

Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)

Customer Service (NVQ)

Level 1 NVQ Certificate in Customer Service **03454**

Level 2 NVQ Certificate in Customer Service **03455**

Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Customer Service **03456**

Level 4 NVQ Diploma Customer Service **10381**

Customer Service

Level 1 Certificate in Customer Service **10378**

Level 2 Diploma in Customer Service **10379**

Level 3 Diploma in Customer Service **10380**

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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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Customer Service, Levels 1, 2, 3 & 4

1. Overview

During the period under review many Centres have successfully migrated from the 'legacy' to the 2014 versions of these qualifications. Centres who are not delivering full apprenticeships continue to offer the legacy qualifications. Indeed there are some examples of specially funded projects which have been developed around the legacy qualifications and these continue to achieve positive results.

There is a continuing shift towards the use of electronic portfolios and these seem to work best when they are used to *support* traditional assessment methods including face to face meetings with learners. Most learners are familiar with the use of IT but some customer service environments do not lend themselves to learners taking time out to upload their evidence. In the main, assessors are sympathetic to this and will provide help to overcome any logistical issues. However it should be pointed out that, in accordance with the scheme handbooks, the onus still lies with the learners to compile their own portfolio of evidence (whether this be electronic or paper).

For the 2014 versions of the customer service qualifications many Centres are providing classroom based training as a means of developing the underpinning knowledge needed to support work based competence. This is considered good practice and works best when it is very practical in nature and relates to learners' real work environments.

2. General Comments

The level 1 qualifications are most often used as an *introduction* to customer service and a platform for going on to achieve levels 2 and 3. Level 4 is most appropriate for those with line management responsibility and is used both as a means of confirming current competence and as an outline personal development programme. Levels 1, 2 and 3 all contain units which are drawn both from higher level qualifications and across the pan-sector group of qualifications (Customer service, Business Administration, Team Leading/Management). This structure of mandatory and optional units provides learners with a range of progression routes. It is recommended that learners are initially registered for the highest level which they are currently capable of achieving and focus subsequent development on qualifications which support their personal growth within their job roles. In the main Centres have become very experienced in carrying out effective enrolment activities which ensure learners are registered at the most appropriate level.

3. Comments on Individual Units

All levels of these qualifications contain mandatory and optional units, some of which cover 'knowledge' and some 'competence'. For the competence units evidence must be collected whilst working in a real work environment, 'simulation' is not a permitted evidence source. It is suggested that when working towards the knowledge based units learners address the assessment criteria in terms of their relevance to the real work environment in which they are or will be working. For example within 10380, the level 3 Customer Service Diploma, the mandatory knowledge unit 3 (Understand customers and customer retention) contains assessment criteria which call for the learner to describe/explain various aspects of customer retention – the learning experience will be much more meaningful if the learner explains and describes customer retention within their own organisation rather than responding generically.

Most Centres now adopt an holistic approach to assessment and plan, for example, for workplace observations of learner performance to generate evidence across several units. The legacy qualifications provided many opportunities for holistic assessment but Centres should be aware that whilst the 2014 versions of the customer service qualifications can still be addressed in this way, many of the units are 'stand-alone' in nature. It is recommended that addressing units more independently creates a more logical experience for the learners. There are, of course, exceptions where evidence for core skills such as 'verbal communication' or 'written communication' can be generated across several units. For example the following units from 10379, the level 2 Diploma in Customer Service, all contain assessment criteria which call for learners to be able to communicate verbally and therefore lend themselves to some degree of holistic assessment:

Unit 6 Communicate verbally with customers

Unit 8 Deal with incoming telephone calls

Unit 10 Promote additional products and/or services to customers

4. Sector Update

Centres are taking a keen interest in the development of the Trailblazer Apprenticeships and as we switch from *frameworks* to *standards*, new information is being issued on almost a daily basis. At this point in time we know that most frameworks are being phased out and the new standards will be in place by the start of the funding year 2017 to 2018. We also know that the *apprenticeship levy* will be introduced on the 6th April 2017 and will apply to all UK employers in both the private and public sectors who have annual pay bills of more than £3 million.

The customer service apprenticeship standard and assessment plan for level 2 practitioners is now ready to use and is available on the government web site. *How* it is used and *how* it will be delivered from a practical point of view will, no doubt, become clear during the coming months.

Further information in respect of the changes can be found on the OCR website, as follows:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/151872-apprenticeships-brochure.pdf>

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-type/apprenticeships/apprenticeships-reform/>

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