

Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)

Principles of Customer Service

Principles of Customer Service Level 1 Award – 10334

Principles of Customer Service Level 2 Certificate – 09628

Principles of Customer Service Level 3 Certificate – 09629

OCR Report to Centres – August 2016

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates, which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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1 Overview

The vast majority of centres use the OCR evidence sheets for the learners to complete. These have been designed to encourage the learners to reflect on their own working environment and provide evidence of their knowledge and understanding with respect to the principles of customer service and their working environment.

The main issues have been with the learners providing sufficient depth of responses where they are required to describe, explain, evaluate (although this has improved since last year) and legislation. Learners are not being encouraged to research the most current legislation and are therefore being penalised because they are referring to legislation that is out-of-date in many cases do not exist in the same format. Learners should be encouraged to research legislation and regulation which is relevant to their own working environment. The Equality Act 2010 should be carefully researched by learners as in April 2011 the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 ceased to exist as a separate piece of legislation and became part of the Equality Act. There are still a number of learners who are quoting the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 which no longer exists as a separate piece of legislation.

There have been some very good examples of good practice within centres where the assessors have encouraged learners to research their job roles and the organisations they are working for. Learners have demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding of the principles of customer service and how this effects their own organisation.

2 General Comments

Level 1 Award in Principles of Customer Service

The only issue that still arises with this qualification is the handwritten responses from some learners. They do not always make sense or do not contain enough detail. Centres are reminded that if there is an issue with the learner's written skills, they can use a separate scribe. Centres are reminded however, to ensure that the learner, assessor and scribe all sign the various sections on the front cover of the evidence sheet.

Level 2 Certificate in Principles of Customer Service

The evidence presented by the learners continues to improve with learners providing more detail with their responses confirming a higher degree of knowledge and understanding. There are still some learners who struggle with the terms "service offer" and "service chain". There are examples on the OCR website which can be used with learners to aid their understanding. It is suggested that assessors use these to discuss with the learners their understanding of the terms and what they would be for their own organisations.

As previously mentioned, the reference to current legislation is still causing some problems with learners who are referring to out-of-date legislation. Learners should be researching the legislation applicable to their own particular organisation and what the latest legislation is and its requirements. Learners who are in larger organisations should be able to easily find out what legislation is relevant whilst learners in smaller organisations may find that more challenging.

Another issue that arises is when learners are required to “explain the impact of....” Unit 1, Learning Outcome, Assessment Criterion 1.4 requires the learner to ‘Explain how poor customer service could impact on customer expectations and customer satisfaction’. Some learners are explaining the consequence of poor customer service which is not the same thing. Learners should be able to link the customer expectations and customer satisfaction and then explain how the delivery of poor customer service influences this.

Level 3 Certificate in Principles of Customer Service

Again legislation appeared to be the main issue arising from submissions this year. The same comments apply here as to those provided for Level 2. This has resulted in learners not being awarded Unit 5. In addition, it is not just about explaining the legislation; it is looking at how the legislation affects the delivery of customer service. So in some instances even if the learner has discussed the correct legislation they are not taking it the step further and talking about the effects.

As with level 2, there have also been learners who do not fully understand terminology such as ‘service chain’ and/or ‘service offer’. This lack of understanding has been the main cause of learners not achieving unit 4.

Overall, unit 3 has been carried out well by learners who have shown a good understanding of the importance of communication within their customer service role and how it can be used effectively with both internal and external customers.

Learners overall, have been entered on the correct level of qualification to meet their individual needs. Some centres have used the principles of customer service as a mechanism to develop learners’ knowledge and understanding of their customer service role prior to undertaking the NVQ qualification. This has provided them with the opportunity to research their working environment and personal job role and reflect on the delivery of customer service and the impacts that internal and external factors can have with effective delivery.

3 Comments on Individual Units

Level 1 Award in Principles of Customer Service

Unit 1 Customer expectations of customer service

LO1 – AC1.1 – there has been an improvement with learners correctly identifying internal and external customers to their organisation.

LO1 – AC1.2, AC1.3 and AC1.4 – learners are required to identify the expectations of internal and external customers and how these are linked to customer satisfaction. Learners will usually correctly identify the expectations of the customers but sometimes do not fully understand how these are linked to customer satisfaction. Learners need to understand that there is a clear link between the two, how these are formed and what they actually mean.

LO2 – AC2.4 – learners are required to outline how the behaviour of individuals in an organisation can affect the customer experience. When providing an example of a positive behaviour and a negative behaviour some learners tend to provide a good example of a positive behaviour and then present the opposite as a negative behaviour. Learners can then struggle on stating how it can affect the customer experience. It is recommended that the assessors encourage learners to consider different examples for each. It is also important that they consider what the effect is on the experience of their customer as opposed to the consequence to their organisation.

LO2 – AC2.5 – this is similar to the issues identified above but in this AC, learners are referring to teamwork as opposed to individuals. This can be difficult for learners if they do not work in environments where they do not constantly work as part of a team. Learners would benefit from a discussion with the assessor to consider how the team could be the learner with other departments in order to, for example, ‘get a delivery out on time’ and how positive and negative behaviour of team members can have a positive and negative effect.

Unit 2 – Organisational procedures for delivering customer service

LO1 is usually accurately evidenced by the majority of learners showing a clear understanding of the policies and procedures in place and their importance.

LO1 – AC1.5 – the main issue for LO1 is where the learners are required to outline the importance of not discriminating against customers. Some learners tend to struggle with providing more than one example and for the second example provide something that is basically a rewording of their first example. Learners in these situations would benefit from a discussion with their assessor about the different forms of discrimination and how this can apply to their job role and working environment.

LO2 is usually completed very well by learners.

Level 2 Certificate in Principles of Customer Service

Unit 1 – Understand the principles of customer service

LO2 - AC2.2, AC2.3 – learners are required to explain the service offer of an organisation. If learners do not understand what is meant by the terminology ‘service offer’ then they will not be able to fully address the assessment requirements for LO2. Some learners also struggle with “describing how the service offer shapes the expectations of customers”. This invariably links back to how well they understand what is meant by a ‘service offer’ and ‘customer expectations’. It is important that learners are provided with the opportunity to discuss different forms of service offer and consider how they shape the expectations of customers. An example could be that the service offer of the online store that delivery is free for standard delivery times but £5.50 for express delivery. This shapes the expectations of the customers as they will not be charged for standard delivery on any item they order regardless of the value and/or size of the order.

LO3 – this particular LO is about learners showing how they understand how the service chain supports the delivery of good customer service. If learners do not understand the terminology ‘service chain’ they are not going to be able to provide sufficient and accurate responses to meet the ACs. Learners have to understand that the service chain includes the external links and not just internal to their organisation. For AC3.2 many learners are still submitting an organisational chart when in fact the requirement is to produce a flow chart showing the service chain of their organisation which should include the external links as well as the internal links.

Unit 2 – Understand the rules of customer service

The main problem area with this unit is in connection with the legislation and/or regulation section. Learners must be encouraged to research the latest legislation and/or regulation relevant to their job role and organisation. Learners who submit evidence quoting out-of-date legislation and/or regulation will have the unit withdrawn. In addition, learners must identify the legislation/regulation for themselves; they cannot be given the titles by the Centre.

Level 3 Certificate in Principles of Customer Service

Unit 4 – Understand the principles of customer service delivery to different sectors

LO1 – AC2.1 – learners at level 3 should have a good understanding of how an organisation develops its service offer. In order to have this understanding they need to fully understand the terminology 'service offer' as well as 'ethical and value base' and 'service chain'. Without having a good understanding of the terminology identified they cannot effectively conduct the required analysis.

Unit 5 – Understand the principles of making improvements to customer service

The main area of concern is again legislation and/or regulation which can have an effect on customer service delivery. As previously stated, it is important that learners conduct research into the most up to date legislation and/or regulation relevant to their job role and organisation. They then need to consider how this can affect customer service delivery.

4 Sector Update

The last registration date for Levels 1, 2 and 3 of the Principles of Customer service is 31/12/2016 and the last certification date is 31/12/2017.

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