



Becky Tootell



## Close-up on assessment

I used a recent lunchtime to assess Omid, says Becky Tootell. He is 16 and taking a City & Guilds NVQ level 1 in catering and hospitality. I was assessing him on greeting customers and taking orders, which is element FS2.1 of unit 508.

First I checked that he was ready and confident. I stated specifically what City & Guilds wants to see by outlining the details from the specification so that there could be no ambiguity.

After clarifying my expectations I stood back and observed Omid. I was looking for a polite and helpful manner when he was greeting customers, giving them menus and answering their questions. I was expecting him to record the order accurately and process it accordingly.

Later when the brasserie was quiet I went through the assessment log with him, pointing out what he had done particularly well and congratulating him on achieving his assessment.

We looked at what his next assessment will be and how he could improve his achievement. I made sure that I gave him the opportunity to reflect and comment on it.

## Learning on the job

The brasserie is part of the college. It is an educational establishment, says Becky Tootell, which is the most important thing, but it's also a business.

We did well in our Ofsted inspection because the inspector realised that the strengths and disciplines of the business environment were giving the students such a fantastic foundation on which to develop their education.

We know our students work professionally because a lot of our customers don't even realise that they are visiting a catering college.



“Some of the students may have struggled at school but they are happy with us”

My name is Becky Tootell. I am 25 years old and I am a trainer/assessor for food and drink service at Horizons Hotel School, Accrington and Rossendale College. The hotel school includes a restaurant, Traders Brasserie, and of course a hotel, which is open 50 weeks a year. I was a student here myself 10 years' ago.

My students' ages range from 14 to 19 although some mature students work alongside them.

They take NVQ level 1 in hospitality up to NVQ level 3 in hospitality supervision.

My day starts early. I begin work at 7.15am when I serve breakfast to the hotel residents, after which I go to work in Traders Brasserie.

The students come through the door from 8am and have their breakfast. The college

day starts at 9am with registration and a team briefing.

Then we look at the brasserie bookings for the day, which gives the students a sense of ownership over the business and helps them to prepare their day.

Quite often the level 3 students, whom I oversee as I am assessing their supervisory skills, do the morning briefing. Our awarding body City & Guilds specifies in these units that the level threes need to brief staff on their plans and check that they have understood what is required.

I offer them verbal feedback and guidance afterwards, which is recorded in their portfolios and builds into a picture of their communication skills.

From 9am until 11.30am the students are preparing the brasserie. All of their tasks

such as polishing the cutlery and laying the tables are relevant to their coursework.

My job means that I assess every student every day – this can mean up to 15 assessments a day. Overall though students take ownership of their learning. In a typical day one of them might come to me and say “Can you assess me on making a cappuccino?” because they feel ready to do this.

When carrying out an assessment, most of it is based on observation of student activities. Once I am confident that they have got all the right casework I observe them performing the task.

Some of the evidence requirements are based on direct observation, while performance evidence comes from observation and underpinning knowledge. The underpinning knowledge is delivered in a classroom in a 90-minute slot every week. Students also have workbooks that I mark, and are given written feedback that they keep in a portfolio of evidence.

I give verbal feedback to the level 1 and 2 students and record their success in their logbooks in language they can relate to and that reflects the specifications of the unit, such as “you showed good customer care skills”. This is to keep the assessment personal to them, whereas the accompanying logbook is formal and divided into units and allows them to cross refer to their achievement in each unit.

My approach to the level 3 students is slightly different. For example, I demonstrate

how we do things. They practise and repeat what I have just done and I'll guide them. In terms of assessment, I'll observe them and then at the end of each pre-service and each service session we'll sit down and discuss what they thought went well or did not go well. We record the assessment in the candidate achievement log.

For each unit in levels 1-3, the students are assessed practically and this is backed up with theoretical knowledge that they can develop from classroom activities. I also like to give a practical bias to the classroom activities – for example, when looking at how to accommodate customers with special requirements I bring in a wheelchair so that they understand how the customer feels. We do a lot of active roleplay.

I also act as a personal tutor to an NVQ level 2 food and service group. This role involves arranging learning support. When our students start in September they will have been “screened” – basically we go

through a series of tests and determine their levels in literacy and problem solving, communication and numeracy. From those results we can see what levels of work they will be capable of entering.

So if I have got a student on a NVQ level 2 course, but their literacy comes out at level 3, below the level they need to be, then quite often we arrange extra support. This can either be one-to-one support in the theory classes to help them with their literacy skills, or allocating a separate support worker who is there for that student.

The personal tutor role also involves handling disciplinary matters such as failure to attend college, or arriving late. We haven't had any major problems this year.

Being a personal tutor is not easy but I am young enough to understand the students' problems and issues and old enough to command their respect. I like to be approachable, but students know where the line is drawn.

Some of the students may have struggled at school but they are happy with us. I get a lot of satisfaction from seeing them enjoying something they can do. They all go on to find jobs or a higher level of study. Many of them quote me as a referee.

## CV

**Name:** Becky Tootell  
**Lives:** Blackburn, Lancashire  
**Teaches and assesses:** Food and drink service  
**Reason for becoming an assessor:** To help people of all abilities from different backgrounds meet their potential



# Self-catering development

Interview **Stephanie Sparrow** Photographs **Jim Varney**

**Students on vocational courses can be encouraged to share ownership of their assessment, says Becky Tootell**