Portfolio Guidance - Employers

November 2024

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What is the CIPFA Portfolio?

The CIPFA Portfolio is an integral component of CIPFA's qualification and obtaining the CPFA designation. The portfolio demonstrates the ability of a student to apply their knowledge and skills in the context of their professional work experiences.

Overview of the scheme

The CIPFA Portfolio comprises two elements for completion. Each of the elements is described in more detail in the following sections of this guide

- Skills and behaviours – students are required to demonstrate achievement of 10 skills and behaviours which are considered key to the work of a professional accountant.

Skills	Behaviours
Building Relationships	Adds Value
Business Insight	Continuous Improvement
Communication	Ethics and Integrity
Leadership	Flexibility
Problem Solving and Decision Making	Professional Scepticism

- Technical competencies must be included within the skills and behaviours section. It is essential that 400-days of practical work experience are recorded and clearly linked to the development of the personal competencies within skills and behaviours

Technical Competenies
Planning, forecasting and budgeting
Strategic financial management
Financial, management, sustainability and performance reporting
Audit, governance and internal control
Transformation, risk and project management

The Employer Role

In this guide, we refer generally to the 'employer' having a specific role in the support and guidance of the student during their training period. Depending on the organisation, this role

may be carried out by a single individual, while in other organisations there may be several different members of staff designated to perform specific functions in relation to the student's training. It is for the employing organisation to determine how best to structure and manage the training programme and to decide who is best placed to contribute to it. In this guide we will refer generally to the 'employer' or 'line manager', and that should be interpreted in the way that most appropriately matches the approach taken in your organisation. Some general points to note from the outset are:

- It is useful, where possible, for there to be an individual who has input to the programme for the full training period to ensure continuity and to give the student a regular point of contact. This person is likely to perform the line manager role in the CIPFA Portfolio.

- The CIPFA Portfolio scheme is designed to develop the student as an aspiring professional accountant, and the student primarily needs to perform this work themselves – so there needs to be a balance between 'guiding' the student and 'directing' them.

- Communication and coordination are essential, and the training programme can be demanding, so it is important to identify from the outset who is involved and what their roles should be.

- It is not essential that the student is under the continual direction of a qualified accountant, but it is recommended that the student should have access to the advice and support of qualified accountants on a regular basis.

- While submissions should ideally be approved by a qualified accountant serving as line manager, CIPFA understands that this is not always feasible. However, CIPFA does reserve the right to request additional documentation during the review process.

Planning the CIPFA Portfolio into the overall training programme

A key role for the employer is in ensuring that the student receives extensive support and guidance in planning their workplace experience. This should include an outline plan for the whole training period, with provision for this to be reviewed and adjusted as required, for example every six months.

There should be guidance and monitoring regarding the timing of workplace activities that will enable students to acquire and demonstrate the 10 evidenced skills and behaviours. Students need to be encouraged to document these skills and behaviours, acknowledging other demands on their time such as particularly busy work periods (budgets, year-end accounts, etc.), study peak times, exams etc. There should be a 6 monthly periodic review against this plan; employers should contribute towards this as part of ongoing workload planning.

It is also important to build some progression into the programme, so that students can tackle work that will stretch and challenge them as their skills and knowledge increase.

Skills and Behaviours

Each submission must be validated by the employer, so it is essential that the line manager understands the role of the skills and behaviours and how to link these to the technical competencies.

The role of the employer can be crucial in ensuring that the skills and behaviours are achieved in the training period, and that the student learns effectively from the experience. Helping the student identify suitable work activities to demonstrate the skills and behaviours is important. This will help to clarify that the work the student is doing meets the requirements of the CIPFA Portfolio scheme, that the skills and behaviours are achievable in the appropriate timescale, and that the student's role in tasks completed will be significant.

Some input may be needed to ensure that the student remains on track to achieve the skills and behaviours and that relevant resources are made available when needed, but generally the employer's input should be 'light touch' so that the student has the maximum opportunity for development. The employer should provide a guiding and enabling hand, but also allow the student to identify their own opportunities for development as appropriate.

The employer can assist the student in identifying appropriate evidence to demonstrate the student's achievement of the skills and behaviours. The student should be encouraged to complete these pieces of work, on a 6-monthly basis.

The student should follow the **STAR** methodology of including content - **Situation**; **Task**; **Action** and **Result**. (STAR).

Situation – describe the context and background embedding the technical competency

Task – what was the specific challenge or objective

Action – what steps did the student take to address it

result – what was the outcome of the action

CIPFA appreciates that there may be confidentiality issues, and this can be addressed by anonymising the content, or by including something in summary form (e.g. an executive summary of a report) that has any sensitive information removed.

It would be appropriate for the employer to engage with the student on the issue of ethical considerations while working towards the skills / behaviours. Ethical behaviour is a key part of IFAC requirements on the training of professional accountants, so the student's write-up of their achievement of the skills / behaviours should include reflection on their own ethical behaviour as a key consideration.

Timing of CIPFA Portfolio submission

There are important reasons for encouraging students to submit their CIPFA Portfolio as soon as possible after passing the Strategic stage exams embedded within the Diploma in

Public Financial Management, Reporting and Business Change. Looking forward, the sooner the student makes the transition from studying for exams and completing their CIPFA Portfolio requirements to focusing on CPD and other post-qualification activities, the quicker he or she will develop as a professional.

It is in the student's and the employer's interests to make progress on the CIPFA Portfolio in an efficient manner and aim to submit it at the earliest possible opportunity.

Student Submission Sign-off Process

Receiving the Submission

Upon submission of an entry through the Microsoft Forms platform, you will receive an automated email notification. Please note that each submission necessitates an individual assessment and authorisation process. Multiple submissions cannot be approved simultaneously, and each must undergo separate evaluation procedures

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Request for your input

Dear test

You have been identified by Test as their Line Manager and the responsible person to approve the below Student PEP Submission.

Please review and respond to this request for Approval using either the Approve or reject button.

Student Details:

Student No. : Test
Student Name : Test
Student Email : ███████████
Student Organisation : Test
Student Job Title : Test
Role & Responsibilities : Test

Supervisor Details:

Supervisor Name : test test
Supervisor Organisation :test
Supervisor Job Title : test
Supervisor Email : ███████████

PEP Activity Details :

Activity Dates : 2024-10-27T00:00:00Z - 2024-11-28T00:00:00Z
PEP Days : 1 Skills Learned : ["Building Relationships"]
Behaviours Exhibited : ["Continuous Improvement"]
Situation : Test
Task :testt
Actions Taken : test
Results Achieved : test
Activity Supervisor : test test

Select one of the options below to respond

Approved   Rejected

Reviewing the Submission

In conducting your review, please ensure adherence to the following verification procedures:

Initial Assessment

- Conduct a comprehensive examination of all submitted information
- Review each component of the submission in detail
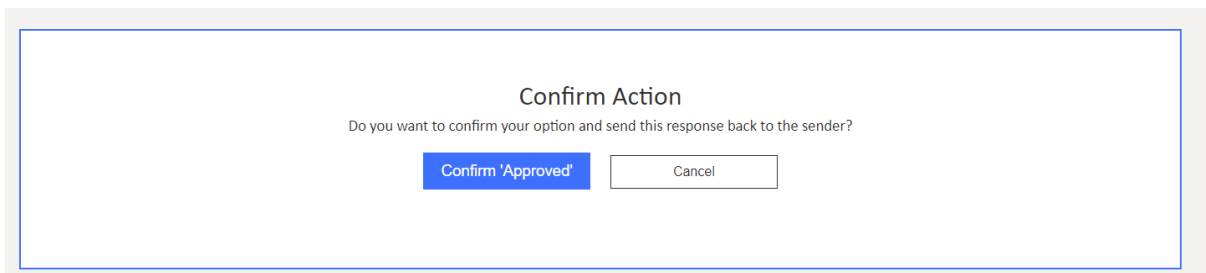- Ensure all required fields have been completed appropriately

Verification of work experience

- Thoroughly assess and approve the accuracy of all documented activities
- Validate all stated achievements against available records

This review process is integral to maintaining the integrity of our assessment system and ensuring the highest standards of quality assurance in student submissions

Approving a Submission

1. If you are satisfied that the submission is accurate, complete and verified:
2. Click the 'Approve' button within the email
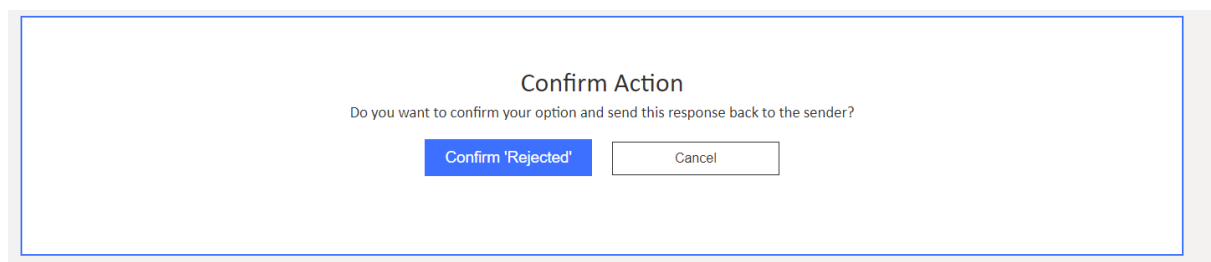3. You will be directed to a confirmation link
4. Confirm your approval

Confirm Action
Do you want to confirm your option and send this response back to the sender?

[Confirm 'Approved'] [Cancel]

5. The system will automatically notify the student of the approval

Rejecting a Submission

If you find issues with the submission:

1. Click the 'Reject' button within the email
2. Confirm your rejection when prompted

Confirm Action
Do you want to confirm your option and send this response back to the sender?

[Confirm 'Rejected'] [Cancel]

3. The system will automatically notify the student of the rejection
4. Contact the student directly to discuss:
   - Specific concerns about the submission
   - Required corrections or improvements

Important Notes

Each submission must undergo individual review and authorisation; the system does not permit bulk approval of multiple entries. It is imperative to conduct timely assessments of submissions to ensure uninterrupted student progression through the program. In instances where a submission requires rejection, it is essential to provide detailed, constructive

feedback to facilitate improvement. Furthermore, maintaining comprehensive records of all significant feedback and correspondence is crucial for tracking student development and ensuring effective communication throughout the review process.

Support

If you experience technical issues with the approval process or have questions about your role:

Contact: Membershipadmin@cipfa.org

Please include your student's name and submission reference in the subject header.