

Course Introduction

Welcome to your Certificate course in Customer Relations. These materials have been published by Vector Business Development and are brought to you by Study House in partnership with Oxford Open Learning.

Course Objectives

At the end of the course you will be able to:

- Understand the need for customer care skills
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in your firm's care approach
- Plan a caring approach
- Develop personal customer care skills – face to face
- Develop personal customer care skills - on the phone
- Understand how to deal effectively with anger, aggression and complaints
- Define the role of receptionist
- Describe good practice in receiving visitors and guests
- List the administrative function assigned to reception
- Understand the importance of security and personal safety

Student Profile

This programme is designed for people seeking to understand and apply good practice in promoting effective customer relations. The course is particularly suited to staff who deal regularly with guests, visitors and customers face to face, in writing and on the telephone.



Oxford Open Learning

Course Structure

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Course Structure

Each section in this course is linked directly to a topic required for the assessment and sections follow the sequence of skills (or topic development) required by the syllabus.

At the beginning of each module, you will find an 'Aims' and an 'Objectives' section which provide a direct link between the syllabus and the content of the module. This can also serve as a checklist to ensure that all the necessary competences have been covered.

Within the sections, you should find all the theoretical knowledge that is required for the examination at this level. There is a wide left-hand margin so that you can add your own notes as you go along.

Some sections contain 'Exercise' sections, marked by black boxes. These exercises enable you to test your understanding of the previous part of the section and also to build up a portfolio that demonstrates the broad range of competences required.

You will probably be asked to tackle a series of numbered questions. These are open-ended activities and there are no set "answers" provided. Most are designed to help you in everyday working situations.

Underneath there is often an empty space. This reminds you that you are expected to write something here! The size of the space is roughly equivalent to the scale of the answer required.

Tutor-marked Assignments (TMAs)

Alongside each module, you will find a TMA, consisting of a series of structured questions, covering the whole module. These TMAs are designed to see how well you can apply the theory you have learnt to a practical situation, e.g. in your own working environment. They should normally be tackled when you have done all the exercises and finished the module concerned.

These assignments are normally to be found at the beginning of the pack, for ease of reference. There are spaces after the questions for you to write your answers in. You may prefer to photocopy these sheets before you start (in case you need to revise your work) and again afterwards.

As you know, you have to complete all your assignments in order to be awarded an ASET Certificate. Send your work to your tutor for marking.

Your tutor will be able to help you best if you also include a brief account of *why* you have selected a particular answer. It could be that you have selected the right answer for the wrong reason but your tutor will not be able to help you if no explanation is given. However, a wrong explanation does not affect the mark you get!

Students not in Employment

Although the TMAs are designed with employed students in mind, they are also possible for students who are unemployed. Such students should identify a “host organisation” upon which their answers can be based. This could be a local business [shop, pub etc] or a voluntary organisation [social club, sports club] willing to provide the student with work experience.

If this is not possible, the student can be issued with case studies which provide details of hypothetical organisations on which to base TMA answers. Consequently, lack of employment need not be a barrier to completing the programme. However, we do encourage students to relate their learning to a real organisation if at all possible because this tends to make the learning experience all the more realistic and valuable.

Method of Study

The programme is offered by distance learning, enabling students to complete their studies at work or at home over a timescale which suits their other commitments. No formal attendance at college is required but tutor support is included.

Duration

The course will take approximately 130 hours to complete, including the assessment.

Course Materials

You will receive: course handbook with exercises and activities, study guide to help you plan your studies, tutor support by telephone/email, reading list and assessment materials.

Tutor Support

Tutor support is available by telephone and/or email. Your tutor will contact you soon after registration to provide an induction and agree the timescale for the course.

Certificate Assessment Method

Students are assessed through assignments based on their application of the knowledge to a business idea. The assignments take the form of a structured essay based on a series of related questions designed to apply knowledge to the workplace. Candidates also need to complete a questionnaire supplied at the end of their studies.

Students who enrol direct with Study House are provided with a course registration form at the time of enrolment. This is used to trigger the allocation of a tutor and registration with ASET, the awarding body.

Once all of the TMAs are received and marked, the student's tutor will arrange for the end-test paper to be sent out to the student's nominee [any non-family member willing to invigilate the test and verify the identity of the student submitting the work]. Once completed this is then returned to the tutor who marks the test and arranges certification.

With students enrolling with Oxford Open Learning, the tutor support is provided by OOL but exam administration and accreditation by Study House. The procedure is as follows:

1. Student completes final TMA which is marked by the OOL tutor.
2. OOL notifies Study House that student has completed TMAs, providing contact details
3. Study House issues student with end-test information pack [registration form, payment request [£25], request for invigilator details and reply paid envelope] and then administers test and claim certificate.

The end-test questionnaire comprises 40 multiple choice questions and is administered on behalf of Oxford Open Learning by Study House Ltd who are an Approved Centre for the ASET award.

Progression

The Customer Relations programme is designed to provide a route to higher level qualifications and will assist in preparing for the following study programmes:

NVQ Customer Care

Syllabus Content

Module A: Customer Care

- Why your firm needs customer care
- Why you need to do something about it
- Your plan of campaign
- Customer care skills
- Handling complaints

Module B: Customer Care on the Telephone

- Telephones - problems and opportunities
- Communicating on the telephone
- Telephone skills
- Telephone Reception skills
- Dos and Don'ts on the telephone
- Handling problems and objections
- Controlling anger
- Dealing with criticism
- Handling complaints

Module C: Reception Skills

- The role of the receptionist
- Being an ambassador
- Receiving visitors & guests
- Administration in reception
- Security & safety
- Telephone skills

How to Apply

The course may be offered as part of a scheme operated by an employer or local college. In this case application should be made to the host organisation.

Otherwise all students must register with Study House by contacting:

Study House Ltd
8 Hillswood Avenue
Kendal
Cumbria LA9 5BT

Tel 01539 724622 www.study-house.co.uk
Fax 01539 734270 www.learn-business.co.uk
Email info@study-house.co.uk

Organising your Study

Whatever your method of study - full-time, part-time or studying by yourself at home - it is important that you plan your private study in an organised way.

Once you have decided how long you want to study for, you should draw up a plan of private study (a work plan). The first thing to do in designing this work plan is to decide how much time you can spend each week on private study. You will need to be honest with yourself: while you must be prepared to work hard for the examination, you must leave yourself enough time to do your job well and to have a reasonable social life. You also need to decide your best time for study - early morning, during the day, or in the evening.

The total amount of time you spend each week on private study should be divided into several short sessions. It is generally not a good idea to concentrate all your study into one lengthy session at the weekend. If for example you decide to allocate six hours per week to private study, try to split this time over three or four evenings. You can then, if you wish, keep the weekends free. If your study is to be really effective, it is important that you allow yourself plenty of time for rest and relaxation as well as for study.

Variety in your Study Methods

Most people find that when they have been working or studying for longer than about one hour they become gradually less able to absorb new material. It is best to tackle new and difficult topics when you are fresh. If your study sessions are longer than about an hour, it is also a good idea to divide them into several shorter periods. During the course of an evening's study session of, say, two hours, you can then tackle two or three topics. This is preferable to going on and on at the same topic.

As well as varying the topics you are studying, you should vary your method of study. Normally it is possible to concentrate on reading for 45 minutes or so at a time. During your study sessions, you should try to attempt example questions, write up notes, practise answering essay-type questions or, if you are at college, prepare for your next class.

'Difficult' and 'Easy' Topics

It is always a good idea to allow time in your schedules for going over topics you find more difficult than you had anticipated. Remember also that it is dangerous to be too confident about topics which you do not find difficult: you need to spend time on them to make sure that you really do understand them.

Once you have decided on a work plan, make sure you stick to it and try to work steadily through the whole period leading up to the examination.

Keeping Notes

Taking and keeping notes is the most common method by which students retain and accumulate information. Notes can be a vital part of your preparation for examination and it is important to make them as clear and accurate as possible.

Lectures and Seminars

Some students following this course will also have the opportunity to attend lectures and seminars.

If you are following a course at a college, you may be able to take notes at lectures and seminars. If you have no previous experience of this, it is worth remembering that you should not try to record every thing that is being said. If you try to do so, you will find that you are paying too much attention to detail and are missing the overall sense of the talk. When taking notes you should concentrate on understanding what is being said and then writing down the key points. You can enlarge on these later by further reading or study. You should also record the points you find difficult and then check these with your teacher.

A good way of making sure that you understand your notes is to write them in your own words. You should allocate time in your study periods to following up the lectures in this way as soon as possible after they have taken place.

Working Effectively with these Study Materials

You should aim to read through a section of this course, then stop for a few minutes to consider exactly what the text was about. You can then make a short note about the passage concerned and add this to your other notes. It is a good idea to make notes in the left-hand margin and also to keep your own separate summary of the topics you have covered.

You will find that you learn best from **active** study of this sort, in which you ensure you have understood material by working

on it in some way - writing notes summarising your understanding of it.

'Consolidation Sessions'

You should make notes on every part of your course but try to avoid becoming immersed in too much detail. It is a good idea to set time aside for regular consolidation sessions in which you summarise your notes. The summaries - or notes of notes - should be lists of key points to remind yourself about the detailed material which you have been studying. During your revision, concentrate on the key points only.

Storing your Material

It is important to store your study material so that it is easily accessible when you want to revise from it. It is a good idea to spend some time at the beginning of your course organising your storage or filing system: this will save you a lot of valuable time later.

Different storage methods will suit different people. One good method is to collect your material together in a series of loose-leaf folders, with a separate folder for each subject to be studied. Each subject can be divided into appropriate topics and dividing markers used to separate the topics.

Further Reading

First it should be emphasized that this course is designed to give you exactly the right amount of reading, taking each topic to the required depth. So if all sections of the text are fully understood, there should be no necessity for purchases of additional textbooks. But some students will find that certain topics are more difficult than others and that they need additional guidance or a fresh approach.

And Finally

You are setting out on an exciting journey which should lead to a prestigious and valuable professional qualification and a wealth of career opportunities. Good luck with your studies!