



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation

Unit code: FE6X 35

Superclass: BA

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to enable candidates who have, or aspire to have, a customer service role in a public sector or related environment to develop the knowledge and skills to critically analyse customer complaints and to make recommendations for their resolution and for best practice in providing service to customers.

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

- 1 Critically analyse customer service complaints.
- 2 Make recommendations on actions to minimise the impact of customer complaints.

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 related 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(s) 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 Skills of Problem Solving 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

This Unit may be assessed holistically by means of a report on an investigation of customer complaints about the service provided by an organisation in which the candidate works or with which the candidate is familiar. Candidates are expected to demonstrate that they can analyse quantitative and qualitative data on customer complaints and their root causes, the way in which complaints were handled, processed and referred and actions taken to minimise conflict with customers, colleagues and partner organisations. They are also expected to recommend, justify and evaluate possible actions to improve the service provided to customers and to recommend how best practice can be shared across their own organisation and its partners. The report can be supplemented by oral questions to ensure that all aspects of the Evidence Requirements are met.

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The report can be integrated with evidence required for Unit FE6W 35 Applying the Principles of Customer Service Within a Public Sector Organisation and Unit FE6V 35 Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation.

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

Critically analyse customer service complaints

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ External and internal customers
- ◆ Importance of effective internal and external communication within a customer service environment
- ◆ Taking responsibility and ownership
- ◆ Types of customer service issues and their root causes
- ◆ Analyse, synthesise and evaluate quantitative and qualitative data about routine and non routine customer service issues
- ◆ Complaints procedures
- ◆ Complaints handling
- ◆ Communication with the customer, colleagues, senior managers
- ◆ Complaint recording methods

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Outcome 2

Make recommendations on actions to minimise the impact of customer complaints

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Implications of repeated customer complaints
- ◆ Individual and group responsibilities for dealing with customers to minimise complaints and conflict through the provision of excellent customer service
- ◆ Analysis of complaint solutions which balance customer expectations and the organisation's service offer
- ◆ Best practice in public sector organisations' complaints handling
- ◆ Current customer service legislation
- ◆ Presenting recommendations

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will provide written/oral evidence to show that they can identify, investigate and analyse the root causes of customer service issues which may lead to complaints from internal or external customers of public sector organisations, and that they can make recommendations on preventative actions in their own/partner organisations and promote best practice.

The evidence provided must cover at least one example of each of the following types of issue/complaint:

- ◆ those which can be resolved at first contact
- ◆ those requiring escalation
- ◆ those requiring changes to policies and/or procedures
- ◆ benchmarking

The organisation may be one in which the candidate works or with which the candidate is familiar. Candidates will be given a brief to critically analyse customer service issues, to make recommendations for their resolution and on the promotion of best practice. It is not necessary for the candidate to be in a work role with responsibility for improving customer service policies and procedures but, for the purpose of this assessment, the candidate must take this responsibility. The task may, therefore, be one which the candidate undertakes as part of his/her normal activity at work or one which is given as a project or a case study.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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The candidate's evidence should:

- ◆ Apply the principles of the organisation's customer service culture to dealing with customer complaints
- ◆ Assess the roles and responsibilities of self and others with respect to providing effective responses to internal and external customer service issues
- ◆ Identify the advantages and/or disadvantages of proposed improvement actions and justify their evaluation with valid evidence
- ◆ Make recommendations to colleagues and senior managers to highlight how proposed improvements will promote best practice within the particular customer service culture of the organisation

Assessment Guidelines

Assessment for this Unit can be undertaken holistically by means of a report on an investigation of customer service issues in relation to the service provided by an organisation in which the candidate works or with which the candidate is familiar.

If the assessment for this Unit is integrated with the other two Units in the (GA7V 48) PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8, the report can be used by the candidate to demonstrate their applying the principles of customer service management and the knowledge and skills used to promote excellent customer service.

Candidates can present their evidence in the form of a written/audio report or an oral/power point presentation to decision makers. These could be supplemented by professional discussion to ensure that all aspects of the Evidence Requirements are fully met.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling 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 people who are or are aspiring to be first line managers, team leaders or supervisors leading, supporting, directing others in front line customer service delivery within public sector organisations. It would also be appropriate for candidates to relate the Unit to an organisation with which they are familiar eg a charity or voluntary organisation.

The Unit is one of three Units in the GA7V 48 PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8. It is closely related to the other Units, Unit FE6W 35 Applying the Principles of Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation and Unit FE6V 35 Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation., and the three can be delivered together as part of an integrated training and development package.

This is a practical Unit and aims to develop capabilities which enable candidates to identify, investigate and critically analyse the root causes of the customer service issues which can lead to internal and external customer complaints and to make recommendations on best practice on preventative actions in their own and partner organisations.

Outcome 1

External and internal customers: who are they, what they expect, what services are to be provided.

Taking responsibility and ownership: understanding and accepting customer expectations, actively developing solutions which will lead to improved organisational performance and customer experience.

Types of customer service issues: those which can be resolved at first contact, those which require escalation, those which may need changes to policies and/or procedures, benchmarking.

Communication with the customer: need for communication at all stages of dealing with the problem, techniques for handling conflict, influencing, persuasion and negotiation, collaborative and partnership working, feedback to colleagues and managers.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation

Complaints handling: measuring, evaluating and managing performance of self and others, actions to avoid complaints, justified and unjustified complaints, regulatory definition of a complaint, cost and regulatory implications of admitting liability, balancing customer expectations and organisational aims, complaints procedure and limits to authority, customer service solutions, risk assessment of customer complaints and options for solution, escalation processes.

Complaint recording methods: need for accurate record keeping, collection of relevant data, trends and patterns in customer complaints and solutions, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of qualitative and quantitative data

Outcome 2

Implications of repeated customer complaints: to the organisation, to colleagues, to those who report to them, to own manager, to self, to customers.

Solutions which balance customer expectations and the organisation's service offer: making decisions, possible changes to customer service policies and procedures, benefits and drawbacks of each possible change, selecting an option for change, evaluation of the impact of proposed actions, procedures for making recommendations to decision makers, work with others to bring about improvement.

Presenting recommendations: collection of relevant data, trends and patterns in customer complaints, solutions and best practice, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of qualitative and quantitative data, audience for presentation, nature of presentation.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This is a practical Unit and delivery methods should reflect this. The Unit has been tailored to the needs of employers and candidates who provide customer service in the public sector. It may be suited to candidates who aspire to a management or team leader role. It is possible for candidates to achieve this Unit as part of a workplace training and development programme, providing evidence of the application of their skills and knowledge in critically analysing customer service issues and complaints.

It is likely that candidates will benefit from a range of information sources in various formats from organisations such as the Institute of Customer Service www.instituteofcustomerservice.com, www.thewowawards.com and www.cse.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Theoretical aspects could be delivered via a mixture of teacher/lecturer input, group discussion, visiting speakers and the use of the Internet and appropriate publications for research.

The Unit can also be delivered in a virtual learning environment.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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In both cases, candidates can be given short case studies or examples to help them explore techniques of handling complaints to minimise conflict and potential solutions to customer service issues. Candidates can also carry out investigations into customer service issues and complaints handling in their own organisation. The investigations and case studies can be used as formative assessment.

This type of approach will prepare candidates for the final summative assessment for which they will be required to produce a report on their analysis of, and proposed solutions for, customer service issues in their own organisation, one with which they are familiar or one detailed in a case study.

As the Unit is closely related to Unit FE6W 35 Applying the Principles of Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation and Unit FE6V 35 Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation., the three Units can be delivered together as part of an integrated training and development package. If the assessment for the three Units is integrated, the report can be used by the candidate to demonstrate their understanding of customer service and the knowledge and skills used to promote excellent customer service.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

As candidates communicate with customers to explore their issues with the organisation's customer service, negotiate potential solutions and present those to the customer, colleagues and managers, they will be demonstrating communication skills with and to a range of audiences.

As candidates identify and analyse customer service issues to make decisions about whether their solution is within their own remit or requires escalation, they will be demonstrating Problem Solving skills.

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.

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

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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Additional copies of this Unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Customer Contact Centre, telephone 0845 279 1000.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation

This Unit enables you to critically analyse the issues which lead to complaints from customers using the services provided by a public sector organisation. It aims to enable you to recognise the roles and responsibilities of those involved in handling and resolving complaints, to learn about and apply the relevant organisational and regulatory procedures for dealing with complaints and any proposed solutions, and to learn about and apply techniques of conflict management and negotiation with customers, colleagues and managers. The Unit will enable you to develop and use investigation skills as you analyse data about customer service issues and evaluate your proposed solutions for improving your customers' experience and the performance of your own organisation and of others which can share best practice.

You will be given support material to help you work on this Unit. It will give you the background knowledge and understanding that you need as well as case studies and examples of how different approaches can be applied to handling complaints and minimising conflict. It will encourage you to relate and apply the ideas to your own work practice. It provides an opportunity for you to investigate for yourself the root causes of complaints and how they are handled in your own and in other organisations. This will help you to develop the analytical skills which you will need for the assessment.

As you communicate with customers to explore their issues with your organisation's customer service, negotiate potential solutions and present those to the customer, colleagues and managers, you will be demonstrating Communication skills with and to a range of audiences. As you identify and analyse customer service issues to make decisions about whether their solution is within your own remit or requires escalation, you will be demonstrating Problem Solving skills.

For the assessment of the Unit, you will have to produce a report on the policy and procedures for handling complaints within your own organisation, one with which you are familiar or one described in a case study. Your report will include your analysis of the nature of the customer service issues, your assessment of the impact of solutions you put forward and your presentation of your recommendations for improvement and sharing best practice in the service provided.