



Working Together

Customer Services Standards

September 2010

History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1.1		Debbie Kerr	

Section 1 – Introduction

Customer Services Standards are in place to provide a professional environment and encourage consistency of approach across the college

These standards are essential for **all** staff. Managers are responsible for ensuring that these standards are monitored and maintained.

Section 2 – Customers

Recognition of customers in Borders College

Our customers include a range of people both internal and external to the college. All should be treated as equal. Examples of internal customers include staff members in our own and other departments, and students. Examples of external customers include agencies, contractors, and the public.

Customer prioritisation

The college adopts a first come first served policy. When dealing with a face to face enquiry and an interruption occurs, for example from a phone call or from another customer, the first face to face enquiry should continue to be dealt with, and the interruption appropriately acknowledged and managed.

Section 3 – Telephones

Answering the telephone

Incoming calls should be picked up within three rings where possible. Should you be already engaged with a customer or unable to take the call, the call should either go to voicemail or a colleague should pick it up.

The call should be answered

- *Reception: Good morning/afternoon, Scottish Borders Campus*
- *Internal calls: Good morning/afternoon (Name)*
- *External calls: Good morning/afternoon (Name and department (or as agreed by the manager))*

The staff member receiving the call should establish who is calling and the nature of the call prior to action or transfer. Customers should be advised what is happening to their call, e.g. if they are transferred or being put on hold.

It is appropriate in teams of staff doing the same or similar roles to pick up a colleagues phone. The exception to this rule is if a manager requests their calls are not picked up.

Call backs

When promising a call back, be realistic. If you are unable to have an answer within the timescales promised call the customer to advise when you will have an answer.

You should not promise timescales for call backs on behalf of another person. You can promise that you will pass the message on and ask a colleague to call back. Alternatively if you are unable to answer a query you should give the customer the option that you will either pass the message on to the relevant person or if the customer chooses they can call back. You should never tell the customer to call back, let them decide.

Transferring a call

Calls being transferred must always be announced. The transferor must advise the recipient of the name of the customer and the purpose of the call.

You must always accept a transferred call if announced. A customer must be told when being transferred there is a possibility of going to voicemail, you should check the customer is satisfied with this option prior to transfer.

Voicemail

Appropriate staff have a voicemail account and must record their own personal greeting.

Use of mobile phones

Within shared office space non work mobiles should be on silent.

Personal calls

Personal calls must be kept to an absolute minimum and any made or returned during your break in an appropriate environment. You should remember at all times the impact this can have on your customers and the impact on professionalism in your department.

It is never acceptable to accept a personal call when you are dealing with customers.

Section 4 – E-Mails

Appropriateness of email usage

Always consider whether e-mail is the most appropriate method of communication before sending. Emails should be used for short, clear messages. You should speak to a customer if the information is lengthy, complex or open to misinterpretation. Email is not the desirable option for urgent transfer of information. Sending an email does not mean it has been read and acted upon, purely that it has been sent.

Email greetings

There should always be a greeting, a main body and an ending to each email. Informal emails should start “Good morning/afternoon” or “Hello”, for more formal communications “Dear” should be used. Endings should be appropriate to the customer and the nature of the email, for example “kind regards” if formal and “many thanks” if informal.

Out of Office

An out of office message must always be used when you are going to be unable to respond to e-mails within normal timescales e.g. when you are not at work or on holiday.

Use of auto signatures

All staff should have an auto signature outlining their name, position, college address, email address and contact telephone number. This should be used on appropriate e-mails.

Section 5 – Diary Management

Use of the electronic diary

All staff are expected to use the electronic diary to help with workload planning and assist with customer service delivery.

Section 6 – Shared Areas

Shared Office Space

Noise levels in open plan areas should be kept to a minimum in order to minimise disruption to colleagues. Never shout at a colleague across an open plan area.

Clear desk policy

A clear desk policy should be adhered to by all and each department should have either a dedicated person for enquiries or a channel for dealing with a customer.

Eating at desks

Borders College encourages all staff to take a break away from your desk for lunch. In shared offices it may sometimes be acceptable to eat cold food, however, hot food is not permitted whilst at desks other than soup in a cup. In any case, if you are customer-facing it is unacceptable to have lunch whilst dealing with a customer either face to face or on the telephone. Lunch in these circumstances must be taken away from the desk, as should breaks. Any exceptions to this rule should be agreed with your manager.

Break and Lunch cover

Managers must ensure that where possible cover is planned over break and lunch times to ensure continuity of service. If a department is going to be unmanned a notice advising customers of when you will be returning or where you can be contacted should be provided.

Confidentiality

Customers should be dealt with appropriately and consideration should be given to the sensitivity of the conversation. If you need to give sensitive advice or guidance then it is good practice to move the conversation to a confidential area e.g. a private room.

Section 7 – Dress Code

The College culture encourages students to raise their employability standards and staff should seek to provide an example of an appropriate and professional appearance. Although there is no formal dress code for the College, staff should adopt standard business dress unless leading or taking part in an activity which requires specialist clothing. Therefore it may be appropriate to wear overalls in a workshop, uniforms in a salon or kitchen, exercise clothes in the gym or jeans in an outdoor working environment. However, for normal classroom based work, and for staff based in an office environment, business dress should be worn.

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Certain groups of staff, for example Facilities and ICT team members are issued with uniforms and these will be expected to be worn during working hours.

Individuals working in The Advice Centre and at Reception have adopted a black and white theme which portrays a consistent, professional image for these frontline services.

Equality Impact Assessment

(Rapid impact assessment tool)

What Impacts may there be from this proposal on any group's ability to use the College services?

Policy: Customer Services Standards

Positive Impacts (Groups affected)	Negative Impacts (Groups affected)
Actions taken to alleviate any negative Impacts:	
Recommendations:	

From the outcome of the rapid equality impact assessment, have negative impacts been identified for any protected characteristic or any other potentially disadvantaged group?

Has a full Equality Impact Assessment been recommended?

Yes

No

Reason for recommendation:

Customer Services Standards

Status:

Policy Dated:

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Equality Impact Assessed: