



# Performance Management through Service Quality Perspective

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Imagine walking into a campus where every detail is handled with genuine care—from the well-maintained exterior to the inviting interior spaces. A customer’s experience begins from the moment they arrive on campus, starting with their first impressions of the physical

environment—from the aesthetics of the landscape to the condition of the transportation infrastructure—and continues through their interactions with campus members. Their experience reflects the overall service quality of the institution. More importantly, a visitor’s experience doesn’t end with their departure; it influences their perceptions long after they leave. For students, faculty, and staff, the quality of services continues to shape their daily experiences and perceptions. Therefore, every detail from tangible elements and service aspects plays a critical role in maintaining a positive experience and lasting impression of the campus community.

### Why Service Quality?

As educational facilities professionals, we are the stewards of customers’ experiences. In response to the ever-changing needs of our customers, the quality of service we provide isn't just about maintaining buildings and grounds—it's about creating environments that support and enhance the overall customer experience. Our role extends far beyond bricks and mortar; we are responsible for cultivating environments that foster learning, growth, and innovation. This is why service quality isn't just an operational concern—it's a fundamental aspect of our mission and a key driver of organizational excellence.

To evaluate how well our facilities organization is performing, information on **‘performance measures’** is necessary to support decision-making, enhance capacity for continuous improvement, and ultimately improve organizational performance. In an era where buzzwords like ‘big data’ permeate all sectors, the substantial volume of information

available can be overwhelming. This deluge of information necessitates a strategic approach to identify key performance indicators (KPIs) that truly impact service quality and align with organizational goals and objectives.

## **What is Service Quality?**

In the context of educational facilities, service quality measures the extent to which the services provided by a facilities organization meet the needs and expectations of the campus community members. Service quality encompasses more than just final outcomes; it focuses on the entire customer experience, especially how services are provided and perceived. In other words, it involves evaluating both the service outcomes and the processes by which they are delivered.

The notion of service quality, as presented here, is based on the analysis of expectations and perceptions of customers proposed by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990). The theoretical model, commonly known as the SERVQUAL model, consists of five key dimensions that are essential for assessing quality in a broad variety of services (Zeithaml & Parasuraman, 2004). These dimensions are imperative for understanding the service experience within educational facilities.



SERVQUAL Model  
(Five Dimensions of Service Quality)

**1. Reliability** is a cornerstone of service quality in educational facilities. It reflects the organization’s ability to consistently deliver promised services to the campus community. To ensure reliability in facilities operations, consider asking the following questions:

- Are your facilities reliable and predictable, maintaining consistent service delivery and minimizing unexpected failures?
- Does your organization have the necessary resources readily available and accessible without disruptions?
- Are your services consistently dependable, ensuring minimal disruptions and continuous availability for the campus community?

**2. Responsiveness** is a key dimension of service quality that demonstrates the organization's ability to deliver timely and appropriate services to the campus community. Responsiveness involves not only how promptly the service is delivered but also how problems are addressed and resolved to meet the needs of its campus members. To assess how your organization approaches responsiveness, considering the following questions:

- Rather than simply reacting to issues as they arise, how proactive is your organization in anticipating the needs of students, faculty, and staff?
- When a problem is reported by customers, how quickly is it addressed, and are the solutions satisfactory?
- Does your organization have systems in place to ensure that communication with the campus community is clear, prompt, and effective?

**3. Assurance** reflects the level of customer's confidence and trust in the organization's ability to deliver services effectively and reliably. This is demonstrated through professionalism, knowledge, expertise, and courtesy interactions. In educational facilities, assurance involves the confidence customers have in the reliability of campus infrastructure, the trust they place in the cleanliness and safety of the campus environment, and the belief they have in personnel's competency to deliver services that meet their expectations. To assess how well your facilities operations encourage trust and confidence, consider asking the following questions:

- What are your current practices or proactive measures in ensuring customers feel assured about the service they receive?
- Does your organization actively build and maintain trust with the campus community through transparent communication and consistent service delivery?
- Do your campus members trust that the facilities staff has the necessary skills and knowledge to maintain a safe and clean environment?

**4. Empathy** focuses on understanding customer's concerns, needs, and experiences while demonstrating genuine care for their well-being. Empathy can be demonstrated in various ways, such as, listening and understanding the customer's needs and experiences with an empathetic and non-judgmental approach, and by providing personalized support. To evaluate how well your organization understands and addresses customers' concerns and ensures consistent service delivered with genuine care, consider asking the following questions:

- How does your organization engage with customers to better understand their experiences, needs, and concerns?
- In which ways does your organization gather and incorporate feedback for service improvement?
- How does your organization ensure work processes are standardized to maintain consistent service and efficient process?

**5. Tangibles** in service quality often refer to the physical aspects and elements of the campus environment including the efficient use of organizational resources. The physical elements work together to create the overall campus environment such as furniture, lighting fixtures, instructional equipment, HVAC systems, technology infrastructure, and trees/plants. The physical aspects that fall under the dimension of service quality would be appearance, condition, accessibility, and maintenance of the campus buildings, classroom environment, study/learning spaces, landscape and grounds, public areas, dining facilities, etc. To ensure that these physical elements are well-maintained and meet customer expectations, consider the following questions:


- How does your organization plan and schedule maintenance activities to ensure the physical elements remain in optimal condition?
- How proactive is your organization in identifying and addressing issues related to the physical environment before they impact the campus community's perception of service quality?
- What other strategies does your organization use to manage and enhance physical elements that directly influence the customer experience?

## **Connecting Service Quality to Organizational Excellence**

As you have learned the fundamental aspects of service quality, it's now time to explore how those five dimensions can be measured and implemented within your organization.


Each dimension provides a unique lens through which to evaluate service quality, but they are also interconnected.

Here are some key performance measures that should be considered in today’s management practice (Becker et al., 2020; Becker & Weidner, 2022; Becker & Weidner, 2023; Education Advisory Board, 2018; Hickling, 2019; Mayo & Karanja, 2018; Palmer, 2019; Pampana et al., 2022; Thiemer, 2022; Webber et al., 2020).


Service Quality	Examples	Description
<b>1. Reliability</b>  	Time Estimate to Complete Tasks	Specify the estimated labor hours required for each task or job and regular review time estimates to improve accuracy and predictability in task completion.
	Work Schedule	Implement the daily or weekly schedule with the employee's availability to ensure adequate staffing levels to meet operational needs and avoid service interruptions.
	Work Priority	Evaluate how work priorities are assigned and managed to ensure critical tasks are addressed promptly.



Service Quality	Examples	Description
	Work Effectiveness	Evaluate the number of work orders completed (preventive vs. reactive tasks) or track the results of equipment inspections to ensure potential issues are addressed in a timely manner and reduce unplanned breakdowns.
	Facilities Condition Assessment	Conduct the Facilities Condition Assessment to evaluate the condition of facilities relative to their replacement value, helping to identify potential failure issues, mitigate risks associated with aging infrastructure, and prioritize maintenance and capital investment.
	Building Audits/Inspections	Conduct audits and inspections to ensure compliance with standards and identify improvement areas through regular audits.
	Service Backlog	Track overdue requests and work orders to identify potential issues in service delivery.

Service Quality	Examples	Description
	Facilities Performance Issues	Monitor common issues such as hot and cold complaints, equipment uptime/downtime, and utility outage to identify trends and address reoccurring issues.
<b>2. Responsiveness</b>  	Work Order Status	Measure how we communicate with customers about work progress and changes impacted. Other communication protocols may be developed internally to ensure consistent communication with customers.
	Service Response Time	Evaluate service response time to customer inquiries, work requests, emergencies, package delivery on time, and other service areas.
	Staffing Levels	Identify and evaluate staffing levels and workloads to ensure adequate resources for timely service.

Service Quality	Examples	Description
<b>3. Assurance</b> 	Employee Competency Evaluation	Evaluate employee skills and knowledge to ensure they meet service standards with SWOT analysis or Skills Matrix.
	Employee Development Plan	Review and evaluate employee’s learning and development based on specific goals and measure their progress.
	Customers’ Feedback	Gather and discuss feedback received from customers to understand their needs and improve business processes.
<b>4. Empathy</b> 	Customers’ Feedback	Gather and discuss feedback received from customers to understand their needs and improve service quality.
	Employees’ Feedback	Discuss feedback received from employees on processes, scheduling, and projects to improve operational consistency and address issues that impact reliability and services.
	Routine Evaluation of Work Processes	Regularly evaluate work processes and incorporate feedback to improve service delivery and address customer concerns.

Service Quality	Examples	Description
	Standardized Work Processes	Create and regularly maintain standardized documentation of work processes to ensure service is delivered consistently and efficiently across operations.
<b>5. Tangibles</b> 	Work Order Costs by Building/Asset	Tracks the cost associated with maintaining specific buildings or equipment, ensuring resources are directed where needed most.
	Total Cost of Ownership	Consider the entire lifecycle cost of facilities, from initial to end-of-life, ensuring long-term financial sustainability.
	Operating Costs	Evaluate operating costs per service provided and student full-time equivalent (FTE) to ensure resources are allocated appropriately and utilized effectively.
	Utility Consumption	Evaluate utility consumption to ensure efficient energy use such as energy use intensity (EUI) to monitor efficiency and energy/utilities cost per gross square footage (\$ per GSF) for financial and resource management.

Service Quality	Examples	Description
	Seat/Space Utilization	Evaluate the usage of seating and spaces to ensure physical resources are used to their full potential.
	Waste Diversion	Analyzes the waste diversion rate to measure recycling, reuse, and composting efforts.
	Waste Audits	Conduct waste audits to identify areas of improvement and best practices for waste management.
	Inventory Stockouts and Cycle Counts	Monitor inventory levels by using the minimum/maximum quantity and regularly review part usage, and performing cycle counts to ensure material availability.

As you reflect on the ideas presented, remember that each organization is unique. It is important to carefully consider what is most relevant to your organization. Focus on what truly matters to your organization and ensure that your performance management practices align with organizational goals and objectives. This thoughtful approach will help you leverage service performance measures to encourage a culture of continuous improvement and support the organization’s success.

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