

COLLEGE OF POLICING MAKES HISTORY BY ACHIEVING NEW ISO 10667 STANDARD WITH SGS UNITED KINGDOM LTD

ISSUED – JULY 2013

On 27 February 2013 the Examinations and Assessment team at the College of Policing made history by becoming the first in the UK to achieve the international standard ISO 10667 for their work in supporting the career progression of police officers and police staff.

The Examinations and Assessment team provides national recruitment, promotion, selection, examination, assessment and related quality assurance processes for the Police Service. Clients range from national stakeholders, like the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), to individual police forces, police officers and staff.

ISO 10667 is the first international standard to address issues of good practice in the assessment of people in occupational settings. It provides clear and concise guidance for providers and clients of assessment services to help to realize the potential benefits of good assessment practices.

Successful achievement of the standard means that candidates who, for example, attend a police recruit assessment centre can be sure that the process they undertake has been certified by a reputable third party organisation to the required standard.

EXTERNAL VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION FOR THE COLLEGE

This is a major achievement for the team at the College of Policing who underwent an in-depth six-month assessment by leading certification body SGS United Kingdom Ltd.

"We believed our business unit provided a high quality of provision to the Police Service," says Stephen Walker, Quality Assurance Manager Examinations and Assessment at the College of Policing.

"However, we wanted external validation and recognition. The introduction of ISO 10667 seemed an ideal opportunity to achieve this. Once it was available we set ourselves the target of achieving external recognition of the quality of service provided by the business unit within 2012 - 2013."

"We selected SGS to conduct the audit because of their international reputation. They are the first organisation to offer certification against the standard. As well, SGS were looking for a partner to pilot the standard."

"SGS have proved to be a good partner in working through the validation process with us. Their auditors subjected our business unit to a rigorous validation process which gave the activity real substance."

THE ROAD TO ISO 10667 CERTIFICATION

Work toward the standard started in November 2012.

"The business unit had already done a lot of work towards embedding continuous improvement in its approach to service provision," says Stephen Walker. "We wanted everyone in the business unit to be aware of ISO 10667 and to work jointly towards achieving the standard."

"We believed we already had the systems and processes in place, but we wanted to be sure of this and would therefore welcome external scrutiny and learn from the exercise. This proved to be the case as we achieved the standard without any major or minor non-compliances. We received a small number of minor recommendations from the auditors, and we have already put plans in place to address these."



Left to right Chief constable Alex Marshall, CEO College of Policing; Gary Baker, Commercial Manager SGS, at a Certificate Presentation which took place at the Home Office in May 2013

"We didn't have to set up any new systems to achieve ISO 10667," adds Stephen Walker. "We have tried and tested systems in place to facilitate working with clients through all stages from identifying need to service delivery. Achievement of ISO 10667 has validated our approach."

"We do however review our systems and processes on a regular basis to ensure they meet the ongoing needs of the Police Service. For example, we have recently applied the principles of lean business practice to our service provision which resulted in considerable refinement."

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ALL STAFF IN THE BUSINESS UNIT INVOLVED

The Examinations and Assessment team examined the standard thoroughly and held standardisation meetings to ensure that there was a common understanding of ISO 10667, before working towards compiling a self-assessment portfolio.

"We held briefing meetings, and we used internal communication systems to ensure all staff in the business unit were aware that we were working towards achieving the standard and what part they would play," says Stephen Walker. "SGS were available to answer any questions that we had about the standard."

"We issued a weekly bulletin to all members of staff to keep them up-to-date on what was required to progress the self-assessment. And we used a range of staff, including associates, during audit visits to explain the different stages of our work."

THE ADDED VALUE OF CERTIFICATION

The College of Policing is the newly formed independent professional body for policing; the first time the service has had a professional body in its history.

The over-arching aim of the College is to support the fight against crime and safeguard the public by ensuring professionalism in policing. One of the five key objectives of the College is to support the education and professional development of police officers and staff. Certification will demonstrate to all stakeholders that the College intends to offer a high quality of service in relation to the assessment of officers and staff in occupational settings.

Eventually the funding regime will change and the College will work in a more competitive market. Certification of service provision against standards such as ISO 10667 will embed the reputation of the business unit and wider organisation.

"Now we're certified against ISO 10667, we have achieved external validation from a recognised international organisation in the auditing business," says Stephen Walker.

POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE BUSINESS

"By using the ISO 10667 certification mark, provided by SGS, on all our materials, the business unit now shows potential customers that we provide quality services and welcome external scrutiny. Equally recipients; the police officers and police staff and ultimately the public, should have confidence in the quality of the services provided. We anticipate that this, in turn, will bring us more business," says Stephen Walker.

"We don't see achievement of the certificate as an end to the process. We have already started to work towards embedding ISO 10667 into the way we operate as a business unit. For example, when Project Managers are considering changes to existing work or introducing new work, they will review if there is any impact on the way we address the clauses within the ISO standard."

"We have met the immediate target of achieving the standard. And we are now ensuring that in the services provided we are aware of and work towards adherence of the various aspects of ISO 10667 on an ongoing basis."

College of Policing Head of Examinations and Assessment, Ciaran McGuigan, says:

"Certification to an international standard demonstrates to our members, customers and candidates that the products and services designed and delivered by the Examinations and Assessment team are of a high quality and meet rigorous external and internationally recognised standards. This award supports the emerging role of the College of Policing in developing and applying standards of professionalism for the service."

And College of Policing board director, Sara Thornton, Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, adds:

"The award of this new international standard is a fantastic achievement for the College of Policing Examinations and Assessment Unit. The quality of policing relies very heavily on the quality of our staff and this award shows that we are supported by the very best there is in terms of assessment and selection. I hope that the public are reassured by the high standards of selection which enable us to be able to say with confidence that we are identifying, developing and nurturing talent effectively and fairly."

SGS IMPRESSED WITH FINDINGS

The auditing team at SGS who carried out the assessment of the business unit's practices and procedures were particularly impressed by the systems and processes used by the business unit.

SGS lead auditor, Ana Inacio, who led the assessment work on the Examinations and Assessment team, said:

"ISO 10667 sets the benchmark for assessment activities and ensures that these lead to successful recruitment and career progression processes within organisations. The College of Policing already had in place the best practices of this sector and used the standard requirements as a means to confirm their leadership in this arena."

In fact, in preparing for the external assessment the College team used a software application they had developed called Quality Assurance Management Systems (QAMS). QAMS reduces unnecessary bureaucracy and staff time within police forces around the management of quality assurance, business improvement and inspection frameworks.

Amanda Mangan, Systems and Services Certification International Training Manager at SGS adds:

“The QAMS system was an excellent tool which greatly assisted the auditors in developing the knowledge and understanding of the College of Policing processes and procedures.”

“All areas of the standard are key as the assessment service covers all aspects of the candidates journey, from initially starting at the application stage through to the actual assessment centre and completing the process with the evaluation and feedback of their results.”

“We reviewed client agreements and related documentation as well as sampling different stages of the varied assessment exercises that were delivered. This involved interviewing internal and subcontract assessors for consistency of communication between the delivering staff and the College of Policing as well as reviewing evaluation documentation.”

“We found working with The College of Policing a very positive and professional experience. Everyone was extremely helpful and clearly motivated to achieve certification.”

FURTHER INFORMATION

The College of Policing is the professional body for policing with a declared aim to use its knowledge of ‘what works’ in policing to raise standards, cut crime and protect the public. The College has a powerful remit to set standards for the police service on training, development, skills and qualifications. It also provides maximum support to help the service implement these standards.

SGS is the world’s leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. SGS is recognized as the global benchmark for quality and integrity. With more than 75 000 employees, SGS operates a network of over 1 500 offices and laboratories around the world.

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