

## Certification Body Customer Satisfaction Survey 2015 Summary Report

### Introduction

The Federation ran two surveys during March 2015 for its key customers; the network of UK based Training Centres and Certification Bodies. The aim of both surveys was the same, to gain feedback on the work the Federation has undertaken over the last 12 months and to rate their customer service experience on a number of specific service areas.

This report summarises the results from the Certification Body survey, where they gave feedback on the services and support provided to them by the Federation. In addition, there is a section which summarises the feedback given by Training Centres, in relation to their customer service satisfaction levels with Certification Bodies. This additional information has been taken from the 2015 Training Centre Customer Satisfaction survey.

### Certification Body Total Survey Responses

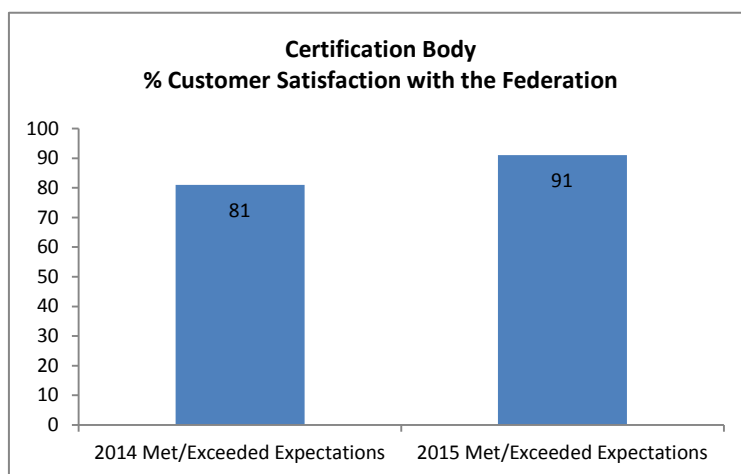
In total, we had **33 responses** with a number of these being multiple responses from the same Certification Body, where more than one person is involved with the certification process.

### Customer Satisfaction Rates – with the Federation

To gain an overall opinion of the work and support offered by the Federation, the CB respondents were asked to rate the level of customer service and support that they have received from the Federation. This was on a scale of Exceeded Expectations, Met Expectations, Somewhat Disappointed and Very Disappointed.

The combined % Customer Satisfaction for Exceeded and Met Expectations, as rated by the **Certification Bodies**, was: **91%** (Exceeded = 21% & Met = 70%)

These results are a huge 10% increase on the feedback received from CBs for the same question that was asked in the 2014 survey.



Additionally, CB respondents were asked if they felt that communication and guidance provided by the Federation had improved over the last 12 months and **91%** of respondents answered **Yes** to this question.

## 2015 Survey - Summary Findings

### Certification Body Feedback on the Federation's Performance – From the 2015 CB survey

The Federation specific questions, asked in the 2015 Certification Body Customer Satisfaction survey, focused on the key areas of work the Federation have focussed on over the last 12 months. The key areas surveyed were: **Communication, Guidance & Support, Federation Forum** and also an opportunity for any general feedback on our performance as an organisation. The majority of questions asked offered a pre-determined choice of options for respondents to choose from but there was also ample opportunity for feedback to be provided in a number of free-text fields.

#### Communication

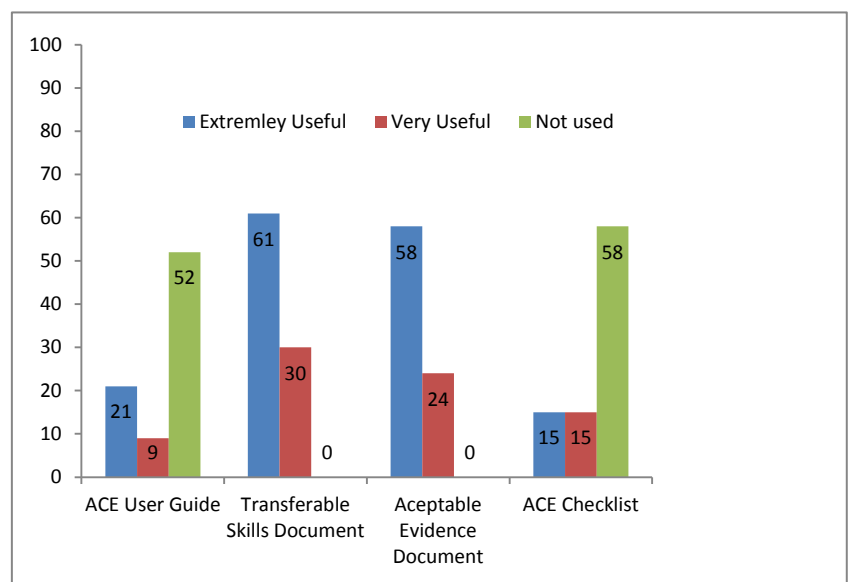
A key part of the work that the Federation has focused on is both maintaining and developing its communication with Certification Bodies. The Federation has introduced a number of new ways of improving communication by developing the Knowledge Base facility on its websites and also by posting regular newsfeeds on websites where there are important issues to be disseminated. The Federation has also used CBs to review and comment on proposed changes to systems, procedures and documentation prior to them being launched and implemented. This has given CBs the opportunity to feedback on proposed changes and has helped us to alter and fine tune original proposals prior to launch. The Federation also publishes a regular newsletter which enables the sharing of important information and developments with the CB network. The introduction of a named Account Manager for each CB has also contributed to improving communication links with CBs.

As a result of these, and other initiatives, 90% of CB respondents feel that the communication from the Federation has improved over the past 12 months and that the communication they do receive is both useful and informative.

#### Guidance & Support

In tandem with improving our communication methods with the Certification Bodies, the Federation has worked on improving the range of guidance and support materials available for Certification Bodies.

The 2 key documents – Transferable Skills and Acceptable Evidence have been very well received with them being rated by 91% and 82% of respondents as being Extremely/Very Useful. It was disappointing that the ACE User guide and the Ace Checklist had not been used by just over 50% of respondents but these guidance documents are, in fairness, more appropriate for Training Centre usage.



The online training tool, ACE-IT was launched in October 2014 as a new way of offering support and guidance to users. 68% of Certification Bodies have used ACE-IT, with more than half of them reporting that it was Extremely or Very Useful. Disappointingly though, almost a third of CB respondents are yet to use the ACE-IT system. This is an area which we will need to address as part of our action plans for 2015/16.

Over all 91% of respondents felt that the revised, updated and new guidance and support materials had improved over the last 12 months and as a result they had seen a reduction in the claim rejections they were making as all users had a better understanding of what constitutes acceptable learner achievement evidence.

CB respondents were asked if there was any additional statistical information that the Federation could provide them with to greater support them in their role of working with, and supporting their Training Centres. There were a few suggestions made, including:

- The currently provided reports on the increase/decrease in rejection rates for their top 20 Training Centres was really useful and would be beneficial to have it bimonthly.
- The ability to get a report on specific rejection reasons, by Training Centre.
- Expand the range of reporting facilities that can be used by Certification Bodies themselves rather than them having to request reports from the Federation.

When CB staff contact the Federation for support, 27% of them are now regularly use the new Helpdesk facility which was introduced in November 2014. They also still use the telephone and e-mail support facility that is available to them. Irrespective of the method used for contacting the Federation, 97% felt that the speed and quality of the response and help that they received from Federation staff was either Excellent, Good or Satisfactory.

### **Federation Forum**

As part of their communication strategy, the Federation hosts regular, quarterly meetings with CB representatives. This is the Federation Forum. These meetings are well attended by CBs with an average of 30 representatives attending on a regular basis. The Federation finds these meetings very beneficial and a vital part of building good working relationships and trust between themselves and the CBs.

CB survey respondents were asked for their feedback on the Federation Forum meetings. 88% of the respondents regularly attend these meetings and of those who do attend, 100% find them useful and informative. The main reasons they stated for finding the meetings valuable were:

- The topics and issues on the agenda and the opportunity to discuss these.
- The regular contact and communication with Federation staff allowing for regular updates and relationship building.
- The opportunity to share any concerns/issues they have and to discuss and generate ideas and identify areas for improvement.
- The chance to sharing best practice with colleagues doing a similar role.
- Networking opportunities with peers and Federation colleagues.

One area for improvement, that the survey identified, was that information discussed at Forum meetings is not always systematically disseminated to other CB colleagues not attending the meetings. 15% of respondents reported that they didn't attend the meetings themselves and they didn't always get feedback from their meeting representative. Meeting notes are always posted on the CB part of the ACE website so are generally available but the Federation needs to ensure that meeting representatives do feedback to their colleagues and that everyone is aware that meeting notes are generally available.

## **Feedback on Certification Bodies – From the 2015 Training Centres Survey**

The 2015 Training Centres survey asked a number of specific questions regarding the customer service and support that they received from their Certification Bodies. The questions focussed on Certification Bodies' levels and methods of communication; the speed of their response to queries raised; the quality and clarity of advice and support provided and the attitude of the staff. Without exception, all of these areas achieved a **98%** response which was rated either Excellent, Good or Satisfactory.

There were a couple of specific questions relating to certification claim rejections and **93%** of respondents felt that the explanation that they were given for the rejection was both clear and understandable. Additionally, **95%** of respondents confirmed that all rejection reasons were captured in a single rejection by their Certification Body. This is an improvement on feedback received in last year's survey where Training Centres commented that rejections reasons given were often not clear and that not all rejection reasons were captured in the first rejection which resulted in multiple rejections being made and this significantly delayed the timely processing of certification claims. CBs have responded well to last year's feedback and improved their performance in both of these areas.

**93%** of Training Centre respondents thought that the speed of Apprenticeship Certification claims processing, printing and despatch was Excellent, Good or Satisfactory. **93%** also felt that the customer service and support they received from their Certification Body had either Exceeded or Met Expectations. However, there were **15%** of respondents who felt that communication from their Certification Body had not improved over the last 12 months with 9% expressing concerns with one, or more, of their Certification Bodies performance. Where there were specific issues raised, the Federation's Account Managers will be discussing these with individual Certification Bodies. **92%** of Training Centres reported that they had seen a much more consistent approach to evidence requirements and acceptability across all Certification Bodies which is a great improvement on last year when only **42%** of Training Centre respondents felt that there was consistency/standardisation across the network.

## **2015 Certification Body Survey Outcomes – Federation Actions Required**

A number of the questions in the 2015 Certification Body Customer Satisfaction survey offered respondents the opportunity to leave specific feedback in a free text field. Many took the opportunity to leave both useful and constructive comments. As an overall summary, there are clearly areas where the Federation is meeting and exceeding customer's expectations but there are also some areas where we have identified the need for some improvements. These will be areas that will be incorporated in our plans for 2015/16 to ensure that we continue to build on our successes whilst enhancing and developing our service provision in other areas.

Areas identified by Certification Bodies that require the Federation to address and improve upon are:

- Clearer guidance on what is/is not acceptable achievement evidence – especially regarding the use of PLR evidence.
- Complete the quality check of ACE-IT question bank – eliminate question errors and expand question bank. Take account of the new SASE changes to Transferable Skill requirements.
- Rather than just redirecting support queries to the FISSS guidance materials, ensure support requests are properly dealt with at the time but then also signpost to guidance materials, for future reference.
- Update and reissue guidance documents less frequently and when updates are planned there should be plenty of advance notice given to users and clarity on the effective date of the changes being made and allow an agreed and adequate transition period.
- Provide regular statistical information to Certification Bodies to support them in their work with their Training Centre network. Consider expanding their own reporting functionality.
- Ensure the maintenance of, and adherence to, a consistent and standardised approach across the network, in terms of certification processes.