

Level Seven Certificate in

school financial and operational leadership

About the course

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and The Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL) have successfully worked in partnership to provide high-quality training for school business management professionals for the past decade. In response to ISBL members and the evolving educational landscape, they can now offer a new Level Seven Certificate in School Financial and Operational Leadership.

School business leaders provide critical support and operational leadership to School Principals, Headteachers and Senior Leadership Teams – of which they will often be a part.

The evolving educational landscape has changed the offer from Local Authorities, and as a result school business management professionals have become even more important, especially in Academies and Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). This means that school leadership teams increasingly need to include a Chief Finance/Operations Officer or similar role to oversee (amongst other things) finance, corporate governance, risk management and strategic procurement.

This innovative new training programme for current and aspiring Chief Finance/Operations Officers takes into account the participant's past qualifications. It provides a flexible blend of e-learning, workbooks and face-to-face sessions to enable participants to develop their skills in:

- Financial management and reporting
- The education funding environment
- Writing business cases and taking investment decisions
- Governance, accountability and assurance
- Procurement and contract management
- Liaising with, and providing information to, internal and external auditors.

This training recognises the government's commitment to public sector efficiency and value for money. ISBL is working with the Department for Education in its drive for a self-improving educational system, which is capable of developing and managing organisational structures.

This programme will help ensure that resources and expertise are deployed in the most effective and efficient way, to deliver optimum learning outcomes for all children and the delivery of a world-class education system.

The programme is aimed at individuals working in a senior position within finance or business management. It is designed to support professionals who aspire to be Chief Finance Officers (CFO) or Chief Operating Officers (COO) in schools and academies.

Programme participants could be currently working inside or outside education, with different paths through the programme available for different past skill sets and experiences. Those working in education could be from: Local Authority maintained schools, independent Academies and MATs or independent schools.

The programme is for anyone interested in progressing into a Chief Finance and Operations Officer role. Participants who have completed the Level 4 CIPFA/ISBL Diploma in Financial Skills or who are Chartered Accountants will benefit from a faster route through the programme.

What you are required to commit to

The programme is made up of 9 modules within three stages, which participants must have successfully accomplished to gain the qualification accreditation. Past qualifications may enable participants to be recognised by CIPFA as having accomplished some modules, and so allow them to pass directly on to stage 2 or 3.

Two routes to accreditation

The duration, content and cost is dependent on previous qualifications:

Programme Route	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Stage name	Foundation	Intermediate	Practitioner
Modules	1 module	2-6 (5 modules)	7-9 (3 modules)
Full	✓	✓	✓
Practitioner		✓ (2 of the 5 modules)	✓

1. Full programme

Anyone who has not completed the Level 4 Accredited Finance qualification will be required to undertake all 3 stages of 9 modules.

- The first stage of the programme, the Foundation Stage, equates to one module and will provide participants with basic skills and knowledge about academy finance and operations, allowing them to undertake the second and third stages of the programme with confidence. Participants working in academies and school structures who have not completed Level 4 CIPFA/ISBL Accredited Finance Training will also be required to carry out the Foundation Stage.
- The second stage of the programme, the Intermediate Stage, will then build on this knowledge covering complex issues around the finance and operations of academies and school structures.
- The programme culminates with the third, Practitioner Stage (see below).

2. Practitioner programme

Anyone who has achieved the CIPFA SBM Accredited Finance qualification can opt for this route.

- Participants will start at Stage Two Intermediate Stage and undertake 2 modules (2 and 6).

All participants have to undertake the third Practitioner Stage, which will equip them with the knowledge and experience to tackle more complex issues around the finance and operations in academies and school structures.

It will provide contextual knowledge for those operating in high-level finance positions, but not familiar with the education sector, and will also assist those School Business Management (SBM) professionals already in the sector who wish to expand and develop their role.

Benefits

To participants

Those accredited with the Level Seven Certificate in School Financial and Operational Leadership will be able to progress their career, assured that they meet the highest professional standards. This programme has been designed to provide a route to a professional accountancy qualification via CIPFA, should participants wish to pursue this in the future.

They will receive exemptions on the CIPFA Professional Qualification or their chosen route of study.

To employers

This prestigious programme will enable employers to be assured of value for money from the certificate holder and so ensure the highest possible drive for public sector efficiency.

To the profession

Programme completion will also provide necessary evidence when applying for ISBL Fellowship, should participants wish to receive this accolade from their professional body and be recognised across the sector for professional excellence. Successful participants will also be able to apply for CIPFA Affiliate membership.

This programme has been specifically designed to meet the Professional Standards as developed by the key sector stakeholders and practitioners and recognised by the DfE.

www.isbl.org.uk/professionalstandards

Programme content: 3 stages made up of 9 modules

Stage	Module		Online Workbook	Face-To-Face	Assessment
Stage 1 Foundation Stage	1	Overview of Public Sector and Academy Finance**	✓	✓	
	1	Accounting and Academy Terminology**	✓	✓	
	1	Key Aspects of Academy Trusts**	✓	✓	
	1	Statutory Duties**	✓	✓	
	1	Introduction to Resource Accounting and Capital Accounting (including Accruals Accounting and the Accounts Direction)**	✓	✓	
	1	Introduction to Layout of the Financial Statements and Annual Report**	✓	✓	
	1	Overview of Financial Management (Budget Planning, Monitoring and Control)**	✓	✓	
Stage 2 Intermediate Stage	2	Certificate in Financial Reporting in Academies (those already holding this qualification will be exempt from this module)	E-Learning and multiple choice exam	✓	
	3	Better Business Cases – Introduction**	✓		
	4	Education Funding**	✓		
	5	The Audit of Academies**	✓	✓	
	6	Procurement and Contract Management		✓	✓
	** Those having completed Level 4 – CIPFA / ISBL Accredited Finance training are exempt from these modules				
Stage 3 Practitioner Stage	7	Strategic Financial Planning (Curriculum-Led Funding), Costing and Finance Efficiency in Academies	✓	✓	
	8	Accountability, Assurance and Governance	✓	✓	
	9	Advanced Audit Requirements	✓	✓	
Qualified Accountants may pass directly into this stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) ■ Association of International Accountants (AIA) ■ Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI) ■ Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) ■ Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) ■ Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) ■ Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) 				

Accreditation and assessment

To gain accreditation, participants are required to complete or pass:

Multiple-choice exam

Certificate in Financial Reporting

Intermediate Stage 2, module 2

Written assessment

Procurement and Contract Management

Intermediate Stage 2, module 6

Portfolio of evidence

From all the remaining modules. This records evidence of learning and critical analysis, and how the skills developed have been translated to the working environment. Accreditation will require participants to complete reflective activities on each workbook, and this will also be covered in the face-to-face sessions.

Still unsure about which of the programmes is best for you?

We would recommend that:

- If you are already working in an academy or a maintained school → you move straight to the Level 7: **Full Programme qualification**
- If you have completed the Level 4 Diploma in Financial Skills → you move straight to the Level 7: **Practitioner Programme qualification**
- If you have a professional accountancy qualification → you move straight to the Level 7: **Practitioner Programme qualification**

Further information

If you have any further questions or would like to chat through your options with one of our professional development colleagues, then please contact:

E: training@isbl.org.uk T: **02476 231 221**
www.isbl.org.uk

Duration and cost

Programme Route	Duration (approx)	Hours of learning (approx)	Face-to-Face sessions	Cost (ISBL members)	Cost (non ISBL members)
Full	12 months	200 hours	6	£2,950	£3,540
Practitioner	6 months	80 hours	5	£2,050	£2,460