TRAINING
QUALITY
STANDARD

Provider Validation FAQ

What is employer validation?

If your organisation wishes to be assessed against, and certificated to, the Training Quality Standard, your application will need to be externally validated by your organisation's employer customers.

What is the rationale for employer validation?

Validation has been included in the assessment process because many organisations presently deploy sound approaches, but cannot demonstrate that this achieves satisfactory results. The absence of this evidence presents a significant obstacle for many of those seeking certification under the Training Quality Standard, and so this transitional arrangement has been offered where organisations applying for assessment before January 2010 can seek certification on a conditional basis, with exemption of Part A Results (Criterion A.5).

What is an employer customer?

Employer customers are:

- Those customers that you have worked with in the previous 12 months
- Those which you had a role in commissioning the work and have subsequently trained delegates/learners – If you have only invoiced these 'customers' but had no specific relationship (e.g. those 'customers' that have been invoiced to pay the fees for individual learners who independently sourced and used a provider), they should not be listed as employer customers
- Therefore, a 'relationship' must exist between the provider and the employer for them to be classed as a 'customer'
- ***Individual*** employer customers - where a separate 'relationship' exists between you and the customer. In instances where the same customer is listed more than once on a dataset, you must ensure that an individual relationship exists with each one. For example, where an HR manager arranges training for all staff, across a number of stores/sites and each store/site is listed on a dataset, they are not classed as individual employer customers. The 'relationship' exists with the employer through the HR manager, meaning this would be one employer customer as opposed to multiple 'individual' employer customers.

What is the method for validation?

The method of validation will depend on the number of customers with whom you have worked in the previous 12 months.

If you have worked with 25 or more customers, your organisation will be validated via a quantitative method, which will involve interviewing, via telephone, a representative sample of your customers, asking them one simple question to provide feedback on your organisation.

Organisations which have worked with very small numbers of employer customers (fewer than 25) will have their assessments validated through a small number of depth interviews, again conducted via telephone. (For more information Appendix 1 on page 5)

Do I have to do it?

Yes, if you wish to be certificated under the Training Quality Standard you will have to participate in employer validation. There are no exemptions.

Who will conduct my validation?

Employer validation will be conducted by an independent market research agency, contracted to CFE. The independent research agency will interview your customers on your behalf. This will be clear to your customers in the opening to the interview.

How many of my customers will be interviewed?

You will be asked to declare how many employer customers you have worked with in the last 12 months on your registration form. You will also be asked to declare, on your registration form, how many of those customers contact details are held for. It is this number which will determine how many of your customers will need to be interviewed.

The number of customers (for which contact data is held) declared on the registration form will allow CFE to calculate a 'sample size', which will be the number of interviews we will need to complete in order to validate your assessment.

[If you work with more than 100 customers] CFE will calculate a sample size to achieve a 5% confidence interval (at 95% confidence), against a population defined by the number of customer records you declare on your registration form (for which contact details are held).

[If you work with 100, or fewer, customers] CFE will seek a sample of 80% of your available customer records as declared on your registration form.

[If you work with very small numbers of customers – fewer than 25] CFE will calculate a sample size on a case by case basis and validate your assessment via depth interviews. (See Appendix 1 on page 5 for more details)

What will my customers be asked?

Quantitative interviews involve asking your customers to provide simple feedback on your organisation through one substantive question. This question asks customers to rate your organisation, on a scale of 0 – 10, in terms of their likeliness to recommend your services.

Depth interviews (for those organisations with fewer than 25 customers) will involve asking a small number of your customers a set of in-depth questions to explore their relationship with your organisation, the standard of service they received and their willingness to recommend your services. (See Appendix 1 on page 5 for more details)

What happens to my customers' answers?

Quantitative interviews elicit feedback, on a scale of 0 – 10. The data is used to calculate a 'Net Promoter Score' (NPS), where the percentage of 'detractors' (those rating 6 or less) is subtracted form the percentage of 'promoters' (those rating 9 or 10). Those rating 7 or 8 are classed as 'passively satisfied' and are not included in the NPS calculation. For example, we interview 100 of your customers. 50 are classes as promoters, 20 are passively satisfied, and 30 are classed as detractors. The % of detractors is subtracted from the % of promoters giving you a NPS score of 20.

(More information on NPS is available upon request: contact andrew.currie@cfe.org.uk) Results are aggregated, meaning you will not be able to determine which of your customers were promoters/passively satisfied/detractors, or in fact which of your customers participated, and then passed to the Training Quality Standard Panel to determine pass/fail.

Depth interview answers (for those organisations that work with fewer than 25 customers) will also be aggregated and then passed to the Training Quality Standard Panel who will determine pass/fail.

What data do I have to provide?

You will be asked to submit your customer data in .xls (Excel) format, using a pre-defined template (supplied to you after you submit your registration form) populating the required fields. You will be asked to supply the organisation name of your customers, a named contact from that organisation (First name and last name), their job title, their title (Mr/Mrs/miss), contact telephone number, and the organisation's postcode. In the longer term you will be able to be download this template from the Training Quality Standard website.

When do I have to provide data? (and how much?)

Employer customer data must be submitted at the same time you submit your Training Quality Standard Application. The amount of data supplied must correlate to the number of employer customers for which you declared you hold contact data for, on your registration form.

Why do I have to provide contact names with my data?

The employer validation involves contacting *your* customers to ask them to provide feedback on *your* organisation. Therefore, it is important we speak to the relevant person to ensure they are the best person to provide that feedback. If the incorrect contact, or no contact name, is supplied it may impact on the rating given by that customer. The research agency, calling on your behalf, will ask checking questions to ensure we interview the relevant person, but the best way to ensure we speak to the right person is by you supplying their name.

What if I can’t supply sufficient data?

If insufficient data is submitted (the number of records does not correlate to that declared on your registration form) the data will be returned to you to improve.

If the quality of data submitted is poor (missing information such as telephone numbers and contact names) the data will be returned to you to improve.

In both cases your application will not be able to be processed further until data is resubmitted and meets requirements.

What if I don’t supply data with my application?

Training Quality Standard applications cannot be processed further if employer customer data is not supplied with your application.

How do I pass?

The Training Quality Standard Panel will decide if you are successful in seeking certification under the Standard by reviewing the recommendation of the Lead Assessor, the Lead Assessor’s feedback on your application and verification visit, and the results of your employer validation together, on a case by case basis.

Does the submission of data affect DP Act 1998?

No, there is no breach of the Data Protection Act 1998. Full guidance on the submission of employer customer data and the implications of this with regard to the 1998 Act is available on our fact sheet “Employer Customer Data – Data Protection Act 1998”.

How can I guarantee my data is ‘safe’?

We have implemented appropriate technical and organisational security measures to ensure the safety of customer contact details, in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. Full guidance on this is available on our fact sheet “Employer Customer Data – Security”.

Can I inform my customers they will be interviewed?

Yes, if you wish to contact your customers to let them know they *may* receive a call asking to provide feedback then there is nothing to prevent you from doing so. The research agency conducting your validation will not make reference to the validation, or the fact that you are seeking certification under the Training Quality Standard; they will simply say they are calling on behalf of "X provider" and would like them to provide feedback on your organisation. You should bear this in mind when informing your customers they *may* expect a call. You should also place emphasis on the 'may receive a call' as we will only be calling a representative sample of your customers; not all will be called.

CFE is also developing a template for you to use should you wish to inform your customers they may receive a call. CFE will publish this on the Training Quality Standard website once released.

How much will validation cost?

The cost of a quantitative validation is wholly dependent on the number of customers we will need to interview in order to validate your assessment. On average, the typical cost of validation is between £1,500 and £2,500.

No profit is made from the validation process; the costs are passed directly to the provider, via CFE, by the independent research agencies.

The maximum cost of depth interviews (for those organisations that have fewer than 25 customers) is £650.

Appendix 1: Validation for organisations with fewer than 25 customers

Background

Organisations that work with fewer than 25 customers will have their applications validated via depth interviews rather than the quantitative method used to validate applications from organisations that work with more than 25 customers.

Rationale

Depth interviews have been included in the assessment process to take into account organisations that work with very small numbers of customers; in this case fewer than 25.

When the number of employer customers falls below 25, nearly all (and where the numbers get very low, all) customers are required to be interviewed to ensure that a statistically sufficient number of customers are contacted.

Because it becomes increasingly difficult to achieve the required sample when the number of customers is very low (due to timescales, refusals, incorrect telephone numbers etc.) CFE will validate applications from organisations with fewer than 25 customers via depth interviews.

How many of my customers will be interviewed?

Because of the reasons given above, CFE will calculate the sample (the number of interviews) required on a case by case basis. However, a maximum of 10 customers will be interviewed.

What will my customers be asked?

Depth interviews involve asking a small number of your customers a set of questions to explore their relationship with your organisation, the standard of service they received from your organisation and their willingness to recommend your organisation's services.

Your customers will be asked 11 questions around four specific themes and involve customers rating your organisation on a scale of 1 – 6 (1 = low; 6 = high).
The four themes are:

- How your organisation responded to the customer's enquires & training needs
- The way you delivered training solutions to the customer
- The way in which your organisation related to the customer
- The impact the training you delivered had on the customer's organisation

Open-ended questions follow each of these themes, which give your customers the opportunity to explain their reasons for rating your organisation.

As with quantitative validations (for those organisations working with more than 25 customers) your customers will also be asked to rate your organisation, on a scale of 0 – 10, in terms of their likeliness to recommend your organisation's services.