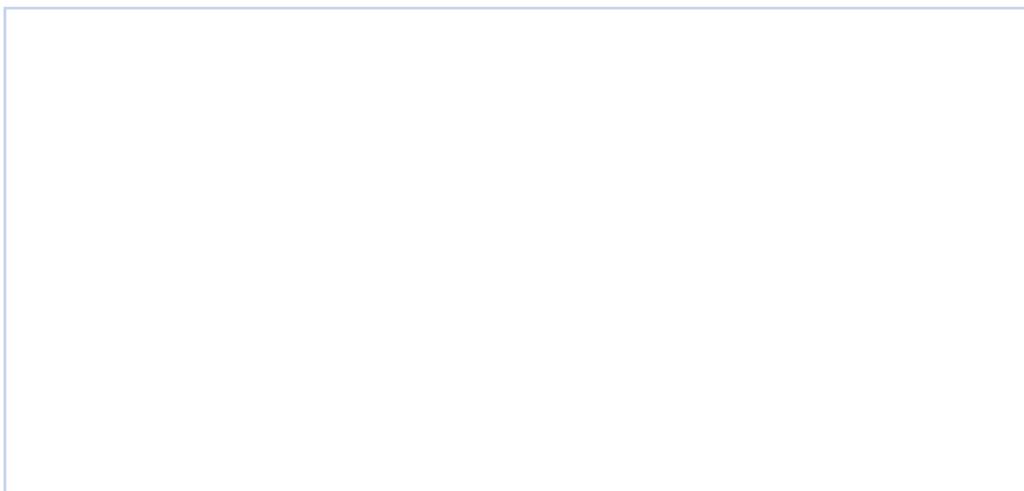
2. What reasons might there be for more than one name being listed on the chart for Maslow to report to?



3. Who would be a good person for Maslow to ask about this problem?



4. What difficulties might occur if Maslow does not find out whether the chart is up to date or not?



1B

Understand employee and employer rights and responsibilities

All employees have a right to the entitlements and conditions of employment that are outlined in their award or contract of employment.

Terms and conditions of employment

When you are employed, the terms and conditions of your employment should be clearly explained to you.

Your terms and conditions of employment cover important matters such as:

- employment status (temporary or permanent)
- employment type (full time, part time or casual)
- hours of work
- start and finish times
- breaks
- whether overtime is expected
- recreation and personal leave entitlements
- salary and other remuneration.

Employment arrangements

Performance incentives are sometimes built into employment arrangements, such as a wage rise linked to achieving a certain level of performance.

When you start a new job, you need to be clear about your employment arrangements. Remember to seek advice if you are not sure about what your arrangements are.

Employment arrangements may be awards or agreements.



Awards

An award is a legally binding document made by a state or federal industrial court or commission. It sets out the rights and obligations of employers and employees covered by the award in relation to rates of pay and conditions of employment. Awards apply to whole industries or sectors of industry. For example, most administrative workers come under the Administrative and Clerical Officers' (Conditions of Service) Award.

The award an employee is covered by generally provides for public holidays, annual leave, personal and long service leave and superannuation, among other matters. Superannuation is an arrangement whereby a certain amount of your wages, and a contribution from your employer, is paid into a superannuation fund. Its purpose is to provide savings for you to use in your retirement.

Awards establish a minimum level for most basic terms and conditions. Whether you get more than the minimum depends on, for example, your value to the organisation, your length of service and the economic conditions in the enterprise and elsewhere.



Agreements

Like awards, an agreement (such as an enterprise agreement or other registered agreement) sets out the rights, entitlements and obligations of employers and employees. The main difference between awards and enterprise agreements is that enterprise agreements only apply to the employees of one organisation and not the whole sector.

Enterprise agreements are a voluntary agreement between employers and employees. In most cases, employees will seek to have a union to represent their interests in these negotiations. Like awards, enterprise agreements can be state or federal. When a workplace has a registered agreement in place, the award does not apply; however, the pay rate of the registered agreement cannot be less than the pay rate in the award. For more information, visit the Fair Work Ombudsman website at: www.fairwork.gov.au/awards-and-agreements/agreements.

Employee rights

One right that all employees have is the right to union representation.

Unions are associations that seek to improve working conditions for their members. They represent a variety of industries and occupations in Australia.

All employees have a right to:

- belong to a union
- be represented by a union when negotiating workplace agreements
- have union assistance when they believe they have been treated unfairly.

Right to union representation

Unions seek to improve the conditions under which people work. People join them because the unions have greater bargaining power with employers and the government than a single person.

For example, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) is the peak national body for all trade unions in Australia and represents two million Australian workers and their families. Each state has an ACTU branch, known as a Trades and Labour Council. The role of a union is outlined here.

The role of a union

To represent its members in negotiations over terms and conditions including hours of work, rest breaks, rates of pay, annual leave, long service leave and overtime

To provide advice and support on health, safety, redundancy, discrimination and welfare issues

To represent its members in disputes with employers over matters such as redundancy pay, notice of termination and stand-down issues



The right to a safe and healthy workplace

As an employee, you have the right to a safe working environment that is free from hazards and not harmful to your health. The level of care and safety required depends on the type of work you do. For example, if you work for a chemical company you may need to wear protective clothing. A manufacturing company may require you to wear a hard hat and hearing protection when you visit the factory floor. In some workplaces employees must be provided with personal protective equipment.

You have the right to expect that other employees in the workplace will contribute to a safe workplace by behaving in a way that ensures others' safety, by using equipment in the correct manner and reporting hazards and dangers.



The right to a workplace free from discrimination

In general, under both Australian federal and state laws, it is illegal to discriminate against another person in the workplace.

Discrimination takes place when a person is treated differently because of their:

- sex
- race
- ethnic origin
- social status
- marital status
- parental status
- sexual preference
- pregnancy
- physical characteristics
- impairment (physical or intellectual)
- religious beliefs
- political beliefs.

The right to a workplace free from sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is different from sexual discrimination. Sexual harassment is any sexual behaviour that is unwanted or unwelcome. It does not necessarily have to be directed at you, it may be directed at someone else in your workplace. Sexual harassment is a type of behaviour that makes the workplace an uncomfortable and harmful place to be.

Sexual harassment has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship – these are private concerns.

It is unlawful under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) to sexually harass a person. Under this Act sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours, or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment does not need to be repeated or continuous to justify making a complaint; it can involve a single incident.

Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written and can include:

- unwelcome comments about a person's sex life, physical behaviour or appearance
- suggestive behaviour, such as leering or ogling
- unnecessary familiarity, such as brushing up against a person
- offensive telephone calls, emails, photographs, reading matter, objects or jokes
- sexual propositions or continual requests for dates
- physical contact, such as touching or fondling
- indecent assault (which is also a criminal offence).

The right to a workplace free from bullying

Bullying is a legal and human resources risk. It has WHS, termination, anti-discrimination and, if serious enough, criminal law implications.

Employees who resign because they were bullied can lodge constructive dismissal claims. Constructive dismissal is a legal term describing the situation when an employee appears to leave their employment voluntarily, but has in fact left because life was being made too hard for them by the employer. For example, a constructive dismissal claim could arise if an employer threatens to sack someone if they do not resign.

Workers compensation also plays a part, as bullying injuries are compensable.

Employers need to be careful about how they deliver criticism concerning work performance. Employers are entitled to be critical of work performance, but feedback about employees' work must be constructive. This means explaining what has been done wrong, showing the employee how to do it properly, and following up to make sure they are on the right track.

Bullying

Bullying is defined as repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of persons at a workplace, which creates a risk to health and safety. According to the guide developed by WorkCover, 'bullying behaviour is based on the misuse of power in human relationships'.

The following guide defines unreasonable behaviour as behaviour that is offensive, humiliating, intimidating, degrading or threatening.

Examples of bullying

- Verbal abuse
- Initiation pranks
- Excluding or isolating employees
- Giving a person the majority of an unpleasant or meaningless task
- Humiliation through sarcasm, or belittling someone's opinions
- Constant criticism or insults
- Spreading misinformation or malicious rumours
- Setting impossible deadlines
- Deliberately changing work rosters to inconvenience certain employees
- Deliberately withholding information or resources that are vital for effective work performance
- Manipulating the impression of others to split the work group into taking sides
- Displaying written or pictorial material that degrades or offends certain employees

Impacts of bullying

Bullying can have a severe impact on organisations and workers. No-one works at their best if they feel hurt, angry, vulnerable and powerless.

The most effective way to prevent bullying is for employers to send a clear message that workplace bullying is unacceptable.

Support and involvement from senior management is essential in preventing bullying before it becomes a problem. Health and safety committees are ideally placed to deal with these issues.

Bullying can have a variety of physical and psychological effects on people.

Commonly reported effects are:

- stress, anxiety and tension
- feelings of social isolation at work
- loss of confidence and self-esteem
- deterioration of personal relationships
- headaches, backaches, stomach cramps, depression
- deterioration of work performance.



Employee responsibilities

As an employee, you have certain responsibilities for how you should behave in your workplace. You have legal responsibilities such as those related to health and safety; and job-specific responsibilities such as those listed in your position description.



Comply with health and safety responsibilities

As an employee, you have a responsibility to act with care and due regard for your own safety and that of others. All employees must contribute to a safe and healthy workplace. You need to be aware of and follow safety procedures such as identifying and reporting risks or hazards, using business equipment according to guidelines, and ensuring your workstation is set up correctly.

If you are familiar with your organisation's policy and procedures for work health and safety then it should be easy to identify unsafe practices or situations. Watch out for potential hazards and identify poor safety behaviour in other people by following safety instructions and warnings. Report anything that is unsafe to the appropriate person.

Keep the work environment safe by watching out for hazards in:

- kitchen areas – keep free from spills
- office areas and walkways – keep corridors clear
- exits – keep clear and easily accessible
- workshop/factory areas – watch out for potential hazards and wear appropriate protective clothing
- workstations – position your chair, desk, screen and telephone to suit your needs
- equipment – follow manufacturers' instructions
- work habits – take regular breaks and exercise to avoid occupational overuse syndrome.

Follow workplace safety instructions

You always need to use equipment correctly, and follow the workplace safety instructions or warnings that have been given to you. You should not attempt to use equipment that has a warning notice or hazard sign on it. Never interfere with the safety equipment provided with a piece of machinery such as a photocopier or printing machine. This is all part of meeting your responsibilities under occupational health and safety. If you believe there is a safety hazard in the workplace it is your responsibility to report it, either personally to your supervisor or other designated person, or through the WHS officer.

Health and safety in the workplace relates to more than just the physical environment. It is also important to make sure the workplace is a healthy place for people to be. If people are able to develop a healthy attitude to their work, they will enjoy their work and be more motivated to contribute to the goals of the organisation.

In a healthy workplace, people:

- take regular breaks
- are supported and encouraged in their work
- are not overworked or highly stressed
- do not burn out
- are not bullied or treated unkindly.

Comply with anti-discrimination responsibilities

Discrimination in the workplace results from actions or words that are offensive and based on attributes such as age, race, religion, sex or ability. Your responsibility is to make sure you do not behave in a way that discriminates against others. An example of this is organising a meeting in a venue that serves alcohol, when you know that some people in your organisation are not permitted to enter such a venue because of their religion.

You should also avoid using language that discriminates by excluding, stereotyping or insulting a particular group. For example, if an annual leave policy states 'Mothers may wish to request leave during the school holidays' this ignores the fact that fathers may also wish to take leave to care for children during the holidays. And, 'Susie, our blonde and attractive receptionist ...' is discriminatory because it focuses on irrelevant characteristics of a person, and also because such a statement is unlikely to be made about a male employee.

Think of others in the workplace

As an employee, always treat others in your workplace with respect, and make sure you do not breach the rules about discrimination. Ask yourself ‘How would I feel if someone said this about me or acted in this way towards me?’

Remember that people can interpret comments and behaviour differently from the way they were meant, and could take offence when none was intended. Be careful and considerate when you are dealing with others, and keep up to date with legal and organisational requirements related to discrimination.



Comply with confidentiality responsibilities

At work, you will have access to information or documents that need to be kept confidential. This is because they contain details about clients that should remain private, or details of business transactions that the organisation does not want to share with others. Most organisations work hard to establish relationships with clients and customers, and need to protect these relationships by making sure confidentiality is protected.

Information about clients, customers and personnel held in an organisation must remain confidential. Make sure you never reveal any personal or confidential information. For example, you may have access to personnel files that contain personal details about employees. It is unacceptable, and possibly illegal, to reveal those details to people inside or outside your workplace.

You can help protect confidentiality by:

- understanding what information is confidential and what is able to be shared with others
- storing paper and electronic files safely
- knowing the rules about taking documents or electronic files out of your workplace
- remembering to think about confidentiality when you are talking to others about your work.

Comply with your specific job responsibilities

You will also have responsibilities that relate to your job and your role in the organisation. These include having a positive attitude to your work, obeying lawful instructions, respecting confidentiality and carrying out the tasks outlined in your position description.

Have a good work attitude

Responsible attitudes towards attendance and punctuality are important in the workplace. You are expected to arrive on time and work the agreed number of hours at the workplace. You may find yourself in a situation where you cannot get to work on time because you are stuck in traffic, your train is late, or you have a family emergency. An employee with a good work attitude will phone their supervisor to let them know what was happening and why they were running late for work, and will take care to avoid the problem happening again. If you are unwell and cannot attend work, follow your organisation's procedures for advising that you will not attend work that day.

Make sure you understand your organisation's policy in relation to absences from work. For example, you may need to know how many personal leave days are you allowed without presenting a medical certificate.

Your attitude to work is reflected in:

- being punctual
- having good personal presentation
- being responsible
- showing initiative
- being able to work as part of a team.

Behave according to workplace expectations

As an employee, you need to be fully aware of your organisation's goals and objectives so your behaviour and all the work you do works towards achieving these goals.

Goals and rules differ from organisation to organisation. What may be accepted in one company may be frowned on in another. Your responsibility is to be familiar with the requirements of the organisation; if in doubt seek assistance from an appropriate person. For example, what is the dress code in your organisation? What are the rules about personal phone calls and emails?

There may be a written outline of these expectations; for example, in the policies and procedures manual. In some cases, this information may not be documented fully and you will be expected to use your common sense. Often you can learn a lot by observing the behaviour of the more experienced people in the organisation. Watch how they conduct themselves in various situations – this will give you some guidance for how to behave.

Understand your position description

A position description describes what you are expected to do in a particular job as well as the skills, experience, qualifications, knowledge and qualities needed. It helps you to understand the role by providing information about the job, what its purpose is and who you are to report to and work with.

The position description is used in a number of human resources processes.

Human resources processes that use position descriptions:

- Recruitment
- Job evaluation and classification
- Performance management
- Career planning
- Training and development
- Managing change

What does a position description cover?

When you apply for a job, you may receive a position description that you can refer to when you write your application. Reading through the position description helps you get a good idea of the tasks involved in the job. You can then refer to these tasks in your application letter and highlight your suitability for the position by outlining how you would complete the tasks.

Jobs can change. This may be because you develop different skills, the type of work the organisation does may change, or you may be given more responsibility. As time goes on, your job description may need to be updated to reflect changes that have taken place in your duties.

A position description outlines the duties, activities, responsibilities, level of authority and relationship to other positions.

Position descriptions usually contain:

- the job title
- the objectives of the job (the main purpose of the position)
- the organisation and job environment (the structure of the relevant department or area and the service it provides)
- specific duties of the job
- an organisational chart (showing the relationship between the position and other roles in the organisation).

Example: position description

Position description: Office assistant

Position purpose

Assist the office manager.

Provide secretarial and administrative support services for Eagle Business Enterprises (EBE).

Maintain and monitor daily financial records for the organisation.

Position environment

The position is based at the head office of Eagle Business Enterprises. EBE provides a range of training and human resources support to organisations that are revamping or implementing a human resources system.

Accountability

The office assistant will report to the office manager.

Position requirements

The position requires sound organisational and communication skills, word processing skills in Microsoft Word and spreadsheet skills in Microsoft Excel. The office assistant will carry out basic bookkeeping and reception duties and provide general administrative support.

Responsibilities

Undertake reception duties

Maintain filing system

Handle mail

Prepare simple documents

Prepare and process banking documents

Record and balance petty cash transactions

Reconcile invoices for payment to creditors

Prepare invoices for debtors

Perform your required work duties

When you sign your employment contract, you are entering into an agreement to carry out certain duties over a set period in return for your salary or wage. You may need to fill out and sign a time sheet at the end of each pay period as part of your job. If you do, remember that this is a legal document and you must make sure all the details are correctly recorded.

In some workplaces, you may have an arrangement that says you are paid overtime or given time off 'in lieu' for hours that you work beyond your usual working week. So, if you usually work 38 hours in a week, but then you work 42 hours in one week, you may either be paid overtime for the extra four hours, or have some paid time off on another day. Remember you are accepting payment for performing certain work duties, so it is your responsibility to make sure you carry out these duties to the best of your ability.



Obey lawful orders

When you agree to work for an employer, you also agree to follow the instructions and directions given to you in the workplace. As long as the requests are lawful and reasonable, you are required to follow them. You are within your rights to refuse an order to do something that you know is illegal or dangerous.

For example, John works as a waiter. During a quiet shift, his manager asks him to clean the customer toilets. As this is a lawful and reasonable request, John should comply with it, even though cleaning the toilets isn't on his job description.

Lan works in a warehouse. She is not qualified to drive a forklift. Lan's supervisor asks her to help pick orders using a forklift as several people are off sick and they are running behind schedule. As this is an unlawful request, Lan has the right to refuse it.

Comply with duty of care

Duty of care means having responsibility for the care of another person or group of people. For example, a teacher in a school has a duty of care to look after their students and make sure they are safe. You may have a duty of care towards others in your organisation, such as people who report to you, clients, customers or suppliers. If you have someone who is reporting to you for some or all of your working week, you need to make sure you think about your duty of care towards that person.

For clients, customers and suppliers, you may have a duty of care in situations such as when they visit your workplace. In this case, your duty of care may involve making sure they have signed into the visitor's book at reception, that they know how to use any equipment safely and that they are included in emergency processes such as an evacuation from the building.

Employer rights

Just like employees, employers also have rights. Many of their rights relate to the expectations they have of their workers, particularly in relation to work behaviour and performance. But employers also have the legal right to end a worker's employment in some situations.

Employers can expect their staff to:

- respect the confidentiality and privacy of documents and people
- follow lawful and reasonable instructions
- have a good attitude to their work, including being punctual, courteous and diligent in completing their tasks
- carry out their work according to the responsibilities and requirements of their position description
- ensure they don't behave in a way that puts themselves or others at risk
- behave in a way that is respectful of the views, values and differences of others.

When can an employer dismiss a worker?

Employers have the right to dismiss (fire) workers in some situations. This could happen if a worker commits a criminal offence; is negligent, careless or causes an incident; or if they are disloyal, such as by revealing confidential information about the company. A worker could also be dismissed if they underperform (do not do their job properly) over an extended period, despite counselling and guidance from their supervisor.

This is not to say that just because you cause a minor incident in your workplace you will automatically lose your job. But it is important to know that your employer does have the right to dismiss you under the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).

Employer responsibilities

Most of the responsibilities of your employer will be outlined in your contract of employment, workplace agreement or award. Some employees do not have a formal contract to sign. In this case, you would have to refer to the relevant award and/or your letter of appointment for details of your employer's responsibilities.

It is your employer's responsibility to:

- meet the conditions of your contract or award
- provide a safe environment
- ensure non-discriminatory practices
- take affirmative action
- apply duty of care.

Meet the conditions of your contract or award

One of the most important responsibilities an employer has is to pay you an agreed amount of money (wage or salary) at agreed times. If you earn above a certain amount in a month, your employer also needs to pay money into your superannuation account.

It is also the responsibility of your employer to:

- meet the conditions set out in your contract or award
- update your contract
- review your salary and conditions if the requirements of your job change, such as when you are given more responsibility or asked to work longer hours.

Provide a safe environment

An important responsibility of your employer is to provide a safe and healthy place to work, as well as safe and healthy work systems and practices. These may include reporting procedures, emergency drills, safety signs and protective clothing. All employers must follow Commonwealth legislation as well as their state or territory's WHS Acts or laws. Many organisations have a WHS representative or committee to carry out workplace safety functions.



Ensure non-discriminatory practices

Your employer is responsible for creating a workplace that is free from discrimination. There are federal and state laws in Australia that are designed to prevent discrimination and promote equal opportunity. There are variations between the states and territories on areas such as the grounds of discrimination and the processes used to investigate complaints; however, the principles and practices are similar.

An employer must not discriminate on the basis of:

- age
- sex
- race
- ethnic origin
- social status
- marital status
- parental status
- sexual preference
- pregnancy
- religious or political beliefs
- physical characteristics
- impairment (physical or intellectual).

Discrimination in the workplace

Sometimes discrimination is not obvious. In a workplace, there are many other areas where discrimination may occur.

Discrimination may occur in relation to:

- offers of employment; for example, selection for employment should be based on merit
- job requirements; for example, an employer who requires applicants for an administrative job to be able to play football may be discriminating against women
- terms on which employment is offered
- access to training programs; for example, an employer should not refuse training
- promotion or transfer opportunities
- dismissal from a previous position.

Take affirmative action

Affirmative action is the general term used for a variety of measures designed to remove barriers (often hidden) that restrict opportunities for a particular group in society. Affirmative action was specifically introduced to improve employment opportunities for women in areas of the workforce where they were under-represented.

In 1986, federal legislation was introduced that required employers of over 100 employees to develop affirmative action programs for women. The current Act is the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth) and you can read more about this topic at the Workplace Gender Equality Agency at: www.wgea.gov.au.

Affirmative action has also been used to help people from disadvantaged groups to access higher education.

Your workplace or the place where you study may have an affirmative action program. Ask your supervisor. Alternatively, any government agency (shire council, electoral office, Australian Taxation Office, etc.) will have an affirmative action policy. Learning institutes also have affirmative action policies. Ask for a copy from the relevant human resources or personnel department.



Apply duty of care

In a workplace, duty of care means that employers have a responsibility to look after their employees while they are at work. Your supervisor needs to make sure you are safe while you are at work, and that you are able to learn and develop your skills at a reasonable pace. You should not be expected to have the same level of responsibility as someone who has been in the workplace for many years. You should have the support of someone who can supervise you and provide assistance on a regular basis. This is all part of your employer meeting their duty of care to you.

Employer duty-of-care responsibilities ensure you can expect:

- a workplace free of dangers and hazards
- support and encouragement as you learn your job
- freedom from discriminatory practices
- freedom from bullying and intimidation
- the ability to develop your skills over time
- consideration of your individual needs.

Practice task 2

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Chien Lee is an accounts clerk in the national headquarters of a pharmaceutical company. She speaks English as a second language, so occasionally has problems with grammar and spelling. Her supervisor often has trouble understanding her strong accent. Chien Lee has two young children at home, and is four months pregnant with her third child.

Chien Lee is hard working, punctual and good with figures. She tells her supervisor that she wants to develop her skills in business writing and accounting processes so she can eventually move into a more senior accounting position. Her supervisor says she cannot do any more professional development because she will soon be going on maternity leave. She is told to concentrate on her accounts tasks, and to 'be grateful for the job she has'.

Chien Lee suspects her supervisor is discriminating against her.

1. Is Chien Lee is being discriminated against? If so, in what way and for what reason?

2. What could Chien Lee do about the situation?

3. Who could she contact to ask for help?

1C

Comply with relevant legal responsibilities and organisational goals and objectives

There are many things to learn when you start working in a new organisation. It is useful to have an understanding of the goals and objectives of the organisation so you can know the sorts of things that are important, and the processes that are used for various tasks. Understanding the goals and objectives of the organisation will help you perform your own job more effectively.

Sometimes the goals and objectives may be clearly written down in an information folder, or talked about at staff meetings. At other times they may just be assumed, with employees knowing how things are done at the organisation without actually writing it down on paper.

The organisation's policies and procedures manual ensures the business complies with all relevant legislation and regulations. It is important to adhere to workplace policies and procedures.



Legal responsibilities

There is a range of legislation at the national and state level that relate to your legal responsibilities and the way businesses operate. Laws also define the way employers must carry out their activities – many of these laws are directly beneficial to the business, its employees, clients and customers.

Working in a safe, healthy environment benefits management and employees as absenteeism is decreased and quality of working and home life for everyone is improved. Along with employee health, it is also important to consider the impact of the business on the environment, as an unhealthy environment often leads to an unhealthy workplace and/or community.

Equal employment legislation and anti-discrimination laws ensure that everyone gets a fair chance to be employed and to work in an environment free from harassment and intimidation. Industrial relations laws safeguard working conditions such as pay levels and workplace entitlements.

Work health and safety (WHS) legislation

WHS legislation is designed to protect the health, safety and welfare of all people at work. You therefore need to be aware of and know how to access current WHS legislation and other WHS documentation relevant to your specific workplace, occupation and industry. This documentation includes regulations, codes of practice and your organisation's health and safety policies and procedures.

Keeping up to date with this information is essential. One of the most recent significant changes has been the national workplace health and safety reforms that resulted in the development of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth) and model regulations and codes of practice. These reforms are designed to improve national work health and safety by simplifying the system and making laws more consistent across Australia.

The following provides the name of the health and safety legislation and the regulator responsible for its implementation in each state and territory, as at the time of publication.

Region	Information
Commonwealth	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (Cth) WHS regulator: Comcare www.comcare.gov.au
Australian Capital Territory	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (ACT) WHS regulator: WorkSafe ACT www.worksafe.act.gov.au
New South Wales	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (NSW) WHS regulator: WorkCover NSW www.workcover.nsw.gov.au
Northern Territory	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (National Uniform Legislation)</i> (NT) WHS regulator: NT WorkSafe www.worksafe.nt.gov.au
Queensland	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> (Qld) WHS regulator: Workplace Health and Safety Queensland www.worksafe.qld.gov.au
South Australia	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012</i> (SA) WHS regulator: SafeWork SA www.safework.sa.gov.au
Tasmania	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012</i> (Tas.) WHS regulator: Workplace Standards Tasmania www.wst.tas.gov.au

continued ...

... continued

Region	Information
Victoria	Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic.) WHS regulator: Victorian Workcover Authority www.worksafe.vic.gov.au
Western Australia	Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (WA) WHS regulator: WorkSafe WA www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Equal employment opportunity legislation

In Australia, national, state and territory laws cover equal employment in the workplace. Everyone is entitled to have equal opportunity when it comes to access to jobs, benefits and associated services in the workplace. Equal employment opportunity is aimed at ensuring that the job recruitment and selection process is fair, and that access to information, workplace outcomes with respect to supervision and management are not biased.

Equal employment opportunity legislation is designed to ensure that:

- fair practices are in place in every workplace
- the best person is recruited or promoted when there is a position vacant, and skilled staff are retained
- management decisions are fair to all employees
- training and development needs address customer and employee requirements
- the workplace is free from harassment and discrimination
- social and cultural differences between staff are recognised and respected.

Industrial relations legislation

Industrial relations law covers employment matters such as pay rates and other entitlements. Issues that have WHS implications, such as any risk to employee health and safety from working additional hours, shift work or working in hot or cold conditions, may be dealt with under industrial relations legislation, in particular, through the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).

The *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) includes several provisions directly relevant to work health and safety, as detailed here.

Provision	Explanation
Union right of entry	Although health and safety legislation in some states already permits union officials with permits to enter workplaces, the Fair Work Act also provides powers to union officials to enter a workplace for health and safety purposes. To do so, the officials must demonstrate compliance with a number of conditions.
Industrial action	Fair Work Australia, the regulator of Australian industrial relations, has the power to terminate industrial action if the action threatens or endangers life, personal safety or the health and welfare of the population.
Working conditions	The National Employment Standards, which provide basic standards of employment for all Australian workers, also address some conditions of employment that can have implications for health and safety including hours of work, maternity leave and alternative duties for pregnant women.
Dismissal	Under the unfair dismissal and discrimination provisions of the Fair Work Act, safety is considered as a factor when determining the dismissal's validity. The 'general protections' provisions under the Fair Work Act also make it an offence to take adverse action against a person (such as dismissal, discrimination or refusal to employ a person) for exercising a right or responsibility under health and safety law.
Discrimination	The Fair Work Act can apply if a worker has been discriminated against because of their characteristics, such as their religion, gender or a physical or mental disability; however, it does not address bullying and harassment.

Anti-discrimination and privacy legislation

Organisations in Australia must comply with a variety of federal Acts and national standards. National anti-discrimination and privacy legislation has a number of aspects as is shown here.

Age discrimination

Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)

The Age Discrimination Act is a relatively new law that is especially important with regard to Australia's ageing population. It protects people from being discriminated against because of their age and states that, regardless of age, everyone has the same right to equality before the law.

The Act also allows appropriate benefits to be given to people of a certain age, particularly younger and older people, according to their circumstances. Objectives of the Act also include removing barriers to older people participating in society and changing negative stereotypes about older people.

Exemptions include stipulations regarding youth wages, health care and voluntary work.

Disability

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

The Disability Discrimination Act gives a broad definition of disability and prohibits direct or indirect discrimination based on disability. It also prohibits discrimination against people associated with people who have disabilities. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate in the areas of:

- employment
- education
- access to public premises
- purchase of house and land
- provision of goods, services and facilities
- administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs.

Exemptions to the Disability Discrimination Act include when a potential employer would be placed under unjustifiable hardship in order to employ a person with a disability, although the employer is expected to make reasonable adjustments.

Racial discrimination

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

The Racial Discrimination Act covers all of Australia and prohibits racial discrimination and offensive behaviour based on racial hatred. It covers discrimination based on race, colour, descent, and national or ethnic origin. It also protects those who may be discriminated against based on their association with people of a particular ethnicity. The Act applies to everyone in Australia and all organisations.

The *Racial Hatred Act 1995 (Cth)* was added to the legislation to provide an avenue for people to complain about racist behaviour that offends, insults, humiliates or intimidates others in public.

Sex discrimination

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

The Sex Discrimination Act states that it is unlawful to discriminate against someone based on their sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy. It sets out laws against sexual harassment as well as dismissal from work based on family duties including pregnancy.

According to the Act, it is unlawful to refuse to provide goods or services, education or employment based on a person's sex. The Act also covers discrimination in awards and enterprise bargaining, insurance and superannuation, Commonwealth laws and programs, and accommodation.

Sexual harassment is included in the Act because it is a form of discrimination to treat a person unfairly because of their sex.

Human rights

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)

The Australian Human Rights Commission (initially called the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) was established in 1986 to deal with breaches of anti-discrimination laws and to promote human rights education.

The Act promotes human rights for all people, and covers most forms of discrimination not already covered in the other Acts, including discrimination on the basis of:

- criminal records
- marital status
- medical record
- political opinion
- religion
- sexual preference
- social origin
- trade union activity.

Privacy

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

If your organisation collects information about customers or clients, its operations will come under the auspices of the Privacy Act. This Act deems personal information about individuals to be sensitive, such as information about:

- criminal records
- health
- membership of a professional or trade association
- membership of a trade union
- political affiliations or opinions
- racial or ethnic origin
- religious affiliations or beliefs
- sexual orientation or practices.

Your organisation should inform you of your responsibilities regarding your customers' privacy. It should also inform you of its responsibilities with regards to your privacy. It is always advisable to take any information provided to you about any individual as confidential.

Vision, mission and values

Most organisations have a strategic plan that contains the vision and mission statements of the organisation.

The values of the organisation also influence the way in which the organisation operates.

Values define how people interact with each other and customers. The values of the organisation will depend largely on what sort of organisation it is, and what it sees as being important, such as customer service, trust, integrity, environmental awareness, ethical behaviour or fostering positive, harmonious work attitudes.

There are many individuals and organisations that may need to read and understand the vision, mission and values of an organisation.

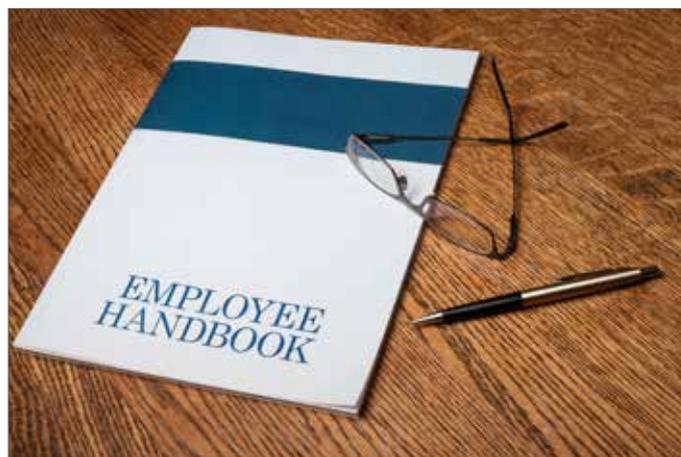
Potential readers include:

- employees
- department managers and supervisors
- the chief executive officer
- clients and customers
- funding bodies
- shareholders
- other stakeholders
- competing organisations
- government agencies.

Strategic plans

The strategic plan, with its vision and mission statements, is the main document for any organisation. Its purpose is to provide anyone who is involved with the organisation with a clear understanding of what the organisation is all about, its goals and future directions. It is the basis from which all the other plans, policies and procedures are developed.

The vision, mission and value statements can often be found in induction kits for new employees, on staffroom noticeboards, in annual reports, on organisation websites and in customer service documentation. They are usually seen as being public statements, which can be referred to by a wide range of people inside and outside the organisation.



Conduct business ethically

As recently as a decade ago, many companies viewed business ethics only in terms of administrative compliance with legal standards and adherence to internal rules and regulations.

Today the situation is different. Attention to business ethics is on the rise across the world and many companies realise that in order to succeed, they must earn the respect and confidence of their customers. Corporations are being encouraged and expected to improve their business practices to emphasise legal and ethical behaviour. Companies, professional firms and individuals alike are being held increasingly accountable for their actions, as demand grows for higher standards of corporate social responsibility.

Goals and objectives

Apart from mission, vision and values statements, the goals and objectives of an organisation may be understood in the way it conducts its business. For example, developing and using manuals, documents and systems are some of the ways an organisation operates as a business, as outlined here.

Work procedures

Work procedures provide information necessary to assist all employees to perform job-related tasks. These procedures also assist in the training and orientation of new staff in how the tasks must be performed, as well as providing them with the rules necessary to ensure they can perform to the standard required.

These documents must be easily accessed and clearly written and must include all necessary workplace procedures.

Quality assurance

In developing products and services, quality assurance is any systematic process of checking to see whether a product or service being developed is meeting specified requirements. Many companies have a separate department devoted to quality assurance.

A quality-assurance system can increase customer confidence and a company's credibility, improve work processes and efficiency, and enable a company to better compete in the marketplace.

Business plans

A business sets business goals and creates a plan for reaching those goals. The development of business plans involves listening to feedback from customers and communicating clearly to staff.

Financial transparency

The degree of openness, honesty and transparency in accounting practices, the fairness of prices, and competitive wages for staff are an indication of the business ethics and standards of an organisation.

Marketing strategies

Organisations should market their products and services using open and honest marketing and advertising strategies. Advertisements should be factual and informative and not mislead customers. This sends a message to the wider community that this business has integrity and a set of values that considers the customer as important.

Too often, the focus is on closing the sale – it should be on opening a relationship.

Communication channels and communication between staff members

All organisations need to have good communications between staff members. Communication means sending and receiving information between individuals and between sections of the organisation. Without good internal communications, an organisation has little chance of functioning effectively.

Progressive organisations constantly look at ways in which to improve communications. No matter how comprehensive the strategic plan of an organisation is, it is worthless unless it is shared with others. For this reason, effective communication is crucial at every level of an organisation. However, the ability to communicate effectively does not come easily to some people, and it is a skill that requires practice.



Organisational values and behaviours

The values of an organisation provide employees with an understanding of how it expects them to treat others, whether they are inside or outside the business. Organisational values convey to people outside the organisation what the organisation stands for and how they will be treated when they work with the

organisation. Organisational values focus on how to conduct business, rather than simply the result. They provide a framework for decisions and actions, which ultimately affect the performance of the organisation. Values complement and build on principles of fairness, integrity, accountability and responsive service.

Manage people

An organisation can also reveal its goals and objectives in the way it manages people – sometimes known as its human resources practices. People are the most important asset of any organisation. People require large amounts of time, support, training and development to enable them to function at their best. It is in the interests of a workplace to look after their staff, as it costs a lot to recruit, train and support a new employee when someone resigns from their position.



The role of a human resources department

Most large organisations have formal systems for managing their human resources. Often there is a human resources department, which exists to provide support and advice about employment issues.

The human resources department can provide advice on:

- pay and conditions
- awards and agreements
- disputes related to pay and conditions
- leave entitlements
- training and professional development
- career opportunities in the organisation
- advertising for new staff
- interviewing and recruiting
- staff induction.

Performance appraisals

Everyone needs feedback about their job performance. The feedback may be provided through informal comments from supervisors or colleagues. Many workplaces have a formal system to provide feedback on their employees' performance. This is sometimes referred to as a performance appraisal or performance review, and occurs regularly; for example once or twice a year.

Performance appraisals are designed to:

- provide formal feedback from both the employer and the employee
- review your performance or job description
- determine your training needs.



Salary reviews

In some organisations performance appraisals include a salary review. Different organisations conduct performance appraisals in different ways.

You may have more responsibility now than you did six months ago. Perhaps you need to negotiate additional training. The performance appraisal could also be conducted through an interview with a panel of relevant supervisors or managers, or through written reports from you and your supervisor.

The performance appraisal is an opportunity for you to discuss your achievements and the areas in which you need to improve, and to find out about the opportunities available for you.

Practice task 3

A typical mission statement for a company is:

'Our mission is to consistently demonstrate empathy, respect and superior service in the pursuit of exceeding our customers' expectations.'

Explain how this statement would apply to you as an employee of this company.

1D

Identify roles and responsibilities of colleagues and immediate supervisors

If there are more than just a few people in an organisation, there needs to be a formal structure, where job positions exist to fulfil particular functions. The organisational structure shows who is responsible for what, and who reports to whom.

Generally in a workplace there will be one person who you need to report to day to day. This person will probably be a supervisor or team leader. In turn, they may report to a more senior manager, who is responsible for a whole department or division.

This manager may then report to either a board of directors or a chief executive officer, depending on the structure of the organisation.

Understand the structure of your workplace

It is useful to have a good understanding of the structure that exists in your workplace, so you know who reports to whom, and how each area or department fits with the others. Make sure you know who you report to, and where to ask for advice if that person is not available. Also, take the time to learn the names and titles of the key people in your organisation, such as the human resources manager and the managers of departments that perform functions similar or related to your own.

As you are learning, keep asking yourself, 'How do I fit in with this?' If you can see how your own work role fits in with the bigger picture, you will be well on your way to being an effective member of your business work team.

Things to remember:

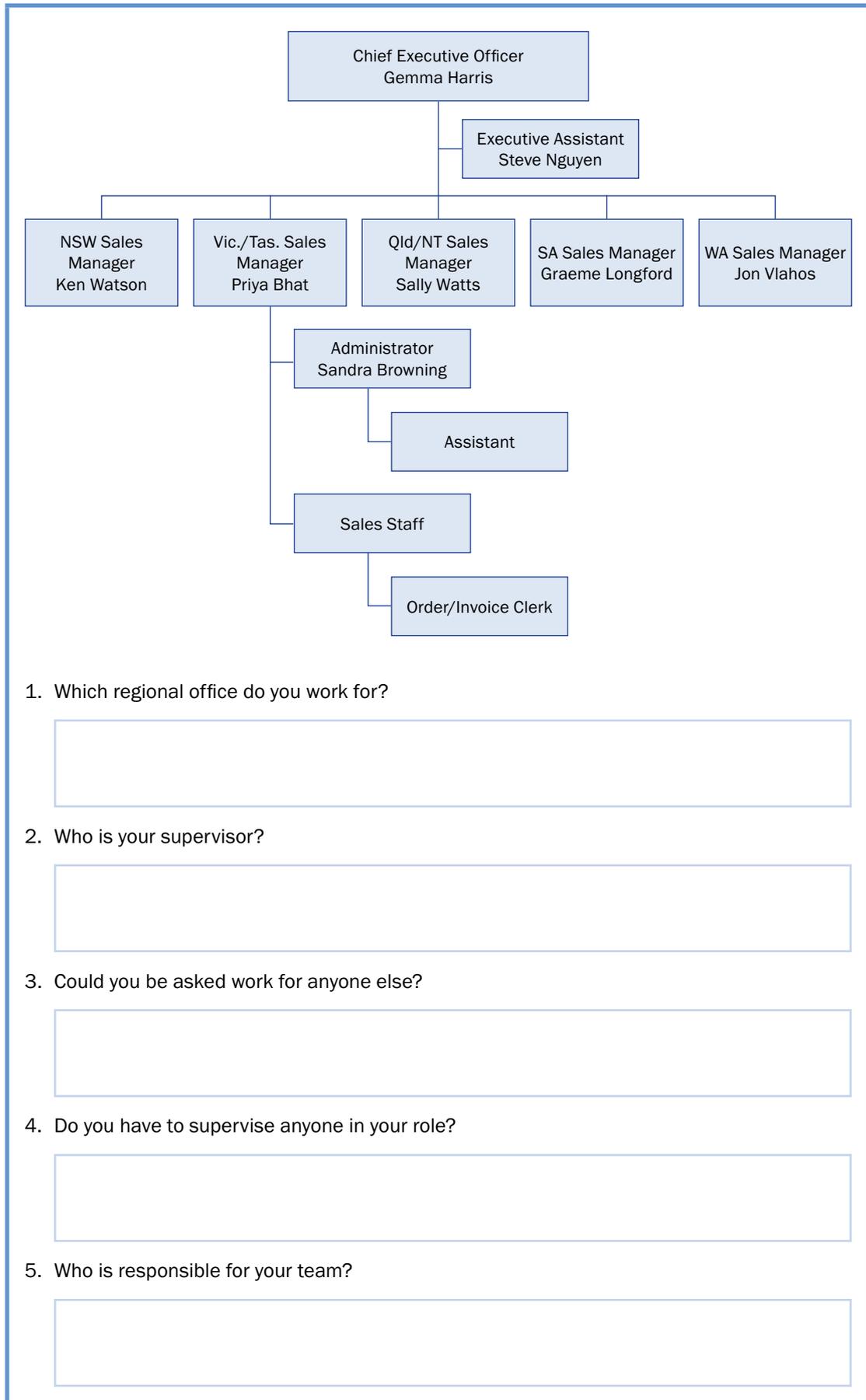
- It will take time to learn all about an organisation.
- Don't expect to understand all the policies, procedures and processes straightaway.
- Ask questions and take note of information you are given.
- Learn where documents are kept, and watch what other people do in your workplace in various situations.

Practice task 4

You have been employed as an assistant in a national company. Study this organisational chart, then answer the questions that follow.

continued ...

... continued



1E

Inform the right person if standards and values are not upheld

Most organisations expect you to behave in a courteous and polite way, and to treat colleagues, customers and visitors with respect. There are certain standards about how to behave, and values that will be important to understand and work towards. Sometimes these standards will be quite specific, and will be written or explained in a way that allows them to be measured. For example, your organisation may have an agreed standard that 80 per cent of telephone calls should be answered within five rings.

As an employee you need to be fully aware of your organisation's standards and values so you can identify and question any standards, values and behaviours that appear to be against the organisation's goals and objectives. Be familiar with the requirements of the organisation; if in doubt, seek assistance from an appropriate person.

Communication standards

Follow your organisation's policy for correctly addressing visitors and clients, as well as your manager and other senior staff.

Here are some guidelines of common communication standards that apply to the workplace.

Addressing visitors and clients

Organisations have various standards for addressing their customers and visitors. For example, you may be asked to use their title and surname rather than their first name. It is better to be formal when you first deal with customers in order not to offend them by being too casual. No matter how customers are addressed, all organisations expect customers to be treated with respect, as good customer relations are important to all businesses.

Communicating with colleagues

Always be pleasant and polite when dealing with colleagues. If you need to attract someone's attention, yelling across the office will distract and interrupt others. A much better way would be to walk over to their desk, email or telephone them.

Dealing with communication barriers

You may have difficulty communicating with a customer who speaks English as a second language, has a disability that affects their speech, or isn't familiar with the vocabulary used in your industry. If you are having ongoing difficulty understanding a particular customer, discuss this with your supervisor. It may be that an interpreter needs to be used, or someone else in the organisation has the language skills to help the person.

Using appropriate language

Both employers and employees have a responsibility not to use discriminatory language; that is, language that singles out or insults a person based on their age, sex, race, social status, disability or sexual preference. Perhaps you have heard someone say, 'He is carrying on like an old woman'. This expression is not only insulting to the person talked about, but is insulting to older women.

Standards of honesty about personal use of facilities and systems

From time to time you may need to send a personal email or make a personal phone call. Make sure you know your organisation's policy and procedures for this. Most organisations allow staff to make a number of personal calls and emails. However, you need to be responsible about your calls and not spend more time than is necessary on them. Also remember that a friendly workplace does not mean that there are no professional expectations in relation to your behaviour.



Example: communicate within company standards

Martin likes the plastics factory where he works. The managers and other staff are friendly and have worked hard to make him feel comfortable.

Martin gets on well with Nina, who also works in the administration area of the company. They have lunch together and sometimes see each other on weekends. Whenever Martin has a spare moment, he pops over to Nina's desk for a chat. They laugh and joke, and generally talk about what happened on the weekend and what is going on in the office.

The office supervisor, Alesandra, has noticed that Martin is spending more and more time talking with Nina. It appears to her that Martin does not have enough work and is distracting Nina from her busy job. Alesandra has also noticed that Martin has nicknames for all the staff in the office and some of them are not pleasant. Today Alesandra overheard Martin describing a customer as a 'stupid old man'.

Alesandra asks Martin to meet her privately. She runs through the company expectations for employee behaviour, and explains to Martin why some of his behaviour is not appropriate for the office. Martin says he didn't mean to distract or offend anyone. Alesandra asks Martin to review the company manual and meet her again in a week's time for a follow-up chat.



Identify and question poor standards and values

Sometimes you may notice things in your workplace that you think are not right, or have the potential to be detrimental to the organisation. The work team or work group meetings are times to identify and discuss such issues. Alternatively, issues could be raised at a staff meeting, or discussed with a supervisor or more-experienced colleague.

It may be that you have noticed that someone in your work team is not complying with the standards of the organisation in a particular area. Or you may have a good idea for helping your organisation be more effective in some way.

Make sure you understand the channels that are usually used in your organisation to share ideas or communicate problems or issues. Think about what you need to communicate and choose the best way of doing it. For example, imagine you notice that a colleague often leaves the lights on in the building when they go home for the night.

How would you deal with this problem?

- Confront the person directly and explain why they should turn the lights off at night.
- Complain to another work colleague about the issue.
- Tell your supervisor what is happening and ask them to talk to the person.
- Make sure you are the last to leave so you can turn the lights off yourself.
- Bring the issue up at a staff meeting.
- Put a copy of the environmental policy on the person's desk.
- Make a sign that says 'Turn the lights off' and put it next to the light switch.

Practice task 5

Imagine you are concerned that a colleague always leaves the lights on in the building when they go home for the night, even though it is organisational policy to turn them off before leaving.

Name one advantage and one disadvantage for each of the options in this table.

Action	Advantage	Disadvantage
Confront the person directly and explain why they should turn the lights off at night.		
Complain to another work colleague about the issue.		
Tell your supervisor what is happening and ask them to talk to the person.		
Make sure you are the last to leave so you can turn the lights off yourself.		
Bring the issue up at a staff meeting.		
Put a copy of the environmental policy on the person's desk.		
Make a sign that says 'Turn the lights off' and put it next to the light switch.		

1F

Contribute to a safe work environment

There are many things you can do as an individual to help make your workplace safe for everyone.

Consider the following information.

Solve problems

Work is all about problem-solving. Asking for advice from a colleague or working together as a group can help you see all the possible advantages and disadvantages of a particular way of doing things. Someone else in your team may be able to see a potential danger in one way of solving a problem that you might not have thought of. Teamwork is an essential part of most workplaces. Solving problems may also involve negotiating situations where people disagree about how tasks should be managed or who should be given a task to do.

Share your knowledge

Sharing knowledge and skills is one way to help others and keep your workplace safe. You may be given a coach or a mentor to help guide you in your work when you first start a job. Eventually you may have to take on this role yourself to help a new employee. This knowledge sharing is one way of making sure safe work practices are followed by all staff.

Knowledge and skills develop over time with experience and training. You may find that spending time as a group talking about safety issues can be a good way of improving safety in your team. You may wish to do further training and could eventually become the WHS representative at your workplace.

Listen to others

Listening skills are very important in a workplace, especially if you are new to a job. Listen to more-experienced colleagues. Often they will know how to work safely and can give you advice about a whole range of issues. Listen and learn, and take the time to think about how you can use what you have been told in your daily work practices.

Watch for hazards and risks

A hazard or risk is something that has the potential to cause an injury to someone. Most organisations have processes about reporting hazards and risks. There will be a form to fill out and give to your supervisor, health and safety representative or maintenance person.

Even an office can have safety hazards – people can trip on loose cords or frayed carpet, or fall over items left in walkways. There are many safety considerations when using a workstation: ergonomic chairs, computers at correct eye height, footstools, and regular breaks from keyboard work all help to keep you safe in the workplace.

When you notice anything that could cause a hazard or risk, report it to the WHS representative or someone senior to you.

Report incidents

Reporting safety incidents and near misses allows the organisation to respond to safety issues. If they are not reported, then there is a high risk that the incident could recur with more serious injuries or even death.

Follow procedures

Often there are rules about how certain tasks are to be performed or how pieces of equipment are used. You may need to do some special training, or follow the instructions written by the manufacturer. Deciding not to follow procedures can endanger you and those around you.

Environmental awareness and support

As a member of an organisation you have a responsibility to support and comply with its environmental standards to help reduce its impact on the environment.

Environmental awareness is now important for many organisations. Many are now trying to reduce the impact their business has on the environment. In many instances an environmental policy will have been developed, which may contain the following information.

Aspects of an environmental policy

Reduce paper use – print on both sides of the page, or email messages rather than printing them out

Use paper with recycled content – choose paper products based on environmental considerations rather than just cost

Buy energy-efficient equipment – such as computers, printers, fridges and televisions

Recycle computers and other equipment – donate equipment to a school or community centre

Reduce electricity use – turn lights and computers off, install low-energy bulbs, wait until the dishwasher is full before running it

Reduce vehicle emissions – choose company vehicles that are fuel efficient, set up a car-pooling scheme, encourage staff to use public transport

Balance the effect of the business by taking part in an activity that has a positive environmental effect – hold a tree-planting day or donate to an environmental group

Practice task 6

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Janelle works as a receptionist for a graphic design studio. She urgently needs to make some high-quality copies of a set of documents for a supervisor who has a meeting in half an hour. She notices that the laser copier has a warning notice on it, saying that it needs to be checked by an electrician before being used. Janelle can see that the copier is still turned on, and she is sure the check by an electrician is just a routine visit to comply with legal requirements for tagging electrical equipment. She moves the sign and uses the copier anyway. Her supervisor walks past just as she is doing the last copy. He asks to see her in his office straightaway. He unplugs the copier and replaces the sign. He does not look happy.

1. What should Janelle have done?

2. What might have happened when she used the copier?

3. What would you have done if you were Janelle?

4. When can safety rules in the workplace be disregarded?

Summary

1. An organisation's documents can include a strategic plan, business plans, policies and procedures manuals, codes of conduct, WHS policies, access and equity policies, customer service charters, annual reports and quality and improvement procedures.
2. Employees' rights include the right to certain conditions in employment, union representation and a safe and healthy workplace.
3. Employees' responsibilities include complying with health and safety procedures, anti-discrimination policies, confidentiality policies and job-specific responsibilities.
4. Employers' rights include expecting employees to follow reasonable instructions, have a reliable attitude to their work, carry out the duties outlined in their position description, follow health and safety procedures and respect confidentiality.
5. Employers also have the right to dismiss employees in some situations.
6. Employers' responsibilities include exercising a duty of care to their employees, providing a safe workplace, honouring conditions of contracts and awards, and ensuring there is no discrimination.
7. All workers should understand and comply with the goals, objectives, standards and values of their organisation.

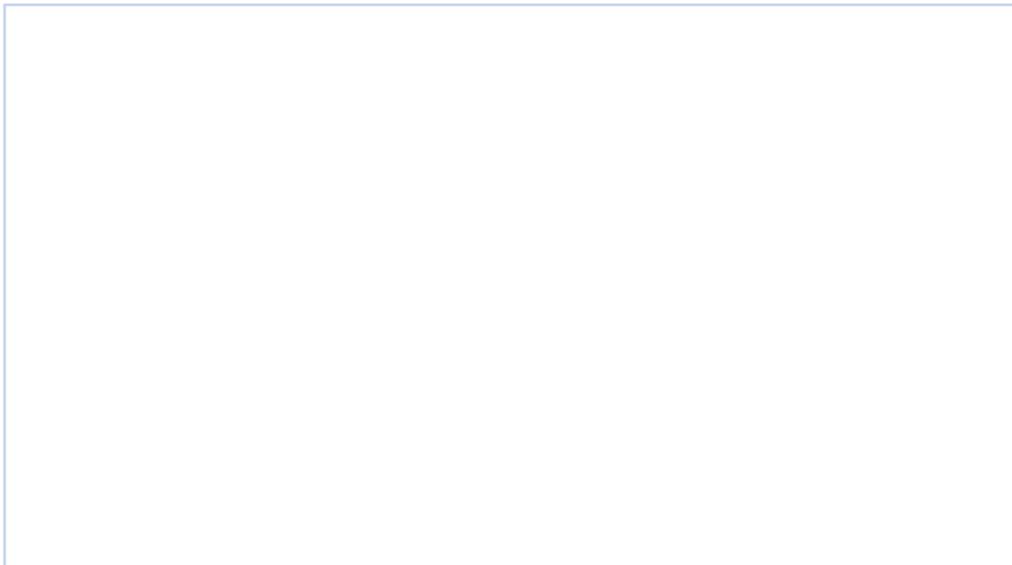
Learning checkpoint 1 Work within organisational requirements

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in working within organisational requirements.

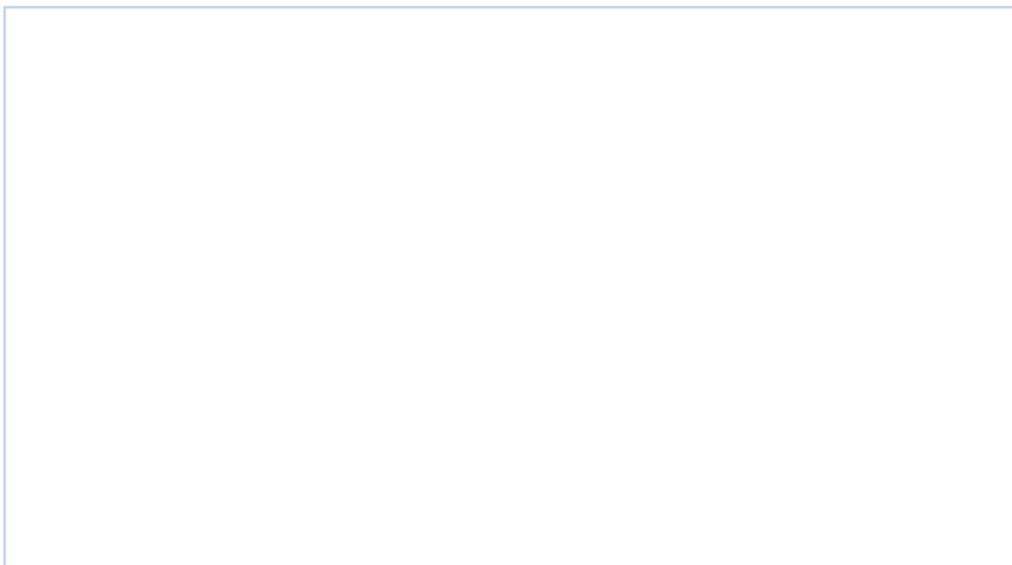
Part A

Following is a list of documents used in a large organisation. For each one, note down the kind of information you would expect to find in this document that would help you understand the organisation's requirements.

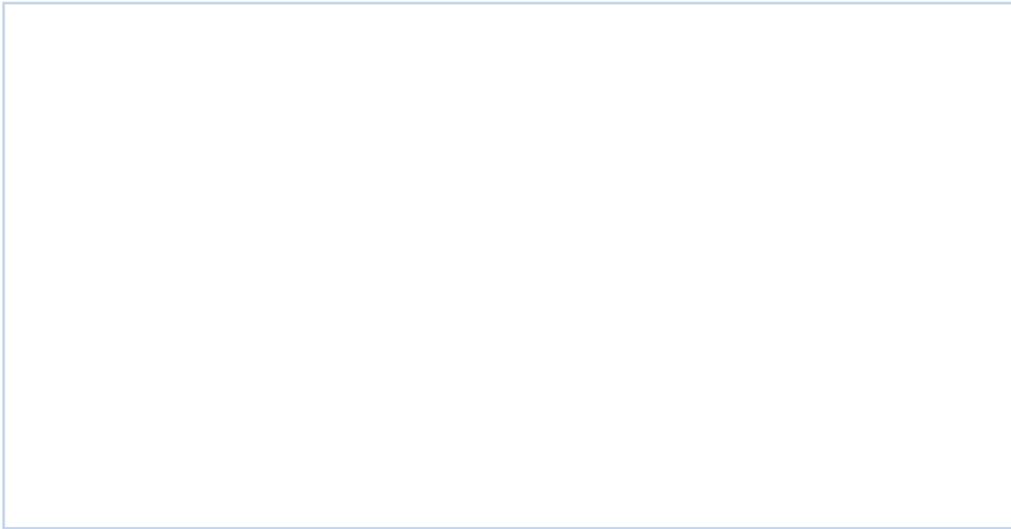
1. Business plan and annual report



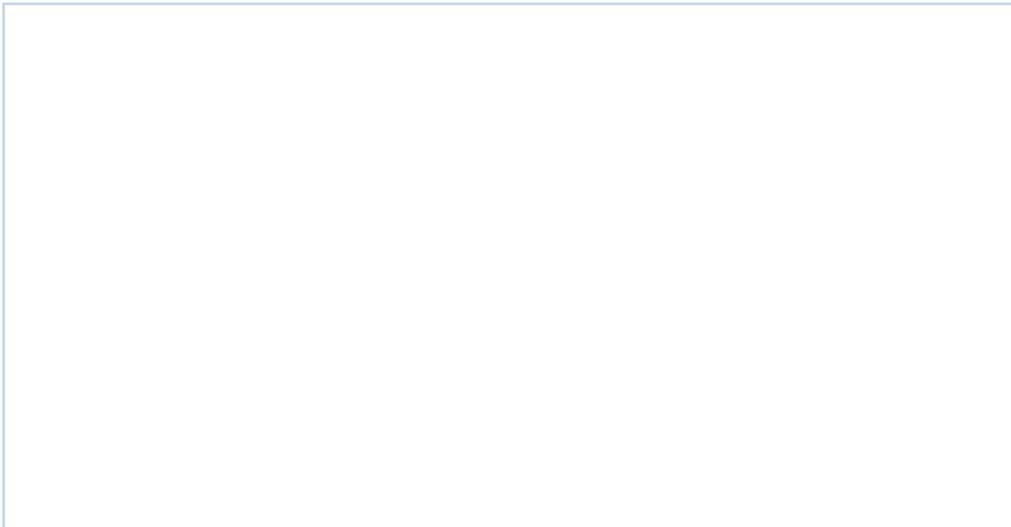
2. Organisational policies and procedures manual



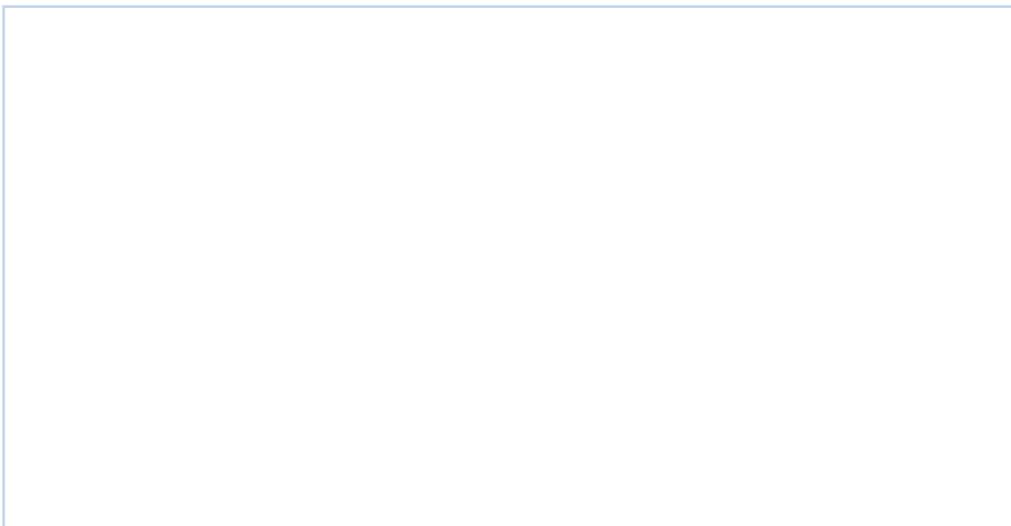
3. Anti-discrimination and related policy



4. Quality and continuous improvement processes and standards



5. WHS policies, procedures and programs



Part B

Complete a table similar to the following. Add examples of the rights and responsibilities of employees in relation to each issue.

Issue	Rights	Responsibilities
Work health and safety		
Employment contracts		
Position descriptions		

continued ...

... continued

Issue	Rights	Responsibilities
Discrimination or harassment in the workplace		
Confidentiality		
Organisational objectives		

Part C

Write a few sentences about the standards and values that you think would be reasonable in a workplace for each of the following:

1. Dress and personal presentation

2. Communicating with customers

3. Communicating with senior colleagues

4. Dealing with communication barriers

5. Meeting work targets

6. Reducing office waste**7. Using office equipment and facilities for personal use**

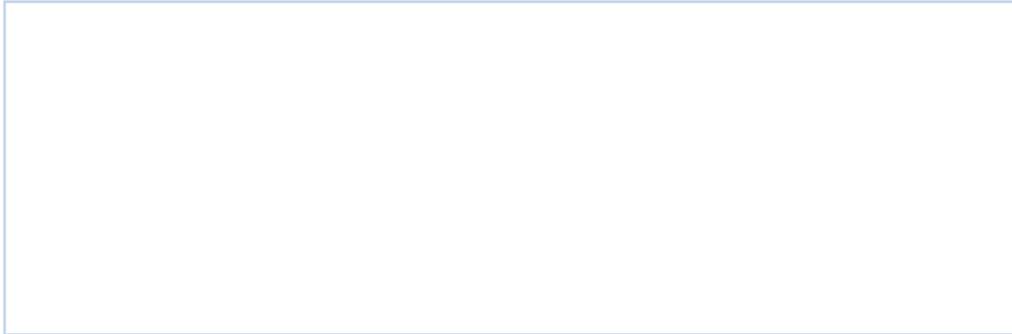
Part D

Read the following situations. For each one, state whether you think it could be an example of discrimination. If it is, write the type of discrimination you consider it to be.

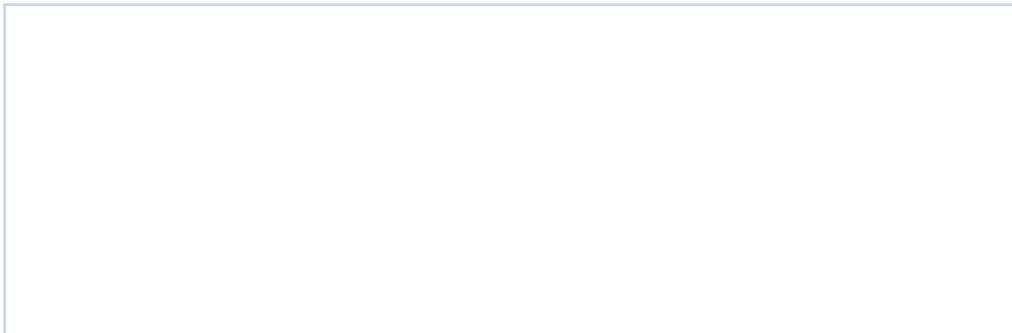
1. A man with less experience and lower qualifications is promoted ahead of his more-experienced and better-qualified female colleague.

2. A company applies for special permission to employ a Jewish worker to work in a Jewish community support program.

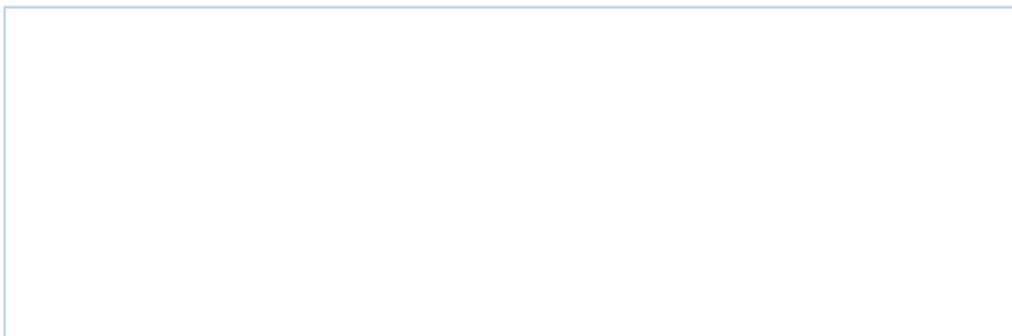
3. A less-experienced married man is chosen to host a visiting overseas executive ahead of a more-experienced single colleague.



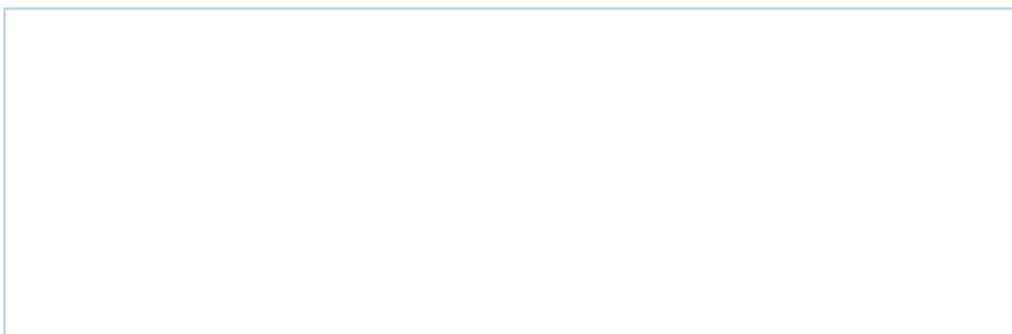
4. A woman who has just told her boss she is pregnant does not have her contract renewed for the following year.



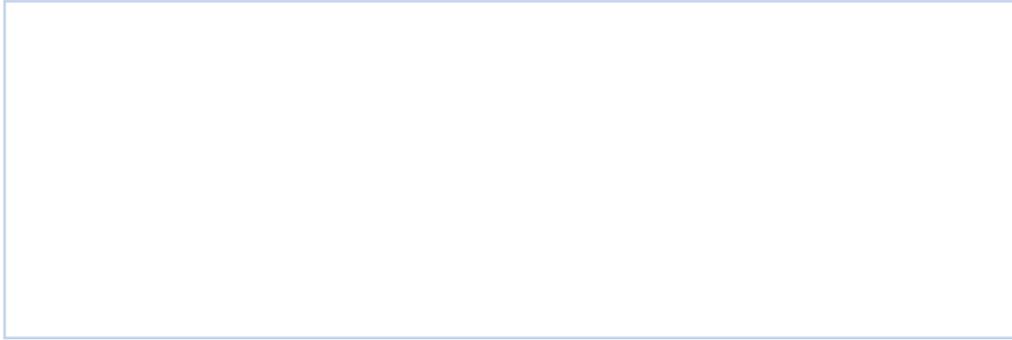
5. A young Muslim man is not given the day off to attend a special religious festival because his supervisor says it would be unfair to others in the organisation who would like a day off too.



6. A man is chosen over a woman for a job that involves manual handling.

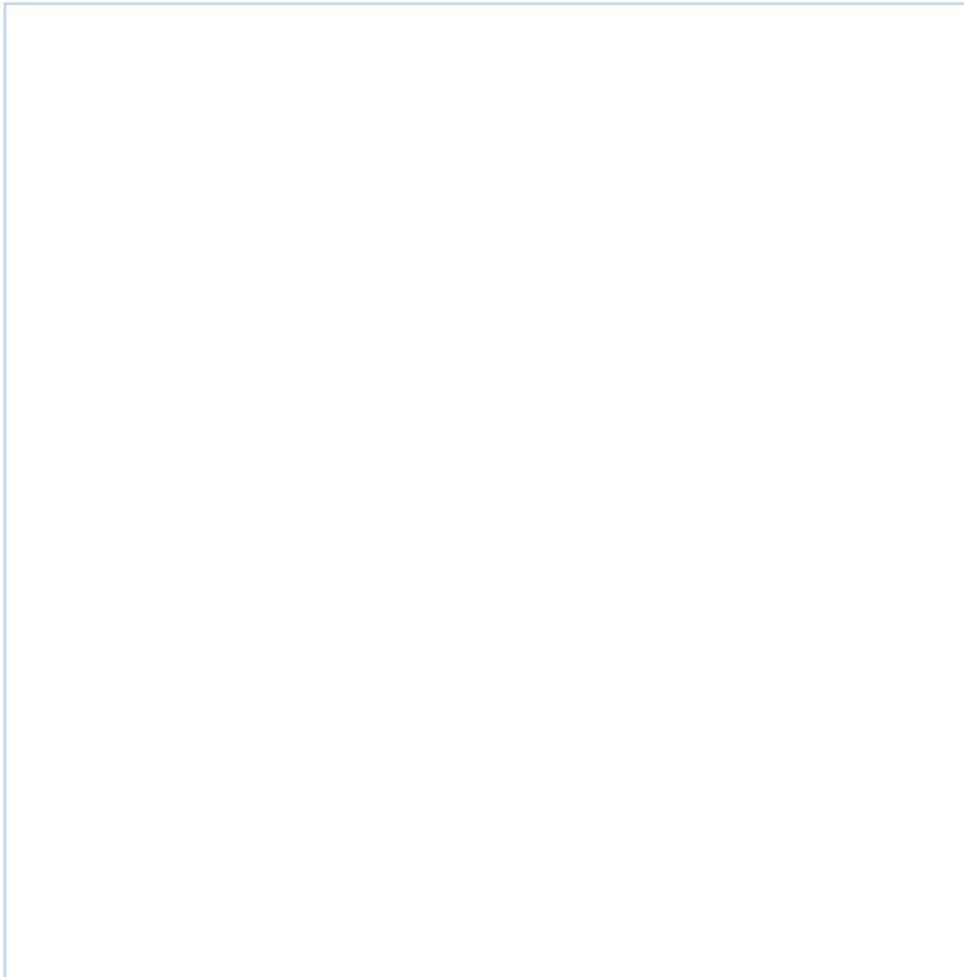


7. A young woman with an intellectual disability is not selected for a job despite having received a great report from a work experience placement in a similar role. A young woman without a disability is chosen instead.

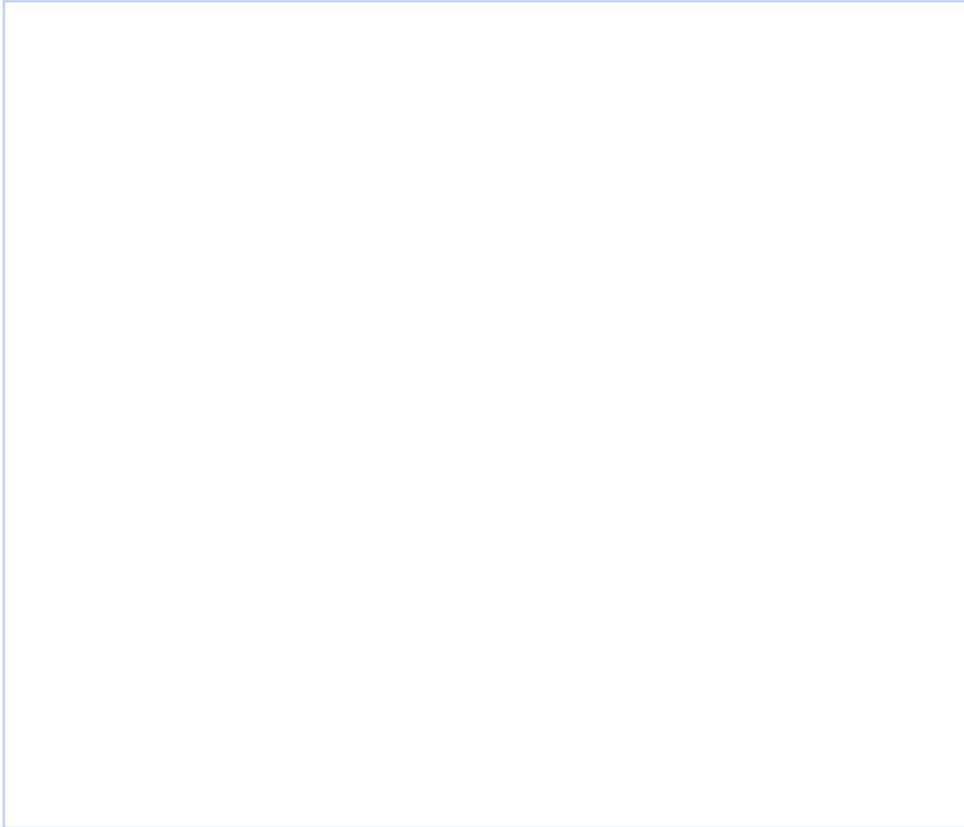


Part E

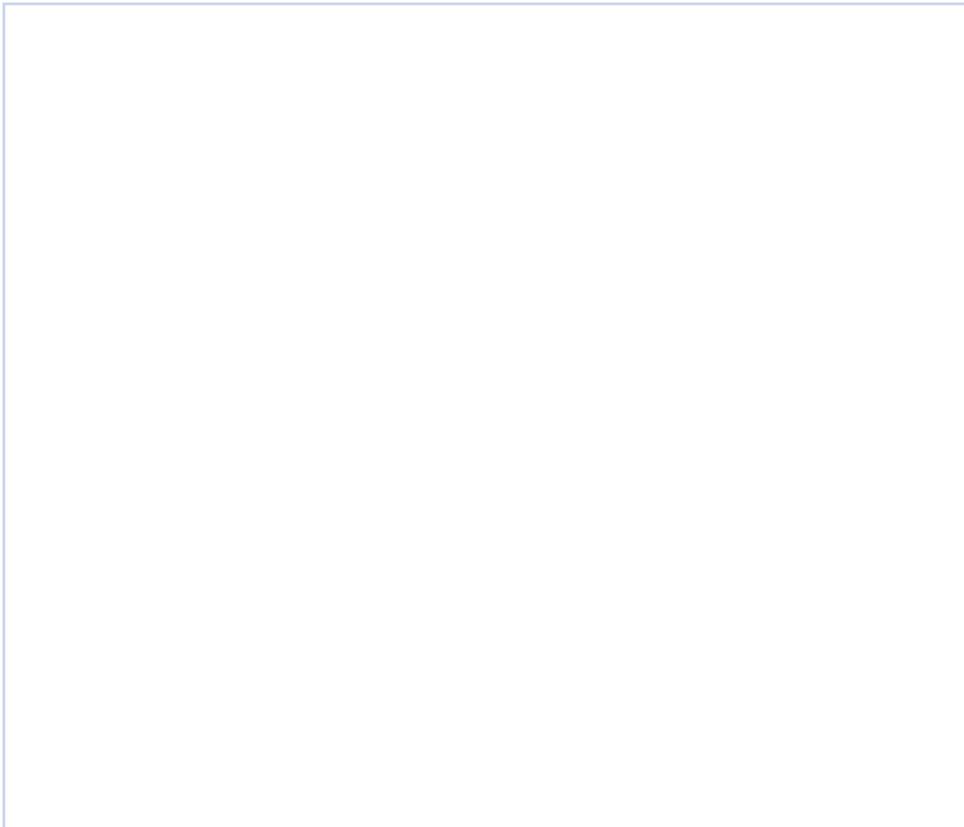
1. Describe your organisation's requirements in relation to each of the following (if you are not working, then describe an organisation with which you are familiar):
- a) Using appropriate behaviour when communicating with colleagues in the workplace



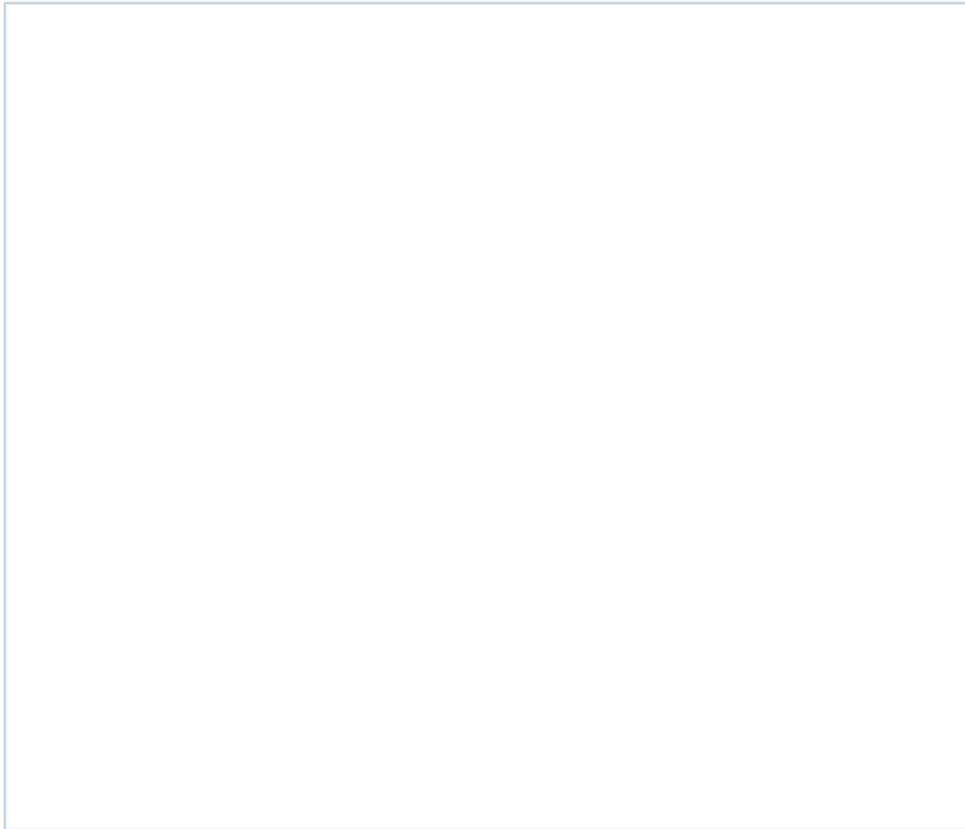
b) Dealing with customers



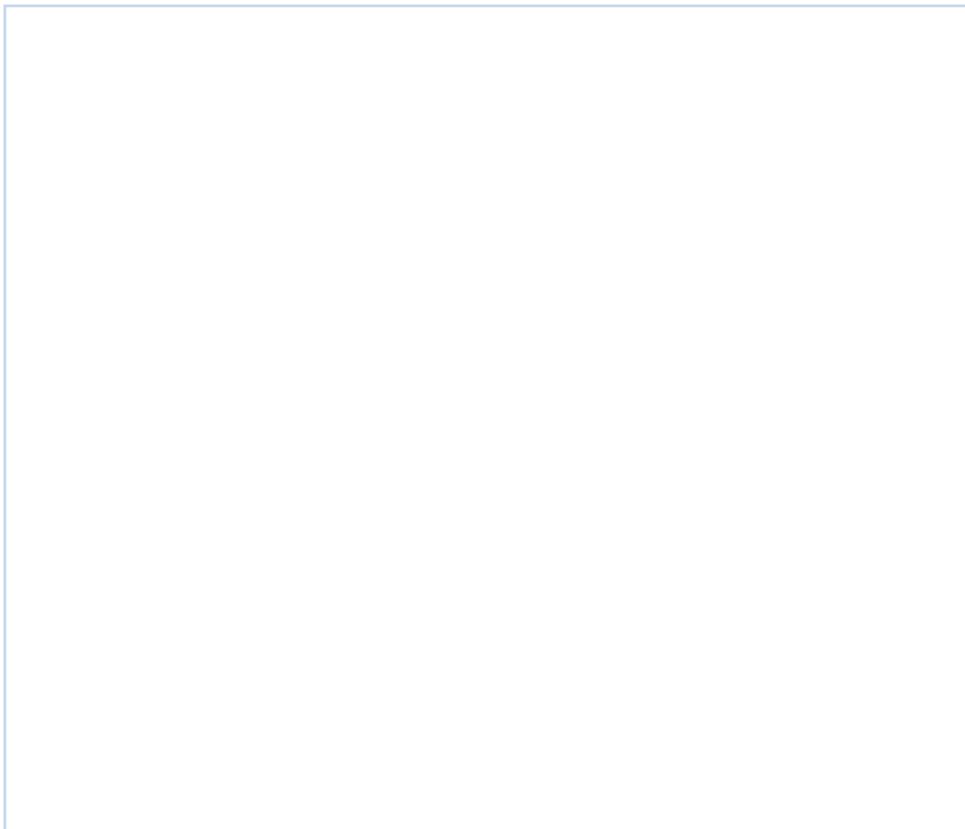
c) Maintaining confidentiality of information



d) Dealing with problems and concerns



e) Using appropriate communication channels



2. Where are the documents located that set out these requirements?

3. Who do you ask if you cannot understand these documents?

Part F

Complete a table similar to the following in relation to your own workplace. Record any changes you think could be made to improve the safety of your workplace.

Area	Suggested changes to improve safety
Use of equipment such as photocopiers, binders, laminators and data projectors	
Movement of objects around the workplace, such as tables, chairs, computers, books and paper	
Location, knowledge and use of safety equipment	
Daily tasks such as answering the phone, using the computer or participating in meetings	
Procedures for identifying risks and hazards	

Part G

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

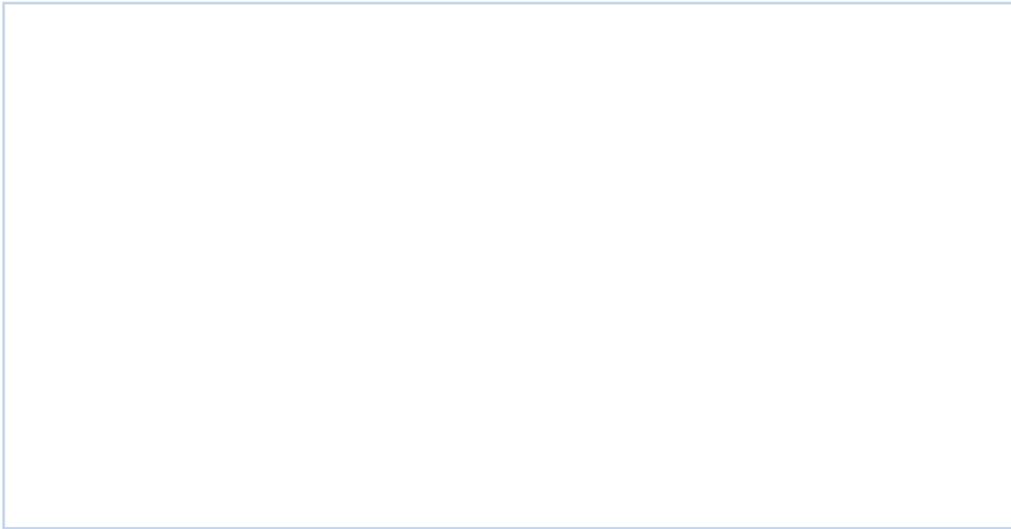
Dominique works at the front desk for a large human resources company. It is a busy job and she is constantly fielding inquiries from employers and applicants. A call comes through from a woman who does not speak English very well. Dominique cannot understand her and gets impatient with the slow pace of the conversation. She has two other phone lines ringing and three people waiting in reception.

Dominique pretends the phone connection is breaking up – she tells the woman she cannot hear her properly and hangs up. When she woman calls back Dominique says ‘Sorry, you have the wrong number’. Later that day, the woman’s social worker calls back to make a complaint to Dominique’s manager about discrimination.

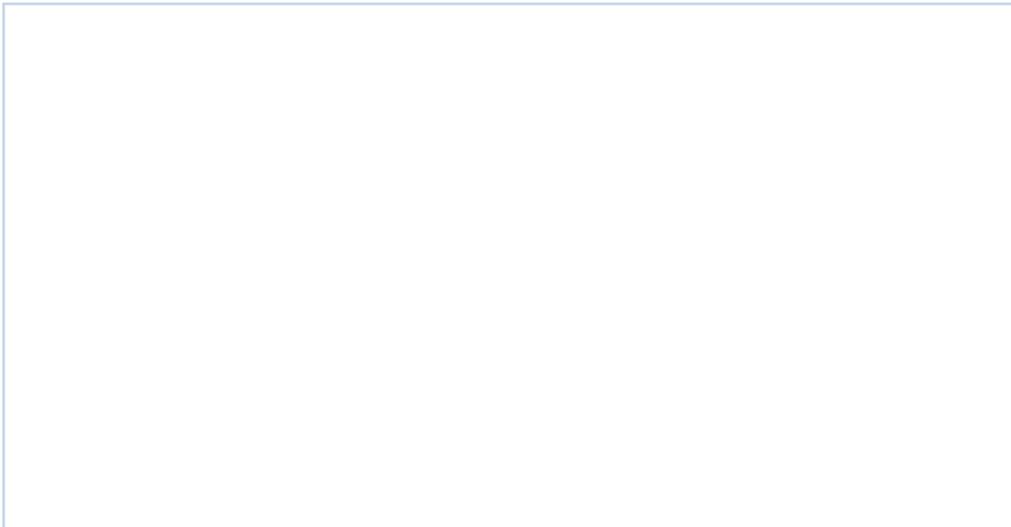
1. Were Dominique’s actions discriminatory?

2. What are Dominique’s legal responsibilities in this situation?

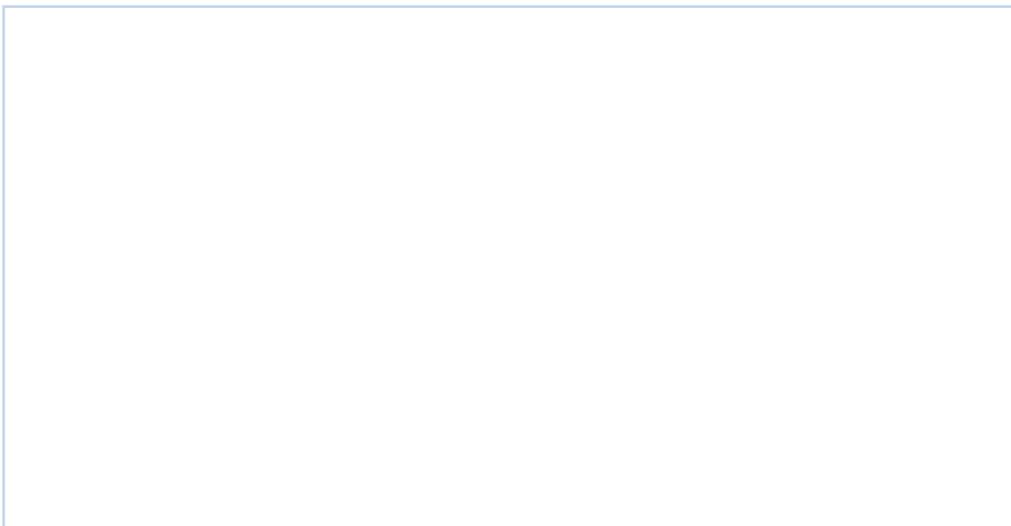
3. Does the woman have the right to complain about Dominique's behaviour?



4. What could Dominique have done when she couldn't understand the woman?



5. If you were Dominique's supervisor, what would you do and say?



Topic 2

Work in a team

Good teamwork comes from everyone being committed to the overall objectives of an organisation. Organisations where people work well together are effective in meeting their customers' needs. If you are working in a team that is functioning well, you will feel that you are contributing to the success of the organisation and that you are important and valued.

The way you relate to other people, and the way you carry out your job, has a major effect on how successful your work team is.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Be courteous and helpful at all times
- 2B Complete allocated tasks
- 2C Seek assistance when difficulties arise
- 2D Ask questions to clarify instructions and responsibilities
- 2E Use a non-discriminatory attitude in all communications with others

2A

Be courteous and helpful at all times

Courtesy can be defined as being respectful or considering others. Courtesy means treating other people in the way you would like to be treated by them. Here are some examples of courteous and helpful behaviour that is applicable in the workplace.

Be polite

Say please and thank you

By saying please, you are letting other people know that you appreciate their efforts – even if you are asking them to do something they are expected to do as part of their job. Likewise, saying thank you tells the other person that you are not taking them for granted.

For example, if you have been in the organisation for a while, you may have an office assistant who does your photocopying. When you ask them to do something for you, it is polite to say, 'Please can you make me five copies of this', instead of 'I need five copies of this'.

Be helpful

Be helpful

Being helpful means putting in the time or effort to make things easier for someone else. Doing something just because it is part of your job is not being helpful. If you see someone is struggling to get something done on time, to carry a heavy load or to understand a complicated document, you could offer to help. They will appreciate it, and in the long run, you may benefit as the other person will feel like helping you when you need it.

Be cooperative

Be cooperative

Cooperation means working toward common goals. Doing your fair share, minimising conflict and having a positive attitude are all parts of being cooperative. By cooperating with each other, members of a team can achieve a lot more than they can if they are constantly putting their own interests first.

Keep work area clean

Keep work area clean

Maintaining a clean work area shows respect for your co-workers and your employer. If you work in an open-plan office or share common work areas, be considerate of others. Make sure you clean up, restock supplies and put equipment back in its place after you finish a task so everything is ready for the next person to use.

In the case of a shared desk, keep your materials (such as papers and folders) on your side and in an orderly fashion. This is good because it makes it easier for other people to work and demonstrates to others that you are considerate and concerned for the wellbeing of your team and your organisation.

Practice task 7

Your organisation has a goal of providing excellent customer service in all its dealings with customers.

List three practical ways that you, as an individual employee, could help meet this goal and describe why each is important.

2B

Complete allocated tasks

In every work environment you will find that tasks are allocated (given out) by someone more senior than you. Whatever your role is, if you want to be a team player, be sure to perform in such a way that your co-workers know they can rely on you. If you say that the photocopying will be completed by the end of the day, make sure it is ready as promised. If you agree to attend a meeting, don't be late or cancel at the last minute. When you make any type of promise or commitment, keep it.

When you fulfil your commitments, it shows that you respect others. Being on time for a meeting, for instance, shows that you don't want to waste other people's time. Treat colleagues and customers as you would like to be treated yourself.

Sometimes you will find that you cannot complete tasks as agreed. In these cases, it is important to let your supervisor or team know what is happening. Be open about what is occurring with your job; keep people informed.

Practice task 8

Read the case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

Mary is a data processing officer in a large government organisation. She has been in her job for five years and works with 10 other people who have similar roles. The work involves entering complex information into a database. Each person in the team must meet targets set by the supervisor. Mary is more experienced than her co-workers and finishes her work well before they do. She then spends the rest of the afternoon talking to her co-workers who are trying to get their targets met, or chatting on the phone to friends.

Mary's new supervisor has asked her to stop making personal calls and to help her co-workers when she has spare time. Although she does help, she does it in a way that makes them feel as though she is telling them how they should do their job. Mary notices that her co-workers are angry and does not know why. The problem is clear to her supervisor: Mary is not a team player. The supervisor has told Mary that she must learn how to work in a team.

List three things Mary could do to become a more useful and active team member.

2C

Seek assistance when difficulties arise

If difficulties arise when you are carrying out your work, it is important to seek assistance before the situation gets too bad. If you feel unable to ask for help about workplace problems, you may end up not completing work on time and let people down. If the problem persists you may worry more and stress levels may increase.

People may find it hard to ask for help because they:

- fear people may think them weak or too dependent on others
- fear people may think they are not competent at their job
- think they should be able to handle all situations
- have a supervisor who is not approachable.

Types of difficulties

During your working life you will encounter many difficulties in the workplace. Some of these difficulties will be within your control and others will be out of your control. Regardless of the circumstances, it is important to recognise that there are people in your workplace who are willing to assist you. If you choose not to ask for assistance this can have a major effect on you, your co-workers and ultimately the organisation.

It takes courage and honesty to communicate and ask for help. Remember the saying 'A problem shared is a problem halved'. Your colleagues and supervisor cannot offer you the benefit of their support, experience and problem-solving skills if you don't ask.

Consider the following information about difficulties that commonly occur in the workplace.

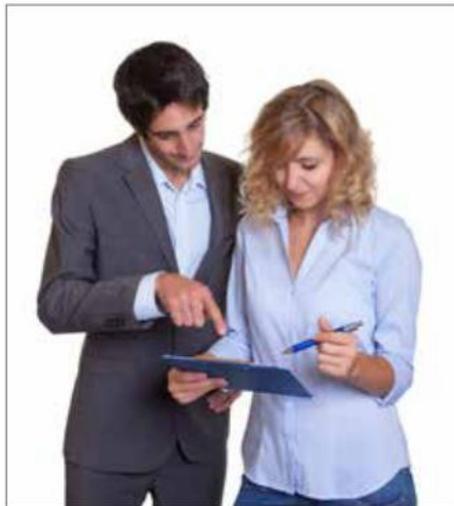


Failing to deliver what has been promised

We all have good intentions about delivering products, services and projects on time. With good time management and organisational skills, this is achievable.

However, sometimes events occur that mean you cannot deliver what you have promised. Supplier delays, staff illness, equipment breakdowns or even extreme weather can put you behind schedule.

Whenever a situation develops where you see that you cannot provide what has been promised, immediately inform your supervisor or team leader so they can help work out a solution. For example, they may be able to extend a deadline or offer an alternative product to a customer.



Not having the authority to do what is required

Having responsibility without authority is a major frustration in most workplaces.

At times you will find yourself in a position where you will have to make decisions about certain things affecting your job. However, your role may not give you the authority to do anything about it.

To overcome this difficulty you should:

- contact your manager or supervisor, discuss the situation and gain agreement about the situation in writing
- define your role; be clear about the parameters of your job; refer situations to others in authority for resolution.



Too many tasks and responsibilities and not enough time to do them

Most people in the workplace encounter times when they have so much to do and little time to do it. The impact of this difficulty is far reaching. In many cases, workers try to do it all and as a result end up stressed, tired, irritable and possibly sick. In addition, the quality of their work and their credibility is affected. This is called spreading yourself too thin.

If you find yourself in this situation:

- make a list of priorities
- create a schedule and clarify expectations with your supervisor
- 'block out' (plan and set aside) time when the tasks can be completed
- minimise interruptions.



Who can offer assistance?

Seeking assistance from others in the workplace should not be difficult. It is important to know where to go and who to ask. The following information outlines some examples of where assistance can be obtained.

Sources of assistance

Your manager or supervisor is there to assist you, or guide you on where to obtain assistance and support.

Employee assistance programs (EAP) are set up to support all employees who are experiencing issues that have an effect on work performance. These programs are usually coordinated by the human resources area in an organisation.

External bodies such as government departments, professional associations and unions can provide information about working arrangements, conditions and issues in the workplace.

Practice task 9

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Juan has worked with his organisation for one year in the mailroom. He carries out administration tasks for three departments. He has been collecting, sorting and distributing the mail as well as photocopying and binding documents for other staff. All three departments rely on Juan to complete the work on time and to a particular standard.

When Juan started in his job he was able to complete his job tasks according to the time lines and standard required. However, recently there have been times when the mail was not picked up, photocopying not completed and binding was done incorrectly. When asked why this is happening, Juan just makes excuses.

1. What difficulties is Juan encountering?

2. What effect would this situation have on Juan and the staff in the three departments?

3. What should Juan do and why?

2D

Ask questions to clarify instructions and responsibilities

When we are given instructions or explanations, especially verbally, there is a good chance that we will misunderstand at least part of the message. It is therefore important to seek clarification of instructions and messages. This means that you must listen carefully, think about what you are hearing and ask questions to make sure you are clear about what you've been told.

Sometimes managers assign work to employees with little or no direction about what is expected or how to complete the job. This results in frustration and incomplete or incorrectly completed jobs.

Managers may:

- withhold information the employee needs, either intentionally or unintentionally
- give misleading information, either intentionally or unintentionally
- be vague in their own understanding of what they actually want done
- be unclear in expressing what they want done
- use a third person to pass on information, who may lack a clear understanding of the task or not pass on the information correctly.

Listening techniques

There are many benefits associated with listening well. Listening well helps you to avoid mistakes and problems. Listening is more than just hearing; it means paying attention and taking note of what someone else is saying.

To listen effectively you should:

- avoid distractions such as noisy machinery, TV or other people
- take time to listen – let the other person know that you have the time to hear them speak
- listen fully – don't interrupt
- avoid judging the person
- watch body language – sometimes what people are saying is totally opposite to what their body is saying
- concentrate fully on what is being said
- take notes
- ask questions
- clarify and summarise what has been said.

Clarify information

Check that your understanding of what is required is the same as that of the person giving the instructions. This means that you repeat and confirm any information that is being given to you. You can give the person a summary of what you think they have told you so they can then check you are both talking about the same thing. Taking this step assures the person giving the information that you have understood.

To fully understand what has been communicated you usually need to ask questions. Asking questions reduces the risk of assuming that you have all the information needed to proceed when in fact you don't. Make sure you get all the necessary information to effectively perform your job.

When communicating with others, listen, ask questions and repeat what you have heard. Keep doing this until you fully understand what is being communicated.



Open and closed questioning

There are two types of questions that you can use: open and closed.

Here is more information about open and closed questions.

Open

An open question is likely to receive an extended answer. They provide an opportunity for discussion, thinking and reflection with another person. Open questions often begin with 'what', 'why' and 'how'.

For example:

- What should I do now?
- What would happen if we received more funding?
- How do I process this information?
- Can you please describe how to do this?

Closed

Closed questions are answered with a single word or short phrase. These types of questions give facts, are quick and easy to answer and keep you in control of a conversation.

For example:

- Are you happy working here?
- Would you like me to help you with that?
- Is this what you said?
- If I deliver this now, can you sign for it?

Practice task 10

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Susie has an important role that requires her to complete projects to tight deadlines. Her boss, Michael, is renowned for giving short and incomplete instructions. This has created problems in the department where Susie works.

Michael has just called and told Susie that the CEO wants a particular project completed within the next four weeks and if it isn't completed on time, jobs will be on the line.

Michael provides a few details over the phone, which Susie quickly jots down. He then says he has a meeting and ends the call before she has a chance to ask any questions.

1. What should Susie do to obtain more information from Michael?

2. Write six questions (three open and three closed) that Susie could ask. Indicate which of your questions are open and which are closed.

2E

Use a non-discriminatory attitude in all communications with others

Everyone has the right to a workplace free from discrimination and harassment. Discrimination occurs when a person is treated differently from others based on a characteristic that is not relevant to how well they do their job. If people discriminate against others, it is impossible to have good relationships in teams. Not only will some people feel hurt, but the organisation will also not be as effective as it should be.

In Australia, it is illegal to discriminate against someone in the workplace based on their race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, social origin, age, medical record, marital status, pregnancy, family commitments, impairment, disability, nationality, sexual preference or trade union activity.

Employers must look closely at how they go about being non-discriminatory. Sometimes discrimination is obvious – it happens openly with the support of managers and other employees. This is called direct discrimination. For example, an advertisement in a cafe window saying ‘Waitress wanted’ is direct discrimination against men.

At other times discrimination is hidden – people know they shouldn’t discriminate but do it anyway. Or, the discrimination is unconscious, based on preconceptions or societal stereotypes. This is called indirect discrimination. An advertisement for a cleaner that calls for ‘high-level written English skills’ could be an example of indirect racial discrimination, as written communication is not necessary to being a good cleaner.

Some examples of hidden discrimination are provided here.

Hidden discrimination

Particular ethnic groups are given certain tasks and not others

People with disabilities are automatically rejected without considering whether adjustments could be made to the workplace to accommodate their needs

Particular groups are stereotyped (labelled) creating an expectation of low performance

Discrimination

The impact of discrimination, apart from possibly leading to legal action, can sour working relations and possibly lead to the departure of valued employees, or to the loss of business. The victims can suffer personal stress and economic hardship.

Discriminatory behaviour has much in common with bullying.

Discrimination may take the form of:

- spreading rumours that discredit an employee
- making crude or offensive remarks about colleagues
- engaging in physical abuse or threatening violence
- dismissing the feelings of people who are the subject of jokes or abuse
- making life difficult for someone who complains about the way they are being treated or who supports the victim.

How to be non-discriminatory

If you observe discrimination or harassment in action, you may be tempted to avoid dealing with the situation. You may tell yourself that, if left alone, the problem will go away, or dismiss it as unimportant. You may be frightened that if you speak up, you will become a target too.

The truth of the matter is that discrimination is wrong and against the law. Once it is entrenched in a workplace, discrimination affects the harmony of the whole workplace and may be very difficult to eliminate.

Managers have a duty to take action, even when the person being affected does not complain. As an employee in the workplace you can develop your own understanding of discrimination issues and become non-discriminatory by taking action when others are discriminating.

It is also important to think about your own behaviours.



Practice task 11

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Maria starts a new job as a senior supervisor with a large company. A month after she starts her job she begins to experience pins and needles and numbness in her hands and feet. She is admitted to hospital for tests, which lead to a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis.

Maria advises her employer that she has a mild form of multiple sclerosis and will require three weeks off work to recuperate and attend specialist appointments. She is confident that she can return to full-time work and perform her duties, and has a medical report supporting this. However, one week into her sick leave, Maria receives a letter that says her employment is terminated.

The company claims that Maria's work performance was a concern during the period she was employed. It says that the decision to terminate her employment is based on the fact that multiple sclerosis is very unpredictable and there are serious doubts she will be able to perform the inherent requirements of the job over time.

At the conciliation conference Maria provides medical evidence to demonstrate that she has been well since her employment was terminated.

Has discrimination occurred in this case study? If yes, in what way?

Summary

1. Courtesy, helpfulness and cooperation are essential qualities for the effective operations of a team in the workplace.
2. Completing tasks on time to the standard required by the workplace is a necessity in any workplace. Completion of tasks on time also shows respect and a consideration for others.
3. Difficulties can arise in the workplace at any time. It is important to seek assistance if this occurs. Most organisations have systems available to support employees.
4. Poor communication contributes to many workplace problems. It is important to listen effectively, ask questions and seek clarification on what has been said when instructions are given.
5. Discrimination in the workplace, whether direct or indirect, is against the law. It is important that every employee and employer demonstrates a non-discriminatory attitude

Learning checkpoint 2

Work in a team

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in working in a team.

Part A

Read the case study, then answer the question that follows.

Case study

John is working in an organisation that conducts major projects for external clients. He is responsible for working with two project teams. He has found that one team is highly successful in developing a quality product and works well together; whereas the other team is experiencing severe team problems. John has been asked to explore why one team is working well and the other one is having issues.

What do you think John will find?

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Habesha has been asked to complete a job that involves three departments. The time lines have been scheduled by her supervisor. Her supervisor does not tolerate mistakes and has told Habesha that the job must be completed on time and to the standard required by the organisation. Habesha starts the job with limited information. She finds that there are few resources available to complete the task and she is now behind time.

1. What should Habesha have done before she started the job and what should she do now to make this a success?

2. Prepare a list of open and closed questions that Habesha should have asked her supervisor. Note beside each question whether it is open or closed.

Then, ask a colleague, co-worker or classmate to participate in a role-play where you can ask the questions. You are Habesha; the other person is the supervisor.

Following the role-play, ask the other participant to give you feedback on:

- a) How well you asked relevant questions regarding the situation

b) How well you summarised and checked for understanding

c) How good your effective listening skills were

d) Whether you seemed to be respectful and willing to listen

Part C

1. If you are working, obtain the policies and procedures regarding discrimination in your workplace.

If you are not working, contact an organisation and speak with the manager or a representative from the human resources department. Find out about the organisation's discrimination policy and how they deal with discrimination in the workplace. Record your findings.

2. What are the main points described in the discrimination policies you have sourced?

Topic 3

Develop effective work habits

Developing good work habits and time-management practices is often a matter of developing proper attitudes toward work and time. People with good work habits are more successful in their careers than those who are poorly organised, and they tend to have more time to spend on their personal life as well.

Good work habits are more important than ever because of today's emphasis on productivity and quality.

It is, however, important to create a good balance between work and your personal life. Career goals you've set for yourself will fall flat if your mind or body can't keep up with competing priorities. You may become stressed or burnt out.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Identify work and personal priorities and achieve a work–life balance
- 3B Apply time-management strategies to work duties
- 3C Dress and behave appropriately for the job role

3A

Identify work and personal priorities and achieve a work–life balance

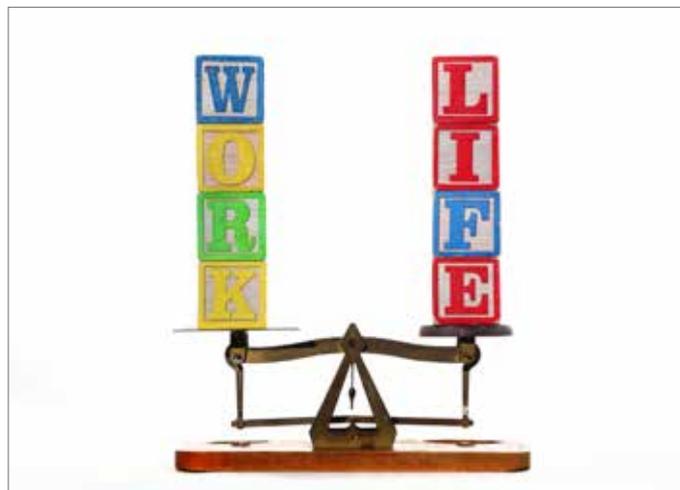
In order to stay healthy and happy, it is essential to find a balance between your working life and your personal life. You may also be juggling study or family commitments. The right balance will change as your career progresses. It will differ if you are single or if you are raising children or nearing retirement.

Work–life balance can involve many things, such as:

- getting enough sleep
- removing negative situations from your life
- working smarter, not harder
- building and maintaining supportive relationships with family, friends and co-workers.

With portable technology, such as laptops and smartphones, it is easier to bring work home and work longer hours. There is evidence to show that Australian workers are working harder and longer while trying to balance the care of children and ageing parents, not to mention having some time for themselves. We call these ‘competing priorities’.

If not dealt with, competing priorities can cause stress-related illnesses and loss of productivity in the workplace. Therefore, a focus on work–life balance is long overdue.



Work–life balance initiatives in organisations

In some organisations, work–life balance initiatives have been implemented to assist employees to be productive and healthy in their work and personal lives.

Some organisations are raising awareness of the benefits of having a balanced lifestyle and are providing employees with greater flexibility in how they work. Work–life balance initiatives change the culture in organisations. Employers gain a competitive business edge by attracting and retaining healthy, productive employees.

Work–life balance initiatives may take many forms.

Flexible working arrangements

Traditional working hours require employees to work from nine to five, Monday to Friday, for a typical 40-hour week. Under flexible working arrangements, an employee may opt to start at 7.30 am so that they can finish work earlier and pick up their children from school. Another employee may work nine hours one day and seven hours the next so they can attend a class or appointment.

Job sharing

Job sharing involves the sharing of one full-time job between two people. It is becoming increasingly popular, as it provides flexibility for the employees while supporting the business of the employer. Good communication skills and well-defined work practices are essential to make job sharing a success.

Working from home

Many organisations are now seeing the merit in allowing employees to work from home. Employees have the opportunity to work using technology and only attend the workplace when meetings are required.

Health-related programs

Some organisations actively promote the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle by offering weight reduction programs, personal training, stop smoking programs, meditation and massages.

The benefits of work–life balance programs

There are benefits for the employer and the employee in finding the right work–life balance.

For the employer

- Improved staff retention rates
- Less sick leave
- Less stress-related illness
- Better work cooperation
- Increased motivation and productivity
- Greater ability to meet customer demands through flexible working arrangements

For the employee

- Improved personal and work relationships
- Increased job satisfaction
- Less stress and improved health
- More time to pursue recreational activities such as exercise
- More opportunities to spend time with children and family
- More time to pursue areas of interest such as study, travel and hobbies

Tips for developing a good work–life balance

A healthy balance between work, leisure and family benefits everyone. All individuals and their workplaces are responsible for creating work–life balance.

You can't control all of the factors that affect your work–life balance; however, there are many things you can do to create a better lifestyle.

Here are some ways you can help yourself when it comes to developing a good work–life balance.



Seek support from your employer

Most organisations have policies in place to help you achieve a better work–life balance. Employers recognise that it is better for the organisation to have fully functional, productive and healthy employees. If you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed talk with your supervisor, manager or human resources contact so support can be provided.



Schedule regular breaks throughout the day

Taking regular 10-minute breaks energises and increases productivity. Take a short walk around the office or outside.



Take your annual holidays

Holidays are important for you to rest and enjoy time away from the workplace. Taking a holiday allows you to return to work refreshed and more productive.



Create a healthy lifestyle

Make a realistic plan to eat better, take regular exercise, reduce your alcohol intake, quit smoking, or pursue a hobby or interest. Spend more time with your family and friends.

Practice task 12

You are an administrative assistant of an online learning management system. You have a pre-school-aged child.

Identify three ways you can achieve work–life balance.

3B

Apply time-management strategies to work duties

Time management is one of those skills that we were not taught at school. However, it is something we must learn or life can be very messy and chaotic. Poor time management affects your work–life balance.

Poor time managers are always busy – they never have enough hours in a day to do what they need or want to. Poor time management leads to stress, worry and procrastination.

Poor time managers appear to work hard but they don't get much done. 'Work smarter not harder' is a saying that highlights that working hard and being effective are two different things. It is the results that are produced that show effective use of time.



Effects of being a poor time manager

If you are a poor time manager you may find that you will have to work longer and longer hours to catch up on tasks. This becomes overwhelming, resulting in procrastination. Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task that needs to be done – postponing until tomorrow what can be done today.

Often we try to disguise our avoidance by being very busy doing things that may be interesting, and even useful, but don't contribute towards the goals of the organisation. Overcoming procrastination usually involves having good time management skills.

Effective time managers work efficiently and effectively, not wasting time on unnecessary things.



What is time management?

Time management is organising the time you have available in a way that allows you to get the most done.

Everything we do requires time. Some of these events and activities are externally controlled and some are internally controlled. Examples of externally controlled activities include getting to work by a particular time, attending meetings and family functions; internally controlled activities may involve chatting online, talking on the phone or in the workplace.

To be a good time manager it is important to focus on what you want to achieve and actively set about making time to complete these goals. It is also about setting priorities and taking full responsibility for your use or abuse of your time.

Many of us do not know how we use our time. Have you ever considered what you do every day? What we are sure of is that time disappears very quickly.

Effective time management involves:

- setting priorities
- taking charge of situations
- experimenting with ideas to find the best way to make maximum use of time
- changing habits or activities that waste time
- avoiding distractions and interruptions
- being disciplined in following your time-management strategies.

Managing your time effectively

Before you embark on trying to manage your time effectively it is important to find out what you do every day. Here are some ways to effectively manage your time.

	<p>Set realistic goals and time lines</p> <p>Do not create situations where what you set out to achieve is impossible. For example, attempting to work a 40-hour week while studying full time is not achievable. Effective time managers will set daily and weekly goals that are achievable.</p>
	<p>Define your priorities</p> <p>Successful time management begins with planning. Some people create lists of the tasks that must be achieved for a day or a week. The list is a remainder of what must be achieved and must be updated every day.</p>

	<p>Avoid distractions and interruptions</p> <p>Become aware of your time wasters. For example, surfing the internet or texting friends are time wasters. If you are inclined to do this, you need to work on the reason why you procrastinate. If something needs to be done, do it.</p>
	<p>Group similar activities</p> <p>If you have a number of phone calls to make over a week, try to group them into one block of time. This can also apply to sending and responding to emails, attending meetings and reading mail. For example, you may allocate Tuesday morning for making contact with clients and Wednesday morning to reading mail.</p>
	<p>Learn to say no</p> <p>Have you ever heard the saying, 'If you want something done give it to the busiest person'? In some workplaces there are people who keep taking on more and more work. These people can end up becoming burned out and ineffective. If you find that you have too many tasks to complete, with tight time lines, talk with your supervisor to work out ways to get them done.</p>

Practice task 13

You work as an administration officer for a training organisation. You have a range of tasks to undertake and need to prioritise them so you do the most urgent one first.

Decide whether each task in this table is a high, medium or low priority.

Task	Priority
Replying to a course inquiry	
Filing a bundle of contracts	
Photocopying documents for a meeting this afternoon	
Typing up minutes from yesterday's monthly team meeting	
Laminating certificates for a course that finishes this afternoon	
Putting together a class list for tomorrow's class	
Developing an agenda for next month's team meeting	
Printing and binding course notes for a course beginning next Monday	
Sending out invoices for course enrolments	

3C

Dress and behave appropriately for the job role

How an employee behaves and dresses reflects on the image that an organisation is trying to project.

Have you ever received a business letter or an email that was full of spelling and grammatical errors? Have you ever received a call from a salesperson who treated you rudely, particularly when you would not buy their product? Have you ever been in a place of business that was messy and disorganised?

All of these examples send a message about the organisation you are dealing with. This is why most organisations have established codes of conduct. When working in an organisation, you are to observe a code of this sort.



Codes of conduct

A code of conduct is a set of rules explaining the responsibilities of an individual or organisation for the way they deal with other people and organisations. Employees must become aware of the standards required for their workplace. Some codes of conduct provide details about dress code and acceptable and unacceptable types of behaviour.

These standards may be very strict in some businesses, whereas in others they may be more relaxed. It is important to find out what is required by your organisation.

Dress standards

A work dress code is a set of standards that provide guidance about what is appropriate to wear to work. The main objective in establishing a dress code is to allow employees to work comfortably while projecting a professional image to customers, other employees and visitors; in other words, making a good impression.

Dress codes set by your employer should:

- be applied equally to men and women
- relate to the job and be a reasonable requirement
- allow workers to follow their cultural or religious beliefs
- be fair to people with disabilities.

Factors influencing dress standards

Workplace dress codes are usually determined by the amount of contact that employees have with customers at their work locations. For example, if you work on the front desk where customers are greeted, dressing in a uniform or business suit is required to make a good impression. If you work in the back office photocopying and sorting mail, your dress code may be more casual.

The type of work you do is also a consideration. If you work in a warehouse unloading pallets, wearing steel-toed boots and practical work clothes is required so you can work safely.

In any work scenario, you need to dress appropriately for your role by abiding by your company's dress standards. Clothing that works well for the beach, clubs, exercise sessions and sports is not appropriate for a professional appearance at work, whatever your role.

Other factors influencing the requirement for dress codes include:

- an industrial award – this award may require that employees are provided with uniforms
- safety – an employer may require employees to wear a uniform or particular types of clothing for safety purposes
- business type – an employer may set a dress code when employees have contact with the public.

Acceptable dress standards

You will always need to use a certain amount of judgment in your choice of clothing to wear to work as dress codes cannot cover every possibility. If you are unclear about what is acceptable, ask your supervisor, manager or human resources officer.

Workplace dress must be neat, clean and appropriate for the work being performed and for the setting in which the work is performed. Torn, dirty or frayed clothing is unacceptable in any workplace. Clothing that has words or pictures that may be offensive to other employees is also unacceptable.

Supervisors should explain what the preferred dress is for their area to new employees. This usually happens during the orientation period and is monitored during the probationary period. Dress codes cannot discriminate between men and women. For example, if men are not allowed to wear earrings, then women shouldn't be either.

If a dress code standard is being introduced into the workplace employees will usually consult all staff in the decision-making process. Employees may have very strong views about being asked to wear a uniform and these need to be considered before any action is taken.



Casual dress days

Some organisations allow casual dress days to raise money for charity or to reward staff for a job well done, such as the completion of a project. The most common day for casual dressing in Australia is Friday. However, most organisations still set guidelines defining what is appropriate casual wear for this day. For example, the guidelines may specify that casual means jeans and a shirt, not sweatpants and a t-shirt.

Organisations establish a dress code in order to:

- have employees project a professional, business-like image
- allow employees to experience the advantage of more casual and relaxed clothing in certain situations or on casual dress days
- keep employees safe at work
- create a positive working environment
- limit distractions caused by offensive or inappropriate dress.

Acceptable behaviour

Having a positive work environment for employees can mean the difference between success and failure for an organisation. There are many ways in which employees can help to create a positive workplace. One way is to demonstrate behaviours that are professional and acceptable for the workplace.

Most organisations have clearly defined guidelines as to what is considered acceptable and unacceptable workplace behaviour. If we look behind successful businesses you will find a set of morals, ethics and work values that have stood the test of time.

The demonstration of acceptable behaviour is usually connected with the values and core standards of the organisation. Value statements outlined in the organisation's strategic plan provide a clue to the behaviours that are acceptable in the workplace. They explain to employees and to the public just what standards the organisation has.



Example: values and statements of expected behaviours in the workplace

Here is a statement of values and behaviours for a particular organisation.

UP Marketing
Statement of values and behaviours

Respect	Being the best	Teamwork	Honesty
I treat others the way I like to be treated.	I try to do the best I can.	I cooperate with others.	I obey company guidelines.
I communicate in an open manner.	I help others to do their best.	I seek help or provide guidance when needed.	I do what I say I will.
I improve poor behaviour.	I strive to improve my skills and knowledge.	I am reliable.	I am open and straightforward in my dealings with co-workers and the public.

Professionalism

Every organisation expects that all of its employees will perform their job by applying the highest standard of behaviour. We call this professionalism. To achieve this standard, it is essential that employees work in an environment that does not tolerate unacceptable behaviour at any time.

Professionalism means:

- respect for others and yourself
- acceptance of others regardless of age, physical appearance, disability, race, nationality or position
- open and honest communication
- trustworthiness and reliability in everything you do
- an understanding of how good and bad behaviours can affect others
- the ability to give honest feedback based on evidence, not on innuendo and accusations
- an understanding that people are usually working to the best of their ability.

Unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour in the workplace often takes the form of bullying, harassment or discrimination. It may also include rudeness, not respecting privacy or confidentiality, and gossiping. These behaviours upset people and can lead to good, productive people leaving an organisation. Unacceptable behaviour can occur inside a workplace or outside it; for example, at a work function. Regardless of the situation, the code of conduct and standard that the organisation sets must be followed.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour

- Making jokes or comments about a person's race or nationality
- Criticising people in their absence
- Gossiping, spreading rumours and turning people against each other
- Making unwanted sexual advances
- Threatening a person that they may lose their job or fail to be promoted
- Using foul and offensive language or gestures
- Making deliberate unwanted physical contact, ranging from touching to assault
- Putting up posters or forwarding emails that are sexual or violent in nature
- Getting other people to bully and harass someone
- Making comments about or excluding a person because they are younger, older, a different colour or race, have a disability or are gay

What to do about unacceptable behaviours

If you are unsure about the behaviour of others, discuss what is happening with your supervisor, manager or human resources staff. If one of your work colleagues tells you they are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against, encourage them to report the incidents to their manager or the human resources department. A union representative or WHS representative may be able to help. Also suggest they keep a note in their diary each time an incident occurs, detailing what happened, how they responded and how the perpetrator responded.

Each organisation will have different ways of dealing with these situations.

If a report of unacceptable behaviour cannot be resolved by an informal procedure (discussion), a formal complaint should be lodged using the organisation's grievance procedures. A grievance procedure aims to provide a framework for raising and dealing with complaints or grievances at work. The procedure is designed to provide an efficient, clear, non-threatening, fair and accessible mechanism for dealing with problems.

Practice task 14

Read the case study, then answer the question that follows.

Case study

Josie is 21 and recently migrated to Australia from South Africa with her family. She has been working as an administration assistant in a large accounting firm for six months. In her area, there are four other women who work as administration officers. Ever since Josie started work, they have made her feel unwelcome. Lately they have been ignoring her, bursting out laughing when she walks by, making fun of her accent, and hiding her mail. Josie raised the problem with her supervisor but no effective steps were taken to deal with her complaints.

What should Josie do?

Summary

1. Creating a balance between your working life and personal life is essential to your productivity and your physical and mental health.
2. Work–life balance programs recognise that employees have families, responsibilities, interests and goals outside work. They provide employees with greater flexibility in the workplace.
3. Time management means organising the time you have available in a way that allows you to get the most done.
4. Managing time effectively requires self-discipline, and the ability to change the way you do things.
5. Dressing appropriately in the workplace helps project a professional image at all times regardless of position and location.
6. Acceptable behaviours are linked to the values, business ethics and morals of an organisation.
7. Unacceptable behaviour is often linked to bullying, harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Learning checkpoint 3 Develop effective work habits

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in developing effective work habits.

Part A

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

You are a staff member and union leader at an IT company that has 60 employees. You have noticed that many of your co-workers are working long hours and taking frequent sick days, and that work productivity has started to decline. This has had a negative effect on the business. As you have a good relationship with your colleagues, you have found out that many of the staff have competing priorities with family, friends, study and recreation. You decide to raise these problems with the CEO, management team and human relations department. After much discussion it is decided that a work-life balance program should be considered. However, you need to provide evidence to the management team that this is a good idea.

1. What information should be collected to show that this type of program would benefit the organisation?

2. List at least six benefits that this work–life balance program may provide to the staff and the organisation.

Part B

Your manager approaches you and says she thinks you are wasting time in the workplace.

She has asked you to improve the use of your time.

1. List five ways you may be wasting time.

2. Find a time management program that would help you to improve your time management skills. List why this program would be good for you, with reference to your responses to question 1.

Part C

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Jenny is employed as an administrative assistant with your department. She has confided to you that some of her co-workers have been 'making life difficult' for her. You have overheard them saying inappropriate things to Jenny and can see that she is becoming stressed and upset. Jenny has complained to her manager who so far has failed to take action.

1. Identify the unacceptable behaviour in this scenario.

2. What category would you place this behaviour in: bullying, harassment or discrimination?

3. What would you advise Jenny to do?

Part D

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Mary is working on a major project for a large government organisation in the city. She travels to work by train, which is proving to be unreliable. On two occasions she has been late for meetings because her train was delayed. This has caused some problems as the people she has to meet are very busy.

Every Monday a team meeting is held to discuss the status of the project. The meeting involves managers from the organisation as well as other co-workers of Mary's.

During the last meeting one of the project managers told Mary, in front of her co-workers, that being late for meetings was irresponsible and unacceptable regardless of the situation and if it continued she would be off the project. The following Monday, the same manager berated Mary for another incident. Mary is extremely embarrassed by being told off in front of everyone and doesn't know what to do.

1. What could Mary do?

2. Is the project manager's behaviour unacceptable? Why?

3. How can Mary improve the situation?