



Chief Examiner's Report

Customer Service NVQ Certificates/Diplomas Levels 1 to 4 September 2011

1. The qualifications and standards

Assessment Team:	Findings: Customer Service EVs have supported OCR centres in a very professional and diligent manner this year, with the introduction of the new QCF suite of NVQ Certificates/Diplomas in Customer Service Levels 1 to 4. They have guided centres in the interpretation and delivery of the new standards to, in many cases, assist achievement of their first completions. Many centres have only recently enrolled larger numbers of new Customer Service candidates, partly because they had substantial numbers of people still completing their NVQs to the old standards, but also because they have taken great care and attention in ensuring their teams have been fully familiarised and standardised on the new qualifications and good practice in delivery. EVs have identified much good practice in the areas of team communication and standardisation activities, also attendance at OCR INSET training programmes introducing the new qualifications. Where there have been identified weaknesses, recommendations and action points have been given. The areas concerned relate to: • more creative ways of evidencing and assessing the knowledge elements of the new standards; • interpretation of the requirements of the standards; • IV procedures and practices, especially relating to the scope of IV activities required; • documentation of standardisation activities; • assessment not meeting national standards; • inadequate assessment planning.
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	Reinstatement of DCS for centres at different Customer Service levels has been recommended by EVs straightaway in some cases, but in others more detailed standardisation and evidence of work with candidates has been requested
Resources:	Findings: The vast majority of centres remain very well resourced. There has been an increase in digital recordings both for professional discussion and questioning of the candidate and also for questioning of witnesses. A few more centres have expressed interest in and/or piloting the use of e-portfolio products, but there has been very little further uptake at present. Because of the increased depth of knowledge required for some Customer Service units, asking candidates to 'explain' and 'describe' procedures and reasons for activities, some centres have organised specific workshops and/or produced workbooks or exercises to assist candidates with learning and knowledge.
Candidate Support:	Findings: Apart from a few cases identified of centres not devoting sufficient resources and attention to planning assessment and supporting individual Customer Service candidate needs, the vast majority of comments and information provided by EVs confirms excellent candidate support. Excellent induction programmes and practices are regularly highlighted, a range of assessment methods appropriate to candidates and their job roles confirmed through EV sampling and also through candidate interviews, where there are regular confirmations of good ongoing candidate advice and support.
Assessment and Verification:	Findings: Most Customer Service centres and their management/IV teams have devoted large amounts of time to the successful transition between the previous qualifications and the current QCF Certificates and Diplomas. EV reports have regularly referred to in depth training, discussion and standardisation of the teams on the new QCF standards, with some centres already achieving a number of completions, especially at Level 2. Some centre teams have struggled with the concept of evidencing the current more detailed knowledge-based criteria in any way other than with lengthy candidate reports and questioning and have requested more guidance on how to approach delivery and assessment.

	There has also been confusion about the use and usefulness of the third column added to OCR units under the heading 'knowledge, understanding and skills', as this term historically related to the criteria separated out from performance criteria which had to all be evidenced and recorded on evidence record sheets. EVs have worked hard to provide guidance on the use of the latter and good practice ideas on varied evidence for the former. Where any weaknesses have been identified, they have mainly related to the lack of planning for IV activities other than portfolios sampling, resulting in delays and non-achievement of these, eg, IV assessor workplace visits and direct candidate interviews and, in a few cases, insufficient attention given to assessing to a national standard.
Management Systems and Records:	Findings: The vast majority of EV report comments on management systems and records are of a very positive nature, with good attention given to reviewing and updating centre policies and procedures, when required, and maintaining efficient and easy to access records of candidate enrolments, registrations and achievements plus assessor/IV activities in relation to these. Where problems have occurred for centres, this is mainly because they have lost sight of the requirement for DCS portfolios to all be available at EV visits and for requests to be met for work in progress or completed portfolios for sampling as part of the EV's sampling strategy.
Assessment Summary:	Findings: On the whole, the transition between the previous and current Customer Service NVQ Certificates and Diplomas has been handled with care and respect by all concerned. Great attention has been given by everyone involved to correctly identify the interpretation and requirements of the assessment criteria and ensuring assessment team personnel are well acquainted with the new standards. The most negative aspect is that there has been a slow take up and/or decline in take up of Customer Service qualifications this year with overall registrations reduced. Much of this is due, of course, to issues with and priorities for funding.

2. Sector Developments

In theory, the forthcoming major events of 2012 – the Diamond Jubilee, Olympic Games and Paralympic Games – provide major opportunities for marketing and delivering Customer Service training and accreditation. In practice, however, this opportunity is marred by reduced funding for training providers and reduced income for businesses, causing them to streamline training and development opportunities.

Discerning businesses and organisations will, though, understand that continuing to offer excellent service to customers could result in greater customer loyalty, repeat business and increased income/profits compared to their competitors. This in turn can present an excellent opportunity for OCR and all its centres to market and promote Customer Service and the QCF suite of qualifications now available.

There is regard for the structure and depth of the Customer Service qualifications, requiring detailed attention to foundation knowledge and understanding and offering a wide variety of optional topics under recognised themes for candidates to demonstrate their skills within their job role.