

# SVI-3033-1 Managing Conflicts in the Workplace

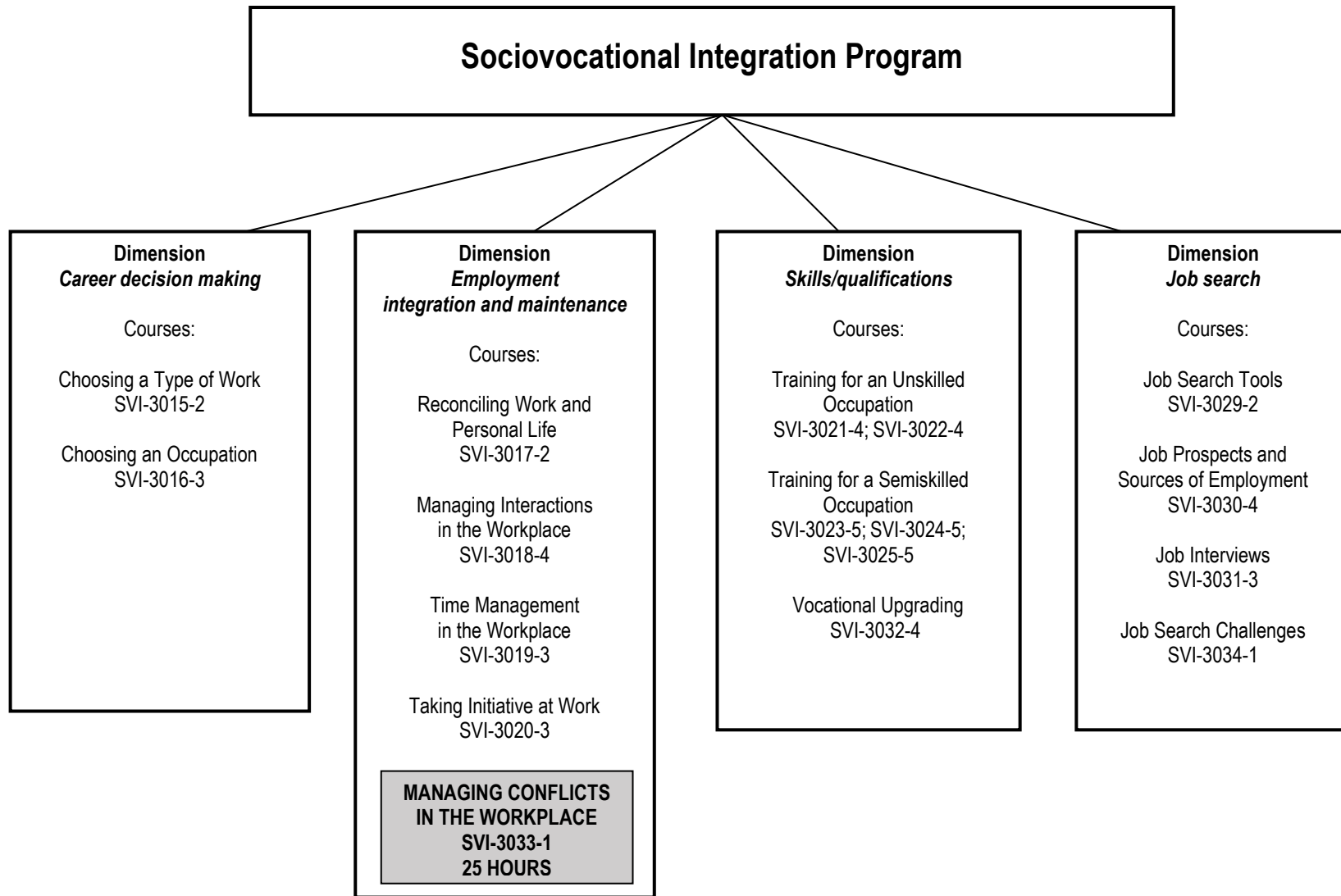
Secondary Cycle Two



**Sociovocational Integration Program**



## Situating the course *Managing Conflicts in the Workplace*



## **Introduction to the Course *Managing Conflicts in the Workplace***

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The objective of the course *Managing Conflicts in the Workplace* is to enable adults to deal competently with real-life situations that involve resolving conflicts in the workplace.

By the end of this course, adults will be able to resolve conflicts in the workplace and review the way they manage their conflicts in the workplace.

## Dealing With Work-Related Situations

**D**ealing effectively with work-related situations is based on actions. These actions are grouped into categories and draw on a set of resources that include operational competencies and essential knowledge. During the learning process, adults are expected to construct knowledge related to these resources in order to be able to deal appropriately with their real-life situations.

The class of situations, categories of actions, operational competencies and essential knowledge constitutes the compulsory elements of the course. Details on these elements may be found under the appropriate headings.



## Class of Situations

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This course focuses on the class of situations *Managing conflicts in the workplace*.

Adults can experience difficulties identifying what happens when disagreements in the workplace escalate into conflict. They are led to search for solutions and to use appropriate methods to manage new or aggravated conflicts. They improve the level of satisfaction, the well-being and the quality of life in their work environment.

The table below provides examples of work-related situations associated with this class of situations. These examples can be used to develop learning situations. Furthermore, since these situations are numerous and unpredictable, the teacher can refer to any pertinent real-life situation that is related to the class and adapted to adults' needs.

| Class of Situations                 | Examples of Real-Life Situations   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Managing conflicts in the workplace | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group work in workshops</li> <li>• Rivalry between colleagues</li> <li>• Sharing tasks within a work team</li> <li>• Disagreements during decision making</li> <li>• Implementation of new rules</li> </ul> |

## Categories of Actions

The *categories of actions* are groups of actions that are appropriate for dealing with the real-life situations in the course. The *examples of actions* listed in the table below illustrate the scope of the categories and serve as a guide in conducting the learning activities.

| Categories of Actions  | Examples of Actions   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict resolution in the workplace</li> </ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notifies escape responses during conflict</li> <li>Practices actively listening to others after a misunderstanding</li> <li>Expresses his/her expectations regarding punctuality to a colleague who is late for a meeting</li> <li>Looks for consensus while working in a team</li> <li>Considers a win-win solution to a conflict</li> <li>Discusses his/her feelings regarding unfair division of tasks</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewing his/her management of his/her conflicts in the workplace</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consults his/her superiors to confirm their expectations regarding negotiations during a conflict</li> <li>Verifies his/her progress in applying conflict resolution strategies</li> <li>Evaluates his/her use of conflict prevention strategies</li> <li>Draws up an action plan to help better manage his/her conflicts</li> </ul>   |

## Compulsory Elements and End-of-Course Outcomes

The teacher must take the compulsory elements into account when designing learning situations.

### Class of Situations

Managing conflicts in the workplace

### Categories of Actions

- Conflict resolution in the workplace
- Reviewing his/her management of his/her conflicts in the workplace

### Operational Competencies

Cooperates

- Takes the characteristics of the work team into account
- Takes each person's resources and limitations into account
- Observes the company's hierarchy

Exercises critical and ethical judgment

- Identifies his/her strengths and limitations
- Distinguishes between fact and opinion
- Distinguishes between his/her perceptions and those of his/her superiors and colleagues

### Essential Knowledge<sup>36</sup>

- Emotional aspects of conflicts in the workplace
- Characteristics of conflicts in the workplace
- Methods to resolve conflicts in the workplace
- Characteristics of a work team
- Company's expectations in terms of conflict management in the workplace
- Change he/she wants to make in terms of managing conflicts in the workplace
- Action plan regarding managing conflicts in the workplace

<sup>36</sup> All of the compulsory essential knowledge is outlined under the heading *Essential Knowledge*.



The end-of-course outcomes describe how adults should use the compulsory elements to deal with the real-life situations addressed in the course.

### End-of-Course Outcomes

To deal with the real-life situations in the class of situations *Managing conflicts in the workplace*, adults resolve conflicts in the workplace and review the way they manage their conflicts in the workplace.

To resolve conflicts in the workplace, adults examine conflict triggers and the intensity of the emotions involved. They evaluate the role of emotions and the extent to which these emotions are apparent. They consider the types and causes of conflicts in the workplace, note different possible reactions and identify fluctuation factors. They use different methods to resolve conflicts in the workplace, and do so by relying on conflict resolution strategies. They put possible results into perspective. They apply decision-making methods that are appropriate to the context. They anticipate the consequences of an unresolved conflict and choose conflict prevention strategies. At all times, they take into account the characteristics of the work team and the resources and limitations of each person, and they respect the company's hierarchy.

To manage conflict resolution in the workplace, adults assess their strengths and limitations by taking into account the company's expectations regarding conflict management in the workplace. They distinguish between fact and opinion, and between their perceptions and those of their superiors and colleagues. They set a clear and precise goal with respect to a change they want to make. They explain the extent to which this change is feasible and meaningful on a personal and occupational level, and estimate the time required to make this change. They draw up an action plan for achieving their goal. This plan will include the means for succeeding in this regard, the internal and external resources they can rely on, deadlines, pitfalls and obstacles they may encounter, alternative solutions and follow-up measures.

## Evaluation Criteria

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- Resolves conflicts appropriately in the workplace
- Manages his/her conflicts in the workplace

## Operational Competencies

The contribution of each operational competency is described in terms of the actions that are appropriate for dealing with the real-life situations in this course. These operational competencies are addressed in other courses and therefore all of the courses taken together contribute to their development.

In this course, only the following operational competencies are addressed: *Cooperates* and *Exercises critical and ethical judgment*.

### Contribution of the operational competency *Cooperates*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>This competency refers to the capacity to collaborate with others in dealing with work-related situations.</p> | <p>When managing conflicts in the workplace, adults take into account the characteristics of the work team and the resources and limitations of each person, and observe the company's hierarchy.</p> |
|---|---|

### Contribution of the operational competency *Exercises critical and ethical judgment*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>This competency involves the capacity to question and assess the personal and social problems encountered in work-related situations according to the rules and principles of sound judgment.</p> | <p>When managing their conflicts in the workplace, adults assess their strengths and limitations. They distinguish between fact and opinion, and between their perceptions and those of their superiors and colleagues. They justify the change they want to make in the way that they manage conflicts in the workplace.</p> |
|--|---|

## Essential Knowledge

Essential knowledge is organized into categories. All of the knowledge mentioned under this heading is compulsory, except for the information in parentheses that serves to clarify or define the scope of the knowledge in question.

### Emotional aspects of conflicts in the workplace

- Conflict triggers (behaviour of colleagues and superiors, problems of implementation)
- Intensity of emotions (disturbing, stimulating)
- Role of emotions (intrinsic and extrinsic changes)
- Expression of emotions (physiological, psychological, behavioural)

### Characteristics of conflicts in the workplace

- Types of conflicts in the workplace (conflict of interests, of values, of ideas, power struggle)
- Causes of conflicts in the workplace (unresolved disagreements, unfulfilled expectations, tensions, unspoken undertones)
- Possible reactions, (escape, submission, confrontation, manipulation, collaboration, indifference)
- Fluctuation factors (duration, frequency, context, issues, mutual intentions)

### Methods to resolve conflicts in the workplace

- Using conflict resolution strategies (rationalization, de-escalation, stepping back, letting go)
- Putting results into perspective (win-win, win-lose, lose-lose)
- Applying decision-making methods (compromise, consensus, negotiation, mediation, vote)
- Predicting consequences of an unresolved conflict (repression, explosion, breakdown, end of a relationship, illness)
- Choosing conflict prevention strategies (verbalization, checking facts, considering prior experiences)

### Characteristics of a work team

- Common goal
- Interactions between team members
- Types of leadership
- Roles and responsibilities of team members
- Levels of participation (content, climate and procedures)

**Company's expectations regarding conflict management in the workplace**

- Formal expectations (official rules)
- Informal expectations (unofficial rules)

**Change he/she wants to make in terms of managing conflicts in the workplace**

- Determining the change he/she wants to make
- Clearly and precisely stated change that is feasible and meaningful on a personal and professional level and that can be achieved within a specific time frame

**Action plan regarding managing conflicts in the workplace**

- Means for achieving desired change
- Internal and external resources
- Deadlines
- Possible pitfalls and obstacles
- Alternative solutions
- Follow-up measures (periodic review, logbook, discussions with a mentor, etc.)

## Attitudes

The development of certain attitudes, particularly those described in the table below, is facilitated by drawing on certain elements of essential knowledge. These attitudes also help adult learners to better exercise the operational competencies and make it easier to deal with the class of situations in question. The attitudes in and of themselves are not evaluated; however, their development is an important aspect of the learning process.

| Respect   | Open-mindedness  |
|---|--|
| <p>Adults who are respectful are open to ways of thinking and acting that are different from their own. They show an interest in other people's opinions and are able to consider points of view that are different from theirs when resolving conflicts in the workplace.</p> <p><b>Connections between respect and certain elements of essential knowledge</b></p> <p>This attitude can be addressed more specifically in learning situations that involve the following elements of essential knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional aspects of conflicts in the workplace</li> <li>• Characteristics of conflicts in the workplace</li> <li>• Methods to resolve conflicts in the workplace</li> <li>• Characteristics of a work team</li> </ul> <p><b>Connections between respect and the operational competency <i>Cooperates</i></b></p> <p>This attitude can be addressed more specifically in learning situations that involve the development of this operational competency, notably with respect to the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes the characteristics of the work team into account</li> <li>• Takes each person's resources and limitations into account</li> <li>• Observes the company's hierarchy</li> </ul> | <p>Adults who are open-minded consider different viewpoints and question their usual way of doing things. This attitude makes them more likely to thoroughly investigate and discover new outlooks in considering different factors when managing their conflicts in the workplace.</p> <p><b>Connections between open-mindedness and certain elements of essential knowledge</b></p> <p>This attitude can be addressed more specifically in learning situations that involve the following elements of essential knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change he/she wants to make in terms of managing conflicts in the workplace</li> <li>• Action plan regarding managing conflicts in the workplace</li> </ul> <p><b>Connections between open-mindedness and the operational competency <i>Exercises critical and ethical judgment</i></b></p> <p>This attitude can be addressed more specifically in learning situations that involve the development of this operational competency, notably with respect to the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies his/her strengths and limitations</li> <li>• Distinguishes between fact and opinion</li> <li>• Distinguishes between his/her perceptions and those of his/her superiors and colleagues</li> </ul> |

## Complementary Resources

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The following resources are provided as suggestions only and consist of references that may be consulted in learning situations.

| Social Resources  | Material Resources   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Superiors</li><li>• Colleagues</li><li>• Practicum supervisors</li><li>• Private sector companies</li><li>• Government agencies</li><li>• Community organizations</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print and electronic documents on conflict management in the workplace (magazines, books, Web sites, etc.)</li></ul> |

## Learning Situation

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The following learning situation is provided as an example to show teachers how the principles of the education reform can be applied in the classroom.

It is authentic in the sense that it addresses a real-life situation (taken from the class of situations in the course) that adults may find themselves in. It is sufficiently open and comprehensive to allow adult learners to explore several important aspects related to dealing with this real-life situation.

The examples of actions presented in the course help the teacher to identify those actions that an adult would take to deal with the real-life situation. The teacher can then refer to these examples in order to develop appropriate learning activities.

The learning situation is organized in terms of the three steps of the teaching-learning process, which are as follows:

- planning learning
- actual learning
- integrating and reinvesting learning

These steps highlight the principles of the education reform insofar as they encourage adults to be active, to reflect on their learning and to interact with their peers when the learning context is suitable. They include learning activities and may also include evaluation activities intended to support adults in the learning process.

These activities help learners to construct knowledge related to the compulsory elements of the course that are targeted by the learning situation concerned: one or more categories of actions, essential knowledge and the actions of the operational competencies associated with the categories of actions.

The example provided also refers to certain teaching strategies— instructional methods and techniques—that can be selected according to the learners, the context and the learning environment. Certain learning strategies may also be suggested, as well as a variety of material and social resources.



## Example of a Learning Situation

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**Title:** *Rivalry between two colleagues*

**Problem addressed in the learning situation**

- Considering a win-win solution for conflict in the workplace

**Instructional methods:**

- Interactive presentation
- Case study
- Oral presentation
- Individual work
- Class discussion

**Expected work:**

- Completed analysis chart
- Participation in a case study
- Individual reflection on the consequences of an unresolved conflict

**Approximate time allotted:** 3 hours 30 minutes for a class of 14 adults

- Presentation of the learning situation: 15 minutes
- Interactive presentation on resolving a conflict in the workplace: 30 minutes
- Case study: 2 hours
- Presentation of results to the group: 1 hour
- Individual reflection: 15 minutes
- Class discussion: 30 minutes

## Example of a Learning Situation (cont.)

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### Planning learning

- The teacher informs the adult learners that they will be participating in a case study linked to conflict resolution in the workplace. The challenge is to search for solutions to resolve a rivalry between two colleagues that will give a win-win result. The teacher hands out and reads the description of the case study:

*Claude works at the laundromat. He is having a hard time accepting the new way tasks are shared in his work team. Claude thinks that he should prepare the delivery carts and check the quality of the work instead of Richard. The climate has been tense and the work environment is toxic for everyone. Claude is aggressive and no longer has meals with the group. He states that he is the oldest and deserves to be assigned these jobs. Richard doesn't want to hear it. He avoids any discussion on the subject and threatens to complain to the boss. It's a stalemate!!*

The teacher presents the conditions that apply to this situational problem: *You need to fill out the analysis chart and use the job descriptions for the work team to do so.* The teacher must also make sure the adults have understood what they are being asked to do and that they are motivated to carry out the activity.

### Actual learning

- The teacher leads an interactive presentation on the emotional aspects and characteristics of conflicts in the workplace. He or she also discusses conflict resolution methods, especially those regarding the expected result (a win-win solution).
- The teacher asks the adult learners to form teams of three for the case study and provides the following documents:

- Conflict analysis chart: *Rivalry between two colleagues*
- *Job descriptions for the work team*

He or she provides information on the questions in the analysis chart:

- What are the conflict triggers? (See the description of tasks.)
- What are the signs of emotions?
- What type of conflict is it (conflict of interests, of values, of ideas, power struggle)? Explain.
- What are the causes?
- What are Claude's and Richard's reactions?
- What are the possible issues (in the short, medium and long term)?
- What strategies would allow for conflict resolution with a win-win result?

- The teacher gives the instructions:
  - Answer all the questions in the analysis chart.
  - Consider each person's resources and limitations.
  - Choose a spokesperson to present the results to the group.

The teacher guides and supervises the groups of three while they are working and emphasizes the importance of showing respect by welcoming points of view that are different from their own.

- The teacher invites the spokespersons from the groups of three to present their results. He or she leads a discussion and comments on the teams' suggestions.
- The teacher ends with a presentation on the possible consequences of an unresolved conflict. He or she asks the adults to individually reflect on this problem with respect to the case study.

## **Integrating and reinvesting learning**

Class discussion:

Were you able to answer all the questions in the analysis chart for the case study?

What difficulties did you experience? Explain.

Did you fully cooperate to search for solutions?

What will you retain from this learning situation?

What is the most meaningful thing you learned?

How will your experience of this learning situation help you improve your ability to resolve conflicts in the workplace?

How do you think you will apply what you have learned in a future job?



## Elements of the Course Addressed by the Learning Situation

| Class of Situations  |  |
|--|--|
| Managing conflicts in the workplace  |  |
| Learning Situation   |  |
| <i>Rivalry between two colleagues</i>  |  |
| Categories of Actions  | Operational Competency   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict resolution in the workplace</li> </ul>   | Cooperates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considers each person's resources and limitations</li> </ul>   |
| Essential Knowledge  |  |
| Emotional aspects of conflict in the workplace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict triggers (behaviour of colleagues)</li> <li>Expression of emotions (physiological, psychological, behavioural)</li> </ul> Characteristics of conflicts in the workplace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of conflicts in the workplace (conflict of interests, of values, of ideas, power struggle)</li> <li>Causes of conflicts in the workplace (unresolved disagreements, unfulfilled expectations, tensions, unspoken undertones)</li> <li>Possible reactions (escape, submission, confrontation, manipulation)</li> <li>Fluctuation factors (duration, frequency, issues)</li> </ul> | Methods of conflict resolution in the workplace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using conflict resolution strategies (rationalization, de-escalation, stepping back, letting go)</li> <li>Putting results into perspective (win-win)</li> <li>Predicting consequences of an unresolved conflict (repression, explosion, breakdown, end of a relationship, illness)</li> </ul> |
| Attitude   | Complementary Resources  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict analysis chart: <i>Rivalry between two colleagues</i></li> <li>Job descriptions for the work team</li> </ul>   |