

Take effective decisions

WM50 - SQA Unit Code H2LE 04

This national occupational standard E10 belongs to the MSC – the standards setting body for management and leadership

Area of competence

This unit is about taking sound decisions based upon a valid analysis of the best available information. Managers at all levels need to take decisions within their area of responsibility and authority. This unit provides a structure for taking decisions that meet defined objectives and are consistent with a broader framework of values, policies and guidelines.

Who is the unit for?

The unit is recommended for managers at all levels.

Links to other units

This unit is linked to all other units in the overall suite of National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership where it is necessary to take effective decisions.

Skills

Listed below are the main generic 'skills' that need to be applied in using information to take decisions. These skills are explicit/implicit in the detailed content of the unit and are listed here as additional information.

- Acting assertively
- Analysing
- Assessing
- Communicating
- Decision-making
- Evaluating
- Information management
- Involving others
- Prioritising
- Problem-solving
- Researching
- Setting objectives
- Time management

Outcomes of effective performance

You must be able to do the following:

1. Identify those who may be affected by the decision and their interests.
2. Involve, where possible, those who are able to contribute to the decision-making process or will be affected by the decision.
3. Establish the objectives of the decision to be taken – clarify what you are really trying to achieve by taking the decision and uncover any hidden agendas.

4. Identify the information you need to take the decision and the sources of this information.
5. Obtain sufficient relevant information to allow you to take the decision and verify its accuracy and reliability.
6. Take timely action to remedy inadequate, unreliable, contradictory or ambiguous information.
7. Analyse the information to identify facts, patterns and trends that may impact on your decision.
8. Identify and evaluate the range of options open to you.
9. Draw conclusions supported by reasoned arguments and reliable information, clearly stating any assumptions you have made and risks that may be involved.
10. Take decisions
 - in line with your objectives
 - within the scope of your authority
 - consistent with values, policies and guidelines
 - in time for necessary action to be taken.
11. Obtain help and advice if
 - you do not have adequate information
 - the decision is outside your area of responsibility or scope of authority
 - your decisions are likely to conflict with values, policies and guidelines.
12. Communicate your decision clearly to those who are affected.

Behaviours which underpin effective performance

13. You act within the limits of your authority.
14. You show integrity, fairness and consistency in decision-making.
15. You check the validity and reliability of information.
16. You push for concrete information in an ambiguous situation.
17. You identify patterns or meaning from events and data that are not obviously related.
18. You build a total and valid picture from restricted or incomplete data.
19. You articulate the assumptions made and risks involved in understanding a situation.
20. You take timely decisions that are realistic for the situation.
21. You take decisions in uncertain situations or based on incomplete information when necessary.
22. You take and implement difficult and/or unpopular decisions, if necessary.

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand the following:

General knowledge and understanding

- a. The importance of involving those who are able to contribute or may be affected in the decision-making process, and how to do so.
- b. The importance of setting objectives for the decision, and how to make it clear what the decision must achieve and what is outside the scope of the decision.
- c. How to identify the information you need to take the decision.
- d. How to judge whether you have sufficient, accurate, reliable and relevant information to allow you to take the decision.
- e. How to identify if information is inadequate, unreliable, contradictory or ambiguous, and how to remedy this in a timely way.
- f. How to analyse information to identify relevant facts, patterns and trends.
- g. The range of options open to you and how to evaluate the options.
- h. How to justify your conclusions.
- i. The importances of ensuring your decisions are in line with your organisation's values, policies and guidelines.
- j. The importance of showing any assumptions you have made and risks that may be involved, and how to do so.
- k. The importance of taking decisions in time for necessary action to be taken.
- l. How to communicate your decision clearly and concisely.

Industry/sector specific knowledge and understanding

- m. Industry/sector requirements for using information to take decisions.

Context specific knowledge and understanding

- n. People who are able to contribute to the decision making process or will be affected by the decision.
- o. Facts, patterns and trends that may impact on your decision.
- p. Your organisation's policies, values and guidelines.
- q. The scope of your authority for taking decisions and when you need to refer to someone else.
- r. Whom to go to for advice if you do not have adequate information, the decision is outside your area of responsibility, or your decisions conflict with policies, values and guidelines.