



CIMA Initial Professional Development (IPD) – guidance for applicants

To gain the Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA®) designation, you need three years verified relevant professional experience.

The professional experience requirements are an essential part of the CIMA® Qualification and CIMA's membership application process. They complement the assessments and demonstrate your ability to apply your knowledge and skills in the context of your professional experience.

Your application will be assessed to determine whether you have gained enough experience to be awarded Associate membership – giving you the Associate Chartered Management Accountant (ACMA) and Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) designations.

2021 update and pilot

We're enhancing the practical experience requirements (PER) route to CIMA membership and invite you to take part in our Initial Professional Development (IPD) pilot. This will help validate the new assessment of experience and professional achievements, which will replace the existing PER routes. This document sets out the criteria for experience and professional achievement and provides you with guidance to help you successfully complete your application for membership. Additional support materials, including FAQs which will be updated regularly throughout the pilot period can be found [here](#).

This guidance includes references to the process of managing your professional development during the early years of your finance career. This will be more useful to students starting their professional career when the new approach is rolled out to all students. However, for students selected for the pilot it is expected they will have already completed sufficient professional development and will have at least three years' experience to write up and therefore the sections on how to complete the application will be most relevant for the pilot.

Initial Professional Development – transferrable and relevant skills and experience

CIMA members and students work in a broad range of finance roles in a wide variety of industries around the globe. The professional achievements assessed under the experience requirements are those which are essential for you to meet during the period of IPD. The assessment of professional achievement is designed to assist you to proactively manage your own professional development in order to gain

relevant work experience, demonstrate how you have put your examination successes into practice and provide evidence that you have achieved the critical and relevant skills and experience employers require, setting a solid foundation for a successful career in finance and continuing professional development.

Your membership application and assessment of professional achievement comprises three key elements:

- Demonstrating three years' experience in a finance role.
- Demonstrating achievement of work activities that are core and critical to the role of the management accountant.
- Demonstrating development of professional skills or behaviours that are essential to the management accountant.

You will need to record and have your IPD supervisor verify three years' experience (full time equivalent) in a finance role. You can be working in any industry or sector and size or type of organisation. You're likely to be working or have worked in one or more of the following areas:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management accounting • finance business partnering • financial accounting • professional services and consulting • financial and management reporting • banking • treasury | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial management • financial planning and analysis • performance management • business intelligence and data analysis • audit and assurance • risk management • taxation |
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CIMA students and members hold a broad range of job titles so we don't prescribe a list of acceptable or expected job titles. We focus instead on what you do in your day-to-day work and ensure the work activities you're undertaking during your IPD are relevant to qualification as a management accountant and that you have developed the required professional skills and behaviours that are expected of CIMA members.

To help you decide whether you have the right level of experience to apply for membership, your finance role should allow you to regularly demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate strong, accurate technical accounting skills and use these to manage performance and/or implement and monitor strategy. • Prepare financial and non-financial information to support decision-making. • Provide trusted information and advice to others within and outside the finance function.
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate understanding of the business context and provides insight and recommendations which add value to the business.

People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and maintain relationships within the finance function and within and outside the organisation. • Work collaboratively to achieve objectives. • Communicate complex technical information in a clear and effective manner to both accounting and non-accounting stakeholders.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take ownership of own workload and/or designated projects and effectively manage own time and the time of others. • Provide leadership to peers in the finance function and through business partnering with other areas of the business. • Act as a role model.
Digital skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data and digital tools to analyse financial and non-financial information in order to manage performance and support decision making. • Able to adapt to increasingly digital work environments.
Ethics, integrity and professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the highest standards of conduct and professional competency. • Apply ethics, integrity and professionalism to all work activities.

The ultimate test of whether you are gaining relevant experience will be to assess your experience to date against the required professional achievements and ensure that your work gives you, or has potential to give you, the experience to demonstrate and discuss your achievement of these (see below).

Depending on your role, you may be ready to apply for CIMA membership as soon as you meet the three years' experience requirement, or you may need a little longer to cover all the required professional achievements.

You don't need to be in full time employment – part time experience still counts although you will need to calculate the full time equivalent to record on your application form. For more guidance on how to calculate the full time equivalent of your part time employment see our guidance [here](#).

Supporting your IPD

The compilation of the final documentation and submission of the assessment of professional achievement will take place towards the end of your period of IPD. However, you should regularly refer to the professional achievements throughout your training to reflect on whether your experience meets the requirements. Use the descriptions and self-reflection questions set out below to support your development discussions with your manager and identify opportunities for you to gain the required skills and experience if you're not achieving these through the course of your day-to-day work.

Regular self-reflection, together with feedback and discussions with your manager, ensure your career development is on track and supports you in acquiring all the relevant experience and skills, leading to a successful application for CIMA membership at the earliest opportunity.

You can record experience and use examples of your professional achievements from before, during and after completing your examinations but you must make sure that you have an IPD supervisor in place for details of any experience you submit or any examples you discuss.

Choosing your IPD supervisor

Your IPD supervisor(s) perform a critical role in supporting you and helping you manage your career during this period of initial professional development. They also provide assurance to CIMA you have achieved the required experience and met the required standard.

All roles you use to demonstrate your professional achievements must be recorded and an IPD supervisor stated for each. You should choose an IPD supervisor for each professional achievement who will be able to verify that your submission is an accurate account of your experience and can assess that you have met the required standard. Ensure you gain permission from each IPD supervisor before you submit their details to CIMA.

Your IPD supervisor must be someone you have worked for in the past or are currently working for. They must have direct knowledge of your work – ideally your manager.

Completing your Record of My Initial Professional Development form

The assessment of professional achievement and membership application requires you to complete the following sections:

1. Personal details
2. Record of employment history & details of IPD supervisor(s)

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3. Record of professional achievement: core work activities
4. Record of professional achievement: skills & behaviours
5. Declaration.

You must complete each section in full, sign the declaration and submit the application with your fee to CIMA.

Your IPD supervisor(s) will also need to complete a short form for you to include with your application.

Recording your employment history

Complete the table in the application form with details of the work experience that you are submitting to meet the three-year experience requirement. You may have several roles to include or just one – there is no upper or lower limit.

You must record sufficient work experience to demonstrate that the overall requirement for three years' experience has been achieved but there is no need to apportion time to each professional achievement.

All roles you use to demonstrate the professional achievements must be recorded and an IPD supervisor stated for each role and then for each professional achievement. In some circumstances this may mean that you have recorded professional experience for a period longer than three years.

There is no need to log non-relevant experience or relevant experience beyond three years where this is not being used to demonstrate achievement of the assessment outcomes relating to professional achievements.

In this section you are also required to provide a brief overview of your role(s) and your organisation(s). This provides helpful context and background for your responses later in the assessment. Although your IPD supervisor(s) will be very familiar with the organisation where you both work(ed) and the context of your work, your assessment may be subject to additional review and quality assurance checks by CIMA assessors. You should write as if you are addressing your application to a stranger in order to ensure that the information you include is understandable and accessible to someone outside of your organisation and that you provide a full and complete response to each section of the application.

As a guide, you should aim for a word count of 250–300 words for the overview of each role and organisation.

Recording professional achievement

The main sections of the assessment template allow you to demonstrate and discuss how you have met all of the required professional achievements, drawing on actual examples from your work during your initial professional development.

“I can” statements, mirroring those used in the CIMA case study examinations, powerfully assert the professional achievements of a newly qualified member and provide a clear steer to both you and your employer on the professional experience that should be acquired during IPD and then recorded and discussed in the assessment. Additional guidance in the form of self-reflection questions is provided to support you and your employer in reflecting on your experience.

A standard format is provided to aid you in reflecting on your professional experience, choosing your examples and discussing your achievements. This format uses the “STAR model” to help you structure your discussion. The STAR model is a well-established technique for supporting self-reflection and structuring responses to assessment questions which require you to demonstrate your professional achievements.

The CIMA-specific prompt questions mapped to this model aid you in your self-reflection and to structure your responses, ensuring that you provide strong examples and the right level of detail to demonstrate that you have met the required professional achievements.

For each professional achievement, your discussion will take the following format:

1. **Situation**
Describe how you demonstrate the selected core activity or skill/behaviour in your work.
Briefly outline the specific context of your example(s).
2. **Task**
Describe your specific role and responsibilities in the example situation(s).
3. **Action**
Describe how you approached the situation(s) and the actions you personally took.
4. **Result**
How did you provide **insight** and **influence** the outcome of this situation? –What was the **impact** for (business benefit to) the organisation?

This format assists you in going beyond a simple log or description of your experience and actions and supports you in discussing the impact of your actions and how your work adds value to your organisation.

You should aim for a word count of 500–600 words for each STAR template and carefully follow the prompt questions in the template to ensure that you are giving the right level of detail.

Valid for IPD pilot from June to September 2021

Record of professional achievement: core work activities

The core activities defined for the experience assessment are the types of work activities that you should be undertaking regularly in any relevant role at the end of the period of IPD (around three years into your finance career). You might notice that these core activities correspond to the core activities assessed in the Management Case Study examination, providing a clear link to your studies and examinations and allowing you to demonstrate practical application of these in a real-world context.

The STAR template is provided for your discussion of each of the selected core activities (see below). Ensure that you follow this format and provide full responses to each of the prompt questions so that you provide all the information required to demonstrate your achievement.

Each core activity has several self-reflection questions to help you think about examples of the kind of activities that could be used and expanded upon to demonstrate professional achievement. You don't need to answer yes to each of the self-reflection questions. They are designed to assist you in reflecting on your personal experience and identifying relevant examples from your own work achievements to write up in the STAR template.

Examples of work activities are provided as a guide but are not exhaustive. There are many more ways in which you could demonstrate your achievement depending on your experience, role, sector and organisation.

You are required to demonstrate that you have achieved **three** out of the **five** core activities. Choose the three which are most appropriate for your experience to date and therefore for which you can choose and discuss strong examples from your recent experience.

Core Activity (3 of 5 required)	Recognising professional achievement <i>Questions to aid self-reflection on the achievement of core activities</i>	Example activity <i>Indicative examples of experience that could be written up in the STAR template</i>
A. I can evaluate opportunities to add value	Can you... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • combine your finance and analysis skills and business insights to support the creation of business cases and decision making for new projects, new products or services, pricing decisions, improvements to existing products or services, investments or acquisitions? • provide analysis and insights that contribute to organisational decisions and success measures? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing the investment appraisal to support the business case for a new product launch. • Undertaking data analysis (financial and non-financial) to inform the organisation's leadership's decision on whether to establish an additional contact centre.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a range of data sources (financial and non-financial) to assist in the preparation of business cases? • identify the internal and external factors which influence decision making and provide data and analysis which allows these to be quantified? • recognise the increasing prominence of the digital ecosystem and its impact on the business and consider it in my analysis and recommendations? • recognise how business and operating models will need to develop in the context of the digital world and how the organisation will need to implement suitable business models that will create value for stakeholders? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the impact on the organisation's business model now that online sales outnumber in-store sales and contributing to the selection and implementation of a new model.
<p>B. I can implement strategic decisions</p>	<p>Can you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manage a strategic decision through to action, translating high level objectives into actions or tactics for you and others as required? • work as part of a project team and lead projects or aspects of projects as required and as relevant to your role and position in the organisation? • take ownership of your designated areas of responsibility and effectively manage deliverables? • contribute to planning or project management, advising on or applying suitable tools and techniques to manage, monitor and evaluate implementation of a strategic decision? • provide insight and analysis which supports decisions around the tools and techniques to manage performance, risk and uncertainty in projects? • provide advice and analysis which feeds into financing decisions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working as part of a project team planning the launch of a new product. • Representing the finance department on a project to select and implement a new ERP system. • Advising on appropriate sources of finance for a project.

<p>C. I can manage performance and costs to aid value creation</p>	<p>Can you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement and use the techniques, structures, data analysis and reporting required for managing performance and costs and creating value for the organisation and its stakeholders? • support the leaders in the business, such as responsibility centre managers, to measure, analyse and report on performance and support managers by providing insights which aid achieving their unit's targets? • select and apply appropriate cost management and cost transformation, quality management, value management and risk quantification techniques? • work with the business owners and managers to enable them to make informed decisions and implement solutions to enhance or create value through managing or reducing costs, improving profitability, finding process efficiencies, improving quality or quantifying and managing risk? • provide insights which contribute to operational performance and organisational effectiveness by supporting employee engagement, empowerment and alignment which drive and enhance individual and team performance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting in the preparation of the annual budgets, forecasting and analysing variances against this on a monthly basis. • Providing analysis on the performance of a profit centre and supporting the manager of the profit centre in readjusting targets when performance is below projections. • Identifying and reporting on costs and revenues relating to the pricing strategy for a new product.
<p>D. I can measure performance</p>	<p>Can you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • select and apply appropriate tools and techniques to measure and report on financial and operational performance? • compile, interpret and analyse financial and non-financial data and share findings with colleagues and managers within the business to provide information on current performance which aids operational decisions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having responsibility for compiling and circulating monthly reporting on performance against KPIs. • Providing commentary to senior management which adds detail and insight as to why there is a variance against budget.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide data and insights which enables the organisation to monitor progress against targets and informs recommendations for improvements? • understand the implications of the data you use and the analysis you produce along with the accounting treatments the organisation chooses? Can you explain these to colleagues and stakeholders? • understand how your work contributes to the published financial statements and other reports for shareholders and other stakeholders and the implications and uses of this reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting in the preparation of year-end statutory accounts. • Designing reports or dashboards which draw from several data sources to provide and present data to non-financial managers within the business.
<p>E. I can manage internal and external stakeholders</p>	<p>Can you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support, collaborate and communicate with colleagues in the finance department, within other areas of the business and/or external partners and stakeholders? • build strong working relationships, dealing with people with professionalism, understanding and sensitivity? • work effectively with internal stakeholders (both finance and non-finance staff) and external stakeholders? • respect and appreciate alternative viewpoints, motivations and goals and, where these are in conflict, recognise the need for difficult conversations and negotiation to resolve the issue and find the best outcome for the organisation? • combine your technical knowledge and skills with your business insight, to provide trusted and credible insights and recommendations? • support the business deliverables and decision making along with contributing to the reporting, assurance and accountability required by our shareholders or other stakeholders? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing or contributing to the financial statements and other reporting for external stakeholders. • Dealing sensitively with an internal department whose targets and profits are affected by transfer pricing issues associated with internal trading. • Maintaining relationships with external partners such as the organisation's customers, suppliers, external advisors, auditors, bankers and/or investors.

Record of professional achievement: skills and behaviours

Aside from technical competence, qualified management accountants have developed professional skills and behaviours which support and enable the achievement of work activities. These skills and behaviours are critical to the finance professional at all stages of their career and will continue to be used and developed throughout your professional development.

Five essential skills or behaviours have been identified as critical for initial professional development. As for the core work activities above, each skill or behaviour has several self-reflection questions to help you think about examples of the kind of activities that could be used and expanded upon to demonstrate professional achievement. You don't need to answer yes to each of the self-reflection questions. They are designed to assist you in reflecting on your personal experience and identifying relevant examples from your own work achievements to write up in the STAR template.

Examples of work activities are provided as a guide but are not exhaustive. There are many more ways in which you could demonstrate your achievement depending on your experience, role, sector and organisation.

The same STAR template is provided for your discussion of each of the selected skills/behaviours (see below). Ensure that you follow this format and provide full responses to each of the prompt questions so that you provide all the information required to demonstrate your achievement.

You are required to demonstrate that you have achieved **all five** skills/behaviours.

Skill/behaviour <i>(5 of 5 required)</i>	Recognising professional achievement <i>Questions to aid self-reflection on the achievement of professional skills/behaviours</i>	Example activity <i>Indicative examples of experience that could be written up in the STAR template</i>
i. Ethics and integrity	Can you... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comply with the CIMA code of ethics and your own organisation's code of conduct and policies? • keep up to date with any changes in legislation or other professional standards? • identify and respond to ethical issues in a professional manner? • consider issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of your work and treat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining independence when dealing with a conflict of interest arising from a project. • Responding to a colleague who challenges the financial modelling you have prepared and/or the sources of data used. • Discovering undue pressure from management to influence metrics in key performance indicators when setting budgets. • Detecting potential errors or misstatements in the preparation of statutory accounts.

	<p>all stakeholders with honesty, respect and consideration?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have the courage of your convictions and stand up for what you believe is right in the face of differing viewpoints or challenges? • defend your recommendations or decisions and the data and thinking underpinning these? 	
ii. Leadership	<p>Can you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take responsibility for specific projects, producing realistic plans that are supported by key stakeholders? • effectively allocate and manage your own time and other resources in order to ensure the successful completion of projects according to agreed plans? • lead by example, motivating other members of the project team to deliver high-quality work on time and within budget? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting as a buddy or role model for a member of the team who has just started their accounting studies. • Mentoring new staff following a major company reorganisation or takeover. • Prioritising staff allocation in developing a new ABC costing system. • Providing guidance on the prioritisation of tasks in organising an inventory count.
iii. Growth mindset	<p>Can you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take ownership of your own professional development, developing an awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses and planning for self-development within the role? • reflect upon areas for professional improvement and identify appropriate development activities to fill these gaps? • seek and reflect upon feedback on performance from colleagues at all levels of the organisation? • adopt a continuous improvement approach in your work and show evidence of learning from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying data visualisation technology skills as a personal development need, finding and undertaking a training course and then applying the learning points in my day-to-day work. • Using personal lessons learned and feedback from business partners during the budgeting process to improve the process next time around. • Seeking feedback from a range of stakeholders on a draft report and acting on constructive criticism to produce the final report.

	<p>professional experiences, for example, by changing your approach in response to constructive criticism or lessons learned in a previous project or piece of work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show a willingness to operate outside of your comfort zone and engage with new experiences? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising that there is limited opportunity for me to develop leadership skills in my current role and working with my manager to identify a project where I can take on some leadership responsibility.
iv. Professional scepticism	<p>Can you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • question the appropriateness and validity of financial and non-financial data used to make management decisions? • proactively seek an explanation of inconsistencies identified in such data? • apply professional judgement to determine whether inaccurate data is the result of error or fraud? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering the appropriateness of data such as the discount rate applied in fair value assessment or investment appraisal model. • Investigating unusual or unexpected variances • Questioning the rationale for a sales target which appears to be unachievable.
v. Communication	<p>Can you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate in a clear and appropriate manner with colleagues at different levels of the organisation? • communicate with external stakeholders in a way consistent with organisational values? • select the most appropriate mode of communication for the message and the target audience? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up arrangements to facilitate project team communication. • Involvement in preparation of and dissemination of financial information following a new product launch. • Presenting outputs of a project to colleagues or senior staff. • Developing a presentation on an investment appraisal project to non-financial management. • Explaining ratios and performance indicators to a non-financial management team.

Assessing achievement

The following criteria, used in conjunction with the detailed core activity and skill/behaviour descriptors above, will be used to assess whether you have achieved the required standard. IPD supervisors and CIMA Assessors will assess your submission using these criteria so you should use them as a checklist as you finalise your responses to the assessment questions (STAR template) to ensure that you provide sufficient information to be judged as meeting the standard for each professional achievement.

Not achieved	Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsuitable situation chosen: the task is too small or does not provide enough scope to demonstrate professional achievement. • Task does not demonstrate the core activity or skill/behaviour assigned. • Description of task missing or too brief. • Specific individual role and responsibilities within the task not described. • Inadequate description of the actions taken to complete the task or team, rather than individual, actions described. • Inadequate discussion of the result of own actions. Little or no insight into how actions impact business outcomes and add value to the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable situation chosen: the task is significant and challenging enough to demonstrate professional achievement. • Task clearly demonstrates the core activity or skill/behaviour assigned. • Task clearly described. • Specific individual role and responsibilities within the task clearly described. • Individual actions taken in completing the task clearly described. • Good discussion of the result of own actions. Demonstrates clear insight into how actions impact business outcomes and add value to the organisation.

Submitting your application (pilot only)

To support you during the pilot you can find the Record of My Initial Professional Development form, IPD supervisor appendix, other guidance and FAQs [here](#)

For additional support, contact ipdpilot2021@aicpa-cima.com

Notes for pilot participants

- Application for membership using the pilot format and criteria as detailed in this document is available for a limited period only. All applications must be received by 31 August 2021.
- CIMA must receive payment before we process your application.
- CIMA may undertake such internal and external validation of information provided by candidates as it sees fit and appropriate. CIMA may seek additional information from candidates and other sources including employers in making its decision. Any additional or missing information requested must be provided within 2 weeks of request.
- CIMA may share your application with anti-plagiarism software third parties for the purpose of detecting plagiarism or unfair practices.
- Applications received during the pilot period will be subject to additional reviews and quality checks which will mean membership decisions may take slightly longer to be confirmed.
- CIMA's decisions regarding admittance to membership are final and may override your employer's assessment of your experience.