



CIPS Management Entry Route to MCIPS

Candidate Guide

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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.

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 will 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.

1. The first step requires the individual to complete the online Competency Assessment. This consists of 100 multiple-choice questions and takes (on average) 60 minutes to complete. The results of this test 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 procurement competencies.
2. The second step of the process is a semi-structured interview lasting around 90 to 120 minutes; this will be based on Themes from the Global Standard at the Professional Level (See the CIPS website and search 'Global Standard' for full details). The themes reflect those used in the Competency Assessment step.

The interview will be based on a sample of the Global Standard themes. The candidate must achieve a minimum of a 'Pass' for all Themes reviewed in the interview 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 30 days of the interview. The report will provide a commentary against each of the Themes together with the results of the online questionnaire. The report will also provide a summary and identify specific learning needs where appropriate.

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. Examples can be taken from your current or previous roles, depending on relevance. 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.

4. 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. Similarly, if the interview needs to be stopped for technical reasons, a cancellation fee may apply. CIPS reserve the right to cancel or reschedule your interview to the earliest available date at short notice.

5. Reporting

Once the interview is complete, the assessor will complete the candidate feedback report using supporting notes and comments from the interview assessment. The assessor scores 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 at least 'competent' for each theme from the CIPS Global Standard.

6. Assessment Areas - CIPS Global Standard – Professional Level

In addition to the interview, the Ethics segment requirement is met by undertaking the CIPS Ethical Procurement and Supply E- Learning and passing the test prior to applying for the MER. Candidates will not be given advance notice of the questions or themes and should be prepared to answer questions on all elements of the specified segments.

7. Assessment approach and methodology

The interview assessment adopts a semi-structured interview approach, with interviews conducted remotely via Video Conferencing Facilities. By agreeing to the interview, you also agree to it being recorded.

Candidates are required to keep their camera on for the duration of the interview. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure a good internet and video connection prior to the interview. If the interview must be stopped because of a technical failure or refusal to comply with this condition, the interview will need to be rearranged, and a cancellation fee may be applicable.

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 that 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.

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

8. 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.

8.1 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 will 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 they work. Managers will automatically tend to use the word "we", so 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.

9. 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.

9.1 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 too.
- 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.

10. Step 3 – The Report

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

1. **Award MCIPS** – meets the standard laid down by CIPS for membership
2. **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's decision.

You will receive a copy of the assessor's report on the interview with your final feedback from CIPS. The assessor's recommendation will be considered along with all other evidence.

Appendix 1 - Guidance for Candidates

- 1 Timing –Be ready at the scheduled start time, as any delay will reduce the interview duration. Ensure your camera is switched on and have photo identification ready to show the assessor (e.g., passport, driving licence, or national ID card)
- 2 The interview will typically last up to two hours and will be conducted by an MER assessor. We recommend setting aside at least 2 hours so you can focus fully on the interview without worrying about your next meeting
- 3 Ensure you are in a quiet room where you will not be disturbed and can remain alone throughout the interview.
- 4 Make sure you are familiar with all the topics that may come up during the interview and prepare strong examples that demonstrate your knowledge, experience, and skills. We recommend viewing our CIPS Global Standard.
- 5 Take a comfort break if needed - you will not be penalised for doing so.
- 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 Your skills and knowledge are being assessed, not your current job role. If your present role does not demonstrate a particular competency, you may use examples from other parts of your career.
- 8 The assessor will manage the interview to ensure you have time to demonstrate your understanding of all competencies. Once they have gathered sufficient evidence for a specific competency, they will move on, even if you have additional examples. Please don’t worry; this approach is designed for your benefit.