

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE
(and Inspection Services Team)

Customer Service Standards

January 2017



Providing Inspection services for:
Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Foreword

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is committed to openness and transparency in all of its work, and to improving the service we provide for our customers and stakeholders. To these ends the Inspectorate has published a range of documents including the [Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\)](#) which supports organisations in the process of self-evaluation.

Other documents guide key stakeholders through the inspection process and provide details of how to raise concerns about the inspection process and/or the associated behaviours of members of our organisation.

These documents together identify the quality of service which customers can expect from ETI and reinforce the following principles, values and standards which underpin all that we do, namely that:

- the interests and well-being of the learners is a key priority of our work in terms of the quality of education and training which they experience, and the outcomes they achieve;
- all evaluations are conducted objectively and in a consistent manner; the findings are communicated honestly and accurately;
- evaluations are based, in the main, on first-hand evidence, the key element of which is the observation of learning and teaching;
- individuals and groups are treated fairly and in accordance with the behaviours associated with the ETI core values of truth, dignity, service and example;
- appropriate sensitivity is shown to the circumstances of the organisation, and tact and courtesy are displayed towards all with whom the inspector/s come into professional contact;
- queries are answered promptly and concerns dealt with, within a defined timescale; and
- ETI is sensitive to the effect on others of evaluations and reports, but without compromising the principles, values and standards set out above.

In publishing the Customer Service Standards outlined in this document, ETI is indicating further its continued commitment to the delivery of excellent customer service in the inspection process within and across the education, youth and training sectors in Northern Ireland. The standards are designed to provide information for you, our customers and stakeholders, on the standards of service you can expect, if and when you contact ETI.

The Customer Service Standards are divided into the following areas:

1. Communication
2. Consultation
3. Complaints
4. Service and Performance Levels
5. Code of Conduct

The extent to which we are meeting these exacting standards will be monitored on a regular basis, and the outcomes will be published in our [Annual Business Report](#).

I trust that if you have occasion to contact ETI, you will experience at first hand our commitment to providing a standard of service which meets fully our principles, values and standards, and our genuine desire to improve if we do not meet the exacting standards set.

Background Information

The ETI provides inspection services and information about the quality of education and training provision to the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for the Economy (DfE). In addition, inspection services are also provided for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Criminal Justice Inspection (CJI) Northern Ireland.

The ETI is led by a Chief Inspector, supported by three Assistant Chief Inspectors, eight managing inspectors and 49 inspectors. The work of the ETI covers early years, primary and post-primary schools, special education, further education, work-based learning, youth, initial teacher education, inspection of DAERA and CJI, as well as policy, planning and improvement work.

The Chief Inspector, Assistant Chief Inspectors and Inspection Services Team (IST) are based at:

Department of Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
BANGORBT
19 7PR

Telephone: 029 9127 9726

Inspectors are not based at Rathgael House but may be contacted through IST, using the contact details below:

Inspection Services Team
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Telephone: 028 9127 9726

Fax Number: 028 9127 9721

e-mail: eti@education-ni.gov.uk

The IST office is open Monday to Friday (inclusive) 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Vision Statement

The vision statement of ETI states that:

'The Education and Training Inspectorate will be a highly regarded and influential organisation dedicated fully to the education and well-being of all learners.'

Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Inspectorate is:

'Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners.'

Definition of the term 'Customer' used in this document

Although ETI provides inspection services for DE and DfE, which are its main customers, there are others with whom inspectors come into contact during inspection, during routine visits to organisations and through professional links with a range of other bodies linked to the education, youth and training sectors in Northern Ireland.

Overall, ETI defines its customers as all those individuals and organisations with whom inspectors come into contact, in order to fulfil its mission and vision statements.

Customer Service Standards

The inspection and administrative staff will be polite, courteous, helpful and professional towards all with whom they come into contact, in line with the protocols set out in detail in 'The Charter for Inspection'.

The Customer Service Standards of ETI are:

1. Communication

Effective Communication with our customers is paramount to ETI.

Spoken/Telephone Communication

The ETI's administrative staff in IST will:

- answer all calls to the branch between the hours of 8:00am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday;
- answer all calls within 5 rings and identify ourselves by name on the telephone;
- provide callers with a voice-mail messaging service outside office hours and respond to such calls within one working day;
- answer all telephone queries immediately and, where this is not possible, the customer will be advised as to why a delay is necessary; and a reply will be made within one working day.
- advise the caller of the appropriate course of action to be taken in relation to queries about specific education and inspection matters; and
- transfer a query not related to the work of ETI to another Department or body where it could be handled more effectively, and advise you of the transfer.

For all telephone queries:

If a customer wishes to communicate in Irish or Ulster-Scots or a language other than English, and the person answering does not speak the language in question, you will be offered the following options for your call:

- continue the call in English;
- write to the Department in the other language; or
- in the case of Irish or Ulster Scots, transfer to a central voice-mail service where you can leave a message. There are defined voice-mail numbers as follows:
 - Irish language voice-mail: 028 9051 5252; and
 - Ulster-Scots language voice-mail: 028 9051 5251.

Inspectors will:

- answer all telephone queries within one day, if received by them directly when they are working at their headquarters, and where this is not possible the customer will be advised as to why a delay is necessary; and
- when away from headquarters, ensure that the customer receives a response from IST within three working days, to advise them when the inspector will be able to return their call.

Written Communication (postal communication or e-mail)

The ETI/IST will:

- acknowledge all written communication received initially by IST (by post or e-mail) within three working days;
- provide a written reply to a general enquiry/communication within 10 working days¹. However, if ETI/IST cannot provide a definitive response within the timeframe, we will send you an interim reply explaining the reasons for this, and how the matter will be progressed;
- ensure that all correspondence from ETI/IST will be on official paper and include the name, date of reply, and contact details of the person dealing with each particular enquiry;
- All materials will be produced in English (the exception to this is publications issued to Irish medium schools and units);
- if necessary, where your query cannot be dealt with by ETI or IST, transfer your enquiry to another Department or body where it could be handled more effectively, and advise you of the transfer;
- ask customers how they wish to receive information, for example by e-mail; and
- provide customers with the information they need in ways that meets their preferences;

Inspectors will:

- when away from headquarters, or unavailable for more than two working days, ensure that an individual receives in response, as a minimum, an 'Out of Office' message in response to an e-mail. This message will indicate when the person will be available and the contact details for IST who may be able to help with your enquiry.

¹ Please note that: complaints sent to ETI are responded to within 20 working days; freedom of information requests are responded to within 20 working days; and Data Protection requests are responded to within 40 calendar days.

2. Consultation

The ETI will:

- consult annually with customers on the services we provide, through for example, the use of questionnaires, focus groups, and individual meetings; and
- involve customers at the design, operational and review stages of our work.

3. Complaints

The ETI/IST will:

- provide information in print and electronic formats about how to register complaints; and
- make a written response to a formal complaint received in written form, according to the timescales specified within the published ETI [Enquiries, concerns, complaints and compliments](#).

4. Service and Performance Levels

The ETI and IST will:

- adhere to the procedures, protocols and timescales for the inspection of organisations;
- issue organisations with details of key events and dates pertaining to their inspection;
- advise by telephone of the reason for any delay if the ETI is not able to meet the specified dates, and issue the organisation with a revised timeline;
- publish all inspection reports on the ETI website within 30 working days of the oral report back at the end of the inspection; and
- place all ETI publications on the [‘Education and Training Inspectorate’ website](#).

The ETI will:

- provide an unbiased, independent, professional assessment of the quality of learning and teaching, including the standards achieved by learners;
- complete an inspection activity in at least 90% of the organisations as agreed with the funding Department and within the timescales set out;

- commission the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to collect customers views and measure the customers' experiences on the process and procedures of the inspection at the end of every major inspection and publish an annual report on the outcomes of the evaluation;
- ensure that customers and customer groups are treated fairly and that we meet the challenging target for positive customer feedback of 85%;
- ensure that we meet challenging targets for levels of customer satisfaction, which are currently set at 85%;
- where appropriate, carry out follow-up processes in line with the procedures published in '[What Happens After an Inspection?](#)'; and
- provide significant advice/guidelines to DE and DfE in at least 90% of the requests.

All the documents mentioned are available on the [ETI website](#).

5. Code of Conduct

The ETI will:

- recognise that the key priority must be the interests and well-being of the learners, in terms of the quality of education and training which they experience, and the outcomes they achieve;
- be sensitive to the circumstances of the organisation, and ensure tact and courtesy towards all with whom the inspector/s come into professional contact;
- evaluate objectively and consistently, be honest in communicating findings and demonstrate openness to ensure that evaluations reflect accurately the organisation's achievements;
- show concern for accuracy and reliance on evidence-based evaluation;
- show fairness in dealing with individuals and groups;
- respect your privacy and treat confidential issues concerning you in an appropriate way;
- comply with our statutory duties to make sure you receive equality of service;
- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection;
- take responsibility and be accountable for the quality of our work;
- be committed to ensuring that queries are answered promptly and concerns dealt with, within a defined timescale;

- be sensitive to the effect on others of evaluations and reports, but without compromising the principles, values and standards of ETI;
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues; and
- act with integrity at all times.

What we expect from our customers:

The ETI expects its customers to play their part by ensuring that inspectors can conduct their inspection visit in an open and honest way and evaluate provision objectively.

The ETI expects all organisations it inspects to:

- show respect and professional courtesy at all times;
- enable inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way;
- enable inspectors to evaluate the organisation objectively against the inspection framework;
- liaise with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy;
- co-operate while carrying out the inspection process including the observation of lessons and training, the sharing of relevant, accurate and up-to-date information and data and a willingness to meet with inspectors for professional discussion relating to aspects of their work;
- ensure that the health and safety of inspectors is not prejudiced while they are on the organisation's premises;
- provide early notification of any changes that may affect the conduct of the inspection;
- provide early notification of any difficulties that may arise in relation to the inspection;
- draw promptly any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors in a suitable manner; and
- understand the need for inspectors to observe practice and talk to staff without the presence of a senior member of staff.

Please note that aggressive and/or abusive behaviour towards our staff is unacceptable.



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