

Commercial in Confidence

Customer Service Excellence



Date:

Organisation	University of Bolton Library, Student Services , Careers and Reception
Assessment Number	14/5167
Date of next visit	TBC
Duration of next visit	One day
Legal Status	Public

Assessment Report

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On behalf of the Centre for Assessment Ltd

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Introduction

The University of Bolton recognises that student success is impacted by the quality and professionalism of support services and as a consequence has an objective of promoting excellence through the achievement of the Customer Service Excellence standard. The first step of this journey is to seek accreditation for the Library, Student Services, Careers and Reception before rolling it out to other parts of the University. Within Student Services the following specific services were included too:

- Accommodation
- Chaplaincy
- Counseling
- Disability Service
- Disclosure and Barring Administration
- Immigration and international Student Welfare
- Student Advisors
- Student Finance (Including the Access to Learning Fund & Discretionary Learner Support)
- Student Liaison Officers

The key objective for the assessment was to establish whether or not the Library, Student Services, Careers and Reception services meet the requirements of the CSE standard; no additional objectives were agreed with the client.

Executive Summary

It was clear from the evidence collected during the assessment process that the services being assessed had a genuine commitment to delivering excellent customer service to students and stakeholders. This was reflected in the level of activity to engage and consult with students, the amount of feedback being sought and subsequently being used to improve services, the professionalism and attitude of staff and the strength of relationships with Partners.

Unfortunately however, the services being assessed did not collectively meet the requirements of the standard since the total number of Partial Compliances allowed in Criterion 5 – Timeliness and Quality of Service, were exceeded by one. There were also 2 Partial Compliances for Criterion 1 and 3 Partial Compliances for Criterion 4, but these are within the overall limits allowed and therefore do not influence the overall outcome which is Non-Compliance at this stage. The table at the end of this report shows the scoring for each criterion as well as the number of Partial Compliances permitted against each Criterion.

Strengths

In carrying out the assessment, the following were identified as significant strengths:

- The level of customer insight and the way this knowledge and information is used to develop and improve services
- Consultation and engagement with stakeholders is wide ranging, well-established and effective.
- The commitment and willingness of each service to not only gather but act on feedback to improve services

- The quality and diversity of information and communication channels used to keep customers informed
- The accessibility of services including the 24:7 access to library services
- The strength of relationships with partners and stakeholders

Areas for Development

The assessment also identified the following areas for development and they have been separated into Partial Compliances and Opportunities for Improvement:

Partial Compliances

1. Criterion 1 – Element 1.3.3

There was insufficient objective evidence to confirm **specific questions related to delivery, timeliness, information and access** were included when measuring customer satisfaction. Results of surveys and feedback should be available to confirm that these questions are covered in addition to any other questions the organisation deems appropriate

2. Criterion 1 – Element 1.3.4

There was insufficient objective evidence to confirm that challenging or stretching targets were being set for customer satisfaction across all aspects of customer service and that the levels are improving. Results of surveys and feedback should be able to demonstrate customer satisfaction levels against targets and also show improvement trends

3. Criterion 4 – Element 4.1.2

There was insufficient objective evidence to confirm that service standards are monitored in a structured way to be able to analyse and report on performance

4. Criterion 4 – Element 4.1.3

There was insufficient objective evidence to confirm that customers are consulted about the setting reviewing and raising of local standards

5. Criterion 4 – Element 4.3.1

There was insufficient objective evidence to confirm that customers are informed about dips in performance against service standards and what action is being undertaken to prevent re-currence

6. Criterion 5 – Element 5.3.1

There was insufficient objective evidence to confirm that **service standards related to timeliness** are monitored in a structured way to be able to analyse performance and identify potential problems

7. Criterion 5 – Element 5.3.2

Because service standards related to timeliness are not being monitored in a structured way there was no objective evidence to confirm whether these standards were actually being met

8. Criterion 5 – Element 5.3.3

Again, there was no objective evidence to indicate whether performance in relation to timeliness was measured or compared to that of similar organisations

Opportunities for Improvement

Criterion 2 – Element 2.1.4

In addition to anecdotal evidence provided by the organisation, the Assessor was able to establish that customers are treated fairly through feedback from the customer focus groups. The organisation should perhaps look at ways of gathering, analysing and reporting on customer feedback related to their perception of being treated fairly in a more structured way, possibly as part of the customer satisfaction surveys

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Summary of findings against Customer Service Excellence

Criterion 1 - CUSTOMER INSIGHT

The services being assessed demonstrated a high degree of knowledge and insight about its customer groups as a result of activities such as stakeholder analysis, customer consultation and engagement and customer feedback processes including the measurement of customer satisfaction

There is a wide range of methods for communication and interaction with customers and significant efforts have also been made to engage with hard to reach and disadvantaged groups such as broadening the range of contact and access methods and introducing specific services such as student peer mentoring scheme, English pre-sessional group inductions and drop in sessions.

There were 2 areas of partial compliance within this criterion as detailed earlier in the report (Elements 1.3.3 and 1.3.4). The standard does allow up to 2 Partial within this Criterion therefore these Partial Compliances have not influenced the overall result of non-compliance

Criterion 2 - THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

The commitment to customer service is well-established and is documented clearly in various places such as the Customer Service Charter, Statement of Service and a range of policy documents such as Equal Opportunities, Mental Health Policy, Disability, Bullying and Harassment, etc.

A staff suggestion scheme is in place and encourages them to put forward ideas for improving services and they also have customer services objectives as part of their PDP process. Significant investment has been made in customer service training and the project to ultimately achieve CSE accreditation. The organisation is also recognised as an Investor in people

Discussions with customer focus groups and observation of staff interacting with students clearly demonstrated that staff were polite, professional and friendly.

Criterion 3 - INFORMATION AND ACCESS

Information is provided for students in a range of ways including the website, leaflets and flyers, posters, TV screens, the Moodle, social media sites, student/staff newsletter. Information is also provided on an individual and face to face basis through events such as open days

Services are constantly reviewed to look at how they can be improved both in terms of quality and accessibility and students have significant choices in how they access services including 24/7 access to the website, E guidance, telephone guidance/Text, drop in sessions, 1-1 appointments, workshops, evening sessions and social media. Services are also taken out to customers through activities such as On Tour – about campus.

There are effective working arrangements with partners and stakeholders that benefit the customers and these include referrals and liaison between services, links with landlords for advertising private accommodation, an on-site assessment centre through Broadbent's where students can have needs assessed, employer visits, careers fairs etc. Community initiatives included a book disposal project and volunteering service and links to community groups

Criterion 4 - DELIVERY

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are set out in local service plans and these are complemented by a range of operational service standards and targets which are contained in various documents such as Charters and statements of services. Customers are informed about the service levels they can expect through the charter, statement of service documents, student entitlement documents and accommodation contracts etc.

Best practice is shared and acquired from attendance at networking meetings with other University's e.g. AISA, UKCISA and by following national guidelines set by organising relevant bodies such as Student Finance England. Staff development sessions are also organised to gain insight into what other departments are doing. And there is attendance at various conferences and seminars.

The complaints procedure has been updated and is accessible to students on their portal as well as booklets. Staff have received training on how to deal with difficult situations and were aware of the key stages of the process. There were also examples of how complaints had led to changes and improvements in processes such as the DBS assessment. Action taken to address issues is publicised through various "You said we displays".

There were 3 areas of partial compliance within this criterion as detailed earlier in the report (Elements 4.1.2, 4.1.3 and 4.3.1). The standard allows up to 3 Partials within this Criterion therefore these Partial Compliances have not influenced the overall result of non-compliance

Criterion 5 - TIMELINESS AND QUALITY OF SERVICE

Each of the 4 services that were assessed had measurable standards for the timeliness of responses but to varying degrees and these were mainly in documents such as the customers charter and various statement of service documents

There were however 3 areas of partial compliance within this criterion as detailed earlier in the report (Elements 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3). The standard only allows up to 2 Partials within this Criterion because this limit has been exceeded within this particular Criterion, the overall result is one of non-compliance.

Technically, in order to achieve overall compliance the organisation could do this by addressing just one of these 3 elements, however, in the spirit of customer service and excellence the organisation may wish to look at developing its approaches in all the areas of partial compliance whilst having a particular focus on Criterion 5

Scoring

- To achieve Customer Service Excellence an organisation may not have any non-compliances
- To achieve Customer Service Excellence organisations must demonstrate compliance with each of the criteria. To do so the organisation must achieve full compliance or compliance plus in at least 80% of the elements contained in each of the criteria
- The maximum number of partial compliances allowed within each criterion is shown in the table below

Criterion	Number of Elements	Maximum number of partial compliances	Actual number of partial compliances	Actual number of major compliance plus elements
1	11	2	2	0
2	11	2	0	0
3	12	2	0	0
4	13	3	3	0
5	10	2	3	0

Conclusions

Assessment

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for assessors by the Cabinet Office the Assessor was satisfied that the University of Bolton Library, Student Services , Careers and Reception exceeds the number of Partial Compliances allowed in Criterion 5 therefore the overall result is non-compliance.

Next Steps

The organisation has until the end of June 2015 at the latest to seek a re-assessment against the areas of Partial Compliance at which time if the number of Partial Compliances within each of the Criteria is within the allowed limits (as shown on the table above), the overall result will be Compliance resulting in the award of the standard.

Should the organisation return for re-assessment after the end of June then the assessment and certification protocol would require a full assessment against the whole standard once again.

Assessor Name: Tariq Mahmood

Date of report: 17 March 2015