

CASE STUDY

CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE TAKES CUSTOMER SERVICE TO NEW LEVEL WITH LATEST ACCREDITATION SUCCESS

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Following a successful assessment by SGS United Kingdom Ltd, City of Glasgow College achieved Customer Service Excellence (CSE). The standard helps all organisations ensure they put their customers at the heart of what they do.

CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE

One of Scotland's largest colleges and home to around 32 500 students from 135 countries, City of Glasgow College's mission is to deliver world class learning for individuals and enterprises, for Glasgow, Scotland and the international community. Formed in 2010, the college offers a wide choice of vocational and leisure courses.

WHY CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

"We chose to be assessed against the Customer Service Excellence standard for three main reasons," says Jim Burns, Head of Quality Systems. "First, the standard integrates well with other Quality Standards that we wished to progress.

Second, CSE emphasises customer insight and satisfaction measurement and these drivers align well with our customers' requirements and expectations. For example, delivering on our promises, responding in a timely way in teaching and learning, and supporting our students at all times. It was essential that we build a leadership culture.

Also we had previously achieved Chartermark and we had transferred to CSE at our Riverside Campus – so we already had an important baseline to start from."

CSE ASSESSMENT

From day one, the college set out to achieve CSE and integrate its existing management systems such as ISO 9001:2008 into our one Quality Management System (QMS).

The first task for Jim Burns was to make staff aware of the new ways of doing things.

"In the academic term 2012-13, we established a CSE working committee that met monthly to create and implement a final action plan. We used existing implemented communication channels such as the managers' monthly meeting to raise awareness and we published information through our QMS on our staff intranet.

In this way, we agreed standards of service and SLAs, and identified ownership for monitoring, recording and publishing of results. It was about releasing the energies of every member of staff and every learner and about giving each of them a sense that their contributions are valued.

We therefore looked at identifying and implementing a customer care charter that went college-wide to all the students and also staff.



(L-R) Rob Sullivan, SGS CSE Assessor, and Paul Little, Principal and CEO, City of Glasgow College

Towards the end of this academic term, we had collated an electronic portfolio of evidence and mapped it against the 57 elements required for the CSE assessment. And then we organised the four-day assessment schedule. We had eight sites to be visited."

SGS assessor, Rob Sullivan, reviewed the portfolio of evidence sent by the college and provided vital early feedback on areas of non-conformity, enabling the college to address these areas prior to the on-site assessment. This early report created the main agenda item for the first on-site meeting.

SGS

SGS Customer Service Excellence assessor Robert Sullivan adds:

"I would personally like to congratulate Jim Burns and the whole of the College team on what is a remarkable achievement for such a large and complex organisation.

The assessment gives the College a clear way forward to further improve its already excellent customer service in line with the Standard and to fit with its own vision, mission and values.

It was impressive to see the work put in at all levels and the very strong and committed leadership from the College Senior Leadership Team when I assessed the College. Significant work had been put into really understanding the environment the College works in and understanding the needs and expectations of current and future customers.

In summary, the College Board, staff and learners should be proud to have achieved this very prestigious award and we look forward to working with them to further their customer focused work through the CSE Standard and in achieving their objectives in the future."

THE BENEFITS

Roy Gardner, Business and International Development Director, City of Glasgow College says "The benefit to our institution is allowing us to benchmark and measure against other institutions that place the customer at the heart of what they do! This isn't only a vision for our institution but gaining the CSE award is testament to what we do every day."

Using the SGS report as a basis of their ongoing CSE Action Plan, the College has implemented new and improved procedures and processes, which in turn has empowered staff to build a culture of excellence through putting people first.

Early outcomes of achieving this standard has already led to a 35% reduction in complaints and increased customer satisfaction statistics. Jim Burns, says "The CSE Standard Award assessment confirms we know what our customer's expectations are and we deliver better and timely service to meet their requirements."

WHY SGS?

"I first met SGS some years ago at a Chartermark event," says Jim Burns. "I've always found SGS' contribution to be efficient and effective at all times. They've always been helpful and flexible in arranging meetings to discuss the standard itself. And that was especially necessary when we were discussing how to achieve our goals in a realistic time frame."

HOW WILL THE NEW STANDARD REINFORCE THE COLLEGE'S CUSTOMER FOCUS?

"CSE aligns with our values. We look to develop as a world class institution – that's part of our vision – and the 'customer first' culture of the standard helps us to understand the expectations of our diverse stakeholders. Plus we've improved communications between staff and customer by focusing on the accuracy and timeliness of information throughout the whole process of learning and teaching.

There is no doubt in my mind that the standard delivers, and it will do so more as we go forward and look at the benefits of continual improvement."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER ORGANISATIONS

"Be prepared to review what you've got at the moment. Be realistic where you are. It's about the timing of how long it will take you to get there. You will be improving your customer service so take your time with a minimum change programme tied in approach and get it right. Definitely adopt and implement a seamless approach to continual improvement. It will become something you are doing and you will have the buy-in from staff, and create a shared understanding."

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