

NSAI

CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN

Revision 4 – October 2022

Introduction

The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) is committed to providing a quality service to its customers. This Customer Action Plan, based on the *12 Principles of Quality Customer Service*¹, sets out a range of actions and objectives that NSAI sets out to achieve in relation to its external and internal customer service.

NSAI has a wide range of external customers such as manufacturing and service businesses, importers, distributors, retailers, consumers, professionals, media, business representatives, non-governmental spokesmen, researchers, students and personnel from Government departments and official agencies.

NSAI communicates its services to customers through a number of channels - telephone, face to face meetings, website and other online resources, walk-in services, email, promotional events, advertising, ezine and written correspondence.

The NSAI Customer Charter, which is based on this Customer Action Plan, sets out, at a high level, the commitments and the standards of service external customers can expect from the NSAI.

Through regular consultation with customers, the services and commitments set out in the Customer Charter are measured to determine customer satisfaction and to highlight areas for improvement.

NSAI strives to continually improve its services.

Role of the National Standards Authority of Ireland

The role of NSAI is to support economic growth and job creation, enable trade, and protect consumers through greater awareness of standards and their wider application.

NSAI was established as an independent body under the National Standards Authority of Ireland Act 1996. While initially, work focused on standards and certification areas the mandate has now grown to incorporate responsibility for measurement through the Legal Metrology Service for weights and measures used in trade and the National Measurement Laboratory for scientific and industrial metrology.

¹ The *12 Principles of Quality Customer Service* are set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: See http://per.gov.ie/wpcontent/uploads/Revised_Guidelines_for_the_Preparation_of_Customer_Charters_and_Customer_Action_Plans.pdf

Key NSAI activities

Key NSAI activities are development and publication of written standards; traceability and enforcement of measurement standards; and certification of products, processes and services.

For written standards we can tell you:

- How to search the standards catalogue
- Whether a standard is being developed and, if so, what stage the work is at
- How to become a participant of a standardisation work group
- How to see and make comments on draft standards
- How to buy a standard
- How to view a standard abstract
- What professional bodies or government bodies/agencies might be able to help you to look at a standard in more detail

For physical measurement standards we can tell you:

- Whether we provide traceability or a calibration service for a measurement unit
- How to get a quote for calibration
- How to interpret the information on the calibration certificate
- About the topics and dates of the metrology training programme
- What your obligations and liabilities are as a user of a measuring instrument in trade use
- What your obligations and liabilities are as a packer of pre-packaged products
- About the inspection of measuring instruments in trade use and manufacturers of pre-packaged products

For certification services we can tell you:

- What products, processes and services we certify
- How to get a quote for certification
- What your obligations are as a certified business or provider of certified products
- What products must be certified in order to comply with CE marking requirements
- How to find a certification body for your product if we do not provide that service
- What government departments or agencies are responsible for market surveillance of CE marked products

Our Customers

The NSAI has a wide range of customers, including manufacturing and service businesses, importers, distributors, retailers, consumers, professionals, media, business representatives, non-governmental spokesmen, researchers, students and personnel from Government departments and official agencies.

How to contact us²

Postal address:

**The Secretary
National Standards Authority of Ireland
1 Swift Square
Northwood
Santry
Dublin 9
D09 AOE4**

Tel: +353 1 807 3800

Email: info@nsai.ie

Website: www.nσαι.ie

Online resources: LinkedIn, Twitter

Our head office is open to the public -

Monday to Thursday:	9.15 h to 13.00 h and 14.00 h to 17.15 h
Friday:	9.15 h to 13.00 h and 14.00 h to 17.00 h

² If a customer contacts the NSAI using other means (i.e. direct dial telephone number, other email address) the principles outlined in this Customer Action Plan cannot be guaranteed.

Quality Customer Service

The NSAI is committed to ensuring that the *Principles of Quality Customer Service* are at the centre of all its activities and that commitment to quality customer service extends across the organisation to all staff. This Customer Action Plan sets out the steps the NSAI takes to ensure that a high quality of service is delivered to its customers, both externally and internally.

This Customer Action Plan aims to:

- Build on the existing strong customer service culture within the NSAI
- Equip staff with the information, skills and support to ensure they are best placed to deliver a quality service
- Ensure our services are provided in a non-discriminatory manner
- Ensure information about our activities is easily accessible
- Develop measurable customer service standards
- Evaluate progress with a view to continual improvement
- Ensure a comprehensive complaint handling procedure is in place

PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE³

The provision of a quality customer service involves delivering a service of the highest quality to all customers and ensuring continual improvement in the standard of the services provided.

The **12 Principles of Quality Customer Service** are:

1. Quality service standards
2. Equality and diversity
3. Physical access
4. Information
5. Timeliness and courtesy
6. Complaints
7. Appeals
8. Choice
9. Consultation and evaluation
10. Official languages equality
11. Better co-ordination
12. Internal customer

³ The 12 *Principles of Quality Customer Service* are set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: See http://per.gov.ie/wpcontent/uploads/Revised_Guidelines_for_the_Preparation_of_Customer_Charters_and_Customer_Action_Plans.pdf

1 QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Principle

Publish a Customer Charter that outlines the nature and quality of service that external customers contacting the NSAI can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

The NSAI Customer Charter sets out the nature and quality of service customers can expect to receive when contacting the NSAI. The charter sets out real and achievable targets which are continuously monitored against actual performance. We contact our customers regularly to evaluate performance and improve the services set out in the Charter.

Service Standard

- Publish the customer charter and ensure it is displayed prominently.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- NSAI Customer Charter is readily available at NSAI reception, on our website in www.nsaie.com in both Irish and English and referred to in correspondence and NSAI publications where relevant.
- Regular customer surveys to determine level of customer satisfaction with our services.

2 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY

Principle

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation⁴.

Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

The NSAI, through its organisational values and processes, is committed to ensuring equal service delivery to all its customers. It will strive to ensure that no one is treated unfairly or with prejudice through any of its actions or decisions. The NSAI is committed to the implementation of the Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2011, the Equal Status Acts, 2000-2012 and the Disability Act, 2005 and to the delivery of its services within the requirements of these Acts.

Service Standard

- Implement all services delivered by the NSAI within the parameters of the Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2011, the Equal Status Acts, 2000-2012 and the Disability Act, 2005.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2011, the Equal Status Acts, 2000-2012 and the Disability Act, 2005 available on the staff intranet.
- Staff members trained on the legislation as required.

⁴ Under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community.

3 PHYSICAL ACCESS

Principle

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

NSAI takes pride in providing public offices that are clean and safe, ensure privacy and comply with health and safety standards. A health and safety officer has been appointed and fire wardens and a first aid team have been established and are fully trained and briefed on their roles. General access to NSAI buildings and alternative building access for staff and visitors with disabilities are maintained to a high standard.

Service Standard

- Maintain clean, accessible public offices that comply with health and safety standards.
- Ensure facilities are accessible to all.
- Ensure and maintain appropriate signage of disability facilities.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Training carried out at least every two years for the health and safety officer, fire officers and first aid team.
- Health and safety statement available on home portal.
- Health and safety audit of all our facilities carried out over a rolling 3-year programme.

4 INFORMATION

Principle

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by information technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication.

Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

The NSAI provides clear, accurate and up to date information on its role, functions and activities through its website, ezine, intranet, LinkedIn page and publications.

A number of NSAI publications are available in hard copy and the majority are on-line and downloadable. NSAI standards publications are competitively priced for sale and a number of NSAI guidance documents and codes of practice, leaflets and factsheets are available free of charge.

The NSAI website complies with the Website Accessibility Initiative (WAI), Level 2. It also adheres to best practice in relation to layout, ease of access and searchability. The website is continuously monitored to ensure compliance.

Through RSS feeds website users may subscribe to receive alert notifications when specific sections of our website are updated. Our website is updated frequently in response to current customer information needs and our current activities.

Service Standard

- Provide clear, timely and accurate information to all.
- Ensure customers are informed of the possibility of reusing NSAI information.
- Ensure we fully avail of the potential offered by information technology.
- Ensure the NSAI website complies with the Website Accessibility Initiative (WAI), Level 2.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Website maintained up-to-date and accurate.
- Maintain information on the NSAI website about reuse of public information under licence.
- Maintain and audit RSS feeds for email alerts for subjects of interest available on website.
- Communication through new channels – LinkedIn etc.
- Regular audit of the website is carried out to ensure compliance with WAI, Level 2.
- Regular audit of website usage.

5 TIMELINESS AND COURTESY

Principle

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer. Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

The NSAI is committed to ensuring that all queries are responded to in a timely manner and that customers are dealt with fairly and consistently.

Enquiries by phone, email or letter are responded to promptly; usually within 48 hours or if that is not possible no longer than five working days. If we are not able to respond fully within that time, for example, where the enquiry requires considerable research or particular expertise, customers will be advised that this is the case and when they should expect a full response.

All correspondence from the NSAI includes the contact details of the person dealing with the query, such as a contact name, telephone number and/or email address, postal address.

When customers contact the NSAI reception the organisation will be identified. When staff members are contacted by direct dial on their office number or mobile phone they will identify themselves when answering.

NSAI carries out regular customer surveys to measure the quality and timeliness of service and identify areas which require action.

NSAI has specific procedures and timelines aimed at resolving customer complaints and appeals.

Service Standard

- Identify the organisation when we answer a telephone call to our reception.
- Answer at least 90% of calls to our head office reception within 15 seconds, during business hours.
- During business hours, return call for message left on reception voicemail within 3 hours.
- Outside of business hours, return call for message left on reception voicemail within 3 hours of the next working day.
- Respond to routine customer enquiries within 48 hours or within five working days if that is not possible.
- Inform customer of timescale for complex enquiries.
- Identify ourselves when answering office extensions numbers or mobile phones.
- Include our contact details in all written correspondence and emails.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Regular monitoring of phone call handling.
- Carrying out regular customer satisfaction surveys of our services.

6 COMPLAINTS HANDLING

Principle

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

The NSAI is committed through its Complaints policy to ensuring that customer complaints are dealt with quickly, impartially and thoroughly.

We aim to resolve complaints at the first point of contact. Informal complaints are those which we can, for the most part, deal with 'on-the-spot' or provide a solution within a short time delay, usually of no more than 48 hours. If the complaint, although informal, is complex in nature it may take longer to respond, in which case the customer will be told about the delay. A customer may also request that an informal complaint be transferred to a higher level.

We will not normally contact a customer on the outcome of an informal complaint once resolved but the concerns raised will be forwarded to the appropriate manager to be taken into account in our internal quality management system.

Formal complaints are those of a more serious nature and usually require a thorough investigation at management level.

Formal complaints are acknowledged within five working days and responded to in writing as soon as possible. They are logged on an internal database and monitored as part of our internal quality management system.

Where it transpires that the complaint is valid, the NSAI will apologise, rectify the issue if possible and take the necessary steps to improve our service delivery quality so as to prevent a recurrence. Customers are advised of outcome of investigation of formal complaints.

Service Standard

- Maintain a clear policy on how we deal with customer complaints.
- Provide a simple to use explanation of our Complaints Policy and publish this on our website.
- Respond to informal complaints within 48 hours, where possible.
- Acknowledge receipt in writing of a formal complaint within five working days.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Regularly monitor the customer complaints handling procedure.
- Train staff on dealing with customer service complaints.

7 APPEALS

Principle

Maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

If you are not satisfied with the way in which a complaint has been handled, you have a right to appeal that decision through the NSAI Complaints Policy.

Appeals can be sent in writing to:

Customer Service Administrator
National Standards Authority of Ireland
1 Swift Square
Northwood
Dublin 9
D09 AOE4

If you believe that you have been adversely affected by an action taken by NSAI and are dissatisfied with the outcome of the NSAI complaints investigation process, you may seek an external review of your complaint.

Full details of how to contact the Office of the Ombudsman is available in the NSAI Complaints Policy downloadable from the NSAI website.

Service Standard

- Maintain a clear system of dealing with appeals on customer complaints outcomes.
- Ensure NSAI staff and customers are aware of the NSAI Complaints Policy.
- Ensure NSAI staff and customers are aware of the Ombudsman's role in dealing with complaints from aggrieved customers.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Regularly monitor the Complaints Policy.
- Train staff on review of customer service complaints.
- Monitor numbers of internal appeals and complaints sent to Ombudsman.

8 CHOICE

Principle

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

The NSAI strives to provide choices to its customers in contacting NSAI and accessing information about its activities and its services. These include contacting the NSAI by telephone, email, through our website or face to face meetings. NSAI office locations and contact details are listed on the website and relevant publications.

The NSAI website has dedicated portals available with searchable databases of NSAI standards development work, published standards, certified businesses and products. Customers can also apply on-line for quotations for certification and calibration services.

The FAQ section on our website is updated frequently to reflect queries and issues raised by customers.

Depending on the service provided, NSAI provides for payments to be made by a choice of payment methods such as credit card, cheque, direct debit or electronic funds transfer as appropriate. In limited circumstances NSAI may offer the facility to pay by instalments. Where NSAI services are provided on its behalf NSAI ensures a suitable choice of payment methods is available for the customers involved.

Service Standard

- Provide a choice of contact channels to customers.
- Provide a choice of payment options for NSAI services.
- Improve choices through adoption of technical solutions.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Evaluate customer satisfaction through customer surveys.

9 CONSULTATION AND EVALUATION

Principle

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

NSAI's services are continually monitored to evaluate their effectiveness. Customer feedback is an important means of identifying gaps or shortcomings in service delivery and of focussing on ways to improve services and address areas of concern. Feedback is also incorporated in ongoing staff training and development.

The NSAI carries out regular customer satisfaction surveys of its services and its website in particular. Feedback on an ad-hoc basis is also encouraged through links on the NSAI website and publications.

Service Standard

- Use technology in so far as possible to develop customer feedback.
- Avail of media opportunities to promote customer participation.
- Publicise availability of web portal on standards development.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Continuously monitor customer service uptake and satisfaction with services.
- Monitor feedback from customers on new channels of communication.
- Monitor uptake by customers of new ways to participate or engage with NSAI.

10 BETTER CO-ORDINATION

Principle

Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

The NSAI engages with many governmental departments and agencies such as the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI); the Health and Safety Authority (HSA); the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC); the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU); the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA); the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI); the Road Safety Authority (RSA); and the National Transport Authority (NTA) as well as a wide range of non-governmental organisations representing consumer, societal, business and environmental interests.

The NSAI holds Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with other agencies having separate remits but where there is a shared public interest and objective.

In certain cases NSAI through service level agreements (SLAs) NSAI provides services to other public bodies.

The NSAI maintains contact with and is the national voting member in European and International bodies for standardisation, scientific metrology, legal metrology and certification.

Service Standard

- Enable a co-ordinated approach to delivery of public services where possible.
- Document relationships with other public services through use of MoUs and SLAs.
- Participate in exchanges with other governmental departments and agencies on NSAI's role and services.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Regularly review and update SLAs and MoUs.

11 INTERNAL CUSTOMER

Principle

Ensure staff members are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

The NSAI recognises that internal customer services and support must be to a high standard to enable staff to effectively carry out their roles to ensure the NSAI meets its objectives.

The NSAI intranet is the principal internal information repository for NSAI policies and procedures and is accessible by all NSAI staff.

All new NSAI staff members are given an induction to the NSAI which includes guidelines on the organisational mission, vision and values, staff conduct and organisational expectations, as well as an introduction to policies and procedures and an overview of NSAI services and activities.

Further training and development is encouraged and funded accordingly by the NSAI.

All grades of staff and all trade unions are represented on at an internal forum which seeks feedback on proposed policies and issues.

Service Standard

- Recognise staff as internal customers.
- Provide access to updated organisational policies for all staff on intranet.
- Encourage feedback from staff on improvements to internal customer service.
- Ensure adequate information is provided to new staff members at time of induction.
- Ensure training and development in relation to customer service.
- Encourage customer contact staff to exchange information and ideas.

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Evaluate feedback on measures proposed to improved internal customer service.
- Monitor and evaluate intranet solution for internal policy dissemination.

12 OFFICIAL LANGUAGES EQUALITY

Principle

Provide quality services through Irish and/ or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

The NSAI publishes its customer charter, strategy statement, annual report and public notices concerning standardisation work in both Irish and English. NSAI will respond to customer queries in Irish received by telephone or in writing, if possible.

Service Standard

- Publish customer charter in both Irish and English
- Publish public notices concerning standardisation work in both Irish and English
- Publish strategy statement and annual report in both Irish and English
- Maintain recorded oral announcements in both Irish and English
- Use non-specific language stationary and compliment slips

Performance Indicator/measurable

- Monitor take up of Irish language documents.
- Evaluate customer feedback.

13 MONITORING PROGRESS AND IMPROVING SERVICE

The NSAI is committed to continual monitoring and improvement of its services.

It does this through:

- Conducting customer surveys to determine the level of satisfaction with services.
- Monitoring NSAI website use to ensure that content is accessible and to evaluate website design. A detailed analysis of various web metrics is carried out on an ongoing basis with an annual report.
- Using its internal quality management system to continually monitor its service operation and satisfaction and to make changes, if appropriate, on the basis of feedback and suggestions for improvement from customers and staff.
- Consulting with internal staff and keeping them regularly updated about organisational and service changes. Staff working groups are established to deal with specific projects aimed at improvement.
- Ongoing training and development of staff to deal with operational changes and the take up of new technology.

