



education

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NATIONAL CERTIFICATE (VOCATIONAL)

SUBJECT GUIDELINES

OFFICE PRACTICE

NQF Level 4

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OFFICE PRACTICE – LEVEL 4

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INTRODUCTION

A. What is Office Practice?

Office Practice equips students with the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes required to be successful as an administrative, secretarial or personal assistant. The subject lays the foundation for lifelong learning and creates the opportunity for further and higher education.

Office Practice is designed to give students relevant and marketable skills and applied competencies for employment and self-employment in the office administration sector. Administration competencies apply to all industries, both in the formal and informal commercial sectors and the non-commercial sector. Office Practice simultaneously builds the cognitive ability and provides the required fundamental learning necessary to access employment in the business and administration sector and related studies at further and higher education level with enhanced employment opportunities.

B. Why is Office Practice important in the Office Administration programme?

A sound knowledge of business practice will serve students as a usable foundation in an office environment. The subject prepares students for the world of work in general and for performing office functions in particular. The practical components of business practice will increase students' competence levels in such a way that they will be productive in positions for which office skills are required.

Students will acquire the skills to work in an administrative environment, including small, medium and micro enterprises, where the acquisition of competence will add value to the student's job performance or increase the student's chances of finding employment.

C. The link between the Office Practice Learning Outcomes and the Critical and Developmental Outcomes

In Office Practice, students develop the skill to plan before commencing any work. Students learn to understand and adapt to the social environment by meaningfully interpreting office practices which they will come across in their future lives. They develop the logical thought processes so that instead of relying on set rules, they are able to apply basic office principles to new and unfamiliar situations. Students also develop a systematic approach to problem solving.

D. Factors that contribute to achieving the Office Practice Learning Outcomes

Students interested in commerce or the business world will benefit by doing Office Practice. This subject is focused on the skills necessary for the office or personal assistant function of any business and is essential for any student exploring management as a future career opportunity. Students will acquire the core skills of handling information, technology and communication and secretarial skills, practices and procedures in a business environment. Students will also develop the ability to communicate effectively in an office environment and the ability to be creative and people-centred in an office environment.

Students who have specific characteristics such as thoroughness, accuracy and orderliness will enjoy Office Practice.

1 DURATION AND TUITION TIME

This is a one year instructional programme comprising 200 teaching and learning hours. The subject may be offered on a part-time basis provided all of the assessment requirements.

Course preparation should consider students with special education needs.

2 SUBJECT LEVEL FOCUS

The general and overall aim of the subject at this level is to contribute towards the effective functioning of the administrative function in an office environment.

3 ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Internal assessment (50 percent)

All internal assessments must be finalised by an assessor with at least a certificate of competence from an accredited provider.

3.1.1 Theoretical Component

The theoretical component of Office Practice will form 30 percent of the internal assessment. Weekly assessments are necessary on all theoretical work and this can be done by short assessments that can be incorporated into the year mark. Short assessments are important but cannot replace the final of each topic or the semester assessment. The theoretical component can be assessed individually or in groups using a variety of assessment instruments.

3.1.2 Practical Component

The practical component of Office Practice will form 70 percent of the internal assessment. All practical components must be indicated in a Portfolio of Evidence (PoE).

Practical assessment will be done in the simulated enterprise (SIM) and evidence will be placed in the PoE. Integration of practical and theory will be assessed throughout the year in the form of task case studies and practical application exercises.

- **Some examples of practical assessments include, but are not limited to:**
- Presentations (lectures, demonstrations, group discussions and activities, practical work, observation, role play, self activity, judging and evaluation)
- Use of aids
- Exhibitions
- Visits
- Guest speaker presentations
- Research
- Structured environment

- **Definition of the term “Structured Environment”**

“Structured environment” for the purposes of assessment refers to an actual or simulated workplace, or workshop environment. It is advised that a practicum room is available on each campus for practical assessment.

- **Evidence in practical/application assessments**

All evidence pertaining to evaluation of practical work must be reflected in the student’s Portfolio of Evidence. The tools and instruments constructed and used for the purpose of conducting such assessments must be clear from evidence contained in the PoE.

3.1.3 Processing of internal assessment mark for the year

A year mark out of 100 is calculated by adding the marks of the theoretical component and the practical component of the internal continuous assessment.

3.1.4 Moderation of internal assessment mark

Internal assessment is subject to both internal and external moderation procedures as contained in the *National Examinations Policy for FET College Programmes*.

3.2 External assessment (50 percent)

A national examination is conducted annually in October or November by means of a paper/s set internally and marked and moderated externally.

Details in respect of external assessment are contained in the *Assessment Guidelines: Office Practice (Level 4)*.

4 WEIGHTED VALUES OF TOPICS

TOPICS	WEIGHTED VALUE
1. Create business reports	25%
2. Assist in planning an event	40%
3. Managing people information	20%
4. Ensuring customer satisfaction	15%
TOTAL	100

5 CALCULATION OF FINAL MARK

Internal assessment: Student's mark/100 x 50 = a mark out of 50 (a)

Examination mark: Student's mark/100 x 50 = a mark out of 50 (b)

Final mark: (a) + (b) = a mark out of 100

All marks are systematically processed and accurately recorded to be available as hard copy evidence for, amongst others, purposes of moderation and verification, as well as for purposes of reporting.

6 PASS REQUIREMENTS

The student must obtain at least fifty (50) percent in ICASS and fifty percent (50) in the examination.

7 SUBJECT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of Office Practice Level 3 the student should have covered the following topics:

Topic 1: Create business reports
Topic 2: Assist in planning an event
Topic 3: Manage people information
Topic 4: Ensuring customer satisfaction

7.1 Topic 1: Create business reports

7.1.1 Subject Outcome 1: Relate the purpose, content, form, frequency and recipients of a range of reports to the information needs of a selected business.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Identify the regular reports for a selected organisation.
- Link the information needs of the organisation to the purpose of each identified report.
- Draw up a template for each report in the company specific format including the mandatory content headings.
- Create a table listing each report, its purpose, the regular recipients and frequency of distribution.

Range: Assessment is limited to five reports.

7.1.2 Subject Outcome 2: Identify information sources and organisational procedures for obtaining and distributing information relevant to a selected business function.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Create a table listing each report and the information sources required for input to the report. The information sources are linked to specific headings within the report.
- Draw up a table listing each information source, from whom it is obtainable, when it is available, its level of confidentiality, and to whom it should be returned.
- Identify company procedures for obtaining information sources for each information source and linked to the table above.

7.1.3 Subject Outcome 3: Compile reports related to a selected business function, ensuring content and format are appropriate to information requirements and that reporting deadlines are met.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Compile the identified reports using current information.
Range: Assessment limited to three reports.
- Create templates to use for writing the reports and make any necessary modifications to ensure compliance with business requirements.
- Use the identified information sources to provide the information required by the organisation.
- Distribute the report in the required manner in time to meet the specified deadline.
Range: E-mail, postage, internal mail, courier and delivery.

7.1.4 Subject Outcome 4: Liaise with relevant parties and verify that reported information is in accordance with requirements and purpose of the report.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Compile a table listing each of the relevant recipients of the reports, a space for comments and an overall rating of the report in terms of whether it meets their information requirements and purpose.
- Distribute the form to recipients and evaluate their comments to determine the usefulness of the report.
- Make possible amendments to reports in line with suggestions from recipients.

7.2 Topic 2: Assist in planning an event

7.2.1 Subject Outcome 1: Assist in the undertaking of a needs assessment.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Source information on client profiles, needs and expectations according to an assessment checklist prior to planning.
- Identify the type of stakeholders within the event sub-field (for example, donors).

7.2.2 Subject Outcome 2: Assist in the design of an event.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Create an environment to facilitate the design of an event.
- Match event elements with the capacity of the facility according to client needs.
- Understand and explain the specific characteristics of the event sub-field.
- Identify facility capacity and constraints.

7.2.3 Subject Outcome 3: Identify the items making up the event plan, appropriate and specific to the event sub-field.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Assist in setting parameters for an event framework according to client, topic and budget.
- Complete all preparatory work to execute the event.
- Interpret and demonstrate an understanding of the critical path of the event.
- Administrate, for example invitations, registration and notices appropriately and according to time frames.

7.2.4 Subject Outcome 4: Apply the support tasks as prescribed.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Interpret and work within a work schedule, time line, organisational structure, budget and legal requirements.

7.2.5 Subject Outcome 5: Adhere to clear communication procedures.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Communicate with internal (in-house) and external service providers regarding contributions towards the event.
- Communicate and arrange issues such as accommodation, transport, facilities, menus and refreshments with appropriate in-house sections.
- Communicate issues such as topics and decoration and arrange with external service providers.
- Deal with the client in a professional manner.

7.2.6 Subject Outcome 6: Operate individually and as part of an event team.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Understand own role within an event within a particular event sub-field.
- Reflect on, measure and evaluate the event and performance.

7.2.7 Subject Outcome 7: Determine criteria for expertise and resources.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Identify clear concise and complete expertise and resource criteria.
- Identify expertise and resource needs including competencies and attributes required.
- Produce estimates of resource needs.
- Confirm expertise and resource needs with key persons and obtain authorisation within scheduled time frames.

7.2.8 Subject Outcome 8: Establish and record expertise and resources.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Ensure that the choice of expertise complies with procedures and supports the organisation's objectives.
- Ensure that the choice of expertise and resources best satisfies the needs, operations and services requirements of the organisations.
- Document expertise and resources in the required format and within agreed time frames.

7.2.9 Subject Outcome 9: Report on expertise and resources.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Select an appropriate reporting method with regard to the context and organisational requirement.
- Prepare a report using the data recorded and in accordance with organisational requirements.
- Submit report within agreed time frames and format.

7.3 Topic 3: Manage people information

7.3.1 Subject Outcome 1: Organise the collation of information required for human resources management.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Collate information according to design requirements.
- Identify sources of income and expenditure for three different types of financial statements.
- Obtain accurate information within agreed timeframes.
- Verify information against reliable sources.
- Take effective action to rectify inadequate, contradictory or ambiguous information.
- Use effective, efficient and consistent methods to collate information in accordance with organisational values, policies and legal requirements.

7.3.2 Subject Outcome 2: Organise, control and monitor the storing, recording, maintenance and retrieval of collated information.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Efficiently organise, capture and accurately record information (including human and physical resources) within agreed timeframes.
- Store records securely in line with system requirements.
- Maintain stored information in accordance with organisational policies and legal requirements.
- Review the records capturing system to ensure compliance with the organisation's record keeping and quality control system, industry best practice and customer satisfaction.
- Control access to stored information in accordance with organisational policies.
- Develop and utilise efficient and effective resources for the retrieval of information on demand.
- Train users and operational staff in accordance with organisational and technical requirements.
- Identify records with long-term value at creation stage and maintain according to long-term preservation and retrieval requirements.
- Monitor the records continuum to facilitate timely transfer of inactive records and ensure efficient use of equipment.

7.3.3 Subject Outcome 3: Advise and inform the organisation by providing human resource information for the use of others.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Give information and advice at a time and place and in a form and manner appropriate to the needs of recipients.
- Ensure that information given is accurate, relevant, current and sufficient for the specifications of the user.
- Ensure that advice given is consistent with the policy, procedures and resource constraints of the organisation.
- Ensure that advice is supported by reasoned arguments and appropriate evidence.
- Check and confirm recipients' understanding of the information and advice given.
- Adhere to organisational confidentiality.
- Use feedback from recipients about the usefulness of information and advice provided to improve ways in which information and advice are given.

7.3.4 Subject Outcome 4: Use the evidence in financial statements to make a financial decision.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Analyse the financial strengths and weaknesses of an entity and suggest ways to improve income and reduce costs.
- Explain the concept of a cost to income ratio and suggest how to improve the ratio.
- Explain with examples, the relationship between turnover, income, revenue, sales/earnings and profit.
- Explain the concept of cash flow in terms of liquidity.

7.4 Topic 4: Ensuring customer satisfaction

7.4.1 Subject Outcome 1: Describe ways to obtain customer feedback.

Learning Outcome

The student should be able to:

- Describe ways to obtain customer feedback.

7.4.2 Subject Outcome 2: Explain the importance of interpersonal skills.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Explain the importance of interpersonal skills.
- Explain the reasons for cultural considerations when interacting with customers.

7.4.3 Subject Outcome 3: Describe the methods used to monitor staff-customer relations.

Learning Outcome

The student should be able to:

- Describe the methods used to monitor staff-customer relations.

7.4.4 Subject Outcome 4: Describe products and services provided by the organisation.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- List and describe products and services provided by the organisation.
- Explain the importance of promoting the products and services.

7.4.5 Subject Outcome 5: Explain the importance of evaluating and dealing with complaints.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Explain the importance of evaluating and dealing with complaints by using effective negotiation and communication skills.
- Describe alternative ways to resolve complaints.

7.4.6 Subject Outcome 6: Explain the importance of understanding company standards.

Learning Outcome

The student should be able to:

- Explain the importance of understanding company standards and identify the person responsible for resolving complaints.

7.4.7 Subject Outcome 7: Describe ways of establishing rapport with customers and maintaining a professional relationship.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Identify and describe ways of establishing rapport with customers.
- Maintain professional relationships with customers.

7.4.8 Subject Outcome 8: Identify customer requirements and decide how best to deal with the request.

Learning Outcome

The student should be able to:

- Identify customer requirements and decide how best to deal with the request.

7.4.9 Subject Outcome 9: Decide how best to promote the features and benefits of products and services.

Learning Outcome

The student should be able to:

- Given a range of products and services, decide how best to promote the features and benefits, taking resources, the type of customer and environment into account.

7.4.10 Subject Outcome 10: Describe ways to rectify complaints.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Given a range of complaints, describe ways to rectify the complaints and explain reasons why these particular solutions have been chosen.
- Complaints relate to products, services and environment.

7.4.11 Subject Outcome 11: Suggest possible ways to improve the procedure for handling customer complaints.

Learning Outcome

The student should be able to:

- Suggest possible ways to improve the procedure for handling customer complaints and give reasons for each suggestion.

7.4.12 Subject Outcome 12: Suggest ways of increasing customer satisfaction.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Suggest ways of increasing customer satisfaction.

8 RESOURCE NEEDS FOR THE TEACHING OF OFFICE PRACTICE - LEVEL 4

8.1 Physical resources

- **Practicum room: (Simulated room)**

- A simulated enterprise in which students can gain practical experience within a simulated office environment, with essential electronic equipment, e.g. adding machine, cash registers calculators, filing cabinets.
- Computer and data projector to electronically project data must be available to facilitator; or
- The facilitator must provide students with examples to be completed in practical assignments.
- The latest developments in electronic equipment must be available.

- **Media centre**

- Availability of computers and printers for students to complete assignments/case studies and do research.
- Access to internet for students.
- Trading magazines, daily newspapers and subject related reference books for research by students.
- Subject related DVDs/videos.
- List of guest speakers.
- List of website addresses for subject related research.
- Legislation/Acts for use by lecturers during lessons and students for research purposes.
- Research software e.g. Encarta.
- Stock room to store video/DVD machines, televisions, etc.
- Security for stock room.

- **Class room**

- Flash disk for facilitator to store information.
- White board, black board.
- Desks big enough for students to work on their own and in groups.

8.2 Human resources

- **Lecturer/facilitator:**

- Applicable 3 year diploma; or
- Applicable 4 year degree; and/ or
- Diploma/Degree in education.
- Declared competence as assessor and/or moderator.
- Training in Outcomes Based Education.
- Advanced knowledge and skills of Office Data Processing.

8.3 Other Resources

- Text books.
- Lever arch file for each student to serve as portfolio of evidence.
- Subscription fees for Internet, industry magazines, newspapers.
- Computer disk for each student.