Occupational Health and Safety Practitioner

Learning Guide

UNIT BSBOHS402B
CONTRIBUTE TO THE OHS CONSULTATION PROCESS

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SafetyLine INSTITUTE®
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OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Unit of Competence BSBOHS402B – *Contribute to the OHS consultation process*. “OHS” and “health and safety” are used in this guide even though relevant legislation and guidance material in some jurisdictions uses “OSH” and “safety and health”.

This unit describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required to contribute to promoting consultative arrangements in the workplace by communicating, influencing and consulting as part of a systematic approach to managing occupational health and safety (OHS). It addresses the formal and informal processes of ensuring people in the organisation are informed about OHS and have opportunities to participate effectively in OHS processes. It involves working with individuals and with groups.

Learners may find it useful to study simultaneously BSBOHS401 *Contribute to the implementation of a systematic approach to managing OHS*, as effective communication and consultation is an integral element of a systematic approach to managing OHS.

The unit of competence consists of four elements and 17 performance criteria, which are reflected in the format of this learning guide. Each section covers a competency element and each sub-section covers a required performance criterion. You can access a copy of the actual competency unit from the National Training Information Service at: www.ntis.gov.au

It is important that you read the *Course Guide* before commencing this learning guide, as it contains important information about learning and assessment. It is particularly important to read it if you feel you may already be able to provide evidence that you meet the performance criteria for this unit. You can access the Course Guide at: www.worksafe.wa.gov.au/institute
Assessment

Assessment is the process of checking your competence to perform to the standard detailed in each element’s performance criteria.

At the end of each element of the learning guide are activities designed to enable you to collect evidence for assessment. They are also listed in the assessment section at the back of the guide.

While there should be some access to an actual workplace and actual activities associated with OHS communication and consultation, part of the assessment may be through simulated project activity, scenarios, case studies or role plays.

While the case studies in the learning guide give examples of how to contribute to the OHS consultation process, where possible you should have an OHS practitioner as a mentor or coach to assist you to develop the practical skills to apply your knowledge.

When you have completed this learning guide you should contact a participating training provider (see www.worksafe.wa.gov.au/institute) who will, for a fee, be able to have your competency in this unit assessed by a qualified assessor and subject expert. This unit of competence may be assessed alone or as part of an integrated assessment activity involving other OHS related units.

When collecting material for your assessment portfolio, please ensure that you protect the confidentiality of colleagues, workers and other persons, and block out any sensitive information. If you have any doubts about confidentiality issues, contact the organisation concerned.

Required readings and resources

The online Readings and Resources section at the SafetyLine Institute website provides additional essential material to help you understand and complete the activities in this learning guide.
Further information

Each OHS jurisdiction in Australia has an Internet site to allow easy access to relevant OHS legislation and OHS management information including communication and consultation.

Websites

Some useful websites for information on OHS communication and consultation include:

- WorkSafe Western Australia - [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au)
- Northern Territory WorkSafe - [www.worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au)
- Safe Work Australia - [www.ascc.gov.au](http://www.ascc.gov.au)
- OHS Reps – site for reps developed by VTHC - [www.ohsrep.org.au](http://www.ohsrep.org.au)
Your feedback

We are committed to continuous improvement. If you take the time to complete the online Feedback Form at the SafetyLine Institute website you will help us to maintain and improve our high standards.

You can provide feedback at any time while you are completing this learning guide.

Glossary of terms

The criteria for this unit of competency include understanding certain OHS terms. Developing a glossary of terms is a useful way of ensuring you have the basic terminology correct. We strongly recommend that you add to your glossary throughout this unit and the rest of your study.

Some terms relevant to this unit are defined below. Make sure that you are familiar with the Glossary of terms before going any further. When they are first used, glossary terms are indicated in the learning guide with an asterisk (*).

Communication
The process of imparting information or knowledge to another. It involves a sender of information and a receiver of the information who must be able to understand the information for communication to have occurred.

Communication strategies and tools
The activities used to disseminate information. May include meetings, hazard alerts, memos, emails, newsletters, posters, reports, training, suggestion processes, informal discussions.
Consultation
A process of seeking information or the informed opinions from one or more people prior to decision-making. Should particularly include those who may affect the outcomes or be affected by the decisions made, but may also include specialist sources. Consultation does not necessarily mean reaching agreement.

Consultative arrangements
The processes or means that are in place (normally agreed) for the exchange of information and views on OHS hazards, risks and risk controls.

State, territory and Commonwealth OHS legislation specifies obligations for workplace consultation. The workplace arrangements to meet these obligations may include:
- OHS and other consultative and planning committees;
- health and safety and other employee representatives;
- employee and supervisor involvement in OHS activities such as inspections and audits;
- procedures for reporting hazards, and raising and addressing OHS issues; and
- employee and workgroup meetings.

System
A concept where there is a recognisable whole consisting of a number of parts or components which interact in an organised way.

Systematic
Logical, ordered, methodical. In the context of managing OHS it is based on a continuous improvement process that includes policy and commitment, planning, implementation, measurement and evaluation, and review and improvement.
INTRODUCTION

Required knowledge and understanding

In this learning guide, the activities at the end of each element will guide you to achieve the performance criteria. However, you will also need to acquire and demonstrate the necessary knowledge and understanding. Therefore, you should include relevant notes and supporting evidence in your assessment portfolio and ensure that you can explain:

- internal and external sources of OHS information and data;
- organisational policies and procedures for OHS, particularly communication* and consultation;
- legislative requirements for consultation and communication;
- organisational policies and procedures for managing OHS in the workplace;
- principles and practices of systematic* approaches to managing OHS relating to:
  ~ hazard identification;
  ~ hierarchy of control;
  ~ risk management; and
  ~ systematic approaches to OHS;
- a range of communication strategies to communicate effectively with people at all levels of the organisation;
- relevant state/territory and Commonwealth OHS legislation, codes of practice and standards; and
- roles and responsibilities of personnel as specified in relevant OHS legislation.

As you work through the activities also include in your assessment portfolio any reports and memos asked for. You should also have evidence of the relevant documents accessed or downloads collected. This may be through a resource file including electronic copies of the documents accessed. Also, you should clearly reference your work with full citations for any quotes or references and a list of all materials that provided background material for completion of an activity.
**Required skills and attributes**

You will also need to show you have the necessary skills and attributes for this unit. To do this, you should include in your assessment portfolio as much evidence as possible to show you can:

- apply conflict management skills to address small disputes relating to OHS implementation issues;
- use culturally appropriate communication skills to relate to people from diverse backgrounds and people with diverse abilities across all levels of an organisation;
- use interpersonal skills to establish and build relationships with internal and external stakeholders;
- apply literacy skills to prepare reports for a range of target groups;
- employ organisational and time management skills to sequence tasks, meet timelines and run efficient formal and informal meetings; and
- employ technology skills to utilise a range of communication media.

**The role of communication and consultation in a systematic approach to managing OHS**

What is a ‘systematic approach’? The definition of an OHS management system given in *AS/NZS 4801 Occupational health and safety management systems – specification with guidance for use for an OHS management system* is

> that part of the overall management system which includes organisational structure, planning activities, responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes and resources for developing, implementing, achieving, reviewing and maintaining the OHS policy, and so managing the OHS risks associated with the business of the organisation.

(Standards Australia, 2001a)
Is this the same as a systematic approach and what does it really mean? What is the role of communication and consultation* in a systematic approach? Information on this latter question can be obtained by examining some notable disasters.

**Learning from failures**

As a result of investigating a number of disasters, Andrew Hopkins notes that:

> Disasters are eminently preventable. They are not unforeseeable and unprecedented. In many cases the circumstances are disturbingly similar to those of earlier disasters. Too often they amount to ‘carbon copies’ of earlier disasters … This is what makes them so preventable. If only we had learnt and applied the lessons of earlier disasters the most recent of the series would have been prevented.

(Hopkins, 1999)

An examination of just three well-documented disasters, the Piper Alpha explosion on an oil rig in the North Sea (1988), the Moura mine explosion in Queensland (1994) and the Longford gas plant explosion in Victoria (1998) shows that, while the exact details of an occurrence are never repeated, there are some concerning similarities in the underlying causative factors.

When these underlying factors are analysed, there is a clear category that can be labelled ‘communication’. These factors are listed in the following table, which is summarised from the references noted in the brief description in the left-hand column.
Learning from failures – Communication

(A summary of key failures in three disasters)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disaster</th>
<th>Communication &amp; consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Piper Alpha               | • No cross-referencing in Permit-To-Work (PTW) system.  
|                           | • Little communication between contractor supervisor and process supervisor.  
|                           | • Communication equipment destroyed in fire. |
| Moura coal mine           | • Warning signs recorded in supervisors end-of-shift reports never read by management.  
|                           | • Alarms noted and cancelled with no follow up, as there was no procedure detailing actions required.  
|                           | • Management sent men underground, knowing there was a problem, without informing them of the situation or offering them the option of not going down.  (It was assumed that they knew of the situation via the ‘grapevine’. ) |
| Longford gas plant        | • Alarms so frequent that they were ignored by operators and were not included in oral handovers.  
|                           | • Control room logs had limited information.  
|                           | • Control room logs never viewed by management.  
|                           | • Shift supervisors report filled in without reference to control room logs. |

The learning guide for BSBOHS401 **Contribute to implementation of a systematic approach to managing OHS** examined what is meant by a systematic approach. This examination of varying approaches to managing OHS noted that one of the factors limiting the effectiveness of OHS management was the failure to recognise the complexity of organisations and the interactions of people and thus the importance of communication and consultation. An OHS management system is a series of sub-systems and one of these subsystems is ‘communication’.

Hopkins (Hopkins, 2004) noted that safety systems are important, but without the right culture they will not work. In Chapter 1 of **Safety, Culture and Risk** (Hopkins, 2004), Hopkins examines the concept of culture as it relates to safety and differentiates between organisational culture (collective practices) and individual or personal culture which tend to reflect values and beliefs. Reason (Reason, 1997) combines the two in defining organisational culture as:
Shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) that interact with an organisation’s structures and control systems to produce behavioural norms (the way we do things around here).

(Reason, 1997)

James Reason (Reason, 1997) highlights the role of information and consultation in determining the safety culture when he states that the key to a safety culture is an effective safety information system enabling an informed culture. He describes four underpinning cultures that combine to make an informed culture – a reporting culture, a just culture, a flexible culture and a learning culture. The description of each of these ‘cultures’ (given below) highlights the pervasive role of information, communication and consultation, and the environment in which this occurs, in an effective OHS organisational culture.

A reporting culture

A reporting culture is where people not only report incidents, but feel ‘safe’ in reporting where they feel there is potential for things to go wrong or a weakness that should be addressed. There are many reasons why people may not wish to report incidents – extra work, fear of getting themselves or others into trouble, past experience of little or no follow up action.

A just culture

Trust, and therefore a reporting culture, is not possible where there is a climate of blame; however, a ‘no-blame’ approach is neither feasible nor desirable. A just culture is an atmosphere of trust where people are encouraged and rewarded for providing essential safety-related information – but there are also clear lines between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

A flexible culture

Organisational flexibility means possessing the culture capable of adapting effectively to changing demands.

Some organisations have the ability to reconfigure themselves when faced with a high work tempo or certain kinds of danger. A flexible culture involves shifting from the conventional hierarchical structure to a flatter professional structure where control passes to
the experts on the spot and then reverts back to the hierarchical mode once the emergency has passed. This type of response is most often seen in high risk areas where failure cannot be tolerated (High Reliability Organisations) such as air traffic control or warships.

Such flexibility requires shared values and assumptions and respect for the skills and experience of the workforce, especially first line supervisors and technicians.

A learning culture

An organisation must have the willingness and competence to draw the right conclusions from its OHS information system, and the will to implement major reforms when the need is indicated.

Collective mindfulness

One of the investigators in the Piper Alpha explosion commented that ‘when you only receive good news you start to worry’. This theme is carried on by James Reason (Reason, 1997) who states that:

\[
\text{a safety culture should be the ‘engine that continues to propel the system towards the goal of maximum safety and health, regardless of the leadership’s personality or current commercial concerns’. The power of this culture should be ‘not forgetting to be afraid’}. \quad (\text{Reason, 1997})
\]

Thus effective communication and consultation is not an ‘add-on’ to a systematic approach to managing but an essential integral part of systematic management of OHS.

Legislative requirements for OHS communication and consultation

The OHS legislation for each state includes the requirement to make OHS information available on request, to communicate about OHS and about matters that impact on the health and safety of workers and others, and to consult with the various stakeholders. The OHS practitioner should be familiar with the legislative requirements in their state.
The relevant legislative requirements are summarised in each section of the learning guide, but the learner should also have read or have completed the learning guide for BSBOHS408 Assist with compliance with OHS and other relevant laws.

Having explored the role of communication as an integral requirement for a systematic approach to managing OHS and refreshed your knowledge of the relevant legislative requirements, you are now ready to examine the role of the OHS practitioner in contributing to the OHS communication and consultation process.

Element 1: CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROCEDURES TO RAISE OHS ISSUES OR REQUEST INFORMATION

Communication is a two-way process. It requires a sender with a message, who presents their information, via a channel, to a receiver who provides feedback on the message. All of this takes place within a context (or environment).

The need for communicating OHS information may arise because there is a need to inform people; it may also arise because people seek or ask for information or they wish to raise an issue for discussion. This section is about the latter, where people in the workplace wish to discuss an OHS issue or concern (and expect discussion and feedback) or they seek OHS information.

In order to complete the first element of this competency unit successfully you will have to show that you have satisfied the following performance criteria:

1.1 Identify strategies and tools* for individuals or groups to raise OHS issues or request information.

1.2 Implement and communicate to stakeholders and interested parties procedures for individuals and groups to raise OHS issues or request information and data.

1.3 Identify barriers to individuals or groups seeking OHS information and data or raising issues.

1.4 Make recommendations to address any identified barriers.
1.1 IDENTIFY STRATEGIES AND TOOLS
FOR RAISING OHS ISSUES OR
REQUESTING INFORMATION

There are legal requirements in all Australian states that establish the right for workers to request (and receive) relevant OHS information or raise OHS concerns for discussion.

For example, Section 22(1)(c) of the Victorian OHS Act, 2004 requires employers to provide the names of persons to whom an employee may make an enquiry or complaint about health and safety; and Section 69(1)(a) allows for a health and safety representative for a designated work group to have access to information relating to health and safety and actual or potential hazards impacting on members of the designated work group.

There is also a requirement that designers, manufacturers and suppliers of plant or substances provide relevant information. The Victorian OHS Act 2004 requires designers, manufacturers and suppliers of plant or substances to:

- give information to persons to whom they provide plant or substances on the purpose for which it was manufactured, results of any testing and conditions necessary to ensure safe use [27(1)(c)] [29(1)(c)] [30(1)(b)]; and
- on request, provide information to a person who uses or is to use the plant or substances [27(1)(d)] [29(1)(d)].

While the legislative requirements set a minimum baseline, we have seen in the learning guide for BSBOHS401 Contribute to implementation of a systematic approach to managing OHS and in the Introduction to this learning guide that establishing a climate where people feel comfortable requesting OHS information is an important requirement for effective management of OHS.
OHS information may be requested or issues may be raised by groups or individuals. There are many ways that these requests may be made including:

**Workplace documents:**

- hazard alerts;
- memos or emails;
- surveys or checklists; and
- suggestion boxes.

**Workplace meetings:**

- informal discussions with team members, especially health and safety representatives;
- tool box meetings;
- employee meetings;
- meetings with health and safety, and employee representatives; and
- consultative or OHS committee meetings.

**Workplace processes such as:**

- workplace inspections and safety audits;
- hazard identification and risk assessments; and
- formal issue resolution processes.

Many of these requests for information will be made to the OHS practitioner, who needs to identify and acknowledge the request for information. It may also be the responsibility of the practitioner to respond to the request for information. (Refer to Element 2 of this learning guide *Contribute to procedures for communicating OHS information*.
1.2 IMPLEMENT AND COMMUNICATE PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING INFORMATION AND RAISING OHS ISSUES

While the strategies and tools for requesting OHS information or raising concerns listed in Section 1.1 of this learning guide may be available in the workplace, their effective use requires documented procedures detailing their availability and how they should be used. Also, legal compliance can only be demonstrated if there are documented procedures.

While the Certificate IV OHS practitioner is not required to design processes for requesting information and raising OHS issues (refer to the unit of competency BSBOHS502 Assist in the design and development of OHS participative processes), they should be able to contribute to the design process and actively communicate the procedures to OHS committee members, OHS representatives, employees, supervisors, managers and contractors and interested parties such as clients and visitors.

Procedures for requesting OHS information

Documenting procedures

Section 1.1 identified a number of ways that people may request OHS information. The procedures covering these tools and strategies, such as hazard alerts, tool box meetings, employee and OHS committee meetings, and workplace inspections are likely to be covered in different documents. However, it is important that the preferred or most effective route(s) for requesting OHS information are clearly stated in a procedure that addresses OHS communication and consultation.

- Check the procedure for consultation in your workplace. Is communication addressed, or only 'consultative' processes? Does it include how people can initiate a request for information or only how the organisation will provide information?
Documented procedures are an essential starting point, but those who may need to request information or raise concerns must know about the procedures, be able to use the procedures, and be comfortable in their use.

**Communicating procedures**

OHS procedures need to be communicated:

- as part of implementing new procedures;
- as ongoing refresher and reinforcement for current employees; and
- to inform new personnel.

Strategies for communicating the procedures will usually involve both formal and informal communication processes.

**Formal processes** may include:

- newsletters, memos, posters;
- employee meetings;
- tool box meetings; and
- training sessions, including induction.

**Informal processes** are generally verbal interaction between workers, health and safety representatives, supervisors and managers. Such interactions may occur at any time, such as during and before or after meetings, in general conversations and during manager ‘walk throughs’.

What is often not considered in informal communication processes are the non-verbal communication messages – body language and actions that may be linked with the requests for communication or raising of OHS concerns.

Consider this situation:

*New procedures for OHS communication and consultation are being introduced as a result of changes to the legislation. The manager has been scheduled to address a meeting of employees to explain the procedure and to reinforce the organisation’s commitment to open communication.*
The manager arrives late for the meeting and rushes through the presentation that has been prepared by the OHS Coordinator. As the manager is leaving, an OHS representative attempts to ask a question but she is brushed off by the manager with the comment ‘that I am late for my next meeting, see me tomorrow’.

The learning guide for the unit of competency BSBOHS401 Contribute to the implementation of a systematic approach to managing OHS identified an ‘appropriate management and organisational environment’ as an essential outcome of a systematic approach to managing OHS. James Reason’s informed culture (Reason, 1997) comprising a reporting culture, a just culture, a flexible culture and a learning culture were examined as part of identifying appropriate management and organisational environment. (Refer also to the Overview of this learning guide for a summary.)

An effective safety information system is not only vital for enabling an informed culture but it also facilitates a reporting and just culture which are important in enabling people to request OHS information and raise OHS issues in a ‘safe’ environment.

Thus a communication strategy for informing people of the procedures for requesting information and raising concerns must address:

- initial introduction of new procedures;
- maintenance of procedures in refresher training for existing personnel; and
- new employees, contractors and visitors;

and consider:

- the nature of the work group (language, literacy, preferred types of communication);
- organisation of the workgroup (workforce and reporting structure, shift arrangements, location); and
- organisation culture.
Procedures for raising OHS issues

Raising of OHS issues will usually begin with a hazard report. In many cases the action on the hazard report will resolve the issue. However, bottlenecks may occur or there may be delays in response by parties on resolution of an OHS issue. There must be procedures to ensure that any OHS issue or concern is progressed to a conclusion and within a reasonable time frame, given the nature of the risk.

While the timely response to and resolution of OHS issues is a requirement of any systematic approach to OHS, some Australian states have legislative requirements for procedures describing the process for raising and dealing with OHS concerns.

■ Learning from failures
  Review Lessons from Longford (Hopkins, 2000).
  Was there an effective system for raising OHS concerns?
  What were the barriers to raising OHS concerns?
  How central were these problems to the sequence of events that led to the explosion?

While the procedures defined for raising and dealing with OHS issues must be developed taking account of the size of the organisation, the organisational structure, geography and reporting links – a standard process will have elements and linkages as described below.
SAMPLE OHS ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS

Employee identifies issue/hazard → Complete Hazard Alert → Report to HSR

Report to immediate Supervisor

Stopwork direction by HSR &/or management

Is stop work direction disputed by management?

Yes → Immediate threat to H & S → Report to Senior manager/responsible officer

No → Issue resolved?

Yes → Document resolution

Communicate resolution to all involved

Table resolution at H & S Committee

End of Issue

No → Issue resolved?

Yes → Take to H & S Committee

Issue resolved?

Yes → End of Issue

No → Issue resolved?

Yes → HSR place a PIN

Issue resolved?

Yes → End of Issue

No → Call in Inspector

Issue Resolved
1.3 IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO SEEKING OHS INFORMATION AND RAISING OHS ISSUES

The previous section identified that where people do not feel ‘safe’ to request OHS information or raise OHS concerns, there will be barriers.

As noted in the beginning of this section, communication is a two-way process. Therefore, the barriers to people requesting OHS information may lie with the person requesting the information or may be with the person receiving the request.

In addition to the workplace culture, other barriers to people requesting OHS information and raising issues include:

- language;
- literacy;
- perceptions and prejudice;
- personal or cultural attributes;
- complexity of processes for making requests; and
- previous experience of requests for information.

*Language* barriers to communication are not just about ethnic language issues but include the nature of the words used, such as jargon (language peculiar to the organisation, trade or industry) slang (language modified by common usage) or highly technical or complex words and phrases. Language that may be emotive, critical or negative may also be a barrier. (Come on, let’s be practical.)

*Literacy* (ability to read and write) may apply to people whose first language is not English but it should also be remembered that people often have limited literacy in their first language. Literacy of those requesting and receiving the information is vital. If requests for information have to be written, or where the response is usually provided in writing, then those who are not comfortable reading or writing are not likely to make requests or raise concerns.
Perception and prejudice barriers to people requesting OHS information or raising concerns may be related to workplace culture. Where workers consider managers as the 'enemy' or exploitative then requests for information will be made (and information received) in an aggressive manner.

Personal or cultural attributes such as perceived lack of status, lack of assertiveness, or a perception that asking questions is challenging authority, may inhibit people in speaking freely especially to those 'up the management tree'.

The complexity of requesting information or raising a concern may put people off. It is just too hard (to access the computer, fill in the form, catch the person I need)! In some organisations it may be that this is intentional to discourage people requesting information and raising concerns (which are perceived as problems).

Previous experience will always influence future action. Where a person has had no response to a request for information or raising a concern; where they have had to repeat a request or the request has been met with derision or other negative response, they are unlikely to repeat the experience.

1.4 MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS ANY IDENTIFIED BARRIERS TO REQUESTING INFORMATION OR RAISING ISSUES

A key requirement for an effective OHS practitioner is that they are aware of and understand the characteristics and composition of the specific workforce particularly:

- language, literacy and numeracy skills;
- communication skills;
- cultural background/workplace diversity;
- gender;
- workers with special needs;
- key personnel, including 'change agents';
- formal and informal communication and consultation processes and key personnel related to communication;
• structure and organisation of workforce, eg part-time, casual and contract workers, shift rosters, geographical location; and
• organisational culture.

Awareness of these characteristics and integration of the information into the design and implementation of the procedures for requesting information and raising OHS concerns should ensure that barriers are addressed prior to implementation.

However, the OHS practitioner should have processes in place to monitor the effectiveness of the procedures and so detect any barriers. They can then make recommendations to address the barriers. It should be noted that while the OHS practitioner can make recommendations it may not be in their control to implement the recommendations (ie in relation to workplace culture).

Competency check for Element 1

Key issues for each performance criterion in Element 1 are as follows.

1.1 Identify strategies and tools for individuals or groups to raise OHS issues or request information:

• Strategies and tools for raising OHS issues or requesting OHS information address legal requirements.
• Strategies and tools include documents, meetings and processes.

1.2 Implement and communicate to stakeholders and interested parties, procedures for individuals and groups to raise OHS issues or request information and data:

• Procedures for requesting information are documented.
• People are informed when there are changes to procedures, and procedures are communicated to new employees and as a refresher to existing employees.
1.3 Identify barriers to individuals or groups seeking OHS information and data or raising issues:

- Barriers identified include language, literacy, perceptions and prejudice, personal and cultural attributes, complexity of process, and previous experience in making requests for information.

1.4 Make recommendations to address any identified barriers:

- Recommendations to address barriers are based on knowledge of the characteristics and composition of the workforce.

The following case study gives an example of how the OHS practitioner can contribute to the implementation of information and data systems in practice.
Case Study 1

You work at a medium-sized packing and warehouse company employing 100 people. You are assisting the organisation to implement a systematic approach to managing OHS.

As part of the systematic approach to managing OHS, you are now implementing procedures for raising OHS issues and requesting information.

Procedures for requesting OHS information and raising OHS issues

Legislative requirements
You start by examining the legal requirements for arrangements for employees to request OHS information. You decide to review your state OHS Act and regulations to make a checklist for evaluating compliance. Your checklist starts to look like that below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act or Regulation</th>
<th>Section number</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OHS Act</td>
<td>22(1)(c)</td>
<td>Provide information to employees (in such languages as appropriate) concerning health and safety at the workplace, <strong>including the names of persons to whom an employee may make an enquiry or complaint about health and safety</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

... ... ...

Extract from the Victorian OHS Act 2004

You are aware that your state has legislated requirements for OHS issue resolution. You also review the OHS Act and regulations and add these requirements to your OHS communication legal compliance checklist.

As you think this is a useful format, you decide to keep this table and add to it as you work through the development of other aspects of communication and consultation processes.
People and organisational requirements

You realise effective procedures for communicating OHS information must not only meet legal requirements but must suit the needs of the people involved in managing OHS and the circumstances of the organisation.

You start off by identifying the strategies and tools currently used for requesting OHS information. You find that these include informal communication with the supervisor and the health and safety representative, hazard reports, emails and tool box meetings. There are also documented issue resolution procedures extracted directly from the legislation, but you cannot find any documented examples of the procedures being applied.

You decide to have some preliminary discussion with the CEO, the production and warehouse managers, two supervisors, two health and safety representatives, two production and two warehouse employees and the administration manager. You then plan a special meeting of the OHS committee. The questions you plan to put to each of these groups are:

- If they wanted OHS information, how would they go about obtaining it?
- What would be their preferred method of making requests for OHS information?
- Are they aware of the OHS issue resolution procedures? Have they ever used these procedures to raise or resolve an OHS issue? Do they think that they are effective? Why or why not?

These meetings should give you a great insight into how the procedures for requesting OHS information and for raising OHS issues should be written to be effective in the workplace. You are also aware that organisational factors can create barriers to effective communication and so, before drafting the procedures for requesting OHS information, you examine the profile of the workforce for language and literacy, and also look at work organisation factors such as shift work and rosters, part time and casual staff, contractors, remote locations and organisational culture factors.

You are now ready to start drafting a procedure for requesting OHS information and for raising OHS issues; but as this is really part of the bigger picture for communicating OHS information, you decide to do the planning for the next step before actually holding the meetings.
Activity 1

Keep a copy of this Activity for your Assessment Portfolio.

Contribute to procedures for requesting OHS information and raising OHS issues

1. What are the regulatory requirements in your state for arrangements to enable employees and others to request information about OHS?

2. What are the regulatory requirements in your state for procedures to resolve OHS issues?

3. Does your organisation have documented procedures for requesting OHS information and for resolving OHS issues? If so, evaluate the documented procedures for compliance with regulatory requirements.

4. Consider the regulatory requirements for issue resolution and any past history of the issue resolution procedures being applied; prepare a memo for the HR, or other relevant manager, on the effectiveness of the procedures and any areas for improvement.

Select a work group (this may be a small work team or a department depending on what suits your role):

5. Draw up a plan for how you would consult to identify the most appropriate processes to enable people to request OHS information and raise OHS issues.
In your plan consider:

- who should be consulted (managers, supervisors, ‘shop floor’ employees and their representatives, contractors and any key personnel such as technical people, maintenance, purchasing);
- how the consultation should occur;
- the questions that you would put to the various representatives; and
- how to identify workforce and organisational factors that may impact on the people’s ability or preparedness to request OHS information or raise OHS issues. (These factors may include the size, structure, geography, technology and other relevant characteristics of your organisation; the nature of the workforce including language, literacy, preferred methods of communication.)
Element 2: CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATING OHS INFORMATION

The previous section dealt with requests for OHS information and raising OHS concerns. This is usually assumed to be initiated by those at the operational end of the organisational structure. This section deals with the ‘provision of OHS information’.

In order to complete the second element of this competency unit successfully, you will have to show that you have satisfied the following performance criteria:

2.1 Identify with stakeholders, needs for OHS information and data, communication and consultation, including relevant legislative requirements.

2.2 Provide information and data about OHS to key personnel on a regular basis, in a readily accessible manner and appropriate to the target group.

2.3 Use formal and informal communication processes to provide information and data about OHS.

2.4 Identify any barriers to individuals or groups gaining information and data about OHS.

2.5 Make recommendations to address any identified barriers.

2.6 Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken to remove barriers to individuals or groups accessing information and/or data about OHS.
2.1 IDENTIFY NEEDS FOR OHS INFORMATION

OHS legislation

What are the requirements in your state OHS legislation regarding providing information to employees and others?

For example, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Victoria, 2004 requires:

- employers to provide:
  - information … as is necessary to enable … persons to perform their work in a way that is safe and without risk [21(2)(e)]; and
  - information to employees … (in such other languages as appropriate) concerning health and safety at the workplace [22(1)(c)] and to consult with the employees about providing information [35(1)(d)(iv)].

- Designers, manufacturers, suppliers of plant or substances:
  - to give information to persons to whom they provide plant or substances on the purpose for which it was manufactured, results of any testing, conditions necessary to ensure safe use [27(1)(c)] [29(1)(c)] [30(1)(b)]; and
  - on request, provide information to a person who uses or is to use plant or substances [27(1)(d)] [29(1)(d)].

OHS requirements for providing information may be further defined in regulations governing specific hazards, including chemical registers and material safety data sheets (MSDSs).

Privacy legislation

Other legislative requirements that impact on providing OHS information include those relating to:

- privacy and confidentiality; and
- commercial-in-confidence.

*Privacy* relates to control over others’ access to information about oneself and the preservation of boundaries against giving such protected information to others or receiving unwanted information.
Confidentiality relates to agreement with a person or organisation about what is done (and may not be done) with their data.

Anonymity is another term that is sometimes confused with confidentiality. Anonymity means lack of identifiers or information that would indicate which individuals or organisations provided which data.

For example, personnel records are protected under privacy legislation, while health records such as results of audiometry or medical assessments are both confidential and private. It may be that some incident reporting is anonymous, ie the name of the person making the report is not acknowledged.

There is a range of legislation related to privacy of personal records. At the Commonwealth level there is the Privacy Act 1988 ("Privacy Act (Cwth)," 1998). There is also state-based legislation, such as in Victoria:

- Information Privacy Act 2000 ("Information Privacy Act, Victoria," 2000); and

Privacy legislation impacts on both the collection and storage of OHS information and on providing access to the information.

The application of privacy legislation to the workplace is not always clear-cut. The issues have been analysed by the report Workplace Privacy – Options Paper (Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2004).

A summary of the current situation (Jenkins, 2004) is that:

The Privacy Act 1988 (Cwth) does not cover employee records or small business but the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) does cover the 'health' information in employee records. Health surveillance records would be considered 'health' records as would health information in worker's compensation files. Whether or not first aid records and incident and investigation reports are considered health records would depend on the level of health information included. Where the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) applies then the organisation must comply with the relevant privacy principles in collecting and managing the records. These principles are included in the schedule to the Act.

(Jenkins, 2004)
Privacy legislation does not give employers the right to refuse to disclose information on health and safety to health and safety representatives, OHS committees or inspectors.

WorkSafe Victoria has prepared information for employers on access to OHS information. This can be accessed on their website at [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au) and then going to the employer information section.

(Victorian WorkCover Authority, 2003a)
(Victorian WorkCover Authority, 2003b)

**Commercially sensitive information**

The commercial interests of a company are often given as reasons for not providing information. The requirement not to pass on information that may be commercially sensitive is often protected in law.

For example, the *NSW OHS Act 2000* has the following provision (Section 137) with penalties for breaches:

> … a person who is, or was at any time, an authorised official exercising functions under this Act must not disclose any information relating to any manufacturing or commercial secrets or working processes that was obtained by an authorised official in connection with the administration and execution of this Act.

**Freedom of Information**

Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation may impact on the provision of OHS information in government and semi-government agencies.

State, territory and Commonwealth Freedom of Information Acts give a right to citizens to request to see information held by government agencies (ie ministers, state government departments, local councils, most semi-government agencies and statutory authorities, public hospitals and community health centres, Universities, TAFE colleges and schools). There is no right to apply for FOI to privately owned businesses. (Baker, 2007).

The only information that can be accessed is documents that have been created by the agency or those supplied to it by an external organisation or individual. People can apply to see documents about their personal affairs and documents about the agency's activities (unless the document is exempt). Exempt documents
include Cabinet documents, some internal working documents, law enforcement documents, documents covered by legal professional privilege, documents containing personal information about other people or information provided in confidence, or information provided by a business, or documents covered by secrecy provisions in other legislation. If the agency refuses to release the information requested, there is a right to have the decision reviewed. (Baker, 2007)

**Systematic management of OHS**

Information, and therefore communication, is an essential requirement for a systematic approach to managing OHS.

The Overview to this learning guide referred to Reason's *informed culture* as part of the required management and organisational environment for a systematic approach to managing OHS.

An *informed culture*, specifically a *reporting culture*, requires an effective OHS information system with:

- flow of information about OHS down the organisation;
- employees informed and skilled to participate in OHS;
- employee reports on OHS reaching top management; and
- employee input valued.

Thus, effective management of OHS requires information. The type and content of the information required will be different for individuals and groups with different roles. The different roles may include:

- managers;
- supervisors/team leaders;
- OHS representatives;
- OHS committee members;
- employees;
- contractors;
- engineering, technical and design personnel;
- human resource personnel;
- procurement and finance personnel;
- emergency and first aid personnel;
- project and contact management personnel; and
- any person involved in or affected by OHS decision-making.
This information is required at all stages of the OHS management process including:

- policy making, planning and implementation;
- measurement and evaluation; and
- review and improvement.

The sources of information required for the systematic management of OHS may be from outside the workplace or internal to the workplace.

Sources of information outside the workplace that may provide information for the management of OHS include:

- legislation, standards and guidance material;
- OHS regulators;
- industry networks and associations, including unions and employer groups;
- international sources of information; and
- OHS specialist advisers.

Sources of information for the management of OHS available in most workplaces include:

- hazard, incident and injury reports;
- investigation reports, workplace inspections;
- maintenance records;
- risk registers;
- minutes of meetings;
- Job Safety Analyses (JSAs) and risk assessments;
- work procedures, including standard operating procedures (SOPs);
- reports and audits;
- sick leave and personnel records;
- organisational data such as insurance records, enforcement notices and actions, workers’ compensation data;
- collated information such as trend analyses of incident and injury reports, OHS performance data;
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) and chemical registers; and
- manufacturers’ manuals and specifications.

‘People’ are also important sources of information for management of OHS and so should be considered as sources of information.
2.2 PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT OHS

Communication has already been identified as a two-way process. It can also be described as having three steps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gather good information</th>
<th>Give good information</th>
<th>Identify that the information has been received and understood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>Provide information in suitable format and structure</td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Provide information in a timely manner</td>
<td>Observing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explain the information</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three key factors in providing OHS information are:
- the target audience;
- accessibility of the information; and
- timeliness of the information.

**Target audience**

Effective communication requires a sender with a message, who presents their information via a channel to a receiver who provides feedback on the message. All of this takes place within a context (or environment). The diagram below explains this relationship.

![Communication diagram](image-url)
Not all communication is effective. The information may be supplied in a form that makes more work for the receiver. The receiver may be antagonised in ways that were not anticipated.

Communication may break down at any stage but most commonly at the coding or decoding stages. The most common reasons for a breakdown in communication are:

- the sender and receiver do not understand each other’s words (especially where jargon is used);
- the message is blurred by too many words or irrelevant information;
- the sender does not get the receiver’s attention;
- the receiver does not know how to respond; and
- the receiver ‘blocks out’ the message because the communication arouses hostility.

These breakdowns can be compared with a radio broadcast where effective communication does not occur because of:

- weak signals;
- poor reception; and
- excessive noise (static) on the air waves.

(Walsh, 1986)

The challenge is to provide relevant information that is needed by the receiver and in a format that can be easily understood by the receiver.

In face-to-face communication it is fairly easy to avoid breakdown. The sender can see when their signals are weak, because the listener looks puzzled, or asks questions, or says, ‘I don’t understand’. They can tell when the reception is poor and act accordingly; put their request in different words or say something to allay suspicion or hostility. If they sense static on the channel, they can postpone the discussion until the listener is less busy, more attentive and more receptive.

Written communication does not have this immediate feedback and the sender does not have control over factors that may contribute to weak reception or noise on the channel. Therefore, in written communication the sender needs to focus on the need of the receiver, not their own needs.
OHS information may be communicated by written or spoken word. Irrespective of the mode, two key requirements for effective communication are:

- know what you want to say;
- know your audience.

Some guidelines for effective communication are given below.

### Guidelines for effective communication – Know your message, know your audience

**Before you start:**
- Make sure you are clear about the purpose of the communication
- Know what response or outcome you want from the communication
- Be certain that you have the facts and all the information you need.

**Then identify:**
- Who are the receivers?
- What do they already know?
- What do they need to know, without being overloaded with unnecessary information?
- Is there additional information that they may ‘want’ to know?
- What is the format that will be best received?

The professional skills of the effective OHS practitioner should include the ability to:

- interact and communicate with people at all level of the organisation;
- explain technical OHS information in non-technical terms
- make group presentations;
- prepare memos, newsletters and other written communication to inform people; and
- prepare technical reports.

There are many self-help references for the practitioner who considers that they need to improve in any of these areas. Two useful references are given below.


Accessibility

OHS information should be in a format that is accessible to all those who need the information.

Your organisation, like many others, holds the OHS policies and procedures in an electronic format on the intranet. This is to ensure that the version used is always the current version. Key OHS information including safety alerts, outcomes of meetings and information on training is also circulated via an electronic newsletter that is sent out each week and, as required, daily.

Sounds good, but what of the production line operators who do not have access to a computer and rely on the supervisor to print off information or raise it at job start and tool box meetings?

Accessibility to information is often a major factor in the effectiveness of OHS representatives.

There may be factors other than technology that impact on the accessibility to OHS information in your workplace; factors such as location (remote and home-based workers), shift arrangements and work arrangements such casual and contract workers.

Procedures for communicating OHS information should recognise and address factors that may limit accessibility to OHS information.

Timely manner

OHS information must be provided in a timely manner. This may mean that it is updated at regular intervals. It may also mean that, when required, information can be provided promptly.

Examples of information that should be updated regularly include procedures, OHS performance reports and achievement against action plans; while hazard alerts and corrective actions following an incident will require more urgent action.
2.3 USE FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATION PROCESSES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

Formal and informal communication processes may involve written communication and/or oral communication. Overlaying both of these are the accompanying non-verbal communication processes.

- **Written communication** includes language, grammar, writing style, editing & proofing, and presentation.
- **Oral communication** includes language, presentation skills, body language, and listening skills.
- **Non-verbal communication** includes body language, personal presentation, and awareness of the audience.

**Oral communication** is the ability to explain and present ideas in clear English, to diverse audiences. This includes the ability to tailor the delivery to a given audience, using appropriate styles and approaches, and an understanding of the importance of non-verbal cues in oral communication. It may involve informal discussion, interviews, meetings, and formal presentations, as well as video presentations, teleconferencing, and video-conferencing.

**Written communication** is the ability to write effectively in a range of contexts and for a variety of different audiences and purposes, with a command of the English language. This includes the ability to tailor writing to a given audience, using appropriate styles and approaches. It includes emails, letters, minutes, memos, formal and informal reports as well as newsletters and notice boards. It
may also encompass electronic communication such as SMS, discussion boards, chat rooms and instant messaging.

Effective written communication requires an understanding of the use of images, graphs and other methods to present data simply and concisely (for example, using appropriate graphing techniques or well-chosen graphics to convey a concept).

**Non-verbal communication** is the ability to enhance the expression of ideas and concepts without the use of coherent labels, through the use of body language, gestures, facial expression and tone of voice.

Non-verbal communication also involves the use of pictures, photographs, maps and plans and also icons and symbols that may be used in signs and posters and to enhance written communication.

Effective non-verbal communication requires ‘audience awareness’ which involves:

- understanding the needs, experience and level of understanding of an audience;
- displaying sensitivity to the audience in organising and presenting ideas, and responding to feedback (for example, avoiding or using jargon as appropriate); and
- understanding the particular perspective of professionals and communicating appropriately (for example, presenting data at a seminar at an appropriate level of detail, or simplifying for other audiences).

Critical listening/reading is an important non-verbal skill. This requires:

- Awareness of both the content of the message and the style and method of communication, and an understanding of how the content and method combine to create the meaning of the message. (For example, the credibility of the message may depend on the authority of the person delivering the message or the authority of the data on which the communication is based.)
- Active listening, reading or viewing of information to gain a complete and accurate understanding of the communicated message. This includes actively listening to gain feedback in the interpretation of the message you have been attempting to communicate.
Non-verbal communication also involves personal presentation and body language where an understanding of and ability to use gestures, expressions and non-verbal cues can be used to help communicate a message (for example, using or changing the tone and volume of your voice to convey emotion and feeling, or controlling posture and nervous gestures to present confidence).

2.4 IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO GAINING INFORMATION ABOUT OHS

Barriers to individuals or groups receiving OHS information may arise due to issues associated with:

- physical accessibility of information (discussed in Section 2.2);
- interpretation of information.

Section 1.3 of this Guide noted that communication may break down at any stage but most commonly at the coding or decoding stages. Breakdowns in ‘decoding’ may occur because:

- the sender and receiver do not understand each other’s words (especially where jargon is used);
- the message is blurred by too many words or irrelevant information;
- the sender does not get the receiver’s attention;
- the receiver does not know how to respond; or
- the receiver ‘blocks out’ the message because the communication arouses hostility.

The OHS practitioner should be aware that while information may be circulated, they cannot be sure that communication has actually occurred (i.e., the two-way process including decoding).

The barriers to communication and understanding were discussed in some detail in Sections 1.3 and 2.2.

The potential barriers are summarised below.
Interpretation by the receiver:
- language, literacy and numeracy;
- perceptions and prejudice, often arising from background, experience and education; and
- personal and cultural attributes.

Organisation of work:
- contractual arrangements;
- shift work and rostering arrangements;
- organisational arrangements such as reporting hierarchy, range of geographical locations and remote working;
- workplace culture related to OHS; and
- timeliness of the information.

2.5 MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

As discussed in Section 1.4 and other parts of Element 2, the key to addressing barriers to communicating OHS information lies in knowing the workgroup and the workplace culture.

In making recommendations to overcome communication barriers, the OHS practitioner should identify whether the source of the barrier is the characteristics of the receiver or the organisation. The practitioner should also consider the separate aspects of effective formal and informal communication employed through written communication, oral communication and non-verbal communication (as discussed in Section 2.3).

Recommendations to overcome barriers to communication of OHS information may be implemented through:

- changes to procedures;
- changes to structure, format and timing of communications; and
- formal and informal training of those responsible for communicating OHS information.
As noted in Section 1.4, the OHS practitioner can make recommendations but it may not be in their control to implement the recommendations (i.e., in relation to workplace culture). However, the OHS practitioner should ensure that they set an example and ensure that where they are responsible for communicating OHS information they know their audience and employ the three steps of:

- gathering good information that is relevant and timely;
- giving good information that is appropriately structured and formatted, accessible and timely; and
- checking understanding by listening, observing, and questioning.

### 2.6 MONITOR AND EVALUATE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATING OHS INFORMATION

Element 2 of this learning guide has emphasised that communication is a two-way process. Whether it is written or oral communication, a sender has to:

- identify the need to communicate;
- code a message; and
- send the message;

while a receiver has to:

- physically receive the message;
- decode the message; and
- act on the message.

There can be a breakdown in communication at any of these stages. Therefore, it is essential that there are processes in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of communication, including identifying any barriers, so that the communication strategies can be modified to optimise effectiveness of the communication. (This monitoring and evaluation is an essential part of a systematic approach to managing OHS, as described in the learning guide for BSBOHS401 *Contribute to the implementation of a systematic approach to managing OHS.*
The OHS practitioner has a key role to play in implementing processes to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of OHS communication.

Such monitoring processes may include:

- informal checking that information is received and the message interpreted as intended;
- surveys and questionnaires to evaluate whether the information is received and interpreted correctly; and
- auditing compliance with procedures.

**Competency check for Element 2**

Key issues for each performance criterion in this section are as follows.

2.1 Identify with stakeholders, needs for OHS information and data, communication and consultation, including relevant legislative requirements:

- Legislative requirements include OHS, privacy, commercial-in-confidence and freedom of information.
- The role of information and communication in a systematic approach to managing OHS is identified.

2.2 Provide information and data about OHS to key personnel on a regular basis, in a readily accessible manner and appropriate to the target group:

- Information is presented taking account of the target audience, physical accessibility of the information and timeliness.

2.3 Use formal and informal communication processes to provide information and data about OHS:

- Communication processes include written and oral communication as well as non-verbal communication.
2.4 Identify any barriers to individuals or groups gaining information and data about OHS:

- Barriers identified include those of physical access as well as interpretation of information.

2.5 Make recommendations to address any identified barriers:

- Recommendations are based on knowledge of the workgroup and work culture.
- Recommendations may include changes to procedures, structure and format or timing of the communication and/or training.
- Recommendations address quality of information collected, communication processes and the understanding of the communication when received.

2.6 Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken to remove barriers to individuals or groups accessing information and/or data about OHS:

- Monitoring process recognises the need to evaluate the receiver’s understanding of the information as well as compliance with procedures.
Case Study 2

This case study continues the work at the medium-sized packing and warehouse company employing 100 people. You have looked at the legal requirements for requesting OHS information and for arrangements for raising OHS issues. You have also developed a plan for the consultation required to collect information as a basis for writing procedures for requesting OHS information and for raising OHS issues. The next step is to build on this work to include the requirements for communicating OHS information.

Contribute to procedures for communicating OHS information

Legislative requirements
The first step is to update the legislative compliance checklist you have been developing to include the requirements for providing and communicating OHS information. The following is just a sample of the legislative requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act or Regulation</th>
<th>Section number</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Requesting OHS information and raising OHS issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHS Act</td>
<td>22(1)(c)</td>
<td>Provide the names of persons to whom an employee may make an enquiry or complaint about health and safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Providing and communicating OHS information</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHS Act</td>
<td>21(2)(e)</td>
<td>Provide information ... to employees as necessary to enable them to perform work safely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHS Act</td>
<td>22(1)(c)</td>
<td>Provide information to employees (in such languages as appropriate) concerning health and safety at the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHS regulations</td>
<td>4.1.17</td>
<td>Current MSDS must be readily accessible to any employee who may be exposed to the chemical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract from the Victorian OHS Act 2004 and Occupation Health and Safety Regulations 2007
People and organisational requirements
Building on your consultation plan developed for information on procedures for requesting OHS information and raising OHS issues, you decide to have some preliminary discussion with key people in the workplace already identified in your plan. These people include the CEO, the production manager, the warehouse manager, the administration manager, two health and safety representatives, two production and two warehouse employees. You then convene a special meeting of the OHS committee.

In addition to the questions developed for requesting OHS information and raising OHS issues, you put the following questions to each of these groups:

- What information do they need to do their job safely and effectively?
- How might this information best be communicated to them?
- In their opinion, does the organisation have effective processes for informing people about hazards and work systems?
- What are the barriers, if any, to them receiving or understanding OHS information?

These meetings give you great insight into how the procedures for communicating OHS information should be written.

Workforce factors
As with the processes for requesting OHS information, you are aware that workforce factors can also create barriers to effective communication of OHS information. So before drafting the OHS communication procedures, you review the information already obtained on workforce and organisational factors that may impact on understanding and interpreting OHS information.

As you are also planning an OHS training and learning program, you seek the advice of an experienced learning and development adviser on how to survey the workforce for such information.
Organisational factors
Your meetings identified some organisational factors as barriers to communication. These barriers included:

- lack of communication between production and the warehouse;
- the night shift in the warehouse felt that they were left out of meetings; and
- one of the supervisors tended not to pass on information.

This prompts you to examine other organisational factors such as reporting arrangements and interdepartmental communication, contractual arrangements, work rosters and communication with casual delivery drivers, to identify barriers to communication.

You are now ready to start drafting procedures for communicating OHS information.
Activity 2

Keep a copy of this Activity for your Assessment Portfolio.

Contribute to procedures for communicating OHS information

1. What are the legal requirements in your state for providing information about OHS to employees? Review the OHS Act and regulations as well as any other legislation that may impact on providing OHS information (eg privacy and Freedom of Information legislation). Develop a table or checklist that can be used to check compliance with legal requirements.

For a selected workgroup and building on your plan developed in Activity 1, complete the following activities.

2. Consult with managers, supervisors, ‘shop floor’ employees and their representatives, contractors, and any key personnel such as technical people, maintenance and purchasing, to identify the key features that should be addressed in developing procedures for communicating OHS information.

As part of your planning for this consultation, you will need to develop a list of questions to identify:

- the type of information needed by the various groups;
- the personal or workforce characteristics that may facilitate or be barriers to communication;
- organisational factors that may facilitate or be barriers to communication; and
- whether, in its opinion, the organisation has effective processes for informing people about OHS hazards and work systems.
3 Prepare a report (of no more than five pages) for the HR, or other relevant manager, outlining:

- legislative and practical requirements for providing and communicating OHS information within the workplace;
- barriers you have identified; and
- your recommendations for overcoming the barriers and ensuring compliance with legislative requirements for providing OHS information.

Your legislative compliance checklist and reports of your discussions with various people should be provided as attachments to your report.
Element 3: COMMUNICATE OHS INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY TO INFLUENCE MANAGERS

OHS practitioners are often ‘the meat in the sandwich’ in promoting effective consultation. This is most likely when the consultation is as a result of an OHS issue or concern being raised and where managers may feel that their authority is being threatened.

Consider this scenario.

You work for a mining company. As the OHS practitioner you have been asked to attend a meeting to discuss and make a decision regarding the purchase, customised design, installation and commissioning of a new processing system. This system will include holding hoppers, a conveyor system for delivery of ore to the furnaces and cooling conveyors that deliver the product to a holding area prior to being shipped to other secondary processing sites. The meeting is to be attended by the CEO, finance manager, production manager, union representative, HR manager, health and safety representative, quality manager, environment adviser and the OHS adviser.

You know that the union representative and the health and safety representative are angry as they feel that decisions have already been made without any consultation. The other key players all have their own agendas. The production manager is concerned about output and possible down-time during installation, the finance manager is concerned about cash flow, the HR manager is concerned about the skills and training requirements for the new plant, the environment adviser is concerned to get the new plant on line as soon as possible as there are environmental issues with the old plant.

How do you bring your OHS skills and knowledge and your communication, conflict management and other interpersonal skills to facilitate an outcome that addresses OHS requirements as well as the practical and organisational requirements?

In order to complete the third element of this competency unit successfully you will have to show that you have satisfied the following performance criteria:

3.1 Provide timely and appropriate OHS information, data and advice to stakeholder groups and individuals.
3.2 Make OHS-related contributions in the form of ideas, information and solutions to influence management decision-making and action.

3.3 Use awareness of the organisation’s cultural and industrial environments when dealing with OHS issues.

Introduction

The OHS practitioner works within an organisation. Organisations are made up of people with differing goals, priorities, cultures and backgrounds, knowledge bases, and attitudes. In such an environment there will be hidden/un-stated assumptions and differential processing and interpretation of the same information that may compromise resolution of OHS issues.

Therefore, issue resolution requires that:

- boundaries are negotiated;
- channels of communication are developed;
- assumptions clarified;
- goals are clearly specified; and
- there is coordinated influence in decision-making.

Such an approach to consultation and resolving OHS issues usually gives better outcomes because it avoids blame, considers more factors, develops options and takes a longer-term approach.

The OHS professional has a key role in promoting effective consultation and resolution of any OHS issues. This role involves:

- establishing communication channels;
- ensuring a sharing of information that is understandable by all and non-threatening; and
- clarifying options, and the disadvantages and advantages of the various options.
3.1 PROVIDE OHS INFORMATION TO STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Section 2.2 of this learning guide examined the key points in providing OHS information to various individuals and groups in a readily accessible and understood format.

However, the role of the OHS practitioner should go beyond providing OHS information to actively supporting the development of effective communication between the various groups and individuals?

- **As the OHS practitioner, how would you facilitate the effective communication between the various individuals at the meeting described in the opening to Element 3?**

If you have credibility and the trust of the people, you might facilitate a round-table discussion where each person is asked to identify:

- the pressures on them regarding the new plant;
- their concerns about the decision-making process or outcome;
- their desired goals in the outcome of the meeting; and
- any other issues relevant to the decision-making process or outcome.

These comments by each person could be listed on a white board.

Some ground rules should be set for such discussions. These might be:

- Clarify that the purpose of the discussion is to improve communication by identifying the various pressures and objectives that everybody has and that may differ across the group.
- As far as is possible, the discussion should be blame-free and non-judgemental.
- No defensive responses allowed at the time statements are made.
- Issues raised and the discussion must focus on the matter at hand and not go into other unrelated matters or disagreements.

Early in her career, this author was invited to a meeting between a group of senior managers and a union organiser to finalise the wording of a sensitive policy that was to be agreed between the company and the union. Expecting an adversarial environment, the author was amazed to find that, when a suggested final wording was put forward, a manager responded by saying that if the (union organiser) took the suggested wording back to his committee it would be rejected as unacceptable. The managers were aware of and
respected the ‘reality’ and so proceeded to work to resolve the wording to suit all involved.

In this case, earlier discussions had clarified the pressures and objectives of all parties resulting in open communication and respect for the differing points of view.

3.2 MAKE OHS-RELATED CONTRIBUTIONS TO INFLUENCE MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING

The open and effective communication described above requires that all persons are talking a common language. This may require the OHS practitioner to explain technical information in non-technical terms or to intervene to ensure that technical advisers clarify any information that may not be understandable to all.

OHS practitioners should not be making management decisions, but they should ensure that managers and others are fully informed when making decisions.

While there is no suggestion that OHS outcomes should be compromised, there is usually more than one way to achieve an outcome. The OHS practitioner should have knowledge of the technical and OHS issues, and the analytical ability to facilitate discussion to clarify options for action – and the disadvantages and advantages of the various options.

One technique that can assist in this type of discussion is that of ‘six thinking hats’ introduced by Edward de Bono in his book Six Thinking Hats. This forces people to go outside their habitual thinking style to look at potential decisions from a number of perspectives (De Bono, 1987).

In a group situation different people may take different positions or alternatively each position or ‘angle’ could be considered in turn by the group. This approach can be used individually, or in a group, to structure the thinking so that a broader approach is applied. A summary of this approach is outlined below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking role</th>
<th>General description</th>
<th>Risk control application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rational, factual</strong></td>
<td>What information do we have? Where are the gaps? Can we fill in the knowledge gaps or do we allow for them?</td>
<td>What are the legislative requirements? Are there any relevant codes of practice or standards? What are other organisations doing about the problem? What are the trends in our organisation? What other information do we have such as inspections or audits?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional</strong></td>
<td>What is the ‘gut reaction’? Will it work? Will it be well received?</td>
<td>How will the risk control be received at management level? What will the workers think? Does it seem like more work? Will it require ‘selling’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pessimistic</strong></td>
<td>What are the negatives? Why won’t it work? What are the weaknesses?</td>
<td>What if …?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optimistic</strong></td>
<td>What are the benefits?</td>
<td>What will/could be the OHS benefits? What could be other benefits for productivity, product quality, financial, staff morale?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creative</strong></td>
<td>Where do we go if we think outside the square?</td>
<td>What about …? Another way would be …?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outcome from such an approach allows emotion and scepticism, as well as rational thinking, to be part of analysing the advantages and disadvantages of various options for action. As a result, there is greater ownership of decisions and the outcomes address technical as well as practical requirements and may go beyond original expectations.

### 3.3 USE AWARENESS OF THE ORGANISATION’S CULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL ENVIRONMENT WHEN DEALING WITH OHS ISSUES

The *Introduction* to this learning guide examined Reason’s ‘informed culture’ which comprises a reporting culture, a just culture, a flexible culture and a learning culture. The key to achieving these cultures is an effective safety information system.

However, an effective safety information system requires reporting, not only of incidents, but also the potential for things to go wrong (ie a reporting culture); but people will only report when they feel safe to do so (a just culture).
The industrial relations (IR) climate also affects people’s willingness to report and the quality of the OHS information and communication. The impact of industrial relations on OHS communication and consultation were highlighted in the Ministerial Inquiry into *Occupational health and safety systems and practices of BHP Billiton Iron Ore and Boodarie Iron sites and related matters* (Ritter, 2004) which was instigated following three incidents which led to workplace fatalities on sites owned or operated by BHP Billiton. This report noted that due to conflict regarding a push for employees to be on Australian Workplace Agreements rather than awards, there was a climate of distrust and suspicion which had the potential to markedly impact upon effective communication and management of OHS. The company was criticised for a lack of planning as to how OHS should be managed in such an industrial climate.

When there is good reporting of OHS incidents and potential for failure, the information obtained will only be put to effective use in a flexible and learning organisation. Another aspect of the workplace culture that impacts on how information is communicated and used is the ‘maturity’ of the organisation. The concept of organisational maturity was introduced in the learning guide to the competency unit BSBOHS401 *Contribute to the implementation of a systematic approach to managing OHS.*

Hudson (2001) describes a model for organisational maturity as it applies to safety. The objective is for an organisation to move from the lower levels to a ‘resilient’ state where OHS is truly part of the way the organisation operates. The graphic below summarises the levels in maturity. (Hudson uses the categories of pathological, reactive, calculative, proactive, and generative.)

![Organisational Maturity Model](Modified from (Hudson, 2001))
Parker, Laurie and Hudson (Parker, Lawrie, & Hudson, 2005) have taken this model and developed a diagnostic framework that incorporates the work of Reason and others. The tool was originally designed for an off-shore oil company but can apply equally to almost any organisation. The descriptors for each level of communication about OHS are given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerable</th>
<th>Reactive</th>
<th>Compliance driven</th>
<th>Proactive</th>
<th>Resilient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Just tell them what they need to know to not cause problems.</td>
<td>☐ ‘Flavour’ of the month safety message is passed down from management.</td>
<td>☐ Management shares a lot of OHS information with workers and has frequent initiatives.</td>
<td>☐ Managers recognise benefits of two-way dialogue.</td>
<td>☐ Two-way process results in managers getting more information than they give.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Short-term interest only.</td>
<td>☐ Management do a lot of talking but there are few opportunities for bottom-up communication.</td>
<td>☐ Management shares a lot of OHS information with workers and has frequent initiatives.</td>
<td>☐ Asking, as well as telling, goes on.</td>
<td>☐ Process is transparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Short-term interest only.</td>
<td>☐ Management do a lot of talking but there are few opportunities for bottom-up communication.</td>
<td>☐ Short-term interest only.</td>
<td>☐ Emphasis is on looking out for each other.</td>
<td>☐ Seen as a family tragedy if someone gets hurt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The maturity scale also gives useful information on how to format information for communication.

_You would phrase a safety message about crossing a road quite differently for a three-year-old toddler, compared with a nine-year-old, compared with a 15-year-old._

Similarly, the content and level of detail should take account of the maturity of the organisation in its approach to managing OHS.

**Competency check for Element 3**

Key issues for each performance criterion in this section are as follows.

3.1 Provide timely and appropriate OHS information, data and advice to stakeholder groups and individuals:

- Information provided goes beyond technical OHS information to facilitate development of channels of communication.

3.2 Make OHS-related contributions in the form of ideas, information and solutions to influence management decision-making and action:

- Contributions to OHS decision-making include ensuring that OHS information is understandable to all.
- Discussion is facilitated to ensure that options are clarified and advantages and disadvantages of the various options are evaluated.
3.3 Use awareness of the organisation’s cultural and industrial environments when dealing with OHS issues:

- The importance of the workplace culture on the quality of information collected is recognised.
- Workplace culture and maturity is considered when determining content and format of OHS communications.
- Where there is potential for the industrial relations environment to impact on OHS communications and consultation, there is additional planning to ensure effectiveness of OHS management processes.
Case Study 3

This case study continues the work at the medium-sized packing and warehouse company employing 100 people, where you have been developing procedures for requesting and communicating OHS information.

Communicate OHS information effectively to influence managers

Organisational culture
You are aware that the ‘culture’ of the organisation affects how people receive and respond to messages; so you realise that for you to provide OHS information and influence management decision-making you must have a clear idea of the OHS culture of the organisation.

As part of defining the culture of the organisation, you decide to ‘diagnose’ the maturity of the organisation and therefore you do some reading on the OHS maturity scale and also an ‘informed culture’ as described by James Reason.

You decide that your organisation is mainly ‘reactive’ with some elements being ‘compliance driven’. Thus you decide that your messages must be focused on consolidating the organisation at full compliance mode with some proactive approaches in the more developed areas. Without these systems firmly in place, the organisation it is not mature enough to take in messages targeted at being proactive or resilient.

In examining the organisational culture, you also become aware of some tensions between the production and warehouse groups which seem to arise from their different pay scales and conditions and this impacts on their relative ‘voices’ in consultation and decision-making.

An OHS issue
An issue has arisen regarding the scheduling of work. The proposed changes will impact on hours worked, roster arrangements and also work flow. While you consider that there are significant OHS risks of fatigue, manual handling, and forklifts and pedestrians, the discussion so far has focused on the industrial relations factors and the ‘negotiations’ are being driven by the HR/IR manager.
Providing OHS information
Your first step in influencing the decision-making is to ensure that you have all the relevant information and can explain the information in ways that are understandable by all groups.

Thus the first step is to ensure that you have up-to-date information on fatigue as it relates to the proposed shift structure and work, and that you can explain the manual handling and forklift risks. You put some time into developing charts and plans for the proposed work flow and the potential issues. You also seek ergonomic advice on the manual handling implications.

Influencing decision-making
Having identified the key people in the negotiations as the CEO, the HR/IR manager and union representative, you initiate informal discussions with each person to clarify their assumptions and their ‘agenda’ or desired outcomes (hidden and stated). You obtain their agreement to a meeting, chaired by you, to focus on the OHS factors that should be considered when making the final decision.

In preparation for this meeting, you draw up an agenda covering the following points.

- Purpose of meeting:
  To clarify OHS implications associated with the proposed change.
- Ground rules for meeting:
  discussion blame-free and non-judgemental;
  no defensive or aggressive responses;
  discussion focuses on the OHS issues and does not go into unrelated matters or disagreements; and
  all input listened to but no one person allowed to dominate the discussion.
- Assumptions and goals.
- OHS issues.
- Examination of OHS issues from different perspectives (ie the rational/factual, emotional, pessimistic, optimistic, creative).
- Review and summary of discussion of OHS issues impacting on the decision.

You recognise that as the OHS adviser, you are not responsible for the management decision-making but you do have a professional obligation to ensure that the various groups and stakeholders have the appropriate information in a format that they understand. Within the extent of your control, you also have a responsibility to facilitate open and effective communication to influence managers and others to consider OHS factors in their decision-making.
Activity 3

Keep a copy of this Activity for your Assessment Portfolio.

Communicate OHS information effectively to influence managers

1 Identify an operational matter that you consider requires OHS input for an effective outcome. This may be a small or large matter; it may be a difference in opinion as to the required direction; it may relate to the purchase of equipment or a change in work practice or another matter.

Describe the issue, why OHS input is necessary, the people involved and the factors that impact on the issue.

2 What organisational cultural or industrial relations issues should be considered in your communication and in facilitating the decision-making? How did you identify these factors?

3 What are the OHS messages or information that you think must be taken into consideration in making the decision?

4 Is there any difference in how the message should be framed for the different groups involved in the decision-making? If so; why should the message be framed differently and what should the differences be?
5 Describe how you might provide OHS input to influence the outcome by:

- facilitating opening channels of communication;
- clarifying the assumptions held by the various groups;
- ensuring that goals or required outcomes of the various groups are clearly stated; and
- providing a coordinating influence on the decision-making process.

6 What barriers or difficulties do you anticipate? How could you plan to address, or prevent, these barriers occurring?

7 If you had an opportunity to be involved in this, or another, decision-making process; did it go according to plan? What problems or resistance did you encounter? How did you attempt to overcome them? What would you do differently next time?
Element 4: CONTRIBUTE TO MAINTAINING OHS CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Earlier sections of this Guide dealt with responding to requests for OHS information and communicating OHS information. This section is about ‘consultation’. Communication is a necessary prerequisite for consultation but, on its own, is not consultation.

**Communication** is the process of imparting information or knowledge to another. It involves a sender of information and a receiver of the information who must be able to understand the information for communication to have occurred.

**Consultation** is the process of seeking information or the informed opinions from one or more people prior to decision-making. It should particularly include those who may affect the outcomes or be affected by the decisions made; but may also include specialist sources. Effective consultation includes both formal and informal processes.

Consultation does not necessarily mean reaching agreement. Nor does it involve shifting management responsibilities for OHS to OHS committees, OHS representatives or other consultative processes. Consultation is sometimes confused with negotiation which is a formal, often adversarial, industrial relations process.

In order to complete the fourth element of this competency unit successfully, you will have to show that you have satisfied the following performance criteria:

4.1 Provide support and advice to those involved in OHS consultative arrangements.

4.2 Support the OHS issue resolution process to facilitate timely and equitable resolution of OHS issues.

4.3 Facilitate OHS consultative processes to meet legislative and workplace requirements.

4.4 Monitor the effectiveness of OHS consultative and participative arrangements.
4.1 PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ADVICE TO THOSE INVOLVED IN CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS*

Who should be involved in consultation

OHS legislation in most Australian states requires that employers consult with employees who are, or are likely to be, directly affected by the OHS matter. Employees include part-time and casual workers, independent contractors, the employees of independent contractors (where the employer has/should have control) and staff hired through labour-hire arrangements. Where employees are represented by health and safety representatives, the representative must be involved in the consultation.

Systematic management of OHS will usually include broader consultation that involves all those who have something to contribute to the OHS management process. A list of workplace people who may be involved in consultation is given on the following page.

Effective consultation may be formal or informal. Legislation provides for formal arrangements such as:

- OHS committees;
- health and safety representatives; and
- agreed (and documented) procedures.

While these formal procedures should be in place and used, it should also be recognised that much effective consultation occurs during informal interaction and discussion on the factory floor or in the tea room. However, such informal processes, while they are to be encouraged, should not be seen as a substitute for formal processes.

The Certificate IV OHS practitioner is not required to be able to design OHS consultative arrangements but only to facilitate the process. Refer to the learning guide for BSBOHS503 Assist in the design and development of OHS participative arrangements for the competency covering design.
People that may be involved in consultation

_Stakeholders_ – those people or organisations who may be affected by, or perceive themselves to be affected by an activity or decision.

Stakeholders in workplace OHS include:
- managers
- supervisors
- health and safety and other employee representatives
- OHS committees
- employees and contractors
- the community.

_Key personnel_ are:
- people who are involved in OHS decision-making or who are affected by decisions. This may include finance, procurement, HR, maintenance and other functional management areas.

_OHS technical advisers_ are persons providing specific technical knowledge or expertise in areas related to OHS and may include:
- risk managers
- health professionals
- injury management advisers
- legal practitioners with experience in OHS
- engineers (such as design, acoustic, mechanical, civil)
- security and emergency response personnel
- workplace trainers and assessors
- maintenance and trade persons.

_OHS specialists_ are persons who specialise in one of the many disciplines that make up OHS, including:
- safety professionals
- ergonomists
- occupational hygienists
- audiologists
- safety engineers
- toxicologists
- occupational health professionals.
Why consultation should occur

While there are legal requirements to consult, effective workplace consultation can be a significant tool in improving OHS.

The duty to consult is based on recognition that employee input and participation improves decision-making about health and safety matters. WorkSafe Victoria lists the following benefits of consultation (WorkSafe Victoria, 2005).

- Through consultation, employers can become more aware of hazards and OHS issues experienced by employees.
- Employees can provide suggestions about how to solve OHS problems.
- Employee participation enables employees to contribute to determining how the work can be done safely.
- Reduced injury and disease.
- Improved management decisions through gathering a wider source of ideas about OHS.
- Greater employer and employee commitment to OHS through a better understanding of OHS decisions and employee ownership of the outcome through consultation.
- Greater openness, respect and trust between management and employees through developing an understanding of each other’s points of view.

(WorkSafe Victoria, 2005)

When consultation should occur

As noted above, consultation should be an integral part of a systematic approach to managing OHS and the earlier in the decision-making process this occurs the better.

As noted in Section 3.3, the more ‘mature’ the organisation, the more consultation will be an integral part of management. In proactive and resilient organisations:

- managers recognise the benefits of two-way dialogue;
- managers ask as well as tell;
- the two-way process results in managers getting more than they give; and
- the consultation process is transparent.
The occasions when consultation is mandated are set out in the various state OHS legislation. For example, the Victorian OHS Act 2004 requires employers, so far as is reasonably practicable to consult when:

- Identifying or assessing hazards or risks.
- Making decisions on how to control risks.
- Making decisions about the adequacy of facilities for employee welfare (e.g., dining facilities, change rooms, toilets or first aid).
- Making decisions about procedures to:
  - consult with employees on health and safety matters;
  - resolve health and safety issues;
  - monitor employees’ health and workplace conditions;
  - provide information and training; and
  - determine the membership of any health and safety committee.
- Proposing changes to:
  - the workplace;
  - plant, substances and other things used in the workplace; and
  - the work performed at the workplace that may affect the health and safety of employees.

(WorkSafe Victoria, 2005)

**How consultation can occur**

Formal arrangements for OHS consultation may involve:

- procedures for raising and resolving OHS issues;
- health and safety representatives and other employee representatives;
- OHS and other consultative committees; and
- employee and workgroup meetings.

Other strategies and tools for OHS consultation might include:

- informal discussions with representatives of the various stakeholder groups;
- input to safety audits, inspections and risk assessments;
- tool box meetings;
- hazard and incident reporting;
- memos and emails; and
- suggestion boxes and similar processes.
4.2 SUPPORT OHS ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS

The OHS practitioner has a role in facilitating the timely and equitable resolution of OHS issues.

Procedures for OHS issue resolution are addressed in Section 1.3. In addition to ensuring such processes are documented, the role of the OHS practitioner may include:

- ensuring that the documented procedures are fair and equitable and comply with legislative requirements; (ie they do not attempt to remove any of the powers of a health and safety representative or the OHS committee);
- ensuring that the implementation of the procedures meet the spirit of the legislation – which is timely and effective resolution of OHS issues through involvement of those who are affected;
- ensuring that the management representative is of an appropriate level of seniority and authority and sufficiently competent to deal with the OHS issue and/or has access to competent OHS advice;
- facilitating the OHS consultative processes as discussed in Section 4.3;
- ensuring that the outcomes of the resolution of specific issues are based on sound OHS principles; and
- ensuring that the outcomes of the resolution of specific issues are documented and communicated to all involved or likely to be affected.

Achieving these roles requires OHS practitioners not only to have good OHS knowledge and organisational skills but also to have good interpersonal skills in communication and conflict management. They also need to have credibility with people at all levels of the organisation.
4.3 FACILITATE OHS CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES

To realise the benefits discussed in Section 4.1, consultative processes must meet legislative and workplace requirements. It must also be part of a systematic approach to managing OHS. This requires that the continuous improvement model described in AS/NZS4801 *Occupational health and safety management systems – specification with guidance for use* and AS/NZS 4804 *Occupational health and safety management systems – General guidance on principles, systems and supporting techniques* and explained in the learning guide for the unit of competency BSBOHS401 *Contribute to the implementation of a systematic approach to managing OHS* is applied to the element of OHS communication and consultation.

This continuous improvement has the five key steps of:

- commitment and policy;
- planning;
- implementation;
- measurement and evaluation; and
- review and improvement.

Thus:

- consultation arrangements and processes should be reflected in the OHS policy with demonstrated management commitment;
- there should be planning for OHS consultation and provision for consultation should be built into all planning processes;
- implementation of consultation arrangements and processes should include documentation of procedures, allocation of appropriate resources, and training; and
- there should be measurement and evaluation to enable review and improvement.
Making consultation work

To meet legislative requirements, employers must do what is 'practicable' to consult. WorkSafe Victoria (WorkSafe Victoria, 2005) provides the following advice for deciding what is practicable.

In determining what is 'practicable consultation', the employer should consider:

- the size and structure of the employer's business;
- the nature of the work that is carried out;
- the nature of the particular decision or action, including the urgency of the need to make a decision or take action;
- the work arrangements, such as shift work and remote work; and
- the characteristics of employees, including languages spoken, literacy or disabilities.

(WorkSafe Victoria, 2005)

Effective consultation requires that:

- information is shared with employees (this may be through the health and safety representative);
- employees are able to understand the information;
- employees are given a reasonable opportunity to express views about the matter; and
- those views are taken into account.

Consultation is not about just telling people what will happen, nor is it about agreement.

WorkSafe Victoria has developed the following table comparing effective and ineffective consultation.
### Effective consultation vs. Ineffective consultation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>When consultation occurs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early, before the agenda is set and decisions are made</td>
<td>After the agenda is set and decisions are made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Employer role</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested in and values employees’ ideas</td>
<td>No recognition of the benefits of consultation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Employer skills needed</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal, facilitative, listening</td>
<td>No skills needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Employee role</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive; employees are encouraged to suggest ideas</td>
<td>Reactive; employees have no role in improving OHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Employee skills</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training provided in communication skills and risk assessment</td>
<td>No training provided to enable participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interaction style</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned, genuine and collaborative</td>
<td>Directionless, tokenistic or sporadic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Approach toward each other</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust and mutual respect</td>
<td>Mistrust and lack of respect for differing views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Process</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open and receptive to employee participation</td>
<td>Invisible, with barriers to employee participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Information</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant information provided</td>
<td>Limited access to information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Communication</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for one-to-one communication with employees; clear and ongoing feedback</td>
<td>No direct communication with employees; no feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Outcomes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effective consultation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ineffective consultation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes result in improvements to how safety is managed</td>
<td>No improvement in the systems for managing safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(WorkSafe Victoria, 2005)

The OHS practitioner may facilitate the consultative processes by:

- providing OHS information in a timely manner and in a format that is readily understood by the various audiences (refer to Section 2 of this learning guide);
- informal support to OHS representatives, OHS committee members, supervisors and managers;
- conducting or facilitating training in OHS communication and consultation for managers, supervisors and OHS representatives and committee members; and
- supporting the functioning of the OHS committee.
The table above shows that communication skills, as well as knowledge of the rights and responsibilities relating to consultation and training, are important for all those involved in OHS consultation, whether they represent the employer or the employee.

The type of training and approval of training providers for OHS representative training are usually mandated by state OHS legislation, with decisions about training of managers and supervisors being left to the individual organisation. This does not preclude further training of OHS representatives by the organisation, either in combined groups with managers or separately.

Similarly, the effectiveness of OHS committees depends on the skills and commitment of their members.

Common problems with OHS committees include:

- meetings put off, cancelled or not seen as important;
- committee meetings bogged down with day-to-day issues;
- the same items appear on the agenda month after month with no outcome;
- recommendations for action are put off or not followed up and implemented;
- committee lacks direction and decisions are referred elsewhere;
- committee meetings run out of time and business is not completed;
- committee meetings are dominated by particular member(s);
- the venue for the meeting is inappropriate, noisy or crowded; there is no equipment and meetings are frequently interrupted; and
- the committee is too big, no one gets a proper say.

The table on the following page gives some recommendations formulated by WorkSafe Victoria to overcome these problems.
### Recommendations to overcome problems with OHS committees

**Meetings put off, cancelled or not seen as important**
- Ensure all members understand their role and the role of the committee.
- Set a meeting schedule for the next year with regular meeting times.
- Display the meeting schedule on notice boards so all members and others in the workgroup are aware of meeting arrangements.
- Remind all members of the meeting a week ahead of time.
- Distribute the meeting agenda to members before the meeting.
- Make sure the meeting time is fixed for a time when the majority of people can attend.
- Review committee membership and evaluate member participation and commitment.

**Meetings bogged down with day-to-day issues**
- Make sure all committee members understand the committee’s role in dealing with overall policy and workplace OHS programs.
- Make sure the committee has well defined functions.
- Ensure the agenda is not crowded with minor issues.
- Ensure that there are clearly defined issue resolution procedures and that these are used as appropriate.
- Where maintenance issues or hazard reports are made to the OHS committee, then refer these back to the appropriate reporting process.

**The same items appear on the agenda month after month with no outcome**
- The chairperson should ensure action items are defined.
- Ensure responsibilities and target completion dates are allocated for action items.
- Ensure that the completion of action items is monitored.
- Items which have appeared more than once should be prioritised to ensure they are resolved.
- Where responsibility for action is outside those on the committee, then invite the responsible person to the next committee meeting.
- Review the composition of the committee to ensure effectiveness of representation and presence of appropriate decision-makers.

**Meetings always run out of time and business is not completed**
- Ensure that the agenda is manageable and all items can be dealt with in the allocated time.
- Make sure all members arrive on time.
- Prioritise urgent items if it appears that there will not be enough time.
- Make sure the agenda is circulated so the members come prepared.
- Ensure chairperson controls the discussion to allow people to have a say but not to dominate the discussion or bring in irrelevant material.
- Chairperson should keep time and sum up where appropriate.

**Meetings are dominated by particular member(s)**
- Ensure all committee members are trained, well informed and confident about holding a position on the committee.
- Consider allocating time for each member who wants to contribute to the discussion on a particular item.
- Consider training in effective meeting procedures for committee members.
- Ensure that the committee is not too large – too many people trying to have a say will slow down the meeting.
- The chairperson should ensure balanced discussion. If the chairperson dominates the discussion, the chair should rotate so that other members have a chance to input.

**Venue is inappropriate, noisy or crowded. There is no equipment and meetings frequently interrupted**
- Ensure a suitable venue is available by making a firm booking with set time and date.
- Ensure management support for the committee through provision of facilities and equipment.
- Make sure the committee has a ‘profile’ in the workplace so that meetings are seen as needing a suitable venue and not to be interrupted.

**The committee is too big. No one gets a proper say**
- More than one committee may be needed if the workplace is large. A tiered structure with departmental or section committees coordinated by an overall committee can work well.
- The workplace should aim for a representative committee where people from a range of areas, needs, operations and levels of expertise can work together. This does not imply a large committee, rather management and employees should work out membership and composition together.
- The chairperson should be trained in meeting procedures to ensure discussion is balanced and enables proper representation by those attending the meeting.

---

*Modified from (WorkSafe Victoria, 2001)*
4.4 MONITOR EFFECTIVENESS OF OHS CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

As part of a systematic approach to managing OHS, there should be measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness of the consultative processes with review and improvement as required.

The continuous improvement processes defined in AS/NZS4801 *Occupational health and safety management systems – specification with guidance for use* and AS/NZS 4804 *Occupational health and safety management systems – General guidance on principles, systems and supporting techniques* highlights these two stages as part of the five-step process.

Element 6 of the learning guide for the unit of competency BSBOHS401 *Contribute to the implementation of a systematic approach to managing OHS* examined the process of evaluating the effectiveness of a systematic approach to managing OHS.
The same principles apply to evaluating the effectiveness of any of the elements of a systematic approach, including consultation.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the consultation processes should involve the following steps.

1. **Access information on the current status of the consultation processes**
   This may include:
   - policies and procedures;
   - action plans;
   - minutes of meetings;
   - investigation reports;
   - shift and supervisor reports;
   - surveys and questionnaires; and
   - audits.

2. **Identify the need for external input**
   The need for ‘fresh eyes’ and independent review is important for consultative processes. It may be difficult for internal people to obtain objective information on effectiveness and, where there may be areas for improvement, it may be difficult to convince those responsible of the need for change.

3. **Consult stakeholders**
   Stakeholders include:
   - managers;
   - supervisors;
   - OHS and committee representatives;
   - employees; and
   - contractors.
   In some cases, the community may be considered a stakeholder.

4. **Identify, document and action areas for improvement**
   Action plan should note:
   - area for action;
   - required outcomes;
   - specific actions;
   - responsibility for actions; and
   - target dates.

5. **Follow up to ensure actions are completed and effective.**
Competency check for Element 4

Key issues for each performance criterion in this section are as follows.

4.1 Provide support and advice to those involved in OHS consultative arrangements:

- Those who should be involved are identified and include stakeholders, key personnel, technical advisers and OHS specialists.
- The benefits of consultation are explained.
- The occasions where consultation is required include legislative, organisational and practical requirements.

4.2 Support the OHS issue resolution process to facilitate timely and equitable resolution of OHS issues:

- OHS, organisational and interpersonal skills are applied to support and facilitate each stage of the issue resolution process.

4.3 Facilitate OHS consultative processes to meet legislative and workplace requirements:

- A continuous improvement model is applied to consultative processes.
- Skills and training of employer and employee representatives are considered.
- Recommendations are made to improve functioning of OHS committees.

4.4 Monitor the effectiveness of OHS consultative and participative arrangements:

- Steps for reviewing and evaluating a systematic approach to managing OHS are applied to communication and consultation.
Case Study 4

*This case study continues the work at the medium-sized packing and warehouse company employing 100 people. Consultation has occurred and procedures written for communicating OHS information and for OHS issue resolution. However, as you know, communication is just imparting OHS information or knowledge. Further work is required to address legal and organisational requirements for OHS consultation.*

**Contribute to maintaining OHS consultative arrangements**

**Legislative requirements**
You have been working on a legislative compliance checklist for OHS communication. You have found that this is a useful format and now decide to review the OHS Act and regulations to add the legal requirements for consultation to your checklist. This makes quite an extensive list.

**People and organisational requirements**
Similarly, the information you collected earlier on the requirements of various groups for effective communication and potential barriers to communication are also important in effective consultation.

You now plan to obtain feedback on the current approach to OHS consultation prior to reviewing the procedures for OHS consultation.

After some preliminary informal discussion with a range of people you decide that a questionnaire would be the most equitable way to collect the information. You decide to use the WorkSafe Victoria comparison of effective and ineffective consultation and their list of common problems encountered by OHS committees (WorkSafe Victoria, 2005) to assist you in developing the questions.
Systematic approach

You also realise that, to be effective, there must be a systematic approach to consultation. You arrange an internal audit of the OHS consultation processes. The audit will address the steps of:

- commitment and policy for consultation;
- planning for consultation including scheduling of meetings, integration with operational plans, and objectives and targets for consultation;
- implementation of consultation arrangements including the resources, documentation, training for relevant stakeholders and consultation on how the consultation should occur;
- measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness of the consultation processes including achievement of the objectives and targets; and
- planning for improvement in the consultation process.

Having collected this information on legal requirements, people and organisational requirements for consultation and audited the current situation, you now consider you are able to provide advice on the current status of the consultation processes and areas for improvement.
Activity 4

Keep a copy of this Activity for your Assessment Portfolio.

Contribute to maintaining OHS consultative arrangements

Your manager wants to review the overall OHS consultative arrangements in the workplace. You have been asked to develop a checklist or other process that the manager can use as a basis for evaluating the consultative arrangements.

(Note that you are not required to actually evaluate the consultative arrangements – just develop the checklist to review the process.)

You need to consider legal compliance and effectiveness of consultation processes in ‘seeking information or the informed opinion of those people whose OHS may be affected by decisions, prior to the decision being made’. In developing the checklist for evaluating OHS consultation, you should address the following areas.

1. The legal requirements (OHS Act and regulations) in your state for consulting about OHS matters and for setting up consultative arrangements.

   You should develop a table or checklist that can be used to evaluate the legal compliance of OHS consultative arrangements and practices. You may add to the checklist developed in Activity 2 or create a separate checklist.

2. Information and feedback from those involved in consultation. This may be by surveys, questionnaires, interviews, meetings or other processes.

   You should plan the survey, questionnaire or agendas for meetings; but you are not required to actually implement them.

3. Prepare your recommendations for evaluating the OHS consultative arrangements as a report to the relevant manager. You report should include your checklist, any questionnaires or meeting agendas and an action plan.
REFERENCES


Information Privacy Act, Victoria, (2000).


Privacy Act (Cwth), (1998).


Online unit test questions

As a final Activity, check your understanding of contributing to the implementation of OHS consultation by answering the online test questions for the unit, which you can access at the SafetyLine Institute:

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au/institute

The test questions have been taken from this learning guide.

Keep a copy of your student record in your Assessment Portfolio as evidence you have correctly answered the online test questions. Please note that you may be further questioned about the test questions during your Assessment Interview.
Integrated project

Keep a copy of this Project for your Assessment Portfolio.

By completing the Activities, you have undertaken the actions necessary to contribute to OHS communication and consultation.

While each Activity has to be individually identifiable for assessment purposes, you should also present them in a way that provides an integrated report for your workplace and demonstrates that you can contribute to OHS communication and consultation.

This will also give you the opportunity to check that you have provided evidence that you have:

- the required knowledge and understanding; and
- the required skills and abilities, which are outlined in the Introduction to this unit.

You should ensure that you integrate evidence of the required knowledge and skills into your report.

Summative presentation

In addition to the written report, you are required to make an oral presentation to a workgroup (or a simulated workgroup) on your contribution to the implementation of the OHS consultative process. You may select the format and approach that you consider is most appropriate to the workgroup, but you should take account of the Project Review Checklist that will be used to assess you.
ASSESSMENT

Assessment portfolio from learning guide

For BSBOHS402B – Contribute to the implementation of the OHS consultative process.

Note to participant

Any documentation provided as evidence must be prepared by you to a satisfactory standard and be in accordance with workplace procedures.

When collecting material for your assessment portfolio, please ensure that the confidentiality of colleagues, workers and other persons is protected, and block out any sensitive information. If you have any doubts regarding confidentiality issues, contact the organisation concerned.

Participant's name: _______________________________
Date: _______________________________

☒ the box when you complete an activity from the Learning Guide. Add the material from the activity to your assessment portfolio.

☐ Activity 1 Contribute to procedures for requesting OHS information and raising OHS issues
☐ Activity 2 Contribute to procedures for communicating OHS information
☐ Activity 3 Communicate OHS information effectively to influence managers
☐ Activity 4 Contribute to maintaining OHS consultative arrangements
Assessment portfolio from learning guide (cont.)

☐ Online test questions

☐ Integrated project and presentation

Note:
Attach a copy of this document to your assessment portfolio, so that your assessor can see you have completed all the activities.

Assessor’s
signature: 

Date: 

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
Project review check-list

For BSBOHS402B – Contribute to the implementation of the OHS consultative process.

Participant's name: _______________________________
Date: ________________________________

✓ the box if the learner has completed the following:

☐ Presented a written report detailing their contribution to implementing OHS communication and consultation processes.

☐ Given a summary oral presentation to a workgroup (or a simulated workgroup) that summarised their contribution to implementing OHS communication and consultation processes and explained the following required knowledge and understanding:

☐ Internal and external sources of OHS information and data.

☐ Organisational policies and procedures for OHS.

☐ Legislative requirements for consultation and communication.

☐ Principles and practices of systematic approaches to managing OHS.

☐ Principles of OHS risk management.

☐ Range of communication strategies to communicate effectively with people at all levels of the organisation.

☐ Relevant state/territory/Commonwealth OHS legislation, code of practice and standards.

☐ Roles and responsibilities of personnel as specified in relevant OHS legislation.

Assessor’s Signature: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________
Third party (manager/mentor) report

For BSBOHS402B – Contribute to the implementation of the OHS consultation process.

Note to participant

Where possible, you should have an OHS practitioner as a mentor to assist in developing your practical skills and applying your knowledge. Your manager is also an important source of feedback on your competence, although from a different perspective.

The assessor will arrange to meet with you and your mentor, coach or manager to discuss completion of the third party report. The third party report will support integrated assessment of this unit.

The mentor, coach or manager is required to provide the Assessor with any relevant information. This report will be forwarded by the Assessor to the candidate for inclusion in their assessment portfolio.

The following list of questions is provided as the basis for a checklist for you and your mentor, coach or manager. Where you have both mentor and manager, separate forms should be completed.

The checklist has been designed to reflect the performance criteria and to collect information about your demonstration of competence in the workplace. The assessor may use additional questions to address any need for supplementary evidence to support your competence.
## Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did the Candidate satisfactorily:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Contribute to procedures to raise OHS issues or request information and data?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify strategies and tools for individuals or groups to raise OHS issues or request information and data?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Implement and communicate to stakeholders and interested parties procedures for individuals and groups to raise OHS issues or request information and data?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identify barriers to individuals or groups seeking OHS information and data or raising issues?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Make recommendations to address any identified barriers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>2. Contribute to procedures for communicating OHS information and data?</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify with stakeholders’ needs for OHS information and data, communication and consultation, including relevant legislative requirements?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide information and data about OHS to key personnel on a regular basis, in a readily accessible manner and appropriate to the target group?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Use formal and informal communication processes to provide information and data about OHS?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Identify any barriers to individuals or groups gaining information and data about OHS?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Make recommendations to address any identified barriers?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken to remove barriers to individuals and groups accessing information and/or data about OHS?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**
### Did the Candidate satisfactorily:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Communicate OHS information, data and advice effectively to influence management decision-making and action?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Provide timely and appropriate OHS information data and advice to stakeholder groups and individuals?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Make OHS-related contributions in the form of ideas, information and solutions to influence management decision-making and action?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3 Use awareness of the organisation’s cultural and industrial environments when dealing with OHS issues?</td>
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</table>

**Comments:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Contribute to maintaining OHS consultative arrangements?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Provide support and advice to those involved in OHS consultative arrangements?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Support the OHS issues resolution process to facilitate timely and equitable resolution of OHS issues?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 Facilitate OHS consultative processes to meet legislative and workplace requirements?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 Monitor the effectiveness of OHS consultative processes?</td>
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</table>

**Comments:**

*Comments: further comments by assessor (if required)*
Keep a record of the following:

Name of person completing checklist: ____________________________

Background/experience in topic (if any) ____________________________

Date: ____________________________

Relationship to person being assessed (tick)

☐ Mentor/coach for _______ Months

☐ Manager for _______ Months

Other _______ Months (explain)

Team Manager/Mentor’s Signature: ____________________________

Assessor’s Signature: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________
# Skills checklist

For BSBOHS402B – Contribute to the implementation of the OHS consultative process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate's name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessor's name</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work activity</th>
<th>OHS communication and consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit of competency</td>
<td>BSBOHS402B – Contribute to the implementation of the OHS consultative process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th></th>
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</table>

**Instructions:**

The candidate undertakes OHS consultation activities (may be simulated).

### During communication and consultation on OHS matters, did the candidate demonstrate or provide evidence of the following abilities:

- Conflict management skills to address small disputes relating to OHS?
- Culturally appropriate communication skills to relate to people with diverse abilities across all levels of an organisation?
- Interpersonal skills to establish and build relationships with internal and external stakeholders?
- Literacy skills to prepare reports for a range of target groups?
- Organisational and time management skills to sequence tasks, meet timelines and run efficient formal and informal meetings?
- Technology skills to use a range of communication media?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The candidate's overall performance met the standard:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments/observations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor’s signature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate’s signature</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of assessment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Interview questions

For BSBOHS402B – *Contribute to the implementation of the OHS consultative process*.

#### Note to participant

The questions listed below cover the performance criteria for this unit and support your required knowledge and skills. The assessor can add to or modify these questions to suit the particular context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate’s name</th>
<th>Assessor’s name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work activity</td>
<td>OHS communication and consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit of competency</td>
<td>BSBOHS402B – <em>Contribute to the implementation of the OHS consultative process</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Location**

**Instructions:**

The candidate is required to provide verbal answers (using examples where possible) to the following questions that will be asked by the assessor. It is suggested that the interview should be a ‘conversation’. The interviewer should be prepared to insert his or her own questions to explore weaknesses, or other queries, that arise during the ‘conversation’.

**Did the candidate satisfactorily answer the following questions:**

| 1 In your workplace, have you been involved in procedures for requesting OHS information? What was the scope of this involvement?  
- What strategies or tools were used for requesting OHS information?  
- Where there any barriers to people requesting OHS information? If so, what recommendations did you make for overcoming the barriers? Were the recommendations implemented? Were they effective? | Yes | No |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the candidate satisfactorily answer the following questions:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **2** Have you been involved in providing OHS information to others? What type of information have you provided? To whom have you provided the information?  
  - What communication strategies or tools did you use for communicating the information?  
  - How did you decide the most appropriate format and content for the information?  
  - Was the information received and understood? How did you evaluate this?  
  - Where there any barriers to people receiving and understanding the information? If so, what recommendations did you make for overcoming the barriers? Were the recommendations implemented? Were they effective? | [ ] | [ ] |
| **3** Have you been involved in providing OHS information to influence management decision-making? If so, give an example.  
  - How was the need for information identified?  
  - What was the information provided?  
  - How was it communicated?  
  - What factors did you consider in deciding the content and format of the information?  
  - How was the information received?  
  - Was there any conflict, dissention or resistance to your information?  
  - Was your information considered in the decision-making?  
  - Were you satisfied with the outcome?  
  - What would you do differently next time? | [ ] | [ ] |
| **4** Have you been involved in supporting OHS consultative arrangements such as OHS committees, health and safety representatives or other consultative arrangements? What has been your involvement?  
  - Do these consultative arrangements enable effective consultation? What are your criteria for effectiveness?  
  - Where could improvement be made? | [ ] | [ ] |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5  Did the candidate satisfactorily answer the following questions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you been involved in applying OHS issues resolution procedures?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What was the issue? What was the outcome?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Were the procedures followed? Were they effective/useful?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- What communication, interpersonal and conflict management skills did you use? Were they effective? How might you do it differently next time?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6  How would you go about monitoring the effectiveness of the OHS consultative processes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The candidate’s required knowledge was satisfactory:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes/Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessor’s signature</td>
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