

## **Advice on completing the IPDS portfolio.**

The following is a list of advice that has been given to students, in response to requests for further guidance. The guidance takes two forms:

- **Guidance Notes:** These are intended to clarify general principles and are given where we have found, in comments from students, employers or assessors that further guidance may be necessary on some aspect of the IPDS portfolio.
- **Questions and Answers:** These are based on specific questions from students and mostly relate to the suitability of specific proposed Evidence Activities. As these are specific suggestions, you might also find these useful in developing ideas for how you can relate your own workplace experience to the requirements of the IPDS scheme.

Our own guidance is in italics throughout, with questions raised being in normal text

## **LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

**Contribute to the analysis of a department's or an organisation's strategic position by, for example, carrying out: an environmental analysis; an organisational analysis; a resource analysis; a market analysis.**

- Q. As part of the audit planning processes we carry out this type of analysis on the audited body in an attempt to assess what inherent risks the body faces, where they come from and their potential impact, i.e. are they material to the audit or not. Is this suitable for this Activity?
- A. *An auditors initial review may focus on the risks that need to be taken account in the audit, rather than a fuller analysis of the strategic position of the organisation, though being involved in such review would put you in a very good position to understand and analyse this strategic position.*

**Contribute to the preparation of a strategic/business/service plan for an organisation (or part thereof). OR appraise an existing one.**

Q. I prepared a SWOT analysis which analysed the strategic position of a business unit. This contributed towards the final business plan document. Is this sufficient for this activity?

A. *A SWOT analysis on its own is not broad enough to cover this activity.*

**Act as a mentor or supervisor.**

**Guidance note:** We have not prescribed a minimum time period but both you and your employer should be satisfied that you have played this role long enough to have gained significantly from the learning experiences that arise from your role. Clearly your evidence could include comments from a member of staff you have supervised or mentored, but you still need to ensure validation from your own supervisor or manager.

<b>STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT</b>
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**Critically appraise an organisation's (or part thereof) accounts identifying issues that may require management attention.**

**Guidance note:** *The above activity is focussed on the way in which the published accounts reflect the underlying activities of the organisation, rather than simply spotting errors or carrying out substantive audit tests on account balances. The activity could focus on presentational aspects, such as how well information is presented, its clarity to users of accounts and fitness for purpose. Alternatively, it could also focus on the interpretation and analysis of the accounts and consideration of the 'issues for management attention' that this analysis raises.*

Q. I am analysing accounts published by a number of companies to help inform a procurement decision by my own organisation. Should 'Issues for management attention', be taken to be the management issues for my own organisation, in light of my analysis, or of the management of the companies I am analysing?

A *'Issues for management attention' refers to the management of the organisation which has published the accounts.*

**Identify and evaluate one aspect of an organisation's financial management processes (eg: a cash-collecting office, the billing of service users or banking arrangements), clearly identifying areas for improvement.**

Q The Activities listed were all submitted by students seeking guidance as to their suitability:

- Reviewing the services current charging model for training courses and developing a new model, which better meets the services' current and future needs.
- Reviewing the financial arrangements within a department, producing a management report on how training courses are costed and looking at the wider financial arrangements within the department.
- Reviewing mechanisms by which government grant income is received and allocated, making changes and reporting the results.
- An internal audit report on a purchasing cards scheme within a Council identifying areas of risk and suggesting improvements).
- Analysing the work of a finance officer to see if it can be reengineered or outsourced to produce efficiency savings).
- Reviewing a petty cash system within an organisation, recommending ways to prevent problems for occurring in the future
- An audit undertaken on treasury management processes
- Reviewing year end financial management processes.
- As part of an audit, identifying and evaluating an authority's Creditors function, identifying problems and making recommendations.

A *All of the above meet the specified requirements, showing this to be a wide ranging and flexible option for an Evidenced Activity. The key thing is to include clear areas for improvement, which should involve thinking about the scope for improvement in underlying processes, rather than simply listing individual instances of error.*

**Complete an investment appraisal exercise for your organisation, recommending an appropriate course of action OR Assist in the appraisal of a project within an organisation and advise on the potential impact of financial and non-financial factors.**

Q. I undertook the capital appraisal calculation as part of a PFI project (comparing Public Sector Comparator with Bidders Tenders) that went to Members, reporting on the financial implications, although these were overridden by political and other considerations.

A. *The important thing is to make recommendations and back them up. We understand that there are numerous reasons beyond your control for them not being implemented.*

Q. I completed a report appraising the suitability of Money Market Funds to a specific Council, recommending a selection of funds, if any, to be opened.

A. *This is appropriate if the funds are being put on long term deposit, as a genuine investment. Short term deposits would not be appropriate for this Activity as this is not an investment but short term management of working capital, though an evaluation of Treasury Management processes would be appropriate for the prior Activity.*

<b>FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING</b>
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**Develop a number (more than one) of performance measures for an organisation, or part thereof OR appraise a set of existing performance measures.**

Q I have produced performance indicators for my team, as part of larger set developed by different teams.

A *This is ok, as long as the ones that you have prepared are related to the objectives and performance measures of the wider organisation.*

Q Reporting to corporate management team on performance against target on range of performance measures and helping develop new performance measures.

A *'Helping to develop' indicators is sufficient if you played a substantial role in their development – be clear in your description and evidence what your individual role was. Reporting on performance against existing PIs would not be sufficient, unless this formed part of a wider appraisal of the effectiveness of the set of PIs that are being used.*

**Identify and evaluate the provision of internal budgetary information used within an organisation (or part thereof), and make recommendations for improving budgetary information for budget holders.**

Q Review and Improvement of Budget Monitoring Process within a Devolved Finance Unit. Following a discussion with senior officers within the Finance Unit I suggested that a more automated method could be possible and was told I could undertake a review of the process with a view to identifying and piloting some improvements.

A *This is a good example of how this Activity could be delivered.*

Q Co-ordination and monitoring of a department's budgets, liaising with service accountants responsible for budgets.

A *The above Activity is fine as long as recommendations based on feedback from accountants are made.*

Q Coordinating a change in a department's budget monitoring process, which includes appraising the current process and planning and implementing change in line with best practice guidelines.

A *This is a suitable Activity.*

**Identify and appraise the budget preparation process for an organisation (or part thereof), making recommendations for improvement.**

None

<b>GOVERNANCE, VALUES AND ETHICS</b>
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**Identify and review an organisation's (or part thereof) governance framework, making recommendations for any improvements.**

Q I work in audit and carry out assessments of standards of financial conduct, legality and internal control, including the statement of internal control.

A *This Activity is more about the decision making and accountability structures and processes within an organisation, rather than financial controls and probity. These controls do, however, form part of the financial management processes of the organisation and the second Activity under 'STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT' could be more appropriate.*

**Identify and discuss the prevalent values of an organisation (or part thereof) organisation by utilising an appropriate cultural analysis tool. OR Identify (justifying your selection) the ethical stance adopted by an organisation (or part thereof), and analyse the impact this has on its stakeholders.**

None

**Take part in the investigation of suspected irregularities, contributing to the reporting process.**

None

## **AUDIT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Prepare or review an annual audit plan for an internal or external audit department (or part thereof).**

**Guidance note:** *For internal audit this would normally be a risk-based plan, prioritising possible audit tasks throughout the audited organisation. For external audit, this level of planning is broadly equivalent to the risk based assessment of the work required to fulfil the audit requirements at a single client organisation.*

**Plan and conduct all of a small (or part of a large) audit.**

None

**Draft and agree an audit specification for a client.**

**Guidance note:** This should be distinguished from an Audit Plan (above). An audit specification is generally a higher level specification of the overall client audit needs and services to be provided, comparable to a Service Level Agreement. An audit plan would describe what would specifically delivered in a particular year.

## **PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS**

**Complete (or appraise should one exist) a stakeholder analysis for an organisation (or part thereof), clearly identifying key relationships and expectations.**

None

**Identify external partners of an organisation (or part thereof) and appraise the way in which the relationship is managed.**

Q. I considered the relationship with outside bodies in view of the SORP 2004 group accounts requirements.

A. *Work on pooled budgets or partnership arrangements would be relevant to this Activity but be sure to meet the requirement to analyse the underlying relationship and how it is managed, rather than focussing simply on the financial transactions between the two organisations.*

**Attend and appraise the success of a meeting between representatives of an organisation and their customers (external to the organisation).**

Q Participation in the Treasurer's Department customer review: conducting interviews, learning interview techniques, understanding the background to these meetings, planning and arranging various meetings, applying interview techniques; completing questionnaires, appraising the success of the meetings.

A *The above might be appropriate if you draw out explicitly who the stakeholders are, what their expectations are and to what extent they have been met.*

Q Budget presentation to council tax payers, committee meetings, shadowing an audit manager at a client and giving feedback.

A *These could all be appropriate but think beforehand about how you can objectively appraise the success of the meeting.*

Q A conference.

A *This could be acceptable if it is your organisation who is leading the conference and its existing stakeholders who are attending . However you will need to think carefully about how you are going to appraise its success: What were the objectives of the conference, how can you demonstrate that these were met? A formal meeting will tend to have an agenda, which provides a framework for identifying objectives, minutes and action points where its relative success can be appraised. Conferences tend to be less structured.*

## **CHANGE, RISK AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

**Develop (or appraise should one exist) a risk analysis for an organisation (or part thereof).**

Q Risk based audit planning, final accounts risk assessment. Appraising a risk plan for the implementation of a new financial system.

A *All are appropriate.*

**Report on a change that has been implemented within an organisation (or part thereof) appraising how well the implementation was managed and how it could have been improved (eg with regard to the impact on staff working practices).**

**Guidance note:** *For auditors, this could be at a client or within own organisation.*

Q Assisting with the implementation of new arrangements under the new prudential capital finance system. Appraising the introduction of the pooling of housing capital receipts regime and commenting on how it could have been improved.

Assisting with the preparation of information on the Local Government Finance settlement, including interpreting it for councillors, seeing where the council may have lost out etc.

Assisting with the acquisition of other businesses.

As a Finance manager taking the business from a paper based operation to one that uses computers more effectively.

Identifying the arrangements in place for the introduction payment by results within a hospital trust. This involves identifying the organisational awareness, preparation for implementation, capacity and contract management arrangements, as well as assessing financial management and testing data to ensure it is valid and accurate

A *All are appropriate.*

**Take part in a project, or team based assignment by drawing up a project plan and monitoring the progress of the project against activity schedules.**

None

<b>PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT</b>
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**Critically analyse the procedures for managing contracts or a procurement exercise, recommending improvements.**

None

**Prepare a tender bid, OR Assist in the drafting of a tender and the evaluation of its (respective) tenders**

None

**Manage a small (or take part in a large) procurement or contract letting task.**

Q Can you elaborate on what is meant by taking part and what I should be expected to achieve?

A *What is envisaged here is that a team is working on the procurement or contract letting task. Your level of involvement is not specified, but you should have a good overview of the project, who was involved, resources, how decisions were made, criteria for decision making etc. You should then be in a position to comment on the final outcome: are there aspects of the process that could be changed, were the criteria 'right' or with hindsight was something missed; people that should/should not have been involved; timings etc. Is the company that was awarded the contract performing as hoped? If not, what is the process for remedial action? Did you agree with the final outcome (support your views).*

Q I critically reviewed financial aspects of proposals in a major regeneration procurement.

A *This should constitute 'taking part in a large procurement exercise' if your involvement was sufficient to take a view of the success of the final outcome (see above).*

### Iterative process

**Guidance Note:** *It must be you as the student who is doing the reworking following review by another person who could be, for example , a manager, a client, a Councillor or Trustee. If no reworking was required, because it was perfect first time, then this could not be considered an iterative process.*

**Guidance Note:** *This Activity is focussed on receiving feedback and responding professionally to feedback from other people or one other person. Re-testing software until it does what you want it to or produces the right answer is not what is intended under this Activity, as there is no personal feedback.*

**Guidance Note:** *Personal development plans/processes are acceptable as an iterative process. However, they can be quite difficult to provide evidence for, so students will need to think carefully before committing to this as an Activity.*

Q After completing an audit file the manager reviews the file then prepares management review points which the student then addresses and answers.

A *Yes, this is a good example of an iterative process.*

Q A budget monitoring process where meetings are held and changes made a final budget is agreed.

A *This should be fine, but be clear in your documentation that you were being given, and responding to, feedback.*

Q Updating an existing annual accounts timetable, which includes receiving feedback and suggestions on the changes made.

*Although the original timetable was not your piece of work, the changes you are making and receiving feedback on are yours so this is acceptable.*

Q I have received advice from College that an ideal exercise would be an audit, however we cannot currently see how this would satisfy the requirements detailed within the log. The log asks us to revisit a situation, from our perspective this would involve us undertaking a follow-up audit of an area previously audited. We both have examples of where we have initially visited schools, and through the normal course of the audit have identified several problems. We have then undertaken further visits to ensure the recommendations have been implemented. Would this be sufficient?

A *The iterative process is one where you respond to the feedback or recommendations from another person, so the proposal as you set it out doesn't seem appropriate. You are making the recommendations on which another has to act, whereas this Activity is about your responsiveness to feedback or recommendations.*

*However, if during the audit that you have carried out, you took a draft report back to your line manager (for example or perhaps the client you were auditing) who then advised you on, for example, an area that you may have missed or not addressed adequately in the report and which you then addressed during your follow up visit, and re-drafted the report accordingly, that would be suitable.*

Q Interviewing colleagues to establish systems for collecting data. Line manager reviews notes then asks questions based on the interview notes. The candidate answers and adds to interview notes (sometimes following further consultation with interviewees).

*Yes, this is appropriate as you are responding to feedback given. Your evidence should include demonstration of comments from the manager, changes made, possibly a completed questionnaire.*

### **Presentation**

**Guidance Note:** *For transitional students, a previous P3 Project viva may be used as a presentation Activity.*

**Guidance Note:** *Presentations undertaken as part of a training course are fine, but note the requirements of planning the presentation in advance – how far in advance is not specified!*

**Guidance Note:** *Presentations undertaken as part of an interview/selection process are ok but consider what evidence may be available. It also will need to be in front of 3 or more people, so students get a feel for talking in front of groups, potentially addressing and responding to diverse points of view.*

**Guidance Note :** *A presentation as part of a group, for example from a firm to a client is acceptable, but be clear as to why it had to be as part of a group and be clear about your role.*

### **Long term planning process**

**Guidance Note:** *The long term planning process should have been for a duration of at least 3 months. The actual task does not have to have been completed and does not have to have been worked on every day.*

**Guidance Note:** *As long as the IPDS Portfolio covers a time period of at least 3 months (and as the log in the Portfolio is for 400 days, it must do!) then planning, managing and reflecting on the compilation of your IPDS Portfolio would meet the requirements of this Activity.*

Q Would a Business Planning process be appropriate for this Activity?

A *As long as you met the requirements to manage this process over a period of at least 3 months then yes, it would be.*

Q As an Audit Team leader I plan to ensure that the audit plan is completed within a financial year.

A *This is a good example of a suitable Activity.*

#### **Log of 400 days workplace experience**

**Guidance note:** *The breadth of the log recognises your developing 'softer' skills as well as the more technical ones and thinking about ALL the experiences you have in the workplace and what you have learnt from them.*

**Guidance Note:** *Regarding allocating tasks to the areas of expertise, it is for the students to judge for themselves which area of expertise a specific task should be assigned. We do not assess whether you have assigned a task to the 'correct' area of expertise. Obviously, something really not remotely connected could be questioned, but where it could go in one or the other, the student has the final say, after all they undertook the task, so they should have the best impression of where it is most appropriately logged.. The log is as much for the students benefit as for CIPFA, and the log encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning.*

**Guidance Note:** *When allocating tasks to the Statement of Expertise, it can help to break down each task into its different components in order to identify the different skills and knowledge. Some may be technical, others will be more behavioural. For example, reviewing a performance management system at a client will comprise time and under Financial and Performance Reporting, but also time under Partnership and Stakeholder Relations. Also keep in mind that the Statement of Expertise is set at*

*a high level. You are not expected to be carrying out the activities outlined in the Statement, which are intended to reflect the skills expected of CPFAs several years after they have qualified. Think of what you are doing as the first or early steps towards achieving those areas of expertise. For example, managing yourself is a first step to wards managing others etc.*

**Guidance Note:** *Appraisals can be counted under Leadership and Management on the basis that self management and self development are (or should be) a first step to building effective leadership and management behaviours.*

**Guidance Note:** *A brief comment is required by each task/experience in order to demonstrate progression and continuous development. It is also in line with CPD requirements for which IPDS is preparation*

Q What is being assessed in the log of 400 days workplace experience?

A *The only things being assessed are that the logbook shows 400 days spread over a minimum of 20 days each in at least 4 areas of expertise (this will be counted). All must be validated, but can be validated in blocks as long as it is clear what has been validated. i.e whether the student has allocated a piece of work to the 'right area' is not being assessed (see above).*

Q Are 'cooks tours' valid as workplace experience?

A *Yes, they provide an opportunity to gain insight into the organisation as well as building relationships.*

Q I am one of the transitional students, so I am completing the old logbook but doing the new assignments. My logbook currently shows 306 days, covering the minimums for Blocks 1, 2 and 3, and for P1 and P2. I can see how to record work so that Block 4 is also covered, but how do I show 100 days at P3 when we no longer have a project?

A *Just transfer over the skills, particularly softer skills, knowledge etc developed during your training. For example*

- *all the FTPC Activities would count towards the 100 days.*
- *You could also include research undertaken for SBM.*

- *Other softer skills you might not have considered might include report writing, negotiation, responses to complaints, performance appraisal on yourself or another person.*

Q Organising a teambuilding event, undertaken on behalf of your employing organisation.

A *This is certainly acceptable as workplace experience as it builds your communication and planning skills.*

<b>General advice</b>
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**Guidance Note:** *A student can fail their FTPC exams but still have their portfolio confirmed as ready. They would not have to resubmit).*

**Guidance Note:** *Students completing the IPD logbook from the previous scheme do not need to link their tasks to the Statement of Expertise. Students using work logs from their organisation will need to have a cover sheet linking tasks to the Statement of Expertise. We can do this, and are responsible for check that their organisation's log is accurate.*

**Guidance Note:** *Evidenced Activities must have been undertaken whilst the student was studying with CIPFA. However if the student has taken a break, and the whole portfolio can be completed within ten years of submission, then Activities undertaken during that break are allowable.*

**Guidance Note:** *Students may use assignments from the previous scheme but they will need to include planning, application and reflection plus additional evidence, eg minutes of meetings, project plan or even a staff appraisal. Students may also use their own failed P3 Projects, as demonstrations of an iterative process or a long term planned process, however they can not use somebody else's P3 project, failed or otherwise.*

**Guidance Note:** One Activity (either the same actual Activity or the same type of Activity undertaken at a different time) can be used for a professional level and then for an FTPC level Evidenced Activity. Obviously the planning, application and reflection need to be clearly differentiated, as should the evidence, as they are demonstrating different skills.

**Guidance Note:** Some students have been asking why they have to wait until they have sat their exams before submitting. The answer is because one of the requirements is to do an overall reflection on their learning experiences over the whole period of training and to identify future learning goals to carry forward into CPD. This means the portfolio can only be submitted at the end of the education and training period. However, in order to avoid additional pressure on students when they will be revising for exams, we felt that a submission date after the exams had been sat would be the preferred option.

**Guidance Note:** Where we have asked for analyses of organisations, we do not prescribe which, if any, analytical tools should be used. Some common analytical tools (PESTLE, SWOT etc) may be useful, but are not always studied until late in the education scheme, by which time a student may already have undertaken the relevant Activity.

Q If an Activity is a mix of two listed in the appendix, is it valid to use as one of the Evidenced Activities?

A You must be able to complete the full requirements of at least one of the Activities. For example, identifying the governance structure of an organisation and identifying its ethical values, but not evaluating the effects these have on stakeholders (as required by the Activity description) would not meet the criteria of this Activity, even if some other analyses were done.