



# Award for Customer Service Professionals SPECIFICATION

## **Structure and learning outcomes**

The Award for Customer Service Professionals is an online learning programme. It is designed to be delivered through e-learning content, online tutor support, online forum discussions and online multiple choice assessment.

The Award comprises an introduction and nine modules. Each of the modules has specific learning outcomes, text and visual content, activities and a multiple choice assessment. The detailed aims, objectives, structure, learning outcomes and indicative content are included below (from page 4 onwards).

## **Rationale and target market**

The Award is for frontline customer service employees, and also for employees who work with internal customers. There is a need to improve the level of customer service in all sectors and in most organisations, and this programme delivers the knowledge and understanding needed for individuals to develop into customer service professionals.

This is a generic programme, of relevance to all sectors. Customisation to particular sectors and organisations can be achieved through customisation of the course activities and forum discussions by the online tutor. In this case, the (generic) learning outcomes remain the same.

## **How the qualification is delivered**

The normal mode of delivery enables a learner to study online as part of a group of learners. The maximum group size is 20 learners. The group is able to access discussion and advice through online forums, moderated by a qualified and experienced online tutor, employed by Customer 1st International Ltd.

All the learning resources are contained within the module learning content, and learners gain benefit from each other's experiences and ideas through the online forums. Online tutors provide encouragement and feedback on the activities that are submitted to the forums. In addition, book, website and video references signpost learners to further relevant resources.

## **How the qualification is assessed**

Each module of the Award is assessed through a multiple choice assessment. Each one is based on the information and concepts within the module. The learner is presented with questions that are randomly selected from a large question bank, so that each multiple choice assessment is different from others for that module. This allows learners to have a number of attempts at the module assessment without being presented with exactly the same set of questions each time. If learners do not pass the assessment at the first attempt, there is an enforced break period before they are allowed to re-take the assessment.

## **Security of assessment**

Records of all individual learner activity, progress and assessment held confidentially within the e-learning system. This data is actually stored on a secure server, with automatic backup in case of data corruption or system failure.



In order to ensure the authenticity of learners' answers to the multiple choice assessments, the following safeguards apply:

- All learners have their own individual login and password.
- All learners must electronically sign an authenticity statement at the start of the learning programme, explaining the significance of submitting only their own work, both for the in-module activities and at the time of the end of module, multiple choice assessments.
- Online tutors "approve" the learner to take the end-of-module, multiple choice assessments only when they judge the learner to be ready for assessment; this judgement is formed on the basis of the activities submitted to the online discussion forums, and on any other interaction they have had with the learner.

## **Assessment records**

The e-learning system retains records of all learner activity, including details of correctly and incorrectly answered questions. This provides a full audit trail.

## **Alternative / special arrangements for assessment**

Learners who require special arrangements for assessment will be identified at the start of their programme, through the initial skill scan which all learners take. Arrangements are set up to provide whatever is needed by the learner to ensure fair and flexible access to assessment.

## **Grading**

Each attempt at the module multiple choice assessment returns to the learner a grade of either "Pass" or "Not yet passed." Feedback is provided immediately to the learner on the questions that have been incorrectly answered. There is no grade associated with achievement of the overall Award.

## **Tutor support**

All learners have a named online tutor. The online tutor can be contacted by email and via the online course. Tutors normally respond to direct requests from learners within one day; no requests go unanswered for more than two days.

## **Quality moderation**

A quality manager, employed by Customer 1st International Ltd, provides feedback to online tutors after sampling learner module records, and produces a Quality Moderation Report, based on information from sampling activities and customer satisfaction questionnaires.

## **Customer satisfaction**

Learners are strongly encouraged to complete customer satisfaction questionnaires at the midpoint and at the end of the course. Information from the questionnaires is used to provide guidance for online tutors, in the form of a Customer Satisfaction Report (for each course), and to inform the review and evaluation of the programme.



## **Learner appeals process**

Learners are able to appeal against the assessment decision of online tutors, using a Learner Appeals process which is communicated to all learners at the start of their course.

## **Review and evaluation**

Customer 1st International regularly reviews and evaluates the delivery of the Award. This is based on customer satisfaction questionnaires and on additional feedback gained from discussions with online tutors, learners and employers.

Review and evaluation will normally be conducted twice per year. Outcomes of the review and evaluation process, in the form of a Programme Evaluation Report, will be used to amend and update the e-learning content, assessments and the work of online tutors where necessary.

## **Programme aims**

The Award for Customer Service Professionals aims to improve the skills of anybody who deals with customers. Today's customers expect to deal with skilled professionals, representing organisations that meet their high expectations. Whether customers are internal (within the learner's organisation) or external (outside the learner's organisation), the skills needed are similar, and this programme will enable learners to focus on improving the skills that they need in their work with customers.

## **Programme objectives**

The learning content of the Award for Customer Service Professionals is based on the UK's National Occupational Standards for customer service. It delivers all the concepts, knowledge and understanding through explanations and examples of best practice, then enables learners to improve their skills by carrying out relevant, work-based activities involving their own customers.

The Award for Customer Service Professionals will enable learners to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts and language of customer service.
- Recognise the importance of long-term organisational relationships with customers, based on customer loyalty and effective customer service processes.
- Explain how customer service is delivered differently in different types of organisations.
- Identify a range of skills and techniques for matching products and services to customers' expectations.
- Recognise and choose appropriate communication methods for specific customer service situations.
- Explain effective ways of working with colleagues, both within their own teams and with other organisations.
- Recognise the importance of systems and processes for delivering excellent customer service.
- Recognise laws and codes of practice that apply to customer service.
- Identify their own strengths and areas for development for skills in customer service.



## Programme structure

The Award for Customer Service Professionals comprises ten modules (including an introductory module), all of which are mandatory in order to complete the Award.

### Module 1: Introduction

Learning outcomes:

- 1.1 Set personal objectives.
- 1.2 Review own support needs.
- 1.3 Become familiar with the course structure and learning methods.

Indicative content:

- Comprehensive course induction

### Module 2: Basic concepts of customer service

Learning outcomes:

- 2.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts of customer service.
- 2.2 Understand the importance to customers of receiving excellent customer service.
- 2.3 Understand how an organisation's reputation can depend upon the delivery of excellent customer service.
- 2.4 Distinguish between different levels of customer service.
- 2.5 Demonstrate an understanding of how the service offer can be enhanced by added service value.
- 2.6 Explain a range of methods of measuring customer service.
- 2.7 Identify moments of truth in a customer service context.

Indicative content:

- What is customer service?
- Customer satisfaction
- Customer expectations
- Excellent and poor customer service
- Customer service transactions
- The service offer and added service value
- Benchmarking
- Measuring service standards
- Moments of truth

### Module 3: Developing relationships with your customers

Learning outcomes:

- 3.1 Recognise and distinguish between internal and external customers.
- 3.2 Understand the benefits and importance of customer loyalty.
- 3.3 Identify the components of an effective customer service process.

Indicative content:

- Internal customers and external customers
- Customer relationships
- Customer loyalty
- Benefits of customer service
- The components of the customer service process



## **Module 4: Customer service in different organisations**

Learning outcomes:

- 4.1 Explain why customer service is important to different types of organisation.
- 4.2 Explain how customer service differs in different types of organisation.
- 4.3 Recognise how the service offer tends to vary for different types of organisations.

Indicative content:

- The aims of different types of organisations
- The service offer in different types of organisations
- Moments of truth in different types of organisations

## **Module 5: Match features and benefits**

Learning outcomes:

- 5.1 Demonstrate an understanding of features and benefits of products and services that affect the delivery of customer service.
- 5.2 Identify customer preferences and match them to available options.
- 5.3 Recognise how organisations can set product and service standards.
- 5.4 Demonstrate an understanding of equality and diversity issues for an organisation.
- 5.5 Demonstrate an understanding of how to promote additional services or products to customers.
- 5.6 Identify the unique selling point for a product or service.

Indicative content:

- Your organisation's objectives
- Features and benefits
- Product and service standards
- Welcome diverse customers and colleagues
- Sell or promote products and services to your customers



## **Module 6: Communicate effectively**

Learning outcomes:

- 6.1 Describe the importance of effective communication in the delivery of customer service.
- 6.2 Choose the most appropriate communication method to suit a specific customer service situation.
- 6.3 Recognise the value of effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills in customer service transactions.
- 6.4 Choose behaviour that is appropriate to a specific customer service situation.
- 6.5 Recognise the importance of social media in customer service.
- 6.6 Understand the benefits, features and methods of using technology in order to deliver effective customer service.

Indicative content:

- Why it is important to communicate well
- Choose and use the appropriate communication methods
- Face to face communication
- Effective non- verbal communication
- Body image
- Active listening skills
- Use behaviour appropriate to the situation
- Importance of social media for customers and organisations
- How organisations manage social media
- Communicating on the telephone
- Email, letter and fax
- Using websites
- Remove the communication barriers

## **Module 7: Deliver service excellence through teamwork**

Learning outcomes:

- 7.1 Demonstrate an understanding of effective methods of team working in the delivery of customer service.
- 7.2 Identify examples of working in partnership with other organisations.

Indicative content:

- The need for teamwork
- The benefits of teamwork
- Satisfy your internal customers
- Working in partnership with other organisations
- Clear principles of team working



## Module 8: Systems for delivering service excellence

### Learning outcomes:

- 8.1 Explain the importance of systems and procedures supporting consistent delivery of customer service.
- 8.2 Demonstrate an understanding that systems should be focused on customers.
- 8.3 Identify customer preferences and match them to available options.
- 8.4 Understand the meaning and benefits of product and service innovation.
- 8.5 Explain how organisations can benefit from customer feedback, both positive and negative.
- 8.6 Describe a systematic approach to service recovery.
- 8.7 Identify effective ways of resolving customers' problems.
- 8.8 Deal effectively with difficult customers and difficult customer service situations.
- 8.9 Understand the importance of using technology to support systems and customers.

### Indicative content:

- Effective systems for customers
- The benefits of customer service procedures
- Identify and meet customer preferences
- Product information and selection
- Product and service innovation
- Systems for customer feedback
- Resolve problems well – Six steps to service recovery
- Handling difficult customers by staying positive
- Handling conflict Dos and Don'ts
- Use ICT to support your systems

## Module 9: Laws and codes of practice

### Learning outcomes:

- 9.1 Understand the main aspects of customer service that are affected by legislation, regulation and sector codes of practice.
- 9.2 Recognise the main regulatory and legal restrictions on what you can and cannot do in all aspects of your work with customers.

### Indicative content:

- Laws and regulations – how they affect you
- Consumer laws for customers' rights
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information
- Sex Discrimination Act
- Disability Discrimination Act
- Health and Safety at Work Act
- Human Rights Act and other EU legislation and directives
- Copyright
- Financial Services Act
- Sector codes of practice
- Useful websites



## Module 10: The you factor

### Learning outcomes:

- 10.1 Identify the skills of emotional intelligence that are relevant to customer service.
- 10.2 Demonstrate an understanding of the effects of submissive, assertive and aggressive behaviours on others. Understand how personal attitude, health and emotional state affect your ability to deliver excellent customer service.
- 10.3 Plan and carry out activities that are needed for your own professional development.

### Indicative content:

- Getting fit to be a customer service professional
- Emotional intelligence
- Stress tolerance
- Assertiveness
- Happiness through personal attitude and motivation
- Interpersonal relationship
- Self-actualisation
- Educating the customer
- Winning more business
- Your checklist for service excellence