
Unit Specification

iUHB351 – Provide hair relaxing services

Unit reference number: D/651/0682

Level: 2

Guided Learning Hours (GLH): 82

Overview

The aim of this unit is to develop learner's knowledge, understanding and skills to be able to carry out relaxing services to the satisfaction of the client.

Learners will be required to demonstrate they have the ability to examine the hair and scalp, select and use suitable products and choose the correct application techniques.

Learners will need to maintain health, safety and hygiene salon procedures throughout the unit. Additionally, learners must maintain their personal appearance and demonstrate effective communication and consultation skills.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, learners will:

LO1 Be able to relax hair

LO2 Know how health and safety policies and procedures affect relaxing services

LO3 Understand the factors that influence relaxing services

LO4 Understand the science of relaxing services

LO5 Understand the products and techniques used in relaxing services

Unit content

LO1 Be able to relax hair

Prepare for relaxing services

Taught content

- Preparation of learners should include:
 - Clean and hygienic appearance for example, avoidance of overpowering odours – tobacco, heavy perfume/aftershave
 - Good communication and listening skills
 - Correct posture with weight evenly balanced
 - Use of protective garments for example, gloves
- 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 for example, if hand held hairdryer is used for drying the hair after the service
 - Products on display to be clean of dust and hair
 - Tools and equipment to be clean and sterilised
 - Electrical equipment to be visually checked before use for example, 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
 - Application of barrier cream around the hairline
 - Check of the client record card (where appropriate) for previous services and client history
- Check all tests have been undertaken

Apply safe and hygienic methods of working throughout services

Taught content

- Working safely throughout the service to minimise risk, harm or injury to self or others
- Minimise the risk of damage to tools and equipment
- Ensure that materials are disposed of hygienically and appropriately
- Ensure the use of clean resources
- Ensure there is sufficient stock, which is used appropriately to minimise the wastage of products
- Assess the hair conditions for contra-indications and suitability for the hair relaxing service to include:
 - Hair classification
 - Hair characteristics
 - Hair elasticity, porosity, texture, density, condition, growth patterns and hair length
- Assess the scalp condition to assess for contra-indications and the suitability of the hair relaxing service to include:
 - Cuts, sores and abrasions
- Ensure personal protective equipment for both the stylist and the client are used at all times
- Ensure client's hairline is protected
- Manufacturers' instructions are checked to identify:
 - Whether a pre-relaxing treatment is required
 - Processing and neutralising timings
- Ensure product does not get into client's eyes or skin and clothes
- Ensure the work area is well ventilated to minimise fumes
- The position of the client meets the needs of the service without causing them discomfort
- Ensure own posture and position is correct to minimise fatigue and the risk of injury
- Ensures the work area is clean and tidy throughout the service
- Make effective use of their working time
- Adheres to the safe and hygienic methods of removing waste during the hair relaxing treatment service are followed

Consult with clients about services and outcomes of tests

Taught content

- Undertaking appropriate tests and recording outcomes to include:
 - Test cutting/development strand test
 - Elasticity test
 - Porosity test
 - Incompatibility test
 - Pull test – if appropriate
 - Skin sensitivity test – if appropriate
- Recording and discussing with the client tests that have been undertaken
- Consulting and confirming with the client before the hair relaxing treatment commences to agree the chosen style, desired look and finished degree of straightness and the required outcome
- Offering alternative services for poor condition/over porous hair
- Identify possible resistant or potentially difficult hair growth pattern areas
- Establish with the client if any areas of the hair have not straightened very well previously
- Asking the client appropriate questions to identify if they have any sensitive areas of the head or allergies/skin sensitivity
- Accurately recording the client's responses to questioning

Confirm with clients the desired effect

Taught content

- Confirm with the client the desired look agreed at consultation prior to starting the service,
- use style books/digital media with examples of styles suitable for hair type (if appropriate)
- Discuss lifestyle as this may impact on style
- Agree the required finished style for example, blow-dry, setting, left naturally to dry
- Establishing if the client has had a previous history of sensitivity to perm lotion or hair relaxing treatments, if necessary:
 - Undertake a pre-hair relaxing skin test
- Consult with client throughout service

Select suitable products, tools and equipment

Taught content

- Products – examples include:
 - Scalp protector(s)
 - Sodium relaxer
 - Non-sodium relaxer
 - Appropriate relaxing products for hair classification
 - Pre-relaxing products/treatments including normalising shampoo
 - Post-relaxing products/treatments
 - Barrier cream/lotion
- Tools – examples include:
 - Non-metallic bowls
 - Selection of combs
 - Tint brush
 - Sectioning clips/clamps
 - Personal protection equipment (PPE) for stylist and client
- Equipment – examples include:
 - Timer
 - Water spray
 - Cotton wool

Carry out relaxing services

Taught content

- Apply the correct hair relaxing treatment technique according to hair classification and characteristics
- Used all application techniques including:
 - Top and bottom
 - Top
 - Hand
- Application of hair relaxing treatment service using sodium relaxers
- Application of hair relaxing treatment service using non-sodium relaxers
- Applied hair relaxing treatment to all areas to include:
 - Virgin hair application
 - Re-growth application between 4 to 8 weeks
 - Regrowth application up to 12 weeks
- During the development time, test for elasticity and tensile strength and the degree of straightness achieved

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

Taught content

- Advising on most suitable time to provide a hair relaxing service for example, before a colouring service
- Advise on home care maintenance for example, suitable home care products and handling the hair
- When to return to the salon for maintenance for regrowth application

LO2 Know how health and safety policies and procedures affect relaxing services

The responsibilities for health and safety in own role

Taught content

- 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, employer's 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 accurately describe the features and benefits of products and services
 - The reasons and importance for 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 trained to use
 - Reasons for personal protective equipment (PPE) for example, 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
 - 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 to any goods that are supplied or offered to supply any goods to which a false trade description has been applied, or 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 and risks associated when using products or when performing a hair relaxing service
- Safety when using associated products, tools and equipment
- Reasons to undertake appropriate hair relaxing tests
- Contra-indications when providing hair relaxing services

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

Taught content

- The importance of ensuring that all chemicals relating to the hair relaxing treatment services are stored, handled and used in accordance to salon policy, local bylaws and manufacturers' instructions
- The potential hazards and risks associated to not completing appropriate tests on the client and the hair
- Hazards – anything that has the potential to cause harm, for example, spillage of product on the floor
- Risks – a chance, high or low, that harm caused by the hazard may occur, for example, potential for self, client or others to slip on the spillage
- Working safely throughout the service, an example may include ensuring there is adequate room around the client with no obstructions
- Ensuring use and maintenance of any equipment is monitored and visual checks are conducted for example, checking for loose wires and temperature settings when using heat appliances for drying the hair after the hair relaxing service
- Ensuring the client is comfortable and free from harm throughout the service for example, removing jewellery that may obstruct application of the hair relaxing service
- Disposing of waste appropriately to minimise risk of cross-infection and ensure there is no unnecessary risk to the environment, for example, ensure clean protective garments are freshly laundered for every client
- Correct handling and storage of all products, tools and equipment as applicable to the country the qualification is being taken in
- The importance of ensuring a thorough visual check of the hair and scalp is performed prior to the service to prevent cross infection for example, ensuring there are no cuts, sores or abrasions on the scalp
- Risk of electric shock when using electrical equipment to enhance the service to include potential hazards of trailing wires
- Fire – the salon's policy in the outcome of a fire and where the assembly point is
- The importance of ensuring personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements are followed for both client and stylist for example, the use of gloves when applying solutions for the hair relaxing services

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

Taught content

- The importance of providing personal protective equipment (PPE) for both client and stylist for example, prevention of damage to clients clothing
- Use of clean and sterile tools equipment for all clients
- The importance of protecting the client's skin, eyes and clothing for example, products splashing into the eyes
- Barrier cream for client's hairline where required
- Sectioning hair appropriate for the technique to be used when undertaking the hair relaxing service
- Systematic application and control of products when relaxing the hair
- Control of electrical equipment (if used)
- Organisation of working area for example, the importance of ensuring the tools and equipment are positioned for ease of use
- Avoid trailing wires, spillages from products on the floor

Contact dermatitis and how it can be prevented

Taught content

- Recognising contact dermatitis symptoms
- Contact dermatitis – is a rash caused by the skin reacting to a substance it has come into contact with for example, 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:
 - Wearing gloves (recommended) when applying products to relax the hair
 - Rinsing and drying hands thoroughly
 - Use of moisturisers or barrier creams
- Correct handling and storage of all products, tools and equipment
- Following and adhering to manufacturers' instructions when using products when performing hair relaxing services

The importance of questioning clients prior to and during services

Taught content

- Understanding the client's requirements and expectations for the hair relaxing finish resulting style
- To check for contra-indications to the hair relaxing service
- To provide the client the opportunity to ask questions (where necessary)
- To ensure the client is comfortable
- To ensure the client understands the process
- To gain information on how they maintain their hair, lifestyle and commitment to the finished relaxed style
- To ensure and confirm that the client's expectations are met for the hair relaxing treatment service
- 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 to identify the potential discomfort clients may experience during the relaxing process and why it is important to check on their wellbeing
- The importance of confirming client's satisfaction

The importance of preventing cross-infection and cross-infestation

Taught content

- How to avoid cross-contamination, cross-infection or cross-infestation
- Ensuring the clients scalp and hair are checked prior to the hair relaxing treatment service
- Avoidance of cross-contamination for example, using unclean tools or protective garments from one client could contaminate the next client's hair or scalp
- Ensure the professional salon image is maintained

LO3 Understand the factors that influence relaxing services

The factors that may influence the services and ways of dealing with them

Taught content

- 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

- Density – this is defined as the number of hairs on the scalp and will affect the choice of tools, techniques and products used and the time of the service. To include:
 - Assessing the hair thoroughly for example, to ensure the product is suitable for the hair
 - Ensuring the correct sections for example, prevent making sections that are too large for the hair density to prevent undue tension when using relaxing techniques on the hair
- 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. To include:
 - When the use of pre-relaxing treatments are required to even out the porosity of the hair
- 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 products and may indicate whether services may be limited or affected
- 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. To include:
 - Selecting suitable pre-relaxing treatment products where required
- Hair condition – hair that is in good condition will be shiny, smooth, with good porosity (flat cuticle scales) and good elasticity. 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 relaxing treatment and may indicate whether services may be contra-indicated or limit and affect the end result
- Hygroscopic – hair has the ability to absorb moisture into the cortex
- Growth patterns – this relates to the direction the hair grows from the scalp and may influence the desired finish. Sectioning and application methods may help overcome a difficult growth pattern
- Other factors include:

- 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 hair relaxing service it is important to ensure that the client has a style they can manage and which suits their overall appearance
- Lifestyle – this is about the client’s everyday activities and working patterns for example, a client may require guidance on daily management of the relaxed hairstyle
- Hair length – this will affect the general condition of the hair. If the hair is long, the ends may show the presence of physical or chemical processes which may affect the condition. To include:
 - The need for possible other services prior to the hair relaxing service for example, cut, conditioning or specialised treatment services
 - Application of product – to ensure sufficient relaxing products are applied throughout the lengths of the hair without saturating the scalp
 - Management of the hair – to ensure the techniques used are appropriate for the hair length
- Services prior to hair relaxing services – other services offered prior to relaxing the hair may influence the selection of products or contra-indicate the service for example, sodium based and non-sodium based products should not be intermixed
- White hair – influences the choice of products as discolouration may occur
- Degree of product build up – frequent use of non-sodium based products may result in dull brittle hair conditions and will be prone to possible hair breakage. The use of clarifying shampoos are recommended
- Temperature and humidity of the salon, client and general external weather conditions – these will be influencing factors when relaxing hair. A salon that has poor ventilation may produce a damp and humid atmosphere, affecting service examples include:
 - Warm temperature:
 - The hair relaxing service will process readily and require frequent strand tests to assess the development of straightness required
 - Cool temperature:
 - The hair relaxing service may process slowly and will require frequent strand tests to assess the development
- Degree of existing curl – for example, the existing curl influences the products and techniques required to straighten the hair
- The different methods of hair straightening applications required to reduce the degree of curl to include:
 - Adapting application methods
 - Regrowth hair
 - Virgin hair
 - Previously chemically treated hair
- The importance of identifying the hair factors through conducting a detailed hair and scalp examination
- Identifying how the hair and scalp examination can affect the product choice
- Effects on the hair and scalp when applications are used to straighten hair to include:
 - The need to undertake the correct tests on the hair to check for suitability
 - The need to ensure the scalp has been thoroughly examined prior to regrowth service Ensure even application of products
 - Importance of ensuring the hair is not overstretched causing damage or breakage
- The importance of ensuring manufacturers’ processing times are followed correctly to include:
 - Identifying why accurate timing and thorough rinsing of products is necessary

LO4 Understand the science of relaxing services

Contra-indications and how they affect relaxing services

Taught content

- The importance of undertaking a full consultation
- The importance of undertaking, recording and recognising the outcomes of tests on the hair for example, incompatibility of products
- The importance of recognising any contra-indications to hair relaxing treatments services that may affect the hair/end result, for example, over stretched very porous hair may not be suitable for the service
- The importance of recognising any contra-indications to hair relaxing treatments that may affect the scalp for example, adverse skin conditions, scalp irritation, cut or sores
- Contra-indications to hair relaxing treatments to include, bacterial, viral or fungal infections
 - Bacterial infection examples include:
 - Impetigo – begins as blisters that itch, then fill with a yellowish-brown fluid, that once rupture becomes 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:
 - 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
 - Monilethrix – is a condition that affects hair growth. Its most characteristic feature is that individual strands of hair have a beaded appearance that results in short, fragile and broken hair
- The course of action to be taken if contra-indications are suspected to include:
 - The limits and boundaries of duties
 - Not to offer diagnosis
 - Which conditions need reporting and when
 - Who to report to and where to record the findings
 - Referral for medical attention or advice
 - History of previous allergic reaction or irritation to hair relaxing treatments services

- The importance of checking the condition of the hair and scalp
- History of previous allergic reactions
- The importance of questioning the client regarding if they have had any adverse reactions to medication, products, or services in the past
- Recognising non-contagious conditions which may prevent or restrict a hair relaxing treatment to include:
 - Cuts, sores or abrasions
 - Sebaceous cyst – tender or sore raised bump on skin, which if infected or inflamed will contain pus
 - Psoriasis – common skin condition that changes the life cycle of skin cells. Causes a build-up of skin cells which may appear thick silvery and inflamed. May cause itching
 - Contact dermatitis – is a rash caused by the skin reacting to a substance it has come into contact with for example, chemicals. May be noticeable around the client neckline/ear area due to contact with nickel based jewellery/earrings. 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
 - Seborrhoea – over activity of sebaceous glands by excessive secretion of sebum resulting in an oily coating on the skin – for example, may limit the effects of the perming solution
 - Scalp sensitivity – an inflamed, sore and red scalp, requires careful massage techniques and use of tools
 - Recent scar/tissue injury may be tender and sensitive
 - Alopecia
 - Loss of hair in patches on the scalp
 - Traction alopecia – hair loss at the point of tension, possible after the removal of hair extensions, this may prevent or restrict the hair relaxing service
 - Hair loss as a result of chemotherapy – usually temporary and hair is lost over scalp and body
 - Hair loss as a result of medication or medical conditions, for example, thyroid imbalance
 - Hair loss as a result of hormonal changes, for example, after giving birth

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

Taught content

- To understand the reasons why tests are carried out
- The importance of following manufacturers' instructions for tests and the potential consequences of failing to carry out these tests
- To ensure that all tests are collated, dated and are 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 hair relaxing service finished results are as expected for example, required level of straightness of the hair
- To ensure the hair relaxing service finished results meet the client requirements

When and how hair relaxing treatment service tests are carried out

Taught content

- Prior to hair relaxing service:
 - Skin tests for hair relaxing treatment services – in certain circumstances where a client has a history of sensitivity to products, a test to check for allergic reactions or skin sensitivity to relaxing can be undertaken:
 - Clean an area behind the ear and apply a small amount of intended relaxing product to the skin 24-48 hours prior to the service
 - Leave the test for 24-48 hours
 - If the skin becomes red or sore then the service should not be carried out
 - Elasticity test – may prevent or restrict the application of relaxing products if the hair is stretched and does not go back to its original state:
 - On wet hair, take individual strand 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 return 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 service. Porous hair tends to process chemicals quickly and can therefore over-process easily. Additional advice to client may include hair treatments, pre-relaxing 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
 - 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 cutting from the hair, secure with cotton or adhesive tape. Pour 20mls of liquid 6% hydrogen peroxide into a non-metallic bowl. Add 5 drops of ammonium hydroxide. Leave for up to 30 minutes. If there are no compatible substances on the hair there should be no reaction in the bowl. Where metallic salts are present the liquid will react with the hair and it may change colour or disintegrate

- Test cutting/development strand test – may be used to check the processing, development and degree of straightness achievable for the hair relaxing service
 - Take cuttings from different parts of clean hair
 - Secure the ends with cotton or tape and apply the relaxing product and carefully work the hair to straighten
 - Process according to manufacturers' instructions
 - Remove product thoroughly, neutralise and rinse clean
 - Assess the outcome
- Pull test – to assess potential hair loss after removal of hair extensions or plaits
 - Take a small amount of hair between the thumb and middle fingers from the base of the hairs near the scalp (approximately 30-60 hairs). Firmly pull hairs from the scalp. If more than 10% 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
 - May prevent or restrict the hair relaxing service
- Density test – to help assess the product, application and development time due to the number of hairs in a 3cm square
- During the hair relaxing service:
 - Strand test – used to confirm straightening has been achieved by taking strand tests on different areas of the head and at suitable times in the hair relaxing process:
 - Follow manufacturers' instructions for development time
 - Wear gloves
 - Remove product with cotton wool from a small section of hair
 - If the hair stays straight (or has reached the desired degree of straightness) and does not revert to its original curl the processing is complete and ready for the neutralising stage

How test results influence the relaxing service

Taught content

- The importance of ensuring that test results are recorded and stored accurately so that a history of results can be reviewed for example, repeating elasticity tests after a period of time to ascertain if there's been an improvement in the hair condition
- The potential consequences of failing to undertake the appropriate tests
- To check for contra-indications for example, the scalp is free from cuts, sores or abrasions
- To check the client's hair condition, texture, porosity or possible breakage
- To discuss limitations with the client
- To confirm hair classification
- To confirm hair characteristics
- To analyse any pre-existing chemical services on the hair for example, colouring and/or lightening services that may be influenced or influence hair relaxing service
- To ascertain the correct hair relaxing solution to use
- Skin/sensitivity test – positive and negative reactions for example, a negative reaction means the service can continue
- Elasticity test – influences the product choice, application and final required result for example, a poor elasticity outcome may prevent the service and advice on further treatment services with the client to improve the overall condition of the hair before the hair relaxing service can be carried out
- Porosity test – may restrict or prevent chemical service – application techniques and product choice need to take into account the differences in hair structure and may affect final may result in unevenness or in some circumstances further damage to the hair
- Incompatibility test – prevents chemical service. There is a presence of metallic salts in the hair and if chemicals are added it may result in the hair destruction
- Test cutting/development strand test – will help determine the suitability of the hair relaxing product, degree of straightness achievable or timing and development depending upon the hair classification and characteristics
- Pull test – will determine suitability of the hair relaxing service
- Strand test – to check the processing and timing of the service. If not undertaken this may result in under or over processing of the relaxing service

The effects on the hair structure when relaxing hair

Taught content

- Hair consists of hardened protein called keratin:
 - Made up amino acids and peptide bonds
 - Found in the cortex
 - Together form polypeptide chains or links
 - Polypeptide chains or links are supported by weaker hydrogen bonds and strong disulphide bonds
 - Disulphide bonds can only be broken by either a chemical perming or relaxing service
- The high alkalinity of the relaxer opens up the cuticle scales allowing the chemicals to enter the cortex
- Hair relaxing treatment products applied to hair cause some of the disulphide bonds to break
- The chemical contained within the relaxer breaks down the disulphide bonds
- The hair is softened by depositing a reducing agent called hydrogen and changes the links in the hair to single sulphur bonds – this process is known as hydrolysis
- Once straightened or moulded the hydrolysis is stopped by a neutralising shampoo or neutralising process which is applied to the hair and removes the hydrogen from the cortex
- This process, called oxidation, joins together the individual sulphur bonds to re-form disulphide bonds and fixes it into its new position
- The higher pH balance of a relaxing product means they work fast and increase the risk of over-processing the hair
- Over processing a hair relaxing treatment service could result in:
 - Damage to scalp
 - Damage to cuticle/increased porosity
 - Breakage or destruction of hair

The active ingredients in relaxing products

Taught content

- Lye based hair relaxer:
 - Known as 'one-step' process
 - Contain sodium hydroxide
 - Stronger pH alkaline level
 - Breaks the hairs' bonds quickly leaves less disulphide bonds
 - Uses acid-balancing neutralising shampoo to fix hair into new shape
 - Can cause hair damage if used incorrectly
 - Limits other chemical processes due to there being fewer disulphide bonds
 - Not suitable for sensitive scalp conditions
- No-lye hair relaxer:
 - Known as 'two-step process'
 - Contain calcium hydroxide or guanidine hydroxide
 - pH alkaline level is lower than the lye based relaxing agent
 - Breaks the hairs' bonds
 - Uses neutralisation to reform hair into new shape
 - Can cause dryer hair due to potential calcium deposit build-up
 - May be suitable for more sensitive scalp conditions
- Lye relaxing and no-lye relaxing products should not be interchanged/mixed and used on the same client

- It is possible to apply a different relaxer type to new growth with care if there is sufficient regrowth to avoid overlapping of products
- Sodium relaxers – sodium hydroxide (lye relaxers)
- Non-sodium relaxers – guanidine hydroxide, calcium hydroxide (no-lye relaxers)
- Neutralising products – chemical composition is acid based
- The importance of pre and post relaxing products to include:
 - Following manufacturers' instructions
 - Pre-relaxing products – used prior to relaxing used to even out the porosity along the hair, form a protective barrier along the cuticle
 - Post-relaxing products – used after neutralising and closes and smooths the cuticle, rebalances the hair to its natural pH value (4.5-5.5)
- Effects of the pH value of all products on the structure of the hair
- Relaxers are alkaline in composition and usually have a high pH value other than chemical hair products:
 - Follow manufacturers' instructions
 - May cause damage the hair
- Effects of the pH value of all products on the structure of the hair to include:
 - The pH of a lye product – averages a pH between 12-14
 - The pH of a no-lye product – averages a pH between 9-11
 - The importance of ensuring the hair classification and characteristics are suitable for the chosen relaxing product in order not to cause irreparable damage
- Identify the importance and effects of restoring the hair's pH balance after the relaxing process

The effects of temperature on relaxing products

Taught content

- External/salon temperature will affect the processing of a relaxing service for example, will process more quickly in a warm salon
- Body heat affects the processing for example, excess heat on scalp can affect a regrowth application
- Warm temperature:
 - The process of the relaxing service may be quicker and the need to take frequent strand tests is necessary during development
- Cool temperature:
 - The process of the relaxing service may be slower and the need to take frequent strand tests to assess development
- Additional electrical heat application must be avoided

LO5 Understand the products and techniques used in relaxing services

The range of products, tools and equipment available for the relaxing services

Taught content

Type of relaxing product	Product features	When to apply/Pre or Post damping	How to apply	Special features/suitable hair types
Barrier cream	Cream used to protect the skin around the hairline from perm lotion	Apply to the hairline after the client is gowned	Apply with a 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. Used prior to the application of lye relaxers that are sodium hydroxide based	Prior to the application of relaxers and after the scalp examination. Use scalp protectors above the ears and hairline for no lye relaxers	Directly from the applicator bottle according to manufacturers' instructions	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
Clarifying shampoo	Clarifying shampoo 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 and pH of the hair prior to relaxing application. Acts as a buffer to slow the penetration of products into the cuticle	Before the relaxer is applied	According to the manufacturers' instructions, many brands are lotions applied directly from the bottle to the hair	N/A

Lye and no lye relaxer	Lye relaxing products and require a protective base to be applied to the scalp to avoid scalp burns No-lye relaxing products may be applied directly to the hair without requiring the protective	Lye relaxing product – after application of scalp protector and pre-relaxer treatment No-lye relaxing product – after application of scalp protector to the ears and hairline	Apply with back of tail-comb, tint brush or fingers	Recommended to use scalp protection around the ears and hairline for all relaxing products. Check manufacturers' instructions
Post relaxer treatments	Acid based conditioners that reduce the pH of the hair after relaxation and halt the relaxation process	As per manufacturer's 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	N/A
Neutralising 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 process of relaxation	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 squeezed from the hair	Apply from the palms of the hands	Has an anti-oxidant action to halt the oxidation process of the neutralising shampoo

• Tools and equipment:

- Pin-tail/tail comb – the narrow end is used to assist accurate sectioning
- Wide tooth comb – used to aid the straightening technique to comb the hair and distribute the products evenly when relaxing
- Spatula – to dispense cream relaxers into the hand
- Non-metallic sectioning clips and non-metallic bowl – used during the relaxing service
Metallic items react adversely when in contact with relaxing products
- Cotton wool strip (if required) – used dampened with water and placed around the hairline to protect the client's skin and eyes from drips from product
- Neutralising sponge – sponge used to foam neutraliser and to apply to the hair
- Personal protection equipment (PPE) for stylist and client – for safeguarding to include gloves for application methods
- Brush for application of relaxing products/creams to the hair
- Timer – to check on development time

The methods of applying relaxing products

Taught content

- Top application – relaxer is applied to the top of each section of the hair 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 of the hair. Top and bottom application enables thicker sections to be taken or is to be used on hair that is coarser or high-density. Care must be taken not to touch the scalp with the product
- Hand – best 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 relaxing applications examples include:
 - Re-growth hair – 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
 - Apply relaxing product only to the regrowth hair
 - Work from the top central parting down to the ears and finally the front hairline
 - Variations may occur in application for example, the need to applying to known resistant areas first
 - Virgin hair – section from ear-to-ear and mid-line from forehead to nape
 - Application of relaxing product is to the mid-lengths first, and then the ends and finally the root area
 - Sectioning the hair when required, cleanly and evenly to assist the accurate application of the relaxer
 - Applying products accurately taking into account the results of the analysis and other factors influencing the service
 - Applying the relaxer in a way that minimises the risk of the product being spread to the client's skin, clothes and surrounding area

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

Taught content

- To ensure the correct relaxing product is chosen for client's hair type
- To ensure the importance of correct methods of rinsing relaxing processes are undertaken to include:
 - Ensuring the correct products are used
 - The importance and effects of restoring the hair's pH balance after the relaxing process
- Preventing damage to the hair or scalp
- Following manufacturers' instructions to ensure correct products are used and prevent wastage
- Effects on the environment to include:
 - The application of products in a well-ventilated area
 - The safe disposing of unwanted relaxing products
- Following salon and organisation policy when using relaxing products
- To prevent legal proceedings
- To present a professional image

The types of problems and causes that may occur during services

Taught content

- To ensure all problems and potential causes are dealt with effectively when providing a relaxing service to include:
 - Identifying own limits of authority for resolving problems
 - Identifying the person that problems should be reported to that cannot be resolved by the stylist
- The reasons why safety considerations which must be taken into account when relaxing hair to include:
 - Prevent potential problems arising from the relaxing service
- The reasons why different tools are used in relaxing service to include:
 - The correct usage
 - The effects on the hair and scalp
 - The potential problems that may result from incorrect use of tools on the hair and scalp
- Identify the safety considerations which must be taken into account when relaxing hair
- Examples of the types of problems may occur during the relaxing service:

Relaxing problem	Cause	Dealing with the problem	How to avoid
Hair breakage or trichorrhexis nodosa on existing hair	• Hair over-processed or chemicals too strong • Hair smoothed excessively during the relaxing process • Poor use of styling methods in between services	• Cut hair if appropriate • Use remedial restructurants and/or protein conditioners • Do not process until damage has grown out	• Monitor processing time closely • Select relaxer that is suitable for the hair type and condition • Do not over-smooth the hair during processing • Use 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 chemicals too strong • Hair smoothed excessively during the relaxing process • Incorrect neutralising	• Use remedial restructurants and/or protein conditioners • Do not process until damage has grown out	• Ensure no over-lapping during application • Monitor processing time closely • Select relaxer that is suitable for the hair type and condition • Do not over-smooth the hair during processing • Follow manufacturers' instructions
Sore scalp	• Incorrect application of	• First aid assistance for chemical burns	• Ensure correct and adequate application of scalp protecting

	- scalp protecting base - Product application too close to the scalp, or touching the scalp - Incomplete rinsing of relaxer from the hair - Incomplete timing for the normalising /neutralising shampoo	If serious, refer for medical assistance	- 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 serious, refer for medical assistance	- Ensure barrier product is correctly applied and according to manufacturers' instructions - First aid assistance for chemical burns - If serious, refer for medical assistance
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	- Product was not suitable or strong enough for hair type - Insufficient development time - Hair not smoothed during relaxer application	If hair condition allows, reduce the curl by relaxing, after a period of two weeks	- Use appropriate relaxing product for hair type and condition - Use product according to manufacturers' instructions - Smooth the hair according to manufacturers' instructions
Uneven effect	- Uneven patchy application techniques - Sections too deep - Uneven smoothing	If condition allows, re-relax affected areas with suitable relaxing products	- Apply relaxer evenly and in clean small sections - Comb through thoroughly

The importance of using products cost effectively

Taught content

- Following manufacturers' instructions to ensure correct products are used and prevent wastage
- Effects on the environment:
 - Apply the relaxing products in a well ventilated room
 - The safe disposal of unwanted relaxing and neutralising products
- Following salon and organisation policy when using relaxing products
- Calculate costs, include any retail products sold

The importance of providing clients with advice and recommendation on the service(s) provided and products available

Taught content

- To provide longevity of the relaxing service
- Time intervals between services/maintenance services
- To help clients maintain the style and condition at home using specific homecare products
- Reputation and walking advertisement for the salon
- Suggesting other services to enhance the relaxing service

Unit requirements

Learners must complete all assessment requirements related to this unit:

1. Service portfolio
2. Theory examination
3. Synoptic practical examination

1. Service portfolio

Learners must produce a service portfolio which is required to be completed under the 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 three observations**. This is to include the following relaxing treatment: 1 re-growth application and 1 virgin application.

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.

3. Synoptic practical examination

Learners must complete a synoptic practical examination for this unit which will be externally set by the awarding organisation and examined and marked by an external examiner. The synoptic practical examination will take place at the end of the period of learning.

Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes	Role
v1.0	19/03/2024	First published	Qualification Administrator
v2.0	24/06/2026	Rebranding	Development Administrator