Unit 3: Principles of Managing Information and Producing Documents

Unit code: J/601/7640
QCF Level 2: BTEC Specialist
Credit value: 3
Guided learning hours: 24

Unit aim
This unit is about the knowledge needed to manage information and produce documents, including organising and researching information, and producing and storing documents.

Unit introduction
Understanding procedures for managing information and producing documents is a crucial skill in business environments.

This unit initially gives learners the opportunity to explore the purpose of IT in a business environment and how to manage information. Learners go on to look at how to produce documents that are fit for purpose. They explore procedures to be followed when producing documents and how to produce documents from notes.

This unit is delivered and assessed in a practical way based on the needs of the chosen organisation.
## Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria determine the standard required to achieve the unit.

**On completion of this unit a learner should:**

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<td>1.1 Identify different types of information technology that may be used for work tasks</td>
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<td><strong>2 Understand how to manage electronic and paper-based information</strong></td>
<td>2.1 Explain the purpose of agreeing objectives and deadlines for researching information</td>
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| 4 Know the procedures to be followed when producing documents | 4.1 Identify reasons for agreeing the purpose, content, layout, quality standards and deadlines for production of documents  
4.2 Describe ways of checking finished documents for accuracy and correctness, and the purpose of doing so  
4.3 Explain the purpose of confidentiality and data protection procedures when preparing documents  
4.4 Compare different types of documents that may be produced from notes and the formats to be followed  
4.5 Explain the procedures to be followed when preparing text from notes |
Unit content

This content has been written in an expanded format to facilitate both a multiple choice test (MCQ) and portfolio assessment. Learners presenting work for portfolio assessment are not expected to evidence all of the bracketed content. Learners who opt for MCQ assessment could be tested on any part of this content.

1 Understand the purpose of information technology in a business environment

Different types of information technology: internet - websites (for selling, for promoting organisation and products or services, for obtaining information, for providing services); social media as used by businesses (facebook, twitter, email); software (word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentation software, accounting software, customised software designed for specific industries or organisations, email software with calendar, contact list, copying people in, attachments); printers (colour or black and white); storage media held internally within organisations (active files, archive files, hard drive); CD drives, DVD drives, flash drives/USB); storage held externally (internet, back-up data service provider); telephony (telephones, voice calls, text messages, teleconferencing, smartphones with internet access, email, calendars and contact lists)

Benefits of using internet for work tasks in a business environment: internet enables organisations to reach out to people who would not visit the organisations; internet enables organisation to provide service or information 24/7; internet enables efficient research and reporting of information; social media allows businesses to expand contact bases, advertise, communicate with different groups of customers or service users; learn about different groups of potential customers or service users; email enables exchange of information through sending and receiving messages, attachments, archiving messages, copying people in; other resources provided by email software (calendar, contact list, sending emails with attachments)

Benefits of using software in a business environment: word processing enables production of different types of documents (business letters, memos, emails, staff handbooks, reports of telephone messages, web pages); information can be presented in a format appropriate to user and purpose; high quality, attractive documents can be produced; spreadsheets enable instant numerical calculations to be done; results can be organised to help analysis (tables of data ascending/descending order); ‘what-if scenarios’ can be quantified; databases provide information in required format; enable user to search for information and make links between different tables of data; presentation software assists in production of professional presentations

Benefits of using telephony in a business environment: voice calls (used to communicate with customers, suppliers and within the organisation); teleconferencing (used as live communication instead of meetings); text messages (allow instant communication between staff or between a service provider and client, used to send messages), alerts (alerting client of new facility, provide updated information, provide information to other staff who are not in the office)
Benefits of using printers in a business environment: attractive documents; cost-effective to produce; enhance image of organisation

Benefits of using storage media in a business environment: safe storage of documents; searchable; cost-effective use of space; ease of back-up storage; ease of sharing with others in different locations; ease of moving data

IT to exchange information: purposes of email; sending, receiving, replying to emails; archiving and compressing emails; using other resources provided by email software (calendar, contact list); difficulties in sending emails with attachments; principles for dealing with unknown senders, unwanted mail; viruses and the problems they can cause; avoiding viruses (using anti-virus software to keep risks to a minimum); risks in downloading documents and software; security, risks in sharing confidential information eg personal details; laws and guidelines (data protection, equal opportunities, disability, health and safety, copyright, organisational guidelines) and activities covered by these laws and guidelines (downloading images, sending inappropriate emails); communication styles (courtesy, tone, reply/forward functions, copying people in, sending emails with attachments)

2 Understand how to manage electronic and paper-based information

Purpose of agreeing objectives and deadlines for researching information: to ensure relevant information researched; to save time; to prevent errors; to provide information in required format within agreed timescales; to provide appropriate amount of research; to conduct cost-effective research

Ways of researching information: internal information sources (active files, archive files - paper or electronic - intranet, database query, interviews/surveys of staff; external sources (information websites, competitors’ websites, surveys of customers or suppliers, books, journals, professional or trade associations, consultants)

Organising and reporting information: good practice in organising and reporting information (accurate selection of suitable information, sources checked for accuracy, amount of detail suited to user, clear, professional presentation, use of house style and format, format appropriate to user and purpose); organising information to help analysis (tables of data in ascending/descending order)

Reporting information: written report (formal style featuring background information, description of research method, findings, and conclusions, data summarised using descriptions/tables/graphs, references and appendices used); oral presentation (using IT software such as PowerPoint summarising research methods and main findings)

Procedures for archiving information held on paper: following organisational archiving policy for identification of documents to be retained; length of time for documents to be retained; restricted status; method of archiving (physical storage of paper, microfiche, electronic copies of paper documents); manual filing classification and index systems (alphabetical, numeric, chronological and alphanumeric index cards, active files, archived files)

Procedures for archiving information held as electronic data: following organisational archiving policy for identification of data to be retained; length of time for data to be retained; restricted status; file naming protocols; place on network where data to be stored; back-up arrangements
Procedures for retrieving archived information: following organisational procedures for identifying who is permitted to retrieve information; permitted purposes of retrieval; any restrictions on use of information; any restrictions on movement or copying of archived information; ensure required notes are left in archive files showing where information is when it is withdrawn from archive; replace after use ensuring manual or electronic protocols are followed

Procedures for deleting information: following organisational policies for retention and deletion of information; ensure that back-up copies are also deleted if data must be deleted; check that data is completely deleted from system; for paper records arrange for secure disposal to ensure confidentiality is maintained; maintain records of data and dates of deletions where required

Importance of confidentiality when managing information: limits security risks (unauthorised access to computer systems, loss of IT data storage equipment, loss of files); avoidance of damage to organisation’s reputation; loss of business; physical danger to staff and members of the public; financial loss to organisation; prosecution; competitor advantage through knowledge of sensitive information (company strategy, customer details, development of new products, promotional campaigns); need to comply with Data Protection Act

3 Understand the purpose of producing documents that are fit-for-purpose

Fit for purpose: appropriate and of a necessary standard for its intended use; quality standards (correct names and titles of recipients, accurate information, following standard layouts or formats, accurate spelling and grammar, clean, clear printing); production of attractive documents (clarity, accuracy, professionalism, courtesy, tact); use of house style

Reasons to produce documents that are fit for purpose: build and maintain good relationships with suppliers and customers; enhance reputation of organisation; contribute to brand image; avoid wasting time resolving issues arising from mistakes and inaccuracies

Different types and styles of documents and when they are used: business letters; memos; emails; staff hand-books; minutes from meetings; business letters (used when more formal style is appropriate, usually external); memos (used internally when a physical message needs to be left, when user/receiver cannot receive emails – staff without computers – informal and short message); emails (used when instant communication is required – informal and short message); staff handbooks (used to induct new staff, to keep current staff informed of company policies/procedures); minutes from meetings (used to record discussions and actions taken as a result of a meeting, used to inform absent colleagues of decisions/discussions – formal, succinct style)
4 Know the procedures to be followed when producing documents

Documents produced by businesses: types of documents (business letter, minutes from meetings, email)

Reasons for agreeing the purpose, content, layout, quality standards and deadlines for production of document: ensures documents are appropriate; produced on time; meet expectations; formatted in house style; enhance reputation of organisation; contain all required information

Ways and purposes of checking finished documents for accuracy and correctness: spell check; grammar check; proof read/visual check; checks for professional image; fit for purpose; accurate information; satisfying legal requirements

Purpose of confidentiality and data protection procedures when preparing documents: avoidance of damage to organisation's reputation; loss of business; financial loss to organisation; prosecution, competitor advantage through knowledge of sensitive information (company strategy, customer details, development of new products, promotional campaigns)

Obligation to fulfil Data Protection Act 1998: lays down principles for those handling personal information; (information must be fairly and lawfully processed, processed for limited purposes, adequate, relevant, not excessive, accurate and up to date, not kept longer than necessary, processed in line with rights, secure, not transferred to other countries without adequate protection, the right of individuals to find out what personal information is found about them on computer and paper records)

Text documents produced from notes: letters; emails; minutes from meetings; reports (customer complaints, accidents, hazard report) instructions; newsletters; posters; flyers

Format of documents produced from notes: business letter (two addresses placed according to house style, date, full address of the recipient always on left before salutation, sender's and recipient's references, title, date, paragraphs, complimentary close, signature space, name of sender, designation)

Email: lines, paragraphs and message kept short; no recipients' postal address; informal salutation and close; need to take care over capital letters; use of humour; use of any additions to standard emails

Minutes from meetings: heading of meeting; place and date; list of those who were present; apologies; items recorded in the order discussed; motions and the names of people who originated them; whether motions are adopted or rejected recorded and actions taken all recorded; too much detail avoided; date of next meeting

Procedures to be followed when preparing text from notes: agree objectives; layout; quality standards and deadline to ensure text meets expectations; format text using appropriate technology and house style; check for accuracy and seek clarification where necessary to ensure a professional and appropriate result; store the text and the original notes using appropriate storage media/filing system that is safe and secure; prepare text as soon after taking notes as possible