

Training Centres Customer Satisfaction Survey 2015

Summary Report

Introduction

The Federation has two significant, key customers and these are the network of UK based **Training Centres** who use our online Apprenticeship certification systems and the **Certification Bodies** who process Apprenticeship Certification claims, on our behalf.

During March 2015, we ran two online Customer Satisfaction surveys, one for each key customer type, giving them the opportunity to provide us with feedback on our performance and to rate their experience on a number of specific areas of our service provision.

Both surveys were open for a 4 week period and were well publicised on the ACE Website, via regular ACE notifications and an automated pop-up for Training Centres each time they logged into ACE to remind them to complete the survey.

Total Survey Responses

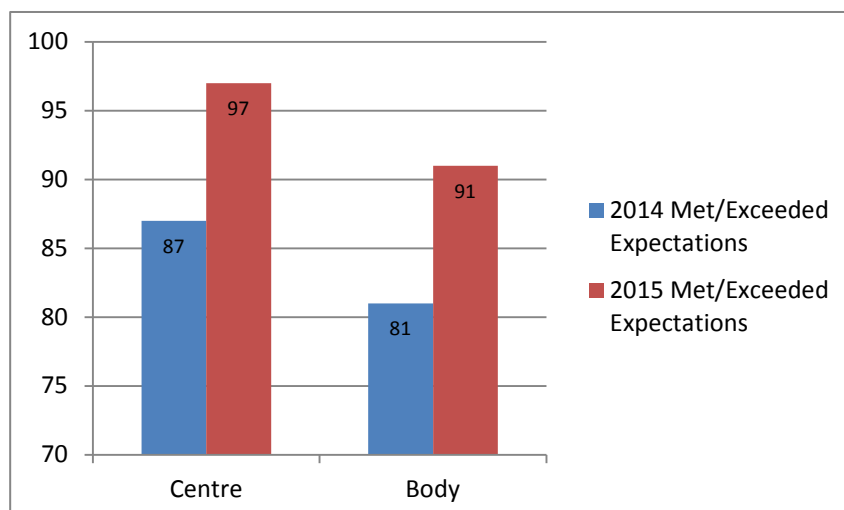
We received an excellent response to both surveys with **811 respondents** to the **Training Centres Survey** and **33** to the **Certification Body** one. The number of responses to the Training Centres survey is 39% up on last year's total.

Overall Customer Satisfaction Rates – with the Federation

Both surveys had a question relating to how the respondent rated the level of customer service and support that they received from the Federation. This was on a scale of Exceeded Expectations, Met Expectations, Somewhat Disappointed and Very Disappointed.

- The combined % for Exceeded and Met Expectations for the **Training Centres** was: **97%**
(Exceeded = 12% & Met = 85%)
- The combined % for Exceeded and Met Expectations for the **Certification Bodies** was: **91%**
(Exceeded = 21% & Met = 70%)

These results are a huge 10% up on the results we received, for both Centres and Bodies, for the same question asked in the 2014 survey:



Additionally, respondents were asked if they felt that communication and guidance provided by the Federation has improved over the last 12 months.

- 77% of **Training Centre** respondents answered **Yes** to this question (NB: 17% responded that they had been in post for < 12 months so couldn't adequately respond).
- 91% of **Certification Body** respondents answered **Yes** to this question

Training Centres Survey – Summary Findings

Federation Specific Feedback

The Federation specific questions, asked in the 2015 Training Centres Customer Satisfaction survey, focused on the key areas of work the Federation have carried out over the last 12 months. The areas focused on were those of: - **Communication, Guidance & Support, Events** and also the opportunity for **General Feedback** on our performance as an organisation. The majority of questions 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

93% of respondents understand the different roles undertaken by the Federation and Certification Bodies which is a good result as we have all worked hard to clarify who does what and where the different roles and responsibilities lie. There was a specific workshop on this topic at the March 2014 Provider events that we hosted and it was clear that at that time there was still definitely some confusion in Providers' understanding of the differing roles. This appears to have now been successfully addressed.

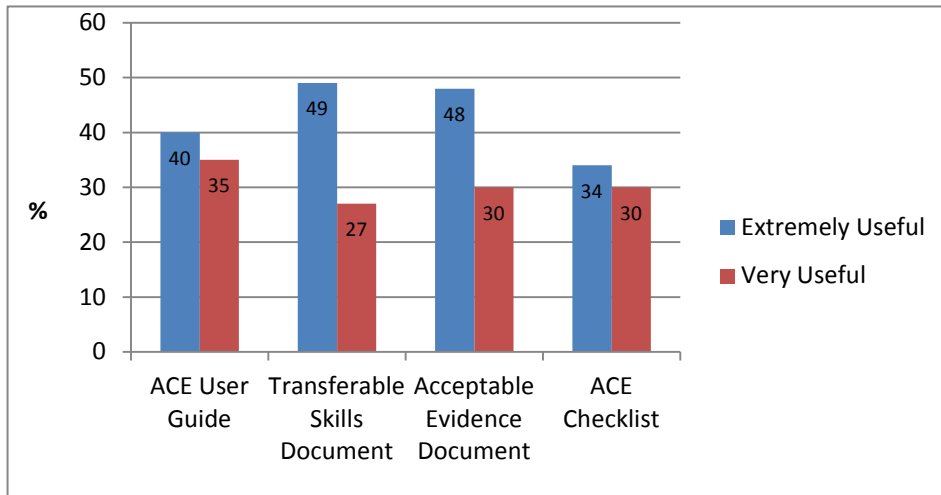
Guidance & Support

In conjunction with a greater appreciation of the differing roles undertaken by the Federation and Certification Bodies, it is very positive to see that 72% of Training centres now use their Certification Body as their first point of contact and have their query successfully resolved by them. Of the 23% that come to the Federation as their first point of contact, they all reported that this contact resulted in a successful resolution of their query/issue.

Overall, 97% survey respondents are Very Satisfied/Satisfied with the response and action taken by their first point of contact, whether this is the Federation or a Certification Body. Only 3% were Not Satisfied with the initial response to their enquiry and that follow-up had been required.

In response to specific feedback received as part of the 2014 Customer Satisfaction Survey, the Federation has concentrated a great deal of effort in reviewing its current guidance and support materials and updating them in line with current regulatory requirements and certification processes. A number of new documents were also developed and introduced.

As part of this year's survey respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of the available guidance materials. The 4 key documents all received an average of 73% of respondents rating the materials as Extremely or Very useful.



There was only a small a small percentage (around 3%) of respondents who were unaware that guidance and support materials are available. The ACE-IT online training tool that was launched in Oct 2014 has been used by 47% of respondents with the remainder either not aware that it existed or hadn't yet used it.

93% of all respondents felt that the Federation's guidance and support materials had improved in the last 12 months and that they had benefitted from their use by helping them in their use of ACE and by seeing a significant reduction in their certification claim rejections.

The new online Helpdesk was launched in November 2014 and already 16% of respondents are regularly using this facility to contact the Federation for support and find it easy to use. However, the remainder of communication from Training Centres is still made by telephone or by e-mailing Federation staff.

Irrespective of the method used to contact the Federation, 90% of respondents felt that the speed and quality of the response and help that they received was either Excellent, Good or Satisfactory.

Events

The Federation hosted a number of different events for Providers in 2014 with 3 in March and a further 3 in September. All of these events were well attended and, in fact, were all oversubscribed. 5% of respondents stated that they had wanted to attend but weren't successful in securing a place at an event. 20% of respondents did attend an event and indicated that they had found it to be informative and that they would attend a similar event in the future. Interesting to note though that 65% of respondents didn't attend an event and this may have been due to a number of factors – lack of time to attend, financial cost of attending, location of venues or that they didn't feel that the events were of interest to them.

General Feedback

A number of the questions asked gave respondents the opportunity to leave specific feedback in a free text field. Many took the opportunity to leave useful and constructive comments. As an overall summary, there are clearly areas where the Federation is meeting and exceeding customer's expectations but, as expected, there are also some areas for improvement.

Certification Body Specific Feedback

The Training Centre survey asked a number of specific questions regarding the customer service and support that they received from Certification Bodies.

The questions asked about 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 either Excellent, Good or Satisfactory.

There were a couple of specific questions relating to certification claim rejections and 93% felt that the explanation that they were given for the rejection was clear and understandable. Additionally, 95% of respondents confirmed that all rejection reasons were captured in a single rejection by their Certification Body.

93% of 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% 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.

92% reported that they had seen a more consistent approach to evidence requirements and acceptability across all Certification Bodies which is a great improvement on last year when only 42% of respondents felt that there was consistency across the network.

Actions Required

Whilst the survey was still open, we were reviewing the free-text comment boxes to pick up any feedback that was being left that we felt needed an immediate, and personal, response from the Federation. These were then followed up with a phone call made from a member of the Federation's Apprenticeship Services management team. The individuals contacted were grateful for the call and the time taken to follow up on the issues that they had raised. Following the contact made, all were satisfied with the responses and explanations that they were given.

Feedback relating to specific Certification Bodies will be identified and discussed with the relevant Certification Body, as part of their regular, monthly telephone call with Federation Account managers. A summary report on the findings of the 2015 Training Centres survey will be shared with both Centres and Certification Bodies.

By reviewing all of the feedback, both in terms of percentage ratings and free-text comments, we have identified key areas of good performance and also areas where there is scope for improvement.

Areas of good performance

- Overall customer satisfaction up by 10% from previous year.
- Very positive feedback on changes made to ACE over last 12 months.
- Guidance materials have improved and are recognised as valuable resources by users.
- Response to user support requests is, on the whole, prompt and efficient.
- For those able to attend, Federation events are a welcome service and seen as a positive and productive method of communication and sharing relevant information/good practice.
- Communication with customer base has improved considerably – now using a wider range of different media to communicate with customers.

Areas for improvement

- Complete the quality check of ACE-IT question bank – eliminate question errors.
- Rather than redirecting to FISSS guidance materials, as a response for support, ensure queries are fully dealt with at the time but then also signpost to guidance materials, for future reference.
- Change guidance documents less frequently and give plenty of notice regarding effective date of the changes made and set adequate transition period.
- Facilitate greater systems integration to avoid double entry of key data.
- Make Federation events more accessible to larger audience – consider different venue sizes/geographical location/format and timing of events.
- Organogram of Federation staff and key areas of responsibility to be made available on website
- Ensure maintenance of, and adherence to, a consistent and standardised approach across the network, in terms of certification processes.