MSC E10   Take effective decisions (MSC)(SQA Unit Code-H0E4 04)

Overview

This standard 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 standard provides a structure for taking decisions that meet defined objectives and are consistent with a broader framework of values, policies and guidelines.

This standard is recommended for managers at all levels.

Links to other standards

This standard is linked to all other standards 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 standard 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.

Behaviours which underpin effective performance

- Act within own limits of authority
- Show integrity, fairness and consistency in decision-making
- Check the validity and reliability of information
- Push for concrete information in an ambiguous situation
- Identify patterns or meaning from events and data that are not obviously related
- Build a total and valid picture from restricted or incomplete data
- Articulate the assumptions made and risks involved in understanding a situation
- Take timely decisions that are realistic for the situation
- Take decisions in uncertain situations or based on incomplete information when necessary
- Take and implement difficult and/or unpopular decisions, if necessary.

What you must be able to do:

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.

What you must know and understand:

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 importance 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)   To whom to go 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.