

MSC Chain of Custody Case study: Compass Group at Oxford Brookes University



**Business profile:**

Compass UK is one of the UK's largest contract caterers with a UK turnover of nearly £2billion and 60,000 employees. Compass head office is certified for MSC chain of custody and individual units - like the canteens at Oxford Brookes University - can be certified as the final link in the chain.

**Gideon Smith, General Catering Manager:** Oxford Brookes University strives to be at the forefront of new initiatives. We recently went through a tender process at the University and sustainability was a big measure coming through the tender document. The University was asking 'What other initiatives are planned with regards to sustainability?' We've been working in partnership with Oxford Brookes for 18 years and Compass has made a commitment to the University to make them the most sustainable university in the UK. All client sites have had the message from Compass about sustainable fish and this gives it a proper stamp that people recognise. To be honest, I'd never heard of MSC a year ago. I'm not ashamed to say that. Now, not only am I working with it, it's part of my lifestyle at home too!

I see a lot of similarity between MSC and Fairtrade. Oxford Brookes was the first Fairtrade University' in the world. It worked as a partnership between us and the University. Now we'll be the UK's first MSC University. It's relevant to our customers, the students; they are getting more and more informed about ethical issues from a practical perspective.

**Training staff and managing the MSC logo**

When I did our MSC training, convincing the staff was easy. I just sat them down in a meeting room and played the MSC DVD [subtitled in 13 languages]. The overfishing and how we could be part of the solution - that got them all motivated.

To be honest, getting certified wasn't difficult because we have food control systems in place. Because we can go 100% MSC fish this means that





'separation' is an easy control to meet on the audit trail as all our fresh and frozen fish is MSC certified.

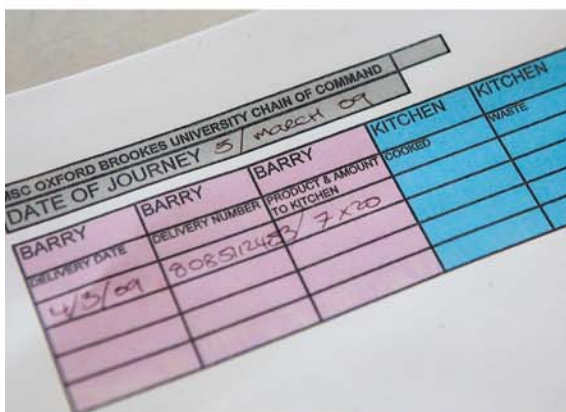
When our certifier came, she inspected our systems and helped us put together a flow diagram for student feeding and VIPs' hospitality. The diagram basically overviews the journey of the MSC fish from the supplier to decanting into blue storage containers including cooking and reconciliation. Programming our tills was important so that every sale relates to the kitchen production.

**Neil Pitcairn, UK Buyer:** I take each unit that is interested through the process and provide them with example procedures developed by one of the first units to go through MSC. They already had ISO14001, so this was a great way for them to show continuous improvement. We also encourage them to visit a similar unit such as Gideon's team at Oxford Brookes. I also manage the logo inside Compass Group – units can only get it once the auditor has confirmed certification. Units send the menu and any other materials using the logo to MSC for approval and we recommend that they do that with an example menu every three months.



**Gideon:** We're very proud of the certificate and would encourage other organisations to get involved. A potential new Chain of Custody applicant can say 'We've got this problem' and then talk it through with someone who's been there already.

We've had the logo on the menu for three weeks. We didn't advertise it straight away. The chefs were living it for two weeks before we went live with the menu. We have five campuses and we started with one of them to make sure we do it right before we expand to the others.



### Telling our customers

We have a board up in each of the restaurants/dining areas with our ten assurances about our food eg: we only use free-range eggs. Next term we'll be updating the assurance with regards to our values on MSC fish. We'll also make information available to the staff and students at the University on the Oxford Brookes intranet. Everyone is proud that we're helping to deliver the MSC's programme to encourage the market for sustainable and well-managed fishing.



### Top Tips:

- Arrange to visit a certified restaurant/unit to see how they did it
- For Compass Group units, all of the best practise information is on the Compass Group intranet and you can contact Neil Pitcairn for more information. Or, the MSC website has a lot of background information and help for restaurants – [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)
- When preparing for audit, put together a flow diagram to illustrate how fish moves through the kitchen and to your customers
- It's a great story, so think creatively about how you can tell it to your customers. Think about the wall where people are queuing, menu boards, leaflets on tables etc. MSC can help you with formulating messages.

Photos: Andrew Aitchison

