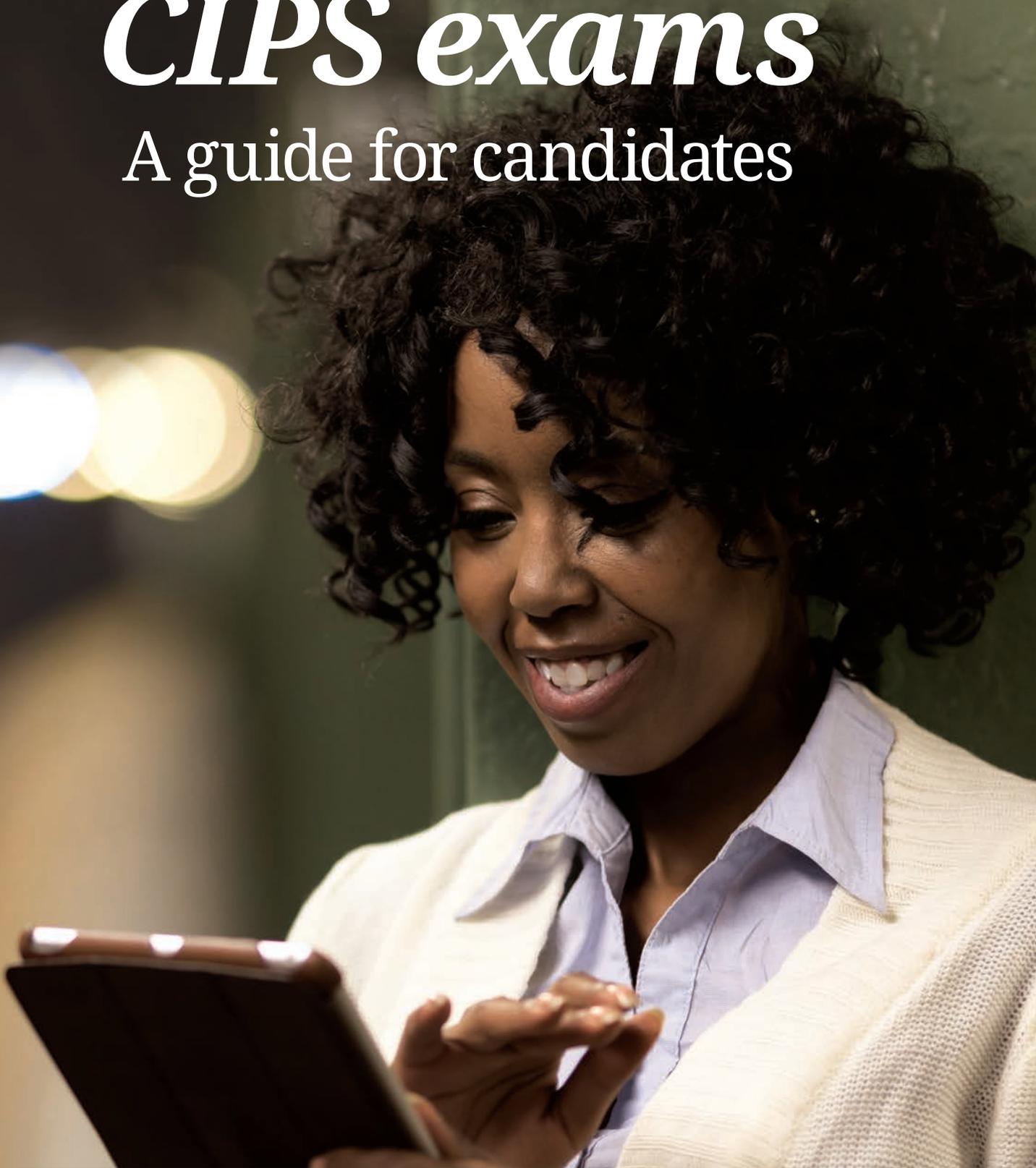




Preparing for CIPS exams

A guide for candidates



Improving your exam technique

Improving your exam technique could be the difference between a pass and a fail, so it's important to spend some time thinking about what you are or aren't doing correctly in the exam.

This guide is designed to assist you in preparing for the Objective Response (OR) and essay style, Constructed response (CR) exams when taking CIPS qualifications.

Hints and techniques for each format are covered in each guide, and you should use the relevant guide for the qualification or module you are about to take. Don't forget that everyone works in different ways, so these guides can only offer you some helpful advice – it is not intended that everyone should follow the advice, or prepare for their examinations in the same way.

Throughout the world CIPS Qualifications are recognised as driving leading-edge thinking and professionalism in procurement and supply. Our qualifications are available in over 150 countries and MCIPS chartered professional is recognised worldwide as the standard for procurement professionals.

General advice for all exams

Whatever the exam format, the purpose of the questions is for you to:

- (a) demonstrate your knowledge and understanding about the subject area
- (b) demonstrate you can apply this knowledge and understanding, and
- (c) show that you can adhere to instructions when answering questions

It is important to consider these aspects when preparing for and during exams. The person marking your exam does not know you, so when writing constructed response exams you need to show your knowledge in a similar way to approaching a job interview – you have to help them to recognise that you know your material, and if you don't, the assessor will not make any allowances for what you missed out!

Revising for CIPS Exams

Tip and hints

- Use the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in the syllabus guides as a check-list of all the things you need to know before the exam.
- Make your own notes, rather than relying on books, or notes provided by lecturers. You may like to summarise your notes on cards that you can carry around with you. If you are a 'visuals' person, make mind-maps instead of linear notes. Use highlighters and coloured pens to focus on important things (see also 'memory aid' no 3 on page 7).
- Use your mobile phone to record your voice. Record yourself reading your notes or summaries and then listen to the recordings.
- Use example material from CIPS website to gain an understanding of how the examiners design questions on the topics you have studied. Example material for each module of the 2018 qualifications can also be found on CIPS website.
- Read any examiners reports and guidance provided by CIPS.
- Get as much practice as you can: once you have entered for an exam you will have access to online system. If you practice using our computer-based exams (CBE) in advance you can focus on your exam answers on exam day not how to complete a CBE. All of our CBEs are run on a computer-based platform called TestReach. Try to get used to answering exams in time constrained conditions.
- Revise with a friend. Explain things to each other and ask each other some questions. Go for a walk with a friend and test each other while you are walking.
- Take regular breaks, perhaps of around ten minutes, to avoid revision-fatigue. Start by revising for short periods between breaks, then gradually lengthen the revision time, but keep the break-times the same. Make extra time for revision during the day by getting up earlier, or shortening your lunch break.

On the day of the exam:

- Eat properly before the exam to keep your blood sugar and energy levels up. Make sure you drink plenty of water to keep you hydrated.
- Try to remain relaxed. Take deep breaths and, if possible, try to stretch. This can help clear your mind and relieve any build-up of tension.
- If you have a sudden 'mental block' during the exam, try not to panic - this is quite a common problem. If it happens to you, some of the following techniques may help:

Leave space and move to the next question. This will give you confidence and give you time to clear your head

Answer questions you feel confident about first – just remember to clearly show the question numbers

Try to recall the information using one of the memory aids listed on page 7, if you have used these methods during revision. You can make notes in your answer booklet once the examination has started. Jot down thoughts as they occur to you when you read through the paper, to see if this triggers recall.

- Be prepared. If you feel confident and know what to expect it can have a really positive effect on your state of mind and level of nerves.

Memory aids for revision, and to improve recall during the exam:



Top Tip

Get as much practice as you can: once you have entered for an exam you will have access to practice exams. Try to get used to answering exams in time constrained conditions. Also if you practice using our computer-based exams (CBEs) in advance you can focus on your exam answers on exam day not how to complete a CBE. All of our CBEs are run on a computer-based platform called TestReach.

1

Many people may think they have to have a 'bad memory', but often the problem is that they don't give the information sufficient attention to commit it to their memory in the first place. So the most important aid to memory is to **PAY ATTENTION:**

- focus on what you are learning or revising, and don't let your mind wander. Many people find that certain types of music (often instrumental music) help concentration, but most people cannot concentrate properly with the TV playing
- make sure you understand the concepts you are learning – if you don't understand them, you will not remember them
- re-phrase or re-state the information, so that you are forced to think about what it means
- if you have to remember lists, repeat the items enough times to lodge them in your memory.

2

Use a mnemonic to help you remember lists, theories, or staged processes.

For example, recognised management theorists include:
Mullins, Brech, Armstrong, Fayol, Mintzberg, Drucker

You can devise a simple mnemonic to help you remember their names using their initial letters:

Most Brilliant Accountants Find Maths Difficult

If you devise your own mnemonics, they are usually easier to remember than someone else's. If you can make them funny or personal to you, they are easier still to remember.

3

Visual memory often helps to support recall of information for an exam. If this works for you

- make charts, mind-maps, tables or pictures while revising – you may find you can recall these better during the exam than sections of text
- use coloured highlighters in your revision notes, choosing different colours for different topics or related concepts. If a question on one of these topics comes up in the exam, you may be able to recall relevant information by remembering the items that you had highlighted in the same colour.

4

Research shows that re-creating the circumstances you were in when you were revising helps you to recall better in the exam. Clearly, you can't take your classroom or bedroom into the exam room, but one tip you might try is to wear a particular perfume or aftershave whilst revising. Wear it again on the day of the exam, and the smell may help you to recall the information you need.

Command words

Finally, make sure you have read and understood the list of command words below: These words will appear in the constructed response questions in your exam, and they tell you exactly what the assessor wants you to do. Although you do not need to learn the words and their definitions, you should make sure you have read and understood the different requirements of each command word.

<i>Definitions of command words</i>	
Analyse	Examine a topic together with thoughts and judgments about it, by dividing the topic into its separate parts and looking at each part in detail
Appraise	Evaluate, judge or assess something, giving views based on strengths and weaknesses of a given situation
Argue	Provide reasons for or against something, clearly and in proper order, using or citing evidence so that a case can be proved. Also, compare with Discuss
Assess	Evaluate or judge the importance of something, referring to the special knowledge of experts where possible. This may involve quoting from other texts
Comment on	Write notes explaining your own criticism and observations of the issues. Base your comments on a balance of fact versus personal views. Often involves evaluation
Compare	Examine one thing in relation to another thing so that points of similarity or difference become evident
Contrast	Emphasise the differences between two opposite or dissimilar things. This may include approaches to a particular aspect of procurement
Criticise	Give your judgments about the good or bad qualities of theories or opinions, supporting your decision with evidence, and where appropriate literature
Define	Explain the exact meaning of a word or phrase
Describe	Give a full account or a detailed representation of something
Discuss	Consider something by writing about it from different points of view. Compare with Argue or evaluate
Enumerate	List and mention items separately in number order. Compare with List, Identify
Evaluate	Calculate or judge the value of something; include your personal opinion in your evaluation. Often includes an assessment of strengths and weaknesses
Explain	Give reasons for, or account for something, so that it is clear or easy to understand

Definitions of command words

Identify	Mention items separately in number order or by using bullet points. Compare with Enumerate, List
Illustrate	Clarify or explain something by using examples or diagrams
Interpret	Use your own ideas to explain the significance of something. This may be qualitative or quantitative
Justify	Show good reasons for decisions or conclusions, perhaps by referring to other texts or evidence with a case study
List	Mention items separately in number order or by using bullet points. Compare with Enumerate, Identify
Outline	Give the main features, facts or the general idea of something, omitting minor details
Propose	Put forward (for example, a point of view, idea, argument, suggestion) for consideration or action
Reconcile	Show how two apparently conflicting things can appear similar or compatible
Relate	Establish a connection or association between things to show how they effect each other or how they are alike
Review	Examine and assess a subject critically
Show	Explain thoroughly or prove something so that the truth can be established
State	Put something into words clearly and briefly
Suggest	This means that there may be more than one answer. You must give the most appropriate answer or answers
Summarise	Give a brief, concise account of the main points of something, leaving out details and examples