

NVQs Certificates/Diplomas in Customer Service Levels 1–4

1 September 2011 to 17 August 2012

London, South East, South West & Wales

6 September 2012

1. The qualifications and standards

- **Structure and content**

<p>Assessment Team:</p>	<p>The Customer Service team in London, the South East, South West and Wales consisted of 29 External Verifiers from 1 September 2011, including my co-Chief Verifier Mo Everett and myself.</p> <p>The team consists of very experienced OCR EVs who have been working on Customer Service qualifications for many years, so are able to provide considerable expertise and advice to centres they visit.</p> <p>This year, they have made recommendations and particularly advised centres on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation of the knowledge-based unit assessment criteria (explain/describe etc), sufficiency of evidence and best practice in the use of assessment methods. • Requirements of assessing and recording of unit evidence requirements. • Centre team standardisation meetings and activities. • Use of digital recording systems for professional discussion, questioning and witness testimony. • Comprehensive and cost-effective IV planning. • Centre team updates on current legislation to meet Customer Service unit requirements. <p>Action points as a result of EV Visits have been necessary in some cases but, in general, have been cleared by the next visit. Commonly, these apply to formalised IV planning, depth of IV activity, accuracy of candidate records and standard and sufficiency of assessed evidence.</p> <p>Most centres, however, seem to have good knowledge and expertise in delivering the QCF Customer Service NVQ Certificates and Diplomas.</p>
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<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Centre resources remained comprehensive and ranged from library access for candidates to computer/internet use, specialised resource packages and personal advice and assistance to individuals.</p> <p>The use of e-portfolio systems appears to have remained constant. There have been some issues with updates to some of the systems, their use for internal verification purposes and, in particular for Customer Service, the recording of assessment of the unit evidence requirements.</p> <p>More centres now use a mixture of electronic and paper methods of assessment. The use of digital recording for professional discussion and questioning, witness testimony and, occasionally, observation in the workplace is resulting in more streamlined candidate portfolios. It also provides direct, personal evidence of candidates' activities, skills and knowledge.</p>
<p>Candidate Support:</p>	<p>Occasionally, EVs reported that individual centres needed to devote more consistent resources to supporting candidates on programmes, but generally, candidate support by assessors, IVs and other centre team members is excellent and regularly commented on by candidates during EV candidate interviews at visits.</p> <p>The quality and depth of induction programmes is often mentioned in reports, also the use of a range of assessment methods appropriate to individual candidates and their job roles (confirmed through EV visit sampling). Individual candidate support is sometimes documented, needed because of a lack of knowledge/experience of a particular activity, lack of workplace support or a disability or specific need.</p>
<p>Assessment and Verification:</p>	<p>EV reports regularly referred to standardisation meetings and activities held in centres to ensure consistent interpretation of standards and use of assessment methods throughout their teams.</p> <p>Some centres are still struggling with the type and depth of evidence required at each level for the more knowledge-based assessment criteria in units, but the majority have devised a good variety of methods of assessment to use alongside written or oral questioning where appropriate or to fill gaps.</p> <p>EVs have been able to provide best practice examples for particular units and, sometimes, new ideas to ensure assessment of these areas is carried out in as lively and creative a way as possible for individual candidates and different customer service job roles.</p>

Management Systems and Records:	<p>The majority of EV reports contained positive comments about centre management systems, reviews of policies and procedures and records proving to be easy to access as required during visits.</p> <p>However, there have also been some issues this year about the accuracy of candidate lists provided to EVs in advance of visits. These appear to have been caused by later candidate registrations, lack of checking of updated/changed candidate/assessor information or misunderstanding the need for all candidates, including DCS claimed, to appear on EV visit lists. It is important that EVs receive fully accurate and up-to-date lists as these provide the basis for the EV visit sampling strategy and plan.</p>
Assessment Summary:	<p>Generally a very good year in terms of the delivery of the QCF Customer Service NVQ Certificates and Diplomas, with much good practice identified in support, assessment and verification of candidates.</p> <p>Level 2 remains the most popular across London/the South/Wales, usually now funded as part of an apprenticeship framework and Level 3 registrations remain quite consistent. There has been evidence of some progression of candidates from Level 2 to Level 3 in line with job development or promotion.</p>

2. Sector Developments

This year's major national events – The Diamond Jubilee, Olympic Games and Paralympic Games – have resulted in a large number of general public experiencing customer service in a greater variety of places, possibly in new locations to them, than usual.

There is an opportunity to build on the Games' legacy of spirit, welcome, friendliness and advice, especially provided by the Games makers – customer service which has been widely documented and applauded.

However, in these times of recession, employers are not always able to allocate resources to training, however necessary or desirable, and customer service sometimes takes second place to the need to train employees on a vital skill for their job/organisation.

Funding issues and variations in different areas can, of course, provide a barrier, especially for possible candidates not eligible for current apprenticeship funding.

Although there has been no increase in the level of qualification uptake, the Customer Service NVQ Certificates/Diplomas, especially at Levels 2 and 3, are well regarded, offering a solid foundation plus wide range of optional units under recognised themes of customer service work.