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Customer Service

**Assessment Strategy for
Customer Service S/NVQs
at Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4**

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This document gives details of the Assessment Strategy for the Customer Service S/NVQs at Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. It gives the key requirements for Customer Service Awarding Organisations/Bodies, External and Internal Verifiers, Assessors and S/NVQ Centres regarding:

- External Quality Control
- Assessor and Verifier Occupational Competence
- Workplace Performance and Simulation
- Employer Direct Model

1. External Quality Control

1a Monitoring Centre Performance

Awarding Organisations/Bodies should:

- carry out thorough risk assessments of organisations applying to become Approved Centres for the Customer Service Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 S/NVQs;
- apply quality control management measures appropriate to assess each centre's risk.

1b External Verification

Awarding Organisations/Bodies will appoint External Verifiers and will monitor all External Verifier practices.

In particular the AO/B will:

- seek centre feedback regarding the performance of External Verifiers and act on this feedback
- ensure that centres have requested feedback from their employers in the feedback process
- ensure that External Verifiers follow the relevant regulatory code of practice for EVs and if no code of practice is developed Awarding Organisations/Bodies will develop their own and apply it
- ensure that where a Realistic Working Environment is used IVs and EVs carry out a full examination of the working practices and the assessment process¹;

¹ Additional Requirements for Qualifications using the title NVQ within the QCF: Version 2 August 2009

2. Assessor Internal and External Verifier Occupational Competence

2a Customer Service Awarding Organisations/Bodies will facilitate Assessment, Internal and External Verification by ensuring that EVs have:

- a thorough knowledge of the Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 National Occupational Standards for Customer Service, appropriate to the Level the EV is working at, and the ability to interpret them across a wide variety of Customer Service environments;
- experience and working knowledge of the operational and assessment processes of the Customer Service S/NVQ at the Level the EV is working at;
- relevant and credible customer service experience across the level and breadth of the National Occupational Standards and S/NVQs at the Level the EV is working at;
- knowledge of current customer service practice and emerging issues in the customer service arena;
- high levels of communication and interpersonal skills.

Level 1 The table at [Appendix A](#) shows the *CfA* requirements for the Occupational Competence of Assessors, Internal and External Verifiers at Level 1.

Level 2 The table at [Appendix B](#) shows the *CfA* requirements for the Occupational Competence of Assessors, Internal and External Verifiers at Level 2.

Level 3 The table at [Appendix C](#) shows the *CfA* requirements for the Occupational Competence of Assessors, Internal and External Verifiers at Level 3.

Level 4 The table at [Appendix D](#) shows the *CfA* requirements for the Occupational Competence of Assessors, Internal and External Verifiers at Level 4.

In these tables the *CfA* has suggested some ways in which Awarding Organisations/Bodies can gain evidence to meet these requirements – **these are not compulsory, just a guide**. The tick boxes on the right show whether the evidence applies to Assessors (A), Internal Verifiers (IV) or External Verifiers (EV)

2b Awarding Organisations/Bodies and the CFA will work together to:

- circulate and disseminate information appropriate to the job role, from the CFA, to all EVs when this supports the Awarding Organisations/Bodies's communication strategy/schedule;
- advise EVs of the availability of the CFA Web Pages;
- hold briefings for External Verifiers about the revised Customer Service Standards and S/NVQs;
- encourage EVs to take part in *CfA* events regarding the Customer Service Standards and S/NVQs whenever this is felt appropriate;

3. Simulation and Realistic Workplace Performance

Wherever possible, assessment of the Customer Service National S/NVQ Units should be carried out in a **real job (either paid or voluntary)**. Where this is not possible this Assessment Strategy does allow for:

3a The use of simulation for the following level 1 S/NVQ Units only:

- C1 Recognise and deal with customer queries, requests and problems
- C2 Take details of customer service problems

To undertake assessment of simulated activities for the units above the Guidelines for Simulation shown at **Appendix E** must be met

3b The use of a Realistic Working Environment including work experience and work placement is allowed for all units in the Level 1 and Level 2 S/NVQ

To undertake assessment in a Realistic Working Environment the Guidelines shown at **Appendix F** must be met.

All other Units must be achieved in a **real working situation (either paid or voluntary)**.

4. Employer Direct Model

The CfA feels that the Employer Direct Model of in-house assessment will encourage more employers to offer the Customer Service SVQs and NVQs, particularly when they often have highly trained and experienced assessors, managers and trainers already in situ who meet or exceed the requirements of the A1 and V1 qualifications. Wherever possible, the CfA works with employers to encourage assessment to be carried out by colleagues, supervisors and/or managers in a workplace environment. However, many employers see gaining the A1 and V1 units as an obstacle and unnecessary given the experience and quality of their own internal assessors and trainers.

The Employer Direct Model has been developed to meet the needs of specific employers based on their knowledge of the Customer Service NOS and qualifications and their history of internal assessor/internal verifier expertise.

The CfA supports this model with several provisos: The organisation must:

- liaise with an Awarding Organisation/Body who will be offering the qualification prior to beginning the process
- prepare, validate and review the assessment/verification roles
- carry out 100% mapping of the employers training to the National Occupational Standards for the A and V units which the qualifications are based on
- agree the mapping process with the awarding organisation/body involved
- demonstrate an equivalent level of rigour and robustness as the achievement of the unit qualification

The Awarding Organisation/Body must:

- offer this model to employers only
- inform the CfA of employers who are using this model
- supply the CfA with statistical data including take-up, sector, size of organisation etc. when requested
- keep the CfA informed of any problems/issues incurred in the delivery of this model

Appendix A

| The Assessor, IV and EV working at Level 1 must have: | | This can be evidenced by: | A | IV | EV |
|---|---|--|---|----|----|
| 1. | A thorough understanding of the National Occupational Standards in Customer Service at Level 1 with the ability to interpret them within the environments and sectors they are working in | gathering feedback from a variety of centres | | | ✓ |
| | | explaining and putting the National Occupational Standards into the contexts they are working in | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2. | Knowledge of current practice and emerging issues and changes in the VQ area across the UK | taking active participation in consultations and briefings with Awarding Organisations/Bodies , | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | explaining the differences between the 4 UK Countries | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3. | Knowledge of current practice and emerging issues and changes in Customer Service across organisations and industries | gathering feedback from a variety of employers and centres | | | ✓ |
| | | attending conferences or workshops where trends and developments in Customer Service are on the | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | reading Customer Service publications and regularly looking at the CfA Website for new developments | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | keeping up to date with media news regarding Customer Service | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | joining the CfA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4. | Experience and working knowledge of the operational, assessment and verification processes specifically for Customer Service S/NVQ Level 1 | having a successful track record of assessing or verifying the current Standards across a variety of | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | achieving or be working towards the Level 2, 3 or | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5. | Sufficient, relevant and credible Customer Service experience across the level and breadth of the Standards and S/NVQs at Level 1 | gathering feedback from a variety of employers and centres | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | curriculum vitae and references/testimonies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6. | Appropriate A and V Units according to their role – within 18 months of working with the Standards for Assessors and IVs and within 12 months for EVs. In Scotland all assessors and verifiers should provide evidence of CPD to show that they are working to the A and/or V unit standards where appropriate; those not yet qualified should show that they are working towards achieving the appropriate units. | producing certificates or evidence of working towards these units or by taking part in a Employer Direct Model in partnership with an Awarding Organisation/Body | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7. | Demonstrated high levels of communication and interpersonal skills | gathering feedback from candidates, employers or peers | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Appendix B

| The Assessor, IV and EV working at Level 2 must have: | | This can be evidenced by: | A | IV | EV |
|---|--|--|---|----|----|
| 1. | A thorough understanding of the National Occupational Standards in Customer Service at Level 2 with the ability to interpret them within the environments and sectors they are working in | gathering feedback from a variety of centres | | | ✓ |
| | | explaining and putting the National Occupational Standards into the contexts they are working in | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2. | Knowledge of current practice and emerging issues and changes in the VQ area across the UK | taking active participation in consultations and briefings with Awarding Organisations/Bodies ,UKCES, Accreditation Bodies and the CfA | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | explaining the differences between the 4 UK Countries | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3. | Knowledge of current practice and emerging issues and changes in Customer Service across organisations and industries | gathering feedback from a variety of employers and centres | | | ✓ |
| | | attending conferences or workshops where trends and developments in Customer Service are on the agenda | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | reading Customer Service publications and articles | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | regularly looking at the CfA Website for new developments | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | keeping up to date with media news regarding Customer Service | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4. | Experience and working knowledge of the operational, assessment and verification processes specifically for Customer Service S/NVQ Level 2 | having a successful track record of assessing or verifying the current Standards across a variety of organisations | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | achieving or be working towards the Level 2, 3 or 4 Customer Service S/NVQ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | | | | |
| 5. | Sufficient, relevant and credible Customer Service experience across the level and breadth of the Standards and S/NVQs at Level 2 | gathering feedback from a variety of employers and centres | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | curriculum vitae and references/testimonies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6. | Appropriate A and V Units according to their role – within 18 months of working with the Standards for Assessors and IVs and within 12 months for EVs. In Scotland all assessors and verifiers should provide evidence of CPD to show that they are working to the A and/or V unit standards where appropriate; those not yet qualified should show that they are working towards achieving the appropriate units. | producing certificates or evidence of working towards these units or by taking part in a Employer Direct Model in partnership with an Awarding Organisation/Body | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7. | Demonstrated high levels of communication and interpersonal skills | gathering feedback from candidates, employers or peers | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Appendix C

| The Assessor, IV and EV working at Level 3 must have: | | This can be evidenced by: | A | IV | EV |
|---|--|--|---|----|----|
| 1. | A thorough understanding of the National Occupational Standards in Customer Service at Level 3 with the ability to interpret them within the environments and sectors they are working in | gathering feedback from a variety of centres | | | ✓ |
| | | explaining and putting the National Occupational Standards into the contexts they are working in | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2. | Knowledge of current practice and emerging issues and changes in the VQ area across the UK | taking active participation in consultations and briefings with Awarding Organisations/Bodies ,UKCES, Accreditation Bodies and the CfA | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | explaining the differences between the 4 UK Countries | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3. | Knowledge of current practice and emerging issues and changes in Customer Service across organisations and industries | gathering feedback from a variety of employers and centres | | | ✓ |
| | | attending conferences or workshops where trends and developments in Customer Service are on the agenda | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | reading Customer Service publications and articles | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | regularly looking at the CfA Website for new developments | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | keeping up to date with media news regarding Customer Service | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | joining the CfA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4. | Experience and working knowledge of the operational, assessment and verification processes specifically for Customer Service S/NVQ Level 3 | having a successful track record of assessing or verifying the current Standards across a variety of organisations | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | achieving or be working towards the Level 2, 3 or 4 Customer Service S/NVQ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5. | Sufficient, relevant and credible Customer Service experience across the level and breadth of the Standards and S/NVQs at Level 3 | gathering feedback from a variety of employers and centres | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | curriculum vitae and references/testimonies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6. | Appropriate A and V Units according to their role – within 18 months of working with the Standards for Assessors and IVs and within 12 months for EVs. In Scotland all assessors and verifiers should provide evidence of CPD to show that they are working to the A and/or V unit standards where appropriate; those not yet qualified should show that they are working towards achieving the appropriate units. | producing certificates or evidence of working towards these units or by taking part in a Employer Direct Model in partnership with an Awarding Organisation/Body | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7. | Demonstrated high levels of communication and interpersonal skills | gathering feedback from candidates, employers or peers | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Appendix D

| The Assessor, IV and EV working at Level 4 must have: | | This can be evidenced by: | A | IV | EV |
|---|--|--|---|----|----|
| 1. | A thorough understanding of the National Occupational Standards in Customer Service at Level 4 with the ability to interpret them within the environments and sectors they are working in | gathering feedback from a variety of centres | | | ✓ |
| | | explaining and putting the National Occupational Standards into the contexts they are working in | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2. | Knowledge of current practice and emerging issues and changes in the VQ area across the UK | taking active participation in consultations and briefings with Awarding Organisations/Bodies ,UKCES, Accreditation Bodies and the CfA | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | explaining the differences between the 4 UK Countries | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3. | Knowledge of current practice and emerging issues and changes in Customer Service across organisations and industries | gathering feedback from a variety of employers and centres | | | ✓ |
| | | attending conferences or workshops where trends and developments in Customer Service are on the agenda | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | reading Customer Service publications and articles | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | regularly looking at the CfA Website for new developments | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | keeping up to date with media news regarding Customer Service | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4. | Experience and working knowledge of the operational, assessment and verification processes specifically for Customer Service S/NVQ Level 4 | joining the CfA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | having a successful track record of assessing or verifying the current Standards across a variety of organisations | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5. | Sufficient relevant and credible Customer Service experience across the level and breadth of the Standards and S/NVQs at Level 4 | achieving or be working towards the Level 2, 3 or 4 Customer Service S/NVQ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | gathering feedback from a variety of employers and centres | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6. | Appropriate A and V Units according to their role – within 18 months of working with the Standards for Assessors and IVS and within 12 months for EVs. In Scotland all assessors and verifiers should provide evidence of CPD to show that they are working to the A and/or V unit standards where appropriate; those not yet qualified should show that they are working towards achieving the appropriate units. | curriculum vitae and references/testimonies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | producing certificates or evidence of working towards these units or by taking part in a Employer Direct Model in partnership with an Awarding Organisation/Body | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7. | Demonstrated high levels of communication and interpersonal skills | gathering feedback from candidates, employers or peers | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Appendix E

Simulated Activities Guidelines for Customer Service National Occupational Standards

Simulation can only be applied to Level 1 S/NVQ Units listed below

- C1 Recognise and deal with customer queries, requests and problems
- C2 Take details of customer service problems

Simulation is defined by the *CfA* as any activities where dealing with customers and work activities are carried out through using individuals acting the part of the customer or scenarios which are not 'real' customer transactions.

To undertake the assessment of simulated activities for these two units the following guidelines must be met:

- a. when role playing, candidates and anybody taking part as a customer must have a brief that gives sufficient information for them to recognise the equivalent real situation and decide what they would do and say;
- b. the simulated situation should represent normal and routine experience wherever possible and not exceptional or unusually difficult circumstances that might be faced;
- c. the person taking part in the simulation as a customer must be credible for the situation that is being simulated;
- d. any resources or equipment that would normally be in real work should be available and in working order for the simulation;
- e. candidates should complete the required tasks to the National Occupational Standards and in the timescales that would normally be expected in real work;
- f. candidates should complete the required tasks taking account of legislation and regulation that would apply in real work;
- g. candidates must carry out the simulated activity in a professional manner taking into account establishment requirements such as appearance and dress code, personal conduct, hygiene, reliability and punctuality;
- h. whilst the primary purpose of the Simulation is for Assessment, feedback must be given in a way that builds confidence.

Realistic Working Environment Guidelines for Customer Service National Occupational Standards

RWE can be applied to all Units in the Level 1 and 2 S/NVQs

It is essential that organisations wishing to operate a Realistic Working Environment (RWE) operate in an environment which reflects a real work setting. This will ensure that any competence achieved in this way will be sustained in real employment.

To undertake the assessment in a RWE the following guidelines must be met:

- a. assessments must be carried out under realistic business pressures, using real customers and within a defined service offer;
- b. all services that are carried out should be completed in a way, and to a timescale, that is acceptable in business organisations;
- c. candidates must be expected to achieve a volume of work comparable to normal business practices;
- d. the range of services, products, tools, materials and equipment that the candidates use must be up to date and available. They must enable candidates to meet the requirements of the National Occupational Standards;
- e. account must be taken of any legislation or regulations in relation to the type of work that is being carried out;
- f. candidates must be given workplace responsibilities to enable them to meet the requirements of the Customer Service National Occupational Standards at Level 2;
- g. candidates must show that their productivity reflects those found in the work situation being represented;
- h. customer perceptions of the RWE is similar to that found in the work situation being represented;
- i. the RWE is managed as a real work situation.