

BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS CURRICULUM OUTLINE

Unit Standard	263374: Generate information and reports for internal and external use
NQF	4
Credits	10
Duration	2 days per week for 3 weeks and consolidation workshop
Organisational Development Area	Durations dependant on client requirements All Business employees, Junior, Senior, Executive Management levels

MODULE ONE A: BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS INTRODUCTION- FOUNDATION CONCEPTS

- General principles of writing:
 - Clarifying your objective – know where you're going and you'll know when you've arrived;
 - Quick and clear messages – six questions to clarify your thinking;
 - Who is going to read your document? Knowing your reader helps you pitch your message;
 - Apply our eight principles of good business writing to work you bring with you, with advice from the course presenter.

- The psychology of effective business writing:
 - The management of information explained;
 - Understanding how the brain reorganises information;
 - How does the mind store, retrieve, process and use information;
 - How does the mind structure logical sequences of information;
 - Explaining and understanding the fears involved in writing.

- Choosing your words:
 - Getting the tone of your document right;
 - Recognising the padding you can cut out and the words you should leave in;
 - Knowing when to write affect or effect, their, there or they're (and many other commonly confused words);
 - Other common traps and how to avoid them;
 - Things that make some people misunderstand your message.

- Good writing techniques for business correspondence:
 - The best sequence of delivery reflects your contents;
 - Structuring your text – layouts to support content and draw the reader in
 - South African Vs. American English;
 - How to ask for things without starting a long sequence of replies to replies;
 - How to give bad news – being up-front and empathising;
 - Responding to complaints – when you are at fault; when you wish to make a concession; standing firm; what to avoid;
 - Writing letters of complaint – useful phrases.

MODULE ONE B: BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS INTRODUCTION- DEVELOPMENTAL CONCEPTS

- Grammar basics – the building blocks of a sentence:
 - Nouns – what are they and how do you use them?
 - Using prepositions to explain what's going on;
 - Articles – definite, indefinite; knowing when the article is not needed;
 - Verbs – a quick overview;
 - Adjectives and adverbs, their uses and abuses.

- Building sentences:
 - Building a sentence from the ground up;
 - From simple to more realistic sentences;
 - Connecting things – and, but, because, etc.
 - Cause and effect – simple sentences;
 - Relative clauses – one of life's great mysteries explained (which or that?);
 - Deciding where to put the emphasis.

- Avoiding common problems:
 - Making verbs and nouns agree;
 - Sentence order for easy understanding – how not to confuse your reader;
 - A round-up of the most common mistakes, why they occur and how you can avoid them.

- Punctuation:
 - Full stops, question marks and exclamation marks;
 - Using the comma correctly;
 - The difference between colons and semicolons and when to use them;
 - Apostrophes in contractions, unusual plurals and possessives – including 'Plain Words' Fool proof Flowchart for possessive apostrophes;
 - Hyphens and dashes – the difference between them and when to use them;
 - Simple rules for using capital letters and abbreviations;
 - Quotation marks – how and when to use them;
 - Knowing when to use italics, boldface, small capitals, parentheses, square brackets, ellipses, the slash, numerals, fractions and dates.

- Writing emails:
 - Why have email etiquette?
 - Email etiquette for header fields – subject lines, content, forward and reply;
 - Technical issues – signature files, attachments, elaborate fonts can work for or against you;
 - Choosing the right structure for your content and objective;
 - Email style counts – it still represents your business;
 - Sending the right message – what your email could be saying about you;
 - How to minimise flaming by recognising ambiguous content and knowing when to use the phone instead.

- Writing agendas, minutes or meeting summaries:
 - Benefits of good minute taking;
 - Agenda – layout and contents to facilitate minute taking;
 - Layout and style of minutes;
 - Preparation to take the stress out;
 - Recognising facts from chatter;
 - Knowing what to include.

- Editing your work:
 - A top-down approach to improving text – edit like a reader;
 - Effective transitions – holding the flow of thought;
 - Tips to maximise impact;
 - Polishing the words – poppycock and commonly-confused words;
 - Polishing your grammar and punctuation – common mistakes and things that make some people go mad;
 - Spelling – using the tools;
 - Infinitives;
 - Proofing your work – tricks to help you see what’s really there.

- General principles of writing:
 - The BASDELL business writing model – an easy to remember formula that covers the main elements to consider when writing business documents.

- Gathering and sifting information:
 - The four main sources of data and the benefits and risks of each;
 - Gathering information and how to get input from others efficiently.

CONSOLIDATION WORKSHOP

Developed and presented by highly experienced facilitators, this workshop will give learners clear guidance on how to communicate effectively through the written word. The workshop will highlight and consolidate the most important factors that learners can take back with them into the workplace. The integration of the experiential learning that takes place will have a long lasting effect for the learner’s future written documents.

Unit Standard	115790: Write and present for a wide range of purposes, audiences and contexts
NQF	5
Credits	5
Duration	2 days per week for 3 weeks Durations Dependant on client requirements
Organisational Development Area	Junior, Senior, Executive Management levels

MODULE TWO A: BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS FOR MANAGERS-WRITING A CLEAR AND CONCISE BUSINESS CASE- FOUNDATION CONCEPTS

- Basic principles:
 - Ingredients of a good business case – focusing on the customer;
 - Identifying key messages – clarity and consistency;
 - Developing a clear objective to keep you on track;
 - Nine things you should know about your audience;
 - Meeting readers' expectations – good planning makes your content relevant.

- Considering content for your business case:
 - Analysing the challenges and opportunities facing you;
 - How can these best be resolved or exploited?
 - What investment will be needed?
 - What are the advantages you may expect?

- Building a solid business case:
 - The four main sources for your data and the role of each;
 - Managing the process of gathering information;
 - The difference between features and benefits – organisation now saves time later;
 - Tying in to IT and business strategies – making your content relevant to different readers;
 - Return on investment – targeted statistics, multiple information sources, alternative scenarios;
 - A word on soft benefits.

MODULE TWO B: BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS FOR MANAGERS-WRITING A CLEAR AND CONCISE BUSINESS CASE- DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

- Designing your structure:
 - Using mind maps and an outline to structure and sequence your material;
 - Discussing the different ways you can structure your business case;
 - Top tips for business case structures – what goes where;
 - Three possible outlines for your business case;
 - A Management Summary that will sell your case – considering your purpose, audience, style and length.

- Making your arguments persuasive:
 - What are the principles of persuasive writing?
 - How can your overall structure support your arguments?

- Improving your writing style:
 - Do your business cases contain these six common hazards?
 - Ten principles of clear writing that have stood the test of time;
 - The best style for your business case and Management Summary.

- Drafting your business case
 - The importance of the correct mind-set for writing a winning business case;
 - How to avoid getting side-tracked when writing your draft;
 - Seven writing musts to keep your writing focussed;
 - Checking that you are maintaining the correct writing style;
 - How the right headings signpost your document;
 - How, when and where to use illustrations.

- Editing your business case
 - Polishing your text the way the reader reads – from the top down;
 - Tips to help you achieve maximum impact;
 - Using headings, lists and tables for visual appeal;
 - Making it easy to read – how punctuation clarifies meaning.

CONSOLIDATION WORKSHOP

The learners will be asked to develop a business case that is work specific and they will have the opportunity to present the business case to the facilitators at the workshop. The facilitator's will then assess the business case and will provide formal feedback to the learner.

Unit Standard	119463: Access and use information from texts
NQF	2
Credits	5
Duration	2 days per week for 3 weeks Durations Dependant on client requirements
Organisational Development Area	All Business employees, Junior, Senior, Executive Management levels

MODULE THREE A: BUSINESS WRITING ADVANCED REPORT WRITING - FOUNDATION CONCEPTS

- A framework for success:
 - The BASDELL business writing model – a model of the process to create effective business documents.
- Understanding your brief:
 - What's the purpose of a business, technical or financial report?
 - Assessing the issues and focusing on the essentials;
 - Setting a clear objective to save you time and effort;
 - Building on the skills you have and developing the skills of your staff;
- Analysing your audience:
 - Questions you need to ask yourself about your readers;
 - Producing a clear set of guidelines on what response you want from each reader; Understanding different readers and giving them what they need—and in their preferred style and format.
- Designing your structure:
 - The benefits of structuring before you start writing.
 - Using techniques like mind mapping™ or Word™ Outline View to sequence and structure your material;
 - Ensuring your structure supports and delivers what you want from your audience;
 - Breaking the job down into manageable chunks.

MODULE THREE B: BUSINESS WRITING ADVANCED - REPORT WRITING: DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

- Developing your style:
 - Plain Words' eight principles for clear writing;
 - How to keep sentences short and simple – even though the content is complex;
 - Writing to express not impress!
 - How to write in terms your reader will relate to;
 - How to use variety in your writing without confusing your reader.

- Making your WRITTEN arguments persuasive:
 - What are the principles of persuasive writing?
 - Explaining the problem to get readers on-side;
 - Anticipating and overcoming objections;
 - Subjective versus objective justifications—what's best when?
 - How can your overall structure support your arguments?

- Creating your executive summary:
 - What is the purpose of the executive summary?
 - Why it's the most important part of your report;
 - How to structure your executive summary;
 - What are the most important things to include?

- Drafting and polishing your words:
 - Mind-set for drafting, how to avoid writer's block;
 - A top down approach to improving your text;
 - Ensuring that you achieve maximum impact – things to check when editing your draft;
 - Common mistakes you can avoid – sentence fragments and run-on sentences;
 - Merging different writing styles from contributors and ensuring a consistent voice;
 - Getting the most from your headings;
 - Hints for proofreading.

CONSOLIDATION WORKSHOP

Devised and presented by highly experienced facilitators, this workshop will give learners clear guidance on how to communicate effectively through the written word. Learners will learn how to write for a variety of audiences including: Internal and external customers, investors, business partners, job applicants, new recruits, senior managers and other colleagues. There is also an opportunity to bring along an example of your writing and have it constructively reviewed by the facilitators. The learners will be able to consolidate:

- Powerful tips to boost readability;
- Five golden rules of good business writing;
- Tips and tools to make your writing more accessible;
- Tips and tools to make your words more presentable;
- Ten common mistakes and how to avoid them;
- Special exercises to enhance your business writing skills;
- Essential checklist for business writers.