

GOOD PRACTICE
GUIDANCE -
COMMUNICATIONS WITH
THE MEMBERS AND
STUDENTS OF REGIONS

INTRODUCTION

This guidance note has been developed in order to provide guidance to the Regions regarding communications to the members and students.

This guidance does not cover the design of documentation that should be used by the Regions, only the way in which the Regions communicate with the members and students; and the interaction with the Membership Operations department at Robert Street.

Contents

		Page
1	The Membership Operations Department	1
2	The Business System	1
3	The Membership Database	2
4	Mailings	2
5	E-Communications	3-5
6	Requesting Data	6-9

1 The Membership Operations Department

- 1.1 The main functions of the Membership Operations department are to:
- Invoice and collect the membership subscriptions.
 - Administer and maintain the membership records.
 - Provide statistics, labels and reports to internal and external customers.
 - Provide non-technical member services.
 - Support to the Members Development Panel.
- 1.2 Within the department the *Membership Database Administrator* has specific responsibility to provide statistics, labels and reports to customers, including the Regions. It is this person that will be the primary contact for the Regions requesting such information. He/she can be contacted on 020 7543 5643 or email membership@cipfa.org.
- 1.3 In addition to requests for data the Membership Database Administrator will provide each Region with a quarterly excel report showing the names and employers of:
- PAQ Members
 - PAQ retired members
 - PAQ students
 - Those studying or have completed other CIPFA qualifications
- 1.4 The *Membership Administrator (New Members)* has the specific responsibility for looking after the process of graduation and election into membership for students who have completed CIPFA qualifications and for encouraging and administering them into membership. He/she can be contacted on 020 7543 5646 or email membership@cipfa.org.

2 The Business System

- 2.1 In the late 1990s CIPFA undertook a review of its business systems and adopted a strategy of implementing a business system that all areas of CIPFA would use, thus eliminating the need for several different systems and databases, and that the system would be packaged software. In order to achieve this CIPFA entered into a development partnership with a software provider RedSky IT who we continue to work with in order to achieve this aim and further develop the business system.
- 2.2 On 1 May 2002 CIPFA went live with the current business system, which is a contact relational database. This means that each contact and organisation is entered onto the business system and the membership database is a module that works off the main contacts database. In theory this means that a contact should be on our system once only and that their basic details (name, age, address, employment details, email addresses etc) can be updated by any user with amendment authority, regardless of their department e.g. a member registering for

a course with different address details will have their details amended by Courses and when Membership look at that member's address via the membership module their new address will be showing.

- 2.3 The system has recently been developed to include the ability to opt contacts into and out of services that CIPFA departments or 'the Region' provide.

3 The Membership Database

- 3.1 In addition to the 'basic' information the Membership module allows us to maintain a person's membership-specific information such as grade of membership (type and level of membership), date of election into full membership and their certificate seal number for PAQ Members, and subscription payment history.

- 3.2 The database itself does not have a reporting facility. To extract data from the database we use a Business Intelligence tool called 'COGNOS Impromptu'. The department has a number of standard reports in place to be able to extract various combinations of data. The Membership Database Administrator can also write simple extraction reports and amend standard reports to be able to respond to the more individual data requests that the department receives. Indeed it is only one of two departments, other than IT, that does have report writing capabilities.

- 3.3 In August 2003 the department launched 'the 'Membership Secure Area' which enables members and students to view and maintain their personal details as well as print off forms and search an on-line Membership Directory. This area is now incorporated within the CIPFA Learning Centre (CLC) under the heading of 'My Membership' so that members and students will only need one login to access all matters relating to their membership.

- 3.4 In March 2006 additional functionality was added to the database to allow for members and students to 'opt' in and out of CIPFA services; and to indicate their preferred method of receiving communications about that service. All requests for data by the Regions will be run including this indicator i.e. if a member or student has **not** opted in to receiving "regional information" as a service, mailing data/reports sent to Regions will **not** include that person's details. *To begin with all current members and students have been 'opted in' to receive Regional information by hardcopy and email, thereafter those opting out can be updated on the business system. Student registration and member re-admission forms will be amended to include the opt in to services and preferred method.*

4 Mailings

- 4.1 Address labels and excel files can be provided to the Region usually within 48 hours of request.

- 4.2 Regions are requested not to order several label prints at one time to cover them for the next few months or to re-use electronic files. The data becomes out of date very quickly, where members and students change address or name, resign or are reinstated, and from March 2006 opt out of receiving mailings for a particular service.

- 4.3 Following a mailing, if the Region receives advice that the member/student has left the address or their address as given is incorrect or a new address is advised, please pass this onto the Membership Operations department on 020 7543 5665 or email membership@cipfa.org.
- 4.4 For further information regarding requesting data please refer to section 6.

5 E-Communications

- 5.1 On the Membership database we can hold up to two email addresses for members and students, one of which is flagged as their 'main email address'. In the absence of any direction from a member/student, when both email addresses are held the Membership Operations department will flag their work address as their main email. Members and students can add, amend and remove their email addresses from their membership record themselves via My Membership within the CLC.
- 5.2 The Membership Operations department can produce excel reports containing the email addresses (both or the main email address) of members and/or students for the Regions usually within 48 hours of request. As with mailings, the Regions are urged not to re-use these reports, as they easily get out of date.
- 5.3 Following an email mailing please inform the Membership Operations department of any incorrect email addresses, so that they can be removed from the Membership database, on 020 7543 5665 or email membership@cipfa.org.
- 5.4 For further information regarding requesting email addresses please refer to section 6.

How to Email

Because the Regions vary in size and have varying degrees of assistance/employer support, CIPFA is leaving the method of e-communications to the discretion of each Region, but gives the following guidance:

- 5.5 *The Region wants to manage e-communications themselves*
- 5.5.1 E-communications can be sent by:
- (a) **Mass email using Microsoft Outlook** – Simple to use by copying and pasting email addresses from excel into the blind copy field. Sends as one email, but it is advisable to restrict the number of emails copied into the blind copy field to a couple of hundred at a time.
 - (b) **Personalised emails using 'mail merges to email' if using Microsoft Office 2003** – Can personalise the email, but goes out as one email per person. Sending too many emails in one go may cause your outbox to reach its maximum and may also clog up or crash your server. If using a personal PC your Internet Service Provider (ISP) may have restrictions on the number

of outgoing emails you can send within a specific time and this may lock your account with them.

- (c) **Purchasing specialist 'mass email' software** – Is a safer method than (b) but does cost. There are many companies offering this software and they can be located by a simple search of the internet.

Each method has its own pros and cons but, in all cases, the following guidance should be followed in order to comply with the Data Protection Act and optimise the success of e-communications with your membership.

- 5.5.2 It is recommended that Regions do not keep their own list of CIPFA members and students email addresses as a contact within Microsoft Outlook on their PC or in an excel workbook. Up to date lists can be emailed to you within 48 hours of request, see section 6.

It is important to note that, if an email address has not been supplied by us in your list you cannot 'create' it yourself even if you know the construction of that organisation's email addresses. According to the Data Protection Act the member or student has to have 'given' us their email address for it to be used.

- 5.5.3 When sending an email to a group of people their email addresses must not be shown to the other recipients. If using method (a) 'copying and pasting' email addresses from excel into a Microsoft Outlook email, you must paste into the Blind Copy field, not the to: or CC: fields.

- 5.5.4 To maximise delivery of your email thus avoiding spam detectors and firewalls:

- Ensure the 'from' address is a real address to which mail can be sent. Spammers use false email addresses to send email.
- The 'from' address should be alphabetic. Email addresses containing numbers are enough to suggest to a firewall that your email may be spam.
- Use plain text messages rather than HTML messages.
- Avoid common words such as 'free' and 'win' which are often used in spam emails.
- Attachments often result in an email being rejected. This is the easiest way to spread a virus and some organisations/services block emails with attachments. If you want to attach a document you may get better delivery results by attaching PDF files rather than a Microsoft Office file. PDF's cannot be used to spread viruses whilst any Office file can contain macros, which in turn can spread viruses.
- The size of incoming emails and attachments are quite often restricted by organisations/services. If you want to 'advertise' an event with pictures, pop-ups etc it is better to place the advert on your Regional website and send a simple email containing a link to the file. Then the recipient can click on the link to view the advert.

- 5.5.5 All communications to members and students should contain an 'opt out' of the service e.g. at the end of correspondence and emails a sentence along these lines should be included *'If you do not wish to receive information regarding this service*

(Regional Information) please reply to this email/contact _____'. This information must be communicated back to the Membership Operations department on 020 7543 5665 or email membership@cipfa.org who will then record this on their membership record. Their details will then not appear on future lists provided to the Regions. Please note that a member/student can opt out of receiving information from you by email but can opt-in to receive it hardcopy only, or visa versa.

- 5.5.6 Even if the above guidance is followed there will still be some emails that are undelivered, or 'bounce backs' as they are more commonly known. There are several reasons why this occurs but they are categorised into two types of bounces, hard and soft.

Hard bounces – Non-existent accounts or domain.

Soft bounces – Full mailbox or blocked domain. These may occur where the person has left the company, their email box is full or there are temporary server problems causing a block on incoming email.

- 5.5.7 The Membership Operations department should be informed of any 'bounce backs' where the email is incorrectly spelt, the domain name does not exist or the person has left the company. In these cases the email address will be corrected or removed from their membership record.

5.6 The Region wants the Secretariat to send their e-communications

- 5.6.1 The Membership Operations department can send out e-communications on behalf of a Region by either a mass email or personalised email. Please contact the Membership Database Administrator on 020 7543 5643 or email membership@cipfa.org.

- 5.6.2 The Membership Database Administrator will need ten working days notice to send out your email and will require:

- The wording of the email to be received as a Word document.
- Any attachment should be received as a PDF file.
Please note: Including attachments will significantly increase the chances of an email being rejected (see point 5.5.4). Attachments also increase the size of the email being sent.
- Details of to whom the email is to be circulated e.g. PAQ active members in the South East. Refer to points 6.6 to 6.9 for further details.
- If the email is to be a 'mass' email or a 'personalised' email.
- Notification if the Region also requires address labels for those within that criteria who do not have email addresses or who have opted only to receive Regional information by hardcopy.

6 Requesting Data

- 6.1 As mentioned in paragraph 1.3, the Membership Operations department provides reports, address labels and statistics to the Regions as and when they are required. In addition, a quarterly report of the members and students including their employer is circulated to Regional Secretaries in the form of an excel workbook.
- 6.2 The quarterly reports were set up to keep the Regions informed of the members and students who are within their Region and the total counts. They are not intended for use as a database for mailing or emailing the membership.
- 6.3 Regions are encouraged to complete a data request form, as in Appendix A, when they require mailing data (either in the form of hard address labels or excel reports to carry out their own mail merge to labels or a letter), and now their main email address. The data request form can be completed on-line via the secure Council website or forms can be supplied electronically upon request from membership@cipfa.org. Data is usually supplied within 48 hours of receipt of the request.
- 6.4 Data requests should be forwarded to the Membership Database Administrator at membership@cipfa.org.
- 6.5 When making a request for data and to minimise any error in interpreting your request we need to know:
- Date data required by.
 - Date data is to be used i.e. expected mailing date.
 - What the data is required for.
 - Who is requesting the data (Names of Regional Secretaries are known to the Membership Database Administrator, but volunteers of smaller groups/new volunteers may not be) and telephone number in case of a query or if further information is required.
 - Where the data is to be sent.
 - What format and order the data is required in.
 - What section of the membership is required – see point 6.6.
 - What information is required – see points 6.7 to 6.9.
 - If requesting email addresses for an e-communication, do you also require address labels or data for those for whom we do not have an email address or those who only want to receive Regional information by mail.
- 6.6 In order to ensure we base the report(s) on the correct section of members and/or students it is important that you define who you require. They are classified as follows:

<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Types within Qualifications</i>
PAQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Member.• Graduate (passed exams & IPDS, but not yet applied for or elected into membership).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student.
Advanced Diploma in Business & Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate member. • Student.
Diploma in Public Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affiliate member. • Graduate (passed exams but not yet applied for affiliate membership). • Student.
Certificate in Charity Finance & Accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affiliate member. • Graduate. • Student.
International Certificate & Diploma in Public Sector Accounts & Auditing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate member. • Affiliate member. • Graduate. • Student.

Regions are encouraged to include the other CIPFA qualifications in their data requests, as the members and students of these are entitled to CIPFA services and products as part of their membership.

Each of those Member types can further be split into:

<i>Status</i>	
Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current memberships.
Retired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retired members.

NB: Reports can be produced on members and/or students who have resigned/lapsed membership if required.

- 6.7 The reporting tool that we use to 'extract' data from the database gives us the flexibility to tailor-make reports. However, the way in which the reporting tool and database work together means that the more information you require in one report the more unlikely it will return what you expect. For example if you ask for a report of all PAQ active members in the South East Region with home address you will receive exactly that; any members for whom we do not have an address or members who have opted not to receive Regional Information will not be included in the report. Then if you add to this 'and their employer' the report will return only those for whom we have an employer i.e. those who are retired or where we do not have an employer listed will not be included.
- 6.8 Over the page is a list of data Regions are likely to ask to be included in reports/analysis and some points that Regions should be aware of when asking for the inclusion or analysis of this data.

Data	Comments
Date of Birth/Age	99% held, but no longer mandatory requirement.
Gender	100% held.
Type of Membership	See point 6.6 above.
Membership Main Address	<p>In most cases this will be the home address, but where a member/student requires everything to be sent to their work this will become their Membership Main Address. However, it should be noted that if a member/student has their work address as their 'main address' this will not include their job title, dept or employer because the database uses the Post Office Address File to maintain addresses. The only way in which these details are included is if we report on current employment details and their work address. Reports will only return records where the member/student has a current Membership Main Address and have 'opted in' to receiving Regional Information by mail.</p> <p>We can filter selections on country, counties or towns but not postcodes.</p>
Region	<p>As defined by the Membership Main Address. The system has been set up to enter the Region based upon the postcode, but Member Services have the facility to change this manually upon request from a member/student.</p>
Telephone Number	
Home Email	See note below.
Employer	<p>Will only include where the member/student has a current employer.</p> <p>Can filter on type of employer i.e. Local Govt, County Councils; Health, NHS Trusts etc. Contact Member Services for full list of classifications.</p>
Job Title	Can filter on job title e.g. Directors of Finance, 'Audit' in job title etc. Contact Membership for full list.
Department	Can filter on department type e.g. Social Services, Finance etc. Contact Membership for full list.
Work Address	<p>Will only include members/students where they have a current employer and address. Will not include retired members, members in Freelance Consultancy, Members in Private Practice & Other Employment or Career Break.</p> <p>We can filter selections on region, country, counties and towns but not postcodes.</p> <p>Reports will only return records where the member/student has a current Membership Main Address and have opted in to receiving Regional Information by mail.</p>
Work Telephone Number	<p>This number will normally be the telephone number for that address, not the direct line of the individual.</p> <p><i>It should be noted that changes are rarely notified, so</i></p>

	<i>the accuracy of this data field is far from guaranteed.</i>
Work Email	See note below.
Elected to membership	Can filter on date range of when members were elected into membership.
Volunteer Information	We can also report on those people who volunteer and by the activity they do.

Emails will be supplied separately from address data. When requesting a list of email addresses the Region will receive a list of those for whom we have an email address and who have opted in to receiving Regional Information by email.

6.9 Membership Operations are unable to report on the following as these are held within separate modules within the business system. For reports/analysis including this information you should contact the relevant department:

- Exam information – contact Jenny BJORKEGARD, Assessments Supervisor on 020 7543 5648 or email jenny.bjorkegard@cipfa.org.
- CPD information – contact Carla ROCKSON, CPD Co-ordinator on 020 7543 5706 or email carla.rockson@cipfa.org.

REGIONS REQUEST FORM FOR MEMBERSHIP DATA

Date Requested:	
Requested By:	
Position:	
Email Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Date Data Required By:	

Purpose of request:

(e.g. South East Newsletter)

Date data will be used by:	
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Type of output required:

Labels:	
Excel report:	
Count only:	

Type of Membership:

You are encouraged to request members &/or students of the other CIPFA qualifications as they are entitled to receive CIPFA services and products as part of their membership.

PAQ

Members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retired Members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduates	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Diploma in Public
Audit**

Affiliate members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduates	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adv Dip in BFM

Associate members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Cert in Charity
Finance**

Affiliate members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduates	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>

**International Cert
& Diploma**

Associate members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Affiliate members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduates	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have ticked more than one of the above boxes, would you like each:

Reported separately	<input type="checkbox"/>
Or as one report/set of labels	<input type="checkbox"/>

If addresses are required would you like:

Mailing address	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work address	<input type="checkbox"/>

(only records with current addresses will be included)

Any other information/selection to be included in the report:

e.g. only those working in Local Government

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If you have any questions please contact the Membership Database Administrator on 020 7543 5643 or email membership@cipfa.org. Our aim is provide standard requests within two working days of receipt.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Details of how job run:	
Total number of records:	
Date job run:	
Date output checked & passed to requestee:	
Signed:	