

UNIT SUMMARY

What is the unit about?

This unit is about carrying out quality audits as part of a formal quality management system, such as ISO9001:2000 or sector-specific systems.

Quality auditors require technical knowledge of the quality system and standards with which they are working and a good understanding of the processes and procedures they are auditing. They need to carry out quality audits professionally and rigorously in order to reveal any nonconformances. They also need interpersonal skills to carry out audits in such a way that auditees (i.e. those being audited) do not feel threatened, but rather feel empowered to continuously improve the quality of their work.

Who is the unit for?

The unit is for quality auditors – those carrying out formal audits of compliance with quality systems.

Links to other units

This unit is linked to units **F13. Manage quality systems** and **F14. Prepare for and participate in quality audits** in the overall suite of National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership.

Skills

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

- Assessing
- Benchmarking
- Communicating
- Decision-making
- Evaluating
- Interviewing
- Involving others
- Monitoring
- Planning
- Questioning
- Reporting
- Researching
- Reviewing
- Setting objectives

OUTCOMES OF EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

You must be able to do the following:

1. Carry out quality audits according to a plan and schedule that meets the needs of those requiring the audits to be carried out.
2. Carry out quality audits in ways which enhance auditees' confidence in the quality system and their commitment to meeting and maintaining quality standards.
3. Give auditees the required period of notice of your intention to audit.
4. Prepare carefully to establish clearly:
 - the scope of the audit
 - the responsibilities of the auditees
 - the quality procedures that apply to their work
 - previous audit history.
5. Clarify with auditees the purpose of the audit and the roles, responsibilities and expectations of yourself and the auditees.
6. Carry out an investigation of the auditees' work in sufficient detail to reveal any deviations from relevant quality procedures.
7. Adapt your behaviour, where necessary, to encourage auditees to co-operate fully to achieve the purpose of the audit.
8. Share with the auditees the results of the audit and agree appropriate corrective actions to remedy any nonconformances and the date by which the actions should be carried out.

9. Check with auditees that corrective actions have been carried out by agreed dates.
 10. Seek advice from your manager or quality specialists if you cannot agree a deviation or corrective action with auditees.
 11. Promptly bring to the attention of your manager or quality specialists any deviations which present serious and/or immediate risks to individuals or to the organisation.
 12. Identify and analyse any inherent problems with processes and/or quality procedures and report your findings and any recommendations with an appropriate degree of urgency.
 13. Keep complete records of quality audits and make your audit reports available to authorised people.
4. The importance of giving auditees the required period of notice of your intention to audit.
 5. The importance of preparing carefully for the audit, and how to do so.
 6. The importance of communicating information clearly, concisely and accurately, and how to do so.
 7. How to carry out an investigation in sufficient detail to reveal any discrepancies.
 8. How to decide on appropriate corrective actions to remedy each discrepancy and the date by which the actions should be carried out, and the importance of agreeing this with the auditees.
 9. How to identify and analyse inherent problems with processes and quality procedures and why it is important to report your finding and recommendations with an appropriate degree of urgency.
 10. The importance of checking with auditees that corrective actions have been carried out by agreed dates, and how to do so.
 11. How to keep complete records of quality audits and the importance of making your audit reports available to authorised people.
 12. How to identify the discrepancies that present serious and/or immediate risks to individuals or to the organisation and the importance of promptly bringing this to the attention of your manager or quality specialists.

BEHAVIOURS WHICH UNDERPIN EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

1. You find practical ways to overcome barriers.
2. You listen actively, ask questions, clarify points and rephrase others' statements to check mutual understanding.
3. You present information clearly, concisely, accurately and in ways that promote understanding.
4. You keep people informed of plans and developments.
5. You comply with, and ensure others comply with, legal requirements, industry regulations, organisational policies and professional codes.
6. You act within the limits of your authority.
7. You show integrity, fairness and consistency in decision-making.
8. You clearly agree what is expected of others and hold them to account.
9. You use cost-effective, time-effective and ethical means to gather, store and retrieve information.
10. You make appropriate information and knowledge available promptly to those who need it and have a right to it.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

You need to know and understand the following:

General knowledge and understanding

1. Quality management principles, methods, tools, techniques and current developments in best practice.
2. How to carry out quality audits and the importance of doing so according to an agreed plan and schedule.
3. Different ways of carrying out quality audits to enhance auditees' confidence in the quality system and their commitment to meeting and maintaining quality standards, and the importance of doing so.

Industry/sector specific knowledge and understanding

1. Industry/sector requirements for quality management and auditing.

Context specific knowledge and understanding

1. The culture and quality management systems in place in the organisation in which the audit is being carried out.
2. The customers of the audit – those requiring the audit to be carried out – and their needs.
3. The responsibilities of the auditees and the quality procedures that apply to their work.
4. Sources of advice, guidance and support from your manager and/or quality specialists if you cannot agree a discrepancy or corrective action with auditees.
5. The limits of your own knowledge, skills and competence.
6. Your organisation's policies and procedures for keeping full and accurate records.
7. The authorised personnel who should receive your audit reports.