

CIPR Specialist Diploma (Public Affairs)

The aim of the CIPR Specialist Diploma (Public Affairs) is to enable candidates to develop specialist knowledge and expertise in the contexts, concepts and practical tools of public affairs. It is designed for both generalist public relations practitioners wishing to enhance their understanding of the discipline and for those intending to specialise in public affairs as a career.

The CIPR Specialist Diploma (Public Affairs) will be of interest to practitioners who have experience either of public affairs activities, in consultancy or in-house, or in a related public relations discipline. This qualification put this experience into the wider context of the role of public affairs in organisations and society, how public affairs contributes to an organisation's success, and what is expected of an ethical practitioner in the complex political environment.

Candidates will research and develop ethical public affairs strategies and plans which confront and manage political and societal issues, change attitudes and influence behaviours, and thus achieve strategic objectives.

Candidates would be awarded the CIPR Specialist Diploma (Public Affairs) on successful completion of the assessment.

Syllabus

The CIPR Specialist Diploma (Public Affairs) focuses on the process of policy formation and the wider corporate communications and reputational context in which public affairs operates. It is focussed on professional practice and explores the concepts, theories and knowledge required to develop capabilities in research, planning, execution and evaluation of public affairs activities. An analytical perspective is applied to encourage candidates to take a reflective approach in examining their own experience alongside case studies of organisations and scenarios.

Qualification objectives

Successful candidates will be able to:

- 1 Apply key concepts in public affairs including:
 - Typologies of political and democratic systems and government structures;
 - Approaches to policy formation and decision making within these systems;
 - Researching key political institutions and actors;
 - Analysis and mapping of linkages between political stakeholders and their influences;
 - Policy making processes;
 - Interactions between political stakeholders;
 - Recent developments in public affairs including the rise of populism and the increasing influence of social media;
 - The employment of, and differences between, methods of political science research (including content analysis, policy analysis, (quasi) experimental methods, polling and surveys, interviews and focus groups).
- 2 Discuss the contribution of the professional practitioner in strategic planning including:

- Policy development and strategic planning processes within organisations, including the role of the public affairs/political communication function;
- Linking organisational strategy to public affairs work through reputation and issues management;
- How to conduct a situational and risk analysis to inform policy development and strategic planning (incorporating issues management, political influence, stakeholder engagement, crisis scenarios, and social responsibility).

3 Critically evaluate public affairs issues and campaign management including:

- How to deploy direct and indirect approaches in relationship building and political communications, including online options;
- Campaigning; issues; tactics; mediated communicative activities (traditional and digital) and agenda setting; campaigning as public affairs work (aims, tactics, channels, research and evaluation);
- The importance of psychology, including credibility and personality, in political communications, and contrasting rhetorical approaches;
- How to identify and evaluate appropriate channels for communicating policies and positions, including traditional media and social media;
- How to operate ethically in the political environment to enhance organisational reputation, minimise risk and secure or maintain policy change or resourcing.

Assessment: Executive report and summary situation analysis

Aim: To enable candidates to demonstrate competence in undertaking an analysis of a case study situation/issue to inform specific public affairs objectives and strategy.

Topic of inquiry: Candidates will be required to evidence professional judgement in identifying a suitable case study as their chosen topic of inquiry. The case study must be on a topic of enquiry associated with public affairs, and the content should focus on the contexts, concepts and practical tools of public affairs. This could be based on the candidate's own organisation, a client, another organisation of the candidate's choice or a broader societal situation that can be associated with public affairs activities.

Submission: The assignment will comprise:

1. A 3,000-word (+/- 10%) executive report, on a topic of enquiry associated with public affairs, comprising:
 - a) A clear and concise statement defining the case study/issue, justifying its relevance as a problem or opportunity facing a specific organisation and/or sector, and verifying that it can be addressed by a public affairs strategy;
 - b) Justification of the public affairs approach using evidence, and explanation of how the evidence provides insight into the current or potential impact of the issue on the organisation and/or sector and its stakeholders;
 - c) Discussion and substantiation of the key findings and outcome of the research and analysis;

- d) Identification and explanation of public affairs objectives and strategy (derived from the research and analysis).

2. Supporting 2,000-word (maximum) summary analysis of secondary research findings including:

- Overview of secondary research undertaken, including the way in which it was analysed for the executive report and its relevance to the topic of enquiry;
- Strengths and weaknesses inherent in the research methodologies used in the original secondary data collection;
- Reflection on the use of relevant public affairs and other frameworks and models used to inform recommendations; exploring the strengths and weaknesses of the frameworks and models in relation to the specific case study;
- Discussion of the ethical challenges that emerge for public affairs practitioners in the consideration of the case study.

Completion of the assignment involves the following activities:

- Reflection – candidates are required to use problem identification concepts and approaches to identify a relevant topic of inquiry relating to public affairs. This will be a current issue of concern (or opportunity) for a specific organisation and/or sector, and may relate to the candidate's own experience.
- Fact finding – candidates are required to undertake data collection using a range of secondary research methods (literature, archives, published surveys, reports, etc.) to examine the chosen topic of inquiry.
- Insight – candidates are required to use a range of appropriate models, tools and methods to analyse the external and internal environment, the organisation or societal issue and relevant stakeholder groups.
- Communication – candidates are required to review and structure their analysis of a situation in the form of an executive report.

Example topics

New regulations on environment for a particular industry

Punitive taxes on excess profits in the financial sector

Securing rights for a neglected minority

Setting up a lobbying process with Brussels post-Brexit

Word count

A substantive response is necessary to meet the requirements for a Pass.

Bibliographies and footnotes are not included in the word count. Footnotes must not contain appendices or be used to include additional text that should have been in the main body of the work. The word count must be recorded in the appropriate space provided on the cover sheet and at the end of the text in the main document.

Candidates are allowed a +/- 10% leeway on the word count for the executive report. Anything outside this allowance will be penalised and may result in the assessment being graded Fail.

Referencing

Teaching Centres must provide guidance to candidates on appropriate referencing conventions.

Further information

CIPR website www.cipr.co.uk

CIPR Specialist Diploma (Public Affairs) Course Regulations

CIPR Specialist Diploma Student Handbook