

CAMBRIDGE CAREER AWARD IN OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Guidance for Assignments

INTERPERSONAL BUSINESS SKILLS

- Customers' approval (or otherwise) of a new product range
- Fellow students' or colleagues' views on new technology and its implications for the future
- The success (or otherwise) of a new advertising campaign
- Possibility of networking within an organisation
- Health and safety issues concerning use of VDUs
- Issues of security within a building and/or students/staff leaving after normal hours
- Sales representatives' use of laptops, videoconferencing, etc.
- Whether an induction course (for students or employees) succeeded and how it could be improved
- Possibility of providing canteen facilities where none exist at present

An example assignment

Investigate and report on possibility of setting up a training office within a college/centre.

- 1 **Write a plan** outlining how the assignment would be handled.
- 2 Identify a **sample group** which would perhaps be six to ten members of the teaching staff, from different departments.
- 3 Decide the best method of surveying the sample group - brief questionnaire, follow-up interviews, etc. The survey could perhaps set out to discover what facilities would be required, e.g. telephone answering, taking messages, typing/word processing handouts for staff, photocopying, e-mailing, etc. Benefits to students (real work experience) could also perhaps be included - or be the subject of a separate assignment.
- 4 Identify a **reference group** of about five people comprising perhaps the tutor, someone with suitable specialist knowledge or experience and fellow students studying the same course at the same level.
- 5 Present the findings (conclusions) to the reference group. (Possibly indicating that a training office would be very valuable to staff - and possibly also as very valuable experience for the students).
- 6 Lead a short discussion with the reference group on the conclusions reached.
- 7 Write a report of between 1400 and 1800 words which may be typed, word processed or handwritten. This should have a logical structure, business-like layout and format and should include all the features described in the syllabus.

Examples of how the competence criteria could be met during the assignment:

1.2 - when interviewing staff: include the types of question which would be suitable to ask to find the answers required (i.e. open, closed, leading and/or hypothetical) and the purposes of the types of questions chosen;

3.1 - when making the presentation to the reference group: set clear objectives, get the physical setting right; plan the presentation, deliver the presentation and what to do if something goes wrong.

CUSTOMER CARE - FOUNDATION LEVEL

Suggestions for observations

- Facilities in student's own business or educational centre, e.g. canteen or snack bar, library, reception area etc. OR
- Facilities at a local business such as petrol station, small shop, grocer, florist, etc.

An example assignment

- 1 Read the assignment guidelines carefully.
- 2 Decide which **one** of the areas outlined below to use for the observations:
 - (a) Different ways of greeting customers and helping them to choose the right product or service **OR**
 - (b) Identification of a service delivery procedure and how it helps customer care **OR**
 - (c) Different ways of handling difficult customers and dealing with their problems.
- 3 Write a plan outlining how the assignment is to be handled.
- 4 Discuss with tutor and amend the plan, if necessary.
- 5 Choose a suitable facility which offers a service to customers. (Bear in mind the need to be unobtrusive whilst observations are carried out.)
- 6 Design a checklist - to be used by student to observe customer service in action.
- 7 Obtain permission from manager for student to carry out the research, if appropriate.
- 8 Student to observe customer care in action on **three separate** occasions. (Observations may be within different departments/sections of the same business or within three different organisations, depending on ease of access, etc.)
- 9 Observe service provided to customers by the organisation - look at all aspects of the service, from procedures through to staff behaviour. (Guidelines on how and where to observe may be found in the syllabus.)
- 10 Write a summary of each observation undertaken.
- 11 Prepare a conclusion outlining the level and quality of customer care observed in each observation.
- 12 Write a report which must include:
 - (a) an introduction to the concept of good customer care
 - (b) a short description of the organisation or business in which the observations were conducted and why these were chosen for this assignment
 - (c) an identification of the types of customers observed
 - (d) an explanation of what decisions were made when constructing checklist to be used during the observations
 - (e) a summary of each observation undertaken
 - (f) a conclusion outlining the level and quality of customer care observed
 - (g) recommendations
- 13 The report must:
 - (a) be between 1,000 and 1,400 words in length
 - (b) be typed, word processed or legibly handwritten
 - (c) have a logical structure with clearly presented and explained sections
 - (d) have a clear, legible and business-like layout and format
 - (e) demonstrate that the following objectives have met 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3
- 14 Copies of completed checklists should accompany report.

CUSTOMER CARE - STANDARD LEVEL

Suggestions for surveys

- Facilities at a local business offering a service such as café, post office, petrol station, small shop/supermarket, refuse collection depot, library, hotel reception, etc.

An example assignment

- 1** Read the assignment guidelines carefully.
- 2** Write a plan outlining how the assignment is to be handled.
- 3** Discuss with tutor and amend the plan, if necessary.
- 4** Choose a local facility which offers a service to customers and select a specific service being provided by that facility.
- 5** Obtain permission from manager to carry out the research, if appropriate.
- 6** Devise questions to be used when questioning customers during the survey.
- 7** Acting as a “customer”, visit the chosen facility and rate the service against the survey questions devised.
- 8** Opportunity to amend survey questions, if desired.
- 9** Interview customers, using survey questions, obtain customers’ views on the specific service selected which is being provided by the facility chosen. (At least 12 customers from a small, specialist business should provide enough data for analysis.)
- 10** Write an analysis of each of the questions included in the survey.
- 11** Use charts, graphs and/or diagrams to display the outcomes of the survey.
- 12** Write a report which must:
 - (a)** Demonstrate the following criteria 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1 and 5.2
 - (b)** indicate the type of business chosen and the specific service investigated
 - (c)** identify the different types of customer and customer care
 - (d)** clearly state how many customers were surveyed
 - (e)** indicate how information was gathered on customer opinion and problems
 - (f)** include an analysis of each of the questions
 - (g)** include charts, diagrams and/or graphs to display outcomes of the survey
 - (h)** offer solutions to customer problems based on the information collected
 - (i)** identify customer care systems which work well and explain why
 - (j)** include a copy of the survey questions used
 - (k)** be between 1,400 and 1,800 words in length
 - (l)** be typed, word processed or legibly handwritten
 - (m)** have a logical structure with clearly presented and explained sections
 - (n)** have a clear, legible and business-like layout and format

CUSTOMER CARE - ADVANCED LEVEL

Suggestions

- A local business offering a service such as restaurant, car repair garage, fitness centre, bank, estate agent, printer, hotel reception, hairdressers, etc. **OR**
- A retail outlet such as general store, supermarket, grocer, outfitter, butcher, baker, etc.

An example assignment

- 1 Read the assignment guidelines carefully.
- 2 Write a plan outlining how the assignment is to be handled. (Students may work in groups of 3 or 4 if desired, but each must submit **their own individual report**.)
- 3 Discuss with tutor and amend the plan, if necessary.
- 4 Choose a local firm offering a service to customers, or a retail outlet.
- 5 Obtain an appointment to interview the manager - interview to focus on the organisation's stated approach to customer care.
- 6 Design a questionnaire - to find out how satisfied customers are with the services provided by the organisation. Some guidelines on potential questions may be found in the syllabus but students must be able to answer these questions:
 - (a) how effective do customers think the procedures of the organisation are?
 - (b) how well do staff treat the customers?
- 7 Questionnaire should be word processed and copies made for use by all members of the group.
- 8 Obtain permission from manager to carry out the research.
- 9 Each member of group to act as an "undercover customer", to visit the organisation chosen and to rate the organisation against the questions that have been devised.
- 10 Opportunity then to amend questionnaire if necessary.
- 11 Interview a number of customers, using questionnaire. Brief explanation of how customers were approached, and how many were interviewed, should be included in a report.
- 12 Observe service provided to customers by the organisation - look at all aspects of the service, from procedures through to staff behaviour.
- 13 Display outcomes of the study using charts and diagrams.
- 14 Write an analysis of each of the questions in the questionnaire.
- 15 Present findings to the manager interviewed.
- 16 Write a report which examines how well the organisation meets customer expectations.
- 17 The report must:
 - (a) Demonstrate the following criteria 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, and 6.1
 - (b) indicate how the student went about the investigation
 - (c) demonstrate adequate coverage of the aims and competence criteria as detailed in the syllabus
 - (d) be between 1,800 and 2,000 words in length
 - (e) be typed, word processed or legibly handwritten
 - (f) have a logical structure with clearly presented and explained sections
 - (g) have well-summarised findings of the investigation
 - (h) have a clear, legible and business-like layout and format
 - (i) include conclusions and recommendations
- 18 Copy of questionnaire should accompany report.

ORGANISING MEETINGS AND EVENTS - STANDARD LEVEL

Organisation of real meetings
is preferred but if this is not possible,
simulation may be used instead.

Possibly organise:

Meeting

- clubs or societies to which students may belong
- to discuss specific problem
- to exchange ideas, find solutions to problems, obtain views, etc.
- Student Council (or similar)
- team meeting (e.g., of tutors or employers)
- departmental meeting
- fund-raising meeting for local charity, hospital, etc.

An example assignment

Organise a Fund-raising Meeting for a Local Charity

- 1 Read the assignment guidelines carefully.
- 2 Write a plan outlining how the assignment is to be handled.
- 3 Discuss with tutor and amend the plan, if necessary.
- 4 Decide what planning aids, organising and monitoring methods to use.
- 5 Identify the appropriate communication methods to be used.
- 6 Plan the meeting:
 - (a) Before the Meeting
 - (b) On the Day of the Meeting
 - (c) During the Meeting
 - (d) After the Meeting
- 7 Prepare a conclusion on the success of the Meeting.
- 8 Write a report which must:
 - (a) indicate how the meeting was organised
 - (b) describe the monitoring methods used and whether or not they were successful
 - (c) include whether anything would be done differently next time
 - (d) describe the communication methods used and include copies of actual documentation
 - (e) include a conclusion on the success of the meeting
 - (f) be between 1,400 and 1,800 words in length
 - (g) be typed, word processed or legibly handwritten
 - (h) have a logical structure with clearly presented and explained sections
 - (i) have a clear, legible and business-like layout and format

Organising meetings and events - Advanced level

Organisation of real events
is preferred but if this is not possible,
simulation may be used instead.

Possibly organise:

Event:

- training day
- seminar
- conference
- staff social event
- workshop
- exhibition
- induction
- visit by local schoolchildren for ½ or whole day
- various fund-raising events such as fun-run, telethon, marathon, disco, radio show, auction, etc.
- evening boat trip or day coach outing
- overseas business trip

An example assignment

- 1 Read the assignment guidelines carefully.
- 2 Write a plan outlining how the assignment is to be handled.
- 3 Discuss with tutor and amend the plan, if necessary.
- 4 Decide what planning aids to use.
- 5 Plan the event:
 - (a) Before the Event
 - (b) On the Day of the Event
 - (c) During the Event
 - (d) After the Event
- 6 Write a report which must:
 - (a) indicate how the event was organised
 - (b) describe the monitoring methods used and whether or not they were successful
 - (c) include whether anything would be done differently next time
 - (d) describe the communication methods used and include copies of actual documentation
 - (e) include a conclusion on the success of the event
 - (f) be between 1,800 and 2,000 words in length
 - (g) be typed, word processed or legibly handwritten
 - (h) have a logical structure with clearly presented and explained sections
 - (i) have a clear, legible and business-like layout and format