

# CIPS Management Entry Route to MCIPS

## Candidate Guide

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### Website:

The Assessment is based on all Themes from the CIPS Global Standard at the Professional Level.

This can be found on the CIPS [website](#)

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## 1. The Purpose of this Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to provide candidates with a process and structure to help them in the MER assessment process for MCIPS as it aligns with the Global Standard for Procurement and Supply. It provides detail on what the assessment is about, how it is structured, some tips on preparation, along with guidance for undertaking the interview.

While each assessor will draw upon their own experience and will have their own individual style, assessments are carried out in a consistent and professional manner to a set standard, irrespective of who conducts the interview. This ensures consistency of assessment for all candidates.

It is intended that this guide shall be part of an iterative process, and candidates are actively encouraged to feedback to their CIPS contact any suggestions for development or improvement.

## 2. Introduction

This Guide sets out the assessment infrastructure for the Management Entry Route (MER) to MCIPS grade of membership against the CIPS Global Standard for Procurement and Supply.

The MER assessment process consists of two steps.

- i) The first step requires the individual to complete an on-line questionnaire. This consists of a number of multiple choice questions and takes around one hour to complete. The results of this questionnaire are assessed against a benchmark level required for the professional level of competence in the CIPS Global Standard. The output of this is to identify the individual's knowledge level across a range of technical procurement competencies.
- ii) The second step of the process is a semi-structured interview lasting around 90 to 120 minutes; this will be based on Themes 1 to 10 from the Global Standard at the Professional Level (See the CIPS website and search 'Global Standard' for full details).

The candidate must achieve a minimum of a 'Pass' for all 11 Themes to be awarded MCIPS through the MER route.

The assessor completes a report and the candidate will receive a copy of this report together with a decision regarding their application. This can be expected within 4 weeks of the interview. The report will provide a commentary against each of the Themes together with the results of the on-line questionnaire. The report will also provide a summary and identify specific learning needs where appropriate.

Where development needs are identified these will be specified, and CIPS will then determine how these needs should be developed.

## 3. Semi-Structured Interview - Structure and Format

The interview lasts approximately 90-120 minutes and takes on a fairly structured format. The individual should be conscious of the time and the need for conciseness in demonstrating their skill and experience. The time allows for approximately 5 minutes per Theme. The individual should be aware that the maximum permissible time for the interview is 120 minutes and so you should diarise at least 120 minutes for the interview assessment.

The assessor will typically introduce the competence and ask the individual to provide an example of something they have done which would demonstrate their skill and experience in a given competence. The use of examples is important in this respect as the MER route to membership seeks to assess the application of knowledge and the individual's experience. In addition, the assessor will use their knowledge of your scores from the on-line questionnaire and a review of your CV to inform them.

**CANCELLATIONS:** If you need to cancel or change the date of your interview, a minimum of 7 days' notice is required or a late notice cancellation fee of £50 may apply. CIPS reserve the right to cancel or reschedule your interview to the earliest available date at short notice.

#### **4. Reporting**

Once the interview is complete, the assessor will complete the candidate feedback report using supporting notes and comments from the interview assessment. They will score each individual competency theme area with one of four description scores: Basic, Minimal, Competent and Adept. For an individual to meet the standard required to successfully pass the MER route, and be awarded MCIPS grade of membership, they must score 'competent' for each theme from the CIPS Global Standard. The report includes a recommendation to CIPS

#### **5. Assessment Areas - CIPS Global Standard – Professional Level**

The MER assessment will be based on the 11 themes from the Global Standard at the Professional Level of test.

Not every competency within a segment can necessarily be covered, given the time constraints. The important thing is that the candidate can satisfy the assessor that they have an appropriate level of knowledge and capability against the segment. For example under Theme one, only questions pertaining to segment 1.6 and 1.7 will be asked.

The segments being assessed by Interview are 1.6, 1.7, 2.5, 2.6, 3.4, 4.6, 5.6, 6.9, 7.7, 8.6, 9.7, 9.8, and 10.4 of Version 3.1 of the Global Standards. (The details for each of these can be found on the CIPS website through the CIPS Global Standard tool).

The Ethics segment will be covered and the requirement met by undertaking the CIPS Ethical Procurement and Supply E- Learning and passing the test.

Candidates will not be given advance notice of the questions, and should be prepared to answer questions on all elements of the specified segments.

#### **6. Assessment approach and methodology**

The interview assessment adopts a semi-structured interview approach, with interviews conducted remotely via Video Conferencing Facilities or telephone. By agreeing to the interview you also agree to it being recorded. The interviews are recorded, but assessors will also be making notes during the Interview as part of the process of compiling their interview report.

Please note we do not conduct interviews via mobile phone.

The content of the interview assessment, and all documentation provided to CIPS as part of the CIPS MER assessment, will be treated as strictly confidential, and CIPS will comply with relevant data protection in accordance with CIPS policy.

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This semi-structured design provides a framework within which assessment can be conducted in a systematic way, and at the same time allows flexibility in the questioning and responding process. This enables maximum interactions and information exchange providing a strong basis of evidence for the assessment.

The following sections will move into the detailed description of the three phases of a one-on-one assessment interview process:

- (1) Preparing
- (2) The interview
- (3) The Report

## **7. Step 1 – Preparing for the Interview**

Advance preparation is essential prior to being interviewed.

This is not simply a question of understanding the process and the content, but also about being prepared to answer any questions on the areas being assessed, with examples of your experience of application wherever possible.

### **7.1 Determine whether it will be a video or a non-video interview**

This is a matter of agreement between the candidate and the assessor, except that the candidate may request “voice only” even if the assessor requests a video interview.

If you have a strong preference then you must inform CIPS of this in advance of your interview assessment.

### **7.2 Understanding the interview process**

As an Interviewee, you need to understand the interview process.

A one-on-one assessment interview can be divided into three distinctive but interrelated parts: *Opening*, *Questioning*, and *Closing*. The Questioning is the major part of the interview in which the capabilities of the candidate are assessed. As a rule of thumb, 80-90% of interviewing time shall be spent on the Questioning part.

It is important to us that we ensure we assess the true experience and application of the Candidate rather than that of the team in which he/she works. Managers will automatically tend to use the word "we" it is important that you stress which are your own actions and which are those of the team you manage/operate in.

We actively discourage the use of acronyms by candidates. The same acronym may have different meanings between industries and between countries. Using acronyms may distort your examples if the assessor's interpretation is different to yours, hence the reason for discouraging their use.

### **7.3 Operating in the right environment**

It is imperative that you set the right environment for yourself so that you are relaxed and fully prepared to give the assessment your undivided attention.

An Interview preparation checklist can be useful. You may prepare your own, but an example list can be found in Appendix 1.

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## 8. Step 2 –The Interview

The Interview is the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and application through their experience of working at the Professional competency level of the CIPS Global Standard for Procurement and Supply.

### 8.1 The Conduct of the Interview

Interviews may vary in duration, content and style, however, the following general guidelines apply to all:

- a) The tone and manner of the Interview assessments is intended to be as relaxed as possible and every effort will be made to put candidates at ease.
- b) Jargon and acronyms should be avoided.
- c) Candidates are not penalized if they ask for clarification of a question.
- d) The assessor will not be concerned by short periods of silence if candidates are considering their responses.
- e) We understand that on occasion candidates may struggle to answer a question because they cannot connect the question to their own direct experience. If this happens, the assessor will try to assist the candidate by rephrasing the question, possibly by asking them how they would deal with a particular situation rather than asking for knowledge of a particular tool.
- f) At the end of the Interview candidates are given time to say something (if they so wish) to comment on anything that would support their application which has not already been covered in the interview.

## 9. Step 3 – The Report

The assessor is able to make only one of three recommendations and this is then reviewed by CIPS.

1. Award MCIPS – meets the standard laid down by CIPS for membership
2. Tailored Development Plan – meets the CIPS standard in most areas but the candidate requires development in a small number of specified areas. Once the identified development requirements have been met then MCIPS can be awarded
3. No Award – the individual does not meet the standard for CIPS membership in several areas and therefore is advised to consider an alternate route to membership

Please do not press the assessor for their view on the likely outcome. They cannot comment in advance of CIPS' decision.

You will receive a copy of the assessors report on the interview with your final feedback from CIPS.

The assessor's recommendation will be considered along with all other evidence by CIPS.

## 10. Feedback

CIPS is committed to encouraging feedback through all avenues and to take account of comments made in order to improve service delivery. We are open to receiving feedback from candidates on the assessment journey and therefore welcome comments, suggestions and feedback from candidates. Please contact us at [mer@cips.org](mailto:mer@cips.org) if you have any feedback you wish to make.

# CIPS Management Entry Route to MCIPS

## Appendix 1 - Pre-Interview Checklist

Technology	
Is my IT good enough to handle Video Conferencing calls?	
Have I tested the relevant Video Conferencing facilities to ensure that it is working properly, and that my headset and microphone are properly set up?	
Is my headset comfortable enough to cope with a long interview?	
Administration	
Where it is an International call, it is clear what UK time the call is to be made at?	
Immediately Prior to Performing the Interview	
Do I know/can I confirm my CIPS Membership Number (005XXXXXX)?	
Is my preparation all complete, have I thought about examples of practical application to demonstrate my knowledge of the segments of the CIPS Global Standard at the Professional Level?	
Have I muted or switched off other telephonic devices immediately prior to the interview?	
Will I be warm/cool enough?	
Will I be speaking in a quiet environment without distractions, and without external noises that might make it difficult for me to concentrate?	
Have I avoided periods of public announcements, and fire alarm tests.	
Have I booked the room I will be in for long enough to ensure no interruptions?	
If this is not to be a video call have I detached the camera?	
Have I got provision for drinks during the interview?	
For any battery-operated items, have I got readily accessible replacement batteries?	
Have I prepared myself to be able to undertake the whole interview which may last up to 120 minutes in total?	

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# CIPS Management Entry Route to MCIPS

## Appendix 2 - Tips and Hints for Candidates

- 1 Timing – ensure you are available for the specified start time; a late start will reduce the time available for the interview.
- 2 The interview will normally take up to an hour to an hour and a half and will be conducted by our MER assessor. (We recommend you set aside at least a 120 minute time slot so that you can concentrate on the interview without being worried about preparing for your next meeting.
- 3 Ideally you should be on your own in a room where you will not be disturbed, and which is quiet. Excess background noise may make it difficult or impossible for the assessor to hear your replies. Please ensure that you do not select a time where external noises such as planned announcements, particular equipment activity, or scheduled fire alarm tests are likely to impact on the interview.
- 4 Ensure you are familiar with all the areas you may be questioned on, and have good examples to demonstrate your knowledge, experience and skill
- 5 Call for a comfort break if necessary – you won't be penalised.
- 6 Keep an "I" on your responses. If you use the word "We" it may be assumed that you are talking about other people's experience, not your own.
- 7 The preferred method of communication for interview is Video Conferencing however CIPS will ask you to provide a land line telephone number we can call you on if there are any issues with the Video Conferencing Facility. Due to the potential for issues with reception, clarity, and battery failure we will not interview via mobile phone.
- 8 If you are being interviewed via a land line telephone rather than Video Conference, please ensure your switchboard operator knows where to find you, unless you have given us a direct dial number.
- 9 It is your skills and knowledge that are being assessed, not your current job role. So if your current role doesn't support a particular competency, the assessor will be happy if you select an example from elsewhere in your career.
- 10 The assessor will look to time-manage the interview so that you have the opportunity to explain your understanding of all of the competencies, consequently, when they have enough evidence for a particular competency they will move on, even if you have more evidence to offer. Please do not be concerned by this, it is for your benefit
- 11 Interview times are given in UK local time. These may be GMT or GMT +1 depending on the time of year. Ensure you know which.