BUSINESS SERVICES

Mandatory Focus Area: Sustainability

Welcome. This module will assist you to review and revise the content of the mandatory focus area ‘sustainability’. Each focus area prescribes the scope of learning for the HSC and is drawn from associated units of competency.

You will have studied one of these competencies, both of which address the scope of learning:

[BSBSUS201 Participate in environmentally sustainable work practices](https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/BSBSUS201)

or

BSBSUS401 [Implement](https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/BSBSUS401) and monitor environmentally sustainable work practices

This module is broken up into:

* Important notes
* Key terms and concepts
* Activities
* Putting the theory into practice
* HSC Focus Area

## How to use the resource

Work through the notes and the suggested activities. Great revision techniques include working through how a problem is solved, explaining the concept, testing yourself and retrieving information from your memory. Spread your revision over a number of sessions rather than sitting at one subject for lengthy periods.

Discuss your responses with your teacher, fellow students or an interested family member.

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## Important Notes

You should use the information here as a prompt and guide when revising your study notes or text-book information or other resources provided by your teacher.

The HSC Content for this industry curriculum framework is organised into focus areas. The outcomes of the mandatory focus area ‘Sustainability’ require that the student:

* explains the fundamental principles of sustainability
* understands environmental hazard identification and risk control
* analyses resource consumption in a business services workplace
* proposes improvements for resource efficiency and sustainability in a business services workplace
* evaluates the workplace in relation to environmentally sustainable work practices

You should use the information here as a prompt and guide when revising your study notes or text-book information or other resources provided by your teacher.

### Understanding sustainability

Interaction between humans and natural systems can impact significantly on society and the environment, which in turn, affects our way of life and our future. Sustainability is about being able to continue an activity for a prolonged period of time while minimising the risk to the environment. To be sustainable, we must develop new approaches to our lifestyle, including the way we do business, so that future generations can enjoy the natural environment as much as we do today.

Current environmental issues applicable to the business services industry include:

* sustainability - using resources in a way that reduces the impact on the environment, such as using less paper or electricity and reducing waste by recycling.
* waste management - collecting, recycling or disposing of waste materials like paper, toner cartridges and other resources used in offices.
* energy use and efficiency - efficiency is about using less resources to produce the same outcome. Energy efficiency is being able to reduce electricity use in order to reduce costs as well as the impact on the environment.
* water resources management - the introduction of systems to ensure that water is not wasted, like using dual flush toilets and water saving taps.
* recycling/reuse - recycling turns used materials into new products to save resources, energy and land fill, while reusing will lengthen the life of an item before it has to be discarded, for example, using the non-used side of paper to make notes on.
* clean-up practices - to ensure that water is not wasted and that environmentally friendly products are used in clean-up practices to reduce the impact on the environment.

### Environmentally sustainable work practices

Environmentally sustainable work practices are those which reduce harm to the environment and reduce wastage of resources. Business services workers can help protect the environment by following the three Rs:

**Reduce**

* print on both sides of paper
* use electronic files rather than paper files
* reduce the amount of junk mail that your office receives
* reduce waste by choosing products that have minimal packaging and can be used productively and then recycled

**Re-use**

* re-use containers, packaging or waste products, wherever possible
* reuse paper for printing draft copies
* make scribble pads from paper used on one side
* use recycled toner cartridges
* use rechargeable batteries instead of single-use batteries

**Recycle**

* recycle waste material wherever possible

Businesses should also use the following strategies to minimise energy wastage:

* + maintain air-conditioning at 20°-24°C in winter and in summer between 23°-26°C.
  + control direct sunlight with blinds and window treatments to minimise heat build-up
  + maintain only security lighting after business hours
  + use power saving options for computers and monitors
  + switch off equipment overnight wherever possible
  + replace incandescent light bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs
  + ensure that air conditioner filters are cleaned regularly
  + install solar electricity

### Resource use

A resource is any input used in an activity in order to help earn a living.

Resources used in a business include:

* human resources – workers
* energy - electricity
* infrastructure – basic facilities, structures and services that act as a foundation for a business. Examples include buildings, equipment, tools required to manufacture their products, computing platforms, IT services such as support and backup, transportation services.
* technology and associated consumables – hardware, video conferencing, virtual office
* equipment and materials – machinery, computers, paper, stock that has been purchased for further processing

It is important to measure resource use in order to measure improvement. Techniques used to collect and measure resource consumption include:

* observing how a resource is being used - making visual assessment of patterns of usage, such as counting how many air conditioners have not been turned off at the end of the workday
* examining invoices from suppliers - comparing invoices for different time periods to calculate changes in usage
* measuring resource usage under different conditions

### Complying with environmental regulations

Legal compliance means behaving according to the law.  
  
An Act is law or legislation that is passed by governments which is enforceable by courts.

A business must comply with all environmental laws covering water, land, air, noise pollution and waste management, as outlined in the main piece of environmental legislation, the [Protection of the Environment Operations Act (NSW)](https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1997/156/full). This Act is managed by the [NSW Environment Protection Authority](https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/licensing-and-regulation/legislation-and-compliance/about-the-poeo-act).

Information on Commonwealth environment laws can be found at the [Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment](https://www.awe.gov.au/).

Codes of practice are written guidelines issued by an official body setting out recommended or preferred processes, actions or organisational structures to be applied in a given setting. Codes of practice can be found at [Safework NSW](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-of-all-codes-of-practice).

Most businesses develop and implement policies and procedures to minimise risk to the environment and workers, whilst ensuring compliance with the laws. Methods used to assess compliance include completing a checklist to see if steps are being followed, measuring resource usage over time, conducting an audit, and monitoring staff attendance at training.

Businesses that fail to comply with environmental laws run the risk of penalties under the [Protection of the Environment Operations Act (NSW)](https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1997/156/full). Penalties range from on-the-spot-fines to $5million fines and 7 years gaol. Reports on company penalties can be found on the [EPA news](https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/news) webpage.

A breach is an instance of breaking a law or regulation or failing to fulfil a duty or obligation. All workers are responsible for identifying breaches and potential breaches (near misses) of environmental regulations and procedures. All workers must report breaches to the appropriate personnel, such as a supervisor, manager, [health and safety representative](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/safety-starts-here/consultation@work/health-and-safety-representatives), or business owner. The method of reporting could be verbally, via a [hazard/incident report form](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/403959/hazard-incident-report-form-SW08483.pdf) or during a team meeting. If the incident presents an immediate threat to human health or property, such as a large chemical spill, emergency services should be phoned on 000. As first responders, Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Police and NSW Ambulance Services take responsibility for controlling the incident.

### Improving resource efficiency

A business may put into place plans to improve environmental practices and resource efficiency.

These initiatives may include:

* green office program - using energy efficient office equipment which will reduce operating and environmental costs, including greenhouse gas emissions and using "green" power.
* supply chain program - improving the sourcing of raw materials or equipment to deliver a better quality environmentally-friendly product for customers, buying in bulk to reduce the amount of packaging, buying products made from renewable resources, supporting suppliers that do not hurt the environment.
* efficient use of energy and resources - use power-save options on equipment, turn off equipment when not being used or at the end of the working day rather than leaving on stand-by, install energy efficient light bulbs and turn off lights when not using a room, install sensor lights in areas not used often, run dishwasher when full and using eco setting, reduce fuel usage by using video conferencing instead of driving to meetings.
* use of alternative forms of energy. For example, solar power.
* use of renewable, recyclable, reusable and recoverable resources:
  + renewable – naturally restores or replenishes itself, constantly available without human or other outside influences. For example, solar and wind power.
  + recyclable - capable of being used again but must be processed before reuse. For example, aluminium cans, glass bottles, paper.
  + reusable - items that can be used more than once, either for the same purpose or a different purpose. For example, use ceramic coffee cups instead of paper cups, magnetic disk.
  + recoverable - energy from waste
* avoidance or minimisation strategies:
  + purchasing sustainable products - products made from recycled material or which are made from renewable resources
  + regular maintenance of tools and equipment - to keep in good working order
  + use of biodegradable/non-toxic materials - materials that can decompose naturally or will not cause any damage to the environment
* waste minimisation:
  + accurate measurements and calculations - purchase only what the business needs and will use
  + recycling - collecting and sorting waste in order that useful materials can be manufactured into new products and not added to landfill
  + using recyclable products - purchasing products that can be recycled after use rather than added to landfill
* removal and disposal of non-reusable materials in a responsible manner:
  + consumables - dispose of in a responsible manner according to manufacturer's guidelines
  + chemicals and hazardous substances - check the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for correct disposal of these products.

Local councils, such as [City of Parramatta Council](https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/recreation-environment/sustainable-business), and [State government](https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/recreation-environment/sustainable-business/state-government-programs) run a range of innovative programs to help businesses implement environmentally sustainable work practices and achieve greater resource efficiency.

## Key terms and concepts

**You can use the following information to revise the key terms and concepts from this unit of competency**. Perhaps you could:

1. Copy the table into your own file, remove all the key terms, then fill in the blanks (without peeking at the original file) with your own answers.
2. Copy the table into your own file and remove the definitions. Write a definition in your own words – it doesn’t have to word perfect but should show you understand the concept.
3. You could add an example of this term or concept which is relevant to the retail environment. If the key term was ‘resource consumption’ your Business Services example might be ‘our organisation has a policy of reduce, reuse, recycle’ (with an example of each).

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| Key term or concept | Definition | |
| best practice | methods and techniques that have consistently shown superior results which are used as benchmarks |
| compliance | obeying a particular law or rule, or of acting according to an agreement |
| conservation | prevention of wasteful use of a resource |
| energy efficiency | things that use only as much energy as is needed without wasting any |
| environmental issues | negative aspects of human activity on the biophysical environment |
| environmental hazards/risks | actual or potential threats to the environment as a result of an organisation's activities |
| environmentally sustainable work practices | practices which reduce harm to the environment and reduce wastage of resources |
| hazard | anything which can harm or damage someone or something |
| organisational plans | business documents developed to identify where the business wants to go and what it needs to do in order to achieve these goals. |
| pollution | the presence in or introduction into the environment of a substance which has harmful or poisonous effects |
| recovery | Recovering materials or energy from waste |
| recycle | to treat or process (used or waste materials) to make them suitable for reuse; use products to make new products |
| reduce | make something smaller (eg use less) or lowering the amount of a waste product |
| resource consumption | the rate at which natural resources are being depleted. |
| resource | something that is available for use or that can be used for support or help |
| resource efficiency | using resources efficiently so they can be reused or recycled to limit the depletion of the stock of natural resources, as well as to limit the harm to the environment |
| re-use | to use again, especially in a different way; use materials repeatedly |
| risks | possibility of loss or injury |
| sustainability | the result of using resources to meet the needs of the present generation without jeopardising or depleting the resources for future generations |
| waste management | management of all processes and resources for proper handling of waste materials |

## Activities

Activity 1 Short answer questions

1. List ways a business services workplace can reduce paper wastage.
2. Download the Code of Practice [Preparation of safety data sheets for hazardous chemicals](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/50084/Preparation-of-safety-data-sheets-for-hazardous-chemicals-COP.pdf). What information is on a Safety Data Sheet?
3. What is the purpose of measuring resource consumption and how can this data be used to develop an environmentally sustainable workplace?
4. How can resource consumption be measured in the business services workplace?
5. What should a business do to implement a green office program?
6. Identify environmentally sustainable strategies (not already mentioned above) that can be employed in a business services workplace.
7. Outline consequences for a business that has not complied with environmental legislation.

Activity 2 Role plays

Working in pairs, discuss, then act out, the following situations in order to show your understanding of this competency.

1. You are planning a training session about sustainability for the office staff. Discuss with the Office Manager the items that should be included on the agenda.
2. You are running an induction training session. Explain the techniques that the business encourages the staff to follow in order to minimise the rate of use of resources.
3. The managing director of a large publishing company is having a discussion with the architect on what to include in the plans for a new office/warehouse complex that would be considered a ‘green building’.
4. You are supervising a new staff member. Explain the procedures to be followed when disposing of waste.

Activity 3 Case studies

1. **Visy Recycling** is one of Australia’s largest and innovative waste recovery companies. Watch the video at <https://www.visy.com.au/about/visy> for an overview of the company.
   1. How much of the following packaging does Visy recycle in a year?

* Paper and cardboard
* glass
* plastics
* metals
  1. Refer to Visy's school [recycling poster](https://www.visy.com.au/recycling/education). List items that a school could recycle.
  2. How can Visy help businesses participate in environmentally sustainable work practices?
  3. The EPA uses a range of tools to ensure environmental compliance, including formal warnings, official cautions, notices and prosecutions. Why was Visy [fined in 2017](https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/news/media-releases/2017/epamedia171208-visy-paper-fined-$1500-for-reporting-breaches-at-st-peters-waste-facility)?

1. **The University of Queensland** offers some simple [sustainability tips](https://sustainability.uq.edu.au/sustainability-tips) for staff and students. Outline how individuals can help to protect the environment.
2. **Sustainability Victoria** helps businesses to improve resource use. Outline this organisation’s advice to [reduce energy use in a business](https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/Business/Energy-efficiency-for-business).
3. Read the [**EGO Pharmaceuticals** story](https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/About-us/Latest-news/2019/12/22/22/52/Simple-changes-create-big-savings-at-this-manufacturing-business). List the strategies this company implemented to save energy.
4. **Barangaroo** is an urban renewal project on the western waterfront of Sydney’s CBD. It aims to be carbon neutral and water positive, working towards zero waste emissions. [Outline two sustainability strategies for each goal](https://www.barangaroo.com/the-project/progress/sustainability/).
5. Go to the **NSW Government**’s [Sustainability Advantage Program](https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/sustainabilityadvantage/).  
   Explain the advantages to business in signing up for the Sustainability Advantage Program. Click on "Sustainability case studies", choose one business and make notes on how that business improved their environmental and business performance.

Activity 4 Create a poster

Use the information from previous activities, the [Australian HR Institute](https://www.hrmonline.com.au/section/hr-capability/5-ways-create-sustainable-office/) and [Kyocera](https://blog.kyoceradocumentsolutions.com.au/corporate-culture-of-sustainability) to construct a poster of easy ideas to create a more sustainable office and create a culture of sustainability.

Activity 5 Lateral thinking

The following cartoon suggests there can be unintended consequences of implementing some sustainability measures. Can you identify two or three such ‘problem’ ideas in a business environment?



Images licenced under CC0. Original version can be found on [LimeBridge Australia Pty Ltd](https://www.limebridge.com.au/2016cartoons?lightbox=dataItem-j0ntxo742)

## Putting the theory into practice

The following questions are [**from past years’ NSW HSC examination papers for this subject.**](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/resources/hsc-exam-papers) HSC exams are intended to be rigorous and to challenge students of all abilities. To better understand a question, you should look for key words and identify the aspect of the course to which these relate. You are then in a position to formulate your answer from relevant knowledge, understanding and skills.

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### Multiple Choice

1. What is the most environmentally sustainable method for a business to store records?   
   1. Plastic crate
   2. Plastic folders
   3. Metal filing cabinet
   4. Cardboard archive box
2. Which piece of equipment would be most useful when moving towards a paperless workplace?  
   1. Photocopier
   2. Printer
   3. Scanner
   4. Shredder
3. Which organisation is responsible for ordering the clean-up of pollution in NSW?   
   1. Clean Energy Regulator
   2. Environment Protection Authority
   3. Office of Environment and Heritage
   4. Department of the Environment and Energy (formerly Department of the Environment)
4. A business installs a large bank of solar panels. What is one likely effect on the environment of this business decision?  
   1. Reduction in energy costs
   2. Improved business reputation
   3. Improved waste management systems
   4. Reduction in generation of greenhouse gases
5. Which body of government does the following statement refer to?

Administers schemes legislated by the Australian government for measuring, managing, reducing or offsetting Australia’s carbon emissions.   
© Clean Energy Regulator, Commonwealth of Australia

* 1. Local councils
  2. Bureau of Meteorology (Cth)
  3. Clean Energy Regulator (Cth)
  4. NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA)

1. Which of the following is usually NOT considered a business resource?   
   1. Wages
   2. Facilities
   3. Stock supplies
   4. Human resources
2. In which of the following are both issues environmental concerns relevant to the business services industry?   
   1. Human resources and energy use
   2. Ergonomics and clean-up practices
   3. Sustainability and waste management
   4. Water resources and software updates
3. To improve resource efficiency, a business replaces its paper coffee cups with ceramic coffee cups. What kind of resource is the ceramic coffee cup?
   1. Recoverable
   2. Recyclable
   3. Renewable
   4. Reusable
4. A business obtains legal advice to ensure it is meeting legislative requirements for environmental performance. What is the business trying to achieve?   
   1. Compliance
   2. Best practice
   3. Sustainability
   4. Accountability
5. Which of the following is the NSW Government allowed to carry out under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (NSW)?   
   1. Issue fines for a business which pollutes, and enforce a clean-up notice
   2. Issue a prevention notice, and force a business to establish environmental policies
   3. Force a business to monitor resource use, and require businesses to train staff about sustainability
   4. Require a business to use recycled resources, and force a business to notify authorities of a pollution incident

### Questions from Section II

These questions should be answered in the suggested number of lines (handwritten) as it gives a guide to the length of your response. Plan out your answer and key points before you commence writing.

You may need to bring together knowledge from several areas of study/competencies to do justice to the answer.

Question 1

1. Identify ONE way an office assistant can contribute to the efficient use of resources in a workplace. (1 mark)

1. A training centre wants to adopt a green office program to improve the environmental sustainability of its office.

What should this training centre do to implement the green office program?   
(3 marks)

Question 2

1. A business is planning to store information from supplier invoices electronically.   
     
   Identify ONE type of software that would be suitable for the task and justify your response. (3 marks)

1. How can a business measure its resource consumption? (4 marks)

Question 3

1. How could a business benefit from implementing sustainable work practices? (3 marks)

1. Identify TWO current environmental issues applicable to the business services industry and suggest how businesses could address these issues.   
   (4 marks)

### Question from Section III

You will note that questions often require you to bring together knowledge from several areas of study/competencies to do justice to the answer. You should allow about 25 minutes for a question in Section III. Map out your answer using post-it notes or a sheet of paper before you start.

Question 1

Propose strategies a business services workplace could implement in order to reduce the effect of environmental hazards. (6 marks)

Explain how a business services workplace can achieve best practice in environmental sustainability. (9 marks)

### Questions from Section IV

In the Business Services HSC exam –

* there will be one structured extended response question in Section IV worth 15 marks.
* the question will have an expected length of response of around four pages of an examination writing booklet (approximately 600 words) in total.

This will provide you with the opportunity to:

* demonstrate knowledge and understanding relevant to the question
* communicate ideas and information using relevant workplace examples and industry terminology
* present a logical and cohesive response

You will note that these questions usually require you to bring together knowledge from several areas of study/competencies to do justice to the answer. You should allow about 25-30 minutes for a question in Section IV of the exam.

In each of the following, map out your answer using post-it notes or a sheet of paper. Pay particular attention to incorporating a variety of aspects of your Business Services curriculum into the plan. Consider why we have included this question within this **sustainability** module and what other areas of study you would need to draw upon.

Question 1 (15 marks)

The diagram shows the resources used within the business services industry.

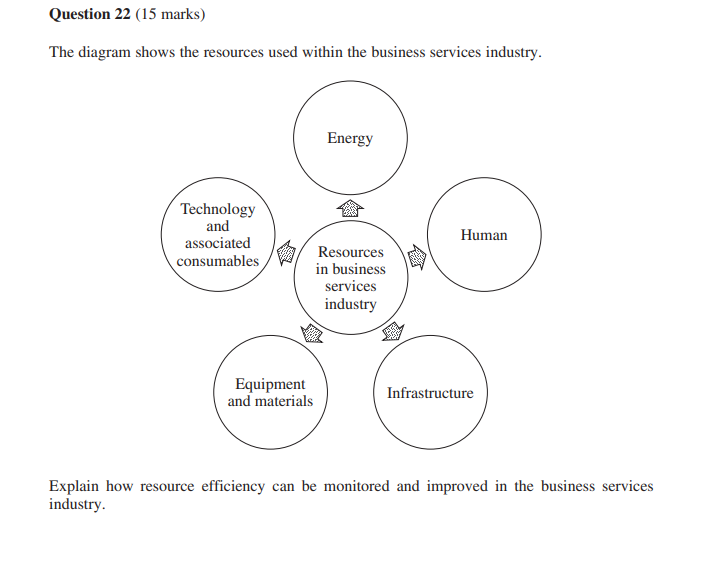


Illustration from NSW HSC Business Services 2014

Explain how resource efficiency can be monitored and improved in the business services industry.

Question 2 (15 marks)

Explain strategies a business could use to improve its resource efficiency.

## HSC Focus Areas

The HSC Content for this industry curriculum framework is organised into focus areas. Each focus area prescribes the scope of learning for the HSC and is drawn from the associated units of competency.

Students undertaking the 240 indicative hour course from the Business Services Curriculum Framework must address **all of the mandatory focus areas**:

* Customer service
* Financial records
* Innovation
* Safety
* **Sustainability**
* Working in the business services industry and workplace
* Workplace information

How to use the scope of learning for ‘Sustainability’ (which follows over).

* draw up your own mind map showing the connection between the various concepts listed; examples appear on the last page of this module
* use the key terms and concepts to add to your mind map
* add examples or case study prompts to show how the concept is applied in the information technology working environment

The following information is taken directly from page 45 ff of [Business Services  
Curriculum Framework Stage 6 Syllabus based on the BSB Business Services Training Package (version 5) for implementation from 2020.](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/e5ea12b9-2d53-415c-bdc4-4b0da5ee6a7c/vet-business-services-11-12-syllabus-based-on-BSBv5.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=)

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| environment |
| * concepts of sustainability in the workplace and environmentally sustainable work practices |
| * current environmental issues affecting the business services industry:   + conservation   + energy use and efficiency   + pollution   + recycling/re-use   + resource use and efficiency   + sustainability   + waste management |
| * potential effect of business services workplace practices on the environment |
| * consequences of poor environmental practices |
| environmental hazard identification and risk control |
| * a range of environmental hazards and risks typical to a business services workplace |
| * personnel responsible for environmental hazard identification and risk control in a business services workplace |
| * reporting environmental hazards and risks in a business services workplace:   + to appropriate person(s)   + verbal and written reporting |
| environmental compliance |
| * purpose and intent of environmental legislation and its application to the industry, the workplace and a specific job role, including:   + *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (NSW) (as amended)   + *Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Act 2014* (Australian Government) (as amended) |
| * definition of:   + ‘compliance’   + ‘best practice’ |
| * levels of compliance in relation to environmental requirements:   + workplace   + industry   + government (local, State/Territory and Commonwealth) |
| * consequences of failure to comply with environmental requirements |
| * workplace policy and procedures relating to environmental compliance |

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| environmental compliance cont/d |
| * individual worker and workplace responsibilities in relation to the environment |
| * industry and workplace requirements for monitoring and reporting in relation to the environment |
| * describing how, when and to whom to report:   + types: * formal and informal * written * verbal   + reporting to appropriate person(s) |
| * primary role/function of key environmental bodies:   + NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA)   + NSW Office of Environment and Heritage   + Clean Energy Regulator (Australian Government)   + Department of the Environment and Energy (Australian Government)   + local councils |
| resources |
| * definition of ‘resource’ |
| * resources used in the business services industry and in a specific job role:   + energy   + human   + infrastructure   + equipment and materials   + technology and associated consumables |
| * concept of ‘resource efficiency’ in a business services work environment |
| * measuring resource consumption within a business services work environment:   + methods to collect and measure resource consumption   + electronic and manual tools for measuring and documenting resource use |
| * methods of reporting and recording findings and suggestions for improved efficiency |
| * opportunities for improved resource efficiency in a business services work environment |

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| environmentally sustainable work practices |
| * strategies and procedures to work in an environmentally sustainable manner for a specific business services workplace and job role:   + management of environmental hazards and risks   + avoidance or minimisation strategies: * purchasing sustainable products * regular maintenance of equipment |
| environmentally sustainable work practices cont/d |
| * + use renewable, recyclable, reusable and recoverable resources   + efficient use of energy and resources: * use of alternative forms of energy or energy conservation * reducing emissions of greenhouse gases   + waste-management systems |
| * examples of best practice in relation to sustainability in a business services workplace, including:   + environmentally sustainable use of technology   + green office design   + green office programs |
| * workplace policy and procedures for environmentally sustainable work practices |
| * propose improvements for environmentally sustainable work practices for the:   + workplace   + team   + individual worker |