

BSB - Business Services Training Package

BSB30120—Certificate III in Business



Unit

BSBCRT311

**Apply critical thinking skills
in a team environment**

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Student/Trainee Manual

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STUDENT/TRAINEE DETAILS

Student/Trainee Name

Student/Trainee Email

Teacher / Trainer Name

School / Institution / Training Organisation / Employer

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INTRODUCTION

This manual was developed to provide training content that addresses the specific 'Unit of Competency' as outlined in the following pages.

We encourage you the student / trainee to take your time when reviewing this content and seek any assistance from your teacher/trainer should you have difficulty in understanding the information.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Also included in this Student / Trainee manual are a series of Learning Activities.

The learning activities in the student and/or trainee manuals are 'Form Enabled' so that if the resources are delivered online, the activities can be entered in using the computer keyboard.

Each learning activity is identified with the following icon.

**Learning
Activity**

Learning activities come in the following forms.

- ☆ Questions
- ☆ Research
- ☆ Tasks
- ☆ Interviews

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INTRODUCTION—CONT'D

Questions

Questions generally relate to the information presented on previous pages. Questions will also include multiple choice questions, 'Yes' and 'No' questions and/or 'True' and 'False' questions.

Research

This type of learning activity requires you to locate information by using research methods. The research methods could include:

- ☆ Internet searches
- ☆ Reading textbooks and other reference sources
- ☆ Location visits

Tasks

This learning activity type requires you to actually do something and some examples of tasks may include:

- ☆ Creating reports
- ☆ Visiting locations such as workplaces
- ☆ Performing an activity in a workplace

Interviews

This learning activity type would require you to interview person(s) in an actual workplace environment or a person(s) who are experienced in the industry sector which you currently are undergoing training.

You will be made aware of the type of learning activity by noting the learning activity type displayed under the learning activity icon.

INTRODUCTION—CONT'D

USING THE FORM ENABLED FEATURE

If you are using this manual online, you can fill in some of the answers using your computer keyboard.

Your teacher or trainer will provide you with the information and instructions on how to use the 'Form Enabled' feature in this manual.

SELF ASSESSMENT

At the end of each manual is a series of questions that you should review and answer either Yes or No.

The term 'Self Assessment' means you will ask yourself these questions and therefore is no need to provide the answers to the self assessment questions to your teacher or trainer, unless they require you to do so.

This self assessment is to ensure you have reviewed and understood the information that was presented in this manual.

If you answered 'No' to any of these questions or are unsure of your understanding in any of the topics reviewed, you are encouraged to go back and review the information again and/or seek the assistance of your teacher or trainer.

UNIT OF COMPETENCY OVERVIEW

The following pages are extracts from Training.gov.au website and outlines this specific 'Unit of Competency' including the 'Elements' and the 'Performance Criteria'. The content within this manual has been developed to address this unit.

BSBCRT311 APPLY CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
<p>1. Prepare to address workplace problem</p>	<p>1.1 Identify and select workplace problem to address within scope of job role of team members 1.2 Identify organisational and legislative frameworks applicable to selected problem 1.3 Develop questions to identify key issues and challenges of selected problem 1.4 Consult key stakeholders using questions to gather information on selected problem</p>
<p>2. Evaluate solutions for workplace problem</p>	<p>2.1 Identify a range of critical thinking techniques to generate solutions to selected problem 2.2 Develop solutions using knowledge and experience of team members 2.3 Explain development process for individual solutions generated to team members 2.4 Apply agreed criteria for selecting most suitable option in consultation with team members 2.5 Critically evaluate solutions generated and select solution to be implemented</p>
<p>3. Finalise and review solution development process</p>	<p>3.1 Present solution to relevant stakeholders with explanation of critical thinking processes involved 3.2 Respond to challenges and questions from stakeholders 3.3 Evaluate critical thinking processes with team members and using feedback received 3.4 Identify critical thinking learnings to apply to individual and team situations</p>

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Section One

Prepare to Address Workplace Problem

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APPLY CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT

SECTION ONE – PREPARE TO ADDRESS WORKPLACE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

This unit describes skills and knowledge required to apply critical thinking skills to generate solutions to workplace problems in a team environment.

The unit applies to individuals who are required to develop and extend their critical and creative thinking skills to different issues and situations.

These individuals apply a range of problem solving, evaluation and analytical skills to resolve/solve workplace issues within a team context.

SECTION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this section you will learn information relating to:

- ☆ Identifying and selecting workplace problem to address within scope of job role of team members
- ☆ Identifying organisational and legislative frameworks applicable to selected problem
- ☆ Developing questions to identify key issues and challenges of selected problem
- ☆ Consulting key stakeholders using questions to gather information on selected problem



IDENTIFY AND SELECT WORKPLACE PROBLEM TO ADDRESS WITHIN SCOPE OF JOB ROLE OF TEAM MEMBERS

In almost all workplaces where there are a number of employees, employees will work as a team.

A team is a set or group of people working together with a common goal, or purpose.

In a workplace environment, it is likely those goals are focussed on implementing policies, procedures or practices within the workplace.

Workplace teams can be formed to create a specific task, or to have an involvement in a particular project. Examples of some activities that teams could be involved with are:

- ☆ Working towards lower operational costs
- ☆ Design products or technology projects
- ☆ Increasing customer service levels
- ☆ Creating and staging training sessions
- ☆ Workplace safety committees
- ☆ Environmental or recycling projects

...just to name a few.

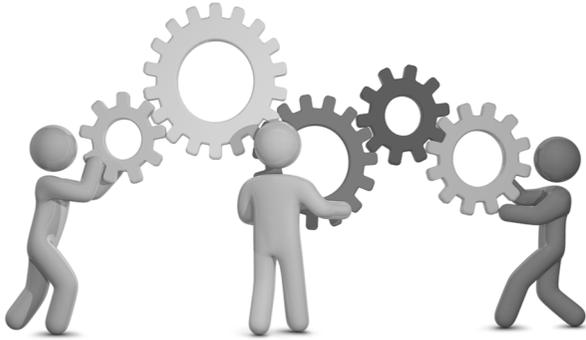
This team will in many cases be confronted with a workplace problem and would require, as a team, to address and identify a solution.

So what is the definition of a problem?

A problem is defined as '*a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome*' (Oxford Languages).

We will at times hear related words such as *difficulty, predicament, dilemma, quandary, trouble* and *issue* to describe a problematic situation.

Regardless of the words used to describe a '*situation which has to be dealt with*', it is the team's and each team member's problem solving skills and processes which have to be activated to meet the challenge of resolving/solving the problem.



SCOPE OF TEAM MEMBERS

The make up of many teams is that they have members with diverse skills, knowledge and experience that when applied to a project or process, ensures that the team successfully achieves the expected outcomes of the project or processes.

In other words, each team member has a role to play in the team.

It is therefore important that all team members understand what their role in the project or processes and it is also important to understand what role others have in the team.

Also, a strong workplace team will have members with different personalities, strengths, weaknesses, perspectives and ideas.

In any workplace project or processes, these differences can be leveraged to achieve success.

When the team identifies what a team member is good at, the team member can then be paired with appropriate tasks and responsibilities that suit their strengths.

This also means that the team collectively or individually will often encounter problems that they need to address and resolve, or solve.

This is when the skill of 'critical thinking' plays an important role; in problem solving.



FEATURES OF PROBLEM SOLVING

There are specific steps required to complete an effective problem-solving process which include:

- ☆ Identify the issue (problem)
- ☆ Understand the interests of all affected by the issue (problem)
- ☆ List all the solution options
- ☆ Evaluate the identified problem solution options
- ☆ Select an option or options to be actioned
- ☆ Document the agreed action plan with all those affected
- ☆ Agree on an evaluation and monitoring process

In the workplace it is advantageous to employers if employees are able to demonstrate good problem-solving skills because it shows to others, within that organisation, a range of employee competencies (the ability to do something successfully or efficiently).

These additional competencies may include **resilience, logic, creativity, imagination, lateral-thinking** (solving of problems through a creative approach), as well as a determination to succeed.

Problem-solving skills are vital to both work-life and our personal lives.



CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

This unit of training that you are undertaking is to build your knowledge and skills in 'critical thinking', specifically in problem solving.

As you go through this training manual you will be asked to apply your knowledge and test your skill level in problem solving by using critical thinking.

Critical thinkers rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than accepting them at face value.

They will always seek to determine whether the ideas, arguments and information presented represent the entire picture and are open to finding that they do not.

Critical thinkers will identify, analyse and solve problems systematically rather than by intuition, or instinct.

In this training unit you will be identifying your level of critical thinking skills and establishing a foundation to increase those critical thinking skills.

This unit of training has a number of assessment requirements that include tasks that you are required to undertake in order to complete this 'Unit of Competency' successfully.

As the title of this unit of training suggests, you will be assessed on your abilities to apply critical thinking skills in a team environment, specifically in a workplace and in the area of 'problem solving'.

As you will learn later, your assessment tasks relate to being able to use critical thinking skills to identify and resolve or solve workplace problems on two occasions.

In an up and coming learning activity we will start this assessment process.

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY ONE**

In the following sentences, we want you to fill in the missing words.

A _____ is a set or group of _____ working together with a common _____ or _____.

A strong workplace team will have members with different _____, _____, _____ and _____.

Critical thinkers rigorously _____ ideas and _____ rather than _____ them at face value.

Critical thinkers will _____, _____ and _____ problems _____ rather than by intuition or instinct.

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**Learning
Activity****Question****LEARNING ACTIVITY TWO**

In this Section we mentioned seven steps that are specific steps required to complete an effective problem-solving process. What were those seven steps?

Learning Activity

Task

LEARNING ACTIVITY THREE

As we mentioned earlier, you will be assessed on your abilities to apply critical thinking skills in a team environment, specifically in a workplace and in the area of 'problem solving' in order to successfully complete this 'Unit of Competency'.

The assessment requirements state that you must be observed identifying and resolving/solving workplace problems on **two occasions** within a workplace team environment.

There are no prescribed problems for this assessment requirement as it will depend on the type of job you have and the role you play in the workplace team.

Ideally, this assessment would take place in a workplace. If this is the case, then to start the assessment process off, you are to speak with your team leader (if there is one appointed), or your supervisor and explain what is required of you in order to complete this unit of training.

Your teacher or trainer will provide your team leader or supervisor the necessary assessment forms to fill in and sign as well as instructions on how to perform the assessments.

If this unit of training and all assessments are being undertaken at a training facility, then your teacher or trainer will set up a simulated workplace and workplace team structure to address the assessment requirements.

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY FOUR**

To successfully complete this unit of competency, you will now need to have identified your **first** workplace problem within your workplace team structure.

In the areas below provide us with the following information:

Describe in brief and basic terms what your job role within the workplace team is.

Describe in brief and basic terms what is your first workplace problem that you will be resolving/solving for the team using critical thinking skills.

Please note:

The assessment requirements requires you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual.

PLEASE NOTE



IDENTIFY ORGANISATIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS APPLICABLE TO SELECTED PROBLEM

In the following pages, you will learn some of the techniques used by critical thinkers.

You will soon realise that many of the techniques require researching and accessing information, as well as compiling and distributing findings that would be used in the resolving/solving of a problem that the team is encountering.

This means that you as the team member tasked with the job of resolving/solving a problem would need to be aware of a number of organisational and legislative frameworks that could affect the ways and methods used to search, access and compile information.

The definition of a 'framework' is:

“The external laws, regulations affecting an organisation and the internal organisational policies, procedures and management Instructions that together establish the mandatory rules of operation.”

We also take the opportunity to define the difference between 'resolving' a problem and 'solving' a problem.

“The word ‘solve’ is a verb and is generally used to mean find a solution – for example an answer or explanation. We solve a problem, something with a logical.”

“Resolve is also a verb and has a number of meanings, one of which is to deal with conclusively – that is, to settle something, effectively to finish it in an acceptable way.”

On the following pages we look at some examples of organisational and legislative frameworks applicable to any problem solving or resolving by any team members.



APPLICABLE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS

The methods and processes used to resolve or solve a problem encountered by the team, means that the team member seeking to resolve or solve the problem will likely need to access and use information as part of the problem solving activities.

The applicable laws would include:

- ☆ The **Privacy Act 1988 (Privacy Act)** is the principal piece of **Australian** legislation protecting the handling of personal information about individuals. This includes employees, clients or customers.
- ☆ In Australia, copyright law is contained in the Commonwealth **Copyright Act 1968 (Copyright Act)**. This includes any written works, artistic works and computer programs.
- ☆ **The Patent Act 1990** is the legislation that provides the legislative basis for the patent, trade mark and design rights systems of Australia.
- ☆ **Competition and Consumer Act 2010** is the legislation that is designed to eliminate conduct that is anti-competitive, or harmful to consumers.
- ☆ **Age Discrimination Act 2004, Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986, Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Racial Discrimination Act 1975, Sex Discrimination Act 1984** are the legislation frameworks that protects every individual from all types of discrimination including access to employment, education, goods and services.
- ☆ **The Fair Work Act 2009** is supported by individual state and territory legislation and relates to workplace *health, safety, welfare* and *non-discrimination*.
- ☆ **Safe Work Australia** developed a single set of WHS laws to be implemented across Australia and the states and territories must separately implement them as their own laws.

Any information accessed and used to solve or resolve problems would need to be assessed as to whether it would breach any applicable legislative framework.



APPLICABLE ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Many of an organisation's policies and procedures are put in place to ensure that the organisation's management and employees comply with relevant laws and regulations in Australia.

The policies and procedures would have been developed using the relevant laws and regulations as the basis of each policy and procedure.

So this would mean the team member who has the responsibility to resolve or solve a workplace team problem would need to learn, understand and follow these internal policies and procedures when addressing the team's problem.

Some examples from a 'privacy' point of view would be personal details of employees, clients and customers that the organisation has on file that the team member who has the responsibility to resolve or solve a workplace team problem may need to access.

Aside from those organisational policies and procedures based on relevant laws and regulations, there are also other policies and procedures that are in place that the team member who has the responsibility to resolve or solve a workplace team problem would need to learn, understand and follow.

Some examples would include:

- ☆ **Organisational financial and legal information** (examples - inventories, customer/supplier contracts, internal financial reports and so on)
- ☆ **Sales and marketing information** (examples - pricing, marketing plans, advertising campaigns and so on)
- ☆ **Product, services and/or creative design information** (examples - plans, drawings, testing results, software application information artwork and so on)
- ☆ **Confidential processes information** (examples - manufacturing, assembly, packaging and so on)

Generally, an organisation would want to protect any and all 'commercially and financially sensitive' information and would put in place access policies and procedures to ensure protection.

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY FIVE**

In Activity Four, you have described your job role within a workplace team. And you also described the 'first' workplace problem you are resolving or solving for your workplace team.

In this activity we want you to analyse your workplace team problem and determine what organisational and legislative frameworks are applicable to your selected problem and list them below.

List what organisational and legislative frameworks are applicable to your selected problem

Please note:

The assessment requirements require you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE



DEVELOP QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF SELECTED PROBLEM

Before we move on with this training manual, it is good to review the steps in approaching a problem using critical thinking.

We do not go into each one in any detail however, your teacher or trainer may want you to do some additional research and learn more about each step of approaching a problem using critical thinking skills.

The more commonly accepted steps are:

- 1) **Identify the problem** - Be as precise as possible: the narrower the issue, the easier it is to find solutions or answers.
- 2) **Gather information, opinions and arguments** - Try to find several sources of information as well as those that present different ideas and points of view.
- 3) **Analyse and evaluate the information gathered** - Are the sources reliable? Are their conclusions data-backed or just argumentative? Is there enough information or data to support given hypotheses?
- 4) **Identify assumptions** - Are you sure the sources you found are unbiased? Are you sure you weren't biased in your search for information and answers?
- 5) **Establish significance** - What piece of information is most important? Is the quantity of information sufficient? Is the information and are all opinions and arguments even relevant to the problem you're trying to solve?
- 6) **Make a decision/reach a conclusion** - Identify various conclusions that are possible and decide which (if any) of them are sufficiently supported. Weigh strengths and limitations of all possible solution options.
- 7) **Present or communicate** - Once you have reached a conclusion and a solution, present it to all stakeholders.

What a person will find is that the steps above will require one major skill and that would be 'questioning skills'.



USING QUESTIONING SKILLS

In critical thinking there are two types of questioning skills required.

The first type is used when confronted with a problem that requires some level of dissection and analyses.

They could be deemed 'reflective' type questions because the team member is asking these question of themselves in order to gain an understanding of the problem.

As an example these questions would often include:

- ☆ What is happening?
- ☆ Why is this so?
- ☆ What don't I see or am I missing?
- ☆ What boundaries or barriers exist in this situation? Do they have to exist?
- ☆ Are there new ideas that can be applied to the problem?
- ☆ How can I solve this problem?
- ☆ Why is something done this way? Is there a different way to do it?
- ☆ What do I need to make this better – what information, what resources, who do I need to speak to?

This critical thinking type questioning leads to the team member seeking to resolve or solve the problem gaining a far more in depth understanding of the problem.

It assists in breaking down the problem into parts, making the analysis process far easier.

It also leads to the next type of questioning skills and these are related to gathering more information about the problem and seeking information that could be applied to a resolution or solution to the problem.

There are commonly used questioning techniques used and on the next page we look at those techniques.



QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

Effective communication depends a great deal upon our understanding of the types of questions we use.

The way we gather information through questioning is vital in identifying/sourcing valuable information and can build very good relationships with other team members or external stakeholders, such as other individuals and organisations.

The techniques are:

- ☆ **Closed questions** - Closed questions require only a yes or no

An example :

Q. *Is a solution to this problem needed right away?*

- ☆ **Open questions** - Open questions require a more expansive response

An example :

Q. *When are you needing a solution to this problem?*

- ☆ **Probing questions** - Probing questions dig deeper and seek further consideration

An example:

Q. *Can you explain why you think this problem exists and whether it can be resolved in your mind?*

There are additional types of questions however that are not relevant to the process of gathering meaningful information.

These include leading, loaded and funnel questions and are generally undesirable within workplace communication.



DEVELOPING QUESTIONS

We now know that to solve a problem you need to be quite clear what the problem is and this would generally lead to questioning other persons.

Effective questions are powerful and thought-provoking.

They are open-ended and not leading.

A leading question is a question which subtly prompts the respondent to answer in a particular way.

Effective questions are more often “What?” or “How?” questions; rather than “Why?” questions.

“Why?” questions are good for soliciting information, but can make people defensive, so they should be used as little as possible.

Also, to be an effective questioner, wait for the answer; do not provide it yourself.

The questions should focus on getting answers to identify key issues and challenges of the problem.

They need to be clear and precise in their structure.

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY SIX**

SAMPLE

In Activity Four, you have described your job role within a workplace team. And you also described the 'first' workplace problem you are resolving or solving for your workplace team.

Based on your selected problem, list below what questions you see needing to be asked to identify key issues and challenges of the problem.

Questions**Please note:**

The assessment requirements requires you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE



CONSULT KEY STAKEHOLDERS USING QUESTIONS TO GATHER INFORMATION ON SELECTED PROBLEM

The team member may need to consult with key stakeholders in order to gather information on a workplace team problem.

This information gathering process would use specifically developed questions designed to identify the key issues and challenges of the problem.

These key stakeholders would vary depending on the size of the organisation, what the organisation does and what industry they participate in.

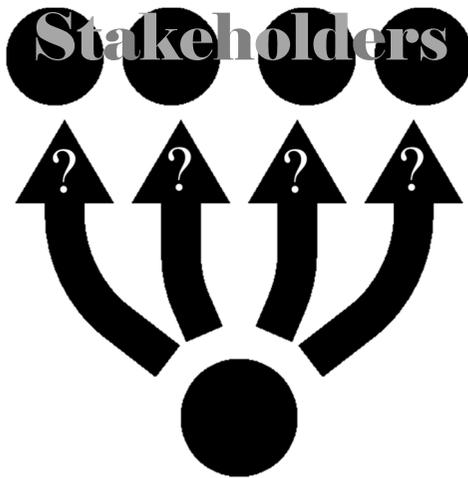
Key stakeholders could be external to the organisation, as well as being internal in the organisation.

The external key stakeholders could include:

- ☆ Government departments and agencies (including local, state/territory and federal levels)
- ☆ Professional consultants (including accountants, legal firms, technology providers)
- ☆ Suppliers
- ☆ Industry associations
- ☆ Unions
- ☆ Investors and shareholders
- ☆ Financial institutions (including banks, finance providers, insurance companies)

The internal key stakeholders could include:

- ☆ Fellow team members
- ☆ Other employees
- ☆ Organisational departments and/or divisions
- ☆ Supervisory personnel
- ☆ Senior management personnel
- ☆ Board of Directors



QUESTIONING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The team member would have analysed the problem and this would have led to the team member developing questions to put to key stakeholders in order to gather information relevant to the problem.

It is also important to identify the most appropriate stakeholders to whom the questions would be put to.

It is known by business professionals that the best tool for gathering information is through questioning.

Earlier we did provide some insight on some commonly accepted questioning techniques and types.

One very important aspect to effective questioning is the need to be 'actively' and 'attentively' listening to the answers.

A team member who is an active listener lets the 'stakeholder' answer the question without interruption.

They face the person answering the question and show by facial and body language that they are giving the person their full attention.

An attentive listener is one that puts the effort in understanding fully everything being said, how it was worded, tone of voice and other body language of the person answering the question.

Active and attentive listeners show Interest by using both verbal and non-verbal messages such as maintaining eye contact, nodding their head and smiling, agreeing by saying 'Yes' or simply 'Mmm hmm' to encourage them to continue.

By providing this 'feedback' the person answering will usually feel more at ease and therefore communicate more easily, openly and honestly.

Also, an active listener can demonstrate that they have been paying attention by asking relevant follow up questions and/or making statements that build or help to clarify what was said.

Clarifying involves asking questions of the speaker to ensure that the correct message has been received.

Clarification usually involves the use of open questions which enables the stakeholder to expand on certain points as necessary.

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY SEVEN**

SAMPLE

Based on your selected problem and developed questions, describe below the most appropriate external stakeholders you see needing to be questioned as part of your information gathering relating to the selected problem.

External Stakeholders

Please note:

The assessment requirements requires you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY EIGHT**

Following on from Activity Seven and based on your selected problem and developed questions, describe below the most appropriate internal stakeholders you see needing to be questioned as part of your information gathering relating to the selected problem.

Internal Stakeholders

Please note:

The assessment requirements requires you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE

SAMPLE

Section Two

Evaluate Solutions for Workplace Problem

SAMPLE

APPLY CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT

SECTION TWO – EVALUATE SOLUTIONS FOR WORKPLACE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

As we learned in Section One, a person that has been assigned to solve a workplace team's problem needs to prepare to do so by :

- ☆ Identifying organisational and legislative frameworks that were applicable to the problem
- ☆ Developing questions to use in identifying key issues and challenges of the problem
- ☆ Selecting and questioning key stakeholders to gather information on the problem

It goes without saying that the next step is to start to develop solutions to the problem.

This is what this section will be focusing on.

SECTION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this section you will learn information relating to:

- ☆ Identifying a range of critical thinking techniques to generate solutions to selected problem
- ☆ Developing solutions using knowledge and experience of team members
- ☆ Explaining development process for individual solutions generated to team members
- ☆ Applying agreed criteria for selecting most suitable option in consultation with team members
- ☆ Critically evaluating solutions generated and selecting solution to be implemented



IDENTIFY A RANGE OF CRITICAL THINKING TECHNIQUES TO GENERATE SOLUTIONS TO SELECTED PROBLEM

A critical thinker has the skill to filter through information to reach unbiased, logical decisions that lead to effective problem solving.

Over the next few pages we go through the following suggested critical thinking techniques:

- ☆ Analytical thinking
- ☆ Communication
- ☆ Creativity
- ☆ Open-mindedness
- ☆ Problem-solving

Learning and using these techniques, a person will see a change in the way they approach problems and consequently, how they resolve them too.

- ☆ **Analytical thinking** - this is the gathering and breaking down of information into small components making it easier to get the sense of it.

With critical thinking it is important to:

- ◆ Be very clear on why you need relevant information.
- ◆ Gather information from as many sources as possible
- ◆ Develop questions to gather information
- ◆ Rephrase questions multiple times to get different perspectives from information sources
- ◆ Break down the information into factual subsets and relate each to the issues



- ☆ **Communication** - this is a key technique for critical thinking as it gives you access to the thoughts of people (such as key stakeholders). This includes:
 - ◆ Seek and ask for different points of view and seek justification for each. This leads to having the ability to explore all options to reach the best solution
 - ◆ Listening without interrupting and only asking questions once the speaker is done helps to create better communication interaction
 - ◆ Being 100% focused on verbal or written communication helps a person better hear/read the opinions of the people involved
 - ◆ Paraphrase the speaker/writer's point of view and ask for clarification. This enables you to pay full attention and use the information to think critically
- ☆ **Creativity** - critical thinking is a skill that includes elements of creativity in the process. This assists in encouraging a flow of ideas and solution options to be explored that may not have been originally considered.

Common techniques include brain storming with other team members and mind mapping.

Other techniques can include:

- ◆ **Evolution** – allowing better ideas developed over time and not rushing
 - ◆ **Revolution** – where a completely different idea is used to solve a problem
 - ◆ **Synthesis** – combining two or more existing ideas to make a new third idea
 - ◆ **Reapplication** – looking at something old in a new way
 - ◆ **Changing direction** – shifting focus from one angle of a problem to another
- ☆ **Open-mindedness** - this starts with being honest about your strengths and weaknesses and how these will impact your ability to solve a problem.

Open-mindedness also includes:

- ◆ Hearing conflicting opinions than to your own and not forming a response before the opinion is fully voiced
- ◆ Acknowledging that there may be more than one approach to solving a problem and that they may all be right in some way
- ◆ Disregarding long-held beliefs and assumptions and let go of habits



CREATIVE THINKING CONSTRAINTS AND BOUNDARIES

As we know, effective critical thinking requires the use of creative thinking.

As a creative, innovative person you will be challenged in many ways with constraints and boundaries when trying to develop, formalise and implement an idea or implement a solution to a problem.

To a creative thinking person constraints and boundaries are there to be challenged.

To challenge constraints and boundaries does not mean you simply ignore them.

Nor does it mean you simply agree and comply with them.

What it does mean is to determine which ones are actual constraints or boundaries and which are perceived.

To **'perceive'** something is to **'come to an opinion about something, or have a belief about something'**.

This perception could be one that you may have. By taking the time to challenge your own perceptions, you may find that they are in fact not actual constraints and boundaries, you have only perceived them to be.

To challenge your perceptions you would ask yourself:

'Is your perception based on valid information, or based on assumptions?'

You would need to question your assumptions. You would need to validate your perception with supporting information.

You will often find that what you previously thought, is in fact not the case.

This is the same when dealing with other people's perceptions.

You need to challenge their assumptions on which they have based their perceptions.

If their perceptions are based on supporting information, you would want to make sure that the information is valid and reliable.

**Learning
Activity****Question****LEARNING ACTIVITY ONE****SAMPLE**

1) What were the five critical thinking techniques that were reviewed in this Section?

2) What were the seven creative thinking techniques that were reviewed in this Section?

3) Why would you want to rephrase questions multiple times when questioning stakeholders?

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DEVELOP SOLUTIONS USING KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF TEAM MEMBERS AND EXPLAIN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR INDIVIDUAL SOLUTIONS GENERATED TO TEAM MEMBERS

(Over the next few pages we cover two 'Performance Criteria' points at the same time to avoid repetition)

In this unit of training we have learned that a workplace team will often encounter problems that require resolving or solutions and the task of solving some of these problems is also often assigned to a specific team member.

Up to this point we have assumed that you the student or trainee have been assigned and given the responsibility to resolve or solve a workplace team problem and have spent the time to identify the issues and challenges of the problem.

You have also developed questions to put forward to key stakeholders as an information gathering process.

Using critical and creative thinking techniques, you would have reviewed the information gathered and would now be at the point of coming up with a few possible resolutions or a solutions to the problem.

As you work towards a final solution to a problem, it is important to explain to the team members the problem solving process and solution development processes you are undertaking.

This will ensure the support of the team members in your problem solving processes and activities.

Because the problem affects the workplace team as a whole, as will the adopted resolution or solution, it is important not only seek their support, but also to seek the input from the team members when developing a problem's resolution or solution.

The team members should be looked upon as key stakeholders and as stakeholders they should be questioned as another information source.

There would be a wealth of knowledge and experience that some or all the team members could offer that could have a significant effect on the final solution to the problem.



PROBLEM SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Many professionals follow a common problem solving process that starts with generating alternative solutions to a problem.

Many alternative solutions to the problem should be generated before final evaluation.

It is a common and a suggested practice to postpone the selection of one solution until several problem-solving alternatives have been proposed.

Considering multiple alternatives can significantly enhance the value of the ideal solution.

Each option will have pros and cons and it is important these are listed, as well as how each solution could impact key stakeholders.

Depending on the type of problem, it can be useful to think of both short-term and long-term solutions, as some of the options may take a while to implement.

This should be communicated to the workplace team.

Once you have narrowed down your options, it is often a good idea to go to other workplace team members for feedback, just in case there has been something missed.

Learning Activity

Question

SAMPLE

LEARNING ACTIVITY TWO

1) What were the nine examples of solution selection criteria we reviewed in this Section?

2) What were the three solution selection criteria classifications we reviewed in this Section and what did each mean?

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY THREE**

As this Section suggested, it is important to use the knowledge and experience of other workplace team members when developing alternative solutions to the workplace team's problem.

Based on your selected problem, describe very briefly below what knowledge and experience you have sought and received from other team members that will be used in your development of solutions to the selected problem.

Knowledge and Experience Overview and Summary**Please note:**

The assessment requirements require you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE

Learning Activity

Task

LEARNING ACTIVITY FOUR

To successfully complete this unit of training you will need to demonstrate your ability to explain to team members the development process for individual solutions for your selected problem generated.

This can be completed in a number of ways which could include:

- ☆ A document showing steps and describing each step of the development process you have used, such as a flowchart and narrative for each step
- ☆ A PowerPoint presentation and this distributed to team members as an electronic file
- ☆ An in person presentation using the document as a handout and/or the PowerPoint presentation

The method of explanation of your development process would be decided in conjunction with your teacher or trainer and the team leader or your workplace supervisor.

Any documentation (including PowerPoint files) should be copied to your teacher or trainer. If there is to be an 'in person' presentation, then your teacher or trainer will provide your team leader or supervisor with the required assessment forms to fill in and sign.

Please note:

The assessment requirements requires you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE

SAMPLE



APPLY AGREED CRITERIA FOR SELECTING MOST SUITABLE OPTION IN CONSULTATION WITH TEAM MEMBERS AND CRITICALLY EVALUATE SOLUTIONS GENERATED AND SELECT SOLUTION TO BE IMPLEMENTED

(Over the next few pages we cover two 'Performance Criteria' points at the same time to avoid repetition)

The agreed criteria in which the alternative solutions are evaluated with wholly depends on the type of problem being addressed. The selection criteria could include any one of the following:

- ☆ **Relevance** - is the solution relevant to the problem being addressed? Is the solution a timely and useful choice and **is** going to make a difference to the outcome?
- ☆ **Impact** - What are the short term and long term effects of the solution chosen? What are the possible unintentional impacts of implementing the chosen solution?
- ☆ **Effectiveness** - Does the chosen solution resolve the issues or problem and achieve the organisational objectives as well as the team objectives?
- ☆ **Economics** - Is the chosen solution cost effective and what are the potential ongoing costs that may be incurred if implemented?
- ☆ **Sustainability** - Is the solution a long term solution or will it need addressing and modifying on a regular basis?
- ☆ **Health and safety** - Does the solution meet all the organisational and regulatory health and safety requirements?
- ☆ **Environmental** - Does the solution meet all the organisational and regulatory environmental requirements?
- ☆ **Ethics** - Has the selection of the chosen solution followed the 'Code of Ethics' established by industry and professional organisations? Have appropriate standards been applied when the solution choice was being made? Are the documentations or any communications relating to the solution accurate with claims not overstated?
- ☆ **Social** - Depending on the problem, does the solution benefit the community or what implications to the community is there if implemented?

Selection criteria is often prioritised. Not all criteria are equally important. Common methods of classifying each of the criterion includes:

- ☆ **Essential** (solution is ineffective if it does not meet this criterion)
- ☆ **High** (very important to meet this criterion, but not an absolute must)
- ☆ **Medium and low** (nice, but not very important)



CRITICALLY EVALUATE SOLUTIONS AND SELECTING A SOLUTION

In consultation with the workplace team members, each and every proposed solution is evaluated using the agreed selection criteria.

Skilled problem solvers use a series of considerations when selecting the best alternative. They consider the extent to which:

- ☆ A particular alternative will solve the problem without causing other unanticipated problems
- ☆ All the stakeholders involved will accept the alternative
- ☆ Implementation of the alternative is likely
- ☆ The alternative fits within the organisational and legislative constraints

**Learning
Activity****Question****LEARNING ACTIVITY FIVE****SAMPLE**

1) What were the nine examples of solution selection criteria we reviewed in this Section?

2) What were the three solution selection criteria classifications we reviewed in this Section and what did each mean?

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY SIX**

As you are aware, to successfully complete this unit of training, you are to develop and present a solution or resolution to a workplace team's problem.

At this stage, you will have now selected a solution to a workplace team's problem and it will be this solution that you will present to the team members, as well as appropriate stakeholders. In this activity we want you to describe the solution in brief terms below.

Summary of Solution Selected

Please note - The assessment requirements require you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

Section Three

Finalise and Review Solution Development Process

SAMPLE

APPLY CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT

SECTION THREE – FINALISE AND REVIEW SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

At this point in this training unit you will be now required to present your chosen solution to the selected problem to appropriate stakeholders.

In this section we review the likely activities that would occur after the chosen solution is presented to the selected problem to appropriate stakeholders, such as responses and feedback.

Also in this final section we look at the importance of reviewing and evaluating your critical thinking process when addressing workplace problems.

SECTION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this section you will learn information relating to:

- ☆ Presenting solution to relevant stakeholders with explanation of critical thinking processes involved
- ☆ Responding to challenges and questions from stakeholders
- ☆ Evaluating critical thinking processes with team members and using feedback received
- ☆ Identifying critical thinking learnings to apply to individual and team situations



PRESENT SOLUTION TO RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS WITH EXPLANATION OF CRITICAL THINKING PROCESSES INVOLVED

As we mentioned in the introduction, once the solution to the selected problem has been chosen, it needs to be presented to the relevant and appropriate stakeholders.

Depending on the organisational requirements and the type and extent of the problem, the method of presenting the solution to the stakeholders could vary.

The type and method of presenting the solution would depend on the following factors:

- ☆ **Location of the stakeholders** - if they are located in different locations this would have a bearing on the method of presenting the solution to the stakeholders
- ☆ **Profile of the stakeholder(s)** - some stakeholders may require a formal approach and require significant supporting documentation, while others may only require informal method of presentation.
- ☆ **Technical levels** - if the problem is of a technical nature, it is likely the solution may also be technical in content. The level of technical understanding and experience would need to be considered of all stakeholders
- ☆ **Confidentially and sensitivity** - the solution may contain confidential and/or sensitive information, so the method of presentation would need to ensure that the content remains confidential.
- ☆ **Volume of information/content relating to the solution** - this could have a bearing on how the solution is presented and/or distributed to relevant stakeholders

Methods of presentation could include:

- ☆ **Written documentation** - depending on the type of problem, this method could be a simple email or if the problem is more extensive, it could be a detailed and formal technical report.
- ☆ **Meeting settings** - the solution could be presented to the stakeholders in a meeting setting using verbal presentations that are supported with other materials such as handouts, whiteboard diagrams and/or slide presentations
- ☆ **Video conferencing** - increasingly used today, stakeholders in diverse locations could login into a video conference session where they are presented the solution to a workplace problem
- ☆ **Slide presentations** - the solution could be presented using a slide presentation, such as PowerPoint and sent by way of an email attachment



PRESENTING CRITICAL THINKING PROCESSES

Stakeholders will likely want to know how the solution was developed and chosen.

This would involve the clear outline of the underlying information in which was gathered and used in developing the solution alternatives.

The processes used to analyse and evaluate the information used in defining a solution would also need to be presented.

These processes are the critical thinking and creative thinking techniques you used to develop and select the solution to the workplace problem.

**Learning
Activity****Question****LEARNING ACTIVITY ONE**

SAMPLE

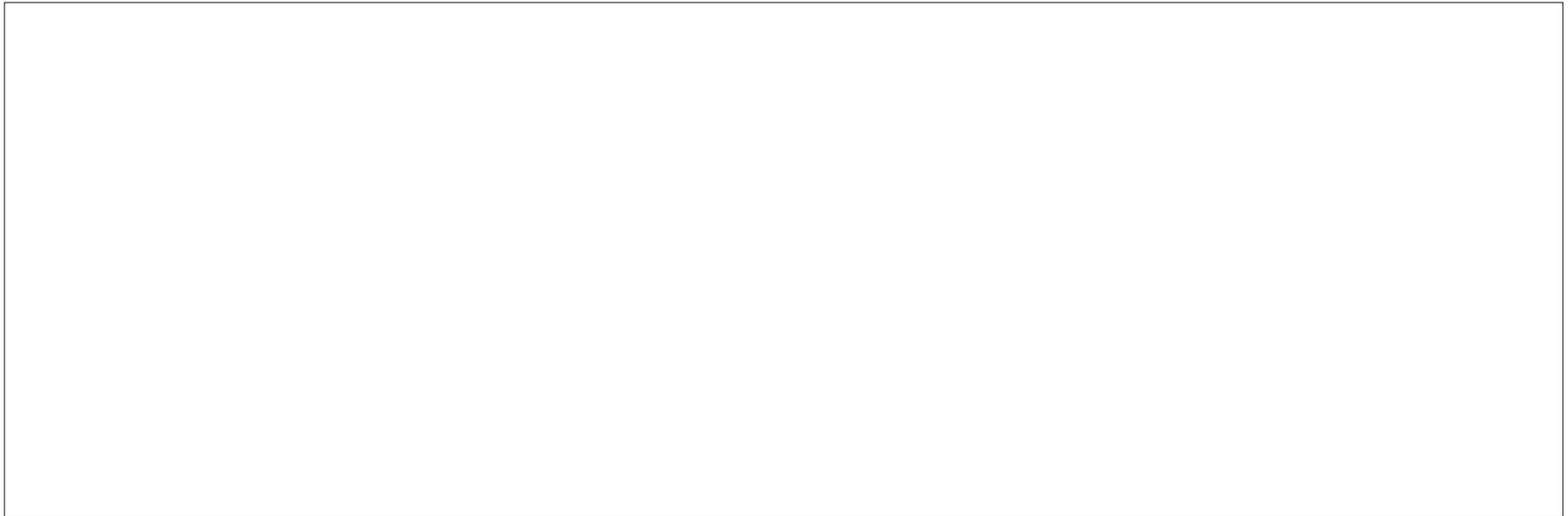
- 1) What were the five factors that need to be considered when choosing a method to present a solution to stakeholders as we reviewed in this Section?

- 2) What were the four common types of presentation methods that we reviewed in this Section?

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY TWO**

Below we want you to describe what methods you have chosen to present to your stakeholders and why. Remember it could be a combination of two or more methods.

If you are using two or more methods, then tell us why you feel you need to use more than one method.

Presentation Method(s) Selected and Why

Please note:

The assessment requirements requires you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE

Learning Activity

Task

LEARNING ACTIVITY THREE

To successfully complete this unit of training, you need to demonstrate your ability to present the chosen solution to your selected problem, as well as explain your critical thinking processes used to develop and choose the solution to your selected problem.

In the previous activity you have described the methods you will be using to present the solution and this presentation will need to also include an explanation of the critical thinking processes you used to develop and select the solution.

Your teacher or trainer will be using your selected presentation methods as part of their assessment tasks and this may include your team leader or supervisor at your place of employment as part of the assessment team.

Please note:

The assessment requirements requires you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE

SAMPLE



RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND QUESTIONS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

With any presentation to an audience, the presenter can be assured that questions will be asked of them relating to the content of their presentation.

This will more than likely be the case when you present to the relevant stakeholders a chosen solution to a workplace problem.

Generally the most common feedback to a presentation will be questions. There are two main types of questions that you as the presenter will encounter.

- 1) **Clarifying questions** - these are questions where one or more stakeholders need to clarify some points or information relating to the solution. This could be because they did not fully understand the information or want to confirm their understanding.
- 2) **Challenging questions** - these are more confronting questions where the questions are framed in a way that the person asking the question is suggesting that the information relating to the solution or the solution itself is inaccurate, flawed, inadequate or unacceptable.

Responding to questions is far easier when you have been detailed and precise in the processes used in developing solutions, including ensuring that all information gathered has been analysed and evaluated carefully using critical thinking.

Preparation prior to the presentation is essential.

- ☆ You need to know your audience and determine what elements of the solutions would have the most interest to them or will impact them the most.
- ☆ Know your material being presented in detail. You can then respond effectively, confidently and not answer in a way that seems you do not know your information enough or worse, answer in a way that contradicts what has been presented.
- ☆ If you do not know the answer to a question, do not guess or 'wing it'. Let the stakeholder know that you will get back to them with the information and ensure you do.
- ☆ Do not get into any arguments with those that are challenging your solution or information. Tell them you will make note of their concerns and comments, as well as that you will address those concerns later and ensure that you do.

For some solutions there will be unfavourable impacts to some stakeholders. If you are prepared enough, you will expect challenges from those being impacted and can respond effectively without inflaming the situation.

Learning Activity

Task

LEARNING ACTIVITY FOUR

This activity is to be done after completing your presentation to the relevant stakeholders.

In a WORD document, create a post presentation report for your teacher or trainer.

In this report outline the following:

- ☆ What questions we asked
- ☆ Define each question as to whether it was a clarifying, or challenging type of question
- ☆ Outline your answer to each question

Also, report on any major challenges (excluding those challenging questions) and how you responded to those challenges.

Once you have completed your post presentation report, present it to your teacher or trainer for review and discussion.

Please note:

The assessment requirements require you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE

SAMPLE

ACTIVE LEARNERS



CRITICAL THINKERS

EVALUATE CRITICAL THINKING PROCESSES WITH TEAM MEMBERS AND USING FEEDBACK RECEIVED AND IDENTIFY CRITICAL THINKING LEARNINGS TO APPLY TO INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM SITUATIONS

(Over the next few pages we cover two 'Performance Criteria' points at the same time to avoid repetition)

We know that critical thinking refers to the process of actively analysing, assessing, evaluating and reflecting on information gathered from communication, observation, experience and research.

It is thinking clearly, logically, reasonably and in a reflective manner which leads to solutions and quality decision making.

It is always suggested that in order to be a critical thinker you need to be an active learner (a pro-active acquirer of information):

- ☆ Understand links between ideas
- ☆ Determine the importance and relevance of arguments and ideas
- ☆ Recognise, build and appraise arguments
- ☆ Identify inconsistencies and errors in reasoning
- ☆ Approach problems consistently and systematically
- ☆ Reflect on the justification of personal assumptions, beliefs and values



EVALUATING CRITICAL THINKING PROCESSES

Using acquired critical thinking skills in developing alternative solutions and using critical thinking skills to select a solution should always be evaluated.

It is important to look for areas of improvement where possible.

One very effective method is to seek feedback from your fellow team members.

Receiving feedback sometimes can be difficult. You may receive some criticism or strong suggestions that you may not want to hear.

Here are some tips to consider when you are given constructive feedback.

First, avoid your first reaction of being defensive, in fact try not to react at all and stay calm while your brain processes what it has heard.

Next, you will need to remember that feedback can, in most cases be very beneficial to receive.

With the feedback you will be able to personally identify areas of improvement or corrective action in order to increase your performance and meet expectations of the other team members.

Use active listening skills and wait until the person offering the feedback has finished without interrupting. Then ask questions to make sure you understood the feedback.

How the feedback is given and what the feedback consists of could cause friction, unless you again ask questions of the other team member in order to clear up any misunderstandings related to the feedback.

It is also important to remember that the person giving the feedback may be nervous, or may not express his or her ideas clearly.



Acknowledge receiving their feedback and thank them.

You should always remember that critical thinking processes can always be improved as your critical thinking skills improve.

Expressing appreciation does not have to mean you're agreeing with the feedback, but it does show that you're acknowledging the effort the team member took to evaluate you and share their thoughts.

Do not get into a debate with the other person, instead start to deconstruct the person's feedback.

To do this, start asking more questions and if possible, provide suggested actions.

What you have done is acknowledged the feedback and asked more questions to determine what the feedback is addressing and some possible improvements.

Soon the conversation should lead to an agreement on the issues that were raised and often help to develop improvement areas should there be issues.

Next you would need to tell the other team member what you will likely do based on their feedback and again, thank the person for their feedback.

If the feedback is regarding a larger issue, you may want to ask for a time to follow-up and ask more questions and get agreement on the next steps.

This will give you time to process the feedback, seek advice from others and think about areas of improvement.

Constructive criticism is often the only way team members learn about their weaknesses and without it no one would improve.

It is always important to remember that critical thinking skill development never stops.

It is a learning process and this learning process is enhanced with constructive feedback on projects where you have used your critical thinking skills.

Learning Activity

Task

LEARNING ACTIVITY FIVE

This activity is to be done after seeking feedback from your workplace team.

In a WORD document, create a report for your teacher or trainer that outlines the feedback received and how this feedback was used. The report should reflect feedback related to the processes you used that required critical thinking skills.

In this report outline the following:

- ☆ Any areas that feedback identified needing improvement
- ☆ How you used the feedback

Once you have completed your feedback report, present it to your teacher or trainer for review and discussion.

Please note:

The assessment requirements requires you to resolve or solve workplace problems on *two occasions*. The second problem you will be asked to identify and resolve or solve will be at the end of this training manual and it will include this activity to be applied to the second problem.

PLEASE NOTE

SAMPLE

**Learning
Activity****Task****LEARNING ACTIVITY SIX**

As you are aware, to successfully complete this unit of training you are to be assigned and resolve or solve **two** workplace team problems.

Throughout the previous Sections and pages the Learning Activities focussed on the **first** workplace team problems assigned.

These Learning Activities would need to be repeated, this time relating to a **second** workplace team problem. The Learning Activities include:

Section One

- ☆ Learning Activity 5
- ☆ Learning Activity 6
- ☆ Learning Activity 7
- ☆ Learning Activity 8

Section Two

- ☆ Learning Activity 3
- ☆ Learning Activity 4
- ☆ Learning Activity 6

Section Three

- ☆ Learning Activity 2
- ☆ Learning Activity 3
- ☆ Learning Activity 4
- ☆ Learning Activity 5

If you are assigned and solving or resolving two workplace team problems at the same time, then your teacher or trainer will modify the abovementioned activities to include both problems.

SAMPLE

SELF ASSESSMENT

Self assessment is where you ask yourself certain questions to ensure you have understood what you have learned while reading this manual and completing the learning activities.

This unit requires you the student or trainee at the completion of your training to have a certain level of 'Required Knowledge' in which you would need to have acquired and in which you will be assessed on. This self assessment section reviews this required knowledge by way of questions and if you are able to say YES to all of them you can be confident your assessment will be satisfactory.

- ☆ This training unit had three sections each with information on critical thinking in the workplace. After reviewing the information in Section One, are you confident that you understand and could:
 - 1) Identify and select workplace problem to address within scope of job role of team members?
 - 2) Identify organisational and legislative frameworks applicable to selected problem?
 - 3) Develop questions to identify key issues and challenges of selected problem?
 - 4) Consult key stakeholders using questions to gather information on selected problem?
- ☆ After reviewing the information in Section Two, are you confident that you understand and could:
 - 1) Identify a range of critical thinking techniques to generate solutions to selected problem?
 - 2) Develop solutions using knowledge and experience of team members?
 - 3) Explain development process for individual solutions generated to team members?
 - 4) Apply agreed criteria for selecting most suitable option in consultation with team members?
 - 5) Critically evaluate solutions generated and select solution to be implemented?
- ☆ After reviewing the information in Section Three, are you confident that you understand and could:
 - 1) Present solution to relevant stakeholders with explanation of critical thinking processes involved?
 - 2) Respond to challenges and questions from stakeholders?
 - 3) Evaluate critical thinking processes with team members and using feedback received?
 - 4) Identify critical thinking learnings to apply to individual and team situations?

If there were any questions that you were unable to confidently say YES to, we encourage you to review the information again in this manual and if needed seek the assistance of your teacher or trainer.

NOTES

SAMPLE