Framework for service quality

I am working on a framework to enable review and improvement of services – within higher education, but also applicable to other endeavours. For such a framework to be useful, it's important to understand what counts as *good*, and this is a first draft of the elements which might be used to measure service quality. I'd welcome any feedback – what's missing, what's good, what's bad, what's unclear, what's funny, what's just right. I'll be posting subsequent drafts on my blog - http://sweepingleavesblog.blogspot.co.uk/ - the more that I share the developing framework and gain feedback from others in the field, the better and more useable the outcomes will be.

My aim is to create a framework which anyone can use, in the hope that it will help improve service delivery in higher education, for the benefit of universities, students and staff.

If you post feedback as comments on my blog, that would be great, as then others can join the conversation. Alternatively, I'd be happy for you to send feedback to me by email – hugh@hughjonesconsulting.co.uk.

Thank you!

Draft 1 – the elements of service quality

Purpose

A good service will have a clearly articulated purpose, well understood by the people within the service, and matched to the needs of the organisation and the clients of the service.

Service orientation

A good service will understand which people and which organisations they serve, and which people and organisations have an interest. They will have structured ways for listening to the observations of their clients and stakeholders, and communicating with them. They will understand what their clients and stakeholders need, and will aim to deliver this first.

Priorities

A good service will have prioritised the different elements of delivery and the development of the service, having regard to client and stakeholder needs, in line with the strategy, direction and resources of the organisation, and with buy-in from management and leadership beyond the service. Priorities will be reviewed in line with progress in service delivery and development; strategic changes; changes in the operating and regulatory environment; and in any case on a suitable regular basis.

Performance

A good service will have identified measures of its performance, will have agreed acceptable and stretching performance levels, and will meet these levels of performance. There should

be specific measures relating to service delivery; financial and people management; efficiency; and client and stakeholder satisfaction. There should also be an awareness of external performance measures – whether public performance indicators or appropriate benchmarking with similar organisations – and proportionate engagement with these.

People

A good service will be well managed. Individual members of staff will be clear about their role and their specific responsibilities. They will understand what they are accountable for, and to whom they are accountable. They will meet on a suitably regular basis with their manager, and will be given clear feedback about how they are doing – what is done well and where improvement is needed.

On an annual basis there should be a formal review – appraisal – between an individual member of staff and their manager, which provides an opportunity for two-way discussion about work. Training and development will be available in line which will relate to appraisal discussions.

There will be good and regular chances for communication as a team and person-to-person, with regular briefings and opportunities for questions and discussion.

There will be proportionate and sensible ways to understand staff engagement, and managers will be regarded as accountable for their team's wellbeing.

Infrastructure

A good service will have an infrastructure which is fit for purpose. This does not mean that everything must be new, but that within resources the physical environment is safe, welcoming and promotes good delivery; the IT resources meet the needs of the service; that there is an awareness of what could be improved, and that as opportunities arise this is done.

The infrastructure should relate to service's business and delivery models. Where the operating environment is changing – because of changes in industry practice, client and stakeholder expectations, and information and other technology used in delivery – there should be a development plan to meet these changing needs.

Integration

A good service will have a business model which is well suited to the situation – integrated with other parts of the wider organisation; complementing other service providers to add additional value; and enabling the effective and efficient use of resources.

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