

CUSTOMER SERVICE PRACTITIONER APPRENTICESHIP STANDARD

Standard Code ST0072
Course Level 2
Work Based
Funding Level £3500
Duration 15mths including EPA

Course Description

The role of a Customer Service Practitioner is to deliver high quality products and services to customers, whether it is in the workplace, digitally, or through going out into the customer's own locality. These may be one-off or routine contacts and include dealing with orders, payments, offering advice, guidance and support, meet and greet, sales, fixing problems, after care, service recovery or gaining insight through measuring customer satisfaction.

As the first point of contact for the organisation it is integral that the employee demonstrates great customer service skills and behaviours as well as product and/or service knowledge. In line with the organisation's customer service standards and strategy, and within appropriate regulatory requirements, the interactions may cover a wide range of situations and can include face-to-face, telephone, post, email, text or social media.

Off the Job Training

A key requirement of an Apprenticeship is Off-the-job training. This must make up an average of 6 hours per week of the apprentice's working hours, over the total duration of the apprentice's planned training period. Off-the-job training must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship standard and must take place within the apprentice's normal working hours. The new learning must be documented and reflected on through the Learner Journal on their e-portfolio.

Entry Requirements

The Apprentice will need to be in a relevant role and show a willingness to undertake the knowledge, skills and behaviours required. They will also need to have Level 2 Maths and English (GCSE at Grade 4/C or above or equivalent) or be prepared to attend a block study period for Maths and English if this is required.

Apprentices may be required to attend an interview and undertake relevant skills assessments.

Once they have been accepted on to the programme all apprentices will be required to attend a Lincoln College Induction. Apprentices will require access to a tablet/computer to access their e-portfolio.

Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

KNOWLEDGE

Knowing your customers

- Understand who customers are and the difference between internal and external customers.
- Understand the different needs and priorities of your customers and the best way to manage their expectations, recognising and knowing how to adapt style to be highly effective.

Understanding the Organisation

- Know the purpose of the business and what 'brand promise' means.
- Know your organisation's core values and how they link to the service culture.
- Know the internal policies and procedures, including any complaints processes and digital media policies that are relevant to you and your organisation.

Regulations and Legislation

- Know the appropriate legislation and regulatory requirements that affect your business.
- Know your responsibility in relation to this and how to apply it when delivering service.

Systems and resources

- Know how to use systems, equipment and technology to meet the needs of your customers.
- Understand types of measurement and evaluation tools available to monitor customer service levels.

Your role and its responsibilities

- Understand your role and responsibility within your organisation and the impact of your actions on others.
- Know the targets and goals you need to deliver against.

Customer Experience

- Understand how establishing the facts enable you to create a customer focused experience and appropriate response.
- Understand how to build trust with a customer and why this is important.

Product and Service Knowledge

- Understand the products or services that are available from your organisation and keep up-to-date.

SKILLS

Interpersonal Skills

- Use a range of questioning skills, including listening and responding in a way that builds rapport, determines customer needs and expectations and achieves positive engagement and delivery.

Communication Skills: Depending on your job role and work environment:

- Use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skills, along with summarising language during face-to-face communications; and/or
- Use appropriate communication skills, along with reinforcement techniques (to confirm understanding) during non-facing customer interactions.
- Use an appropriate 'tone of voice' in all communications, including written and digital, that reflect the organisation's brand.

Influencing Skills

- Provide clear explanations and offer options in order to help customers make choices that are mutually beneficial to both the customer and your organisation.

Personal Organisation

- Be able to organise yourself, prioritise your own workload/activity and work to meet deadlines.

Dealing with Customer Conflict and Challenge

- Demonstrate patience and calmness. Show you understand the customer's point of view.
- Use appropriate sign-posting or resolution to meet your customers' needs and manage expectations.
- Maintain informative communication during service recovery.

BEHAVIOURS

Developing Self

- Take ownership for keeping your service knowledge and skills up-to-date.
- Consider personal goals and propose development that would help achieve them.

Being Open to Feedback

- Act on and seek feedback from others to develop or maintain personal service skills and knowledge.

Team Working

- Frequently and consistently communicate and work with others in the interest of helping customers efficiently.
- Share personal learning and case studies with others, presenting recommendations, and improvement to support good practice.

Equality – treating all customers as individuals

- Treat customers as individuals to provide a personalised customer service experience.
- Uphold the organisations core values and service culture through your actions.

Presentation – Dress code and professional Language

- Demonstrate personal pride in the job through appropriate dress and positive and confident language.

“Right 1st Time”

- Use communication behaviours that establish clearly what each customer requires and manage their expectations.
- Take ownership from the first contact and then take responsibility for fulfilling your promise.

Assessment

Assessment is done through a combination of practical tasks, written assignments, oral discussions and online tests throughout the programme.

- One to one support from a dedicated, professional assessor/instructor allocated to the learner for the duration of the programme.
- Work based assignments and projects to be completed in an e-portfolio.
- Case studies and in College course days as and when required for each learner
- Job shadowing and mentoring, cross training in other departments.
- Employer led in-house training.
- Independent learning and research as directed by the assessor, relevant to the area of study.
- Review of progress every 4-10 weeks with the Apprentice, Manager and Assessor, evaluating and contributing to what has been learnt and what the next steps to take are.

End Point Assessment

There will be an End Point Assessment (EPA) as the final stage of an Apprenticeship. The Apprentice must demonstrate their learning to an independent end point assessor and the overall grade available is distinction, pass or fail.

Apprentice Showcase

The apprentice showcase is compiled after 12 months of on-programme learning. The Apprentice Showcase enables apprentices to reflect and present examples of their development over the whole on-programme period.

Practical Observation: Minimum of 60mins. The practical observation will be pre-planned and scheduled to when the apprentice will be in their normal place of work and will be carried out by the Independent Assessor. The observation should enable the apprentice to evidence their skills, knowledge and behaviour from across the standard to demonstrate genuine and demanding work objectives.

Professional Discussion: The professional discussion will be a structured discussion between the apprentice and the Independent Assessor, following the observation, to establish the apprentice's understanding and application of knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Progression

Completion of this apprenticeship will lead to eligibility to join the Institute of Customer Service as an Individual member at Professional level.

Completion of this apprenticeship provides an ideal path to the Customer Service Specialist Level 3 apprenticeship.

Fees

As an Apprentice, you will pay no course fees. However, your employer may have to pay towards your training as well as providing you with a wage. All Apprentices are entitled to the national minimum apprentice wage within their first year of training from their employer, although they can, and often do, pay more. In the second and subsequent years of an Apprenticeship programme, if you are aged 19 or over, the national minimum wage for your age would apply [<https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>]

If you are an employer and want to find out more information regarding employer contributions and any further costs related to the Apprenticeship programme, please contact our dedicated Apprenticeship team at employers@lincolncollege.ac.uk

Business Benefits

Employers have designed the Apprenticeship Standards to meet the needs of the sector and industry. Ensuring they include:

- Relevant Knowledge, skills and behaviours ensure that the Standard is relevant to the occupation.
- Widening participation Apprenticeship standards provide opportunities to employees that may not previously have been available.

- Development tools A cost effective way to train your employees to undertake specific roles in your business.
- Return on Investment On average, an apprentice who has completed their course will increase business productivity by £214 per week (CEBR, 2015).