

Apprentice Preparation Guide



Practical Observation

Assessment Method: Practical Observation with Questions and Answers

Preparing for your End-point Assessment

This document is designed to support you in preparing for the VTCT Skills Level 3 Customer Service Specialist v1.1 End-point Assessment.

During your End-point Assessment, **one** of the **three** assessment methods that you will undertake is a practical observation with questions and answers.

Overview of a Practical Observation with Questions and Answers

A practical observation with questions and answers is an assessment method where you must be observed, by an Independent Assessor, undertaking a range of day-to-day workplace activities. The practical observation should involve activities which allow you to demonstrate the full range of your knowledge, skills and behaviours required.

Delivery of the Practical Observation with Questions and Answers

The practical observation with questions and answers will be conducted as follows:

- be covered in one session lasting **60 minutes** (with a 10% +/- tolerance)
- with you and your Independent Assessor in a 1:1 observation (face to face), with no other parties involved
- completed in a controlled environment which is free from distractions and interruptions
- during the practical observation you should have the opportunity, if required, to move from one area/function of the business to another in order to best demonstrate how you can apply the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours in a realistic work environment to achieve genuine and demanding work objectives
- the Independent Assessor must plan the practical observation in conjunction with you and your employer, taking account of workplace considerations. This would typically include timing, the right environment and enough space for you to be able to do your job
- the practical observation must include questioning to clarify that your knowledge and understanding is being applied. The questions must be open questions and the Independent Assessor may ask supplementary questions as required to seek further clarification
- the amount of questioning time carried out during the practical observation should not exceed 15% of the total time allowed for the Practical observation.

Where will the Practical Observation with Questions and Answers take place?

The practical observation with questions and answers must take place in your employer's workplace.

The practical observation with questions and answers should take place in a quiet room, free from distractions and influence, in a controlled environment.

- **What is a controlled environment?** *A controlled environment for an assessment refers to a setting where specific conditions are monitored to ensure fairness, security, and reliability in the assessment process across apprentices.*

Preparation for Practical Observation with Questions and Answers

During the practical observation with questions and answers, you must demonstrate the full range of the requirements for the technical skills outlined in the End-point Assessment Plan.

To prepare for the practical observation with questions and answers it is essential that the grade descriptors on pages 4-5 are considered. The grade descriptors include areas that must be covered throughout the practical observation with questions and answers

During the practical observation with questions and answers, the Independent Assessor will allow you to undertake a range of day-to-day workplace activities. The observation should involve activities which allow you to demonstrate the full range of your knowledge, skills and behaviours required.

How is the Practical Observation with Question and Answers graded?

The Independent Assessor will use the grading criteria to assess the practical observation with questions and answers. The assessment method will be graded Fail/Pass/Distinction.

Practical Observation with Questions and Answers grading criteria

Fail criteria

Grading descriptors - Practical observation with questions and answers
The Apprentice does not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that their performance meets the requirements of the pass criteria.
Shows a little or no understanding of their role in meeting the organisation's customer service standard.
Does not fully know or understand their organisation's service level agreement.
Provides insufficient evidence to demonstrate an understanding of customer expectations.

Pass criteria

You will achieve a pass grade if you provide evidence to meet all the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour requirements set out for the practical observation with questions and answers and all of the criteria below:

Grading descriptors - Practical observation with questions and answers
An ability to assess at least 3 different customer types and their role of emotions in order to achieve a successful outcome for them.
Demonstrates through advanced questioning, listening and summarising, the negotiation of mutually beneficial outcomes.
Demonstrates management of challenging and complicated situations, balancing organisational needs and customer satisfaction.
An ability to assess situations and offer clear explanations, options and solutions that balance customer and organisational requirements.
Ability to react appropriately to customer emotions and bring about a successful outcome for different customer types.
Evidence knowledge of how customer expectations can differ between cultures, ages and social profiles.
Recognises when customer emotions have been affected by the level of service offered.
Demonstrates an understanding of current legislation, compliance and regulatory guidance and their impact on customer service delivery.
Demonstrates how they adapt their communication style to clearly and concisely communicate complex information to customers to support positive outcomes.
Evidence when they have maintained a positive relationship even when they are unable to deliver the customer's expected outcome.
Evidence how they recognise when customer expectations are not met and demonstrates how, using appropriate communication techniques, this could be managed to maintain a positive relationship.

Demonstrates when and how historical interactions, challenges and related information are taken into account in determining the next steps, when managing referrals and escalations.
Shows proactivity and creativity when identifying solutions to customer and organisational issues.
Demonstrates identifying, negotiating and agreeing appropriate options with customers, making realistic commitments and delivering on them in line with organisational policy and procedures.
Demonstrates achievement of results through effective teamwork and collaboration with colleagues at all levels.
Shows adaptability of own skills when working with internal customers.
Demonstrates adaptability and flexibility in working towards meeting customer needs, supporting equality, diversity and inclusion in their customer service delivery.
Evidence to show how their personal presentation made a positive impact on their organisation's brand.
Demonstrate brand advocacy, values and belief when dealing with customer requests to build trust, credibility and satisfaction.
Demonstrates how they analyse, use and present a range of information in order to provide customer insight.

Distinction criteria

You will achieve a distinction grade for the Practical observation with questions and answers if you provide evidence to meet all the pass criteria and also all of the additional criteria below:

Grading descriptors - Practical observation with questions and answers
Demonstrates own communication with customers that ensures the best solution to meet customer requirements and organisational needs.
Demonstrates when they provided additional solutions to customers and made recommendations based on their findings to enable improvement.

Please follow the guide outlined below to support your preparation

What can I do to prepare for my End-point Assessment?	Completed Yes/No
1. Access and familiarise yourself with the 'Mock Assessment Form' for the practical observation with questions and answers.	
2. Refer to the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours that may be assessed during the practical observation with questions and answers. These are outlined in the table below.	
3. Collaborate with others to seek constructive feedback on your performance.	
4. Practice questions and answers with peers/assessors in preparation for your practical observation with questions and answers using the sample questions provided.	
5. Incorporate any feedback from your peers/assessor to enhance your approach and to address any identified areas for improvement in readiness for your practical observation with questions and answers	
6. Practise effective time management during the practical observation with questions and answers. Allocate appropriate time to each task and ensure completion within the given timeframe.	
7. Approach the practical observation with questions and answers with confidence. Remember that it is an opportunity to showcase your knowledge and skills.	
8. Stay calm under pressure and communicate effectively throughout the Practical observation with questions and answers.	
9. Remember to bring your identification with you on the day of your End-point Assessment. This can be one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving licence • Employee ID • Passport 	

Planning and Preparing for your Practical Observation with Questions and Answers

Knowledge

Knowing your customers and their needs/customer insight	What do I need to remember?
How to analyse, use and present a range of information to provide customer insight	
Understand different customer types and the role of emotions in bringing about a successful outcome	
Understand how customer expectations can differ between cultures, ages and social profiles	
Customer service culture and environment awareness	
Keep current, knowledge and understanding of regulatory considerations, drivers and impacts in relation to how you deliver for customers	

Skills

Business focused service delivery	What do I need to remember?
Find solutions that meet your organisation's needs as well as the customer requirements	
Providing a positive customer experience	
Through advanced questioning, listening and summarising negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes	
Manage challenging and complicated situations within your level of authority and make recommendations to enable and deliver change to service or strategy	
Use clear explanations, provide options and solutions to influence and help customers make choices and agree next steps	
Identify where highs and lows of the customer journey produce a range of emotions in the customer	
Use written and verbal communication to simplify and provide complex information in a way that supports positive customer outcome in the relevant format	

Customer service performance	What do I need to remember?
Maintain a positive relationship even when you are unable to deliver the customer's expected outcome	
When managing referrals or escalations take into account historical interactions and challenges to determine next steps	

Behaviours

Ownership/responsibility	What do I need to remember?
Personally, commit to and take ownership for actions to resolve customer issues to the satisfaction of the customer and your organisation	
Exercise's proactivity and creativity when identifying solutions to customer and organisational issues	
Team working	
Work effectively and collaboratively with colleagues at all levels to achieve results	
Recognise colleagues as internal customers	
Equality	
Adopt a positive and enthusiastic attitude being open minded and able to tailor your service to each customer	
Be adaptable and flexible to your customer needs whilst continuing to work within the agreed customer service environment	
Presentation	
Demonstrate brand advocacy, values and belief when dealing with customer requests to build trust, credibility and satisfaction	
Ensure your personal presentation, in all forms of communication, reflects positively on your organisation's brand	

Following your End-point Assessment:

What happens following my End-point Assessment?	You will receive the results from your End-point Assessment within 10 working days.
What happens if I do not achieve my End-point Assessment?	If you do not achieve a pass result within this assessment method, you will be able to re-sit this assessment.

Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes	Role
v1	04/02/2025	First published	Qualification Development Manager