

Voice of the Customer (VOC)

What is it?

In the university context, customers can be members of staff (internal or external to your department); students; College staff; members of the public – anyone who is receiving a service or information from you.

*The challenge is identifying our customers and in how customers define and prioritise their expectations. It's important to identify all **customers**, internal and external, involved in the process and not just the end customer. You can construct a **SIPOC** (Suppliers-Inputs-Process-Outputs-Customers) diagram to help you to do this. It can be beneficial for all those involved in delivering a process to see how they fit into the bigger picture and how their action or inaction can impact positively or negatively on the end-user.*

Benefits at a glance....

- helps understand the real customer experience throughout a process use it as a baseline for improvement
- discover, through their own words, how your customer defines value and understand their needs and wants

VOC is a market research tool that helps you to really understand what your customers' needs are and what they value. Customer 'experience' is entirely in the minds of your end customer and VOC helps you to capture this.

By talking to your customers extensively, you can find out:

- what their fundamental needs are - *basic (must-haves)*
- what they expect and will accept (*satisfiers*)
- what they don't expect but would absolutely delight them (*delighters*)

It also helps to find out what the customer's expectations, preferences and aversions are.

Warning: *When anyone can express their opinions or dissatisfaction instantly online, it is even more important to know to delight your customers.*

When to use it?

Use **VOC** when you want to:

- find out what your customers value
- decide what services to offer
- decide where to focus improvement efforts
- get a baseline measure of customer satisfaction in order to measure improvement

How to use it?

VOC data can be collected through a variety of qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods workshops, interviews, observations and surveys.



Figure 1: VOC workshop outputs

By asking searching questions to uncover what it would mean to them if aspects of your product or service were absent or present, you can establish drivers and measures.

Case study: Focus Practitioners working on the Graduate Admissions project engaged with and collected **VOC** information through 7 **VOC** workshops with 120 customers who ranged from prospective students to colleges, to administrators to academics.



Figure 2: What customers say

From the initial **VOC** information that is collected you then need to generate 'needs statements' to understand what the customer sees as 'value'.

Warning: You may need to gather further data, for example, survey or undertake a competitive analysis to ensure that each of these 'needs statements' are quantifiable.

'Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.'

Bill Gates