

Professional Assessment of Competence

A competence based route to full membership of the CIPD for experienced practitioners

Some experienced Human Resource professionals reach a senior level in their organisation without achieving full membership of the CIPD. Membership of CIPD is often used as a screening factor for recruitment and selection. The lack of this 'seal of approval' can cause frustration for skilled practitioners who know they are extremely competent and experienced!

The Professional Assessment of Competence (PAC) may well be the route to membership for them. It is a work-based, non-exam route that offers accreditation of senior practitioner experience leading to membership or fellowship of the CIPD. The professional assessment process requires the HR practitioner to demonstrate their competence, both in terms of skills and experience as well as knowledge against the CIPD Professional Standards. These are the same standards against which CIPD students are examined when they follow the academic route to Graduate Membership.

The PAC process will be triggered by establishing contact with Cullen Scholefield, a CIPD accredited PAC Centre. We are renowned for our friendly and practical response to those seeking advice. Often we ask for a CV to be sent in so that one of our experienced advisers can see if the entry criteria for PAC is met. We will also arrange for an individual diagnostic meeting with an adviser.

The practitioner will emerge from the diagnostic process with a clear view of their suitability for the programme and an action plan to enable them to demonstrate their competence against relevant parts of the professional standards. The CIPD professional standards have four parts or 'fields'. These are:

- ⇒ Leadership and Management
- ⇒ Personnel Management and Development
- ⇒ Specialist and Generalist Electives
- ⇒ Applied Personnel and Development

Leadership and Management

This field defines key managerial knowledge and competence. There are four modules in this field:

Managing for Results
Managing and Leading People

Managing Information for Competitive Advantage
Managing in a Strategic Business Context.

People Management and Development

This field covers all the vital elements that make up personnel and development. It requires the professional assessment candidate to demonstrate that they have an integrative holistic view of the HR function irrespective of their chosen electives.

Specialist and General Personnel and Development

There are four streams:

People Resourcing
Employee Reward

Learning and Development
Employee Relations

and the Advanced Practitioner standards.



WORK-LIFE
BALANCE



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

These streams and the Advanced Practitioner standards contain a choice of 19 electives. Professional assessment candidates can select a combination of any four of these electives against which to demonstrate their competence. All aspects of personnel and development are covered by the electives and the seasoned practitioner should have no difficulty in choosing four electives that represent his or her areas of expertise.

Applied Personnel and Development

There are two aspects to this field. The Management Research Report, which is an excellent tool to assess how professional competence is applied in the workplace.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the other aspect. It is a mandatory requirement for all levels of membership. It is a personal commitment to keeping up to date and taking action to improve individual capabilities throughout the CIPD member's working life. It requires the candidate to have a current CPD Plan and Record. The CPD Plan sets out the aims and objectives and proposed action for the next 12 months. It must include resources required, success criteria and target dates for review and completion. The CPD Record lists the activities actually carried out during the past year together with an explanation of why they were undertaken, what was learned and how this learning was or is to be applied. Ask us to eMail you a pro-forma of both of these documents.

Roles held by the Cullen Scholefield team

All of our PAC team are Chartered Fellows of CIPD and have been approved by CIPD - this means that their occupational competence in the areas they support and their technical competence to act as an adviser, assessor or internal verifier has been scrutinised by CIPD.

Planning a route to membership

These fields may be tackled in any order and candidates may choose to undertake just one or two fields by professional assessment if for instance, they already have the equivalent of one field via another route.

The professional assessment process typically takes some six to nine months. Candidates are able to work at their own pace and will not be constrained by any term dates or class times as in a traditional taught programme. Each candidate will have access to a CIPD approved personal adviser from our team. The **personal adviser** will provide advice and support while the candidate identifies evidence of their competence that matches the requirements of the Professional Standards.

That evidence should demonstrate the individual's personal involvement in the relevant areas normally at a strategic level and should be relatively current. It may be in the form of reports that the candidate has written, relevant correspondence they have conducted, presentations that have been made to colleagues, training sessions that they have facilitated or videos or tapes. Our **Executive Route** provides for 10 hours of support via face to face meetings, telephone and eMail feedback. We find that most candidates prefer the telephone and eMail feedback as it fits in with busy work life. Our **Fast Track Route** buys more time with the adviser to speed up the process by working with the adviser to match the evidence provided to the standards. The adviser will also carry out professional discussions with the candidate. These are digitally recorded.

When both the adviser and candidate are satisfied with the completed work, it will be submitted to a CIPD approved **assessor** from our team. The assessor will conduct an assessment interview with the Candidate. This meeting will be digitally recorded. The whole PAC process will be quality assured by a CIPD approved **internal verifier** from our team. The internal verifier quality assures the report provided by the assessor. The internal verifier needs to be satisfied as to the level of competence of the candidate and the rigour of assessment.

The Management Research Report is marked against the CIPD Generic Assessment Criteria by two **markers** from the Cullen Scholefield team. We have a dedicated team for this activity to ensure consistency. Our marking scheme and advice was moderated by CIPD in January 2006 and our judgements were endorsed. We will next be moderated in 2008.

Our CIPD external verifier will be informed that the individual has demonstrated competence. The external verifier then samples the work of our candidates, provides us with feedback and signs the certificate documentation.

At this stage the candidate will achieve Chartered Membership (MCIPD). Experienced candidates can apply for immediate upgrading to Chartered Fellowship (FCIPD). We support our candidates with their upgrade document and often act as sponsor for them.

It therefore is possible for an experienced practitioner to attain FCIPD status by the PAC route in a relatively short time.