



## Higher National Unit specification: general information

**Unit title:** Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation

**Unit code:** FE6V 35

**Superclass:** BA

**Publication date:** August 2010

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**Version:** 01

### Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to enable candidates to develop the skills and knowledge required to assess customer service provision and propose a plan for promoting excellent customer service.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Analyse the benefits of excellent customer service.
- 2 Propose a plan for implementing a customer service excellence culture.

### Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Entry to this unit is at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial if candidates had some knowledge and/or experience of customer service in a public sector or relevant environment. Candidates should also possess the communication and analytical skills needed to embark on a Unit at SCQF level 8.

### Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 8: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8\*)

*\*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

## **General information (cont)**

### **Core Skills**

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill of Problem Solving, Working with Others and Communication at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

### **Context for delivery**

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

### **Assessment**

Assessment for this Unit can be undertaken holistically and will be open-book. This Unit is part of the PDA in Customer Service Professionalism and candidates may generate evidence for this Unit whilst working on the other Units of this award. These Units are;

- ◆ Applying the Principles of Customer Service Within a Public Sector Organisation
- ◆ Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

**Unit title:** Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Please refer to *Evidence Requirements for the Unit* after the Outcomes.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

### Outcome 1

Analyse the benefits of excellent customer service

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Identify the organisational service level requirements
- ◆ Explain the characteristics of excellent customer service within an organisation
- ◆ Identify indications of poor customer service within an organisation
- ◆ Explain the importance of effective internal communication to the provision of excellent customer service
- ◆ Explain the importance of effective external communication to the provision of excellent customer service

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation

### Outcome 2

Propose a plan for implementing a customer service excellence culture

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Explain the requirements for a customer service excellence culture
- ◆ Conduct an analysis of current customer service performance
- ◆ Identify areas for improvement of customer service
- ◆ Explain individual and group responsibilities for customer service
- ◆ Recommend improvements to organisational performance which will lead to the implementation of a customer service excellence culture

#### Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide written/oral evidence which draws on all knowledge and skills items from both outcomes to show that they can, **with reference to a particular organisation or chosen area**:

- ◆ Analyse three benefits of excellent customer service and use them to suggest and justify the implementation of improvements to customer service
- ◆ Analyse three components of poor customer service and use them to suggest and justify the implementation of improvements to customer service
- ◆ Evaluate the importance of internal and external communication and draw conclusions, based on analysis, on the impact on customer service requirements
- ◆ Analyse the importance of a customer service culture and identify the relevance to delivering excellent customer service
- ◆ Make recommendations for two improvements to performance which will lead to the implementation of a customer service excellence culture
- ◆ Identify the roles and responsibilities required for yourself and the others who are involved in delivering excellent customer service
- ◆ Set clear **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime bound (SMART) objectives for the achievement of two improvements which will promote a customer service excellence
- ◆ Develop a plan with proposals for the implementation of chosen objectives

Evidence must cover the importance of effective internal and external communication within a customer service environment. It must also cover both individual and group responsibilities for analysing the benefits of, and implementing a culture to ensure, excellent customer service.

The assessment will be open-book. Assessment will take place at a time agreed between the assessor and candidate, and will be completed within a six calendar week period. Assessment will consist of an invigilated online test along with assessment of submitted evidence.

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation

### Assessment Guidelines

Assessment for this Unit can be undertaken holistically and will be open-book. This Unit is part of the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation and candidates may generate evidence for this Unit whilst working on the other Units of this award. These Units are;

- ◆ Applying the Principles of Customer Service Within a Public Sector Organisation
- ◆ Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation

Candidates can be asked to investigate aspects of customer service within an organisation with which they are familiar. They can be given a brief to which they can respond. This should draw their attention to both aspects of the Unit to ensure that all parts of the outcomes have been covered. The investigation will lead to the development of objectives which will ensure the implementation of a customer service excellence culture. These objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound.

Alternatively, candidates can be given a case study of an organisational scenario which relates to providing excellent customer service. The case study content must provide the opportunity for the candidate to meet the evidence requirements in full.

Candidates can present their evidence in the form of a written/oral report which will be supplemented by items of **performance** evidence, such as the results of research and planned objectives for the achievement of a customer service excellence culture. Candidates may also wish to consider power point presentation, blogs and portfolios as means of presenting their evidence for assessment.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes

### **Unit title:** Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

### **Guidance on the content and context for this Unit**

This Unit is intended for those who wish to develop and improve the delivery of excellent customer service within the environment in which they work. It would also be appropriate for candidates to relate the Unit to an organisation with which they are familiar, eg, charity or voluntary organisations. The Unit is particularly suited to those candidates who work in the public and local authority bodies, and is primarily aimed at people who already have responsibility for organising and delivering customer service. However, it may also be suitable for those who are hoping to be in this position in the near future.

The Unit is a practical Unit and is designed to enable candidates to recognise and use the components required to ensure excellent customer service. As a result, candidates will be able to reflect on current customer service performance and recommend, through setting of clear objectives, improvements to practice in place.

Customer service requirements, values and beliefs will differ between organisations. The crucial requirement is that candidates understand that excellent customer service can be developed by identifying requirements and introducing a culture which promotes consistent excellent service. This culture is equally important to internal and external customers.

This Unit is part of the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation and delivery and assessment could be integrated with delivery and assessment of the other two Units, ie, Unit FE6W 35 Applying the Principles of Customer Service Within a Public Sector Organisation and Unit FE6X 35 Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation.

### **Outcome 1**

Organisational service levels: service levels will be those identified by the candidate's organisation as the minimum expected service levels. Service levels could include the following;

- ◆ Answering the telephone with a specific greeting
- ◆ Answering the telephone within a specified time
- ◆ Acknowledging customers immediately
- ◆ Meeting and greeting customers in a specific way
- ◆ Replying to customers written communication within a specified time limit

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

### Unit title: Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation

Characteristics of excellent customer service: characteristics of excellent customer service will be those extraordinary actions/activities which lift customer service to a higher level. Characteristics of excellent customer service could include the following;

- ◆ Using the customer's name
- ◆ Anticipation of customer needs
- ◆ Going beyond the organisation's expected service levels
- ◆ Exceeding customers expectations
- ◆ Effective handling of customer complaints

Indications of poor customer service: indications of poor customer service will arise as a result of the failure of effective customer service and could include the following;

- ◆ Fall in customer numbers
- ◆ Fall in sales
- ◆ Rise in the number of complaints received
- ◆ Internal issues and concerns

Internal communications: an effective internal communication system is vital to customer service and will have a huge impact on the delivery of external customer service. Examples of internal communication could include;

- ◆ Team meetings
- ◆ Inter department communications
- ◆ Organisational communication
- ◆ Training programmes
- ◆ Personal development plans

External communications: external communication is vital to ensure that all customers of an organisation are aware of any service related matters. Examples of external communications could include;

- ◆ Information on products or services
- ◆ Information to update suppliers
- ◆ Information to contractors of the organisation
- ◆ Information to other branches

### Outcome 2

Organisational customer service culture: this should cover the organisation's attitude, values and beliefs in relation to customer service and should be what the candidate is aiming to achieve in terms of minimum customer service performance.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

### Unit title: Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation

Analysis of current performance: analysis of current performance should include research on current customer service to identify any issues and/or concerns, potential problems and any good practice. Research findings should identify individuals, departments/sections involved in service delivery. A SWOT (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats) analysis may be appropriate.

Individual and group responsibilities: the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the delivery of customer service to include both individuals and departments/sections who input to service delivery. This information might come from the research into the analysis of current performance and could be presented in the form of a presentation to be delivered to teams and individuals.

Setting of objectives: the results of the analysis of current performance should provide information which can be used to set objectives for implementing improvements to customer service. Objectives should meet the SMART acronym requirements, ie, be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**ime bound.

The objectives should form a plan for implementing activities/training which will improve customer service and promote a customer service excellence culture.

### Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit is part of the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation and delivery and assessment could be integrated with delivery and assessment of the other two Units, ie, Unit FE6W 35 Applying the Principles of Customer Service Within a Public Sector Organisation and Unit FE6X 35 Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation.

This is a practical Unit and delivery should reflect this. The Unit is particularly suitable for those people who are employed in the public sector although it is appropriate for anyone who has responsibility for delivering customer service, or who aspires to a position of responsibility within a customer service environment.

Delivery of the Unit will involve ensuring that candidates identify the components for excellent customer service and are able to apply them. It is likely that candidates will benefit from a range of sources of information in various formats. Delivery, therefore, should encourage candidates to research information from organisations such as;

- ◆ Cfa business skills @ work [www.cfa.uk.com](http://www.cfa.uk.com)
- ◆ Customer service awards [www.thewowawards.com](http://www.thewowawards.com)
- ◆ The Government's Customer Service Standard [www.cse.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/home](http://www.cse.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/home)

Candidates should also be encouraged to research the customer service cultures of other successful organisations, eg, Retailers, Airlines, Utility Companies to gain as much information as possible on the various methods which can be used to promote a customers service excellence culture.



## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

### **Unit title:** Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation

Knowledge of effective communications procedures is vital to excellent customer service. Candidates should be encouraged to research and identify the most effective and efficient methods of communication which will ensure involvement and commitment of both internal and external stakeholders in the customer service process.

This Unit is part of the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation and delivery and assessment could be integrated with delivery and assessment of the other two Units, ie, Unit FE6W 35 Applying the Principles of Customer Service Within a Public Sector Organisation and Unit FE6X 35 Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation.

Ideally it should be based on a customer service task which arises naturally from the candidate's current situation. In many cases this will be one which is part of the candidate's work activity. Where the candidate is not involved in an appropriate work activity, they should be given access to situations, either through a project at work or an appropriate case study, which will enable them to meet all of the knowledge and skills for both outcomes. In both cases, practical exercises (eg, in setting objectives and developing a plan) are likely to be important parts of delivery.

### **Opportunities for developing Core Skills**

As candidates investigate and analyse the benefits of excellent customer service they will be researching the effects of internal and external communication in relation to delivering excellent customer service. This will bring them into contact with a wide range of people and enable them to demonstrate Core Skills Communication with, and to, a range of audiences and Working with Others. As candidates identify and analyse factors which contribute to the development of a customer service excellence culture, they will be demonstrating Problem Solving.

### **Open learning**

This Unit could be delivered on an Open Learning basis. Appropriate arrangements would need to be made for assessment and quality assurance. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document Assessment and Quality Assurance of Open and Distance Learning, which is available at the SQA's website: [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)

### **Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs**

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements)

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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## General information for candidates

### **Unit title:** Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation

This Unit is designed to enable you to develop the skills and knowledge required to assess customer service provision and propose a plan for promoting excellent customer service. In particular, it concentrates on identifying the characteristics of excellent customer service in addition to indicators of poor customer service. It will also give you the opportunity to reflect on your current customer service performance and help you to put a plan in place to implement a customer service excellence culture. Following on from this you will be able to use your skills to help develop a culture within an organisation which will promote excellent customer service.

This unit has been designed to focus your attention on what factors contribute to the provision of excellent customer service. It is particularly suited to those people who are employed in public sector organisations, but is also appropriate if you are hoping to become a customer service professional, with responsibilities for delivering excellent customer service, in the near future.

In order to complete this unit you will have to produce a report which explains how you have researched what constitutes excellent customer service. You will also have to develop a plan which will enable you to propose, implement and review improvements which will help to promote a culture of excellent customer service within an organisation. Ideally you will be employed in a position (or aspiring to) which enables you to research and implement your findings in a realistic working environment. Alternatively, you will be able to use appropriate case studies which will provide the scope for you to fully demonstrate your knowledge and skills, and meet the evidence requirements for both outcomes. In both cases you can supplement your reports and plans with evidence of your research.