

Teacher guide

Topic area – Company

Where does the lesson fit?

This session would serve as an introduction to organisational structure in a People or Human Resources module.



Suggested resources & activities related to UNISON and organisation structure

- Full UNISON case study
- Organisation structure PowerPoint
- UNISON crossword
- UNISON word search

Suggested timings for the session

5 mins	Starter e.g. UNISON word search
5 mins	Use the organisation structure PowerPoint to discuss the topic
5 mins	Read the case study
10 mins	Questions
25 mins	Task – drawing up an organisation chart
10 mins	What have you learned?

Answers to questions

1. Define organisation structure.
Organisational structure refers to how the workers within a business are organised and how they relate to each other.
2. Describe the purpose of a matrix structure.
The purpose of a matrix structure is to draw together workers with a range of necessary skills, in order to complete a given project. Matrix teams tend to be fairly short term, being disbanded once the project is completed.
3. Explain what is meant by 'centralisation' and give examples of the services provided centrally by the UNISON Centre in London.
A centralised structure is one where the majority of decisions are made by senior managers or head office. Some services may be centralised, which allows for organisations to benefit from economies of scale. In UNISON, legal, financial and personnel services are provided centrally.



THE TIMES 100

BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

4. Analyse whether a tall organisational structure is better than a flat structure for organisations like UNISON.

On one hand:

- UNISON is large organisation with 1,100 staff. As organisations grow, they tend to become taller as employees are taken on and different levels of authority are developed.
- Tall structures allow for a high level of control.
- Tall structures provide greater opportunities for promotion, which can be motivating for employees.
- This tall structure allows UNISON to respond quickly to changes and make speedy decisions.

However:

- Tall structures can lead to poor vertical communication as there are so many intermediaries for information to pass through
- Skilled and motivated workers with UNISON may feel stifled within a tall organisation

What have you learned?

Expected learning is likely to include:

- Definitions of:
 - Organisation structure
 - Organisation chart
 - Hierarchy
 - Span of control
 - Chain of command
- Definitions, examples, advantages and limitations of:
 - Flat/Tall structure
 - Communication channels
 - Centralisation/decentralisation
 - Matrix structures
- Reasons why different organisations adopt different structures