



RRC Sample Study Text

NEBOSH

National General Certificate in
Occupational Health and Safety

Unit GNC1: Management of Health and Safety



Element 2

How Health and Safety Management Systems Work and What They Look Like



Learning Objectives

Once you've studied this element you should be able to:

- 1 Identify the key components of a health and safety management system (ISO 45001:2018 and HSG65).
- 2 Recognise the benefits and limitations of different types of health and safety management systems.
- 3 Recognise the key components of an effective health and safety policy.

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2.1: Key Components of Health and Safety Management Systems

IN THIS SECTION...

- Two widely recognised Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (OHSMSs) exist for the systematic management of health and safety: HSG65 and ISO 45001.
- HSG65 is outlined in the HSE's guidance note *Managing for health and safety* and can be summarised as Plan-Do-Check-Act (the PDCA cycle).
- ISO 45001 is an externally verified OHSMS standard that can be summarised as: Context of the organisation, Leadership and worker participation, Planning, Support, Operation, Performance evaluation, and Improvement.

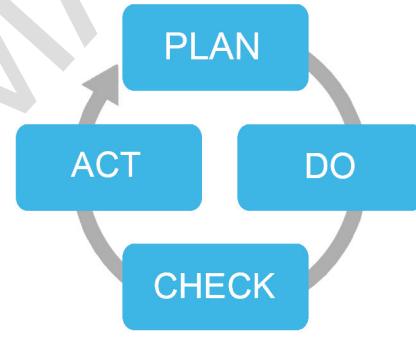
Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems

The management of workplace health and safety must be considered systematically within any organisation of significant size, in the same way as any other form of management. A systematic approach to management of an organisation's health and safety is referred to as an Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS). There are two common OHSMSs used by organisations. These are usually identified by reference to their publication code numbers: HSG65 and ISO 45001. HSG65 is the HSE's own OHSMS published in a guidance note called *Managing for health and safety*. ISO 45001 is the OHSMS standard published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Organisations are free to develop their own OHSMS, but working to a recognised standard can be an advantage.

Both OHSMSs are based on what is known as the **PDCA management cycle**:

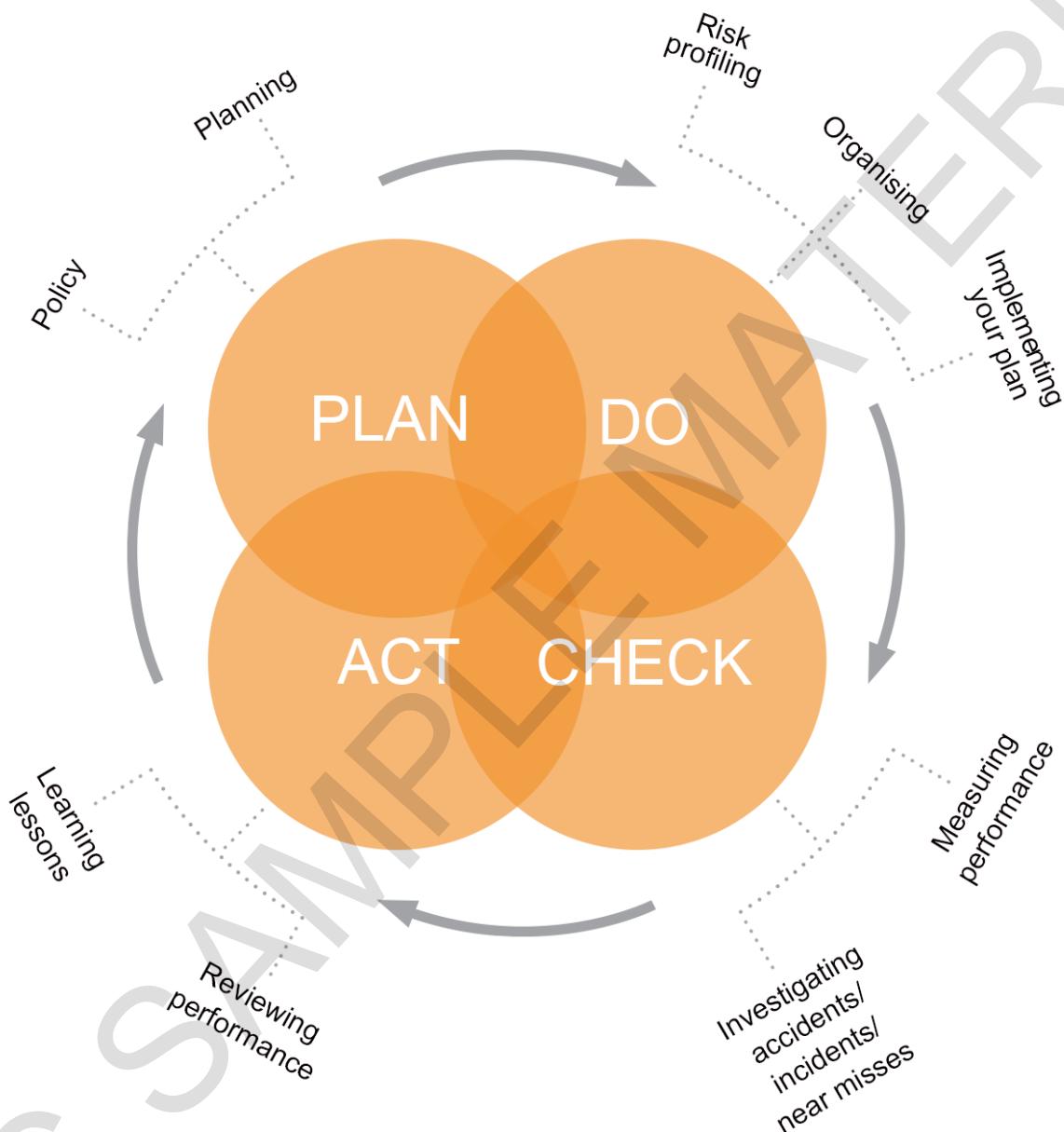
- Plan** – set aims and objectives and then plan how to achieve them.
- Do** – put plans into effect; implement them.
- Check** – monitor performance towards the aims and objectives set.
- Act** – routinely review progress and change what is being done if it looks like targets are being missed.

We saw in Element 1 that the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHSWR)** make it a legal requirement to have effective arrangements to 'plan, organise, control, monitor and review' the preventive and protective measures (Regulation 5). Having a clearly defined OHSMS is the way to meet this legal requirement.



HSG65: Managing for Health and Safety

The key elements of the HSE's own OHSMS, called HSG65: *Managing for health and safety*, are shown graphically as:



These can be explained simply as:

Plan

- **Policy**

- The organisation should say what it wants to achieve, who will be responsible for what, how it will achieve its aims and how it will measure success. This will form part of the health and safety policy, which may need to be written.

- **Planning**

- The organisation should make plans in order to deliver the intended aims and objectives established in the policy.
- It should decide how it will measure performance. This should go beyond looking at reactive indicators such as accident figures to include active indicators such as the number of workplace inspections carried out or the results of housekeeping tours.
- Consideration must be given to fire and other emergencies. There must be co-operation with anyone who shares the workplace to co-ordinate plans with them.

Do

- **Risk profiling**

- The organisation must identify and assess significant Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) risks in order to identify what could cause harm in the workplace, who it could harm and how. This will allow for the identification of all of the OHS issues that might have significant impacts.
- The organisation can then decide what the priorities are and identify the correct risk management approach.

- **Organising**

- The organisation must allocate roles and responsibilities so that workers understand what is expected of them. Adequate resources must be provided, including competent advice where needed.
- Key principles are worker involvement and effective communication, so that everyone understands what is needed and can discuss issues. This develops positive attitudes and behaviours.

- **Implementing**

- The organisation must decide on the preventive and protective measures needed and put them in place.
- It must provide the right tools and equipment for the job, and keep them maintained.
- It must train and instruct to ensure everyone is competent to carry out their work.
- It must supervise to make sure that arrangements are followed.

Check

- **Measuring performance**

- The organisation must make sure that its plan has been implemented; 'paperwork' on its own is not a good performance measure.
- It must assess how well the risks are being controlled and if its aims are being achieved. In some circumstances, formal audits may be useful.

- **Investigating the causes of accidents, incidents and near misses**

- The organisation must conduct good quality, thorough investigations to ensure that root causes are properly identified and effective preventive measures are put in place.

Act

- **Reviewing performance**

- The organisation must examine information collected from accidents and incidents, ill-health data, errors and relevant experience, including from other organisations.
- It should re-visit plans, policy documents and risk assessments to see if they need to be updated.

- **Learning lessons**

- The organisation must learn from experience through the review process to avoid repeating mistakes, and so that it can work effectively towards the aims and objectives that have been set.

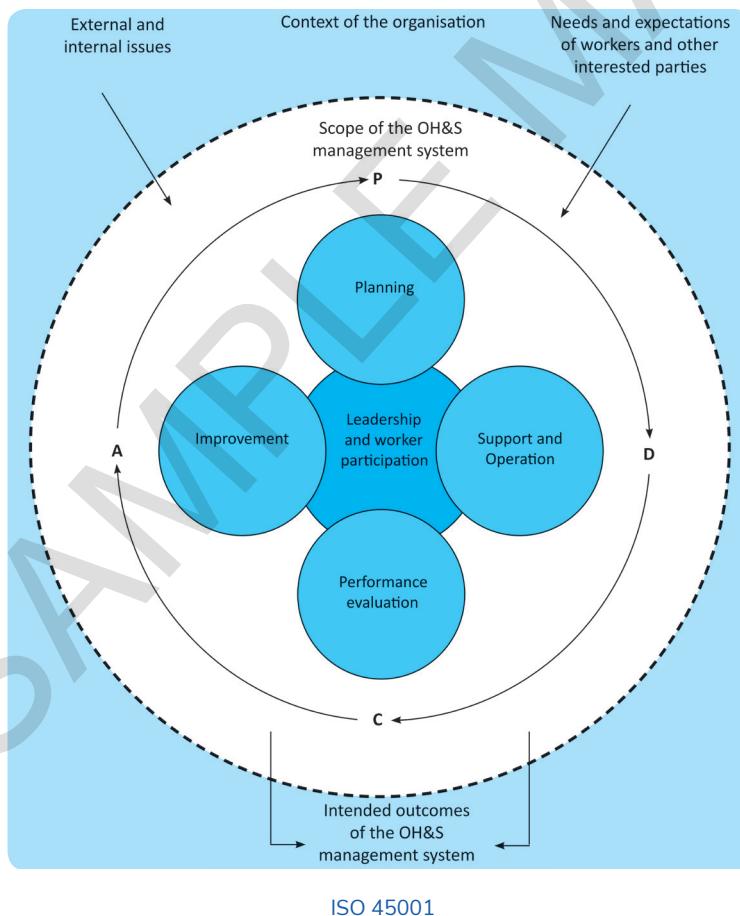
HSG65 is widely used by many organisations in the UK as the basis for their health and safety management system. The one significant drawback of HSG65 is that it is not a management standard that organisations can gain external certification/verification to. Organisations seeking external certification to a **management standard** have to use ISO 45001 instead.

ISO 45001: The Occupational Health and Safety Management System Standard

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard **ISO 45001** provides an OHSMS standard that an organisation can be externally audited against. Successful certification to the management standard means that the organisation can demonstrate to other interested parties (such as clients) that it has a robust safety management system that can stand up to close scrutiny. Like HSG65, it is based on the PDCA management cycle. Unlike HSG65, it is fully compatible with other ISO management standards such as **ISO 9001** (an internationally recognised quality management standard) and **ISO 14001** (an internationally recognised environmental management standard).

Outline of the Standard

In the following outline, the location of each element in the PDCA cycle has been indicated in brackets after the element title just to help:



- **Context of the organisation** (management system framework) – requires that the OHSMS is designed and operated so as to be appropriate to the organisation and its operational environment. This involves understanding issues and interested parties that could influence the success of OHSMS. Referring to the figure, we can see that this forms the environment in which the management system operates, the boundaries of the system, and the system itself. This sets the scene.

- **Leadership and worker participation** (management system framework) – requires that the OHSMS is driven by those at the top of the organisation with the active engagement and participation of workers at all levels. From the figure we can see that this requirement sits at the heart of the PDCA management cycle with a very heavy emphasis on management leadership. This is because leadership is responsible for the health and safety culture of an organisation, and allocating adequate resources to make sure the management system is effective. The standard makes it clear that top management must be personally involved in driving and promoting the management system.
- **Planning** (Plan) – requires that an ongoing planning process forms a part of the OHSMS so that hazards, risks and opportunities (for improvement) are identified and that appropriate action is identified and planned. This requirement sits in the 'Plan' element of the PDCA cycle and contains many requirements which are central to most organisations' health and safety management arrangements – such as setting objectives and planning how to achieve them, and planning the risk assessment system.
- **Support** (Do) – is concerned with the provision of support for the OHSMS so that it can be established, implemented, maintained and continually improved. This involves ensuring that there are competent workers who are aware of the risks associated with their work, that there is effective communication with all workers including contractors, and that there is appropriate documentation in place to ensure work is carried out safely.
- **Operation** (Do) – requires that hazard and risk of workplace activities are operationally managed, and this also includes managing the risks associated with contractors and procurement. This ensures that changes are managed effectively and that there is an adequate response to emergency situations. The figure shows how both of these requirements form the 'Do' element of the PDCA cycle, being concerned with many of the core management activities that are central to good OHS management.
- **Performance evaluation** (Check) – requires the systematic internal monitoring and reviewing of OHS performance with a view to driving continual improvement. The figure shows how this fulfills the requirements of 'Check' in the PDCA management cycle.
- **Improvement** (Act) – embeds the principle of learning lessons and implementing the learning from those lessons into the OHSMS. The figure shows how this sits on the position of 'Act' that closes the loop of the management cycle and explicitly requires both organisational learning and ongoing enhancement of the management system. From a practical perspective, the requirement sets out many routine OHS management activities such as safety inspections to identify non-conformities and accident investigation.

The Benefits of Achieving Certification

The ISO management system standard operates in the same way as other ISO management standards, in that conformance to the standard can be verified by an external accredited organisation (such as the British Standards Institution) so that certification to the standard can be achieved. This certification can then be used by the organisation as proof of a robust OHSMS.

This may be useful for internal purposes (e.g. to demonstrate to internal interested parties that the management system exists and is functional).

For many organisations, it will be useful externally when trying to show clients, customers or the authorities that OHS management is integrated into the routine functioning of the organisation. This can give the organisation a competitive advantage when competing against other organisations for contracts or further work.

Certification is an expensive process but the costs of achieving and maintaining certification are often outweighed by the financial benefits associated with having a robust formal/certified OHSMS.



Certification is something an organisation can be proud to achieve

Benefits and Limitations of Formal/Certified Health and Safety Management Systems

Formal management systems, such as ISO 45001, are structured management systems that adhere to established standards and can be certified through external audits.

Benefits

- **Compliance with Legal and Regulatory Requirements**
 - Adopting a formal system like ISO 45001 helps organisations meet the legal requirement to “plan, organise, control, monitor, and review” health and safety arrangements, as mandated by regulations like **MHSWR**.
- **Clear Structure and Standardisation**
 - Provides a well-defined framework, making it easier to implement consistent safety practices across the organisation.
 - ISO 45001, for instance, follows the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, ensuring continuous improvement.
- **Enhanced Credibility and Reputation**
 - Certification to ISO 45001 demonstrates to stakeholders, customers, and regulatory bodies a commitment to high health and safety standards.
 - This can be a competitive advantage in industries where safety is a critical factor.
- **Proactive Risk Management**
 - Formal systems emphasise identifying and addressing risks before they lead to incidents, improving overall safety performance.
- **Improved Employee Morale and Engagement**
 - Clear safety policies and procedures instill confidence among employees, leading to better morale and reduced resistance to safety measures.
- **External Validation**
 - Certification often involves independent audits, providing assurance that the system is effective and compliant with international or national standards.
- **Scalability**
 - Formal systems are designed to be scalable, making them suitable for organisations of various sizes and industries.
- **Continual Improvement of Health and Safety Performance**
 - Monitoring and evaluation of health and safety performance identifies opportunities for improvement.

Limitations

- **Resource Intensity**
 - Implementing and maintaining a certified system requires significant time, effort, and financial investment, particularly for smaller organisations.
 - Costs may include training, audits, and consultant fees.
- **Complexity**
 - The detailed documentation and procedures required can be daunting, especially for organisations with limited administrative capacity.
- **Risk of Bureaucracy**
 - Over-reliance on documentation and processes may lead to a “tick-box” approach, where the focus shifts from meaningful safety improvements to merely meeting certification criteria.