

Competency Standard

UNIT TITLE: MAINTAIN CONTACTS WITH HANDLING AGENTS		NOMINAL HOURS: 30
UNIT NUMBER: D2.TTG.CL3.12		
UNIT DESCRIPTOR: This unit deals with skills and knowledge required to maintain contacts with and obtain information from ground handling agents		
ELEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE CRITERIA	UNIT VARIABLE AND ASSESSMENT GUIDE	
<p>Element 1: Define the role of the handling agent</p> <p>1.1 Identify the <i>organisations who use the services of handling agents</i></p> <p>1.2 Identify the <i>general services provided by handling agents</i></p> <p>1.3 Identify the <i>benefits of using handling agents</i></p> <p>Element 2: Describe the contact and operational protocols between the business and the handling agent</p> <p>2.1 Identify <i>key contact personnel</i> within the business providing handling agency services</p> <p>2.2 Identify <i>contact details</i></p> <p>2.3 <i>Determine the time difference</i> between the host enterprise country and the location of the handling agent</p>	<p>Unit Variables</p> <p>The Unit Variables provide advice to interpret the scope and context of this unit of competence, allowing for differences between enterprises and workplaces. It relates to the unit as a whole and facilitates holistic assessment</p> <p>This unit applies to all industry sectors that deal with overseas or remote businesses within the labour divisions of the hotel and travel industries and may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel Agencies 2. Tour Operation <p><i>Organisations who use the services of handling agents</i> may be related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airlines and other types of carriers • Travel agencies • Tour operators • Accommodation venues • Any business involved in the supply chain for travel and tourism products and services that uses the services of a handling agent, especially one in an international destination. 	

<p>2.4 Identify the <i>recognised holiday periods</i> for the year in question for the country where the handling agent is situated</p> <p>2.5 Identify the <i>preferred protocols</i> for contacting the handling agents</p> <p>2.6 <i>Create comprehensive list of services available</i> from the handling agent</p> <p>Element 3: Describe situations where contact with handling agents may be required</p> <p>3.1 <i>Enquire about options for packages</i></p> <p>3.2 <i>Enquire about local conditions</i></p> <p>3.3 <i>Follow-up on customer issues</i></p> <p>3.4 <i>Update existing arrangements</i></p> <p>3.5 <i>Advise and confirm travel arrangements</i></p> <p>3.6 <i>Obtain specialist advice</i></p> <p>Element 4: Evaluate the relationship with handling agents</p> <p>4.1 <i>Record evidence of the service received</i> from handling agents</p> <p>4.2 <i>Seek feedback from handling agents</i></p> <p>4.3 <i>Provide feedback to management</i> regarding the service received</p> <p>4.4 <i>Recommend action</i> to improve the relationship with handling agents</p>	<p><i>General services provided</i> will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passenger service assistance • Check-in assistance • Baggage handling services • Arranging optional tours/activities available as part of a package • Facilitating transfers • Providing local information • Supplying local destination updates • Investigating local problems and issues affecting customers on behalf of the principal • Investigating local options and opportunities for the principal • Providing feedback to principal on the products and services being provided to the principal by third party providers/suppliers, such as accommodation venues, supplementary transport providers, attractions • Supplying detailed recommendations relating to targeted business/potential business opportunities and/or initiatives. <p><i>Benefits of using handling agents</i> may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost effectiveness, avoids having to establish and maintain an office in the country • Local knowledge, allows the organisation to have quick and constant access to local information from international countries • Language expertise, provides an on-the-ground person who can speak the local language • Local networks, provides a ready-made source of industry-related contacts that can facilitate access to identified products and services • Local experience, allows the user to benefit from local knowledge about the reputation, expertise, experience, nature, quality and environment/ambience of local venues, attractions, destinations and providers.
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Key contact personnel may include and/or relate to:

- The business operator; some handling agents may be sole traders
- Names of individuals
- Positions of staff within the organisation
- Details of roles and responsibilities of individuals as assigned by the handling agency
- Reading employee biographies, as supplied on the internet
- Visiting the handling agency and meeting individual handling agency personnel.

Contact details must include an exhaustive list of contact information that will enable contact 24-hours a day if required and may include:

- Street address
- Postal address
- Telephone numbers, including international direct dial (IDD) codes and country codes as appropriate for:
 - General reception/office landline number
 - Direct landline numbers for all nominated agency staff the organisation has identified as being relevant/useful to their operation
 - Mobile telephone numbers for all nominated agency staff the organisation has identified as being relevant/useful to their operation
 - Specific after hours contact details, including for contact after normal business hours in the country where the handling agency is situated
- Facsimile number(s)
- E-mail addresses for all nominated agency staff the organisation has identified as being relevant/useful to their operation
- Website addresses
- Telex number(s).

Determine the time difference may include:

- Generating a table showing the relative times in the host country and the country of the handling agent for a 24-hour period

Recognised holiday periods must include:

- Holiday seasons
- Specific days
- Religious festivals
- Local events, including sporting events.

Preferred protocols are intended to facilitate communication and optimise the provision of required information between the host enterprise and the handling agent and may include:

- Determining the nature of the information that needs to be obtained before making contact, understanding that the person who needs to be contacted may vary depending on the nature of the enquiry to be made
- Recording the preferences for individual handling agency staff personnel in relation to:
 - Time of day, such as AM or PM
 - Method of contact, including verbal, written/printed or electronic
- Scheduling regular contact times to facilitate the exchange of information and maintain communication channels even where no specific information is required
- Accommodating handling agency protocols in relation to payment for services rendered which may include pre-payment, approved authorisations/orders for work and recording details of time spent on the telephone answering queries/responding to host enterprise requirements
- Determining the parameters of work that the handling agent is required to provide in relation to arrangements and agreements that exist

- Establishing operational understanding that new work, information, research and similar required by the host enterprise will be remunerated appropriately despite the absence of a relevant existing contractual relationship, underlining the need for the handling agent to take immediate action on an issue safe in the knowledge that payment will be made for such services.

Create comprehensive list of services available may include:

- Obtaining same from handling agents
- Accessing websites
- Generating a list that accommodates needs specific to the host enterprise
- Including all contact details and staff names.

Enquire about options for packages may include:

- Seeking input for the development of new packages, including information regarding local destinations, events, attractions and costs
- Seeking alternatives to enable existing packages to be modified on the basis of customer feedback, customer preferences, or to revise an existing package
- Seeking information regarding optional tours, sightseeing, activities that can be provided within a package
- Seeking market place information regarding the activities of local travel and tour operators
- Seeking contextual information and identified specific data to enable the accurate and effective development of promotional material and selling activities
- Arranging monitoring activities and feedback protocols for inclusions in packages.

Enquire about local conditions may initially involve development information, then updating information throughout the life of a package and may include:

- Seeking initial information and updates relating to:
 - Weather

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currency ▪ The economy ▪ Availability of products and services ▪ Political stability ▪ Industry position, including actual and potential changes to that position ▪ Service delivery, including services available and changes to services ▪ Procedural and processing matters, including loading, disembarkation and arrival procedures ▪ Health-related and safety issues ▪ Special needs passengers and children ▪ Social, cultural and environmental issues ▪ Schedules and timetables ▪ General availability of products and services ▪ Local requirements relating to tour and travel arrangements, including changes to legislated requirements ▪ Cost and prices, including fees and charges ▪ Geographical layout of areas, buildings and facilities, including airports and terminals ▪ Trading hours of businesses ▪ Local assistance available to travellers and tourists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking information and advice in relation to circumstances that arise, including emergency situations that have the potential to impact on existing travel arrangements. <p><i>Follow-up on customer issues may include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to specific customer enquiries
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- Seeking action and assistance in response to requested last minute changes to customer itinerary
- Seeking baggage handling assistance, including luggage transfers and lost baggage
- Requesting contact with travellers in response to an emergency situation, including family matters, legal issues and property-related emergencies
- Arranging independent evaluation of activities, destinations and venues as a result of negative customer feedback received.

Update existing arrangements may include:

- Seeking advice in relation to proposed changes involving the country where the handling agent is located
- Notifying handling agent of changes that have been made to travel arrangements for individual passengers/customers
- Notifying handling agent in relation to generic changes that have been implemented to packages including revisions to inclusions and options, changes to times and destinations, alterations to costs, amendments to delivery standards and services.

Advise and confirm travel arrangements may include:

- Notifying handling agents of passenger manifests
- Notifying handling agents of package details, including inclusions and options
- Confirming previously advised travel details, including times, carriers, flight numbers, passenger numbers and details
- Advising handling agents of changes to previously notified travel arrangements
- Notifying handling agents in relation to problems and issues experienced prior to departure of passengers from the host country, including passport and visa issues, delays to departures, passenger illness, changes to names of travellers and problem passengers.

Obtain specialist advice may include:

- Seeking contacts to enable the provision of relevant advice from a third party in the country of the handling agent
- Engaging the handling agent to undertake specific extraordinary tasks on behalf of the host enterprise, including market research, mystery shopper activities, identifying potential joint venture partners and meeting with authorities and relevant government agencies on behalf of the host enterprise
- Obtaining and/or clarifying information regarding processes, laws and customs that exist in the country of the handling agent.

Record evidence of the service received may include:

- Documenting details of requests made to handling agents and their responses, including:
 - Speed of response
 - Comprehensiveness, accuracy, reliability and usefulness of information provided
 - Call back times
 - Availability of key staff within the handling agent organisation, including out of hours availability
 - Willingness to be of assistance.

Seek feedback from handling agents may include:

- Requesting advice from individual handling agents, organisations and individual personnel, regarding their experience of working with the host enterprise
- Seeking advice as to how the existing relationship can be maintained and improved.

Provide feedback to management may include:

- Providing verbal and/or written reports
- Contextualising the feedback
- Supplying supporting evidence of feedback provided.

Recommend action may include:

- Changing handling agents
- Revising the contractual agreement that exists with the handling agents, including an extension of the existing parameters to include activities and information provision not previously covered
- Altering the communication protocols that exist between parties
- Seeking improved access to existing staff.

Assessment Guide

The following skills and knowledge must be assessed as part of this unit:

- Enterprise policies and procedures in regard to the use of handling agents
- Principles of written and verbal communication with people and organisations from overseas countries
- Ability to use negotiation, questioning, liaison and research techniques
- Knowledge of the time zones and telephone call protocols that apply to the countries where there is a handling agent relationship
- Ability to use the communication tools and technologies required for communication with handling agents
- Ability to foster and maintain an effective working relationship with organisations and individual staff.

Linkages To Other Units

- Access and retrieve computer-based data
- Communicate on the telephone
- Manage and resolve conflict situations
- Receive and resolve customer complaints

- Work effectively with colleagues and customers
- Work in a socially diverse environment
- Establish and maintain a business relationship
- Maintain quality customer/guest service
- Plan and establish systems and procedures
- Prepare business documents
- Use common business tools and technology
- Work cooperatively in a general administration environment
- Develop and implement operational policies
- Develop and update tourism industry knowledge
- Promote products and services to customers
- Access and interpret product information
- Produce travel documentation on a computer
- Construct and apply tourism product research
- Create, implement and evaluate strategic product initiatives
- Develop and monitor culturally appropriate tourism activity
- Develop/monitor ecologically sustainable tourism operations
- Develop and manage business strategies
- Manage and monitor innovative tourism programs and projects
- Manage contractual agreements/commitments.

Critical Aspects of Assessment

Evidence of the following is essential:

- Understanding of host enterprise policies and procedures in regard to the use of handling agents
- Demonstrated ability to produce a comprehensive, accurate and current database for at least one handling agent in each of three nominated overseas countries that identifies in each instance:
 - Name of the handling agent
 - Full range of services provided
 - Cost(s) for services provided
 - Full range of contact details and options, including out of hours details
 - Comparative time chart for each agent/country relative to the host country
 - Names, positions and where applicable, specialist roles and expertise of personnel within the handling agency
 - Recognised holidays/holiday periods, including events and religious festivals, in the country where the handling agents is located
 - Brief overview of the agency experience and history in providing handling agency services to travel and tourism businesses
- Demonstrated ability to verbally communicate with a real or simulated handling agent representative and undertake at least ten contact activities which must include:
 - Seeking nominated information on products and services available as possible inclusions
 - Seeking nominated information on alternatives for trips/sight-seeing
 - Advising on nominated changes to existing passenger/traveller arrangements
 - Seeking action on nominated emergency issues

- Seeking information on a nominated type of legal issue that tourists and travellers are required to comply with
- Resolving a nominated traveller/passenger problem.

Context of Assessment

This unit may be assessed on or off the job

- Assessment should include practical demonstration either in the workplace or through a simulation activity, supported by a range of methods to assess underpinning knowledge
- Assessment must relate to the individual's work area or area of responsibility.

Resource Implications

Training and assessment to include access to a real or simulated workplace; and access to workplace standards, procedures, policies, guidelines, tools and equipment.

Assessment Methods

The following methods may be used to assess competency for this unit:

- Observation of practical candidate performance
- Oral and written questions
- Problem solving
- Role plays involving communications with handling agents
- Third party reports completed by a supervisor
- Project and assignment work.

Key Competencies in this Unit

Level 1 = competence to undertake tasks effectively

Level 2 = competence to manage tasks

Level 3 = competence to use concepts for evaluating

	Key Competencies	Level	Examples
	Collecting, organising and analysing information	1	Obtain information regarding services available from handling agents
	Communicating ideas and information	2	Liaise with handling agents to amend existing arrangements
	Planning and organising activities	2	Schedule regular contact with handling agents
	Working with others and in teams	2	Communicate with handling agency personnel to gain required information and advice
	Using mathematical ideas and techniques	1	Determine time zone differences between host country and the country where the handling agents are located
	Solving problems	2	Resolve customer-related travel issues
	Using technology	1	Use telecommunications systems and the internet to communicate with handling agencies