
Unit Specification

iUHB314 – Provide a variety of relaxing services

Unit reference number: F/617/8097

Level: 3

Guided Learning (GL) hours: 90

Overview

The aim of this unit is to develop learner's knowledge, understanding and skills to use a variety of relaxing effects. The learner will combine, adapt and personalise a variety of relaxing techniques to provide prescriptive relaxing services. Learners will have the ability to analyse relaxing issues, deal with chemically treated hair, sensitised hair, and plan and agree the course of action which is required, as service requirements may need to span a period of time and a number of appointments.

Learners will need to maintain a high level of health, safety and hygiene throughout the unit.

Additionally, learners must reflect the Hairdressing Industry in their personal appearance and demonstrate effective communication skills.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, learners will:

LO1 Be able to carry out a variety of relaxing hair services

LO2 Understand how health and safety policies and procedures affect a variety of hair relaxing services

LO3 Understand factors that may influence the variety of relaxing services

LO4 Understand the science of providing a variety of relaxing hair services

LO5 Understand the products, tools, equipment and techniques used for relaxing hair services

Unit content

LO1 Be able to carry out a variety of relaxing hair services

Prepare for relaxing hair services

Taught content to include

- Preparation of learners should include:
 - Personal image, ensuring industry standards of dress
 - Clean and hygienic appearance, e.g. avoidance of overpowering odours – tobacco, heavy perfume/aftershave
 - Good communication and listening skills
 - Correct posture with weight evenly balanced
 - Correct personal protective equipment worn
- Preparation of the working area to include:
 - Chair and work area to be clean before the client arrives
 - Chair is positioned correctly, including height
 - Adequate work area to allow safe use of electrical equipment, e.g. if using accelerator for processing colour
 - Products on display to be clean of dust and hair
 - Tools and equipment to be clean and sterilised
 - Dispose of waste hygienically and appropriately
 - Electrical equipment to be visually checked before use e.g. for centres within the United Kingdom portable appliance testing (PAT) may be required when using electrical equipment
 - All tools and equipment to be positioned for ease of use
- Preparation of the client to include:
 - Clean protective garments for the client
 - Visual checks of client's scalp for signs of cuts, sores, abrasions or infections; check the hair for infestations and suitability of service
 - Removal of obstructive jewellery
 - Check of the client record card (where appropriate) for previous services and client history
 - Check all tests have been undertaken prior to and during the hair relaxing service

Apply safe and hygienic methods of working throughout services

Taught content to include

- Ensure there is sufficient stock, which is used appropriately to minimise the wastage of products
- Ensure products, tools and equipment are correctly handled, stored, clean, readily available and all hygienic precautions are followed to minimise the risk of damage or cross-infection
- Cleansing/sterilising tools and equipment
- Working safely throughout the service to minimise risk, harm or injury to self or others
- Maintain own good posture throughout the service
- Ensuring the client maintains the correct posture and comfort throughout the service/ treatment to avoid a hazard or a risk, e.g. when applying relaxing product to the front hair line the client may be required to tilt their head backwards to avoid contact with the skin
- Safely mix, apply and follow manufacturers' instructions when using products
- Ensure relevant tests are conducted where appropriate
- Ensure correct own personal protection equipment (PPE) garments are used
- Ensure client has correct personal protective garments
- Minimise the risk of damage to products, tools and equipment
- Ensure that waste is disposed of hygienically and appropriately
- Minimise the risk of harm or injury to themselves and others if using electrical equipment
- Ensure the skin and scalp is protected where necessary
- Ensure hygienic working practices throughout the service including own personal hygiene, e.g. eliminating offensive body odour or strong smell of tobacco
- Make effective use of their working time, e.g. ensuring the processing time is correctly adhered to according to manufacturers' instructions

Consult with clients about services and outcomes of tests

Taught content to include

- Undertaking appropriate tests and recording outcomes to include:
 - Skin/sensitivity test (if previous allergic reaction to relaxing products)
 - Elasticity test
 - Porosity test
 - Incompatibility test
 - Density test
 - Pull test
 - Test cutting (where applicable)
 - Development test (strand) curl
- Assess the hair conditions for contra-indications and suitability for relaxing services to include:
 - Hair classification
 - Hair characteristics
 - Hair elasticity, porosity, texture, condition, growth patterns and hair length
- Assess the scalp condition to assess for contra-indications and the suitability of the relaxing service to include:
 - Cuts, sores and abrasions
- Consulting and confirming with the client before the service commences to agree the chosen style, desired look and finished relaxed result
- Explaining each stage of the relaxing service to the client
- Agreeing products, process and possible equipment to be used
- Checking throughout the service to meet the client's needs and client comfort, e.g. ensuring tension applied is not causing discomfort to the client
- Use visual aids where appropriate, e.g. photos (style book), internet search for images of relaxed effects

Confirm with clients the desired effect

Taught content to include

- Discussing client's needs and requirements, e.g. if the desired amount of relaxing is achievable, the amount of relaxing required for the chosen target hairstyle
- Discussing limitations or adaptations that may be required, e.g. the amount of time required to achieve the chosen degree of straightness or advising regarding a cutting/restyle service to enhance the relaxing service
- The importance of informing the client of the likely cost, duration and expected outcome of the service, e.g. if the client underestimated the length of time the hair relaxing service would take

Carry out a suitable questioning process with the client for the service

Taught content to include

- Understanding the client's requirements and expectations of the chosen hair relaxing service
- The costs related to maintenance of hair relaxing, e.g. conditioning treatments and regrowth relaxing services required
- To ensure the client understands the process
- To provide the client with the opportunity to ask questions (where necessary)
- To ensure the client is comfortable
- To gain information on how they maintain their hair, lifestyle and commitment to the hair relaxing
- To ensure and confirm that the client's expectations are met for the relaxed finish
- The legal significance of client questioning and the recording of client's responses to questioning
- The importance of informing the client of the likely cost, duration and expected outcome of the service
- The importance of confirming client's satisfaction

Select suitable products, tools and equipment for relaxing services

Taught content to include

- Products and materials:
 - Preparing products in advance (where applicable), e.g. scalp protectors, pre-relaxing treatments
 - Preparing the materials required, e.g. cotton wool
 - Barrier cream (where required)
- Tools:
 - Personal protective equipment (PPE) to include protective garments, e.g. non permeable cape, protective gown and towel for client, non-permeable gloves and protective apron for learner
 - Selection of combs, e.g. tail comb and wide tooth combs, sectioning clips, tint brushes, bowls, hands and applicators
- Equipment:
 - Timer
 - Electrical equipment (if used), e.g. accelerator

Carry out relaxing services

Taught content to include

Relaxing process	Method
Top application	Relaxer is applied to the top of each section only. Suitable application method for fine or low-density hair
Top and bottom application	Relaxer is applied to the underside of the previous section and then on top of the new section. Top and bottom application enables thicker sections to be taken or is used on hair with high-density. Care must be taken not to touch the scalp with the product
Hand/smoothing – best for virgin hair application	Relaxer is placed onto the palm of the gloved hand with a spatula of the stylist. Relaxer is then applied by using the palm onto the sectioned hair to spread the product and smooth the hair to the desired straightness
Re-growth	Section from ear-to-ear and mid-line from forehead to nape. Apply by taking 2 - 5 mm sections from the crown and work down towards the nape at the back of the head. Work from the top central parting down to the ears and finally the front hairline. Variations may occur in application, e.g. by applying to known resistant areas first. Hair around hairline/nape area usually takes less time to straighten
Virgin	Section as for re-growth and follow the same order for application. Apply to the mid-lengths first, then the ends and finally the root area
White/grey hair	Soft, no-lye products may be suitable for frizzy, extremely curly white hair. Care must be taken as, when using some relaxing products on white/grey hair, they may produce discolouration of yellow or green. Ensure all appropriate tests are taken first

Relaxing service	Purpose	Method
Correction of under processing	Areas of the hair may not achieve the desired amount of curl reduction due to the relaxer not being left on long enough, sections being taken too large, product was not suitable or strong enough for hair type, or the hair not smoothed during relaxer application	If condition allows, reapply to affected areas with suitable relaxing products Take appropriate tests before undertaking further service
Partial relaxing	Where relaxing is only required in a partial area of the hair, e.g. through growth patterns, back of the head, or fringe areas	Section off areas where relaxing is required. Ensure the rest of the hair is protected using conditioner or foil wraps. Relax the hair following manufacturers' instructions
Relaxing varying texture on the same head	Relaxer should be chosen for its suitability on all areas of the head	Section off areas of differing textures and apply appropriate relaxing products following manufacturers' instructions

Relaxing coloured hair	Coloured hair is more fragile and great care should be taken, and lower pH mild strength relaxers should be used. Bleached hair should not be relaxed as breakage will occur	Select appropriate relaxing agent and apply following manufacturers' instructions
Texturising	Where hair is to remain curly rather than straightened. Texturising will loosen the curl pattern and texture to make the hair more manageable	Select appropriate texturising agent and apply following manufacturers' instructions. Texturising is a much quicker process than totally relaxing the whole head of hair

Carry out the correct procedures for rectifying problems and apply solutions that may occur when creatively relaxing hair

Taught content to include

Relaxing problem	Possible cause	Immediate action	How to avoid
Hair breakage or Trichorrhexis nodosa on existing hair	• Hair has been over- processed or chemicals too strong in previous service • Hair smoothed or incorrect tension excessively applied during the relaxing process • Poor use of styling methods or home care in between services	• Cut hair if appropriate • Use remedial restructuring and/or protein conditioners • Do not undertake further relaxing services until damage has grown out	• Monitor processing time closely • Select relaxer that is suitable for the hair type and condition • Do not over-smooth or apply excessive tension to the hair during processing • Advise suitable styling methods, do not use excessive heat or heat styling equipment • Use protective styling and finishing products
Hair breakage after relaxing	• Over-lapping relaxer on to previously relaxed hair • Hair over-processed or relaxing solution too strong • Hair smoothed or incorrect tension excessively applied	• Use remedial restructuring and/or protein conditioners • Do not undertake further relaxing services until damage has grown out	• Ensure no overlapping during application • Monitor processing time closely • Select relaxer that is suitable for the hair type and condition • Do not over-smooth or apply excessive tension

	during the relaxing process • Incorrect neutralising		to the hair during processing • Follow manufacturers' instructions when using the neutraliser or neutralising shampoo
Sore scalp	• Incorrect application of scalp protecting base • Product application too close or touching the scalp • Incomplete rinsing of relaxer from the hair. Incomplete timing for the neutraliser or neutralising shampoo	• First aid assistance for chemical burns • If necessary, refer for medical assistance	• Ensure correct and adequate application of scalp protecting base by following manufacturers' instructions • Ensure the application of relaxer does not touch the scalp • Ensure correct rinsing of products from the hair by following manufacturers' instructions
Sore hairline or skin irritation	• Incorrect application of barrier cream	• First aid assistance for chemical burns • If necessary, refer for medical assistance	• Ensure barrier product is correctly applied
Bald areas – Traction baldness due to poor relaxing methods or not following manufacturers' instructions	• Relaxing products too strong or over-processing	• Hair is contra-indicated for relaxing service	• Use relaxer according to manufacturers' instructions • Select relaxer that is suitable for the hair type and condition • Monitor processing time closely
Relaxed effect too curly	• Mid length, end and root under-processing • Incorrect product choice • Insufficient development time • Incorrect method and technique	• Undertake a further consultation after two weeks • If hair condition allows, reduce the curl by relaxing after further	• Use appropriate relaxing product for hair type and condition • Use product according to manufacturers' instructions

	used to relax the hair	consultation period	• Apply the correct technique to relax the hair
Uneven effect	• Uneven patchy application of relaxer • Sections too deep • Uneven method and technique used to relax the hair	• If condition allows, re-relax affected areas with suitable relaxing products	• Use relaxer according to manufacturers' instructions • Select relaxer that is suitable for the hair type and condition • Monitor processing time closely • Apply the correct method and technique to relax the hair

Provide clients with advice and recommendations on the service(s) provided and products available

Taught content to include

- Provide aftercare advice regarding the service including potential costs of further services or products, e.g. suitable shampoo and conditioners which are sulphate free and pH balanced, additionally styling products to achieve moisturised and smooth results
- The products that may be used by clients including the benefits and effects to maintain the new target relaxed effect, e.g. specific shampoos and conditioners to maintain the relaxed effect and/or condition of the hair
- To ensure the client feels valued and that the hair relaxing service was specifically tailored to their individual needs, e.g. using a specific hair relaxing pre-treatment to optimise the relaxing service
- To ensure client expectations can be met and where applicable offer other services, e.g. advise the client how a conditioning service could enhance the overall condition of their hair post the relaxing service
- To advise on home care products to help the longevity of the relaxing effect, e.g. the use of salon retail shampoo and conditioning products for clients to maintain their hair condition and relaxed effect
- Special precautions, e.g. not to use incompatible products to relaxing advise against home colouring, when swimming use a swimming cap or a chlorine safe shampoo
- The needs and requirements of the client for future services, e.g. guidance timing of when to return to the salon for upkeep of relaxer – follow manufacturers' advice
- Avoidance of excessive heated styling equipment, e.g. using straightening irons continuously will affect the overall condition of the hair
- Advice from manufacturers' instructions e.g. first wash usually 24-48 hours after the service Some manufacturers offer much reduced times – check manufacturers' instructions
- Providing advice on how to manage their hair at home and suggesting products to use ensures the client will return for repeat relaxing services, e.g. caring for newly relaxed hair may be of concern to the client unaccustomed to relaxing services
- Other services, offers or promotions, for example discount incentives tailored to hair relaxing services when using a salon loyalty card
- Reputation and walking advertisement for the salon

LO2 Understand how health and safety policies and procedures affect a variety of hair relaxing services

The responsibilities for health and safety in own role

Taught content to include

- Relevant legislation for consultation, client care, confidentiality and consumer/retail, for the country the qualification is taken, which includes: General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), consumer rights, health and safety, equality. Health and safety regulations for the country where the qualification is taken, examples within the United Kingdom would include:
 - The Health and Safety at Work Act
 - The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
 - Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations
 - Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations
 - Electricity at Work Regulations
 - Reporting Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)
 - The Consumer Protection Act
 - The Trade Descriptions Act
 - Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH)
 - Salon insurance requirements, employers liability, public liability, professional indemnity
- Responsibilities for health and safety to include:
 - The reasons why all staff working in the salon have a responsibility for the health and safety of themselves and others
 - The salon safety regulations to ensure their actions do not put others at risk, which includes all staff, clients and visitors
- Additional factors will include:
 - The reasons why it is important to describe the features and benefits of products and services accurately
 - The reasons for and importance of gaining client consent
 - The maintenance of the salon environment including:
 - The comfort of the salon
 - Cleanliness of the salon to prevent cross-infections via direct or indirect contact
 - Provisions and use of workplace equipment – using only products, tools and equipment that are fit for purpose
 - Reasons for personal protective equipment (PPE), e.g. using protective gloves to prevent contact dermatitis when using certain products
 - Making visual checks on all electrical equipment and reporting faults/isolating power
 - Ensuring manufacturers' instructions are always followed when using products and equipment, e.g. incorrect measurements of products could result in target colour being incorrect
 - Responsibilities of reporting certain work-related incidents or accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences to a senior staff member

- Ensuring the public are protected from the manufacture of supplied unsafe goods or misleading price indications
- Prevent a false trade description of any goods that are supplied; prevent offering to supply any goods to which a false trade description has been applied, or making a false statement about the provision of any service
- Ensure that all personal client data records remain safe and confidential
- Update client records following service
- Hazards associated when colouring and/or lightening hair
- Risks associated to colouring and/or lightening hair

The potential hazards and possible risks that may occur in the workplace and affect services

Taught content to include

- The importance of ensuring that all chemicals related to providing a variety of relaxing services are stored, handled and used in accordance to salon policy, local bylaws and manufacturers' instructions
- The potential hazards and risks associated with not completing appropriate tests on the client and the hair
- Hazards – anything that has the potential to cause harm, e.g. incorrect application of product causing seepage onto the clients scalp/skin
- Risks – a chance, high or low, that harm caused by the hazard may occur, e.g. potential for product to cause a skin burn, damage, soreness and/or tenderness
- Working safely throughout the service, an example may include ensuring there is adequate room around the client and no obstructions
- Ensuring use and maintenance of any equipment is monitored, e.g. conduct visual checks
- Ensuring the client is comfortable and free from harm throughout the service, e.g. removing jewellery that may obstruct the use of tools and products when providing a variety of relaxing services
- Disposing of waste appropriately to minimise risk of cross-infection and ensure there is no unnecessary risk to the environment, e.g. following the salon's guidelines for the safe disposal of unused relaxing products
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH), including handling and storage of all products, tools and equipment
- The course of action to be taken for a minor burn or skin irritation when using relaxing and neutralising products:
 - Cool the skin
 - Apply a cold compress to the affected area immediately
 - Cover if possible
 - Avoid touching the area
 - If burn is severe refer for medical attention
- The importance of ensuring a thorough visual check of the hair and scalp is performed prior to the service to prevent cross-infection, e.g. ensuring the scalp is not tender when combing hair for sectioning prior to and after the relaxing service
- The need to ensure personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements are followed for both client and stylist, e.g. the use of gloves when applying relaxing products and neutralisers

- Risk of electric shock when using electrical equipment to enhance the service to include potential hazards of trailing wires, e.g. if used to style the hair after the relaxing service
- Fire – the salon’s policy in the event of a fire and where the assembly point is

The safe and hygienic working methods and practices that must be followed throughout the services

Taught content to include

- Use of clean towels, gowns and correct protective garments for all clients
- Use of clean and sterile tools equipment for all clients
- The importance of providing personal protective equipment (PPE) for both client and stylist’ e.g. prevention of damage to clients’ clothing - a non-permeable gown is advised for relaxing services
- Barrier cream where required for client hairline, ears and neck
- Sectioning hair appropriately for the relaxing service, e.g. to prevent overlap of product or product touching the client’s skin
- Apply appropriate techniques for the relaxing service, e.g. varying relaxing techniques for different hair textures throughout the same head of hair
- Control of electrical equipment (if used)
- Organisation of working area
- Avoid trailing wires and spillages from products on the floor, e.g. relaxer spilt on the floor may cause slippage
- The precautions that must be taken when using a relaxing lotion and neutraliser/normalising shampoo

Contact dermatitis and how it can be prevented

Taught content to include

- Recognising contact dermatitis symptoms
- Contact dermatitis – is a rash caused by the skin reacting to a substance it has come into contact with, e.g. chemicals. Symptoms can be varied and include:
 - Skin redness
 - Extreme itching
 - Oozing or blisters, may make skin swell
 - Skin that appears darkened or hard/leathery to touch that may become dry or flaky
 - Sensitive to products and sunlight
- How to avoid contracting and preventing measures which may include:
 - Always wearing gloves when smoothing and straightening the hair and neutralising/normalising for relaxing services
 - Rinsing and drying hands thoroughly
 - Use of moisturisers or barrier creams
- Following Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations when using and storing relaxing products
- Following and adhering to manufacturers’ instructions when using products to provide a variety of relaxing hair services

LO3 Understand factors that may influence the variety of relaxing services

The factors that may influence services provided

Taught content to include

- Hair classification

Hair classifications table			
Type 1: Straight hair	1A - Fine/thin	1B - Medium	1C - Coarse
	Straight	Straight with volume	Straight difficult hair
Type 2: Wavy hair	2A - Fine/thin	2B - Medium	2C - Coarse
	'S' pattern	Frizzy 'S' pattern	Very frizzy 'S' pattern
Type 3: Curly hair	3A - Fine/thin	3B - Medium	3C - Coarse
	Soft curl	Loose curl	Tight curl
Type 4: Very curly hair	4A - Fine/thin	4B - Medium	4C - Coarse
	Tight coiled curl pattern	'Z' pattern and spring curl	Tight 'Z' pattern

- The factors that must be taken into account to judge where the application of a variety of relaxing products, tools and equipment are required, to include:
 - Density – this is defined as the number of hairs on the scalp and will affect the tools, techniques and products used and the time of the service
 - Texture – the circumference of an individual strand of hair. Hair can be fine, medium or coarse. Coarse hair has the largest circumference, and fine hair the smallest
 - Porosity – this relates to the condition of the cuticle. Porosity levels are caused by both chemical and physical damage. Cuticles which are raised and feel rough may tangle easily
 - Elasticity – this relates to the condition of the cortex layer of the hair. Elasticity levels are affected by how the hair is treated and the condition it is in. Hair should stretch and return to its normal size, this indicates the hair is in good condition with no damage to the cortex. If hair stretches and snaps or does not return to its original length this indicates internal damage to the cortex
 - Growth patterns – this relates to the direction the hair grows from the scalp, it will be important to take these into account when relaxing services are undertaken to ensure the correct sectioning and application method is applied
 - Head and face shape and size – this relates to the overall shape and size of the client's head and includes any specific features
 - Lifestyle – this is about the client's everyday activities and working patterns
 - Hair length – this will affect the general condition of the hair, e.g. longer length hair may have areas that are more porous
 - The current style hair or haircut, e.g. adaptations may be required to achieve the client expectations
 - Temperature and humidity of salon – will affect the hair's ability for relaxing products to process and the may affect development time
 - Existing chemical services – this can impact on the client's desired result, e.g. selection and application of relaxing products may vary according to the existing chemicals present on the hair, e.g. previous applications of colour or lightening services

- Percentage of white hair – this can cause resistance to relaxing agents and become very difficult to relax
- Test results – these impinge on planning the way forward when relaxing any hair; these test results will establish what it is possible to achieve with the planned relaxing service
- Strength of relaxing agent – this determines the degree of smoothness or relaxing and the correct choice must be used depending on any previous relaxing services undertaken
- Time interval from last chemical service – already recorded for existing client, determined by questioning for new client
- Recent removal of hair extensions/previous services – this should be considered, as fallen hair can occur after hair extension removal, and the scalp and hair could be sensitised after this service, e.g. apply a pull test
- Use of electrical equipment /accelerators – these can speed up the development but should only be used if manufacturer’s instructions allow
- The chosen relaxing effect – whether the desired result is smoothed, straight or wavy
- Virgin hair – hair that has not been treated with chemicals. Select correct relaxing product according to condition, texture and desired result; undertake appropriate tests prior to application

The ways of dealing with any influencing factors

Taught content to include

- How these may influence the relaxing services to include:
 - Density
 - This is defined as the number of hairs on the scalp and will affect the choice of tools and products used and the duration of the service, e.g. the application methods on dense hair will differ to application methods on hair with low density. Low density hair requires the relaxing product to be applied to the top of the section only and dense hair will need relaxer applying to the top and underside of each section
 - Texture
 - The circumference of an individual strand of hair. Hair can be fine, medium or coarse. Coarse hair has the largest circumference and fine hair the smallest. Texture may affect the porosity of the hair. In relaxing, the use of pre-relaxing treatments will help to even out the porosity of the hair. Select relaxing products according to hair texture combined with hair classification. Fine, medium or coarse hair all require matching to the relevant strength of relaxing products within a brand
 - Porosity
 - This relates to the condition of the cuticle. Porosity levels are caused by both chemical and physical damage. Cuticles that are raised and feel rough are known as porous and will absorb water and relaxing products more easily and unevenly. Suitable pre-treatment products will be required if hair is porous
 - Elasticity

- This relates to the inner strength of the hair's cortex. It is an indicator of the internal condition of the hair's bonded structure and its ability to retain moisture. The hair's elasticity will influence the selection of relaxing products and may indicate whether services may be limited or affected
- Hair condition
 - Hair that is in good condition will be shiny, smooth, with good porosity (flat cuticle scales) and good elasticity (good moisture levels). Hair that is in poor condition will be dull, may have split ends or torn cuticle, be over-elastic, have signs of breakage and have dry, porous ends or lengths. Hair condition will influence the selection of relaxing agents and may indicate whether services may be limited or affected. Carry out tests to confirm the condition of the hair to match to the most suitable relaxing product to apply
- Hygroscopic
 - Hair has the ability to absorb moisture into the cortex and this is called hygroscopic. The properties are changed when it has been shampooed or becomes wet by breaking down weaker hydrogen bonds and in its natural state, hair is known as Alpha keratin. This allows the hair to be stretched using heat and brushes in blow-drying. Once hair is stretched and dried into a new shape it becomes known as beta-keratin state. When finishing the relaxing service it is important that the hair is thoroughly dried and correct tension is applied to the hair to create the finished style
- Growth patterns
 - This relates to the direction in which the hair grows from the scalp and may influence the desired finish. Selection of sectioning relaxing techniques to overcome difficult growth patterns
- Head and face shape and size
 - This relates to the overall shape and size of the client's head and includes any specific features. When finishing the relaxed effect it is important to ensure that the client has a style they can manage and which suits their overall appearance. The head size influences sectioning and how much product is needed
- Lifestyle
 - The need to ensure the client is advised regarding return visits and costs required for maintenance, also the client's everyday activities and working patterns, e.g. a client may not have time to return for regular maintenance or upkeep of hair that has been relaxed very straight
- Hair length
 - This will affect the general overall condition of the hair
 - The length of the hair has several contributing factors that affect relaxing services - How the condition of long hair affects the selection of the correct relaxer and use of pre-relaxer treatments for a virgin application e.g. long hair may have porous ends and require a pre-relaxer treatment to even out the porosity of the hair prior to applying the relaxer
 - Timings for relaxer application – long hair application will take longer to apply product than short hair - relaxers need efficient application to avoid potential damage to the hair
- Temperature and humidity of the salon
 - Client and general external weather conditions – these will be influencing factors when relaxing, both the inside and outside temperatures. A salon that has poor ventilation may produce a damp and humid atmosphere

affecting the processing time for the service, e.g. if outside weather conditions are very hot and sunny, the heat will accelerate the processing time. Temperature control within the salon must be adjusted with either additional heating, ventilation or assisted fanning device

- Test results
 - These should be recorded and made available whenever relaxing services are undertaken
- Degree of relaxation required
 - The degree of relaxation is the straightness or looseness that the hair achieves during the relaxation process
- Length of re-growth
 - A re-growth is the demarcation between natural hair growth from the root area and the line where a previous chemical service has grown out. If lotion is overlapped this could cause excessive damage to hair therefore careful consideration to suitability of the relaxing service must be taken into account
- Degree of existing curl
 - The existing curl influences the selection of relaxers and strength of relaxer used. Manufacturers' instructions must be followed to select the most appropriate strength of product within the brand
- Scalp condition
 - Due to the extreme pH of relaxing products the scalp must be free from irritation, sensitivity, cuts, abrasions and inflammation. A thorough examination of the scalp must be part of the consultation
- White hair
 - Soft, no-lye products may be suitable for frizzy, extremely curly white hair. Care must be taken using some products to avoid discolouration
- Degree of product build-up
 - No-lye relaxers containing guanidine hydroxide may leave calcium mineral build-up on the hair as a by-product of the process. This results in dull, limp hair prone to breakage. It is important to know how to detect build-up and to use chelating/clarifying shampoo products to remove the deposits from the hair
- Recent removal of hair extensions/previous services
 - The application of relaxing products may not be suitable for a sensitised scalp
- Use of electrical equipment/accelerators only according to manufacturers' instructions (if appropriate)
- Services prior to relaxing – other services offered prior to relaxing may influence the selection of products or contra-indicate the service. For example, using powder lighteners will contra-indicate relaxing services due to the weakened internal structure of the hair
- Correct product usage is important when relaxing, along with selecting the correct tools for the hair classification and characteristics
- Application methods to ensure that sufficient product is used whilst avoiding wastage

Contra-indications and how they affect relaxing services

Taught content to include

- Contra-indications to relaxing services to include, bacterial, viral or fungal infections.
Contagious conditions to include:
 - Bacterial infection examples include:
 - Impetigo – begins as blisters that itch, then fill with a yellowish-brown fluid that, once ruptured, form a flat crust
 - Folliculitis – infection of the hair follicle, causes bumps with pus. May be painful, itchy, sore or swollen
 - Viral infection examples include:
 - Herpes simplex, a raised red blister full of fluid. It will usually be painful and tender to the touch
 - Warts, small, fleshy, grainy bumps usually flesh-coloured, white, pink or tan. Rough to the touch and can be sprinkled with black pinpoints, which are small, clotted blood vessels
 - Fungal infection examples include:
 - Ringworm – depends where it appears but may be red, itchy, scaly, or raised patches that develop blisters or begin to ooze. Patches that may be redder on the outside edges creating a 'ring' effect
 - Infestation/parasites examples include:
 - Head lice – are tiny grey/brown insects. Head lice cling to hairs but stay close to the scalp which they feed off. Head lice lay eggs which hatch after 7 to 10 days. It takes about 7 to 10 days for a newly hatched louse to grow into an adult and start to lay eggs known as nits. Nits are the empty yellow-white eggshells which are left when the lice hatch. Nits look like dandruff but stick strongly to hair
 - Scabies – itchy skin condition causing a rash which may cause tiny blisters or sores where mites have burrowed into the skin
- Hair defects, contra-indication examples include:
 - Trichorrhexis nodosa – hair which breaks easily. Symptoms can include patches of hair loss or extremely short hair that appears not to grow. The hair shaft has thickened or thinned areas or has excessively split ends with discolouration. If a hair defect is suspected the client should be referred for medical attention or advice and a colouring and/or lightening service should not be performed
- History of previous allergic reaction
- Conditions which may be contra-indicated, prevent or restrict the relaxing service
 - Scalp sensitivity – an inflamed, sore and red scalp may prevent service relaxing and neutralising/normalising products may affect or seep onto the scalp
 - Sebaceous cyst – lump on top or under scalp/head
 - Psoriasis – dry silvery scales of skin, can become inflamed when chemicals are applied to the scalp area
 - Contact dermatitis – dry, red, sore, itchy and may be weeping
 - Recent scar/tissue injury, may be tender when using straightening techniques, combs, brushes or heat
 - Hair loss, possible after hair extension removal, medication, stress or trauma (alopecia), may prevent or limit the relaxing service

- The course of action to be taken if contra-indications are suspected, to include:
 - Not to offer diagnosis
 - Which conditions need reporting and when
 - Whom to report to and where to record the findings
 - Referral for medical attention or advice

The importance of preventing cross-infection and cross-infestation

Taught content to include

- The importance of using the correct sterilising and disinfecting methods for all tools and equipment, e.g. use of correct sterilising and disinfecting methods
- Ensuring the clients scalp and hair are checked prior to the relaxing service
- Avoidance of cross-contamination, e.g. using unclean tools or protective garments from one client could contaminate the next client's hair or scalp
- Ensuring the professional salon image is maintained

The importance of tests to the hair and scalp prior to and during the relaxing services

Taught content to include

- To understand the reasons why tests are carried out, e.g. not undertaking an elasticity test resulting in an uneven relaxing result and deterioration of hair
- The importance of following manufacturers' instructions for skin/sensitivity tests and the potential consequences of failing to carry out these tests
- To ensure that all tests are collated, dated and stored and recorded for future reference
- To ensure there is a history of all test results
- To ensure that the records have full and accurate information including additional comments relating to the tests
- To prevent possible legal action
- To ensure the relaxed finished results are as expected
- To ensure the relaxing service finished results meet the client requirements

When and how relaxing tests are carried out

Taught content to include

- Skin/sensitivity test – this may be necessary for those clients who have a history of allergic reactions to other products or generalised skin sensitivity. A positive reaction would prevent the relaxing service going ahead.
- Refer always to manufacturers' instructions, as an example:
 - Clean an area behind the ear with clean damp cotton wool
 - Apply a small amount of relaxing product to the prepared area
 - Advise client to leave on for time specified by manufacturer unless there is irritation, in which case the client should wash it off immediately

- Symptoms of a positive reaction would be redness, itching, soreness, swelling or inflammation
- Elasticity test – may prevent or restrict application of relaxing products if the hair is stretched and does not go back to its original state:
 - On wet hair, take individual strands of hair from 3-4 areas of the head – if hair is dry then dampen thoroughly
 - Hold one single hair securely and pull it – if the hair stretches and returns to its original length without breaking it has normal elasticity. If hair breaks or fails to return to its original length it has low or no elasticity
- Porosity test – the hair's ability to retain moisture. Where hair is porous it may prevent or restrict the relaxing service. Porous hair tends to process chemical reactions quickly and can therefore over-process easily. Additional advice to client may include hair treatments, restyle or cut
 - To determine the external strength of cuticle – take a few strands of hair slide down towards the scalp using one finger and one thumb
 - The more resistance felt, the more porous the hair
- Density test – Take a square inch sized area to assess how tightly packed the follicles and strands of hairs are. When testing the density of the hair, 3-4 different areas of the hair on the scalp should be assessed.
 - Low density hair will be spaced out allowing the scalp to be seen (if more than 60% of the scalp can be seen then the hair has low density)
 - High density hair will be tightly packed with minimal scalp to be seen (if less than 20% of the scalp can be seen then the hair has high density)
- Incompatibility test – to check for the presence of metallic salts in the hair. If present, it will result in the hair becoming discoloured or dissolving and result in a positive reaction. This will prevent the relaxing service:
 - Take a small cutting from the client's hair and place it in a solution of 20mls 6% hydrogen peroxide and 1ml of perm solution in a non-metallic bowl. Leave up to 30 minutes to check for a reaction. Signs of a positive reaction are bubbling, fizzing, discolouration or the solution may give off heat. These signs indicate that metallic salts are present in the hair
- Test Cutting/pre-relaxing test piece undertaken prior to service to check if desired straightness is achievable
 - Take a few cuttings from various parts of the head. Using a cotton thread or tape to secure the strands relax the cutting to desired straightness
 - Process as per manufacturers' instructions
 - Rinse and remove the relaxer
 - Neutralise as per manufacturers' instructions and assess the results
- Development strand test – during the relaxing service
 - To monitor the processing of the relaxing product and assess the degree of straightness required
 - Follow manufacturers' instructions and during development time – wipe off the relaxing product from a few strands of hair to see if the desired result has been achieved
- Pull test

- To assess potential hair loss after recent removal of hair extension or plaits, and the hair's ability to sustain weight and increased tension
- Gently pull small sections of hair whilst sliding the fingers from root to point on at least three areas of the scalp (approximately 30-60 hairs)
- Firmly pull hairs from the scalp. If more than 10 percent of hairs are pulled out this may indicate active shedding and extreme care in handling the hair is required, along with advice and guidance to the client

How test results influence the relaxing service(s)

Taught content to include

- The importance of ensuring that test results are recorded and stored accurately so that a history of results can be reviewed e.g. test cuttings to review for future relaxing service
- Skin/sensitivity test – positive and negative reactions, e.g. a negative reaction means the service cannot continue
- Elasticity test – influences the product choice, application and final required result, e.g. a poor elasticity outcome may require the application of a sensitised relaxing agent with advice on further treatment services to improve the overall condition of the hair
- Porosity test – may restrict or prevent chemical service – product choice, need to take into account the differences in hair structure and may result in unevenness of relaxation and finished effect
- Density test – may affect the type and amount of relaxing products required and potentially the cost of the service e.g. thick dense long hair may require double the amount of product used
- Incompatibility test – prevents chemical service. There is a presence of metallic salts in the hair and if chemicals are added it may result in hair destruction. Alternative services may be permitted – undertake a test cutting to establish suitability
- Test Cutting – to check if final relaxing is achievable, e.g. how the result may look and if the hair will smooth or straighten
- Development strand test – timing of the process, e.g. ensure a timer is used to monitor the progress of the relaxing product

LO4 Understand the science of providing a variety of relaxing hair services

The chemical composition of a variety of relaxing products

Taught content to include

- Sodium relaxers
 - Sodium hydroxide (lye relaxers)
- Non-sodium relaxers
 - Guanidine hydroxide, lithium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide (no lye relaxers)
- Definition of lye
 - A strongly alkaline solution
- Neutralising products
 - Chemical composition is acid based
- Effects of the pH value of all products on the structure of the hair
 - pH values vary and affect the hair's structure with different relaxing agents
 - pH variations in the differing strengths of relaxing agents, e.g. pH is stronger in relaxers for resistant hair and weaker in relaxers for coloured hair

The effects on the hair structure when using relaxing products

Taught content to include

- Relaxers
 - When relaxing products are applied to the hair some of the disulphide bonds are broken by hydrolysis making cysteine (HS) and sulphenic acid (SOH). As the hair straightens the cysteine (HS) and the sulphenic acid (SOH) react together to form the amino acid called lanthionine
 - Different types of relaxer have different pH strengths. The higher the pH the more disulphide bonds are broken, and the more damaging for the scalp
 - No-lye relaxers work in the same way as lye relaxers, but the sodium hydroxide is replaced with potassium, lithium or guanidine hydroxides. This means no-lye relaxers are gentler on the scalp
 - Ammonium thioglycolate relaxers are much thicker in consistency than other relaxers, which makes them easier to apply. They have a pH value of at least 10 to ensure that enough of the disulphide bonds are broken. The relaxer is then rinsed out and a neutraliser used to bring the hair back to its original pH value of 4.5 – 5.5
- Normalising
 - Used with lye and no-lye relaxers, Acid balanced 4.5 to 5.5 – alters the hair from a highly alkaline state to an acidic state and prevents the relaxer from continuing to develop
- Neutralising
 - Used with ammonium thioglycolate relaxers, to reform the disulphide bonds into the new relaxed state

The implications of using a hydroxide based product on ammonium thioglycolate treated hair

Taught content to include

- Ammonium thioglycolate (ATG) can be used to relax hair, and is also a product used in permanent waving
- Hydroxide relaxers (guanidine hydroxide, lithium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide and sodium hydroxide) and ammonium thioglycolate relaxers should not be used interchangeably
- Overlapping these chemicals can cause extreme damage to the hair, and can result in hair loss
- Over processing these chemicals can lead to deterioration in the hair

The effects of pre and post relaxing treatments on the hair structure

Taught content to include

- Pre-relaxing treatments
 - Used to even out the porosity along the hair's length prior to applying the relaxer; they deposit a polymer film that acts as a buffer to the relaxing agents
 - The pre-relaxing treatment will slow down the development process giving more control over the processing time
- Post-relaxer treatments
 - Used to rebalance the pH value of the hair and add moisture to the hair after the neutralising process
 - Post-relaxer treatments contain protein and can be applied before the neutralising shampoo
- The effect of the treatments on the hair
 - How the treatments affect the structure of the hair, e.g. a clarifying shampoo would be used to remove the build-up of products from the hair, contains no conditioning agents
 - When to apply the treatments, e.g. a clarifying shampoo would be applied in advance of the relaxing service so that the hair is clean and dry
 - How to apply the treatments, i.e. according to manufacturers' instructions
 - The consequences of failing to apply the treatments, e.g. unhappy client due to poor relaxing service outcome/expectations not met

The effects that temperature has on the relaxing service process

Taught content to include

- Warm temperature
 - The relaxer will process readily; take frequent strand tests to assess development
 - Do not use an additional heat source if the relaxer is readily processing unless stated in the manufacturers' instructions
- Cool temperature
 - The relaxer may process slowly; take frequent strand tests to assess development
 - If the test shows slow development in relation to time, then allow longer processing time or decide whether to use an additional heat source to speed the development
 - Only use additional heat sources if the manufacturers' instructions recommend it
- Body/head temperature
 - May affect the processing of the relaxing process, e.g. a client who is extremely hot may radiate additional heat source

LO5 Understand the products, tools, equipment and techniques used for relaxing hair services

The range of products, tools and equipment available and the effects they achieve

Taught content to include

- Products – to include the type of product, their features, when and how to apply and suitability when providing a variety of relaxing services

Type of relaxing product	Product features	When to apply	How to apply	Special features/suitable hair types
Barrier cream	• Cream used to protect the skin around the hairline from relaxing agent	• Apply to the hairline, ears and neck prior to application	• Apply with a suitable tool, e.g. cotton bud, avoid contact with the hair	• N/A
Scalp protectors	• Cream or oil used to protect the scalp from the harsh pH of relaxers.	• Prior to the application of lye relaxers that are sodium hydroxide based and after the scalp examination	• Directly from the applicator bottle according to manufacturers' instructions • Use scalp protectors above the ears and hairline for no-base relaxers	• Many are petroleum based that melt on contact with the body heat of the scalp. Important not to apply to the hair as it will act as a barrier
Pre-relaxer shampoo	• Clarifying shampoo that removes grease, silicones, product and dirt	• To be used in advance of the relaxing service so that the hair is dry for the service appointment	• Shampoo the hair according to the manufacturers' instructions	• All hair types
Chelating/clarifying shampoo	• Chelating shampoo that removes mineral build up from the surface of the hair and has no conditioning agents that would cause a barrier to relaxing	• To be used in advance of the relaxing service so that the hair is dry for the service appointment	• Shampoo the hair according to the manufacturers' instructions	• All hair types
Pre-relaxing treatment	• Treatment used to even out the porosity of the hair prior	• Before the relaxer is applied	• According to the manufacturers' instructions, many brands	• To assessed hair that has been identified as

	to relaxers is applied. Polymer film acts as a buffer to slow the penetration of products into the cuticle		are lotions applied directly from the bottle to the hair	requiring treatment
Base and no base formula of lye relaxer	• "No base" relaxers have a lower concentration of lye (pH) and are also called no-lye, they may be applied directly to the hair without requiring the protective "base" layer • Base relaxers are known as lye, contain sodium hydroxide and require a protective base to be applied to the scalp to avoid scalp burns	• No-base – after application of scalp protector to the ears and hairline • Base – after application of scalp protector and pre-relaxer treatment	• Apply with back of tail comb, tint brush or fingers	• It is still recommended to use scalp protection around the ears and hairline for no base relaxers
Lye relaxers	• Called lye because they contain the strongest pH chemical sodium hydroxide, with a pH of 12-14 • Works faster on the hair than no-lye • Usually available as a thick paste	• After the base or scalp protection has been applied	• Apply with back of tail comb, tint brush or fingers after the base or scalp protection has been applied	• Due to the strong pH can cause scalp irritation • Fastest processing time, therefore of great importance to avoid over-processing and hair destruction
No lye relaxers	• Although branded 'no lye' they are still strongly	• After consultation	• Apply with back of tail comb, tint brush or fingers	• Some brands have mild strengths suitable for sensitive

	alkaline with pH of 9-11 • Due to lower pH they require longer processing times • Many require mixing with activators before application • Usually available as a thick paste consistency			scalps and fine or normal hair types • Also have extra or super strength which has the highest pH for coarse resistant hair types • Disadvantage of no-lye relaxers is the resulting calcium deposit on the hair, making the hair dull and brittle
Post relaxer treatments	• Acid based conditioners that reduce the pH of the hair after relaxation and halt the relaxation process	• As per manufacturers' instructions, either before or after the neutralising shampoo, brand; instructions vary	• As per manufacturers' instructions, usually from the applicator bottle directly to the rinsed hair at the basin	• All hair types
Neutralising/Normalising shampoos	• Acid based shampoo that acts to halt the relaxing process	• Applied after relaxer has been thoroughly rinsed out of the hair	• Applied and used like regular shampoo • Essential to shampoo for long enough for the product to halt the relaxation process • Some may change colour once this stage has been reached	• Shampoo methods need to be very gentle as the hair is in a delicate state and scalp may be sensitive
Post-relaxer conditioner	• pH balanced to close the cuticle to retain the strength of the hair after relaxing services	• Apply to the lengths of the hair once all traces of neutralising shampoo have been rinsed away and excess water has been	• Apply from the palms of the hands	• Has an antioxidant action to halt the oxidation process of the neutralising shampoo

		squeezed from the hair		
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- The types of relaxing products that are recommended for different hair characteristics
- Fine or tinted hair
 - Use mild relaxer, for fine or tinted hair
- Normal, medium-textured virgin hair
 - Use regular no-lye relaxer
- Coarse, virgin hair
 - Use strong or super relaxer lye or no-lye (but if the client has a sensitive scalp use a no-lye regular or mild relaxer for normal hair)
- Virgin hair
 - Hair that has not been treated with chemicals, select according to condition, texture and desired result
- Tools to include
 - Plastic tail comb – is used for precise and accurate sectioning and can be used for applying the product to the section. The back of the comb can be used for smoothing the hair
 - Wide tooth combs – used for detangling the wet hair after the relaxing process
 - Hands – fingers protected by gloves can be used for applying the relaxer and for smoothing the hair
 - Non-metallic sectioning clips and non-metallic bowl – used during relaxing procedures. Metallic items react adversely when in contact with relaxers
 - Application brush – plastic tint brushes can be used to apply relaxing products
- Equipment to include
 - Gloves – to protect hands
 - Gowns – non-permeable to protect client's clothes
 - Plastic cape - provides a plastic layer to avoid seepage occurring
 - Towels – placed on top of gown to protect the client
 - Timers – to ensure precise timings for service
 - Heat accelerators – electrical appliances that deliver a heat source suitable for accelerating the processing time for chemical services. To be used only if stated in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions for the hair relaxing service

The range of hair relaxing application methods

Taught content to include

- Different methods of applying relaxer to include:
 - Top application
 - Relaxer is applied to the top of each section only. Suitable application method for fine or low-density hair
 - Top and bottom application
 - Relaxer is applied to the underside of the previous section and then on top of the new section. Top and bottom application enables thicker sections to be taken or is to be used on hair with high-density. Care must be taken not to touch the scalp with the product
 - Hand/smoothing – recommended for virgin hair application
 - Relaxer is placed onto the palm of the gloved hand with a spatula and applied by using the palm to spread the product and smooth the hair straight
 - Sequence of application – as per manufacturers' instructions for sequence of application of re-growth and virgin hair
 - Re-growth – section from ear-to-ear and mid-line from forehead to nape. Apply by taking 2 - 5 mm sections from the crown and work down towards the nape at the back of the head. Then work from the top central parting down to the ears and finally the front hairline. Variations may occur in application; apply to known resistant areas first. Application starts at the crown as this area has the strongest movement, is coarser and takes longer to process than hair in the nape
 - Virgin – section as for re-growth and follow the same order for application but the application is to the mid-lengths first, and then the ends and finally the root area

The importance of following salon and manufacturers' instructions during relaxing services

Taught content to include

- To ensure the relaxing result is achieved
- The importance of ensuring there is adequate ventilation applying relaxing agents to minimise unnecessary inhalation of product
- To prevent hazards, e.g. when applying the relaxing product ensure spillages are wiped up if dropped onto the clients skin
- To minimise risks, e.g. the risk of an allergic reaction to the product irritating or burning the client's skin
- To produce satisfactory results, e.g. incorrect development timings could result in hair deterioration or areas of unwanted curl
- To avoid problems or mistakes, e.g. incorrect application technique
- To avoid legal action, e.g. failure to undertake the appropriate tests before relaxing services

The importance of using products cost-effectively

Taught content to include

- Applying products in a logical sequence
- Applying products evenly to minimise wastage, e.g. sectioning of the hair to ensure even distribution of relaxing agent may be required to produce an even result and prevent waste
- The effect on the hair and/or scalp if excessive products are used, e.g. saturating fine hair could result in hair breakage or the scalp become irritated by the product
- Following manufacturers' instructions to ensure correct application of relaxing agents and neutralising/normalising products and prevent wastage
- Effects on the environment to include
 - The application of products in a well-ventilated area – away from others
 - The safe disposing of unwanted relaxing agents and neutralising materials
- Following salon and organisation policy when using relaxing products

Assessment requirements

Learners must complete all assessment requirements related to this unit:

1. Service portfolio
2. Theory examination

1. Service portfolio

Learners must produce a service portfolio which is required to be completed under supervision of a lecturer who must monitor the quality of the services performed throughout the learners' training

The performance of learning outcome 1 must be demonstrated as part of all technical observations and will be recorded on **at least 3 occasions**. This should be conducted on a range of new and existing clients.

The service portfolio must be completed and marked prior to the learner completing the theory examination.

2. Theory examination

Learners must complete a theory examination for this unit. This will consist of a multiple choice question paper.

The theory examination will test knowledge and understanding from across learning outcomes 2, 3, 4 and 5. Learners should use the unit content sections of this unit to aid revision.

Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes	Role
v1.0	02/09/2019	First published	Head of Qualifications and Processing
v2.0	05/03/2020	Clarified content on Density Test	Product and Regulation Manager
v3.0	23/06/2026	Rebranding	Development Administrator